Media as a Factor of Electoral Apathy in the Czech Republic

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Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.

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Prague 19.05.2015 Jana Vatahová
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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore whether the drop in voter turnout between the 2009 and 2014 European Parliament elections, as well as the general apathy toward the politics of the European Union, in the Czech Republic was contributed to by the mass media. Specifically, this thesis will examine the two most read daily newspapers of both 2009 and 2014, Blesk and Mladá Fronta Dnes, and analyze its articles with the use of search words in order to assess whether any change occurred in the way the European Union, its policies and institutions, were presented immediately prior to the 2009 and 2014 European Parliament elections. This will be achieved through the use of content analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, while evaluating the articles in comparative fashion. The thesis will argue that, given the essential role of the media as intermediary between the world of politics and the electorate, the portrayal, or lack thereof, of the European Union is a factor in explaining the electoral dynamics of the country.

Key Words: voter turnout; European Parliament elections; mass media; electoral apathy
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1. INTRODUCTION

The European Parliament elections in the Czech Republic took place from the 23rd to the 24th of May 2014. Voter turnout in the third European Parliament elections in the country since its accession to the European Union was a record low, standing at just 18.20%.\(^1\) The European Union-wide average was 42.54%, with 89.64% highest voter turnout in Belgium, and with only Slovakia having a lower voter turnout of 13.05%.\(^2\) To any concerned European citizen, this is cause for alarm. This alarm is based on a trend of gradually falling voter participation since direct elections to the European Parliament had been instituted in 1979. Based on the results, it is clear that Czech voter turnout is, and has always been, lower than the European average. However, in the latest elections, voter turnout experienced a relatively steep fall of 10.02%.\(^3\) It is the objective of this thesis to research whether the sharp decrease in voter turnout in the European Parliament elections between 2009 and 2014 in the Czech Republic can be attributed to changing coverage of the European Union in the media.

The importance of studying the media and its coverage of the European Union comes at a time when the EU is accused by the public and by political elites as lacking legitimacy; its institutions are accused of a democratic deficit. This accusation stems from the perception that EU politics are far detached from the ordinary citizen. Initially, the transfer of legislative powers from national governments to a supranational body such as the Council of Ministers and the European Council was seen as an impediment to true democracy. The result has been the introduction of a democratically elected European Parliament. However, the accusation of a lack of democratic legitimacy still stands, partly due to a communication deficit between the electorate and the European Union. In such climate, there are calls for a more informed and engaged European citizenry, as the EU relies on the media as a way to increase citizen awareness of its existence, and thereby strengthening its legitimacy. In order to address this perceived communication deficit, the communication gap between citizens and government must be closed.

In order to begin addressing the communication gap between EU institutions and EU citizens, it is essential to acquire empirical knowledge about how mass media cover the EU.

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In general, more news has been shown to be conducive to increased public awareness; despite the fact that visibility of the EU in mass media is increasing, however, voter turnout seems to be falling.\textsuperscript{4} From a high of 61.8\% in 1979, voter turnout fell to 56.7\% in 1994 and further to the lowest level, 43.0\% in 2009.\textsuperscript{5} In the Czech Republic in particular, voter turnout has been consistently low, and falling; 28.32\% in 2004, 28.22\% in 2009 and a record low of 18.20\% in 2014.\textsuperscript{6} Given that the media exercise notable influence over the public’s general knowledge, it would not be unwise to study the coverage of the EU as a possible factor contributing to this general apathy.

Agenda-setting theory has already established that the media has an uncanny ability to command the public’s attention by manipulating the salience of certain subjects. Agenda-setting per se will not be analyzed here, but for the purposes of this thesis the theory establishes that the media has a crucial influence over the public’s perception of the importance of elections, issues, candidates etc., and that it can affect what people believe is important.\textsuperscript{7} This theory, therefore, provides the basis for the assumption that there exists a connection between public awareness and exposure to media. It continues to be relevant in light of the fact that in a public opinion survey conducted by the Center for Research and Public Opinion, only 63\% of respondents claimed to know that the election for the European Parliament was taking place on May 23\textsuperscript{rd} and 24\textsuperscript{th}. This percentage may not be regarded as particularly troubling under other circumstances, but this answer was given no less than two months prior to the election.\textsuperscript{8}

Agenda-setting has been studied extensively, and therefore will not be the focus of this thesis, because although the agenda-setting theory gives remarkable insight into how media can dictate what the audience thinks about, in this case I will be interested in finding out the way in which the media influences how the audience thinks about the issues presented in the media. In analyzing media coverage, it is not only important to know what issues are being


\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{6} Results for each respective year available at \url{http://www.volby.cz/}

\textsuperscript{7} “What we know about the world is largely based on what the media decide to tell us. More specifically, the result of this mediated view of the world is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. Elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind.” McCombs, Maxwell E., and Donald L. Shaw. “The agenda-setting function of mass media.” Public opinion quarterly 36.2 (1972): 177. In 1972, media theorists Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs published the results of the first agenda-setting study. Based on the 1968 US election, its aim was to research the agenda-setting function of mass media. It came to be called the “Chapel Hill Study”, and researched the concept of agenda setting and its effects on public opinion.

discussed, but also in what light; what tone of coverage is used, whether issues are presented in a broader, European-wide context, allowing for more complex and systematic understanding, whether issues are merely described or also analyzed etc. This, by extension, has a great impact on voting dynamics. The mass media do not only inform an electorate about the technicalities of elections, i.e. the date of the election and where it is possible to vote. Rather, the ability to persuade and motivate the electorate to vote is as much the responsibility of the political elite as it is of mass media. Mass media provide a platform through which an informed citizen in a participatory democracy can obtain information about an election, a platform through which political actors attempt to disseminate information and influence voters. Mass media serve the role of communicator by spreading information about political candidates, political parties, their aims and programs, about governments and their activities, about elections, electoral campaigns and electoral laws, technicalities and processes; mass media become a source of understanding of the political world around us, they supply a picture of the political forces shaping our future.

However, this becomes particularly problematic when it comes to second-order elections. Coined by Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt in 1980, second-order elections are considered to be qualitatively different from national elections because there is less at stake. This is because the national government is understood to be of greatest consequence, since it has the most immediate impact on the lives of its citizens. As the European Parliament elections do not fill the positions of the national government, the public and political elites consider them less important. Reif and Schmitt established that second-order elections are characterized by low voter turnout as a result of this belief. The question, therefore, arises, whether the media also consider European Parliament elections as second order elections, and whether this is reflected in the media’s coverage of the EU. An observably lower interest in EU affairs, as compared between 2009 and 2014, by the media, manifested through lower coverage of the EU, may therefore be considered a symptom of the general apathy toward such second order elections as the European Parliament election.

Although European Parliament elections are considered second-order, the importance of this institution, as well as the other institutions of the European Union, for national governments is not. In the United Kingdom, the percentage of laws based directly on EU laws

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lies at approximately 20%. ¹⁰ “Estimates of the proportion of national laws based on EU laws in other EU Member States vary widely, ranging from around 6% to 84%.” ¹¹ In the Czech Republic, the number is estimated to be between 60 to 75 percent. ¹² If, according to Reif and Schmitt, national elections are considered first-level elections because they directly impact the make-up of the government, which subsequently impacts the public through its lawmakership function, then by virtue of the European Union’s lawmakership authority that directly impacts European Union citizens via their governments would also make European Parliament elections first-order, or at least should be presented as such by both the political elites, as well as the media. The factor that is different in the two cases is perception. ¹³ If this importance of the European Union for national level governance was, in fact, reflected in the media and in political rhetoric, could voter turnout then be expected to rise correspondingly?

In the words of Reif and Schmitt, media attention to campaigns in second-order elections may well be crucial in terms of whether or not voters cast ballots; “Since less is at stake in secondary elections, fewer voters may consider them sufficiently important to cast ballots. This attributing of lesser significance to such elections may also be noted among top-level politicians, partly activists, and political journalists. A generally subdued campaign means that fewer voters may even learn that elections are being held.” ¹⁴ The authors also point out the importance of framing on voter mobilization: “To summarize the particular aspect of mass media relevance in second-order elections, we could say: the more national

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¹¹ Ibid.
¹³ "The "European" elections are simultaneous national elections in each of the EC-member nations. Although these elections have no institutionally binding consequences on government or opposition policies at the national level, the crucial factor here is the existing political connection between European elections and the national political configuration - above all, the manner in which this connection is perceived by political parties. This connection exists and has an effect, regardless of whether or not it is explicitly expressed." Reif, Karlheinz, and Hermann Schmitt. "Nine Second-order National Elections – A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results." European journal of political research 8.1 (1980): 8.
media are oriented towards first-order arena issues and sources of information, the more their contribution to the electoral mobilization depends upon the attention first-order politicians pay to the specific second-order elections. “In other words, news pertaining to European elections, i.e. second order elections, is conducted through a domestic prism; all issues are discussed in terms of implications for the state.

The problem lies in the lack of a systematic, European debate on European issues by European actors. The ‘European’ level is lacking in coverage of the EU. The media sporadically cover important events, but do not provide context, only so far as it pertains to the state. As the issue at hand is a communication gap between the European Union and its citizens, “a discussion of European themes among a set of EU actors in the media is important to the development of a European public sphere that will sustain the EU’s democracy and develop it further” Visibility of key democratic moments may not be enough to sustain European democracy, but rather a consistent discussion of general EU affairs within the news will ensure a better, general public awareness that will not be based solely on the national-level arena, but rather will be based on sound knowledge about European issues in a broader sense. This is all the more crucial given the lack of a pan-European media system that could coordinate the flow of information on a European level.

Greater knowledge about the EU may well encourage larger voter turnout during European Parliament elections. There have been many studies linking political knowledge and voter turnout. Although these will be outlined in greater detail in the section on second order elections, this connection must briefly be mentioned here. Political knowledge creates motivation and mobilizes toward more political involvement, including electoral participation. Media exposure aids in public debate, which subsequently leads to the formation of political attitudes. Much support, or lack thereof, for European integration, enlargement, or certain policies is influenced by the way these events are covered in the news.

The value of newspapers in cultivating an informed electorate is evident and understandable, and in the 1980s and 1990s was confirmed and reinforced by many studies;
“modern surveys lend credence to this perspective by showing that newspaper readers know more about politics than nonreaders. Moreover, newspapers offer quantitatively more and, by some accounts, qualitatively better political coverage than alternative media, especially television news. In short, newspapers allegedly matter because they offer relatively expansive and superior information that leads to a more informed electorate.”

Newspapers (which are also available in digital form on the internet) will be the focus of this thesis in the analysis of media coverage of the European Union. Although television consumption and its rapid diffusion in households across the country constitute reasonable prerequisites for a study of the effects of media on voter turnout, newspaper media presents itself as the better option for a number of reasons. Despite the availability of television sets in most households, internet consumption is rising. The advantage of newspaper media, therefore, is twofold; it is available in traditional print form, or in digital form on the internet. Additionally, television broadcasts contribute a very limited time to news specifically; for example, Česká Televize, the television channel with the highest yearly viewership in 2014, devoted an average of 38 minutes to news broadcasting. The length of a newspaper, therefore, offers a much larger variety, and devoted more space to news. As a consequence, television news broadcasts can only offer limited coverage with incomplete information. Therefore, I will focus only on newspaper media, specifically the daily newspaper Blesk and Mladá Fronta Dnes.

The two daily newspapers have topped the charts of the most read newspapers in the Czech Republic in both 2009 and 2014; in 2009, Blesk had the highest readership of 1,400,000 during the first two quarters of 2009, and 1,128,00 during the first two quarters of 2014. MF Dnes had the second highest readership of 975,000 in the first two quarters of 2009, and 709,000 in the first two quarters of 2014. For comparison’s sake, both newspapers are daily newspapers, and are both privately owned. It is noteworthy that Blesk is a tabloid


20 According to Mediasearch, a research agency specializing in services in the field of marketing and media research, analysis and data processing, found that 71% of Czech households owns at least one television set, 30% owns more than one, and 6% owns three or more such sets. Mediasearch. “Plochý televizor je v českých domácnostech již standardem, vyšší sociální skupiny odlučuje vlastnictví tabletu či smartphone.” 10 December 2014. Accessible at http://www.mediaresearch.cz/press/tz-plochy-televizor-je-v-csksych-domacnostech-jiz-standardem-vyssi-socialni-skupiny-odlusuje-vlastnictvi-tabletu-ci-smartphone-2/ Last Accessed 26 January 2015.


newspaper, devoted mostly to celebrity news. Mladá Fronta Dnes is a daily newspaper devoted to various types of both domestic and foreign news.

As may already be clear, this thesis will be based on the comparative method; the research will be in the form of a comparison between newspaper media coverage of the European Union prior to the elections in 2009, which took place on 5th and 6th of June, and those of 2014, which, as already mentioned, took place on the 23rd and 24th of May. As for the timeframe, I will focus on the pre-election campaign period. This period proves to be an excellent source of information in the study of electoral participation for a number of reasons. Both media and politicians are most actively attempting to influence voters, and the manner in which this is done can prove to be a useful way of establishing a difference in coverage between the two elections. As per the second order election model, the media employ a subdued campaign during second order elections; with the 10.02% drop in voter turnout between the two elections, can we observe a more subdued campaign period prior to the 2014 election, as compared to the 2009 election?

However, the pre-election campaign period is an ambiguous term. Each party chooses to begin their campaigns at different times, and in order to ensure fair and accurate comparisons, that timeframe must be the same for both elections. With some exceptions, most candidate lists were compiled and ratified by the respective party congresses early in each election year, at which point election campaigns were initiated. The final candidate lists, however, were in both years to be submitted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs 66 days prior to the elections24 (March 31st 2009 for the 2009 European Parliament elections, March 18th 2014 for the 2014 European Parliament elections). This is the latest point in time for registration of political parties looking to participate in the elections, and therefore would be a finalization of the registration process. From this point, the media would have final data on the participating parties and could then report inclusively on all party programs, issues and candidates. This will, therefore, serve as the timeframe of my research. I have decided not to include the very first European Parliament elections in the Czech Republic, which took place in 2004, as those elections were strongly influenced by initial media hype and public enthusiasm for the election’s primary status. Media coverage of the elections was also considerably influenced by the coverage of the referendum on the accession to the European Union, so the entire institution received relatively more active and intensive coverage. The

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2009 and 2014 elections took place within a relatively undisturbed political climate, and enjoyed already established conditions.

The researched material will be examined in the form of content analysis. As mentioned above, the theory of second-order elections posits that media devote less attention to second order elections than national ones, and that second order elections are framed in the context of the national-arena. This will be one of the phenomena that will be examined in the content analysis; i.e. whether or not European events, issues and policies are placed into a broader European context, or whether news about the EU are dominated by the national arena. Any potential change, whether more toward the European context, national context or without change, may give insight into the change in turnout. A part of the perceived apathy and lack of knowledge about the EU may also be influenced by the form in which news are presented to the reader. Therefore, I will also note whether articles are merely descriptive, i.e. merely provide basic information about a law, about an event etc., or whether analysis is also offered, i.e. elaboration of what a particular law may mean for the Member States, for the future of European integration etc.

In addition to examining the content for possible changes in coverage and the examination of what context (national or European) news were covered in, I will also attempt to find out whether the coverage of the European Union was overwhelmingly positive, negative or neutral. There are two opposing theories in this field; the demobilization hypothesis “claims that negative ads undermine political efficacy and depresses voter turnout.” The contrary theory, known as the stimulation hypothesis, conversely claims that “such advertising may have an invigorating effect on the electorate.” By conducting qualitative analysis, and using keywords and phrases to analyze the tone of the article in the newspaper, I will then determine whether the tone of coverage had changed between 2009 and 2014. According to Kahn and Kenney, “people distinguish between useful negative information presented in an appropriate manner and irrelevant and harsh mudslinging. As the proportion of legitimate criticisms increases in campaigns, citizens become more likely to cast ballots.” This effect should be relatively easy to determine.

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26 Ibid. 1189.
In the following section, I will briefly outline the history of the European Parliament, its growth in powers, and therefore its significance for European citizens. General trends in voter turnout will also be presented to provide context. The following section will provide literature background of second order elections, of the studies and theories of mass media effects on voter turnout, and the section after that will explain the methodology of my research in detail.

2. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND VOTER TURNOUT TRENDS

At this juncture, it would be pertinent to point out the importance of the European Parliament, the European Union as a whole, and its authority over, and close relationship with, national governments. As the thesis question examines the portrayal of the EU in the media and the effects of this portrayal on public opinion of the institution and the public’s subsequent tendency to vote in its elections, by extension it also presupposes that it should be considered important enough to warrant the study of this thesis. This section highlights two significant aspects worth mentioning; the EU’s legislative powers and its legal powers. The section on the EU’s legislative power explains and adds context to the now famous belief that 80% of national laws originate in the EU. Although not quite true for every Member State, the Czech Republic can indeed assume this claim. It is essential to point out just how much influence the EU has over national laws, and by extension over European citizens. Once this is established, the importance of voting can be demonstrated.

In terms of the legal powers of the EU, it is vital to show how EU laws have evolved to achieve supremacy over national laws, logically placing greater weight on the makeup of the European Parliament. This will lead into the following section, which describes EU elections as second order elections. Such elections are considered less important, as they do not directly influence the makeup of the government, and therefore are seen as insignificant for the daily lives of citizens. Whether or not the media inform the public about the legal supremacy of the EU may, therefore, have an impact on the attitudes the public maintains about the EU and its institutions.

