VOTER TURNOUT IN THE 2009 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: MEDIA COVERAGE AND MEDIA EXPOSURE AS EXPLANATORY FACTORS

by
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Voter Turnout in the 2009 European Elections:
Media Coverage and Media Exposure as Explanatory Factors

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ABSTRACT

VOTER TURNOUT IN THE 2009 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS:
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AS EXPLANATORY FACTORS

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Ph.D. Thesis, August 2015

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ali Çarkoğlu

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This study examines the impact of European Union (EU) news coverage and of media exposure on voter turnout in the 2009 European Parliament elections in the 27 EU member states. It analyzes media content data and voter survey data from the PIREDEU project and builds the hypotheses on the existing literature on media coverage, media exposure, voter turnout, and the second-order elections theory. The study matches data on the visibility and tone of EU news in countries' media outlets with voters' usage of these outlets. This allows for examination of the effects of exposure to individual outlets on voter participation in the European elections. The study finds that people exposed to media in which the EU news coverage is highly visible are more likely to vote in the European election. The tone of the news does not play an important role in this equation, as long as the EU news is salient. Additionally, the study examines the differences in the media effects between countries of Western and Central and Eastern Europe, finding lack of media effects in the latter group. Low voter turnout in the European Parliament elections may signify voters' lack of interest in the EU and low level of knowledge about the EU. The results further indicate the lack of EU's external communication and a deepening of the democratic deficit in the EU, as well as the lack of interest in the EU from national political parties and candidates to the European Parliament.

ÖZET

KİTLE İLETİŞİM ARAÇLARININ 2009 AVRUPA PARLAMENTOSU SEÇİMLERİNE KATILIMA ETKİSİ

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Ph.D. Thesis, August 2015

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Parlamentosu Seçimleri, Kitle iletişim araçlarının etkileri, Komünizm sonrası Avrupa

Bu çalışma Avrupa Birliği (AB) üyesi 27 ülkedeki kitle iletişim araçlarında yer alan AB içerikli haberlerin 2009 Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimlerine katılıma olan etkisini inceler. PIREDEU projesinden alınan kitle iletişim araçları kaynaklı içerik verilerini ve seçmen tercihlerine dair kapsamlı kamuoyu yoklaması verileri ile birleştirip incelemek suretiyle; kitle iletişim araçlarının içeriği ve tesiri, seçimlere katılım ve ikinci derece seçim kuramı konularındaki mevcut kaynakların üzerine hipotezler geliştirir. Toplanan veriler AB hakkındaki haberlerin görünürlüğü, tonu ve buna ek olarak seçmenlerin bahsi geçen kitle iletişim araçlarını kullanımları hakkında bilgi içerdiğinden, bu veri grubu seçimlere katılım veri grubuyla birleştiğinde seçmen seviyesinde haber tüketimini ve bunun seçimlere katılımına olan etkisini incelemeye imkân sunabilmektedir. Bu çalışma kitle iletişim araçlarında AB hakkında haberlere maruz kalan seçmenlerin Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimlerine katılma olasılığının arttığına dair sonuçlar içerir. Haberlerin tonundan ziyade çokluğu seçimlere katılımı açıklamaktadır. Bu çalışma ayrıca Batı, Orta ve Doğu Avrupa ülkelerindeki kitle iletişim araçlarının etkilerinin farklılığını da inceler. Batı ve Orta Avrupa ülkelerinde kitle iletişim araçlarındaki haberlere maruz kalan seçmenlerin Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimlerine katılma olasılığını artırırken, Doğu Avrupa ülkelerinde benzer bir olumlu etki görülmemektedir. Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimlerine düşük seviyedeki seçmen katılımı seçmenlerin AB'ye olan ilgisizliği veya AB hakkındaki bilgi eksiklikleri ile ilişkilendirilebilir. Bu sonuçlar ayrıca AB'nin kendini tanıtımındaki eksiklikler, derinleşen AB demokrasi açığı, ve son olarak AB'deki partilerin ve adayların Avrupa Parlamentosu'na olan ilgisizliği ile de ilişkilendirilebilir.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe / European
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
EES	European Election Study
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
PIREDEU	Providing an Infrastructure for Research on. Electoral Democracy in the European Union
WE	Western Europe / European

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) has been blamed for a lack of democracy and legitimacy since its beginnings as the European Community. Direct elections to the European Parliament (EP) after 1979, and subsequent expansion of the Parliament's competencies, were supposed to improve the EU's image as a democratic, legitimate entity; from both institutional and its 'people's' perspectives on legitimacy. Nevertheless, providing citizens with the chance to select their representative in the EP did little to fix the legitimacy crisis of those early years, and the debate about EU's democratic deficit continues to this day.

Democracy in the EU is generally evaluated from two perspectives, one examining its institutions and governance, the other looking at the people it governs and the public discourse about it. These concepts link two views on the question of EU legitimacy: output legitimacy and input legitimacy. Output legitimacy encompasses the performance of EU institutions and how they govern people; referring to the perceived policy performance and efficiency of rules, laws, and policy-making processes. Input legitimacy concentrates on people's participation in the policy-making processes; and the responsiveness and capability of the system, such as the EU, to deliver what its citizens require (Lindgren and Persson, 2010; Risse 2006; Scharpf, 1999; Schmidt, 2010). In other words, output legitimacy can be described as democracy *for* the people, while input legitimacy is considered democracy *by* and *of* the people.

In the past, output legitimacy in the EU primarily presented itself in the form of traditional democratic processes, but this has declined with its enlargement, the deepening of European integration, and limiting of the legislative powers of EU member states. At present, output legitimacy is largely damaged because the EP, as the

only directly elected body within the EU, has limited powers compared to the European Commission or the Council. Additionally, although chosen directly by EU citizens, the members of the EP are elected mainly on the basis of national issues. Consequently, since output legitimacy is very institutionalized and difficult to alter, recent debate has concentrated on improving the input legitimacy rather than that of output. Involving citizens in the EU democratic processes is seen as the best way to help improve the EU legitimacy crisis (H. ritier, 2003; Horeth, 1999). For these reasons, I will concentrate on the problems of input legitimacy and the ways it can be improved.

The low level of voter participation in the EP elections contributes to the input EU legitimacy crisis. Not only is the EP the only EU institution directly elected by the citizens, but the low voter turnout also signifies people's lack of interest in this unique opportunity to choose their representatives in the EP, consequently damaging the EU legitimacy. Voter turnout in the EP elections has been decreasing ever since the first direct election in 1979. On that occasion, the average turnout was 62%. By 1999 it dropped to nearly 50% and then, even lower, to 43% in 2009, remaining at this level in 2014 (European Parliament, 2014).

While these figures are substantial, we can see even more striking differences in the participation levels across the individual EU member states. Comparing the Western and Central and Eastern (i.e. post-Communist) EU member states presents an outstanding example. In 2004, the average turnout for the Western EU member states was just over 49%, while for the eight post-Communist countries it was 26%. This gap of about 20% remained in both the 2009 and 2014 EP elections[1].

The overall decline in turnout in the EP elections is apparent, but the turnout gap between the EU's Western member states and the post-Communist countries is more remarkable. Studies on turnout in the EP elections tend to take this gap for granted and do not look for further explanations above the usual characteristics of post-Communist legacy; including unstable governments, volatile party systems, corruption, lack of party affiliation, distrust to political elites and media, or the lack of voting tradition (Flickinger and Studlar, 2007; Gagatek, 2009; Howard, 2002). Nevertheless, data analyses of these studies indicates that these factors do not fully describe the low turnout in the post-Communist countries, and that there still is much variance left to be

[1] Country-level participation data obtained from the Directorate-General for Communication, 2014. Please refer to Figures 4.2 and 4.3 for more detailed turnout data.

explained. On the following pages, I propose, and empirically test, an additional explanation of this phenomenon, by examining the content of the national media and people's exposure to it in the weeks prior to the EP elections.

A significant component of the input legitimacy is transparency of EU processes and easy access to information about policy-making and the functioning of the organisation. This is where news media can play an important role in helping to strengthen the input legitimacy, by providing relevant and information about the EU (Héritier, 2003). However, national news media are regularly blamed for not providing enough information about the EU, and for contributing to the democracy deficit. Media allow elites to publicize the EU policies, and they also help people gain knowledge about the EU. News media continue to be used by the majority of people as their main source of information, especially about remote issues such as the EU. Despite the expansion of online media, print newspapers and television broadcasting remain among the most used and trusted sources of information in 2009 (Special Eurobarometer 308). Being more informed about the EU enables people to form opinions and eventually decide who to vote for in the EP elections.

While there is of course news about the EU in the media across the member states, there remains too much variation in how - and how much - national media in the different countries cover EU affairs. The EU media system is further characterized by the lack of common language, EU-wide news media, common communications policy and interest from the elites. All these factors make the creation of European public sphere, the common European discourse, very challenging (Sifft et al., 2007; Trenz, 2004; van de Steeg 2006). Nevertheless, providing more information about the EU across national media could not only create the European public sphere, but also increase voter participation in the EP elections and help solve the EU input legitimacy crisis (Meyer 2005; Wessler et al. 2008).

