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Working Paper

Towards a european public sphere? Vertical and horizontal dimensions of europeanised political communication

WZB Discussion Paper, No. SP IV 2003-403

Provided in Cooperation with:

WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Suggested Citation: Koopmans, Ruud; Erbe, Jessica (2003) : Towards a european public sphere? Vertical and horizontal dimensions of europeanised political communication, WZB Discussion Paper, No. SP IV 2003-403, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin

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Ruud Koopmans and Jessica Erbe

Towards a European Public Sphere?
Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of
Europeanised Political Communication.

Best.-Nr. SP IV 2003-403

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB)

Veröffentlichungsreihe der Arbeitsgruppe „**Politische Öffentlichkeit
und Mobilisierung**“

ISSN 1612-1635

Berlin, November 2003

Zitierweise:

Ruud Koopmans and Jessica Erbe, 2003:

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Discussion Paper SP IV 2003-403

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Zusammenfassung

In diesem Papier entwickeln wir einen systematischen Ansatz zur Europäisierung der Öffentlichkeit, der drei Formen von europäisierter politischer Kommunikation unterscheidet: supranational, vertikal und horizontal. Diese Formen kommen durch kommunikative Verbindungen zwischen politischen Akteuren verschiedener geographischer Räume (z.B. aus dem eigenen Land, anderen Ländern oder der EU Ebene) in nationalen Massenmedien zustande. Mittels einer politischen Claim-Analyse in sieben Politikfeldern für das Jahr 2000 stellen wir fest, in welchem Umfang diese Formen von Europäisierung in der deutschen Presse tatsächlich vorhanden sind. Unsere Ergebnisse stellen zumindest teilweise die weit verbreitete These des Öffentlichkeitsdefizits in der Europäischen Union in Frage: Die Europäisierung der politischen Kommunikation variiert erheblich je nach Politikfeld, und in Bereichen mit klarer Kompetenzübertragung zur supranationalen Ebene scheint der öffentliche Diskurs in den Massenmedien durchaus nachzuziehen.

Abstract

In this paper, we develop a systematic approach to Europeanisation of the public sphere, distinguishing three forms of Europeanisation of public political communication: *supranationally*, *vertically* and *horizontally*. These forms materialise through communicative linkages between political actors of different geographical spheres (e.g., from the own country, other countries or the EU level) in national mass media. Based on a political claims analysis in seven policy fields for the year 2000, we determine the degree in which these forms of Europeanisation are actually present in the German press. Our findings challenge, at least partially, the wide-spread idea of a public sphere deficit in the European Union: Europeanisation of public political communication appears to vary considerably between policy fields, and in fields with a clear-cut transfer of competencies to the supranational level, public discourse in the mass media seems to follow suit.

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Introduction

While policy decisions in Europe are increasingly taken in the supranational and inter-governmental arenas, the nation-state has remained the primary focus for collective identities, and public debates and citizens' participation in the policy process still seem mainly situated on the nation-state level and directed at national authorities. This discrepancy between Europe's institutional development, its increasing competences and influence on Europeans' conditions of life, on the one hand, and the continuing predominance of the national political space as the arena for public debates and the source for collective identification and notions of citizenship, on the other, is at the core of Europe's "democratic deficit". Since the beginning of the 1990s, the former "permissive consensus" on EU integration has eroded, increasingly so after the Treaty on European Union (EU) of 1992, which was ratified only with great difficulty in those countries where it was subject to popular referenda. Trust in European institutions and support for the integration process have steadily declined, and so has in many countries voter participation in European elections (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999). In addition, tendencies of a "re-nationalisation" of politics are observable in many member states, e.g., in the form of increasing support for xenophobic parties, which usually also have a strong anti-European profile.

The increasingly controversial nature of the integration process, the need to fundamentally reshape the EU's institutional structure and decision-making process in the context of enlargement, as well as the heightened visibility of Europe in people's everyday life (the euro!), make further advances in the integration process increasingly dependent on active engagement, acceptance, and legitimacy among the citizenry. Even more than is already the case on the national level, the communication flow between Europe and the public depends crucially on the mass media. The mass media fulfil at least four crucial functions in the European policy process. First, in the absence of direct communicative links, European actors, issues, and policies have to be made visible by the mass media, and it is in this public forum that they may gain (or fail to obtain) public resonance and legitimacy (*legitimation* function). Second, with the partial exception of opinion-polling — which provides only punctual, pre-structured, and non-discursive access to the public opinion — European policy-makers must depend for their information about the desires and concerns of the citizenry on the communicative

channels of the mass media (*responsiveness* function). Third and conversely, the public can build its opinion about the distant European institutions and the complexities of multi-level policies only to a very small extent on direct personal experience and therefore must also rely on how Europe becomes visible in the mass media (*accountability* function). Finally, participation of citizens in the European policy process usually also requires access to the mass media. Although a small number of resourceful and well-organised actors may gain access to European policy-makers directly (e.g., in the context of the Brussels lobbying circuit), most forms of citizens' participation through NGOs, civic initiatives, and social movements can only indirectly influence policy-makers by way of the visibility, resonance, and legitimacy they may mobilise in the mass media (*participation* function).

Given the growing dependence of advances in the integration process on the emergence of a European public sphere that can fulfil these functions, it is no wonder that questions concerning the conditions for the emergence of a European public sphere have come to the foreground of the social-scientific debate about European integration (e.g., Gerhards 1993; Erbring 1995; Kopper 1997; Schlesinger 1995). However, so far this discussion suffers from insufficient empirical grounding, and therefore has a tendency to remain highly speculative. In this paper, we want to offer a more empirically grounded view on the extent and forms of Europeanisation of public spheres. We do so by presenting theoretical ideas and data from the ongoing project "The transformation of political mobilisation and communication in European public spheres" (EUROPUB.COM).¹ Although this project is comparative both across time and across altogether seven countries (Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Switzerland) we draw here only on the German case and the year 2000. Moreover, we focus on only one — albeit the most central — of the multiple data sources produced in the context of the project, namely the analysis of public political claims (a concept explained below), based on a content analysis of four German newspaper sources. Because of the obvious possibility that levels of Europeanisation of public communication depend on the actual competencies of the EU, our analysis stretches over various policy fields, ranging from ones with

¹ This project is sponsored by the European Commission in the context of its 5th Framework programme (project number HPSE-CT2000-00046). For an outline, see Koopmans and Statham (2002), available on the project website at <http://europub.wz-berlin.de>.

strong (monetary politics, agriculture), intermediate (immigration, military interventions), and weak (education, pensions) EU influence. In addition, we study the public debate about the meta-issue of the European integration process itself.