The European Parliament has gone through immense changes, both institutionally and in terms of its powers, since it first convened on 10th of September 1952.28 The entire

institutional framework at the time of its first meeting was very different; in 1952, the Parliament was known as the “Common Assembly”, much like today’s European Union was, at the time, the European Coal and Steel Community. The powers of the European Parliament have since significantly increased, and it has begun to operate increasingly like a typical national parliament “with cohesive parties who compete to dominate legislative outcomes and who form coalitions with other party groups for that purpose. “²⁹ Yet despite this fact, the connection between citizens and their MEPs remains weak in relative terms.³⁰ I will briefly provide an overview of the institutional history of the Parliament, and follow with a description of the evolution of its powers. At the end of the section, I will also provide some general trends in voter turnout since the first direct elections, including trends for various Member States, and conclude with Eurobarometer findings about citizens’ views of the European Union. In more specific terms, I will also discuss trends in knowledge about the EU in the Czech Republic.

The importance of the Parliament, as well as the other European Communities, has grown as membership swelled to include more states.³¹ Each enlargement was followed by institutional changes to reflect the demographic character of each new state. As membership grew gradually, the powers of the European Union expanded correspondingly over various fields which now include monetary and financial policy, foreign policy, employment, etc. The size of the Parliament now stands at 751 members.³² The size of the Parliament, therefore, has changed considerably, as have its powers. The following section outlines the origins of the Parliament, and the evolution of its power.

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³⁰ As an example from the Czech Republic, only slightly over one third of the population was able to name an MEP representing the country; “Otázka na znalost konkrétních europoslanců, do níž se neopětovněje sociálně desirabilita odpovědí (sebeprezentace), potvrzuje, že znalost je významně vyšší na Slovensku. Ačkoli Slovensko má jen 13 europoslanců a Česko 22, alespoň na jednoho europsloance si vzpomenu v iez dve třetiny Slováků (68 %) a jen necelá třetina Čechů (32 %). To potvrzuje dojem, že na Slovensku je díky přijetí Eura více politicky i mediálně propojena obce domácí a Evropské politiky, což respektuje ve výši znalosti a nižší zastoupení národně kritického vnímání Evropské unie.” Median. “Evropská unie očima Čechů a Slováků. Bleskový výzkum v ČR a SR.” Median 24 February 2014. Accessible at http://img.cz24.cz/multimedia/documents/55/5499/549861.pdf Last Accessed 27 January 2015.
³¹ The founding members of the European Union and all its institutions since its conception were France, Italy, West Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg. The first enlargement took place in 1973, when the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland joined the European Economic Communities. Greece joined in 1981, followed by Portugal and Spain in 1986. With the fourth enlargement in 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the European Union. The largest enlargement, the Eastern Expansion, came in 2004, when 10 countries joined the European Union; Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta. Romania and Bulgaria acceded in 2007, and the final enlargement took place in 2013 with the accession of Croatia.
³² Originally, it tallied 78 members. In 1958, this number grew to 142, and with the first wave of accession expanded to 198. In 1979, the number of members swelled to 410, with the accession of Greece to 434 and with the third enlargement to 518.³² Following German unification, the size of the Parliament rose from 518 to 567 for the June 1994 elections. After the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden, the number of MEPs stood at 626, increasing to 732 after the largest accession in 2004.
2.1 Origins

In the Schuman Declaration, a government proposal signed in 1950 and masterminded by the French foreign minister Robert Schuman, the countries of Western Europe agreed that the post-war order required the formation of a supranational authority that would organize states in Europe as a way to promote peace. The idea of creating a parliamentary body, “a European parliamentary assembly which would express European public opinion” was, in fact, already outlined during the Hague Congress of 1948.\(^{33}\) However, no parliamentary body was established within the framework of this prospective organization, and instead “the Council of Europe took up the principle of a parliamentary assembly while considerably watering down its responsibilities.”\(^{34}\) It wasn’t until the Paris Treaty of 1951, also known as the Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, that the Common Assembly was created. It was a “purely consultative parliamentary institution” which was to be “composed of representatives of the peoples of the member States of the Community.”\(^{35}\) Its powers were merely supervisory, and its representatives were delegates chosen from each of the founding Member States. The Assembly only met once a year, or it could be convened in “extraordinary session “at the request of the Council.”\(^{36}\)

As already mentioned above, the Schuman Declaration did not mention the creation of a parliamentary body. However,

“The concept was put forward by Jean Monnet, and by the Belgian and Italian delegations, on the second day of the treaty negotiations as a way of monitoring and providing a counterweight to the High Authority. The constituent parties gave it the name Common Assembly in the ECSC Treaty. The establishment of the Common Assembly thus provided the democratic legitimacy required by the ECSC.”\(^{37}\)

In 1957, the Treaty of Rome (also known formally as The Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community), which founded the European Economic Community and

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\(^{34}\) Ibid.


\(^{36}\) Ibid.

the European Atomic Energy Community, renamed the Common Assembly to the European Parliamentary Assembly. It also extended its powers to cover the two newly created communities, but it remained a consultative body, and it convened for the first time in March 1958. In 1962, it was renamed for the final time to the European Parliament, and it became the common assembly for all three communities.

As referenced above, prior to the introduction of direct elections in 1979, each Member State’s national parliament appointed the State’s representatives in the European Parliament. At a Summit Conference on Paris in December 1974, the members concluded that direct elections were necessary, and that they should take place in 1978 or soon thereafter. The Parliament was tasked with drawing and submitting a proposal to replace the original draft convention. Agreement on the issue came in July 1976, when Heads of State of Governments of each Member State adopted the new draft convention; known as The Decision and Act on European elections by direct suffrage, it was signed on the 20th of September 1976 in Brussels, and following ratification by each Member State, entered into force in 1978. The first direct elections then took place in June 1979.

2.2 Legislative Powers

Much like the institution itself, the Parliament’s powers have also changed considerably. With each successive treaty, the last and most recent of which was the Lisbon Treaty, the scope of the Parliament’s powers has increased. Although its powers were weak in the first few decades of its existence, being primarily a consultative body, its designers had left an intimation of its future prominence in the wording of the Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community; it was already referred to as the “representatives of the people”40, and left the possibility of direct election possible;

“Although its powers were limited, it was a parliamentary assembly and was therefore both representative and sovereign. Article 20 of the ECSC Treaty refers to representatives of the peoples, a phrase which demonstrates that the authors wanted to distinguish the Common

38 Ibid.
Assembly from traditional assemblies established within international organizations and made up of representatives of the national governments. The Common Assembly was the first international assembly based on a parliamentary model. Article 21 of the ECSC Treaty explains that it was to be ‘composed of delegates whom the parliaments of each of the member States shall be called upon to designate once a year from among their own membership, or who shall be elected by direct universal suffrage, according to the procedure determined by each respective High Contracting Party.’

Additionally, it was given the power to use the motion of censure. In the words of Hix, “Since the Treaty of Rome, in 1958, the European Parliament has had the power to sack the Commission, by passing a vote of censure in the Commission as a whole. This first power of the European Parliament was consciously modeled on the way government worked at the national level in Europe, where one of the main powers of parliaments is to remove the government.” Despite this power, the Parliament was not quite fully fashioned in accordance with the parliamentary model of government; although it had the power of censure, the commission was not elected by a majority in the Parliament.

As European integration proceeded, the powers of the Parliament grew. The first extension of power came in 1970, when the Parliament’s budgetary powers were expanded as the Community’s own resources replaced the Member States’ contributions to the EEC budget. The Parliament was to be given last word on the administrative budget (non-compulsory expenditures) of the EEC. A Second Budgetary Treaty, known as the Brussels

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41 Muñoz, Susana. “European Parliament”. CVCE.eu European NAvigator. Accessible at [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/european_parliament-en-ad60d57-08ef-427d-a715-f6e3bfaa75a.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/european_parliament-en-ad60d57-08ef-427d-a715-f6e3bfaa75a.html) Last Accessed 27 January 2015. Also, Article 21: “The Assembly shall be composed of delegates whom the parliaments of each of the member States shall be called upon to designate once a year from among their own membership, or who shall be elected by direct universal suffrage, according to the procedure determined by each respective High Contracting Party.” Ibid.

42 Article 24: “If a motion of censure on the report is presented to the Assembly, a vote may be taken thereon only after a period of not less than three days following its introduction, and such vote shall be by open ballot. If the motion of censure is adopted by two-thirds of the members present and voting, representing a majority of the total membership, the members of the High Authority must resign in a body. They shall continue to carry out current business until their replacement in accordance with Article 10.” Ibid: 11.

Although available to the EP, it is difficult to pass; the motion of censure requires a double-majority. “The existing rules for passing a ‘censure’ motion make it difficult for such a motion to pass simply because the majority in the Parliament no-longer supports the policies of the Commission. A censure vote requires a ‘double-majority’: a two-thirds majority in the vote, which must also be an ‘absolute majority’ (50 percent plus 1) of all MEPs. Given the arithmetics of party composition in the European Parliament, this double-majority threshold can in practice be reached only if the main parties on the left and right vote together, which they will only do for non-policy reasons, such as corruption, mismanagement or serious incompetence. Hence, this is closer to the power of the U.S. Congress to impeach the U.S. President for what the U.S. constitution calls ‘high crimes and misdemeanours’ than the power of the majority in a domestic parliament in Europe to withdraw its support for the government.” Hix, Simon, Abdul G. Noury, and Gérard Roland. Democratic politics in the European Parliament. Cambridge University Press, 2007: 20.


44 “Part of the budget which excludes the main items of EU spending on the
Treaty, further strengthened the Parliament’s budgetary powers; “It strengthened the Assembly's budgetary powers (the EP secures the right to reject the Community budget and to grant discharge to the Commission in respect of implementation of the budget) and provided for the establishment of a Court of Auditors.” Such budgetary procedures enabled the Parliament to gradually take on the functions of a national government.

Since the Single European Act of 1986, the legislative powers of the Parliament have been experiencing a similar expansion. The Parliament was recognized in this Act as “an indispensable means of expression’ of the democratic people.” The Act constituted an amendment to the Treaty Establishing the European Communities, and introduced the cooperation and assent procedures. Under the cooperation procedure, the Parliament’s support would allow the Council to adopt a legislative proposal by a qualified majority. The assent procedure required accession and association treaties subject to the Parliament’s approval by absolute majority. This procedure is no longer valid since the Treaty of Amsterdam, but this has, in no way, curtailed the Parliament’s powers. On the contrary, “the Maastricht Treaty, by introducing the codecision procedure in certain areas of legislation and extending the cooperation procedure to others, marked the beginning of Parliament’s metamorphosis into the role of co-legislator. It gave Parliament the power of final approval over the membership of the Commission: this represented an important step forward in terms of Parliament’s political control over the EU executive.”

The Maastricht Treaty, also known as the Treaty on the European Union, was signed in 1992, and along with extending the cooperation procedure, also introduced the codecision procedure, which gives the Parliament

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45 “The Council shall, acting by a qualified majority, establish the draft administrative budget and forward it to the European Parliament. The draft administrative budget shall be placed before the European Parliament not later than 5 October of the year preceding that which the budget is to be implemented. The European Parliament shall have the right to amend the draft administrative budget, acting by a majority of its members, and to propose to the Council, acting by an absolute majority of the votes cast, modifications to the draft budget relating to expenditure necessarily resulting from this Treaty or from acts adopted in accordance therewith.” Official Journal of the European Communities (OJEC). Treaty amending certain budgetary provisions of the treaties establishing the European Communities and of the Treaty establishing a single Council and a single Commission of the European Communities (22 April 1970). CVCE.eu. Accessible at http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/93a76fb-b740-400-8b30-2c7c25fa625d/publishable_en.pdf Last Accessed 29 January 2015.


48 Ibid.


50 Ibid.
equal power with the Council of the European Union to approve laws in certain legislative areas. Additionally, the Parliament “has the right to invite the Commission to present a legislative proposal on matters which, in its view, call for a Community act to be drawn up. The entire Commission must also now be approved by the EP, which also appoints the European Ombudsman.”

The Treaty of Amsterdam further extended the Parliament’s control over the executive by subjecting the President of the Commission to the Parliament’s approval. The Treaty extended the co-decision procedure to include most spheres of legislation.

The Lisbon Treaty, the final and arguably the most important treaty with regards to the powers of the Parliament, cemented the institution’s status as co-legislator and established its equality with the other decision-making institutions. The co-decision procedure is now the norm, and has come to be known as the ‘ordinary legislative procedure’. More importantly, it has broadened to encompass strategic policy areas traditionally seen as relatively contentious, such as agricultural policy or justice and security policies.

The Parliament now also has increased powers regarding treaties; “The Government of any Member State, the European Parliament or the Commission may submit to the Council proposals for the amendment of the Treaties. These proposals may, inter alia, serve either to increase or to reduce the competences conferred on the Union in the Treaties. These proposals shall be submitted to the European Council by the Council and the national Parliaments shall be notified.”

As a result of all the above treaties, the European Parliament has gained authority in the most influential of policy areas; the budget.

Known as the ‘power of the purse’, it is the result of decades of the Parliament’s efforts to “securing for itself the basic powers of a parliament in budgetary matters.” As mentioned above, with the Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community allowed the Parliament only limited powers, both in general matters and in terms of the budget. It could only examine administrative expenditures, but not amend or reject them.

Following the Treaties Establishing the European Economic Communities, the Parliament was given power to draft the Community budget, as well as recommend modifications. The

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greatest breakthrough came with the 1970 Treaty of Luxembourg, which required the Parliament to approve the budget, with certain restrictions; it could only make decisions on non-compulsory expenditures.\textsuperscript{55} In 1975, the Parliament gained authority to reject the budget entirely.\textsuperscript{56} Through these developments, the Parliament has managed to place itself into a position of relatively equal importance and authority with the other institutions of the European Union.

The European Parliament wields, in certain instances, considerably more influence over the executive than national parliaments; in terms of legislative power, the European Parliament can be considered the most powerful chamber in the world as, unlike in traditional parliamentary systems, the majority in the Parliament is not forced to support what the Commission (the executive in parliamentary systems) proposes. It is an elected body that is entirely independent of the executive body. Although it is the Commission which commands the exclusive right to initiate proposals, the European Parliament has shown its independence by not becoming the traditional “rubber stamp” institution for the executive with a parliamentary majority.\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{2.3 Legal Powers}

The European Parliament, as co-legislator, and the European Union as a whole, exercises great authority over national laws. In a 1964 decision by the European Court of Justice, the principle of supremacy of Community law over national law was articulated for the first time. Interestingly, this principle was not enshrined directly in any of the Treaties, but was rather arrived at by the European Court of Justice which claimed that the Treaties,

\textsuperscript{55} As already referenced above, the Treaty replaced the financial contributions of each Member State with the Communities’ own resources.
\textsuperscript{56} “The first major development in the European Parliament’s legislative powers was the introduction in 1970 and 1975 of a new procedure for adopting the annual budget of the then European Community. The limit on the revenue available to the Community was fixed by the member states. But, within this overall limit, annual expenditure would be determined jointly by the European Parliament and the Council. The European Parliament now had the power to reject the budget as a whole, to increase or reduce expenditure within certain limits, and to redistribute revenues between the lines in the budget.” European Parliament. “Treaties and the European Parliament.” Europarl.europa.eu. Accessible at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/000882c7869/Treaties-and-the-European-Parliament.html Last Accessed 01 February 2015.
\textsuperscript{57} “Despite the Commission’s exclusive right of initiative, the European Parliament is an elected body that is independent of the executive and shows this independence. It is clearly not simply a rubber-stamp for an executive with a parliamentary majority. At the domestic level in Europe, where governments usually command a parliamentary majority, legislation is rarely amended by parliaments against the wishes of the executive. In contrast, almost 50 percent of legislative amendments proposed by the European Parliament become law.” Ibid: 25.
through their wording, indirectly established a very specific legal order.\textsuperscript{58} The principle states as follows:

\textit{It is evident that there will be clashes between Community law and national law. In the event of conflict there must be a set of rules that indicate what legal norm shall prevail over the other. The ECJ has created a system whereby the laws of the Community take precedence over conflicting laws in the Member States. Consequently, the national courts are obliged to ensure the practical effectiveness of supremacy by upholding Community law.}\textsuperscript{59}

As the Union comprises various levels of governance, and consequently of jurisprudence, there are many sources of law for which, naturally, the European Union was obliged to create some type of structure, or hierarchy. Each successive Treaty ratified by the Member States delineates the competencies of the European Union, and by extension, its jurisdictional competences. Community Law only takes precedence in areas granted to it by each Treaty. Naturally, this principle has evolved since the creation of the European Court of Justice through successive cases brought before the Court. The evolution of this principle has enabled the European Union to command the legal authority it has today, and has paved the way toward not just a uniform system of standards across Europe which are directed from Brussels, but has also enabled the EU to initiate, or give impetus for, a significant number of national laws. It is essential to highlight some of the groundbreaking milestones of this evolution, as they highlight just how significant the principle is, especially for the ordinary European citizen, and how it impacts on the composition of national laws.