I see this as a vicious circle: as there is less at stake at the EP elections, and their results do not decide who runs an individual country, political parties and candidates devote less interest, time, and money on the EP election compared to national election campaigns. Consequently, there is little for the media to write about, and the lack of news concerning the EU and the EP elections results in citizens not receiving sufficient information about these topics. They can also become confused about whether the elections matter since it seems that neither media or political parties and candidates are actually concerned about them. As a result, many people choose not to vote in the EP

elections simply because they do not know what the EP does, what the purposes of the elections are, where they can vote or who they should vote for. This chain of events is detrimental to the EU legitimacy but, as I show later, it could be prevented if the media reported more news about the EU, the EP elections, parties, and candidates.

I argue that people who are exposed more often to a high amount of news about the EU are more likely to vote in the EP elections. EU news can provide information essential for people to vote, including who the candidates are, where they can vote, what the powers of the EP are, or how EU policies relate to their everyday lives. By making news about the EU and the EP election more visible, the media can also send out a message that the elections are important and relevant to the member country, consequently increasing citizens' motivation to vote. I expect the media effects to be weaker, or non-existent, in the CEE countries due to the low levels of EU news visibility as well as the lack of trust to media.

I further argue that the tone of the news, defined as whether the story evaluates the EU or the EP positively or negatively, does not influence the effects of the exposure to news. As long as the EU news is well-visible, exposure to it has a positive impact on people's likelihood to vote. Finally, I argue that there are differences in the effects of exposure to various media types. This is due to the different content presented in the newspapers and on television. Newspapers tend to publish more EU news than television and, similarly, quality newspapers and public television channels present more news about the EU than tabloid newspapers and commercial television channels.

My results show a weak but statistically significant, positive relationship between people's exposure to news about the EU in the weeks prior to the 2009 EP elections and their participation in the elections. These effects are not present for citizens in the CEE countries, in contrast to Western EU member states. My data analysis also provides evidence for my claim that the tone of the EU news plays an insignificant role in the relationship between exposure to media and voting. The effects of exposure to positive and to negative EU news do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. This can, nevertheless also be the results of the low proportions of EU news with a positive or a negative tone

Furthermore, I find clear differences in the effects of content exposure between various media types. Exposure to EU news in newspapers, both quality and tabloid, has stronger impact on the likelihood to vote than exposure to EU news on television. Additionally, exposure to EU news in tabloid newspapers is likely drive people away

from voting compared to exposure to quality newspapers, which, conversely, is likely to mobilize them. The effects of content exposure to all the various media types is, nevertheless, very weak.

Finally, I simulate a situation to show how turnout would change if content exposure to EU news increases. My results clearly display that turnout would increase if people's exposure to news about the EU and the visibility of EU news is increased. These effects are larger in the CEE countries, compared to the Western European countries, suggesting that as both the turnout and the EU news visibility were lower in the CEE countries, there is more scope for a change. The following paragraphs now outline how I explore my argument and reach my findings.

On the following pages, I search for new explanations for the very low turnout in the post-Communist countries, aiming to fill the gap in the literature and understand whether these countries possibly contribute more to the EU legitimacy crisis than their Western counterparts. I analyze the content of the news media outlets across the 27 EU member states and the exposure of EU citizens to these outlets to determine whether exposure to more EU news impacts one's likelihood to vote in the EP elections. Examining the visibility and tone of news about the EU in national newspapers and television channels in the weeks prior to the 2009 EP elections, I assess to what extent the news media actually fulfil their function as information providers. I tackle the central questions about the legitimacy of the EU, the effectiveness of political communication of the EU, and the extent of the attention that national media pay to the EU, considering specifically the post-Communist countries. The setting of the EP elections offers a unique opportunity to study voter behavior and media effects, since it allows researchers to examine the role of individual and contextual factors on the decisions of voters across diverse countries but voting in the same election (Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996).

In Chapter 2 I present a survey of existing research on voter turnout, news coverage about the EU, effects of media on voting behavior, and the characteristics of the post-Communist EU countries in relation to voting behavior. I also link the findings and arguments from the surveyed literature to my research questions and outline the expectations and assumptions for my analysis. In Chapter 3 on data and measurement, I describe the three datasets used and explain their main variables. I also describe the creation of the main independent variable of interest, the content exposure, which combines the content of news media outlets and citizens' exposure to it. At the end of

this chapter, I present the method used here and explain why it is the most fit to explain my research questions.

In Chapter 4 I discuss the context of the 2009 EP elections, including the campaigns, turnout, and news coverage. I present numerous figures on the turnout across the EU member states, the visibility of EU news and its tone in national news outlets across the EU and the variations in news coverage across different media types. I also discuss the topics covered in the media and argue that the 2009 EP elections campaign, as portrayed by the national media, has little to do with the EU itself.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I present the data analysis and discuss the results. Chapter 5 looks at the effects of exposure to EU news based on the visibility of EU news, while Chapter 6 considers the effects along with the tone of the EU news. In these two chapters, I analyze the data using multilevel analyses, and also calculate marginal effects of exposure to media for various groups of observations; for example, people in different age groups, those with high and low interest in the EU, and those living in the Western EU member states and CEE countries.

Succeeding the results chapters, in Chapter 7 I present alternate scenarios debating the extent of the impact elites and media could make by altering the media content. I examine how turnout would change if the content exposure across the EU countries either increased or decreased. I find that increasing the amount of news about the EU in the media and people's exposure to it could indeed boost turnout, especially in the CEE countries. Finally, in Chapter 8, I summarize the findings and present them in the light of the EU legitimacy crisis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Elections are a central feature of democratic countries, and of the EU itself, and a high turnout is desirable to ensure the governing bodies are legitimate and truly representative (de Vreese, Banducci, Semetko and Boomgaarden, 2006). Over the past decades, voter turnout in European national and EP elections has declined, prompting researchers to look for explanations for this trend. Studies have found that, in addition to the numerous factors traditionally used to explain voter turnout, exposure to mass media also has an impact on one's decision to vote in an election (Esser and de Vreese, 2007; Norris, 2006).

By providing information to citizens about political affairs and the workings of the governments, among other topics, media play an important role in a democratic society. Particularly in the times of elections, many people rely on mass media to obtain the knowledge that will enable them to cast an informed vote, thus giving it great power to influence their decision to vote as well as actual vote choice. This effect is likely to be stronger in the case of the EP election, as people generally know less about EU politics and candidates to the EP than their national politics. This leaves considerable space to the mass media to provide the information needed and help form opinions about parties and EP candidates (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; de Vreese et al., 2006; Elenbaas, Boomgaarden, Schuck and de Vreese, 2013; Esser and D'Angelo, 2006; Mughan and Gunther, 2000; Norris, 2004).

I link the cognitive mobilization theory of media effects to the rational choice and mobilization theories of voter turnout. In line with the former theory, by providing information about the elections, media help decrease the costs of voting, and are thus likely to help boost the turnout. Similarly, related to the second theory, by the provision of election news, media show its importance and can help mobilize citizens. I examine

these theories in the setting of the 2009 EP elections which offers a unique setting for a comparative research because the same event is held across 28 different political, electoral, and media systems, so both country-level and individual-level explanatory variables can be considered (Boomgaarden, de Vreese, Schuck, Azrout, Elenbaas, van Spanje and Vliegenthart, 2013; Schuck, Boomgaarden and de Vreese, 2013).

When studying the effects of media in voter turnout, both the content of the media and people's exposure to it need to be taken into account in order to obtain a complete picture (Azrout, van Spanje and de Vreese, 2012; de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006c; Elenbaas et al., 2013; Slater, 2004). Regarding the content, studies generally examine the visibility of the EU news; i.e. the proportion of EU news items amongst all other news reports (de Vreese et al., 2005; Machill et al., 2006), the tone of EU news; i.e. whether this in any way evaluates the EU or its institutions (Bruter, 2004; de Vreese and Semetko, 2006), and the 'Europeanness' of the news; i.e. the extent to which the news refers to the EU, as opposed to being about an EU issue described within national context (Schuck and de Vreese, 2011; Trenz, 2004). A number of studies also seek to explain differences in EU news coverage across the EU (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; Schuck and de Vreese, 2011; Schuck, Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, Elenbaas, Azrout, van Spanje and de Vreese, 2013) and over time (Boomgaarden et al., 2013).

Studies have found that exposure to news about politics or a particular issue helps make people interested in that issue (Baek, 2009; de Vreese and Semetko, 2002; Norris, 2006) but may also increase political cynicism; i.e. create or increase the gap between voters and politicians (Schuck, Boomgaarden and de Vreese, 2013). Findings about the tone of the news are inconclusive, with some commentators holding the view that tone impacts upon people's views about a particular issue; i.e. a positive tone makes them think positively about the issue and vice versa (Norris, 2000), while others say that any tone, whether positive or negative, helps make the news more memorable, thus having effectively the same impact on those exposed to it (Feldman, 2001; Marcus et al., 2000).

I examine the media effects across the 27 EU member states and look at the differences in the effects between countries in Western Europe and the CEE, i.e. post-Communist countries. The turnout in the latter group, especially in the EP elections, is generally lower than in the former. This is commonly explained by the lack of voting tradition, volatile party systems, low levels of party affiliation and interest in the EU

from both voters and candidates, high rates of political corruption and lack of trust in politics (Flickinger and Studlar, 2007; Guerra, 2010; Schmitt, 2005). I further suggest that due to these characteristics, and a lack of trust in media, the media effects are likely to be weaker compared to Western European countries and thus unable to help boost the turnout.