Europeanisation of Public Spheres: A Theoretical Model

There has been a tendency in the literature to view the notion of a European public sphere in a narrow way, implicitly or explicitly derived from an ideal-typical conception of the national public sphere. Thus, several authors have focused on the question of the probability of the development of transnational mass media or transnational collective action and organisation on the European level. This way of approaching the problem usually results in a negative answer to the question whether there is or can be a European public sphere and particularly emphasizes linguistic boundaries to communicative spaces as a crucial and perhaps insurmountable barrier to a Europeanisation of public debates, collective identities, and collective action. Although some authors reckon with the emergence of English as a true lingua franca in Europe that would allow such direct transnational communication on a mass level (De Swaan 1993), for the moment this prospect seems to be very distant, not least because of strong resistance against such cultural homogenisation in many non-English speaking member states. In our view, this perspective on the Europeanisation of the public sphere is deficient because it basically envisages Europeanisation as a replication, on a higher level of spatial aggregation, of the type of unified public sphere that we know — or think we know — from the nation-state context. In fact, this perspective is often based on an idea of the nation-state that presupposes a degree of linguistic and cultural homogeneity and political centralisation that cannot be found in many well-functioning democratic states. For instance, the Dutch consociational democracy has proved to be a successful way to politically integrate a population characterised by deep socio-cultural cleavages (Lijphart 1968). Similarly, Switzerland is one of the most stable and successful Western democracies, despite important cultural differences, not least of which the existence of four different language regions (Ernst 1998).

Indeed, if one looks for this kind of genuinely transnational European public sphere, there is not much to be found (e.g., Schlesinger 1999). There have been a few attempts to establish European mass media, but most of these have either quickly disappeared (like the newspaper *The European*) or lead a marginal (and often

heavily EU-subsidized) existence (e.g., the television station *Euronews* or the independent, but limited in terms of expert readership, *European Voice*). In as far as transnational media have been able to carve out a niche in the media landscape, the successful examples have a global, rather than European profile and audience (e.g., *CNN*, *BBC World*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde diplomatique*, *Financial Times*). Regarding collective action and social movements, Imig and Tarrow (2001) have similarly shown that mobilisation on the European level by transnationally organised European actors has so far remained a rare phenomenon.

Gerhards (1993, 2000) has therefore rightly emphasized that the more realistic scenario is probably not that of a genuinely supranational European public sphere in the singular, but a Europeanisation of the various national public spheres. This view assumes that — also because of the language factor — nationally-based mass media are there to stay, but that their content may become less focused on the nation-state context and will include an increasing European perspective. Gerhards (2000: 293) mentions two criteria for such a Europeanisation of national public spheres: an increased proportion of coverage of European themes and actors, on the one hand, and the evaluation of these themes and actors from a perspective that extends beyond the own country and its interests, on the other. Using media content data drawn from Kepplinger (1998), he shows that between 1951 and 1995 there has hardly been an increase in European themes and only a very slight increase at a very low level of the coverage of European actors. These data, however, were gathered for other purposes and it is therefore questionable whether they accurately measure the European dimension of themes and actors, let alone the intricacies of multi-level politics that may result in varying mixtures of national and European dimensions in news coverage. Nonetheless, we think that the possibility of an increased presence of European actors and themes in national media would be an important form of Europeanisation of public spheres. However, Gerhards' second criterion seems unnecessarily restrictive in that it demands an orientation on a European common good in order for an act of public communication to qualify as "Europeanised" (for this criticism see also Trezz 2000). If we use this common good criterion of orientation on more than self-interest, we should also exclude much of the routine national claims-making (e.g., of many socio-economic interest groups) from the national public sphere.

Even though Europeanisation in Gerhards' view does not require supranational mass media, it does presuppose a form of Europeanisation of policies and politics

along similar lines as in the traditional nation-state. It is no wonder, therefore, that Gerhards (2000) arrives at the conclusion that the European public sphere deficit is a direct consequence of the democratic deficit, which he sees in the lack of the kind of government-opposition dynamics, and the direct accountability of office-holders to the electorate that we know from the national level. This position has been criticised by Eder, Kantner, and Trenz (2000) as too restrictive. They assume that because of the complex nature of multi-level politics, we will not necessarily find a strong orientation of public communication on European institutions. In their view, the Europeanisation of policies and regulations may instead lead to a parallelisation of national public spheres in the sense that increasingly the same themes are discussed at the same time under similar criteria of relevance. An example of this phenomenon would be the discussions on asylum policies in different European countries during the 1990s following European-level discussions and the Dublin Agreement. National political actors carried the ideas developed here into their national public spheres, and as a result, in many European countries a discussion started more or less simultaneously about such things as establishing lists of “safe third countries”, a notion that was developed in Dublin. However, the fact that such policies had a European-level origin was hardly mentioned in the coverage of these debates on the national level. Although what we see in such cases is certainly a consequence of the Europeanisation of policy-making, it does not in our view constitute a Europeanisation of the public sphere. For the latter, it would be a necessary precondition that the European dimension of the issue is made visible in one way or another to the public. As long as this dimension remains hidden from view, one cannot call such debates “Europeanised” because for the citizen, unaware of what was discussed in Dublin or of the similar discussions going on in other member states, they appear as purely national debates. If anything, such examples illustrate the nature of the public sphere deficit rather than being a solution to it.

Eder et al. are on the right track in insisting that direct references to the EU are not a necessary precondition for a Europeanisation of public spheres. What Gerhards’ perspective forgets is namely that although, particularly in the first pillar, the EU has some supranational features, much of its policies have an intergovernmental basis. These intergovernmental features of the EU polity are more likely to be expressed in an alternative form of Europeanisation of public spheres, which has thus far received almost no attention in the literature (a partial exception is Risse 2002). This type of Europeanisation would consist not of direct references to

European actors and themes, but of increased attention for public debates and mobilisation in other member states. In an intergovernmental polity, the other member states can no longer be treated as foreign countries whose internal politics are not really relevant for one's own country. To the contrary, in an intergovernmental polity, it may matter a great deal who wins the elections in another member state, or what kind of new policy another member state develops in a particular policy field. Such tendencies are further increased by the interdependencies created by common market policies and the freedom of movement within the EU. Under such conditions, policy changes or policy outcomes in one country may become relevant for one's own country in a way that goes far beyond traditional international relations. For instance, if Germany liberalises its naturalisation policies, this is immediately relevant for other member states, because once naturalised, immigrants from Germany can freely travel to, and take up work in another EU country. Similarly, the Northern EU countries watch closely what measures countries such as Italy, Greece, and Spain undertake to prevent illegal immigration from Africa and the Middle East, which under the Schengen conditions is no longer just "their" problem.

We thus arrive at three theoretically possible forms of Europeanisation of public communication and mobilisation:

1. The emergence of a *supranational European public sphere* constituted by the interaction among European-level institutions and collective actors around European themes, ideally accompanied by (and creating the basis for) the development of European-wide mass media;
2. *Vertical Europeanisation*, which consists of communicative linkages between the national and the European level. There are two basic variants of this pattern, a bottom-up one, in which national actors address European actors and/or make claims on European issues, and a top-down one, in which European actors intervene in national policies and public debates in the name of European regulations and common interests;
3. *Horizontal Europeanisation*, which consists of communicative linkages between different member states. We may distinguish a weak and a strong variant. In the weak variant, the media in one country cover debates and contestation in another member state, but there is no linkage between the countries in the structure of claims-making itself. In the stronger variant, actors from one

country explicitly address, or refer to actors or policies in another member state.