The first milestone for Community Law came in 1963, during the Van Gend en Loos case.\textsuperscript{60} The Court was to rule on the question of whether individual rights of citizens of a

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{58}“by creating a Community of unlimited duration, having its own institutions, its own personality, its own legal capacity and capacity of representation on the international plane and, more particularly, real powers stemming from limitation of sovereignty or transfer of powers from the States to the Community, the Member States have limited their sovereign rights, albeit within limited fields, and have created a body of law which binds both their nationals and themselves.” Case 6/64, \textit{Flaminio Costa v ENEL} [1964] ECR 585. In Stiernstrom, Martin. “The Relationship Between Community Law and National Law. Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series Vol. 5 No. 33, October 2005.” (2005): 2. The principle of supremacy of Community law over national law in the Member States has never been enshrined in the Treaties. None of the Treaties explicitly expressed that Community law should take precedence over national law nor was the principle endorsed by subsequent Treaty revisions. The Treaties are therefore said to be silent on the issue of the relationship between conflicting national law and Community law. Nonetheless, it is an essential part of the legal order of the EC.” Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{60}This was a case brought to the Court concerning a Dutch company, Van Gend Loos, which imported a chemical product from Germany to the Netherlands, and claimed that the Dutch customs office charged it customs duties that were higher than permitted by the European Community Treaties. It claimed that “Article 25 of the EC Treaty bans the introduction of new custom duties and the increase of existing duties on the market, this was contrary to Community law. Van Gend en Loos
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Member State could be claimed by appealing to Community Law in national courts. The extension of legal authority of European Union law to the national level was established in the Court’s final decision, which came to be known as “The Doctrine of Direct Effect”, “

“The Court stated that the Treaty not only imposes obligations on the individuals of the Member States but also confers upon them rights, which is up to the national courts to protect. Article 25 was said to produce direct effects. This meant that Community law could, under certain conditions, create rights for individuals of the Member States that were to be protected by national courts. If individuals would be deprived of the right to invoke Community law before these courts and authorities then they would not be able to invoke their individual rights. The justifications for attributing direct effect to articles in the Treaty were the necessity to ensure the effectiveness and uniform application of Community law in the Member States and legal integration in the Community." \(^ {61}\)

Again, this doctrine, much like the principle of supremacy, is not to be found in any of the Treaties, and is the direct result of the interpretation of the Treaties by the European Court of Justice. As part of the doctrine, the Court also specified the conditions which Community laws, directives and other such legislation must fulfill in order to become binding. However, the case established European Community law as an independent legal system, but one that is inextricably linked with its constituent Members.

The afore mentioned Supremacy principle of European law was articulated only a year later, when the Court had taken up another watershed case known as Costa v. ENEL.\(^ {62}\) The Court ascertained that the Community is a unique institution that commands an integrated legal order comprised of all the Member States’ legal systems which takes precedence over

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\(^ {61}\) Ibid: 4.

\(^ {62}\) Costa was a citizen of Italy, a lawyer who, on protest against the nationalization of energy companies, declined to pay his electricity bills, issued by a company called ENEL. ENEL, a nationalized energy company, had subsumed a private corporation that Costa had shares in. Costa, therefore, argued that “the Italian nationalization law of the electricity industry was contrary to Community provisions. The Italian nationalization law had been passed after the Italian ratification of the EC Treaty. Italian constitutional law applied the rule of \textit{lex posterior derogat priori}, i.e. the last passed law was to take precedence over an earlier passed law. Costa argued that nationalization constituted a distortion of the market by the State, which infringed on the laws of the European Community. Stierstrom, Martin. "The Relationship Between Community Law and National Law. Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series Vol. 5 No. 33, October 2005." (2005): 4.
national laws. By joining the Community, the Member States have accepted the Community’s legal system, and therefore, are subordinate to it.\(^\text{63}\)

The Court took the issue a step further in 1970 in a case called Internationale Handelsgesellschaft, where it passed a decision on the question of whether national constitutions are also subordinate to Community law. As the prior case centered on ordinary national law that was in conflict with Community law, it left unaddressed the issue of national constitutions. As national constitutions are not ordinary laws, are not amended like ordinary laws and comprise the entire existing set of rules governing the political system of a country, the question of supremacy was not immediately apparent. The Court’s ruling in this case established the ‘Full Supremacy of European Community Law’ doctrine; it declared that “Community law should take precedence over all provisions in national law whatever its legal status even the Member States’ Constitutions.”\(^\text{64}\)

The last case I wanted to mention in reference to the supreme legal status of European Community Law was concluded in 1978 and is known as ‘Simmenthal II’. The relevance of this case lies in the ECJ’s practical application of the two previously mentioned cases; it outlined the national courts’ duty to comply with European Community Law by preventing the application of any national law in conflict with EC law, even if such a law was passed after the adoption of European Community Treaties by the relevant state. The ECJ ruling stated that “it was the duty of a national court to give full effect to the Community provisions and not to apply any conflicting provisions of national legislation, even if it had been adopted subsequently. It also held that it should not wait for the national law to be set aside either by a

\(^{63}\) “It follows from all these observations that the law stemming from the Treaty, an independent source of law, could not, because of its special and original nature, be overridden by domestic legal provisions, however framed, without being deprived of its character as Community law and without the legal basis of the Community itself being called into question. The transfer by the States from their domestic legal system to the Community legal system of the rights and obligations arising under the Treaty carries with it a permanent limitation of their sovereign rights, against which a subsequent unilateral act incompatible with the concept of the Community cannot prevail.” Case 6/64, Flaminio Costa v ENEL [1964] ECR 585.

\(^{64}\) The details of the case are as follows: “In order to control the market in certain agricultural products, a system had been introduced by the Community, under which exports were permitted only if the exporter first obtained an export license and gave an economic deposit. However, if the firm failed to import the goods then the firm would lose its deposit. The matter at hand regarded a firm that had lost its deposit. The applicants claimed that the whole system was invalid as it was contrary to fundamental human rights. According to German constitutional law public authorities may impose on the citizen only those obligations which are necessary for attaining the public objective in question. In the German administrative court it was argued that the Community measure was invalid for it violated the German Constitution and the question of its validity was referred to the ECJ for preliminary ruling. The question concerned whether the ECJ considered the European regulation to be in violation of fundamental rights of individuals. The ECJ held that the law stemming from the Treaties is an independent source of law and that it cannot be overridden by rules of national law “however framed”. Otherwise, it would be deprived of its character of Community law which would lead to the Community itself be called into question.” Stiernström, Martin. “The Relationship Between Community Law and National Law. Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series Vol. 5 No. 33, October 2005.” (2005): 6 - 7.
constitutional court or by the legislature.” The powers of the Member States can also be limited when such laws lie in conflict with EC law only indirectly.

2.4 Origin of Laws in EU Member States

Now that the powers of the European Parliament, and the European Union as a whole, have been established, it is important to outline the practical, day-to-day authority of the institutions over Member States. In October 2010, The House of Commons Library published a research paper which “explores various approaches to the question of how much national law is based on or influenced by EU law.” It begins with a prediction; “The former European Commission President, Jacques Delors, predicted in July 1988 that within ten years 80% of economic legislation, and perhaps also fiscal and social legislation, would be of European origin. Since then, Treaty amendments have given the European Union a role in several additional policy areas, which has contributed to a view that national legislatures are becoming ‘Europeanised’, both in terms of the quantity of EU laws and their impact on domestic law- and policy-making.” Although the number is relative with regards to each Member State, it is not far from the truth today; each successive Treaty has expanded already existing, and introduced new, areas of EU legislative jurisdiction.

The specific number of laws origination in the EU, however, is difficult to assess accurately for a number of reasons. Each policy area experiences different levels of influence by the EU. Agriculture- and economy-based policy areas receive the greatest amount of attention from the EU. It is almost impossible to give an accurate answer about the number of national laws based on EU requirements because

“sources for data collection, including the EU’s own EUR-Lex website and national databases, are not totally reliable. Several analysts note that there were missing values in the national and/or EU databases they used. Electronic databases used to trace EU legislation

65 Stiernstrom, Martin. “The Relationship Between Community Law and National Law. Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series Vol. 5 No. 33, October 2005.” (2005): 8. The details are as follows: “The Simmenthal II ruling laid clear the practical implications of the supremacy doctrine. The facts were simple. Simmenthal imported beef from France to Italy and was made to pay a fee for public health inspection when the meat crossed the frontier. An Italian law passed in 1970 laid down that it was however contrary to the EC Treaty and two Community legislation passed in 1964 and 1968 respectively. The case began in an Italian court where two points were raised by the Italian authorities. First, that the Italian law must prevail because it was passed after the two Community legislation, and secondly, even if the Italian law conflicted with Italy’s Treaty obligations, it had to be applied by the Italian courts until such time as it had been declared unconstitutional by the Italian Constitutional Court. This latter contention was based on a principle of Italian constitutional law according to which questions concerning the constitutionality of Italian laws had to be determined by the Constitutional Court.”
67 Ibid.
tend not to go back beyond the early 1990s, making it difficult to measure accurately the institutional output. Also, data collection methods vary among the Member States. For example, some do not record amending EU directives (i.e. directives which change earlier directives), only the original directive. It is difficult to differentiate between EU-induced and nationally induced changes to the law. Governments might have intended to implement legislation in areas in which the EU decides to act, or have legislated in anticipation of the adoption of an EU law. These do not then show up as EU-based, even though they might have been EU-influenced. In addition, if calculations focus on politically defined sectors, they may vary over time and across Member States. What is meant by ‘economics’ in one State, for example, may differ from what is called ‘economics’ in another.”\textsuperscript{68}

Understandably, the number of laws passed per year varies from one Member State to the next, and also varies in the number of laws per year the EU passes. The estimates also do not offer information as to the importance of such laws, or which of them affect EU citizens directly or indirectly. Furthermore, the length of EU membership may be a factor; “the proportion of EU-based national laws is likely to be higher for a new Member State than for an older one, as the new State will have adopted all the existing acquis communautaire (with the exception of some transitional exemptions) in a short time frame in order to qualify for membership. As formal membership requires that most adaptation of national law to the acquis has already been made before entry in a pre-accession policy alignment, in theory, a new Member State starts off on an equal footing with other Members. In practice, the initial adoption of the vast body of the EU acquis has a significant impact on new Members.”\textsuperscript{69}

There are also nonlegislative measures, such as administrative rules, common targets and standards, recommendations and so on, which do not require transposition into national law; this is known as soft law.\textsuperscript{70}

Although the results of the study are estimates, they still offer an impressive insight into the impact of EU legislation on national laws. The figures vary from country to country, and the data provided by the study is separate for each of the examined countries. According to the authors, over a period from 1997 to 2009, “6.8% of primary legislation (Statutes) and 14.1% of secondary legislation (Statutory Instruments) had a role in implementing EU

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid: 2.
obligations…”  
Additionally, “sectoral studies suggest that the agriculture forms the highest area of EU influence and defence the lowest. The British Government estimates that around 50% of UK legislation with a significant economic impact originates from EU legislation.”

Similarly in Austria, the study found that the greatest influence of EU laws was received in agriculture, transport and economic policy areas; the country experienced the highest influence prior to its accession. “The study finds that the average yearly share of EU–related legislation from Austrian entry to the EU in 1995 until 2003 was slightly below 25%, although it had been as high as 45% in 1993, when Austria was preparing for EU membership. They show how many EU-related federal decrees (delegated legislation) were passed during this period. The number of decrees exceeded that of laws by several times both in the pre-accession period and from 1995 to 2003, when the ratio of federal decrees to federal laws was 3.2:1.”

In France, with significant variations according to the particular sector, the number of new laws originating on EU level was calculated at 54%. For the period 2002–2005, it was found that an average 38.6% of laws in Germany originated from a ‘European Impulse’. Again, across sectors, the greatest influence is found in the agricultural sector, as well as finance and economics sectors. For the Czech Republic, this number is believed to be approximately 75%, although no empirical studies like the above have been conducted to prove this number. However, it would be unwise to assume the percentage of laws originating in the EU in the Czech Republic would be any less than in the above mentioned countries.

2. 5 General Voter Trends in European Parliament Elections

The general trend in voter turnout in European Parliament elections has been experiencing a consistent downward path since the first elections in 1979. With an average

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72 Ibid.
74 “The 1993 annual report of the French Conseil d’État, the supreme administrative court, contained a detailed analysis of the impact of EU legislation on French law and public policy. It claimed that by 1992 the European Community had become the main source of new law in France, with 54% of all new French laws originating in Brussels… Another table (6) shows that in the period 1987-2006 the relative global share of Community norms in the total norms applicable in France was “inférieure à 20% (elle s’établit à environ 12%), “less than 20% (around 12%)”. There were significant sectoral differences: the proportion was a little under half in agriculture; about 20% in economic and foreign affairs matters; just under 5% in environmental laws and less than 2% in ten other sectors.” Ibid: 31.
75 Ibid: 32.
turnout of approximately 65% in 1979, the percentage has since dropped to approximately 45%, and is expected to continue on a downward spiral. For the purpose of clarification, a definition of turnout would be prudent at this junction. A satisfying definition of turnout can be found in a study published by the European Parliamentary Research Service, published two months prior to the last elections in May 2014, where voting trends since the first direct elections took place are outlined; “turnout in European Parliament elections is calculated as the total number of votes cast in all Member States as a percentage of the total number of registered voters in those countries. Turnout for national parliamentary elections in Member States is calculated on the same basis, totalling all elections taking place in each year to create an annual whole-EU aggregate.”\(^77\)

The table below shows the turnout in each Member State, by election, since 1979.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>LU</th>
<th>BE</th>
<th>MT</th>
<th>IT</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>CY</th>
<th>IE</th>
<th>LV</th>
<th>GR</th>
<th>AT</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>ES</th>
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<th>DE</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>FR</th>
<th>FI</th>
<th>BG</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>NL</th>
<th>HU</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>CZ</th>
<th>RO</th>
<th>PL</th>
<th>LT</th>
<th>SK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
<td>84.9%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
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The graph above shows a comparison of the voting trends in EP elections as compared to national elections. Both have been experiencing downward trends, pointing at a general, systematic electoral tendency against participation, rather than a uniquely European one. Eastern European countries seem, on average, more plagued by low voter turnout than Western European countries, not just in European Parliament elections, but also in national ones. Perhaps not entirely unrelated is the fact that the countries that consistently experience low turnout in European Parliament elections are also those whose citizens do not feel that they have a voice in the European Union. The relationship between the two may not be coincidental. The following graph from Standard Eurobarometer outlines the views of citizens of each Member State.\(^\text{78}\)

\[\text{\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.png}}\]

Quite telling is also the following graph, highlighting what percentage of European Union citizens in fact feel themselves to be European citizens.\(^\text{79}\)

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79 Ibid: 35.
A similar downward trend, as is experienced across Europe in terms of voter turnout, is also visible in the relative trust that European citizens have in both national governmental institutions and European ones. Again, the trend is downward sloping in both cases, pointing to a general apathy, or disillusionment, toward government, not simply the European one.80

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The consistently highest voter turnout in European Parliament elections has taken place in Belgium, Luxembourg, and Italy. The consistently lowest voter turnout has taken place in Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, and Slovenia; none of these countries has achieved voter turnout above 30% since accession to the European Union. In 2003, the Czech Republic held a referendum on the accession to the European Union and in 2004 became a member. The trend in voter turnout each election year has been downward sloping; 28.32% in 2004, 28.22% in 2009 and the afore-mentioned 18.20% in 2014.

As for the relative trust in European Union institutions, the trends in the Czech Republic tend to fluctuate. Respondents who answered that they predominantly trust EU institutions was 51% in autumn 2004, falling to 46% in spring 2005 and rising again in autumn 2005 to 53%. In 2007, 58% of respondents held trust in EU institutions, rising by one percentage point to 59% in spring 2008, but falling again in autumn 2008 to 58%. 59% of respondents declared trust in EU institutions also in autumn 2009. The European Parliament has consistently been enjoying the highest levels of trust in the country; in spring 2005, 51% of respondents had trust in the EP, rising to 56% in the autumn of the same year. By comparison, the European Commission enjoyed trust from 46% of respondents in the spring, rising to 53% in the autumn of 2005; the European Central Bank scored 53% trust in the spring, falling to 49% in the autumn.

As for the relative trust in European Union institutions, the trends in the Czech Republic tend to fluctuate. Respondents who answered that they predominantly trust EU institutions was 51% in autumn 2004, falling to 46% in spring 2005 and rising again in autumn 2005 to 53%. In 2007, 58% of respondents held trust in EU institutions, rising by one percentage point to 59% in spring 2008, but falling again in autumn 2008 to 58%. 59% of respondents declared trust in EU institutions also in autumn 2009. The European Parliament has consistently been enjoying the highest levels of trust in the country; in spring 2005, 51% of respondents had trust in the EP, rising to 56% in the autumn of the same year. By comparison, the European Commission enjoyed trust from 46% of respondents in the spring, rising to 53% in the autumn of 2005; the European Central Bank scored 53% trust in the spring, falling to 49% in the autumn. In autumn 2008, 58% of respondents declared trust in the European Parliament and the Central Bank, and 54% declared trust in the

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81 It is noteworthy that a form of compulsory voting exists in all of these countries. In Italy, voting was compulsory for the 1979, 1984 and 1989 elections.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
Commission.\(^94\) The peak of trust for the Parliament came in autumn 2009, when 60% of respondents declared trust, with 59% for the European Commission.\(^95\) A relative low point in trust for the European Parliament came in autumn 2013, when only 45% of respondents held trust in the institution, and only 42% held trust in the Commission. For the first time, the European Central Bank enjoyed higher rates of trust than the Parliament, with 49% trust.\(^96\)

2. 6 Knowledge about the EU in the Czech Republic

In February 2014, the agency Median\(^97\) conducted a survey of how Czechs and Slovaks view the EU.\(^98\) It is interesting to note that an approximately equal percentage of the population assessed Czech membership in the EU as positive as those that assessed it to be negative. 8% of respondents viewed Czech membership in the EU to be very negative, 27% as rather negative, while 34% viewed it as rather positive and 3% as very positive. It is apparent that the country is divided, but also that many people are ambivalent toward Czech membership in the EU; 26% of respondents claimed they have neither a positive nor negative assessment.\(^99\) A similar survey was conducted by the government in January 2015, almost a year later,\(^100\) and the number of respondents with a generally positive assessment of the EU was found to have grown to 37%, those with a neutral assessment also grew to 40%, while those with a negative assessment fell to 22%.\(^101\)

Although this may be an encouraging trend, the growing positive view of Czech membership in the EU is not actually matched by any true, systematic knowledge of the functioning of the EU, of its institutions or its politicians. For example, 65% of respondents claimed they believe that EU funds are a benefit to the Czech Republic, but only 34% were able to name an example of a project funded by the EU. Of those asked to name at least one


\(^97\) Median is a market research agency that conducts surveys of public opinion. Accessible at www.median.cz.