In the following literature review chapter I first tap into the issue of EU legitimacy and then present an overview of existing research on voter turnout in national and EP elections, outlining theories on voter turnout as well as the numerous factors that have proved significant in explaining it. I further discuss the relationship between media and elections, the nature of media coverage of the EU, and the effects of exposure to media on voting behavior. Lastly, I present the characteristics and peculiarities that impact voting behavior and turnout in the CEE countries.

2.1. EU Legitimacy

The lack of democratic legitimating processes in the EU has been an issue present on both political and academic agendas for several decades. While there are many types of legitimacy within the EU, on the whole it can be defined as the "…acceptability of a social or political order." (Lindgren and Persson, 2010: 450). For an institution to be legitimate, it needs to have the means to achieve what its citizens require and to have support from those whom it affects by its policies (Horeth, 1999; Lindgren and Persson, 2010). In the case of the EU, this suggests that it needs to know what its citizens want; which can then be expressed via their vote in EP elections for parties and candidates that represent their needs and wishes. Furthermore, citizens across the EU member states need to express their support for the EU system either actively, by participating in the EU politics - for example, by voting in the EP elections - or passively, by following EU regulations.

Of the numerous sources of political legitimacy, discussion in terms of output and input democratic legitimating processes is the best fit for the EU (Meyer, 1999; Scharpf, 1999). Output legitimacy refers to the perceived policy performance and the efficiency of rules, laws and policy-making processes, i.e. democracy for the people. Input legitimacy is described as democracy by and of the people. It entails citizens'

participation in EU politics and the EU's responsiveness to them, expressed as taking into account conflicting interests when making decisions. A significant component of the input legitimacy is transparency of EU processes and easy access to information about policy-making and the functioning of the EU. This is where news media can play an important role to help strengthen the input legitimacy by providing relevant and information about the EU (Héritier, 2003; Lindgren and Persson, 2010; Meyer, 1999; Schmidt, 2010).

Output legitimacy had primarily been present in the EU in the past in a form of traditional democratic processes but has declined with the enlargement of the EU, deepening of the European integration and the limiting of the legislative power of EU member states. At a present day, the output legitimacy is largely damaged because not only is the EP the only directly elected body within the EU, it also has limited powers compared to the European Commission or the Council. The input legitimacy is weakened by the lack of citizens' support for the EU expressed as low voter turnout in the EP elections[2] and the fact that voters tend to choose their EP representatives mainly on the basis of national issues rather than EU-wide questions (Follesdal and Hix, 2006; Héritier, 2003).

The recent debate about EU legitimacy has therefore concentrated on improving the input legitimacy rather than output because involving citizens in the EU democratic processes is seen as the best way to improve the EU legitimacy crisis (Horeth, 1999). Citizens can participate in EU decision-making - and thus justify the legitimacy of the EU - only if they have sufficient information about it. This nevertheless seems to be another of EU's problems; usually referred to as the communication deficit. The theory of EU communication deficit suggests that it is the EU's own representatives who are responsible for not providing sufficient accessible and comprehensible information about the EU. The official information released by the EU tends to be very technical, making little sense to ordinary citizens without prior knowledge or experience about organisation. Similarly, the news coverage about the EU by national media is generally very limited and does not provide the information citizens need to be able to get involved in the EU processes (Meyer, 1999).

This brings me back to the vicious circle described in the introduction: EU representatives provide either too little information about the EU and its functioning, or

[2] See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the turnout in the EP elections.

make it too technical in nature, and thus news about the EU is generally missing from the national news media. EU citizens then receive little information about the EU, which prevents them from participating in the EU politics. As a result, the EU communication and democratic deficits keep growing. Nevertheless, there seems to be a relatively simple solution to stop this detrimental chain of events. As I show in Chapter 7, boosting the visibility of EU news in the media and people's exposure to it can have a very positive impact on voter participation

I discuss the aspects of communication deficit relating to the media coverage of the EU later in this chapter. First, I will turn to the overview of the literature on voter turnout, describing the factors that influence voter turnout in studies of both national and EP elections.

2.2. Voter Turnout

As advocated in the previous section, citizens' participation in policy making and other democratic processes is essential for the legitimacy of a democratic political system. Many researchers have examined the reasons why citizens participate in elections and why they do not, presenting numerous factors The majority of studies agree that the most important determinants are education and the levels of political information and political interest, in addition to country specific characteristics such as those describing the political, party, and electoral systems (Lassen, 2005; Mattila, 2003). Generally, country-level variables are said to play the most important role in determining an individual's voting behavior, but the explanatory variables differ depending on the particular theory. I will examine these aspects on the following pages.

2.2.1. Theories of Voter Turnout

From the numerous theories which seek to explain voter turnout, the rational choice theory, the mobilization theory, and the political-institutional model form the basis of this study. The rational choice theory bases its assumptions on a calculation of

costs and benefits of voting. Studies have established that there are more costs associated with voting (including going to the polling place, obtaining information about the election and the candidates, missing work etc.) than there are perceived benefits (such as civic duty, supporting one's favorite party or candidate, feeling involved in the policy-making process etc.). Furthermore, in most elections, citizens are aware that a single vote is very unlikely to change the outcome of the election and this often discourages them from voting (Downs, 1957; Dowding, John and Rubenson, 2012). Franklin and Wessels (2010) point to the same problem in the EP election when they conjecture the reasons for anyone to vote in an election that has no clear purpose. They suggest that it is actually rational for people not to vote and those that vote do so because of their deep interest in the election and its outcome.

Empirical studies based on the rational choice model usually consider a set of independent variables, including voting in previous elections, caring about elections, sense of civic duty, positive evaluation of candidates, personal costs and benefits of voting, evaluation of personal and national economic situation, or propensity to vote (Blais, 2000; Rallings, Thrasher and Borisyuk, 2003; van Ham and Smets, 2012).

In recent decades, voter turnout rates have been declining paralleled with the number of people who identify themselves with a political party. Therefore, the need for capturing the effects of mobilization has been recognized by those supporting the concept of the mobilization theory. They suggest that voting is a social behavior in the sphere of social norms, where the default is to not vote and that people exercise their vote just because they are asked to do so by parties, candidates, interest groups, social movements, campaigners and media, or because their family and friends do so (Arceneaux and Nickerson, 2009; Gerber and Green, 2000; Rallings et al., 2003).

This is where the media, the main interest of this study, play an important role; by reporting on the elections, media provide voters with information and also help persuade them to cast their vote, possibly helping to decide who to vote for. Analyses based on the mobilization theory include media exposure, in addition to factors such as mobilization by parties and non-partisan groups, membership in organizations, union membership, attendance to religious service, or exposure to political advertising (van Ham and Smets, 2012).

Finally, the importance of institutional factors, originating from aggregate-level studies, is put forward by the political institutional model. The contextual country-level variables used to explain turnout include compulsory voting, concurrent elections

(important especially for second-order election), closeness of the election race, electoral system, or effective number of parties (Arceneaux and Nickerson, 2009; Blais, 2000; van Ham and Smets, 2012).

Some studies have found that although the act of voting is done by individuals, individual characteristics do not have as strong explanatory power as systemic and contextual factors, such as the country-level indicators of compulsory vote, weekend polling, the availability of postal votes, time until the next election or electoral system and voter registration processes (Franklin, 1996; van der Brug and Franklin, 2005; Norris, 2007). Nevertheless, despite these factors being viewed as significant in numerous research pieces, their importance may be exaggerated (Blais, 2006). In the end, it is the voters' own decision to vote or not based upon whether they see the election as important and whether they believe that their vote will impact the election outcome. I use both country-level and individual-level variables to explain voter turnout in the 2009 EP elections,

Due to different causal mechanisms being prominent for voters in diverse contexts, a single theoretical approach may not be sufficient for each study, particularly if this looks into variances in turnout across countries with different characteristics. Additionally, a cross-national study of variance in voter turnout should consider variables on both individual and country levels because factors from both these levels have an impact on voter behavior. It is, nevertheless, a difficult challenge "…to link these [individual and contextual] approaches, so that individual-level behavior is understood within its broader institutional context." (Norris, 2007: 5).

I include both levels of explanatory factors, as well as ideas from several theoretical concepts. I base my principal assumptions on the main idea behind the rational choice model, suggesting that in order for people to vote, the benefits need to outweigh the costs. Considering that it is nearly impossible to increase the benefits of voting, especially in the case of EP elections, the costs need to decrease. As indicated above, the costs of voting are diverse, including the time and effort it takes for a citizen to obtain information about the election itself (for example, where the polling booths are and how to obtain a voting ballot) and about the parties and candidates, in order to decide who to vote for. By having this information readily available, the costs of voting could decrease. As news media continue to be mentioned as the source of information people use the most, it is perfectly placed to provide such information.

One may argue that providing such information in the media creates only a small increase in the quantity of information available to people and, thus, just a little reduction in the voting costs. However, marginal changes to the costs of voting have been shown to have an impact. A Canadian study, for example, showed that "…marginal adjustments to the costs of voting were likely to have a small, though measurable impact on voter turnout" (Blais, 2000; Rallings, et al., 2003). This is also where the mobilization theory comes into play. Apart from providing information and decreasing the costs of voting, by publishing news about the election and candidates, the media give importance to the election, make it salient in the news, and place it on the country's agenda. When people see that the election is important and that the media and politicians care about it, they are more likely to vote than if they do not see, hear, or read about it in their daily lives.