It is important to note that we can only speak of “European”, “global”, “national”, or “local” public spheres in a relative sense. We propose that the spatial reach and boundaries of public communication can be determined by investigating patterns of *communicative flows* and assessing the *relative density of public communication* within and between different political spaces. In *figure 1*, we have drawn a set of concentric spheres delimiting different political spaces that are of interest to us in this study. At the centre, we find the German political space (*sphere 1*). In the next sphere around it (*2*) are the respective national political spaces of the other EU countries.² In the next sphere (*3*), we find the transnational European political space, in which the European institutions and common policies are situated. Beyond that, the next circle (*4*) contains all other countries of the world and their national political spaces. Finally, the outer sphere (*5*) contains global supranational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the G-8, the International Court of Justice or the United Nations (UN), as well as international treaties and conventions.³

2 For all data presented in this paper, the terms *European* and *EU countries* include both the 15 current members and the 12 countries with whom accession negotiations have been concluded or opened, as they appear in the public debate already as (potential) future member states.

3 Within each of the national political spaces, one could of course have drawn additional regional, local, as well as sectoral political spaces. For the sake of clarity, we have left those out of the picture and treat these subnational spaces as part of the national political space. Another simplification in the figure is that in reality political spaces are not always nicely separated as the concentric spheres suggest, but may partially cross-cut and overlap. For instance, there is more than just one European public space, including apart from the EU also subsets of it (e.g., the euro zone), or larger European political spaces (e.g., the signatories of the European Human Rights Convention). Theoretically, it is of course possible to disentangle these political spaces and our data allow this. For the purpose of this paper, however, we have chosen to ignore these — as our data show relatively marginal — deviations and focus on the broader picture.

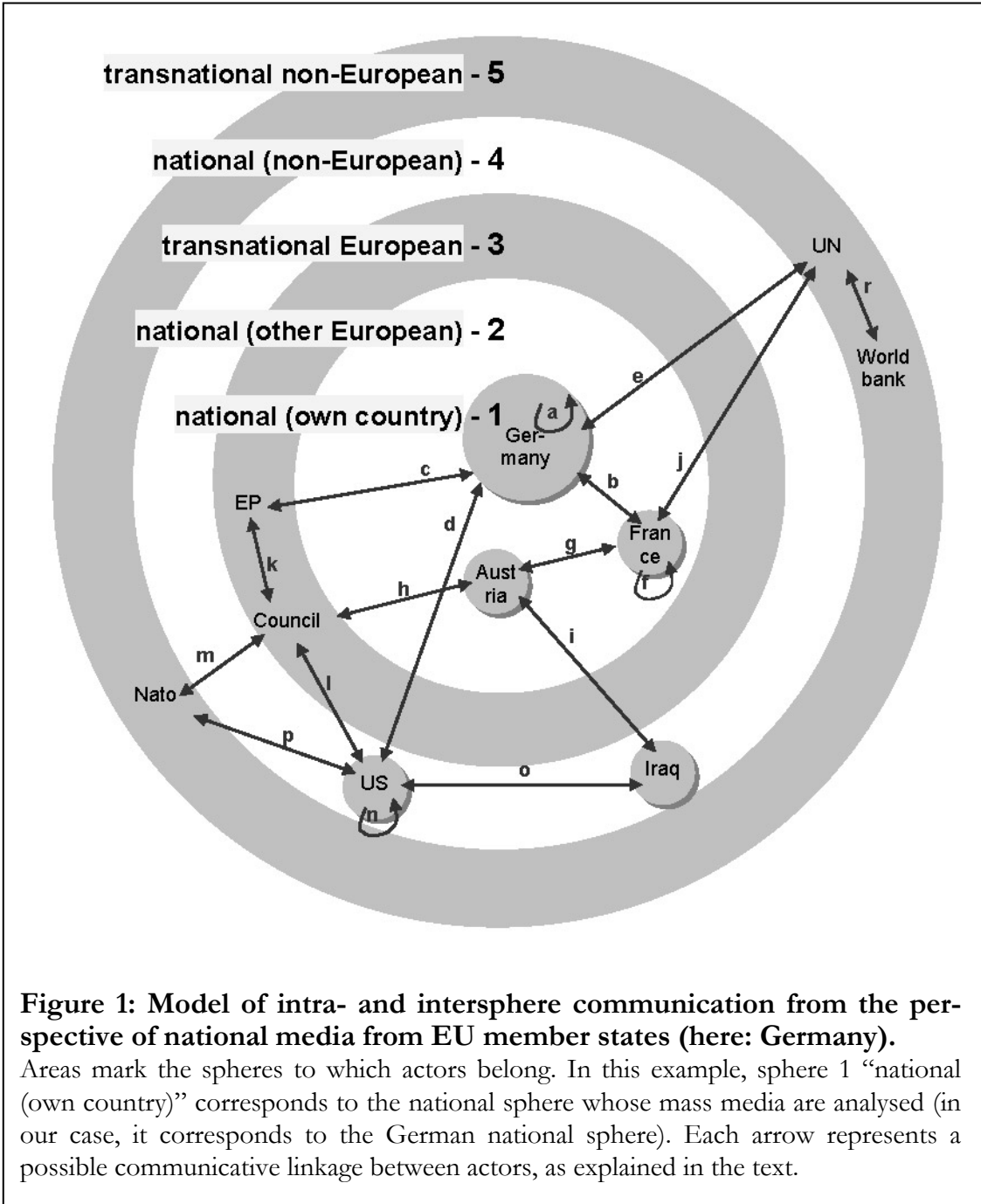


Figure 1: Model of intra- and intersphere communication from the perspective of national media from EU member states (here: Germany).

Areas mark the spheres to which actors belong. In this example, sphere 1 “national (own country)” corresponds to the national sphere whose mass media are analysed (in our case, it corresponds to the German national sphere). Each arrow represents a possible communicative linkage between actors, as explained in the text.

The nature of public spheres, now, is constituted by the density of communicative linkages (which are symbolised by arrows *a* to *r* in *fig. 1*) within and between these spaces. In terms of our model, the ideal-typical national public sphere is characterised by the fact that communicative linkages remain completely confined to one national political space. To make clear what we mean by such linkages, and illustrate them with concrete examples, we must say a few words about our notion of public claims-making. A claim consists of the public expression of a political

opinion by some form of physical or verbal action. Claims normally consist of the following elements:

- a *claim-maker* or *claimant*, who makes a demand, proposal, appeal, or criticism;
- an *addressee*, who is held responsible for implementing the claim, or is the target of criticism or support;
- an *object actor*, whose interests are or would be positively (beneficiary) or negatively affected by the claim;
- the *issue*, *i.e.*, the substantive content of the claim, stating what is to be done (aim) and why (frame).

In the case at hand, the ideal-typical national claim would be a German claimant making demands on a German addressee in the name of the interests of a German beneficiary, referring to a set of aims and frames that refer only to the German political space. An example would be German media reporting a call by the German government on the German Trade Union Federation to cooperate in a reform of the (German) retirement system in order to secure pensions for future (German) generations (corresponding to *arrow a*). The degree to which we can speak of a nationally confined public sphere is then measured by the relative amount of all communicative action that conforms to this ideal-typical national pattern of claims-making. The mass media of a fully nationalised public sphere would have a density of 100% of such nationally confined communicative linkages. In a fully denationalised public sphere the density of purely national communicative linkages would be 0%, which does not imply that national actors, addressees, interests, and issues do not play a role any more, but that these always appear in combination with some sort of reference to political spaces beyond the country in question.