\(^101\) Ibid: 10.
European Parliament representative from their country, 68% could not name a single representative; 20% remembered one, and a mere 12% remembered 2 representatives.\(^{102}\)

According to Eurobarometer 72, conducted in 2009, 55% of respondents claimed they do not understand the functioning of the EU.\(^{103}\) In 2014, 37% of respondents answered that they understand ‘very little’ about the workings of the European Parliament and their Czech representatives within the parliament; 49% of respondents answered the same question with ‘rather little’\(^{104}\). Additionally, 59% of respondents, for example, did not know what their rights as EU citizens are.\(^{105}\) Respondents are, however, interested in finding out more about their rights, and about the functioning of the EU in general. 61% of respondents claimed they would like to know more about their rights, especially rights pertaining to work in another EU country, about healthcare in the EU, or about living in another EU country.\(^{106}\) In the survey from January 2015, 59% of respondents claimed they had sought out information about the EU.\(^{107}\) 95% of respondents believe that the government should inform its citizens more about the functioning of the EU.\(^{108}\) Most importantly, asked whether they believe Czech media provide enough information about the affairs of the EU, 56% of respondents answered no, and 17% said absolutely not.\(^{109}\)

There are many conclusions that can be drawn from the above trends; firstly, the Czech public generally is not very well informed about EU affairs and about the functioning

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107 Ibid: 5

108 Ibid: 5

109 Ibid: 5.
of the EU, but is positive about the EU’s influence on the Czech Republic overall. Secondly, the public is interested in finding out more about the EU, and some have actively sought out information regarding the EU. Thirdly, and most importantly for this thesis, the public does not believe that Czech media provide enough information about the EU; whether this is true will, in a way, be investigated in this thesis. It is difficult to ascertain what is ‘enough’ information, but providing an idea of what Czech media write about in terms of the EU will show insight as to how valuable such information may be in providing a cohesive, systematic picture of the affairs and functioning of the EU.

The following sections will discuss the second order election model and its basis for the studied material, and will detail the importance of the media in this context.

3. SECOND ORDER ELECTIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

In 1980, Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt published a seminal study and analysis of the results of the first direct elections to the European Parliament in which they established that EP elections should be treated as second order elections. According to the authors, the Second Order election model states that there is a qualitative difference between various types of elections, ranging from municipal to international, based on the perception of what is at stake. In their study, the authors established that voters behave differently in second order elections than in first order elections; given that the media comprise the most important and most widespread source of political information, such as informing the public about the term of elections, the issues and stakes, and therefore act as an intermediary between the electorate and the political sphere, the media’s perception of EP elections and its coverage of those elections proves to be of crucial importance. This model is one of the most widely used in determining voter’s behavior in elections, and leads to an important question regarding the media; namely, does the media also contribute to the public’s perception that European Parliament elections are second order elections, i.e. less is at stake, by devoting less coverage to them? This section will explain the Second order election model in greater detail, and provide a basis for the practical part of this thesis.

It is important to first differentiate between first order and second order elections. First order elections in a parliamentary system are parliamentary elections, in a presidential system they are presidential elections; in short, they determine the composition of the most powerful

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political organ of the country. Second order elections are many; they are those conducted on all levels of government other than the national one, that is, they do not directly influence the makeup of the national government. Municipal elections, regional elections, or European elections are just some examples of second order elections. The significance of the distinction lies in what the authors call the particular political arena in which public positions are filled. Provided that national political systems remain the sole decision-makers, other elections matter little. This is what the authors identify as the “less at stake dimension”; as long as the sovereign decision maker is the national government, national elections will offer the most stakes, while other elections offer no such stakes.111

It is noteworthy that the second order election model has not been extensively applied in the study of the effects of mass media on such elections. It is telling enough that the authors of the second order election model, although developing a very systematic framework for the study of such elections, only devoted one ‘dimension’ to the media, and a very short one at that. The dimensions of the second order election model will be discussed in greater detail below, but the media was clearly not studied in great detail in the original model. Apart from a handful of exceptions, such as the studies of de Vreese and Peter112, the potential impact of the media on voting behavior has been relatively neglected.113

As referenced above, the authors identify six ‘dimensions’ of second order elections which, when combined, produce a systematic model. Of the six dimensions described by Reif and Schmitt, the one pertaining to the topic of this thesis, and therefore the one of greatest concern here, is the ‘Campaign Dimension’.114 This dimension states that campaign efforts of

112 Both authors specialize in the study of media effects on voting patterns. De Vreese has devoted many studies to the effects of news framing in the media, on media effects on public opinion with regards to support for various European policies, as well as many studies on media coverage of European Parliament elections. One of his more notable studies includes De Vreese, Claes H., et al. "The news coverage of the 2004 European Parliamentary election campaign in 25 countries." European Union Politics 7.4 (2006): 477-504. Jochen Peter has published many comparative studies of media coverage of European elections, of the EU in the news in cross-country analyses, of which the most well known is De Vreese, Claes H., Edmund Lauf, and Jochen Peter. "The media and European Parliament elections: Second-rate coverage of a second-order event?." (2007): 116-130. – has to pertain to see model
114 The authors point out that second order elections are characterized by six distinct dimensions that distinguish second order elections from first order ones. The six dimensions are as follows: the ‘less-at-stake dimension’, which is self-explanatory and has been touched upon in this section already. The consequences of this dimension are lower levels of participation, better prospects for small and new parties, higher percentage of invalidated ballots, and the loss of governmental parties. The second dimension is the ‘specific-arena dimension’, which claims that political and institutional circumstances of the respective political arena, such as parties, platforms, candidates, the policy-areas and positions of control that are at stake also play a role. This means that the various level elections do still command attention, and this is different for each. The third dimension, the ‘Institutional-procedural dimension’, points out that the more distinct the electoral procedures between national first order and second order elections are, the lower the turnout. It points out that voter turnout levels are also dependant on various procedural aspects – whether voting is required by law, and whether second order elections are held on
parties and candidates in second order elections are more important than in first order elections. Although this may seem counter-intuitive, given that second order elections are considered less important, the explanation for this is simple. In first order elections, inherently more attention is paid to the event by the public, media and politicians, as the entire life of the country is naturally focused on it. As for second order elections, they bind together both first and second order issues; low-salience, remote issues of EU politics as well as national politics. Second order election outcomes inevitably influence the ‘main arena’, and vice versa, as voters cast their votes in second order elections not just based on issues of the second order arena, but also on the basis of the national arena. Political parties strategize in second order elections based on political calculations within the main national arena. Those campaigning in second order elections must, therefore, compete with two levels of issues in an election which voters are less willing to accept as relevant to begin with.

The second order election model posits that candidates employ a much more subdued campaign; this is because parties tend not to devote a large share of financial resources on an election that they do not consider important. Additionally, those parties that are already frontrunners simply do not feel the need to employ a large campaign; such parties are able to mobilize an electorate with very little effort. Yet the main aspect of second order elections is their domestication by the media; per the words of Reif and Schmitt, “the strategy and tactics of political parties in second-order election campaigns are often influenced by political calculations concerning main arena.” Political parties base their campaigns in second order elections on the national arena, and voters cast their ballots based on national level cleavages. This domestication is then reflected in electoral campaigns, and by extension is also imparted in this manner by the media.

Additionally, the authors also identify a number of differences between national and second order elections. Second order elections are often marred with low levels of participation. This is attributed to the notion that there is less at stake; fewer voters consider a second order election worth casting ballots in. Additionally, low interest on the part of the

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116 Ibid: 7-8
electorate is enforced by both political elites and the media; by attributing lower significance to second order elections, politicians employ subdued campaigns and rely less on the media for campaign dissemination. Political journalists, by extension, attribute low importance to election issues and stakes, meaning that fewer voters show any deeper understanding of the elections, some not even knowing elections are held. The authors also point out that second order elections offer better prospects for small and new political parties to win votes. This is because in first order elections, voters may circumvent voting for a small party they identify with, as there is little chance for small parties to win against large, established parties. When less is at stake, true political preferences come to light more readily.

3.1 The European Union in the Media

Like most governing bodies, the EU also relies relatively heavily on the media to strengthen its legitimacy; all the more so given that it is perceived to be so politically distanced from its electorate. However, given the lack of any unified, Europe-wide media system, it relies indirectly on each Member State’s mass media to inform its citizens about the activities and policies of European institutions. This situation gave rise to debates during the late 1990s which centered on a perceived lack of media communication between EU institutions and its citizens; the EU was accused of a democratic deficit, stemming from a communication deficit. This has led many to believe that a more informed and politically

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119 The EU has, practically since its inception, been accused of a democratic deficit. The term ‘democratic deficit’ was first coined by David Marquand in 1979 in Marquand, David. *Parliament for Europe*. Jonathan Cape, 1979. The idea was borne out of criticism of the transfer of powers from state governments to supranational institutions such as the Council of Ministers. Although each may have been elected in his/her own country, they were not elected in a European election. It was believed that, as the institutions lacked a directly elected body, citizens were not truly represented, and there was, as a result, a lack of accountability and accessibility to European institutions. This led to the creation of an elected, European legislative institution, the European Parliament. The concept, however, is quite controversial, as some authors dispute that such deficit truly exists; for example, a well known response to the belief that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit was delivered by Andrew Moravcsik in his article Moravcsik, Andrew. "The myth of Europe’s democratic deficit." *Intereconomics* 43.6 (2008): 331-340. Similarly, Giandomenico Majone similarly argues that the EU does not suffer from a democratic deficit, mostly because it functions not as a traditional state for which certain democratic standards must apply, but rather that the EU is a regulatory state. Majone, Giandomeno. "The rise of the regulatory state in Europe." *West European Politics* 17.3 (1994): 77-101. Additionally, certain authors, such as Follesdal and Hix, argue that a deficit only partly exists, specifically they do not believe "a democratic polity requires contestation for political leadership and argument over the direction of the policy agenda." Follesdal, Andreas, and Simon Hix. "Why there is a democratic deficit in the EU: A response to Majone and Moravcsik." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 44.3 (2006): 533-562. The democratic deficit is one of the reasons that the EU is believed to lack legitimacy, specifically because it is unable to foster sufficient trust and support through transparency via media communication.

120 The 1990s, with controversy surrounding the Maastricht crisis in 1992-3 and the resignation of the Santer Commission in 1999, saw an increase in media attention toward the EU, and the perception that EU institutions do not sufficiently communicate with European citizens. In his 1999 article, Meyer argued that this deficit stems from “fragmentation of political authority, a pervasive technocratic mindset and a lack of adequate staffing.” Meyer, Christoph. "Political legitimacy and the invisibility of politics: Exploring the European Union’s communication deficit." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 37.4 (1999): 617-639. In 2004, Anderson and McLeod were prompted by the low turnout in the 1999 European Parliament elections to publish a study on the failures of the EP and its MEPs to sufficiently communicate with the electorate,
engaged citizenry may offer a possible solution. Citizen’s awareness of European politics can be achieved by closing the ‘communication gap’ via a more active mass media. This, however, requires a change on the part of national media, in a way that would introduce a European-only agenda that would focus on European issues and policies on a continuous basis, not only during special events. It would require European actors and politicians speaking regularly about European issues and their implications for the entire European Union. This deficit of the ‘European’ is well summarized by Hix as follows;

“Neither national elections nor European Parliament elections are really ‘European’ elections: they are not about the personalities and parties at the European level or the direction of the EU policy agenda. National elections are fought on domestic rather than European issues, and parties collude to keep the issue of Europe off the domestic agenda. European Parliament elections are also not about Europe, as parties and the media treat them as mid-term national contests… (studies) provide some evidence that at the individual level participation in European elections is related to citizens’ attitudes towards the EU. However, this effect is substantively very small… The absence of a ‘European’ element in national and European elections means that EU citizens’ preferences on issues on the EU policy agenda at best have only an indirect influence on EU policy outcomes. In comparison, if the EU were a system with a genuine electoral contest to determine the make-up of ‘government’ at the European level, the outcome of this election would have a direct influence on what EU ‘leaders’ do, and whether they can continue to do these things or are forced to change the direction of policy.”

In order to encourage public-wide debates about European politics and general awareness of the public about long-term European issues, “empirical knowledge about the media’s coverage of EP elections is a prerequisite for assessing the well-being of democratic processes in Europe and for informing the ongoing discussion about the EU’s democratic and communication deficits.”

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need to acquire visibility within the media sphere in order to ensure sustainable and on-going discussion in the public national sphere, and by extension, foster a climate of democracy and transparency. Such visibility would ensure that the public is aware of important issues and key democratic elements such as elections and their implications, and foster a European identity. This is currently not the case.

In fact, since the first direct election to the European Parliament in 1979, studies have shown that although visibility of the European Union in the news has been increasing, the EU is still only marginally covered in the news. Prior to the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, the ‘European’ context was entirely missing until the beginning of the election campaign. The national campaign dominated, and still dominates, European elections, as confirmed by studies conducted in the 1990s and early 2000s. In his study of the 1999 EP elections, Peter found that “the invisibility of the [European] campaign in the main evening news of several countries is striking.” Studies have consistently found that EU-related stories have a share of approximately 20% in the national news.

Although this percentage may not be ideal, the visibility of the EU in national news is rising, according to a study conducted by de Vreese of the period 1999–2004. However, the trend he found was that domestic political actors still dominated EU news coverage.

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125 Some examples include studies by Leroy and Siune, who had analyzed the 1979, 1984 and 1989 election coverage in Denmark and Belgium and found that “Regarding the content of the campaigns on television, the conclusion is that it is nationally bound in both countries. Europe, defined as the EC, is a topic, but so far the EC has not been the main object of an elections, not even for a European election.” Leroy, Pascale, and Karen Siune. "The role of television in European elections: The cases of Belgium and Denmark." European Journal of Communication 9.1 (1994): 67. Siaroff found that in some countries, such as Luxembourg, Ireland, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal, media coverage of European elections does seem to be about Europe, but in the sense that it expresses "anti-European sentiment at the expense of the national 'European consensus party'". Siaroff, Alan. "Elections to the European parliament: Testing alternative models of what they indicate in the member nations." Journal of European Integration 23.3 (2001): 255.


127 “Election stories and EU-related stories usually had a share of more than 20% of the political coverage, with the exception of the UK and the Netherlands, where there was less.” Ibid: 427. “The level of coverage in the old member states was slightly higher in 2004 compared to 1999. Looking at individual countries there was considerable variation with some countries (e.g., Greece, Denmark, Slovakia, and Austria) devoting about 20% of the news to the elections and others (e.g., Germany, Belgium, and the Czech Republic) devoting about 5% or less to the elections.” de Vreese, Claes H., et al. "Off-line": The 2004 European parliamentary elections on television news in the enlarged Europe. Information Polity 10.3 (2005): 177-188.

128 "In 1999, a research team at the Amsterdam School of Communications Research conducted an analysis of the most widely watched television news programmes in the then 15 EU member states in the two weeks leading up to the 1999 European elections. The results showed that the average portion of the programme (based on time) about the election in the main evening news programmes for all EU member states was about 7%. Belgium, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom devoted less than 5% of news to the elections. Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy and Sweden are somewhat above average, spending 8–13% of news time on European elections" That number has risen to the
“Coverage of European affairs tends to be cyclical in nature, with coverage of the EU virtually absent from the news agenda and then peaking around important EU events, to vanish off the agenda again. This pattern of news coverage has been found to apply to EU summits, which are pivotal moments for EU decision-making and where news coverage of EU affairs is much more visible than during ‘routine periods’. During other key events, such as national referendums on issues of European integration, EU news can take up a substantial part of the news agenda, especially in the final weeks of the campaign. During routine periods, i.e. outside the referendum periods and when there are no scheduled events of the magnitude of European Council meetings for example, EU politics is marginal in national news.”

Apart from pre-election campaign coverage, many scientists throughout the 1990s, have sought to study how and when the EU was covered, coming to very similar conclusions. Many studies, such as those conducted by van Noije or Vliegenthart et al., analyzed media coverage over long periods of time, from 1990 to 2003 and 1990 to 2006, respectively. Although Noije’s study only analyzed media coverage in three EU Member States, Britain, France and the Netherlands, the study found that only key events, such as EU enlargement, EU referenda and the EU constitution, were extensively covered. News coverage centered on domestic viewpoints, and “the prominence of EU news in all three countries seems unrelated to the EU’s growing authority. Besides key events regarding the integration process, the EU appears to rely on crises and rows to draw media attention. Everyday politics remain invisible.”

Similar conclusions were reached by Boomgaarden et al. in their study of the visibility of the EU in newspapers from 1990 until 2006. Although, again, the study was only limited to seven specific countries rather than across the EU, results showed that although visibility is increasing, in general, over time, “news visibility is substantially influenced by infrequent polity-related events such as European Parliamentary (EP) elections or Council summits but also by EP sessions. Also policy-related and national events affect visibility.”