Finally, given that voter turnout in this study is examined across 27 countries that differ in, for example, turnout rates, party and political systems, media systems, public opinion about the EU, contextual explanatory variables originating from the political-institutional model also play an important role in this research. I expect to see differences between individual countries as well as between blocs of countries, namely Western European countries and CEE countries.

2.2.2. Factors Affecting Voter Turnout

Despite the vast amount of research carried out on voter turnout, the findings are somewhat inconclusive. In their review of 90 empirical studies of individual level voter turnout in national elections, published in ten top journals between 2000 and 2010, van Ham and Smets (2012) found over 170 independent variables that could be used to explain voter turnout; none of them was included every single study. Only 8 of these variables were included in more than 25% of the studies. These are education, age, gender, ethnicity, party identification, income, marital status, and political interest. Age and education, the two most common explanatory variables, were included in 72% and 74% of studies, respectively (van Ham and Smets, 2012). I utilize most of the traditional variables used to explain voter turnout and searches for new variables, namely those

related to the media and campaign that could add more explanatory power to the models.

Although the effect of compulsory voting on turnout has been confirmed by all studies which utilize it, there still are differences found among countries with compulsory voting. These differences relate to whether the countries apply sanctions or not; it has been found that compulsory voting matters only when there are sanctions for not voting (Blais et al., 2003). Among the EU countries used within this study, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg have compulsory voting systems. Other institutional variables, such as the proportionality of electoral system, unicameralism, competitiveness of election, impact of one's vote, voting age, and voting rules have been used in a huge number of studies and the significance of their effects has been shown; however, they do not have the same effect in all countries (Blais, 2006; Hirczy, 1995).

The nature of the electoral system is an interesting variable when studying the EP elections. Although all countries vote in the same election, there are only some basic common rules regarding the electoral system. This results in most countries using slightly different electoral systems. The optimal way then to compare the systems is using a degree of proportionality of the electoral system (Norris, 2000). I therefore use this measure.

Socio-demographic indicators, including gender, age and education, have been proven to influence one's likelihood to vote on the individual level (Blais, 2000). The effect of education has been widely researched and discussed. Despite some findings suggesting that education is not a significant determinant of voting in all countries (for example, in certain Western European countries it does not appear to play a role) a positive relation between time spent in education and turnout has been found in many studies. The rational choice approach explains the effect of education to the extent that those with fewer resources (i.e. less education) tend to be less informed about politics, feel alienated from politics, and outside of the groups targeted by parties and candidates during campaign. Thus, they come across more challenges when they seek information about the election and the seemingly simple decision of whether to vote or not can become very difficult, making them more likely to not vote (Downs, 1957; Gallego, 2010).

It is well-established that younger people are less likely to vote than older people (Gallego, 2010). The main rationale for this difference is that many older people have

had a chance to develop a habit of voting and socialize in an environment where voting is a norm while the younger members of society are still in the process of socialization. Despite most of the research with these conclusions coming from the USA, it is often generalized so as to fit European countries as well (Esser and de Vreese, 2007). Comparing the 2004 USA presidential election with the 2004 EP election (notwithstanding dissimilarities between the two processes), Esser and de Vreese (2007) found that turnout of young voters (aged 18 - 29), was lower in Europe than in the USA. Nevertheless, age is an important variable and is included in the models in this study.

Political variables are important determinants of voter behavior at both individual and aggregate levels. Hirczy (1995) shows this while examining turnout in Malta. Even without the presence of compulsory voting, Malta has the highest turnout of all EU countries without compulsory voting: it is always above 90% in national elections and around 80% in EP elections. This is due to the characteristics of voters and of the party and electoral system: strong partisanship and party loyalty, deep polarization, single transferrable vote system (ranking candidates no matter what party they come from), low volatility (for the two main parties), high participation in other political events, intensive campaigning by candidates and parties (Hirczy, 1995).

Exposure to media and their content have been said to have an impact on voter turnout although there has been much discussion about the direction and extent of the effect (e.g., Banducci and Semetko, 2003; Esser and de Vreese, 2007; Norris, 2006). The following paragraphs look briefly into the determinants of voter turnout in the EP elections, and the next section in this literature overview examines the relationship between media and voter turnout.

2.3. European Parliament Elections

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the EU has been suffering from legitimacy crisis ever since its early days. Although the direct elections to the EP and expansion of its powers were aimed at fixing this issue, the lack of EU citizens' participation in the elections keeps the democratic deficit in the centre of research agenda. On the following pages I will briefly mention the history of the EP elections

and outline its characteristics relating to campaigning and turnout. I will also explain the links between EU news coverage and voter turnout in the EP elections.

2.3.1. Turnout in the EP Elections

Voting is the central element of democratic political systems. The EU is a democratic entity, so a high turnout in European elections is a prerequisite for a well-functioning democracy in the EU (de Vreese, Banducci, Semetko and Boomgaarden, 2006). The direct EP elections were established a response to early critiques of the democratic deficit and "…to establish a direct link between the individual citizen and decision-making at the European level" (Marsh and Mikhaylov, 2010: 5; Follesdal and Hix, 2006; Franklin and Hobolt, 2011).

The EP is the only EU institution directly elected by the citizens of all the member states, and thus forms the ultimate democratic body. However, it is only wishful thinking on the part of politicians and political scientists that citizens of the EU have the desire to participate in the EU policy making by electing their country's representatives to the EP; despite the fact that the EP elections are the only time when citizens can directly influence the EU politics and choose their national representation, the turnout figures show that Europeans do not take advantage of their unique opportunity to participate in the EU's democratic process of decision-making (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Karp, Banducci and Bowler, 2003b). The voter turnout at EP elections has been decreasing since the first direct election in 1979. On that occasion, the average EU turnout was nearly 62%. By 2009, it had dropped to 43%, and it remained at this level in 2014 (European Parliament, 2014). I discuss the change of turnout over time as well as the differences across individual EU member states in Chapter 4.

Soon after the first direct elections to the EP, political scientists realized that voting behavior in these elections is not precisely similar to that displayed in national elections. Reif and Schmitt (1980) referred to EP elections as 'second order national elections' because they play no role in deciding who rules the country, and there is thus 'less at stake' than in national elections. Nonetheless, the same candidates and parties often compete in both first and second order elections – and, often, about the same

national issues - even though the ideal is that the EP elections are about EU issues (Franklin and van der Eijk, 1996; Franklin, 2006; Schmitt, 2005).

By their nature, second order elections show lower voter turnout than first order elections (Marsh and Franklin, 1996). Despite the situation changing since the first European election and voters knowing more about the EU today, they still have little knowledge about EU politics compared to their national politics, and they often see EU affairs as irrelevant to their everyday lives. Voters also rarely have preferences for EU policies because they believe that they do not affect them, which makes them less likely to vote in the European election (Mattila, 2003). This is what makes the EP different from other second-order elections (for example, regional or municipal): they are trans-national, which is often reflected in voters not feeling European or believing that the EU membership benefits their country or themselves personally (Marsh and Mikhaylov, 2010).

There is "less at stake" in second-order elections and some aspects result directly from it, including the lower voter turnout, news coverage, and interest in campaigning by politicians (as compared to national elections). When attention is paid to the EP elections in the news, it is usually in connection with national political leaders, parties or national issues, while the EU issues are often pushed to the side (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Schuck and de Vreese, 2011). Voters do not consider second-order elections to be very important and are very likely to follow their feelings rather than making a rational decision about who to vote for; they often vote for parties that they would not vote for in national elections. Consequently, the outcomes of EP election do not reflect outcomes of national elections (Marsh, 2007; Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

National voting systems and institutional settings and rules also have an impact on the public's interest in the EP election. Turnout is influenced by the position of EP election in the country's electoral cycle, by the closeness to any previous elections, or whether there is another election running at the same time as the EP election (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Holding EP elections on the same day as any other elections, whether national or local, is likely to boost voter turnout in the country as more citizens choose to vote in the other election that decides who runs their country or a region. Subsequently, while they are at the polling station, they would often cast their vote in the EP election as well. One the other hand, holding the EP elections just a short time before or after other elections has a negative impact on turnout as voters experience fatigue; they may feel the need to choose one election to vote in, and the EP election is

rarely the choice. Different EU countries went through these two scenarios during the 2009 EP elections, and I will discuss this further in Chapter 4.

There are opposing views on what happens when second-order elections take place for the first time. Either too much is unknown and too many questions and doubts are raised by the public, politicians, and journalists, which results in low turnout and low media coverage (Reif and Schmitt, 1980) or a 'first election boost' occurs, which causes high turnout and a visible media coverage (Franklin, 2007: 56). In the case of the EP elections, the first election boost occurred in all new members except for the CEE countries; I discuss this in more detail in the later sections of this study.

2.3.2. Factors Affecting Turnout in the EP Elections

Despite the 'second-order' nature of the EP elections, studies that examine EP elections turnout generally use the same individual-level explanatory factors as those related to national elections (mentioned in previous pages). I build my model utilizing the individual-level variables commonly used in electoral studies, including age, education, income, gender, closeness to or identification with a party, and political interest (Franklin et al., 1996; Marsh and Franklin, 1996; Mattila, 2003).