Along similar lines, we may speak of the emergence of a *supranational European public sphere* to the extent that we find claims that link European claimants to European addressees in the name of European interests, without referring to any other level of political space. An example would be a motion passed by the European Parliament urging the Commission to undertake institutional reforms in the context of the enlargement of the Union (*arrow k*). Similar to the density scores for nationally confined political communication, we can conceptualise a supranational European public sphere in its ideal-typical form as the percentage of

all communicative action in which European actors refer to European addressees, interests, and issues.

This would be the replication of the classical pattern of the national public sphere on the level of the European Union. However, if Europe is indeed a new type of multi-level polity, this should not be the most frequent type of Europeanised claim. Within the model of *vertical Europeanisation*, we may distinguish a number of varieties in which vertical communicative linkages between the national and the European political space can be made. In the *bottom-up variant*, the simplest form is when national actors directly address European institutions (*arrow c*; e.g., when a national actor brings a case before the European Court of Justice, or Fischer claims that the European Parliament be strengthened in the next treaty revision), but there are also more complex patterns in which national actors address national authorities asking them to promote the group's interests on the European level (a case with national claimant, addressee, as well as object actor, but an issue with a European scope). The *top-down variant* of vertical Europeanisation occurs when European actors address national actors, usually regarding common European issues and interests (e.g., when the Commission threatens sanctions against governments who do not meet the criteria of the stability pact).

The *weak variant of horizontal Europeanisation* occurs when German media report on what happens within the national political spaces of other member states, for instance that the French national assembly adopts stricter laws on begging in French streets (*arrow f*). In terms of the structure of claims-making, this case is similar to the purely German claims, but the difference is that by their coverage the German media transport these non-German claims into the German public sphere. The degree to which such coverage represents a form of Europeanisation of the German public sphere can only be evaluated in a relative sense. Horizontal Europeanisation may be said to occur if coverage of other EU member states is over-represented in comparison to that of non-EU countries. If, on the other hand, references to France and Italy are not more frequent in the German public sphere than, say, to Japan or Mexico, we may perhaps still speak of a transnationalisation of the German public sphere in a wider sense (if such references have increased over the course of time relative to purely national coverage) but not of a more specific Europeanisation of public communication.

The *stronger variant of horizontal Europeanisation* is brought about by direct communicative linkages between two member states' political spaces (*arrow b*). An example

in the case at hand would be if Prime Minister Tony Blair issues a statement in support of Gerhard Schröder's bid for the Chancellorship, or when the German government criticises the French government's approach to the BSE epidemic. As in the case of vertical Europeanisation, there may be cases where all actors involved remain national (German) ones, but the issue is framed in a comparative way with one or more other member states, e.g., when the German opposition criticises the government's economic policies pointing out that Germany has the worst performance of all EU countries. In such a case, the policies and performances of other EU countries are deemed relevant as benchmarks or possible examples for German policies, thereby inserting a European dimension in the German public debate.

Of course, there can also be mixtures of horizontal and vertical Europeanisation. A common example is when government representatives of several member states issue a common statement on some European issue, e.g., the recent proposals of the Spanish, British, and Italian governments for institutional reform of the EU. Another common combination of vertical and horizontal dimensions occurs when the media of one country report on interactions between the EU and another member state, e.g., when the German media report about the FPÖ warning that Austria can veto decisions in the Council of Ministers (*arrow h*).

All these forms of a Europeanisation of public communication must not only carve out a communicative niche in competition with purely national public communication, but also relative to transnational communicative interaction that goes beyond Europe. It is after all possible that a de-nationalisation of public communication and mobilisation occurs, but that most of the resulting linkages beyond the national level refer to supranational institutions and regulations with a wider scope than Europe alone (e.g., the UN), or to national political spaces outside of the European Union., e.g., to the United States, Russia, or Japan. In as far as claims-making referring to political spaces wider than or outside Europe involves the EU and its institutions, this would certainly still be a form of Europeanisation, of the supranational variant to be more precise. Such claims constitute the foreign political dimension of the EU polity, e.g., when the EU and the US criticise each other's positions in the GATT negotiations (*arrow l*), or when the EU general affairs Council agrees on embedding WEU in NATO structures (*arrow m*).

Another form of communicative interaction involving supranational political spaces or countries beyond Europe that might still constitute a form of Europeanisation, is when German media report on interaction between actors from other member states, on the one hand, and supranational institutions or non-European countries, on the other (e.g., when they report on Haider visiting Saddam Hussein in Iraq (*arrow i*), or on French human rights NGOs calling on the UNHCR to improve the protection for female refugees (*arrow j*). As in the case of coverage about other Member states' internal affairs, the coverage of such claims in the German media might indicate a growing awareness of the relevance of other EU countries' foreign relations to one's own country's (or Europe's) position in the world. Of course, a precondition would again be that such coverage of other member states' foreign politics would be more frequent than coverage of international and supranational politics in which other member states do not play a role (e.g., relations between the US and Russia) or in which they appear only as part of broader international coalitions or members of supranational institutions (e.g., claims made by the UN Security Council on Iraq).

Finally, there are two types of communicative linkages that are — like the purely nationally-confined claims we began with — clearly competitors to Europeanised political communication. The first are communications which link Germany to non-European countries or to supranational institutions, and which bypass the European level. Examples are the debate about US-German relations in the context of the Iraq conflict (*arrow d*), or chancellor Schröder asking the UN secretary general to mediate in a conflict (*arrow e*). Second, a substantial part of foreign political coverage consists of the internal affairs of non-European countries (*arrow n*), relations between such countries (such as president Bush's claims of regime change in Iraq or Iran, *arrow o*), between them and supranational institutions (e.g., the USA asking NATO for support after September 11, *arrow p*), or among supranational institutions (the UN, for instance, calling on the World Bank to include poverty reduction in its funding criteria, *arrow r*). If such forms of political communication and contestation receive prominent coverage that increases relative to other types of coverage over time, we may certainly consider them as an indicator of a denationalisation or transnationalisation of the German public sphere, but not of a more specific and delimited form of Europeanised public communication.

Summing up, we can speak of a Europeanised public sphere to the extent that a substantial — and over time increasing — part of public contestation does neither stay confined to the own national political space (the European public sphere’s inner boundary), nor extends beyond Europe without referring to it (the outer boundary of the European public sphere). Coverage in the German media about other member states’ internal and foreign affairs constitutes a borderline case and can only be interpreted as a form of Europeanisation if such coverage is more frequent (and over time increasingly so) compared to the coverage of the internal and foreign affairs of non-EU countries.

Data and method

In this paper, we draw on one part of the EUROPUB.COM project that maps the acts of communication through which collective actors make demands on political institutions. For the empirical data collection we use the methodology of *political claims analysis* (see Koopmans and Statham 1999a), which goes beyond traditional media content analyses. The latter usually focus on newspaper articles as the unit of analysis, and use article-level variables to investigate the way in which journalists frame the news. To answer the question of the constitution of European public spheres, the traditional approaches to content analysis are much too media-centric, and neglect the role of other political actors in shaping the nature of public discourse and contestation. Media professionals certainly contribute to shaping the public sphere, but to do so they have to draw on the raw material of communicative actions and events that are produced and staged by non-media actors such as politicians, interest groups, and NGO’s.

Traditional content analysis on the article-level offers no possibility to map fields of political communication in terms of actors, issues, and the relations between them. At most, traditional methods can tell us with which frequency certain actors and issues are mentioned, and perhaps to what extent certain actors and issues co-occur in news stories. But they tell us nothing about the relations between actors, their role in public debates, or the positions they take with regard to which issues. As we have seen above, it is precisely such information about who addresses whom on which issue and in the name of whose interests, which we need in order to answer questions about the Europeanisation of public spheres and the different forms it may take.