Many studies have also been conducted to examine the effects of coverage of the EU in the news on public support for EU integration, such as EU enlargement, and specific EU
institutions or policies. Scientists have identified links between media coverage of the EU and public perception of the EU. For example, Vliegenhart et al. found that “both the framing of EU news in terms of benefit and conflict matters for public support. While benefit framing increases public support, conflict framing decreases support.”\(^{132}\) Similarly, the consistency in tone and visibility of news coverage over longer periods of time seemed to be a crucial factor in public support for EU enlargement, as found by de Vreese et al.\(^{133}\) In another study, de Vreese et al. conducted an analysis of news coverage of the 2004 EP elections in the 25 countries belonging to the EU, based on three national newspapers and two television newscasts. They found that “On average, the elections were more visible in the 10 new member states than in the 15 old EU member states...When evaluative, the news in the old EU-15 was generally negative towards the EU, whereas in the new countries a mixed pattern was found.”\(^{134}\) Similarly, basing his analysis on three news indicators,\(^{135}\) de Vreese found in a later study that the greatest support for the EU from the public was found when the benefits of EU membership were highlighted in the media.\(^{136}\)

Interestingly enough, Jochen Peter, in his study of media coverage effects on both the perceived importance of European integration and citizens’ support for European integration,\(^{137}\) concluded that “Disagreement among political elites about European integration sensitizes citizens to the importance of the issue. Consensus among political elites seems to have a

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\(^{132}\) The authors explain conflict framing as follows; “Conflict framing was measured by three items established in previous research: (a) Does the story reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/countries/groups/institutions? (b) Does the story say that one person, group, institution or organization criticizes/blames/reproaches another? (c) Does the story (or somebody in the story) mention two or more sides of a problem or issue?” They explain benefit framing as follows; “The presence of a benefit frame in an article was assessed by the following two items: (a) Does the author or any kind of actor mentioned in the article express/argue that one’s country has benefited from the EU/EC either generally or specifically (or that the situation in one’s country has improved or will [potentially] improve because of the EU/EC)? (b) Does the article present numbers, figures, statistics that indicate that one’s country has benefited from the EU/EC?” Vliegenthart, Rens, et al. “News coverage and support for European integration, 1990–2006.” International Journal of Public Opinion Research 20.4 (2008): 423.

\(^{133}\) De Vreese, Claes H., and Hajo G. Boomgaardern. “Media Effects on Public Opinion about the Enlargement of the European Union*.” JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies 44.2 (2006): 419-436. This is what the study found, in the words of the authors; “a significant and positive effect of news media exposure on support for enlargement was found in Denmark (in the country that had a consistent positive coverage). No significant effect of exposure to news media in the Netherlands, in which the coverage was two-sided, was found... However, for respondents in the Netherlands that were exposed only to television news (and did not read any newspapers) a marginal negative effect on change in support was found. This group was not exposed to a two-sided message flow but rather one-sided (negative) flow. This finding therefore also confirms the expectation about the impact of media messages under the condition of a consistent information flow.”


\(^{135}\) “Thinking about the mechanisms through which news coverage can have an impact on public opinion dynamics we consider three news indicators to be of particular relevance: (a) framing the EU in terms of benefits, (b) framing the EU in terms of disadvantages, and (c) framing the EU in terms of conflict.” Ibid: 418.

\(^{136}\) “Our results suggest that both the framing of EU news in terms of benefit and conflict matters for public support. While benefit framing increases public support, conflict framing decreases support.” Ibid: 415.

numbing effect, owing to which larger amounts of coverage have no effect whatsoever on the perceived importance of European integration.” In this case, longer period of news coverage had no overall effect on public support when the tone of coverage was overwhelmingly neutral. In fact, he found that “exposure to negative coverage only jeopardizes support for integration in a consonantly negative context”, meaning a consistently negative tone has a greater impact on public opinion than does visibility.

Additional research also substantiates the notion that media coverage can have significant effects on public knowledge of, and support for, specific EU policies, such as EU Enlargement. Meier and Rittberger, in their study of the public’s opinion on EU Enlargement, established that “media exposure affects the standards by which individuals evaluate the accession of potential candidate countries.” Support for the accession of any given country was based on three factors, as covered by the media – economic performance, state of country’s democracy, and the perceived cultural match to the remainder of the EU.

In comparison to international literature on the subject, studies relating to the coverage of second order elections, specifically European Parliament elections, by the Czech media have been sparse. A number of studies and analyses of this issue have been conducted by Jan Kovář, who concluded that in the Czech Republic, “the results show that, indeed, national political themes and domestic geographic scope dominate the EP election campaign in the media.” In a similar study of coverage of the 2004 and 2009 EP elections, Kovář concluded that “Television newscasts devoted little attention to the European election campaign and, in terms of actors featured, the coverage was overwhelmingly domesticized. Again, given the media effects on citizens involvement and thus indirectly on the EU’s legitimacy and the campaign’s potential to inform and mobilize citizens to vote, this is rather bad news for the EU and its citizens. The low visibility of European elections and the domestic nature of

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138 Ibid: 141.
coverage hardly contribute to public knowledge about the issues and procedures of the EU or help European voters to make an informed choice.”

Additionally, Lukáš Linek\textsuperscript{143}, whose field of study is electoral behavior, has also published a number of studies on the issue of European Parliament elections and voter dynamics in the Czech Republic. According to the results of his study of the 2004 elections,

“Ukázalo se, že v ČR měla pozitivní vliv na účast ve volbách do EP nejen stranická identifikace, ale i pozitivní postoj k Evropské unii. Zároveň ale nelze potvrdit názor, že účast ve volbách je významně ovlněna sledováním médií, která v ČR v relativně velké míře přenášela voličům sdělení, že voleb do EP se zúčastní malý podíl obyvatel a že v těchto volbách nejde o moc, ale pouze o vystavení vysvědčení české vládě. Předpoklady teorie voleb druhého řádu na individuální úrovni ohlédně volební účasti nelze v Česku úplně potvrdit…”\textsuperscript{145}

As already outlined, the visibility of the EU in the news is not the sole determinant of public opinion; the consistency in tone of news coverage, as well as news content, also have an effect on public opinion, and ultimately on voter turnout.

3. 2 Effects of Media Exposure on Voter Dynamics

For the purposes of establishing a testable basis for this thesis, it is crucial to outline a connection between political knowledge accessed via the media and the propensity to vote. In the late 1980s and early 90s, Hagstrom and Guskind found that attack advertisements have become the norm in pre-election campaigns in the United States.\textsuperscript{146} This finding prompted an interest on the part of political and social scientists to investigate the effects of such advertising on the electorate. Initially, studies tended to suggest that negative media coverage of an issue (or election, candidate etc.) deter the electorate from voting, which is a phenomenon that has come to be known as the demobilization hypothesis.\textsuperscript{147} However, in


\textsuperscript{144} PhDr. Lukáš Linek, Ph.D. was a lecturer at Charles University in Prague, and currently lectures at Masaryk University in Brno. He is also employed at the Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences. His areas of expertise include electoral behavior, political parties, and parliamentarianism. Some of his notable works relating to elections in general include "Linek, Lukáš. "Kam se ztratili voliči." Vysvětlující vývoj volební účasti v České republice v letech 1990-2010 1 (2013)., Linek, Lukáš. 2004. "Analýza voleb do Evropského parlamentu 2004 v ČR. Platí stále teorie voleb druhého řádu." Naše společnost, č 2 (2004): 25-29., Linek, Lukáš. 2004. „Důvody neúčasti při volbách do Evropského parlamentu v ČR. “ Parlamentní zpravodaj 10 (9): 21-25. ISSN 1211-037X.


\textsuperscript{146} The hypothesis is conditional upon many factors, for example the type of media, the type of coverage, the type of election/event/issue etc. Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, studies were conducted that investigated the demobilization hypothesis, specifically pertaining to advertising on television; these studies concluded that negative campaign advertising,
1999, Wattenberg and Brians published a critique of this hypothesis, detailing their own study, which found contradictory results. The authors found that negative ads, instead of discouraging voters to cast ballots, are intended to convert votes “by focusing on an issue for which the sponsoring candidate has credibility in handling but on which the opponent is weak.” The study is based on the premise that it is easier to change the outcome of an election by changing the minds of voters, rather than convincing them to change a certain habit, such as voting. This has been corroborated by many additional studies, such as those done by Finkel and Geer, Freedman and Goldstein, Clinton and Lapinski, and others.

Authors de Vreese and Boomgaarden have made great contributions to the establishment of a link between media exposure and the propensity of the public to vote; “Exposure to news outlets with high levels of political content (such as public television news and broadsheet newspapers) contributes the most to knowledge gains and increases the propensity to turn out to vote. Exposure to news outlets with less political content has either no effects or slightly positive effects, depending on the type of content. In other words, the effects of news media use on knowledge and participation are rather ‘virtuous’ than

attack advertising and negative coverage of elections had a negative impact on voters’ propensity to vote. For example, in 1994 Ansolabehere et al. published a study of campaign tone during the 1992 US Senate elections and found that “exposure to negative advertisements dropped intentions to vote by 5%” and that “the demobilizing effects of negative campaigns are accompanied by a weakened sense of political efficacy. Voters who watch negative advertisements become more cynical about the responsiveness of public officials and the electoral process.” In 1999, the same authors replicated their experiment and confirmed their original result in Ansolabehere, Stephen D., Shanto Iyengar, and Adam Simon. “Replicating experiments using aggregate and survey data: The case of negative advertising and turnout.” American Political Science Review 93.04 (1999): 901-909. By the late 1990s, however, the demobilization theory was losing ground.

148 Wattenberg, Martin P., and Craig Leonard Brians. "Negative campaign advertising: Demobilizer or mobilizer?" American Political Science Review 93.04 (1999): 891-899. The authors dispute the experimental results of authors Ansolabehere et al., as follows; “Ansolabehere and his colleagues (1994, 1995) contend that attack advertising drives potential voters away from the polls. We dispute the generalizability of this claim outside the experimental setting. Using NES survey data as well as aggregate sources, we subject their research to rigorous real-world testing. The survey data directly contradict their findings, yielding no evidence of a turnout disadvantage for those who recollected negative presidential campaign advertising. In attempting to replicate Ansolabehere et al. s earlier aggregate results we uncover quite substantial discrepancies and inconsistencies in their data set. We conclude that their aggregate study is deeply flawed and that Ansolabehere et al. exaggerated the demobilization dangers posed by attack advertising, at least in voters’ own context.” Additionally, “the fact that respondents who showed an awareness of the ads’ theme had higher turnout rates appears inconsistent with the demobilization hypothesis and suggests the need for further empirical tests. This article demonstrates that the demobilization theory cannot be confirmed based on analysis of NES data from 1992 and 1996. In 1992, recollection of negative campaign ads was actually associated with significantly higher turnout, and in 1996 there was no significant relationship in either direction. We also reexamine the aggregate data analyzed by Ansolabehere et al. and find no evidence that the advertising tone of Senate campaigns affects voter participation.”

149 Finkel, Steven E., and John G. Geer. “A spot check: Casting doubt on the demobilizing effect of attack advertising.” American Journal of Political Science (1998): 573-595. Finkel and Geer found that “attack advertising does not influence either the overall turnout rates or individual self-reported votes. Similarly, we find no demobilizing effect for negative advertisements among independent voters. Further survey analyses show that the effect of attack advertisements on voter withdrawal is weakest among individuals who are most highly attentive to the mass media, and thus who are most likely to have read about or seen the negativity of the campaign.”


‘vicious’.\textsuperscript{152} This is also corroborated by Banducci and Semetko, who argue that “it is not surprising that studies that look specifically at the effect of media attention on participation show that it mostly has a mobilizing effect. Even the more general measure of exposure to newspapers and television news tends to emerge as having a positive relationship with mobilization.”\textsuperscript{153} Political knowledge increases with greater exposure to political news, which subsequently increases turnout; a person who actively seeks out political news can be assumed to also be a person who has interest in influencing the political climate via voting. Such a person is more readily mobilized by being more politically informed. This is understandable, as it is common knowledge that media encourage public debate, aid in the formation of political beliefs, and thereby strengthen democratic processes.

Very important for this thesis are also the conclusions of a study conducted by Prior, which attempted to explain the paradox between the “dramatic increase in available political information through cable television and the Internet” while “political knowledge and turnout have not changed noticeably”\textsuperscript{154}; he concluded that

“…greater media choice makes it easier for people to find their preferred content. People who like news take advantage of abundant political information to become more knowledgeable and more likely to turn out. In contrast, people who prefer entertainment abandon the news and become less likely to learn about politics and go to the polls… Results show that content preference indeed becomes a better predictor of political knowledge and turnout as media choice increases. Cable TV and the Internet increase gaps in knowledge and turnout between people who prefer news and people who prefer entertainment.”

Given that one of the newspapers that will be analyzed, Blesk, is a tabloid newspaper i.e. devoted to entertainment rather than political news, the above conclusion may have potential implications for the results of this thesis. It is telling that an entertainment newspaper has consistently been topping the charts of the most read newspapers in the country. From the above study, a correlation between greater numbers of people choosing entertaining content over political content and low political engagement may also exist in the case of the Czech Republic.


\textsuperscript{154} Prior, Markus. “News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout.” \textit{American Journal of Political Science} 49.3 (2005): 577-592.
The following section will introduce the practical part of this thesis. It will begin by providing background information on the studied material, Blesk and Mladá Fronta Dnes, and follow with an explanation of the methodology used in acquiring data for further discussion.

4. RESEARCH MATERIAL

The material studied in this thesis, as mentioned in the introduction, will be the two most widely read daily newspapers in the country both in 2009 and 2014. The two daily newspapers are Blesk and Mladá Fronta Dnes. Together, these two dailies have a total readership of approximately 1.7 million\footnote{Mediaguru. “Nová data: Nejčtenějším deníkem zůstává Blesk.” Mediaguru.cz, 5th of February 2015. Accessible at http://www.mediaguru.cz/2015/02/nova-data-nejctenejsim-denikem-zustava-blesk/#.VVNPlo6qqkq Last accessed 30th of April 2015.} in any given year, which means together, they reach a large segment of the population and, by extension, their impact on readers will be considerable. In this case, analysis of only two newspapers will still provide a comprehensive enough picture of the media environment and its potential impact on readers vis-a-vis the EU.

The dailies will be examined through Newton Media Search, the largest electronic archive of media in Czech Republic. It allows me to search based on specific criteria such as date, search word, etc., a tool not available otherwise. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly outline the evolutionary change the media has gone through between the late 1980s and now.

With any change in regime also inevitably comes a change in the existential conditions and role of the media. With the transformation of the centrally planned political system of the totalitarian era to a democratic, market oriented political and economic system, the media took on a transformation along similar lines. Economically speaking, the media was privatized and strongly commercialized, in other words media became a commodity. Politically speaking, the process of democratization mediatized politics; political discourse became shaped by the media.

4. 1 Blesk

An important feature of Czech post-totalitarian media was its discernible move toward entertainment news. An excellent example of this is Blesk, the first large-scale tabloid whose first issue was published in 1992. This move toward entertainment news is seen as a means to
supplement the spectrum of the type of news that was available. Due to the lack of experience with tabloid news, and because of the inefficiency of state-owned newspapers, privatization enabled foreign investors to purchase Czech publishing houses, and fill in the gaps in the media consumer market. The Swiss publishing giant Ringier, therefore began to publish Blesk in 1992, a Czech version of the successful Swiss newspaper Blick.

At the beginning, the publisher faced a number of obstacles; most significantly, perhaps, it was facing a media culture and intellectual notion in society that saw media as an educational tool, a cultural and political institution. Secondly, the publisher had trouble casting editors and reporters, who, never having worked in tabloid newspapers before, had to be taught the workings of this type of journalism. It lacked photographers and models who would be willing to work for this new type of media.

Today, Ringier’s move is seen as one of the most successful in the area of printed media in the Czech Republic. Not only because Blesk has successfully topped the charts of the most read daily newspaper for most of this decade, but because it has succeeded in entirely changing the media climate; profit as the means of existence. The market mentality changed entirely so that other newspapers, even those more traditionally oriented toward journalism for information rather than profit, began to turn to more entertaining subjects for their headlines, and personalizing politics by taking an interest in their private lives.

The newspaper is based on current news, curiosities and sensational stories mainly geared toward celebrities and scandalous tidbits about politicians. It supplements its stories with large and exciting images or photographs. It has recently begun a transformation toward what its chief editor claims to be a fight for the rights of its readers; it has launched, or will be launching in the near future, several projects to attest to that. For instance, Blesk is demonstrating its claims with the Blesk Ombudsman, the Civil Code project, consumer goods tests or the campaign against what it calls “Šmejdí”, revealing unfair practices of retailers. In 2014, the newspaper, along with many other newspapers, was purchased by Czech News Centre.

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158 Ibid.

159 Ibid.

4. 2 Mladá Fronta Dnes

MF Dnes is an entirely different case in comparison to Blesk. In the immediate post-totalitarian period, the denationalization of newspapers took, in most cases, one of three forms – the restoration of those newspapers that were not allowed to publish during the communist period, creation of entirely new newspapers independent of the state, or absolving the existing owner (the state) of its influence over the newspaper, mostly through privatization. MF Dnes is an example of the last case, where prior to 1989, it existed as Mladá Fronta, a newspaper published by a publishing house of the same name between 1954 - 53, and from 1953 – 1989 it was published directly by the Central Committee of the Socialist Youth Union (Ústřední výbor Socialistického svazu mládeže). Control over Mladá Fronta was taken by employees in 1989, and publishing was transferred back to the publishing house of the same name in 1990. Later that year, however, the publishing house was purchased by Mafra, whose majority owner was a German-based company.

One of the characteristics of these denationalized newspapers was their gradual change of not just content, but also graphic design. Mladá Fronta was transformed into MF Dnes, and its content became commercialized and trivialized. However, unlike Blesk, MF Dnes is not a tabloid. It publishes current news, political, domestic, foreign, along with other columns devoted to areas such as sport, culture etc. In 2013, Andrej Babiš, the current finance minister and deputy Prime Minister, bought the publishing house Mafra through his company Agrofert.

5. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this thesis is best served through the use of content analysis. This technique will enable me to find patterns in the communication content; it will illuminate the type, tone and message of the content, and facilitate the best method of gathering content information for analysis. Given that the research investigates a potential change in news media coverage in order to find out whether such a phenomenon may have had an effect on turnout, content analysis presents itself as the most straightforward method of answering such inquiry.