While one would expect that people's opinion about the EU serve as an indicator of how likely they are to vote in the EP elections, there is little agreement in the existing literature: while some say these factors play no significant role (Franklin, van der Eijk and Oppenhuis, 1996; Schmitt and van der Eijk, 2002), others suggest that they do (Blondel et al., 1997). I include two variables indicating respondents' attitudes toward the EU in my models as well and discuss their significance later in the paper.

As in this study, turnout in the EP elections is generally studied across several or all EU member states. Therefore, country-level variables are vital to the explanation of the EP elections turnout variation. Country-level indicators are comprised of institutional variables, including the type of electoral system, compulsory voting, the existence of concurrent national election, and the position of EP election in electoral cycle. These contextual variables explain a great deal of variance in turnout in the EP elections between countries (Franklin et al., 1996, Franklin, 2007; Norris, 2007; Schmitt, 2005).

The cross-country variance that cannot be explained by the contextual variables could be assigned to the campaign mobilization, or rather the lack of it, by parties and mass media. To examine these aspects, researchers use variables that include political interest, exposure to campaign, or appeal by main party (Franklin et al., 1996). Media coverage of EU affairs and the EP elections has been singled out as important influence on voter turnout and - at the same time - been blamed for providing too little information about the elections to the citizens. I utilize campaign mobilization and exposure to news regarding the elections as the main explanatory factors in this study.

Despite the situation changing since the first EP election, with media paying more attention to EU affairs (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; Schuck and de Vreese, 2011) and voters knowing more about the EU today, EU citizens still have little knowledge about the EU politics compared to their national politics, and they often see the EU affairs as irrelevant to their everyday lives. Voters also rarely have preferences for EU policies because they believe that they do not affect them (Mattila, 2003). All these aspects have an effect on turnout in the EP elections, but they do not explain it fully. In the rest of this study I search for additional explanations of voters' decision to vote in the EP elections, utilizing content of the media and exposure to it as one of the most prominent explanations.

2.4. Role of Media in the EP Elections

Media play a very important role in the democratic political process, especially during election campaigns. As Esser and D'Angelo (2006) state, "Election campaigns are a staple of modern democracies" and they receive much attention from the media (44). The EU strives to be a modern democracy but the media fall behind with their lack of campaign coverage which tends to leave voters uninformed about the election (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; Elenbaas et al., 2013).

The EU is a complex political entity that requires effective political communication to function in a proper and legitimate way. However, most of the communication produced by the EU serves only the elite since its content, language, and accessibility can be complicated and hard to understand for an ordinary citizen (Meyer, 1999; Peter, 2003; Schlesinger, 1999). On a national level, EU communication

usually originates from national political elites and often concentrates on domestic rather than EU-wide issues. Political communication between EU institutions and the public is one of the main functions of the democratic EU, and while media are the tool to make such a communication happen, they frequently fail at this task (Schuck and de Vreese, 2011; Trenz, 2004).

The study of media coverage of an event such as an EP election, and its effect on voting behavior, matters because media are the most important source for Europeans to get information about the EU (Special Eurobarometer 308). Availability of information is necessary for quality decision-making by both public and policy makers: for the public to vote for those who accurately represent their views, and for policy makers to respond to the peoples' needs (Norris, 2004).

Considering they are a part of the EU decision-making process, European citizens should be able to gain as much knowledge about the EU as they wish, in order to make an educated and reasonable choice when electing their country's representatives to the EP. High visibility of news about the EU in the media is thus desirable because this is the most important source of information for the public, particularly about remote issues such as the EP elections (de Vreese et al., 2006; Mughan and Gunther, 2000). According to the rational choice theory, voters see voting as an act with low benefits and high costs, especially when, as in the European elections, the benefits are hard to delineate. To boost the participation rate, the perceived benefits need to be increased and/or the costs decreased. Easier access to information - such as that obtained from media - can lower the costs associated with voting. Greater campaign coverage in national media could thus increase turnout as it would decrease the cost of voting by providing information to the citizens. More politically informed citizens are more likely to be interested in the matters of politics and elections and are then more likely to vote. This set of propositions forms the main idea behind this study. I will examine the links between these in the data analysis section.

2.5. Media Theory and News Coverage

Media play an important role in embracing a country's democracy as they publicize the opinions of political and economic elites. Many researchers have agreed that media have a positive impact on democratization and human development. To strengthen democracy and government's responsive to citizens, media need to provide plurality of opinion, serve as a watchdog for the government and a place for public debate, and to be easily accessible to the wider public (Elenbaas et al., 2013; Norris, 2004).

Despite the EP election not being a first-order election or being preceded by a highly visible campaign in the media, political scientists often study the media effects on voting in the EP elections. Since the elections are not salient, the media are likely to play an even greater role in this election than in national elections by providing information about issues, candidates, and voting procedures, that citizens are distanced from or have generally little knowledge about. Consequently, as the main hypothesis of this paper states, higher intensity of the EP election campaign and higher visibility of news about it could also increase turnout as voters would perceive the EP to be of greater importance (Banducci and Semetko, 2003; Banducci, 2005).

There is a variety of research of media coverage of EU issues and its effects on public opinion on issues such as European integration, EU enlargement, the 'Euro' currency union, and the benefits and effectiveness of the EU in general. The EU leaders cannot inform European citizens about its processes and policies on their own (Anderson and McLeod, 2004; Meyer, 1999; Morgan, 1995) and so have to rely "…on the media to indirectly strengthen its legitimacy by increasing citizens' awareness of its activities and policies" (de Vreese et al., 2005: 185).

Media can help increase not only public's knowledge but also its interest in the EU, and can also contribute to the formation of a common European identity (de Vreese and Semetko, 2004; de Vreese et al., 2006; Schuck and de Vreese, 2011). However, EU news can sometimes be very technical and complicated making it difficult for the public to understand and learn from. This is when stereotypes about the EU are created, for example the one about the EP setting standards for bent bananas (Bruter, 2004; de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006a: 421; Meyer, 1999; Morgan, 1995).

Research about the EU media coverage is necessary for learning about the functioning of its democratic processes and for the discussion of its communication and democratic deficits (de Vreese et al., 2005 and 2006: 478; see also Boomgaarden et al., 2013). It is important that citizens are informed because then they can make an educated decision in the EP election and thus participate in EU policy making. Following the arguments of rational choice and mobilization theories, high visibility of EU news in the media is desirable considering that it is very important source of information for the public (de Vreese et al., 2006; Mughan and Gunther, 2000; Norris, 2000; Peter, 2003; Prior 2005). By providing information about the EU and the EP election, media can not only help reduce the costs of voting but can also serve as mobilizing actors when, by intensively covering the EP elections, they assign importance to them (Baek, 2009).

Media tend to publish news about election campaigns when they feature tight competition and are well visible. However, as I outline on the following pages, parties and candidates rarely campaign for the EP elections as intensively as they do for national or local elections, so the news media have little incentive to cover it.

2.5.1. EP Election Campaigns

The intensity of campaign activity is closely linked to both voter turnout and news coverage about the election; if it is of high intensity, it can have a positive impact on citizens' likelihood to vote (Bowler and Farrell, 2011; Karp, Bowler and Banducci, 2003). It has been established that parties and candidates do not campaign for EP elections as much as they do in national or local election because the parties do not hold the EP election to be as important as a national election. Thus, they often devote little money, time, and effort to campaigning for the EP election.

Campaign styles and efforts vary across the EU member states. In countries with compulsory voting, campaign efforts are usually even lower and are targeted on specific candidates or parties since little effort is needed to bring voters to the polls (Bowler and Farrell, 2011). Additionally, the type of electoral system in use is linked to the intensity of campaigning: under the PR system, elections are generally more competitive and parties have a higher motivation to campaign since votes proportionally translate into seats (Karp et al., 2003). Campaigning is thus expected to be more intensive under the

PR system. Countries with candidate-based systems (Ireland, for example) can generate intense and individual mobilization; nevertheless, it has been shown that turnout is generally higher in countries with proportional electoral systems rather than plurality systems or candidate-based systems. Most countries in the EU use a PR system, so the electoral system as explanatory variable has very little power (Karp et al., 2003). Nevertheless, due to various country specifics of the electoral systems, the actual degree of proportionality differs even across PR systems and thus is often used in the analyses explaining voter turnout, as in this study.

Many have suggested that the problem of lower turnout may partially be caused by the lack of campaign and media coverage about the EU and the EP election. Even if there is some campaign and coverage, national issues play the main role in it and European issues are seen within the framework of national politics. People know very little about how the EP works, what it does, and who the MEPs are; political parties and mass media, although having the potential to improve this, do little to change this, by continually failing to engage the citizens (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; Elenbaas et al., 2013; Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010).

Mass media could be used as a tool to increase people's awareness of the EU and the EP elections, combatting low visibility of the EU and EP election campaign in the media, EP elections framed within domestic political affairs, lack of interest from citizens in the EU and the election, and consequently citizens' hesitation to go cast a vote. In the following section I examine the literature on news coverage and media effects and explore the ways in which the mass media could improve the current state of the EP election affairs.