To answer such questions, we take individual acts of political communication – claims – as our units of analysis and use newspapers as a source for the publicly visible part of this claims-making.⁴ A claim is defined as an instance of strategic action in the public sphere. It consists of the expression of a political opinion by some form of physical or verbal action, regardless of the form this expression takes (statement, violence, repression, decision, demonstration, court ruling, etc. etc.) and regardless of the nature of the actor (governments, social movements, NGO's, individuals, anonymous actors, etc. etc.). Statements by media and journalists may also be included if a journalist includes his or her own opinion in an explicit way in the news coverage. For each instance of claims-making, we coded a range of variables, including the actor, the addressees, the content and spatial framing of the demand, and the object actors whose interests are at stake. For each actor, addressee, and object actor, we coded the polity level at which they are organised (local, regional, national, European, and other supranational), as well as (in the case of local, regional, and national actors) their nationality (for more detailed information on the coding rules and variables, see the codebook: Koopmans 2002).

Four daily newspapers of different types were selected to represent the German print media landscape: two quality newspapers with national reach (one centre-left, and one centre-right), one tabloid (if such a newspaper type plays a prominent role in the respective country) and one regional newspaper. In the German case, these are *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Bild-Zeitung*, and the East German regional newspaper *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. From these newspapers, we coded public claims that referred to one of the following seven policy fields:

1. “Monetary politics: currency politics and interest rate”,
2. “Agriculture: subsidies, livestock and dairy quotas, animal disease control”,
3. “Immigration: entry and exit”,
4. “Troops deployment”,
5. “Retirement and pension schemes”,

4 Obviously, many attempts at making public claims never reach the columns of the news media because they fail to pass the media's selection filters. For our research question, however, it is the publicly visible claims that count, since by definition only those that become public can contribute to a Europeanisation of public spheres.

6. “Primary and secondary education”,
7. “European integration”.

In the context of our research question, the inclusion of the topic of European integration requires no further explanation. The other issues were chosen in order to generate systematic variation in terms of the degree and forms of institutional Europeanisation. Monetary politics and agriculture are fields where the EU has strong competencies of the supranational type. The next two policy fields, immigration and troops deployment are much less strongly institutionalised on the European level, and to the extent that they are have thus far remained almost entirely of the intergovernmental type. In retirement and education politics, finally, the EU has virtually no formal competencies, and European institutions at most have a co-ordinating task.

For such a broad range of issues, which need to be included regardless of whether a reference to Europe is made or not, it was impossible to code each newspaper for every day. We therefore used a sampling strategy.⁵ Since we are still in the process of collecting the data, we can draw in this paper only on the data for the German case for the year 2000.⁶

Who speaks?: The spatial scope of actors involved in claim-making

The first question we want to address, is whether the actors that appear in the German media as speakers on the seven selected issues are primarily national, German actors, or whether they also include a substantial amount of speakers from the EU level and from other member states. The degree to which the latter is the case gives us a first indication of the level of Europeanisation of public communication as it becomes visible in the German news media.

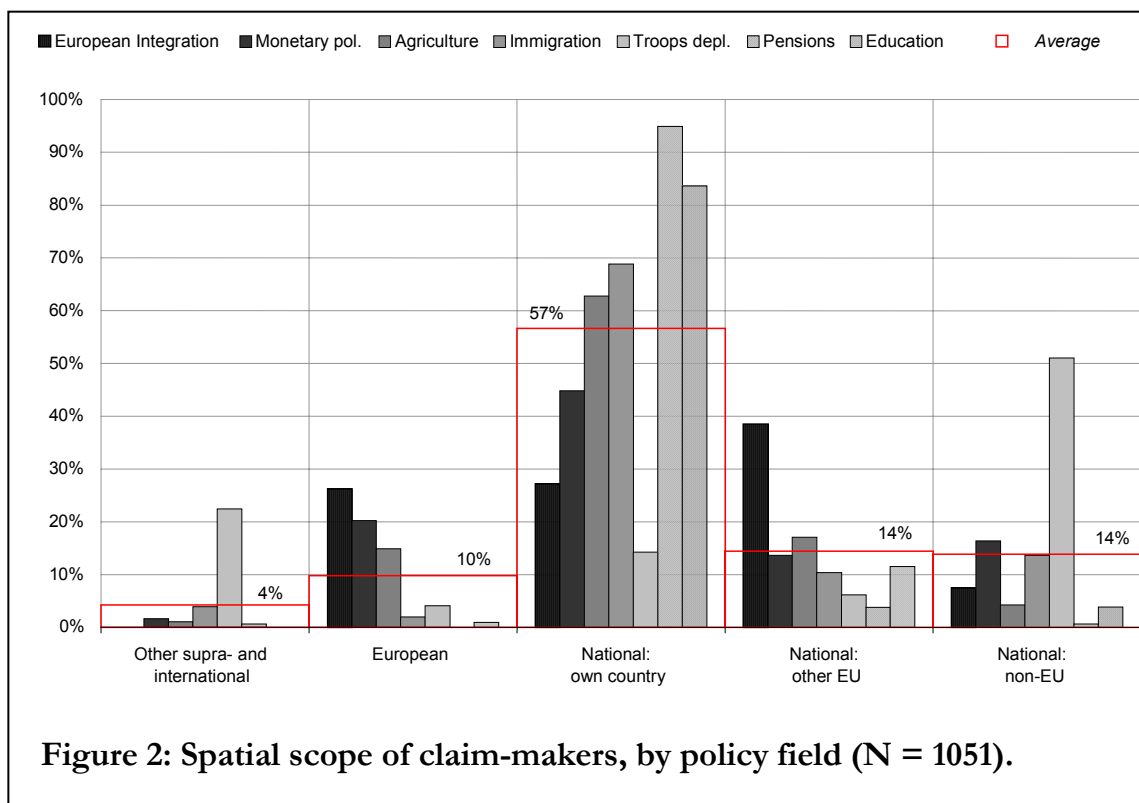
5 For each of the two quality newspapers we sample one issue per week, and for the tabloid and regional papers one issue per two weeks. These days are chosen in such a way that for every second day of the year, one newspaper is coded. Because even this turned out to amount to an unmanageable workload, the sample was further reduced on half of the days, to claims with a European scope in at least one of the scope variables (claimants, addressees, object actors, or issue). For this paper, we only use the days with the full sample (n = 1051).

6 The data were produced by eight coders from two teams, at the University of Hohenheim (FAZ, Bild) and Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (SZ, LVZ). We thank Barbara Pfetsch, Silke Adam, and Barbara Berkel of the University of Hohenheim for sharing their data with us.

As *figure 2* indicates, on average across the seven policy fields, more than half (57%) of claim-makers in our German media sources were German local, regional, and especially national actors. The other half has an international dimension and is distributed between national actors of other EU countries (14%) and of non-EU countries (14%), actors belonging to the EU and other European institutions (10%), as well as other supra- or international actors (4%). These averages are, however, of only limited interest, because there is strong variation in the distribution of claim-makers across the seven policy fields.