5. 1 Media Content Analysis – strengths and weaknesses

162 Ibid.
Given the relatively recent scrutiny of the media in its potential to cause racism and violence, sexual and otherwise, media content has become the subject of increasing interest on the part of scholars. Sociologists, such as Max Weber, have been interested in mass media since the early 20th century “as a means of monitoring the ‘cultural temperature’ of society.” The method of content analysis is applied to any type of documentation produced through the medium of communication, ranging from the study of transcripts of interviews to the study of advertising content in television. In the most rudimentary form, content analysis is the analysis of messages; more specifically, it seeks to describe with as much objectivity and precision what is said about a given subject at any given time.\textsuperscript{164}

The aims of content analysis are many; in the words of Satu and Kyngas, “\textit{content analysis is a research method for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action. The aim is to attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon, and the outcome of the analysis is concepts or categories describing the phenomenon. Usually the purpose of those concepts or categories is to build up a model, conceptual system, conceptual map or categories.}”\textsuperscript{165} It is the aim of this thesis to provide a foundational basis for a more comprehensive conceptual system that would, more exhaustively, map the entirety of Czech media and its portrayal of the European Union and its institutions.

Content analysis has been the fastest growing method over the past few decades in the field of mass communication research.\textsuperscript{166} According to Macnamara, “the number of content analyses published in \textit{Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly} increased from 6.3\% of all articles in 1971 to 34.8\% in 1995 – nearly a six-fold increase...by the mid-1980s over 84\% of masters level research methods courses in journalism in the US included content analysis.”\textsuperscript{167} Similarly, Satu and Kyngas found that “the number of papers for which content

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
Media content analysis as such is a subset of content analysis, and was first introduced as a research methodology in communication studies and social sciences in the 1950s. Harold Lasswell, credited with introducing the method, originally used it to study propaganda, but it became widely used in the 1920s and 30s, as a means of analyzing movies, a medium that was rapidly on the rise. Much like content analysis in general, media content analysis can be based upon either qualitative or quantitative data. Quantitative analysis, as the name suggests, attempts to quantify a certain phenomenon, and seeks numerical patterns within research data. It relies on empirical data to support a specific hypothesis. Qualitative analysis is much more varied and uses many different types of methods to support a hypothesis; it requires a more in-depth analysis of messages conveyed in the particular medium. As such, qualitative research investigates meanings.

In this thesis, I will be using both quantitative and qualitative analysis, for a number of reasons. Both methods have their strengths and weaknesses, and by using both, some of the weaknesses can be negated. For an illustration, I will review the strengths and weaknesses of both methods. The advantages of quantitative analysis are, at first sight, quite obvious; as it deals primarily with numbers and quantification of phenomena, it is easily interpreted, and does not easily lend itself to bias. It provides for easy comparisons against other data, and the interpretation of such data is precise and objective. However, as media texts are open to interpretation, the categorization of phenomena so necessary for quantitative analysis and their subsequent coding may not be as objective as interpreting the already collected and coded data. A researcher using quantitative analysis in media research must still be mindful of latent content such as sarcasm, irony, etc. Additionally, quantitative analysis may not be particularly helpful in analyzing the content and implications of a message – i.e. the why? Rather than the what?.

As for qualitative research, the in-depth nature of its data collection allows for better understanding of a phenomenon, which leads to a better explanation of its occurrence, and subsequently its implications. In media research, it can better interpret the message sent by certain media, and what effect that could potentially have on the viewer. The disadvantage of qualitative analysis is more or less straight forward – it lends itself to bias and varying

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interpretation. It complicates the objectivity of analyzing collected data because it brings into play the background of the researcher, his/her character traits, education etc. In the analysis of media, this can be particularly problematic when detecting the afore-mentioned sarcasm, irony in articles. This can have a negative impact on the reliability of the analysis.

The following section will describe the method of collection of data.

5. 2 Research Design

Case studies prove to be a wonderful test subject for content analysis. That is why content analysis is the best method for the analysis of media, as I will be using the 2009 and 2014 European Parliament election as a case study for the research of media messages about the institution, and about the European Union in general.

Content analysis allows the classification of words and phrases into specific categories whose meaning can then be easily interpreted. As such, I will be searching within articles for the following:

- The content – i.e. the main theme of the article (for example, the Ukraine crisis, the European Parliament election, an EU Summit etc.)

- The main actor or subject of the text – i.e. who is doing the talking, or what is being talked about (National political leaders, top EU officials, etc.)

- The context of the article – i.e. is it national in nature, European or international (for example, is the article speaking about an EU-wide law that has implications for the entire Union, is it speaking about a national policy that has only national implications etc.)

- Is the text analytical or descriptive – i.e. does it simply state a fact, or does it provide insight as to the background and implication, and even possible problems it may entails (the EU passed a law on immigration v. The EU passed a law on immigration whose passage was blocked for many years by certain countries because of their own problems with immigrants... etc.)

- Tone of coverage – this aspect will only analyze the tone of coverage in case the article, in fact, concerns the EU, the European Parliament or the elections; i.e. if the article is about a Czech MP, who happens to be running for the EP elections, it will
not be analyzed for its content. Content will be based on words and phrases; in most instances, it is easy to interpret an article as being either critical of the EU and its institutions, or favorable toward the EU and its institutions, or even neutral – when the article simply states a fact, this will be considered neutral. The problem will be presented by articles whose authors tend to employ sarcasm. In such cases, unfamiliarity with any particular author may make it difficult to understand whether it is positive, negative or neutral. However, phrases and word will be provided for each article when interpreting the tone, and therefore it will be open for discussion.

- Key words and phrases – this is an aspect of the above, as explained.

To reiterate what had been mentioned in the introduction, I will be analyzing all the articles written between March 31st and June 5th 2009 in Blesk and Mladá Fronta Dnes, and compare them to all the articles written between March 18th and May 23rd 2014, in the same daily newspapers. I will be using the search engine Newton Media Search, and will use search words as follows: “volby do Evropského Parlamentu,” (European Parliament Elections) “Evropský Parlament,” (European Parliament) and “Evropská Unie” (European Union). Each of these will yield results of articles which have those key words in them, whether in the headline or in the text. I will then content analyze those articles for the above characteristics. Newton Media Search accounts for the declension of each of the keywords. The analysis will be carried out via the comparative method; once the data is collected, I will compare, quantitatively and qualitatively, the changes between the two timeframes, i.e. did the number of articles written about each key word rise, fall or stay more or less equal; were the articles more positive, negative or neutral; did the articles offer analysis of issues, or were they simply informative, descriptive etc.

I have chosen these specific key words because I am attempting to find out what kind of articles are being written about the EU, what tone they employ to see what light the EU is being portrayed in, and whether any change occurred between the two time frames that could account for not just the drop in voter turnout, but also for the general apathy experienced in the country toward second order elections such as the EP elections. I have decided to only include the European Parliament and the European Union, and omit the other five principle decision making bodies, such as the European Commission or the European Council, for a number of reasons. Given that there are seven such institutions, the task would require a greater input of time than permitted under these circumstances. The parameters of the thesis,
especially the parameter of length, would not permit such comprehensive analysis. As the European Parliament elections are the event I am basing my research on, the European Parliament is an obvious choice. How the media convey messages, and what messages they convey, about the European Parliament, and the elections, is therefore of key consequence. Additionally, the keyword European Union seems inclusive enough to contain most of the decisions made, if not specifically the body that makes them. I believe that will give a more complete picture, better than simply analyzing articles only on the European Parliament.

The limitations of this thesis are several; the thesis focuses on research of only two specific newspapers, they are both daily newspapers, and both privately owned. There is a case to be made that for a greater variety of research material, and consequently for a better picture of the media portrayal of the EU, newspapers such as those issued weekly, or even monthly, should also be used. Additionally, ownership undoubtedly makes a difference in the way certain institutions are covered; state media should essentially be covered in order to understand possible differences in state and privately owned media. To take it further, newspapers are not the only medium that comprises mass media. To have an even fuller picture, television and radio broadcast media could also be analyzed. Furthermore, the research is limited to a relatively short timeframe. It analyzes 132 days worth of media articles; arguably, that is not much. There is, of course, much more that could be studied, but before writing of the thesis begins, certain judgment calls must be made as to what exactly will be studied. The parameters of the thesis must be observed, and therefore the research must be adapted to these parameters, time-wise and length-wise. However, I do believe this research will provide a crucial data base for further research of the problem in years to come. Given that electoral participation is generally low in second order elections, and that electoral participation in general is continuously falling, it is not unwise to search for causes, and one of those causes may indeed be poor coverage of the EU by the media. Moreover, study of the media and its influence during elections has been covered relatively little in the Czech Republic, as mentioned in the section on Second order elections. Hopefully, this will be one among many more studies to come, and hopefully, it will serve the purpose of instituting small, slow changes.

As implied above, there are also limitations concerning the interpretation of media messages during data collection. Although quantitative analysis may be generally considered unbiased and objective, it is more difficult to establish such objectivity when interpreting the material. For example, in my subjective belief, I can label an article neutral, when others may
see it as negative. Consequently, the quantitative analysis will show that more articles are neutral, when other would say that number should be lower. Quantitative analysis will not explain why, if analysis shows most articles were neutral, this lead to lower voter turnout. This shortcoming will be addressed by qualitative content analysis, which will seek to show whether any change did, in fact, occur, and what impact that may have had on the electorate, given the established literature. Interpreting whether anything is positive, negative or neutral is inherently a subjective undertaking, and I have attempted to circumvent any possible misrepresentation of articles by including the words and phrases I used to interpret the tone. This way, my judgment will be visible, accessible, and in case my judgment was incorrect, to can easily be remedied and the results altered accordingly.

The following section will provide the quantitative results of the data collected.

6. ANALYSIS

The following sections will outline both the quantitative and qualitative results of the collected data, which will subsequently be analyzed for patterns, changes and for explanation of the discussed phenomena.

6.1 Results of collected data

The quantitative analysis was based on the use of keywords entered in the search engine Newton Media Search, which houses a full collection of digitized Czech media. The following key words were used when searching both Blesk and MF Dnes articles; the keywords were “volby do Evropského Parlamentu”, (EP elections) „Evropský Parlament“ (European Parliament) and „Evropská Unie“ (European Union) in order to provide as broad a data set as possible so that the image created in the media of the EU and its main institutions could be analyzed. The search was narrowed as follows: the search was restricted to only Blesk (the printed version) followed by Blesk (the internet version). As for Mlada Fronta Dnes, the internet version was not used. There are a number of reasons for this. Mlada Fronta Dnes has a multitude of regional versions in addition to the nation-wide issue. It also has a multitude of internet versions, such as brno.idnes.cz, budejovice.idnes.cz, ekonomika.idnes.cz, cestovani.idnes.cz, finance.idnes.cz and many more. The parameters of this thesis would not facilitate such analysis. Additionally, Mlada Fronta Dnes, the printed version, has supplied a very broad, and very robust amount of data for analysis, that will enable an effective comparison.
The search was also restricted time wise to the already mentioned dates, 66 days prior to the start of the elections; i.e. the first data was collected between 31st of March and 5th of June 2009, and the second data was restricted between the 18th of March and the 23rd of May 2014. A comparison was made, both between the two versions for Blesk, then a comparison of the same newspaper for each timeframe (i.e. Blesk articles in 2009 compared to Blesk articles in 2014) and finally a comparison was made between the two newspapers for each of the timeframes (i.e. Blesk compared to MF Dnes in 2009 and Blesk compared to MF Dnes in 2014). An overall comparison between the two timeframes was conducted at the end, to detect any change in overall patterns.

6. 2 Quantitative Analysis of Data in Blesk

When searching only the printed version of the newspaper Blesk, it contained 3 articles about European Parliament elections. 4 articles were about the European Parliament, and 19 were about the European Union. Of those 19, one had already been counted in the section about the EP, and in order to avoid overlaps, it was not included in the final count of articles about the EU. This brings the total down to 18 articles about the EU. So the total number of articles written in the printed version of the newspaper Blesk about EP elections, the European Parliament, and the EU together was 25 articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search word</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of articles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the internet version of the newspaper was added into the search, 27 articles were found when searching for European Parliament elections; however, 3 were already included in the count for the printed version. As the articles were identical, published on the same day, they will not be counted. That brings the total down to 24 articles about the EP elections. 54 articles were written about the European Parliament in total, but those included a number of articles already counted in the printed version about EP elections, bringing the number down to 22 articles. As for the European Union, a total of 78 articles was found, 20
of which were already included in the printed version. 12 of those articles had either been featured twice, or were counted already in another category, so the final count of articles containing the keyword European Union was 46. This brings the total number of articles written in the internet version of the newspaper Blesk about EP elections, the European Parliament, and the EU to 92.

Tabulka 5: Total number of Articles by Search Word In Internet Version of Blesk 31.03.2009 – 05.06.2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Word</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Articles</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Altogether, 117 articles were written in both the printed and the internet version of Blesk about the European Parliament, about the EP elections, and about the European Union in the period from 31st of March until the 5th of June.

As for the March 18th – May 23rd timeframe, 7 articles were written about European Parliament elections in the printed Blesk. 12 articles were written about the European Parliament, however, those 12 included 7 articles that were already categorized under EP elections, and one article that was printed twice on the same day. That brings the total down to 4 articles written about the European Parliament. As for the European Union, 11 articles were written, 1 was already counted in the previous category, and 1 article was printed twice. This brings the total down to 9 articles about the EU. In total, 20 articles were written in the printed version of Blesk about the European Parliament, the EP elections and the European Union.

Tabulka 6: Total number of Articles by Search Word In Printed Version of Blesk 18.03.2014 – 23.05.2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Word</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Articles</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the internet version was added, the result was 24 articles in total for European Parliament elections, which includes 9 from the printed version. This brings the total down
to 15 articles about European Parliament elections. 29 articles were published in total about the European Parliament, but only 11 of them were not already counted in the previous section. 25 articles in total were published about the European Union, but only 22 were not already counted in the previous section. In total, 48 articles were written in the internet version of Blesk about the European Parliament, the EP elections and the European Union.

**Tabulka 7: Total number of Articles by Search Word In Internet Version of Blesk**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Word</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Altogether, 68 articles were written in both the printed and internet versions of Blesk about the European Parliament, the EP elections and the European Union in the period between 18th of March and 23rd of May.

**Tabulka 8: Total Number of Articles Written in Both Versions of Blesk per Time Frame**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>31.03.2009-05.06.2009</th>
<th>18.03.2014-23.05.2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed Blesk</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Blesk</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. 3 Quantitative Analysis of Data in Mladá Fronta Dnes

A total of 113 articles were written about the European Parliament elections in MF Dnes. 9 of those articles were printed twice, so were not counted; this brings the total down to 105. 250 articles in total were written about the European Parliament, but only 129 articles that were not already included in the previous section or weren’t re-printed.
As for the number of articles written about the EU, the total yielded 774 articles; given such a large amount of articles and given the time constraints, for the purposes of content analysis, a representative sample of 1 article per day was analyzed; however, MF Dnes is not issued on Sundays. If the first article for the particular day was already analyzed in any of the other sections, the next article was used. Not all days yielded articles with the search words in them.

In order to eliminate from the total about the EU any articles already included in the two above sections on the EP elections and the EP, the search word “Evropská Unie” was coupled with both the search word “volby do Evropského Parlamentu” and “Evropský Parlament” independently, and then subtracted from the total. 29 articles included both the words “Evropská Unie” and “volby do Evropského Parlamentu”, and 70 articles included both “Evropská Unie“ and “Evropský Parlament“. This brings the total to 99 articles already included in the previous two sections. When subtracting this from the total, 675 articles in total were written only about the EU.

Tabulka 9: Total number of Articles by Search Word In Mladá Fronta Dnes 31.03.2009-05.06.2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Word</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Articles</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is for the timeframe 31st of March until 5th of June 2009 and yielded a total of 909 articles about the European Union, the EP elections, and the European Parliament together.

As for the following timeframe, 97 articles in total were written about the European Parliament elections, but only 91 did not include reprints. 174 articles were written about the European Parliament in total, but only 75 were not already included in the previous section, and were not reprinted. A total of 462 articles were written about the European Union. Again, for the reasons listed above, and for the sake of fair comparison, 66 articles were analyzed from this group, the first article of each day. 34 articles contained both search words, “Evropská Unie“ and “volby do Evropského Parlamentu”, and 62 contained both “Evropská Unie“ and “Evropský Parlament“. These were subtracted, giving a total of 366 articles written only about the European Union.
Tabulka 10: Total number of Articles by Search Word In Mladá Fronta Dnes 18.03.2014-23.05.2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Word</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Articles</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between March 18th and May 23rd 2014, the total number of articles written about the European Parliament, the EP elections and the European Union was 532.

Tabulka 11: Total Number of Articles Written

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>31st of March 2009 – 5th of June 2009</th>
<th>18th of March 2014 – 23rd of May 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blesk</td>
<td>117 articles</td>
<td>68 articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF Dnes</td>
<td>909 articles</td>
<td>532</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. 4 Quantitative Analysis Implications

The research question aims to understand whether a change had occurred between the years 2009 and 2014 in the media. Themes, tone and framing within the text will be analyzed in the qualitative analysis section, so the quantitative analysis will be purely oriented toward identifying a pattern or change in the quantifiable content. At first glance, some inferences can immediately be made. The number of articles written by both newspapers about the EU, the EP and the EP elections, has fallen between 2009 and 2014 by approximately 58%., meaning readers in 2014 were much less exposed to news regarding the EU. Therefore, a
quantitative change can be positively ascertained. There is a correlation, in that voter turnout fell by approximately 10% in the 2014 EP elections, while media attention to European issues also fell, by a much steeper number. However, can there also be a link in terms of causation?