2.5.2. News Coverage

Many studies examine the relationship between media and politics. News media play a prominent role during elections as the most common channel of communication between parties and voters. News media allow parties to reach a wide audience, including less partisan voters. There are many political and contextual factors that influence the amount of EU news coverage, and these vary among countries and although detailed explanation is beyond the scope of this study, awareness of these

factors helps explain the different levels of EU news coverage across the EU countries but also the varying effects of people's exposure to the media (Blumler, 1997; Boomgaarden et al., 2013; de Vreese, 2005; Mughan and Gunther, 2000; Norris, 2006; Schuck and de Vreese, 2011; Schuck et al., 2013; Peter, 2003).

The process of European integration is driven mainly by actions of national and European-level political elites, and their opinions concerning the EU have an impact on the EU news coverage. Higher levels of public satisfaction with domestic democracy, and that of the EU, increase EU news coverage and make it more prominent (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Peter and de Vreese, 2004; Peter, 2003).

Although media are acknowledged as an important source of information, they are often blamed for the lack of EU news and for creating a communications deficit, which along with other factors leads to democratic deficit (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006a; de Vreese, 2007; Norris, 2000; Schuck and de Vreese, 2011). Most of the studies agree that the coverage of EU issues in the news is generally very low and peaks only around important events (Boomgaarden et al., 2010 and 2013; de Vreese et al. 2005 and 2006; Peter 2003; Machill et al. 2006; Peter and de Vreese, 2004; Semetko et al., 2000).

Therefore, scholars examine media coverage generally, in 'routine' periods (Peter et al., 2003; Trenz, 2004), but more often concentrate their studies around important EU events, such as the EP election (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; de Vreese et al., 2006; de Vreese et al,. 2005; Peter et al,. 2004; Schuck et al., 2013), referenda (e.g. Danish referendum on Euro – de Vreese and Semetko, 2002 and 2004), EU enlargement (Schuck and de Vreese, 2006) or introduction of Euro in 1999 (de Vreese et al., 2001).

Some studies examine only the visibility of EU news (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; de Vreese et al., 2005), while others study its tone (Bruter, 2004; de Vreese and Semetko, 2002; Schuck et al., 2013) or the visibility along with prominence of specific EU topics (Peter et al., 2003, 2004; Peter and de Vreese, 2004; Schuck and de Vreese, 2011). Although the EU is not covered much in the news, when it is covered it is given high prominence, i.e. it is placed on the front page of a newspaper or at the beginning of the television newscast, or a large space or long time is devoted to it (Peter and de Vreese, 2004). When studying the tone of EU news, scholars have found that the EU news is generally negative or neutral toward the body and its representatives (de Vreese et al., 2006; de Vreese and Semetko, 2002; Peter et al., 2003).

The EU news also differs in the extent to which it actually talks about the EU or simply mentions it: there are numerous instances when the news item mentions the EU but this is often in connection to national issues and actors; fewer news items actually discuss an EU matter in great detail (de Vreese et al., 2005 and 2006; Peter et al., 2004; Semetko et al., 2000; Trenz, 2004).

2.5.3. EU News in Various Media Types

Media content and its effects vary across media types. Studies look into the differences in the effects of exposure to news in newspapers and on television, and between different types of newspapers, such as tabloid or quality, and television channels, such as public and commercial (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; de Vreese et al., 2006; Peter et al., 2003 and 2005; Schuck and de Vreese, 2011).

Nevertheless, it is not the actual type of the media outlet that matters but it is the content typical for each media type. Quality newspapers and public television channels tend to include more political and economic news as well as, in relation to this study, more news about the EU. Tabloid newspapers and commercial television channels, on the other hand, are likely to present more soft, sensational news, i.e. news that appeal to human interest. To support this argument, upon investigating the relationship between various media types, political knowledge, and participation in Denmark and The Netherlands, de Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006c) concluded that media had a positive effect on political knowledge and participation only when it contained a substantial amount of political news; meaning that exposure to quality news and public television, rather than tabloid news and commercial television, is likely to boost people's likelihood to vote (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006c; see also Newton, 1999). I find similar outcomes in this study.

Nevertheless, research indicates that newspapers tend to have more news about the EU than television. Additionally, more attention and effort is needed to follow news in newspapers as compared to television, which would suggest that by doing so, one learns more and can thus become more politically interested. Furthermore, while frequent television-watching may distract people from voting and politics in general, reading newspapers can make them more likely to vote (Esser and de Vreese, 2007).

When people watch television, they are often distracted in their ability to fully see and understand the message and, consequently, their preferences are not likely to be affected. Furthermore, people tend to trust news on television less than news in print media, which also affects whether one is influenced by the message or not.

Distinctions are also often made between quality and tabloid newspapers and between commercial and public television. Generally, quality newspapers and public television channels tend to contain more stories about the EU compared to tabloid newspapers and commercial television channels, respectively (Blumler, 1997; Boomgaarden et al., 2013; de Vreese et al., 2006; Peter et al., 2003; Peter and de Vreese, 2004; Schuck and de Vreese, 2011). The findings in the latter chapters in this study are in line with existing research.

While the news content of national media is important, it is not the only aspect to be considered when examining the effects of exposure to media. National media system, i.e. the broader context in which media operate, including the regulations, pressures, and accountabilities, also greatly influences the content of the media and its potential impact on voters' likelihood to vote.

2.5.4. Media Systems

When examining news coverage and its effects on voter behavior, one needs keep in mind that voters live in not only different electoral and political systems, but are also exposed to a variety of media systems. The EU news coverage varies greatly among member countries (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006b; Peter et al., 2004; Schuck et al., 2013; Semetko et al., 2000); knowing the political and economic context along with the national media systems is crucial to understanding the extent of and variations in media coverage between countries (de Vreese et al., 2001, 2006; Linek and Lyons, 2007; Peter, 2003; Peter et al., 2003; Semetko et al., 2000; Trenz, 2004).

There is a close connection between the political and media systems. Numerous issues need to be included when examining this connection, including news production (all factors involved in creating the message: e.g. political environment, media regulations, and journalistic integrity), content (what is actually broadcast or printed),

and audience (how people react to the messages) and, in this case, the impact of the news on the audience (Oates, 2008). It is beyond the scope of the current study to examine the process of news production, but both the content and audience are considered in this study.

The study of media systems is limited and often based only on a number of selected countries. Hallin and Mancini's work on media systems (2005) set the direction for consequent studies on this topic. Because media system classification in regards to all EU countries is slightly outdated and unclear, it is not directly utilized as a variable in this study. Nevertheless, familiarity with media systems is crucial for understanding the differences in EU news coverage and media effects across the countries. Hallin and Mancini (2005) outline four factors to consider when comparing media systems: (1) the development of media markets; (2) political parallelism; (3) the development of journalistic professionalism, and; (4) the degree and nature of state intervention in the media. The first of these factors, the development of media markets, is usually measured by newspaper circulation, while political parallelism is interpreted by the extent to which political actors influence media. The development of journalistic professionalism and the degree and nature of state intervention in the media are often legacies of countries' history and are reflected in the type of news in country's media outlets (Hallin and Mancini, 2005).

Hallin and Mancini (2005) developed three main models of media systems. First, is the polarized pluralist model, which is common in the southern Europe and involves more political organization-tied media than commercial and a strong role for the state. Second, is the democratic corporatist model found in northern Europe where commercial and state-tied media co-exist, and state has an active but legally limited role. Third, and lastly, the liberal model can be found in the UK and USA, based on market mechanism, commercial media, and a small role of state, with the media serving as the watchdog of the state (Oates, 2008). These models are not necessarily mutually exclusive as characteristics of each could be found in one country. In fact, these models are now slightly outdated as most modern, developed democracies have tended to shift toward the liberal, market-based model.

It is apparent that, although being applicable to many countries, these three models cannot explain the media structure in every single country. Nevertheless, they are a good starting point for a discussion about the differences in media across countries. There are different views on which media system is the best for a democratic

society; for example, the social responsibility model with public service broadcasting in the main role or the 'libertarian' theory with its free and private press (Baek, 2009: 377). In additional to the media system, the split of audience between public and private broadcasting, level of political parallelism in press, and laws on paid political advertising on television, all influence the amount and quality of information that the public receives through mass media (Baek, 2009).

Normally, it is assumed that public broadcasting, compared to commercial, gives more information about public affairs and politics in general; therefore, it lowers information costs to the public and can induce higher turnout. Commercial television stations, on the other hand, rely on income from advertising and have to deal with competition to obtain high ratings; consequently, they often offer only low quality programming and sensational news which has rather low impact on voters' behavior (Baek, 2009). Similarly, with higher levels of political parallelism (aka 'partisan press') in a country, there is likely to be higher turnout since in this way, political parties are able to give more information to voters through mass media (Baek, 2009: 379). Some media systems allow for paid political advertising on television, whether public or commercial, while others do not. Where political advertising is allowed, it enables the public to access information easily and thus voter turnout tends to be higher (Baek, 2009).

Keeping in mind the media systems along with the content of the news, on the following pages I outline several theories on media effects, each proposing different direction and extent of effects of exposure to media.

2.5.5. Theories of Media Effects

Media can be a very powerful tool to influence public in a certain way. The discussion about the possible effects of media exposure is extensive although inconclusive, with one side proposing negative effects of media leading to disengagement of people from politics (video malaise), while the other side suggesting that information in media leads to positive effects on political participation (cognitive mobilization). The video malaise theory suggests that media drive citizens away from voting by covering politics unfavorably and creating distrust and cynicism toward not

only media outlets but also politics and political elites (Baek, 2009; de Vreese and Semetko, 2002; Newton, 1999; Norris, 2000).