If we start with the two policy fields where the competencies of national institutions are strongest, education and pensions politics, we see that these fields are correspondingly strongly dominated by German actors, who make up 84% of all claimants in the case of education politics, and 95% in the case of pensions and retirement. The only other categories that — at a great distance — receive some level of visibility in the German media, are national actors from other countries. The fact that among these other countries, EU member states predominate over non-EU countries is an indication of a certain degree of horizontal Europeanisation, albeit at a very low level. Vertical Europeanisation, in the form of claims by EU-level actors, play no role whatsoever in these policy fields, and neither do claims by other supranational actors.

More surprisingly, given the fact that there is quite some intergovernmental activity on the European level in these areas, European-level actors neither play a significant role as claim-makers on immigration and troops deployment. The distribution of claim-makers in the immigration field in fact resembles the results for education and retirement policies very much. Almost 70% of claim-makers on immigration are German actors, and the remainder are primarily national actors from other countries. In this case, however, actors from non-EU countries (e.g., Australia) appear more frequently than those from EU countries, which does not suggest a high degree of horizontal Europeanisation in this field. European-level actors as well as other supranational actors play virtually no role in public claims-making on immigration. The results of Koopmans et al. (forthcoming; see also Koopmans and Statham 1999b) in the context of a study of claims-making on immigration in the 1990s in five European countries, suggests that this finding is not limited to Germany, but reflects the still strongly national mooring of immigration politics in European countries in general.



The distribution of claim-makers in the field of troops deployment shows a very different pattern. Here, German actors play a marginal role and are responsible for only about 15% of all claims. However, neither European-level actors, nor national actors from other member states profit from the weakness of German actors in this field. In contrast, actors from non-EU countries (most importantly the USA) account for more than half of all claim-makers, followed at a distance, with somewhat more than 20%, by supranational actors beyond the EU, particularly NATO and the UN. Troops deployment therefore appears — at least in Germany — as a strongly transnational policy field, but not one in which the EU or other European actors play any role of significance. Our results for the year 2000 thus foreshadow the weakness of Europe in this policy field that became apparent in the conflict over military intervention against Iraq in 2002-2003.

European actors are clearly more important in the two fields where the EU has substantial supranational prerogatives, agriculture and monetary politics. Still, German actors are the dominant speakers, responsible for almost two thirds of claims on agriculture and 45% of those on monetary politics. Compared to the involvement of German actors, the role of EU actors (15% in agriculture and 20% in monetary politics), but also that of national actors from other members states

(17% in agriculture and 14% in monetary politics) remains modest. In monetary politics, we also find a substantial share (16%) of claims that were made by actors from non-European countries, especially the USA. This attention for claims by US actors is related to the relevance of the exchange rate between the dollar and the euro for the German and other European economies.

Not surprisingly, European-level actors are most prominent in public claims-making on the process of European integration, where they account for 26% of all claim-makers. Nevertheless, national actors dominate this field as well, but notably, actors from other members states (39%) appear more often as speakers on issues of European integration than German actors (27%). This seems clear evidence in favour of a truly Europeanised public sphere as far as the issue of European integration is concerned, and runs counter to the expectations offered by Gerhards and others, who attribute to the news media a bias in favour of the national perspective in their coverage of European issues.

The most important conclusion from this section relates to the important differences we found among the seven policy fields. This result indicates that the question as it is usually posed in the literature, namely whether “a” Europeanised public sphere exists, makes little sense if it is posed on this general level, unconnected to specific issues. For similar reasons, empirical data about the presence of European-level actors in media content across all issues have little meaning, since they obscure large differences between policy fields. Differentiation by policy field is also crucial for the interpretation of findings. The fact that we find hardly any European-level actors in education and pensions politics cannot reasonably be taken as evidence for a “public sphere deficit”. These fields are strongly dominated by national actors and policies, and the EU has very little power and influence here. By focusing on the claims of those national actors that are the most relevant players in these fields, the media actually fulfil their legitimacy, accountability, responsiveness, and participation functions quite accurately. The same may be said for the field of troops deployment, where European-level actors do not play a significant role either, and coverage concentrates on claims made by foreign national actors, above all the USA, and supranational institutions such as NATO and the UN. Once more, this seems an accurate reflection of the relevant decision-making actors and arenas, rather than the result of a media bias against European actors and institutions.

As far as the other three substantive policy fields are concerned, the results in this section provide more reason for concern about whether the media accurately reflect the role of European institutions and policies. In the case of immigration politics, one might still argue that the low profile of European-level actors is due to the fact that although there have been many attempts to set up common European immigration and asylum policies, these attempts have thus far largely failed, and the national level has therefore remained by far the most relevant arena of decision-making. In agriculture and monetary politics, however, there can be little doubt that the European level is where the most relevant decisions are taken. Still, European-level actors appear almost four times less often as claim-makers on agriculture issues than German actors. Even in the field of monetary politics, where the powers of national central banks have been almost completely transferred to the European level, we find more than twice as many Germany claimants as European ones. In both fields, moreover, horizontal forms of Europeanisation are weakly developed. Even though in agriculture and monetary politics the member states have become highly interdependent, the German media tell us little about what other EU countries do and think in relation to these issues.

Even though it is of crucial importance what kind of speakers appear in the media, an inspection of claim-makers alone provides an insufficient basis for drawing conclusions about the nature of public communication. Even if in most policy fields actors from the European level and from other member states do not play important roles, an important form of Europeanisation of public communication may be that national actors refer in the content of their claims to policies, institutions, or interests on the European level or in other member states. This is a question to which we turn in the next section.

A multi-level look at the structure of public claims

In this section, we return to the different types of communicative linkages between different geo-political spaces, which we have outlined in the theoretical section above. For reasons of clarity, we have reduced the seventeen possible types of linkages that were distinguished in *figure 1* to eleven main categories, which we have grouped in *table 1* according to the theoretical form of Europeanisation they represent. To classify the type of communicative interaction to which a claim in its entirety belongs, we retain the information on who makes the claim, but add to this information about the addressees, adversaries, allies, and beneficiaries of

claims, as well as on the spatial framing of the issue. We will focus here on co-occurrences of different geo-political levels within claims, and leave the complex question how exactly these levels are combined for further analysis. Concretely, this means that claims in which German actors address British actors, British actors address German ones, or German actors frame an issue by drawing a comparison with the situation in Britain, are all classified in the same way, namely as “relations between Germany and other member states”. For the reader’s reference, *table 1* shows which categories correspond to which arrows in *figure 1* above. Average percentages are given for all seven issues taken together, as well as excluding the field of European integration. In contrast to the other issues, claims in this field must by definition have a European dimension, and therefore may bias the overall average in favour of supranational and vertical forms of Europeanisation.

Table 1 shows that, even if we take all composite elements of claims into account, claims that remain entirely within the national German political space remain by far the most important category, accounting for 37% of claims across all seven fields, and 43% if we look only at the six substantive policy fields excluding the meta-issue of European integration. However, comparison of these results to *figure 1* above, where we found 57% German claim-makers across all seven fields, shows that in about 20% of claims (57-37), German claim-makers referred to geopolitical spaces beyond Germany. *Table 1* shows that such references were made most often to European-level actors and policies (11%), followed to relatively equal shares by references to actors and policies in other member states (5% + 2%) and to non-EU countries or supranational institutions (6%).