The demographic characteristics of the readers of each newspaper are quite telling; the age group with the largest readership of MF Dnes is the age group 30-60, and is read most often by those with higher levels of education, those with a high school degree, or those with university degrees\(^\text{170}\), and more often male. Blesk is also read mostly by those in the age group between 30 and 60, by in contrast to MF Dnes, it is read more frequently by those with lower education, mostly those with no degree (střední vzdělání bez maturity), and more often female.\(^\text{171}\) Not only has Blesk’s readership been consistently highest throughout the decade, but its readership around the elections in 2009 actually rose, while the readership of MF Dnes fell, while in 2014, although readership of both fell, it only fell slightly for Blesk, but relatively steeply for MF Dnes.\(^\text{172}\) As the readership of Blesk, whose readers are mostly uneducated either rose, or only negligibly fell around elections, the readership of MF Dnes, whose readership tends to be more educated, has consistently been falling, the election time not excluded. Additionally, it has also been documented that those with lower education and lower earnings tend to be more critical of the EU, and also more disinterested;\(^\text{173}\) interestingly enough, a poll conducted prior to the 2014 EP elections showed that respondents were more likely to not have been aware of the EP elections if they were female, had low levels of education, and who earned less.\(^\text{174}\)


\(^ {174}\) “Podrobnější analýza přitom ukázala, že o nadcházejících volbách častěji slyšeli muži (67 %), lidé od 60 let výše (70 %), absolventi vysokých škol (86 %), ti, kteří se na pravolevě škále politické orientace sami řadí jednoznačně na pravici (73 %), potenciální voliči TOP 09 (79 %), ODS (79 %), ČSSD (73 %) či ANO (73 %), účastníci posledních voleb do EP v roce 2009 (89 %) a ti, kdo se o volby do EP podle svého vyjádření zajímají (89 %), ale v menší míře rovněž i ti, kdo se o tyto volby „spíše nezajímají“ (70 %). Naopak měně často o nich slyšely ženy (59 %), mladí lidé ve věku do 29 let (54 %), dotázaní se základním vzděláním (48 %), ti, kdo životní úroveň své domácnosti hodnotí jako špatnou (54 %), obyvatelé Olomouckého
Again, this may be a case of correlation rather than causation, that those people who are of a certain demographic group tend to gravitate more toward tabloid newspapers, are also the kinds of people who tend to be more politically disinterested and therefore less likely to vote. Even if such causation was established, it would be difficult to ascertain which causes the other; do people who are less politically motivated naturally more interested in tabloid news, or do tabloid news make them less politically motivated?

The quantitative data shows that the two daily newspapers have been showing less interest in EU issues and have therefore published less about them. The data also show that in both timeframes, the number of articles written about the EU in the internet version of Blesk was higher for all three search words than the number of articles about the EU written in the printed version of Blesk. This reflects the trend of greater internet use in acquiring information.  

6.5 Qualitative results of collected data

The research question requires a delving into the analysis of the content of news in order to determine whether and what kind of change occurred, if any, and then consulting the literature presented in the previous sections to determine whether that change contributed to political apathy among the electorate which was manifested in the drop in electoral attendance. The content analysis will therefore be looking at the aforementioned characteristics, which are theme, context (European/National), and tone.

In terms of the themes discussed, I will look at each timeframe and each newspaper separately. In 2009, Blesk featured a combination of entertainment, general and political news regarding the EU. Entertainment news were dominated by various celebrities and their activities that endorsed certain political parties; for example, the activities of famous signing duo Eva a Vašek or Martin Maxa, both of which support the communist party, and both of which had performed at KSČM party meetings. The scandalous divorce of Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi also made the entertainment headlines, with the articles mostly stating that the public nature of his private life may hurt his party’s chances in the EP elections.
analyzed Jana Bobošíková’s fashion, and her image in the European Parliament. A few articles were devoted to the Euromiss beauty pageant, where readers picked the most beautiful Czech female candidates running in the EP elections.

The general news were most often devoted to the description of various EU directives, for example directives regarding packaging, price caps on text messages, or formalities regarding travel to and from Croatia. General news also included information about various EU related, or EU funded, projects across the country and abroad; some of those included the construction of a puppet museum in Brno, for which EU funds were dispatched, EU emergency funds aimed at helping post-earthquake Italy, construction of a highway between Cheb and Prague, also co-financed by the EU, the European Day of Melanoma raising awareness of skin cancer, or the opening of a lookout tower in Velké Pavlovice na Břeclavsku, co-financed by the EU. EU financing of various projects was always mentioned sparsely, and not indicative of benefit framing; the importance of EU funding was not stressed, and the articles were focused primarily on the project.

The theme dominating the political news was party campaigns; for example, the campaign of political party Libertas.cz, attack advertising between ODS and ČSSD, the refusal of Česká televize and Český rozhlas to air the campaign of Nacionalistická Národní strana, ODS initiating an EP election campaign in the British newspaper Daily Mail etc. Many articles also discussed popular political figures, both Czech and foreign, such as Vlastimil Tlustý and Jan Schwippel leaving ODS, Vladimír Železný and his conflict with the law over taxes, the ‘egg wars’ against Jiří Paroubek, David Cameron endorsing ODS on his visit to Prague, or Barack Obama in Prague as part of a Summit. What was noticeably absent was the Czech presidency of the EU; only 7 articles mentioned the Czech presidency. Also noticeably absent was the Lisbon Treaty; only in two articles was the treaty the main subject. It was mentioned in other articles, for example in those discussing election campaigns of parties, but it was only mentioned in light of whether the party supports the treaty or not as part of the party campaign. The contents of it, or what particularly certain politicians disagree with in the Lisbon Treaty, was not discussed.

Table 8: The Total Number of Articles Written per Type of News in Blesk 31.03.2009-05.05.2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of News</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Other (interview, Q&amp;A, open letters etc)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
As for the context, it was overwhelmingly national for the European Parliament election and European Parliament articles. In terms of the articles written about the EP elections, Blesk presented only Czech parties and politicians, and did not provide any kind of predictions as to what chance which parties have at receiving seats in the EP, or the pervasive trends in Europe and what they may mean for the EP elections. One article did discuss low voter turnout. When the context was other than national, it pertained to Silvio Berlusconi and his various political scandals in Italy. The articles written about the European Parliament were also overwhelmingly national in context; again, much like above, the articles featured party campaigns and various popular politicians. One article explained the technicalities of the elections, and one the importance of the EP elections. The articles written under the search word 'European Union' revolved around the theme of high profile meetings of top politicians, both domestic and foreign, mainly the G20 summit, the EU-US summit, on which occasion Barack Obama visited Prague, or the Eastern Partnership hosted by Václav Klaus. The articles offered a more varied contextual spectrum, as they featured events on a European or even international scale; apart from the aforementioned high-profile European events, one article also mentioned Václav Klaus’ meeting with Jordanian King Abdullah II., condemnation of North Korea’s rocket launch by the international community, the Turkish government’s successful foiling of a plot to kill Obama upon his planned visit, or Moldovans’ requests for Romanian citizenship.

However, European and International news were sporadic, they were given no previous context, and no follow ups. They were few among many national news that were much more frequent, so that the ratio of national to European news was heavily skewed toward national. The articles were also mostly descriptive in nature; they were presented simply as dry pieces of information, with no analysis of implications, of background or greater meaning.

In terms of tone, the articles were overwhelmingly non-judgmental; the majority did not comment on the functioning or policies of the EU and its institutions. Out of a total of 5 articles that were assessed as having a distinguishable tone when addressing the EU, 4 were negative. In the four articles, the common theme was that the European Parliament is
ineffective; it is a place where politicians can receive large sums of money for very little work, where 'uncomfortable' politicians can simply be hidden out of sight. The elections were labelled unimportant. The views of Václav Klaus were also repeatedly mentioned, especially his critique of the devolution of powers from national governments to the EP and the EU in general. One of the articles was positive toward the EU, and this was in regards to one of the MEPs, Jana Bobošíková, who claimed that the when fighting for people's rights fails in national governments, the EP provides a useful platform to do so.

The articles written about the European Parliament were also overwhelmingly non-judgmental. One article was assessed as being of a positive tone, and two of a negative tone. One of the articles that was negative toward the EP accused the institution of creating nonsensical norms and regulations, and lamented that the 'experts' in the Parliament nearly destroyed Moravian slivovice, an alcoholic beverage the Czech people are particularly proud of, due to its norms regulating what should and should not be in such beverages. The other negative article was critical of the EP's proposal to create a single basic salary for all MEPs; the article claimed that this would be unfair, as living standards in each country are entirely different. It considered the level of salaries the EP was proposing as obscene (nemravne). The positive article outlined the importance of the institution; it stressed that approximately 60% of all national laws originate in the EP, and therefore each country must have capable representation. It also stressed that with the Lisbon Treaty, the powers of the EP will grow and it will receive greater competences. Additionally, the EP elections would serve as a precursor in helping determine the distribution of political power in the national election scheduled for later that year.

In terms of the articles written about the EU, they were, again, overwhelmingly non-judgmental, those that were were mostly simply neutral, in that they merely presented a piece of information or fact about an EU policy, or were negative. No article was assessed as positive. One of the negative articles was devoted to the political views of Klaus, who is a well-known Eurosceptic. It focused on Klaus' view that the EU's powers should be devolved in favor of national governments, that EU presidency was merely an administrative nuisance, and that institutions of the EU need to be reformed. The second article that was negative toward the EU was a short, two-sentence piece of news that stated that the EU will force the Czech Republic to accept illegal immigrants.
Table 9: The Number of Articles Written per Tone per Section in Blesk 31.03.2009-05.06.2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone/no. Of Articles</td>
<td>4 negative, 1 positive</td>
<td>2 negative, 1 positive</td>
<td>3 negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the 2014 time frame, the analysis has shown that the amount of entertainment news regarding the EU had fallen. The news also featured a few opinion surveys and some predictions as to the results of the election, almost unseen in the previous time frame. The most common theme were election campaigns of various parties, but the articles also mentioned observations from abroad, such as events in Great Britain, the Netherlands or France. However, those were more the exception, rather than the rule. The section on the EU also featured a number of economically related articles, mostly pertaining to taxes and GDP, in comparison to EU averages. The news were overwhelmingly political. What was most obviously missing was any kind of assessment of the 10 years since EU accession; one of the articles, which will be mentioned in the following paragraph, did describe the positives and negatives of EU accession, but it was still only one article, and it offered very little analysis. Regarding the context, it was mostly national. The European context was mostly used in articles that described the lives of various MEPs, or their various activities in Parliament.

Table 10: The Total Number of Articles Written per Type of News in Blesk 18.03.2014-22.05.2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of News</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Other (interview, Q&amp;A, open letters etc)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of articles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the tone, again, the vast majority of articles was either non-judgmental, in that it simply stated facts, or the EU was not the subject of the article, and therefore was not analyzed for its tone. In the EP elections section, two articles were found to be negative, and two mixed. None was assessed as positive. The negative articles were mostly critical toward MEPs; one of the articles lamented the inefficiency of MEPs, who either do not bother to show up at meetings at all, or, when they do, they do very little work. Another article criticized the unorthodox amounts of money that MEPs are paid in salaries, for their assistants, and for food allowance. One article called a seat in the EP a golden cage where the
birds get paid in gold ("Štrasburk a Brusel připomínají pro politiky zlaté klíčky, do kterých by se rád dostal nejeden politický "ptáček". Platí se zde zlatem."). and that exorbitant amounts of money are paid to sustain a bloated bureaucracy. One of the mixed articles discussed the positive and negative aspects of the European Parliament, and the other discussed the positives and negatives of the 10 years since EU accession. The first article about the EP mentioned that MEPs influence our lives on a daily basis, that MEPs are often forced to work harder than members of national parliaments, but it disapproved of the high salaries and the swollen bureaucracy. The article about EU accession simply stated that the majority of the public currently consider EU accession positive, but that the EU is seen as being detached from ordinary citizens, that it is viewed as an elite club, and that low voter turnout signals a need for change.

The section on the European Parliament has one positive, and one negative article. The positive article praised the EP’s passing of the law against roaming fees, and hailed it as a step toward greater integration and lower discrimination. The negative article again lamented the high salaries of MEPs. The third section, on the European Union, featured 4 negative articles, 1 positive and 1 mixed. The positive article featured quotes from politicians urging voters to cast ballots, explaining why voting in the EP elections is crucial. The mixed article simply featured party videos, and depending on the party’s political views, were either critical to the EU, or positive toward it. The negative articles mostly criticized EU conduct with regard to the Ukraine crisis; some criticized that the EU for not doing enough to punish Russia for its actions, and some criticize the EU for the imposition of sanctions, saying the goal is not to economically destroy the country.

Table 11: The Number of Articles Written per Tone per Section in Blesk 18.03.2014-22.05.2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone/no. Of Articles</td>
<td>2 negative, 2 mixed</td>
<td>1 negative, 1 positive</td>
<td>4 negative, 1 positive, 1 mixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for Mlada Fronta Dnes, most of the articles were political, none were classified as entertainment, and some were general news which featured regular news such as various planned constructions in different regions, healthcare of education. In comparison to Blesk, Mlada Fronta Dnes was exceptional in that it provided frequent political overviews from regional areas, not just Prague; it introduced regional parties and candidates, evaluated their chances of getting seats in the EP, discussed what the parties are campaigning for or
against etc. There were also generally more articles that informed readers about the technicalities of the elections, such as date, time, what to bring, but also how many parties and candidates are running for the elections, how many seats in the EP the Czech Republic will fill, how many seats there are in general in the EP and so on. MF Dnes also featured a great number of interviews with relevant people, discussing the political situation and providing their opinions on issues related to the political climate both at home and abroad.

The articles for the first time frame, 31st of March to 5th of June, in MF Dnes were overwhelmingly political; the articles until mid-May aimed to introduce the parties, their campaigns and the various politicians running as candidates for various parties. It mostly commented on election campaigns of ODS , ČSSD, or, for example, KDU- ČSL. Additionally, it also introduced regional parties and candidates, for example from Liberecky kraj, Zlinsky kraj, Karlovarsky kraj and others.

Additionally, it also introduced regional parties and candidates, for example from Liberecký kraj, Zlínský kraj, Karlovarský kraj and others. There were four articles in the section about EP elections which discussed results of various surveys of public opinion, which parties were in the lead and what the turnout is expected to be. Additionally, some articles also discussed Europe-wide trends; losses expected for Gordon Brown's party, large number of votes expected for Geert Wilder's party, Europe-wide trend in low voter turnout, EP elections reflecting national political climates etc. A common theme was also the egg wars, a campaign aimed against Jiří Paroubek and the ČSSD. MF Dnes featured various opinions on the egg wars, whether through opinion columns, through surveys of public opinion, or the opinions of politicians and political scientists. Very conspicuous was the multitude of interviews available in MF Dnes; they included high-ranking politicians and their analyses of the current political situation, such as Jiří Paroubek, with candidates to the EP, like Petr Benda, Jaroslav Zvěřina, or Edvard Kožušník, or political scientists and journalists such as Václav Moravec, Salim Murad (political scientist from southern Bohemia), or even interviews with various students about who they will vote for and why.

Table 12: The Total Number of Articles Written per Type of News in MF Dnes 31.03.2009-05.06.2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of News</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Other (interview, Q&amp;A, open letters etc)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of articles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most common theme of the articles about the European Parliament is the EU Czech presidency and, generally, the image of the Czech Republic in Europe. Some articles included assessments of the Czech presidency and how successful it was in fulfilling its goals. Many articles also lamented poor, or entirely lacking, representation of regions in Brussels, although some, like Pardubice, are hailed as shining examples. The section was interspersed with overviews of candidates, parties and their slogans and programs, as well as gradual surveys of public opinion. Again, this section also includes interviews with various politicians, such as Jose Manuel Barroso, Jan Fischer, Jana Bobošíková or Karel Schwarzenberg.

Interestingly enough, the section with articles on the EU were mostly general news, rather than political news. They featured overwhelmingly information about various constructions, reconstructions and events funded by through EU funds; luxury Hotel Avion in Brno, memorial cemetery in Havlíčkův Brod, water treatment at a dam in Blansko, or trolleybuses in Hradec Králové - all projects funded by the EU. Many articles also discussed health and educational benefits stemming from the EU, such as EU funding for the modernization of the Centre for Treatment of Malignant Tumors in Zlín, background information on Erasmus, or the University of Tomáš Bati in Zlín receiving the Diploma Supplement Label to make it simpler for Czech students to enter the European labor market etc. What is visibly missing is the coverage of the swine flu epidemic, and while that is not an issue directly related to the EU per se, a discussion of EU’s preparedness would not be illogical.

As for the context, it was mostly, but not overwhelmingly, national. However, in comparison to Blesk of the same time frame, MF Dnes featured a more balanced discussion of European-wide issues, like the reactions of other Member States to the Czech EU presidency, current political trends in Europe, European laws and their impacts, how active European MEPs are etc. The section that featured the most articles with a European context was the section with the search word „Evropský Parlament.“

In terms of tone, again, the overwhelming majority of articles passed no judgment on the EU or its institutions and policies; however, that does not mean they were non-judgmental. Most articles did have a point of view and featured an assessment of whatever topic the article was discussing, but as mentioned above, unless the article was about the EU, the EP, or the elections, it was not assessed for its tone. 6 articles were found to be positive, and 5 negative in the section on the elections. The positive articles were attempting to outline
the importance of the European Parliament, they highlighted its powers, the importance of having representation in such an institution, and that once we are a part of the EU, our participation should be a given. The articles outlined some of the areas in which the EP had authority, and often also featured the opinions of students, common people, or politicians about why the EP is so important to them. Many politicians mentioned how important it is to overcome the trend of low turnout and the general lack of interest in EU institutions. Many also stressed that the EP is the only institution through which citizens can influence the EU directly, and that it has an impact on the daily lives of each one of us.

As for the negative articles, they mostly outlined the spendthrift nature of the Parliament, that it mismanages the budget, providing the example that the European Court of Auditors has not once approved the EU budget. This includes hefty salaries of MEPs, which are considered absurd, as well as large pensions. The institution is accused of fostering corruption through the financing of dubious and often nonsensical projects, and many of those providing opinions on EP financing agreed it requires greater transparency. Unsurprisingly, those articles that featured the opinions of Václav Klaus were assessed as negative, as on numerous occasions, Klaus designated the EP as useless (zbytečné), and that it would be sufficient to simply send national representatives, as before.