The cognitive mobilization theory, on the other hand, proposes that the information in media make people more likely be interested in politics and to vote (Baek, 2009; de Vreese and Semetko, 2002; Newton, 1999; Norris, 1996 and 2006). Numerous studies, based mainly in the USA, have found that exposure to newspapers and television leads to increases in turnout and voters' level of political knowledge, and is also likely to alter their opinions and preferences or reinforce pre-existing preferences (Della Vigna and Kaplan, 2006; Gerber, Karlan, and Bergan, 2006; Goldstein and Freedman, 2002; Iyengar and Simon, 2000). Newspapers, rather than television, have been found to be positively related to participation in election (Eveland and Scheufele, 2000; Scheufele, 2002). In a study on media exposure of young people and their turnout in the EP election, Esser and de Vreese (2007) found that mass media and messages sent during election campaigns played a considerable role in engaging people in the election and politics and that, indeed, "…exposure to traditional news sources such as newspapers or television news […] contribute positively and significantly to EP turnout." (Esser and de Vreese, 2007: 1210).

The cognitive mobilization theory works alongside the rational choice theory. People are the most likely to vote when the benefits outweigh the costs. Considering that, especially in the case of EP elections, it is nearly impossible to increase the benefits of voting, the costs need to be decreased. Among the costs of voting is the time and effort it takes for a citizen to obtain information about the mechanics of the election process, such as where the polling booths are and how to obtain a voting ballot, and deciding which parties and candidates to vote for. By having this information readily available, the costs of voting could be decreased. News media, the source of information people use the most (Special Eurobarometer 308), provide the most suitable tool for obtaining such information.

The mobilization theory of voter turnout now comes into play. Apart from providing information and decreasing the costs of voting, by writing about the election and candidates, the media give a message that they believe the election is important and make it salient in the country's news agenda. When people see the national media discussing the EP elections, they get the idea that the election matters and are consequently more likely to vote than if there is no or little mention of the elections in the media. Nevertheless, most of the news across the EU gives no or very little

information about the election or the EU in general. This could in turn be explained by the lack of campaigning by parties and candidates, which completes a negative cycle: parties and candidates do not campaign enough; therefore, media do not cover the elections enough, and, consequently, citizens do not have enough information about the elections, do not think they are important, and do not vote (Banducci, 2005; Schmitt, 2005; Toka, 2007).

The majority of scholars agree that media and their coverage of EU have an effect on the public opinion (Bruter, 2004; Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Peter, 2003: 8) and, indirectly, on voter turnout (de Vreese et al., 2005 and 2006; de Vreese and Semetko, 2002 and 2004; de Vreese, 2005; Norris, 2000). Many also agree that although media is an important source of information, they are often rightly blamed for the lack of EU news (Semetko, de Vreese and Peter, 2000; Banducci, 2005; de Vreese, 2007; Toka, 2007).

Apart from the lack of electoral campaigning, the low media coverage is also a result of the lack of EU's external communication; referred to as the communication deficit, and closely related to the democratic deficit (Peter and de Vreese, 2004). It is unlikely if there was actually a large-scale political discussion about the EU that the media would not cover it. The studies on EU news coverage agree that the handling of EU issues in the news is generally very low and peaks only around important events, such as European elections, the introduction of Euro, or referenda about EU issues, but that it has increased in the past decades (Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart, de Vreese, and Schuck, 2010; de Vreese et al., 2006; Peter and de Vreese, 2004; Semetko et al., 2000).

When examining the effects of media coverage of election campaigns on voter behavior, both media context and use need to be considered. Context of media encompasses the country's media system and news content, including visibility and tone of news. Media use shows the patterns of exposure of individuals to media outlets. When only one of these variables is used (which is often the case in media effects research) the picture one gets is not precise, as it misses out an important component of media influence. Thus, the analysis in this study uses a combination of both content and exposure measures.

In research examining media effects in the EU and EP elections context, the most often used measure is the visibility of EU news, measured as the ratio of news about the EU and EU-related issues among other political and economic news. The tone, or valence, of the EU news (i.e. how the news evaluates the EU and its

institutions) is also frequently used, as I discuss on the following pages, especially when predicting attitudes toward the EU or participation in the EP elections. Finally, the European nature of the news, depicting the extent to which the EU news actually discusses the EU, has also been proven to matter (de Vreese et al., 2006).

2.5.6. Tone of the News

The possibly diverse effect of news with a different tone (i.e. news that evaluates political actors or institutions in a certain way) has also been widely discussed. The findings are nevertheless inconclusive, with some commentators arguing that the tone does not matter, while others seek to demonstrate different effects of positive or negative news.

Examining the tone of the news in an EU referendum campaign, Schuck and de Vreese (2009) found that by increasing the perception of the likelihood of approving the referendum, exposure to positive news about the particular issue mobilized those in opposition to this issue to vote against it in the referendum. Similarly, Martin (2004 and 2008) found that it is negative, rather than positive, messages that create more interest and involvement in campaigns by mobilizing those who do not agree with the negative message. Applying this logic to the EU news, exposure to positive news about a certain party or candidate may mobilize opponents of the party or candidate to vote for someone else or, vice versa, negative news about a particular party or candidate may mobilize supporters to vote for them.

In their experimental study on the effects of positive and negative news framing public perception of EU enlargement, Schuck and de Vreese (2009) show that exposure to positive information increased people's positive opinion of the enlargement, and vice versa, confirming findings from previous research (see also de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006a).

Others however suggest that any tone of the news, as long as there is some, helps those exposed to the news memorize it more easily. This can be true for negative news as well: "Negative information is thought to be more attention grabbing. By stimulating anxiety, negative ads may encourage greater attention [to the message in the news]." (Marcus et al., 2000). Also, negative news provides a kind of evaluative

framework that allows the voter to classify the information and thus recall in memory easily when needed (Feldman, 2011).

This is a similar mechanism to that at work for people with strong partisanship when they evaluate information they learn from the media based on their party preferences. In both cases, a person exposed to the news finds it easier to understand the message. Claibourn's empirical analysis (2012) of the effects of news with various tones on understanding of the campaign message shows slightly mixed results. While positive news has a positive impact on voters understanding of the message, the effects of exposure to negative news rarely reach levels of conventional statistical significance, while, in some cases, the effects of negative news on the understanding of ad messages are even stronger than the effects of positive news.

As this brief overview of the impact of tone of the news on media effects shows, the findings from existing research are inconclusive, often contradicting each other. While some see the tone of the news having a positive relationship with the media effects, others argue that the tone does not play a significant role. With these findings in mind, I aim to shed more light on this relationship in the context of EP elections by examining the effects of exposure to positive and negative EU news on voting.

2.6. Central and Eastern European Countries

My priority in this study is to compare the media effects on voting behavior between Western EU member states and Central and Eastern ones. I also refer to the latter group as post-Communist countries as, apart from their geographical location, this is another aspect they have in common. In the following paragraphs, I outline the historical, cultural, and political reasons, stemming from the Communist legacy, behind considering the CEE countries as a distinct group.

Participation or the lack thereof, in elections and other acts of civic engagement in CEE countries needs to be explained differently compared to other young democracies where usually, after the fall of a non-democratic regime, people are eager to exercise their right to vote (Hughes and Guerrero, 2009). Voting was compulsory under the Communist regime and although the extent of freedom and fairness could be discussed, the fact remains that citizens were required to vote under that system of

government. Consequently, despite being enthused about the democratic elections in their countries, many voters have been discouraged from voting by memory of compulsory voting under the Soviet rule. In many CEE countries, citizens exercised their franchise in the founding elections of their new countries, but later became dissatisfied with the way affairs were being run and turned away from voting. This lack of voting tradition results in very low voter turnout rates. In an attempt to break from the Communist past, no CEE country has compulsory voting (Fauvelle-Aymar and Stegmaier, 2008; Schmitt, 2005).

Disappointment about the way that the political and social scene has developed since the fall of the Communist regime is among the main factors contributing to the lack of interest and participation in politics among the citizens of CEE countries. The issues that prevailed in the politics of these countries during Communist regime, and shortly after its fall, such as corruption, 'friendship networks' among politicians, and the governing parties' attempts to gather power have persisted till this day. Over the past decades, these aspects have been accompanied by political instability and party volatility, which has resulted in deepening citizens' mistrust of political and social organizations and their representatives (Flickinger and Studlar, 2007; Gagatek, 2009; Howard, 2002).

While it could be expected that these attitudes might disappear with a generational shift, the post-Communist political systems have retained all the characteristics outlined in the previous paragraph, not giving their citizens a chance to disconnect from the past. All these factors then lead to low participation in civil organizations, i.e. a weak civil society, as well as low voter turnout rates, both of which are necessary to build and sustain a legitimate democratic system (Howard, 2002).

As suggested above, CEE countries have generally lower voter turnout both in national and the EP elections compared to the Western EU countries, but the gap is much greater for the EP elections[3]. The even lower turnout in the EP elections suggests that there are certain features specific to the EP elections that dissuade CEE citizens from casting their votes. The context of the EU, low-profile election campaigns, and the lack of public discussion about the EU have been mentioned among the factors that fail to mobilize CEE citizens (Franklin and Wessels, 2010).