As in the case of our analysis of claim-makers, we must be very careful in drawing conclusions from these results across all policy fields. As *figure 3* shows, there are again large differences between the policy fields, which make it impossible to draw general conclusions about the Europeanisation of public communication. Generally, the results in *figure 3* confirm the trends we already saw in our discussion of claimants. If we compare the percentage of claims with a purely German frame of reference to the percentages of German claim-makers in *figure 2*, we see that these are almost identical in the fields of immigration, troops deployment, education, and pensions. In other words, when German actors appear as claim-makers in these fields, they do so almost exclusively to present demands and proposals that refer exclusively to the German political context. This is

different in the other three fields where the competencies of the EU are larger. Whereas German actors are responsible for more than 60% of all claims in the agriculture field, the content of claims remains exclusively German in 42% of the cases. In a substantial number of cases, therefore, claims by German actors on agriculture refer to other geopolitical spaces — as *figure 3* makes clear, usually in the form of references to the EU level or other EU countries. Even so, given the high concentration of regulative power in the agriculture field at the European level, the frequency of claims with a purely German frame of reference (42%) remains surprisingly high. This strong national perspective seems at odds with the strongly Europeanised structure of decision-making in this field.

We do not find such a discrepancy in the case of monetary politics, where even before the introduction of the euro coins and bills, we find very few claims (5%)

Table 1: Average multi-level linkages within claims

Forms of Europeanisation of Public Communication	Type of Multi-Level Linkage (Letters in brackets refer to the corresponding arrows in <i>figure 1</i>)	All Seven Policy Fields	Six Policy Fields (Excluding European Integration)
NON-EUROPEANISED FORMS OF CLAIMS-MAKING		57%	67%
	Purely German national [a]	37%	43%
	Relations Germany with non-EU countries or supranational [d,e]	6%	7%
	International politics without ref. to EU, DE or other EU-countries [o,p,r]	15%	17%
EUROPEANISED FORMS OF CLAIMS-MAKING		43%	33%
Supranational	Purely supranational European [k]	5%	4%
	Relations EU with non-EU countries or supranational [l,m]	7%	5%
Vertical	Relations Germany with EU (without ref. to other EU-countries) [c]	11%	10%
	Relations other EU-countries with EU (without ref. to Germany) [h]	10%	6%
Mixed vertical/horizontal	Relations Germany with other EU-countries and with EU [combination]	5%	3%
Horizontal	Relations Germany with other EU-countries (without ref. to EU) [b]	2%	2%
	Relations among and within other EU-countries [f,g]	1%	2%
	Relations other EU-countries with non-EU countries or supranat. [i,j]	4%	4%
		100%	100%
TOTAL NUMBER OF CLAIMS (N)		1051	742

This table presents weighted averages across the seven policy fields, in such a way that each field contributes equally to the result. The three non-Europeanised patterns and the sum of Europeanised patterns add up to 100% of all coded claims in the year 2000. Within the category of Europeanised claims, however, some claims are attributed to more than one pattern and the total therefore exceeds 100%.

with an exclusively German frame of reference. Although *figure 2* showed that German actors remain the most frequent claim-makers in this field, their claims almost always refer to contexts beyond Germany. In this case, too, such references are mainly made to the European level, where the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of the ECB clearly provides a strong focus for claims-making. Less surprisingly, the 27% claims by German actors on European integration that we encountered in *figure 2*, all make reference to the European level.

Compared to the modest role of European-level claimants in *figure 2* (from 0% in pensions politics to 37% in the field of European integration), *table 2* shows that claims which refer in one way or another to the European level are much more widespread. By definition, 100% of claims in the field of European integration refer to the European level (either in the form of supranationally or vertically Europeanised claims), but more interestingly this is also true for 79% of claims on monetary politics. This indicates that with the introduction of a common currency, monetary politics has very quickly become a field that is debated and contested almost entirely from a European perspective. This provides support for the idea that the alleged “public sphere deficit” of the European Union is merely a derivative of a lack of strong and clearly demarcated competencies on the European level. With the ECB, and the relatively transparent delineation of its prerogatives and those of the Commission in this field, a clear focus for public communication has been created that has led to the quick establishment of a strongly Europeanised pattern of public contestation over monetary politics.

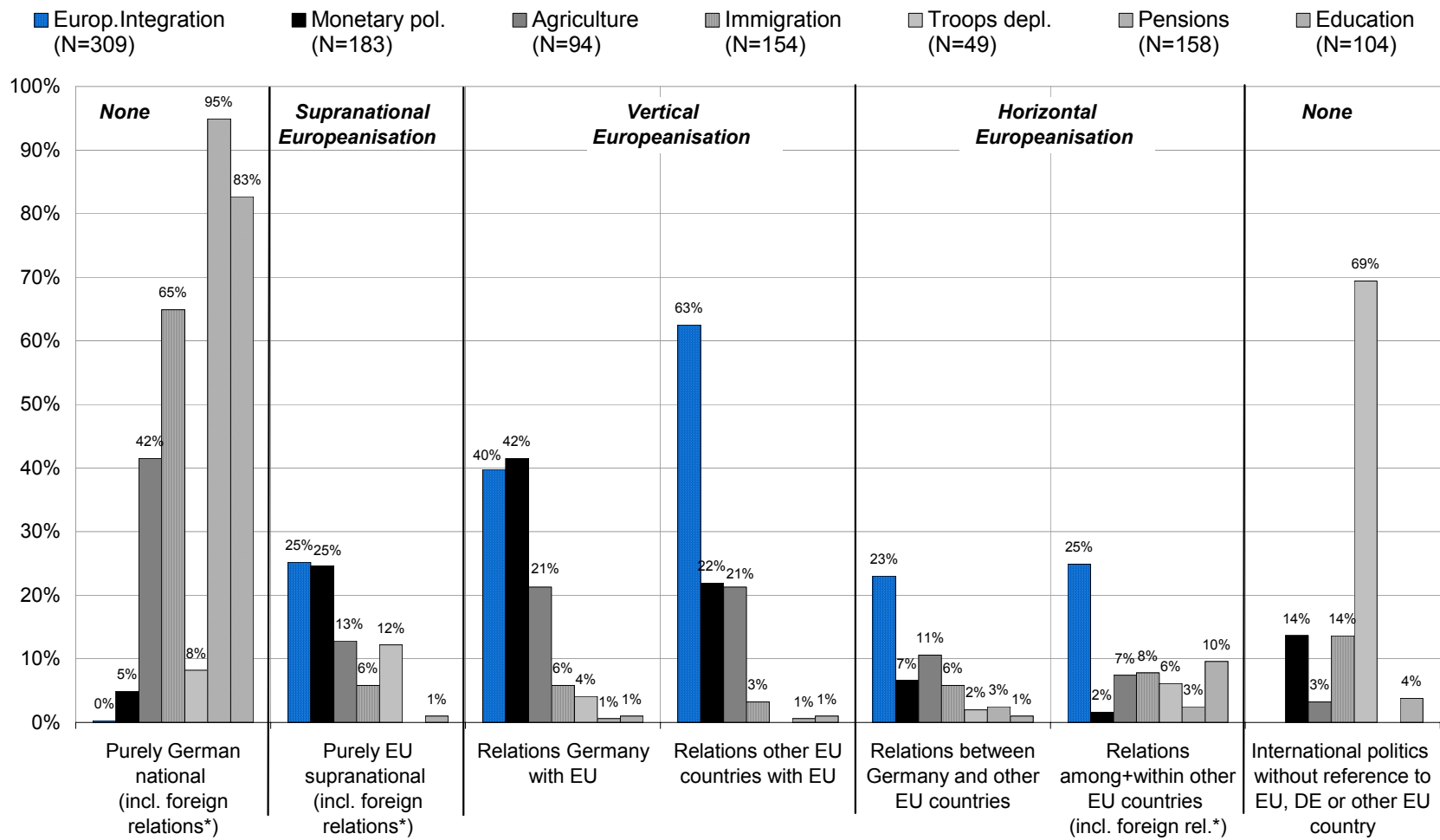
This is much less the case in the field of agriculture politics, where only 45% of claims refer to the European Union in one way or another. Here, we may probably speak of a deficit of public communication, since this relatively low percentage does not seem to reflect the influence of the EU in this policy field adequately. More detailed analyses of the structure of claims on agricultural issues will be necessary to find out what it is about claims-making in this field that tends to obscure or downplay the role of the EU. A possible explanation is that a large part of the claims involving only the German national level concern the sub-issue BSE, where the opportunity structures are perhaps less clearly Europeanised than is the case for agricultural subsidies. In the other policy fields, the European level plays an even more modest role. In descending order, the EU level is referred to in 14% of claims on troops deployment, 9% of those on immigration politics, 3% of those