The section on the European Parliament featured 4 negative and 3 positive articles. The negative articles mostly posed the question whether a true democracy on a European-wide scale can even exist. The negative articles also claimed the Lisbon Treaty is a failure, and that it has taken away too many powers from the national governments, and thereby challenged their sovereignty. One of the articles also mentioned that EU institutions are detached from reality, that they attempt to find solutions to problems that are trivial, instead of focusing on larger problems and on the political, social and economic realities. The positive articles described how unique the EU is, that it is like nothing created ever before, occupying a space between state and international organization. One of the articles featured an interview with Jose Manuel Barroso, who labelled the EU 'the most advanced attempt to create political and economic integration based on solidarity and freedom'. Some of the articles also outlined the importance of fighting certain threats as a group, as part of the EU, for example

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176 "Je to unie států a unie občanů. Je to naprosto nebývalé uskupení. Nejsme stát, nejsme jako USA či federální Německo. Ale nejsme ani mezinárodní organizace, jako je třeba OSN či NATO. Co tedy jsme? Unie představuje v dějinách dosud nejprogresivnější pokus o dosažení politické a ekonomické integrace postavené na solidaritě a svobodě. Je to unie států, které si ponechávají svoji nezávislost, ale chtějí sdílet část své suverenity."
health threats such as the swine flu, which states would not be able to fight individually. Such efforts require team work, which the EU provides a platform for.

The section about the EU yielded two positive and one negative article. Again, the positive articles stressed the importance of group work in tackling healthcare and education issues, such as fighting the swine flu and the standardization of education in order to enable a smoother transition into the labor market for students across the EU. The negative article lamented the disunity within the EU, especially regarding energy security. It mentioned the failed Nabucco pipeline and the inability of EU Member states to push hard enough, in a united manner, to successfully implement this project.

Table 13: The Number of Articles Written per Tone per Section in MF Dnes 31.03.2009-05.06.2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone/no. Of Articles</td>
<td>5 negative, 6 positive</td>
<td>4 negative, 3 positive</td>
<td>1 negative, 2 positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the final time frame, the 18th of March to the 22nd of May 2014, in MF Dnes, the most common themes discussed in the articles included, once again, the introduction of various candidates and candidate parties to the EP, discussions of their platforms and programs, discussions and assessments of the 10 years since the Czech accession to the EU and what has changed since, both at home and abroad, and the political developments in various other EU countries, such as France, Hungary, UK or Austria. The articles were overwhelmingly political in nature for the section on the EP elections and the EP, but as in the previous time frame, the section on the EU was a more or less even mixture of political and general news. The general news presented information about various new norms, but mostly spoke about construction and reconstruction plans across the country that are being financed by the EU, as well as various healthcare and education-related programs funded by the EU.

As mentioned above, the most pervasive theme of the section on EP elections was the introduction of candidates and candidate parties running in the EP elections, but also opinion polls and various EU-wide political trends; for example, the French municipal elections and their implications for the winning and losing parties in the terms of the EP elections, the rise of the ultra-right wing Jobbik party in Hungary and the populist, anti-immigrant UKIP in the UK, and the generally strengthening Eurosceptic trend across Europe. As 2014 marked 10
years since accession, many articles featured assessments of EU accession and what it has brought not just to the Czech Republic, but also to its various regions, and how the EU itself has evolved since. Many of the articles, however, lamented the poor representation of regional candidates on EP election lists, and poor representation directly in Brussels.

The themes pervading the section on the European Parliament were party campaigns and the activities of party leaders, but also EU events, such as the Brussels energy summit, the visit of some MEPs to the Czech Republic in order to assess the management of EU funds, or the developments in Hungary since Viktor Orbán's government came to power. The articles also featured assessments of current Czech MEPs, and how they have fared since they were elected in 2009 based on their attendance of EP meetings and their voting in the EP. This section contained the greatest number of interviews; most of them were conducted with EP election candidates and featured their political views, such as Pavel Telička, Radek John or Michaela Suchardová. The section featured mostly political news, with some general news, for example, about the events of the Million Marijuana March, or the opening of various exhibitions across the country.

The third section, on the EU, most pervasively contained articles on the EU response to the Ukrainian Crisis and the annexation of Crimea. It also featured articles on the 10 years since EU accession, as well as articles on the Eastern Partnership summit. These were the themes common for the articles of a political nature. Those that were general news were most often, as before, news that pertained to EU funds, to various construction or reconstruction projects that were co-financed through the EU funds. These included, for example, the building of an environmental center in Cerhenice, the modernization of railways in Strakonice, and EU funds for the construction of kindergartens and elementary schools in various regions.

The three sections together contained an even mixture of national and European contexts. The articles were certainly not focused only on the national, and presented information and analyses of not just European-wide trends, but also political developments in specific countries, as already mentioned above.

Table 14: The Total Number of Articles Written per Type of News in MF Dnes 18.03.2014-22.05.2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of News</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Other (interview, Q&amp;A, open letters etc)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For all three sections, the tone was, again, mostly non-judgmental. For the section on EP elections, 4 articles were assessed as negative, and 4 as positive, and 5 as mixed toward the EU or any of its institutions or policies. The negative articles mostly featured Eurosceptic rhetoric, such as the invasive nature of European regulations, the top-down approach of EU integration, and the democratic deficit. Additionally, critics also pointed out the unequal status of Member states, not just in EU institutions, but also in terms of economic disparity which is tearing the EU apart. The positive articles emphasized the mythical nature of the decisions made "for us without us" ("pro nás, bez nás"); voting in the EP is one of the ways in which this argument is negated, as MEPs have the ability to influence, through party dynamics, the voting on various laws. Additionally, the positive articles wrote about how the Czech Republic has benefited from EU membership, economically through an almost two-fold rise in export, through EU funding of projects otherwise out of reach, and through benefits such as freedom of movement. Five articles were assessed as mixed in terms of tone; they provided both benefit and conflict framing. These articles provided a generally positive assessment of EU membership, especially due to its financial aid and development of regions, but criticized some technicalities and practical impacts that have created problems. These include poor absorption of EU funds through insufficient regulation and oversight, leading to corruption, certain bureaucratic impediments, and excessive norms.

The second section, on the European Parliament, likewise featured mostly non-judgmental articles, but four were assessed to be negative, three positive, and two as a mixture of the two. One of the negative articles was an interview in which the interviewee criticized the ever-growing integration in the EU, and the idea that the EU should be in charge of Member states' public finances (state finances). Other articles also criticized the devolution of power to the European Parliament from national parliaments. Another article criticized the imposition of immigrant quotas by the EU, which should be left to national governments. One of the positive articles hailed the efforts at integrating the banking system across the EU. The other positive articles emphasized the efforts of the EU to redistribute wealth to regions and countries in need, not just within the EU, but also beyond it, such as in Ukraine. Again, as above, the mixed articles provided an overall positive assessment of EU membership, but
described some of the negative aspects of it, such as the added bureaucratic impediments preventing some regions from taking full advantage of EU funding.

Articles in the sections about the EU were evenly distributed among positive and negative, that is those that were assessed as having presented a certain tone regarding the EU; 2 articles were found to be positive, 2 negative and 1 mixed. The positive articles featured much the same positive analysis about EU membership, including EU funding for renovation and modernization projects, the opening of the market, financial and labor market, and the rise in living standards. The negative articles lamented the disunited response to the Ukraine Crisis on the part of EU Member states, and their inability to take a hard stand against Russia by means of tougher sanctions. The second negative article spoke about the fact that opinions about the EU among the public is the worst since 2010, and that the pervasive opinion about the EU is that it is undemocratic.

Table 15: The Number of Articles Written per Tone per Section in MF Dnes 18.03.2014-22.05.2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>EP elections</th>
<th>European Parliament</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone/no. Of Articles</td>
<td>4 negative, 4 positive, 5 mixed</td>
<td>4 negative, 3 positive, 2 mixed</td>
<td>2 negative, 2 positive, 1 mixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. CONCLUSION

As stated in the Second order elections section, both the public and political elites consider European Parliament elections as qualitatively less different, as something less than national elections. Reif and Schmitt established that eligible voters behave differently in second order elections, in that they tend not to vote at all. As such, it is not only up to the politicians and political parties to endorse these elections, but as an intermediary between the political and the non-political, the source of information, it is also up to the media to motivate and inform the electorate about elections. So the question has been asked, does the media also consider European Parliament elections as less important? This question would be well served by a comparison of coverage between national and second order elections, but it can partly be answered by the research conducted in this thesis. The answer is that it depends on the type of media.

Even before looking at the analysis, it is not difficult to imagine that a tabloid newspaper, based on profit through attention-grabbing scandals and sensational news about
the private affairs of celebrities, will not devote much of its coverage to the dry, complicated world of politics. This idea is then strengthened by the research done here; in comparison to MF Dnes, Blesk not only had quantitatively much fewer articles devoted to news about the EP elections, the EP or the EU in generally, but the articles it had published on any of the subjects was overwhelmingly descriptive, sparse and unsystematic.

This idea is then strengthened by the research done here; in comparison to MF Dnes, Blesk not only had quantitatively much fewer articles devoted to news about the EP elections, the EP or the EU in generally, but the articles it had published on any of the subjects was overwhelmingly descriptive, sparse and unsystematic. This gives the impression that not just the elections, but the EU as an institution, is not worth writing about; a testament to that is the fact that a mere single article bothered to mention the date of the election, in full (i.e. 5. a 6. června) for the 2009 researched time frame, out of a total of 117, and although the number rose to three articles mentioning the full date for the 2014 research period out of a total of 68, it is still a dismal record. As for MF Dnes, as a newspaper with an entire rubric devoted to political news, it was far better at conveying the importance of the elections. By comparison, 26 articles mentioned the full date of the election for the 2009 time frame, and 10 for the 2014 time frame. Admittedly, that is still not enough, but better. MF Dnes was able to provide much more political analysis, not just for the political situation at home, but also abroad.

A part of the media's role as intermediary, it must inform the public about the date, in which, as mentioned above, both have not done well. Additionally, the media should also inform the public about the candidates and the parties running for the elections, as well as their platforms and programs, and what they stand for. Again, this brings us to distinguish between the two newspapers. While both did present the candidates running for the EP, and the platforms of the various parties, MF Dnes provided a much more in-depth, exhaustive picture; it introduced regional candidates and parties, it evaluated their chances of actually obtaining votes, and by extension, seats in the EP, as well as providing information about the trends in other EU countries, the rise of ultra-right and Eurosceptic parties, and the implications for the EU. MF Dnes was also much more successful in explaining the stakes, by often discussing the importance of the European Parliament.

So is there any European-wide debate to speak of? Not yet, but I do believe the path is set toward a future where European issues will be debated in a more European-oriented media. Both newspapers attempted to frame some articles in a European context, but not enough to foster a European-aware electorate, which is substantiated by the various surveys
mentioned previously in this thesis; although knowledge about the EU is improving, people are still not informed enough about European figures. Although certain European-wide trends and EU policies were discussed in a European frame rather than a national one in MF Dnes, it was still mostly analyzed by national figures, whether politicians, political scientists or others. The debate on European issues and policies and their impact on Europe as a whole may have been started, but they still need to be discussed by European-level experts and figures, including MEPs, Czech or otherwise, which may lead to greater familiarity. The visibility of such figures is still very low.

As for the consistency in tone, I have mentioned in the section on the Effects of Media Exposure on Voter Dynamics that consistency in tone matters as much as the visibility of news about the EU. The demobilization versus stimulation hypothesis unfortunately could not be established in this case, because the news did not follow the campaigns of parties closely enough, and consistently enough. Were this a national election, the incessant coverage would certainly provide a testable basis for these two hypotheses. Political campaigns would be analyzed consistently, on a daily basis, and while both newspapers did cover the election campaigns of the parties, they did so sporadically, and without any greater depth of analysis or attention to detail. When an election campaign is followed on a daily basis, it is easier to analyze any subtle changes to the program, to the rhetoric, to the views of the party representative; however, in the European Parliament election, that is not the case at the moment. Larger changes can be spotted, differences between candidates leading to conflict can be found, but not in a systematic way. Additionally, there is no European-wide party system, each Member state has its own parties, which subsequently form larger party groupings at the European level. Were the parties already European to begin with, and a pan-European media system to report on and analyze these parties, it could be treated like a national election, and the electorate would most probably receive better information across the EU.

Of great importance to the conclusion of the analysis is the study by Jochen Peter, who, in his study of media coverage effects on both the perceived importance of European integration and citizens’ support for European integration, concluded that “Disagreement among political elites about European integration sensitizes citizens to the importance of the issue. Consensus among political elites seems to have a numbing effect, owing to which larger amounts of coverage have no effect whatsoever on the perceived importance of
European integration.”

Therefore, longer periods of news coverage had no overall effect on public support when the tone of coverage was overwhelmingly neutral. I believe this is the case when taking into account the results of the analysis of Blesk and MF Dnes. As the overwhelming majority of articles were either not pertinent to the EU, its policies and institutions, and only mentioned them in passing, or mostly neutral by simply presenting dry facts, the effect seems to have been numbing. Peter found that support for EU policies is only truly jeopardized when the tone is consistently negative, which we are not seeing here. Perhaps what we can see, however, is a slight correlation between the coverage of the Eurosceptic views of Václav Klaus and the pro-European views of his opponents, which have succeeded in sensitizing the electorate to the issues at stake. The electoral turnout in 2009 was higher than 2014, and 2009 is when Václav Klaus was often presented in the news for taking an actively negative view against EU integration and various policies. Although the tone of coverage was relatively similar in 2009 as in 2014, the difference between the two is that in 2009, the criticism of the EU was specific; it was delivered by a well-known public figure (Klaus), it was the most visible negative news, and his criticisms were specific, for example pertaining to the failures of the Lisbon Treaty, the loss of sovereignty of national governments, etc. In 2014, the negative criticism was not delivered by one single public figure; it was general and not motivating enough to sensitize readers to the problems of the EU. However, this goes against the findings presented in the section on ‘The European Union in the Media/Coverage and Visibility of the EU in the Media’, where the study of Vliegenhart was described - Vliegenhart et al. found that “both the framing of EU news in terms of benefit and conflict matters for public support. While benefit framing increases public support, conflict framing decreases support.”

The conflict framing presented in the 2009 time frame, the conflict between Klaus and EU-supporters, may have acted as a trigger to the electorate, which saw higher motivation in expressing their own views on the subject.


178 The authors explain conflict framing as follows; “Conflict framing was measured by three items established in previous research: (a) Does the story reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/countries/groups/institutions? (b) Does the story say that one person, group, institution or organization criticizes/blames/reproaches another? (c) Does the story (or somebody in the story) mention two or more sides of a problem or issue?” They explain benefit framing as follows; “The presence of a benefit frame in an article was assessed by the following two items: (a) Does the author or any kind of actor mentioned in the article express/argue that one’s country has benefited from the EU/EC either generally or specifically (or that the situation in one’s country has improved or will [potentially] improve because of the EU/EC)? (b) Does the article present numbers, figures, statistics that indicate that one’s country has benefited from the EU/EC?” Vliegenthart, Rens, et al. “News coverage and support for European integration, 1990–2006.” International Journal of Public Opinion Research 20.4 (2008): 423.
It has already been determined in the theoretical section that political knowledge increases with greater exposure to political news, which subsequently increases turnout; a person who actively seeks out political news can be assumed to also be a person who has interest in influencing the political climate via voting. Such a person is more readily mobilized by being more politically informed. The conclusion that can be taken from this is that the choice of media is available to the public in this country; there are many newspapers that offer analyses of the political situation, but as long as tabloid newspapers, such as Blesk, remain the top choice for the public, the trend in voter dynamics may not change, or even worsen. Newspapers like the tabloids which have a reputation that attracts readers for their light-natured news coverage will never be able to deliver politically relevant news, for the important reason that they have chosen to present this type of news. One of two things would then have to change, either the electorate will begin to take greater interest in politically-oriented newspapers, or those popular tabloid newspapers will have to shift their journalistic interests toward politics. Neither of these seems to be a viable option in the near future. Blesk, as one of few, has managed to maintain a high readership, so it is apparent that people are drawn to its brand of news. Others, such as MF Dnes, as already mentioned, have been losing their readership.

Of course, newspapers are not the only way to inform the public about the EU, and they are not the only means through which the electorate becomes mobilized. It matters greatly how invested a party and its candidates are in the electoral campaign, whether they employ grassroots campaigning to encourage voters to cast ballots, whether they try to reach out to the public and convince them of the importance of voting. As Reif and Schmitt have established though, second order election campaigns tend to be subdued, and candidate parties seem to want to divulge lower funds for them. Additionally, education is also a large factor influencing voter dynamics. More educated citizens learn about the EU through different channels, and are more pre-disposed to be politically active. These factors, and many more, cannot be explained through the study of the media. They need to be analyzed on their own, as no one factor will be pivotal, but rather a combination of them may give a better explanation of the electorate’s decisions to vote. This is especially true in light of the fact that although political information through various channels, internet, cable, newspaper etc., has seen a dramatic rise, voter turnout across the EU has seen a constant downward trend in turnout.
So can the decrease in voter turnout in the European Parliament elections between 2009 and 2014 in the Czech Republic be attributed to the changing coverage of the European Union in the media? Yes and no. Quantitatively speaking, yes, as we have seen, the number of articles about the EU has fallen quite dramatically between 2009 and 2014. The number of articles simply mentioning the date of the elections has fallen. But the coverage has mostly remained consistent, both in terms of context and tone, as well as theme. There may not have been a qualitative change to speak of, but the quality itself may be to blame, rather than any changes. As long as news coverage about the EU remains overwhelmingly descriptive, with national framing, in a national context, and of unassuming tone, the electorate will most likely remain apathetic to the issues of a far-away institution they do not understand.
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