on education, and a mere 1% of claims on pensions and retirement. The lack of strong supranational or vertical forms of Europeanisation is in some of these policy fields partly compensated by significant levels of horizontally Europeanised claims, which refer to debates and policies on these issues in other member states. This is the case in the fields of agriculture (18% of all claims), immigration (14%) and education (11%), where claims referring to other member states are not negligible. However, they tend to take the form of classical foreign news coverage of the politics of other countries, and, except for agriculture, do not often refer to linkages between countries. Moreover, in two of the policy fields (troops deployment and immigration), references to EU member states are less frequent than references to countries or organisations outside the EU, which makes it difficult to interpret these findings in terms of Europeanisation. Such an interpretation is more convincing in relation to agriculture, pension and education politics, where references to EU member states are clearly more frequent than to countries and institutions outside the EU.

Table 2: Claims with a reference to a supranational European actor or issue, in % of all claims within each policy field

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Weighted average (policy fields 1-6)
Monetary politics	Agriculture	Immigration	Troops deployment	Pensions	Education	European Integration	
79%	45%	9%	14%	1%	3%	100%	25%
N = 183	N = 94	N = 154	N = 49	N = 158	N = 104	N = 309	N = 742

This table combines the supranational and vertical forms of Europeanisation of table 1.



* relations with non-European countries or organisations

Figure 3: Multi-level relations within claims by policy fields.

NB: Read e.g. last bar at the right as: “4 per cent of all claims on education concern international politics without reference to the EU, Germany or another EU country”. Percentages add up to more than 100% per policy field as claims may fit several multi-level categories.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have developed a systematic approach to Europeanisation of the public sphere, which distinguishes three forms of Europeanisation of public political communication: (1) *Supranationally Europeanised communication*, where European-level institutions and collective actors interact around European themes; (2) *vertical Europeanisation* through communicative linkages between the national and the European level, either in the bottom-up variant, where national actors address European actors and/or make claims on European issues, or in the top-down variant, in which European actors intervene in national policies and public debates in the name of European regulations and common interests; and (3) *horizontal Europeanisation* through communicative linkages between different member states, either in a weak variant where media in one country simply cover debates and contestation in another member state, or in a strong variant where actors from one country explicitly address actors or policies in another member state. On the basis of data collected through political claims analysis in the EUROPUB.COM project, we have analysed the degree in which these forms of Europeanisation are present or absent in the German mass media in the year 2000.

Our results cannot be read as providing unequivocal evidence either for or against the existence of “a” European or Europeanised public sphere. The answer completely depends on the policy field one studies. Public contestation around the meta-issue of European integration as covered in the German media, quite closely approaches the ideal of a Europeanised public sphere. Actors from the EU level play a significant role in claims-making, and actors from other member states appear even more frequently as speakers than German actors. As a result, the information about the integration process that German newspaper readers get is clearly not limited to a parochial German view on the issue, and provides ample room for expressions of opinion from European institutions and actors in other member states.

Given the fact that the data analysed here refer to the situation only one year after the introduction of the euro (and still before its materialisation as a tangible currency), it is remarkable how quickly a European frame of reference has come to dominate public communication on monetary politics. This shows that if significant power is transferred to the European level, and institutional responsibilities are transparently demarcated, the public discourse in the mass media follows suit. The results on monetary politics therefore suggest that the

most important determinant of patterns of mass media coverage is simply where the decision-making power in a policy field is concentrated.

Seen from this perspective, it cannot be taken as evidence for a lack of a Europeanised public sphere that we find only very few claims with European references, either of the supranational, vertical, or horizontal type, in policy fields such as education, pensions, and troops deployment. Rather than the result of a general lack of interest of the media in Europe, or of a parochial concentration on national interests, the modest place given to European actors and issues in these fields results from the media fulfilling, rather than failing their function to provide the citizenry with an accurate coverage of those actors and issues that matter most.

The two policy fields where there is more reason to have doubts about whether the discourse in the mass media adequately reflects the influence of European institutions and policies, or the interdependencies among member states, are the fields of agricultural and immigration policies. Even though the EU does not yet have many powers in immigration politics, one might have expected more attention for immigration issues in other member states and for cross-border issues between Germany and other member states. As a result of the opening of the internal EU borders in the context of the Schengen agreement, flows of migration to Germany are no longer independent from other member states' immigration policies. Moreover, enlargement will have important immigration consequences, especially for Germany, which shares long borders with two of the most important accession countries, Poland and the Czech Republic. We find these strong interdependencies to be only weakly reflected in the kind of claims that appear on immigration issues in the German media.

Even though the majority of claims in the agriculture field do refer to the European level, and to a lesser extent also to other member states, two-fifths of all claims in this field remain within a purely national frame of reference. Even if competencies for some agricultural issues have remained on the national level, our suspicion is that these cannot account for such a large percentage of claims. A more detailed analysis will have to show whether this suspicion is correct.

Obviously, our findings for the moment only refer to the German case for the year 2000. Further results from the EUROPUB.COM project will allow us to determine to which degree our results are typical for Germany, or can be generalised to other member states. First results already indicate that in at least

some member states, especially the United Kingdom, the structure of public communication provides less encouraging signs of the emergence of (field-specific) Europeanised patterns of claims-making than is the case in Germany. In addition, the upcoming results from the project will allow us to place our findings in a temporal perspective by way of the inclusion of data for the years 1990, 1995, 2001, and 2002. Since Europeanisation, as its name indicates, is a process, the temporal perspective can help us to resolve some of the indeterminacy in the interpretation of the results presented here. Without a temporal standard of comparison, it is not always easy to judge whether a certain level of Europeanised claims-making is much or little. Moreover, a longitudinal analysis will allow us to trace the consequences of institutional changes on patterns of public claims-making, e.g., pre-euro and post-euro.

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Zivilgesellschaft, Konflikte und Demokratie

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung

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