[3] See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the turnout in the EP elections.

The voting behavior of CEE citizens in the EP elections has challenged the previously established 'first-election boost' theory. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this theory sees turnout in EP elections likely to increase when the election takes place for the first time in the country, because of the initial enthusiasm about EU membership (Franklin, 2006; Mattila, 2003). This hypothesis is well-supported by evidence from the established EU member states, but it does not hold true for the CEE countries. As a group, the overall turnout in the CEE countries increased slightly from 26% in 2004 to 28% in 2009, and then sank again to 27% in 2014[4]. There are nevertheless great differences in turnout between the individual CEE countries, implying that caution should be paid when treating these countries as a single group[5].

Some propose that in 2004, voters in the new member states suffered from voter fatigue, as only a year or less previously many of them voted in referenda on EU accession, and several of the states had also held general or presidential elections. For many voters and political elites in the CEE countries, the EU accession was an issue of the highest priority; once it was achieved the political elites no longer considered it necessary to promote the EU. They therefore put little effort into creating a salient campaign that would mobilize the voters prior to the 2004 EP elections; consequently, the citizens did not find a strong enough reason to go to the polls in their first EP elections (Franklin, 2007; Lodge, 2005).

This trend, however, continued in 2009 as well. Voter fatigue may have played a role again, as most of the CEE countries held national, presidential, or local elections close before or soon after the EP elections: namely, Bulgaria (national election in July 2009), the Czech Republic (early national election planned for October 2009, postponed to June 2010), Estonia (local election in October 2009), Hungary (national election in April 2010, local in October 2010), Latvia (national election in October 2010), Lithuania (national election in October 2009, presidential election in May 2009), Poland (presidential election in June 2010), Romania (national election in November 2008), Slovakia (presidential election in April 2009) and Slovenia (national election in September 2008). Being asked to come to the polls relatively often makes people less likely to vote in some or all of these elections. People are likely to pick which election they intend to participate in, and when presented with a choice to vote in either in the

[4] See Figure 4.2 for the overview of the turnout trend in the EP elections.

[5] See Figure 4.1 for a discussion of the turnout of individual CEE countries in the EP elections.

EP election - about which they have little idea - or in a general election which decides who will run their country, most would clearly choose the latter (Gagatek, 2009).

Furthermore, the lack of news coverage and public debate about the EU and the elections was typical in all CEE countries. Where public debate took place, it was framed in a national context and was generally negative, often describing the elected members of the EP as receiving a lot of money for very little work or outlining the pressures and regulations imposed by the EU on these countries. This type of news undoubtedly discourages voters from going to the polls to vote in the EP elections (Gagatek, 2009).

There are numerous other plausible reasons for why the turnout in European elections in the CEE countries is so low. One of then is the remoteness of the EU and its perceived lack of importance in people's daily lives. The CEE countries are geographically farther away from Brussels than their Western counterparts, which only add to the CEE citizens' perception that their countries do not play an important role in Europe (Batory, 2005). This perception is closely linked with people's lack of knowledge about the EU. Being EU members for a shorter period of time than the Western countries, people in the CEE EU member states tend to know less about the EU and its policies. Both lack of knowledge about the EU and the perceived absence of its relevance can lead to people not being interested in the organization, and, thus, not supporting it. Lack of interest in and support of the EU is linked to the low turnout in these countries. Research on non-voters in the EP elections has shown that the major reason for not voting in the CEE countries was lack of support for or interest in the EU; this was rarely mentioned as a reason by non-voters in the Western EU countries (Gagatek, 2009; Schmitt, 2005).

Furthermore, several CEE countries have relatively small populations, which results in low number of MEPs: Estonia, Latvia, and Slovenia each had less than 10 representatives to the EP in 2009, and Lithuania and Slovakia had 12 and 13 respectively. If citizens of the above mentioned countries are aware of the small number of their representatives in the EP, they are likely to see the elections as irrelevant and consider that their MEPs do not have much say in the EP. This is then likely to further discourage them from voting (Brinar, 2005).

As outlined at the beginning of this section, the political environment in CEE countries remains under the influence of their Communist past, and connects to still-present corruption and bribery scandals and instable governments. For example, just

before the 2009 EP elections, governmental crises and corruption scandals were on the agenda in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, and Slovakia. This may have dissuaded many voters from casting their vote simply because they did not want to get involved in a political landscape about which they had heard so much negativity. The volatile and corrupted political scene is reflected in voters' distrust in politics and politicians and has projected into the perception of EU politics as well (Gagatek, 2009; Guerra, 2010; Schmitt, 2005).

Distrust in media, and the belief that they are influenced by the government and political elites, is also widespread among citizens of the post-Communist countries, again stemming from the Communist legacy. Because of this distrust, media have a lower potential to impact people's decision to vote. On the other hand, people in the CEE countries tend to know less about the EU than their Western counterparts; consequently, even a little information about the EU and the elections in the media can make a great difference in attracting people to the polls (Guerra, 2010; Schmitt, 2005).

Although media were an important tool of Communist propaganda, by expanding the media market to private domestic and foreign owners, mass media has increasingly gained popularity. However, comparing the news coverage of the 2003 referenda on EU accession to that of the 2004 EP elections, it is clear that the media paid more attention to the referenda than the election. It is apparent that once they had secured their places as EU members, political elites, citizens, as well as media, in CEE countries lost interest in EU affairs (Fauvelle-Aymar and Stegmaier, 2008).

I examine the diverse media effects between the Western and the CEE member states, following on the work of Franklin and Wessels (2010) who "…unwrapped [a] black box…" of post-Communist countries which "…were thought to be inexplicably low turnout countries…" and found two equally inscrutable "…black boxes of low mobilization and lack of habitual voting." (Franklin and Wessels, 2010: 17). Trying to explain the low turnout in the EP elections, they searched for additional variables and found that mobilization by mass media and political parties could be the key to understanding the post-Communist low turnout phenomenon. Uutilizing media content and voters' exposure to the news content as indicators of the strength and intensity of the election campaign, I seek to 'unwrap the black box' of low mobilization. In so doing, I aim to contribute to the literature on media effects and voter turnout in the CEE countries.

2.7. Research questions

The research reviewed on the previous pages raises many questions, some of which I examine in the rest of this study. Primarily, I aim to show the impact of exposure to news about the EU on one's likelihood to vote in the EP elections. Given the large turnout gap between Western EU countries and the CEE member states, I will search for different patterns of media effects in these two groups. I will also compare the differences in the effects of exposure to various types of media outlets. The literature suggests there are variations in the size and direction of the effects of exposure to newspapers and television channels, quality and tabloid newspapers, and public and commercial television.

In the first part of the analysis section, I test whether more frequent exposure to media outlets with higher visibility of EU news increases voter participation in the 2009 EP elections. The average visibility of EU news across the EU is nearly 36%, meaning over one third of news were about the EU, but the range across all members states is from 14% to 62%, signifying great variance across the countries (see Figure 2).

Three theories underpin mu expectations. The cognitive mobilization theory of media effects suggests that by providing information about the elections, media help decrease the costs of voting, and are thus likely to help boost the turnout. The rational choice and mobilization theories of voter turnout also propose that by reporting news about the elections, media stress the importance of the elections and can help mobilize citizens. I therefore anticipate findings that respondents who are more often exposed to media with higher visibility of EU news are more likely to vote in the EP election.

I am especially interested in the different patterns of media effects in the Western and the CEE EU member states. While there is virtually no literature on the media effects in the CEE countries, the very low turnout in these countries along with their unique characteristics indicate that also media effects may show different patterns there compared to the Western EU countries. To illustrate this, in 2009, turnout in the EP elections was 47% in Western EU and 28% in the CEE member states and the average visibility of EU news in the Western countries was 38% and in the CEE countries this was nearly 31% (see Figures 2 and 3). The post-communist legacy of lack

of trust to media and to politicians, of party identification and political participation all lead to the assumption that media effects are weaker in the CEE countries. The size of the effects will nevertheless be affected by the visibility of the EU news in the media; low visibility would lead to practically non-existent effects while higher visibility could boost the effects.

Researchers have found diverse effects of exposure to various media types. Newspapers generally contain a higher content of political, and thus EU, news, so stronger effects are generally reported for the exposure to newspapers compared to television. Similarly, tabloid newspapers and commercial television channels tend to concentrate on sensational news and report less serious, political news, so the effects of exposure to these channels are likely to be weaker compared to quality newspapers and public television channels, respectively.

The second part of the analysis studies the role of the tone of the EU news in the above question. The tone of the news summarizes how the news evaluates the EU, whether it refers to the EU, its representatives and institutions in a positive or negative way. The majority of the EU news is neutral, and the positive or negative news items make up between only 0.2% to 6% of all EU news across countries (see Figure 4). The effects of exposure to news with a specific tone have been discussed, with many suggesting that positive news mobilizes while negative news demobilizes, others saying that any tone in the news makes the information more easily memorable, thus any tone of the news would be likely to mobilize people to vote.

My assumptions are based on the latter approach and I expect to find little or no difference between the effects of exposure to positive and negative news as they both provide information about the EU and the elections, and, in this way, help reduce the costs of voting, thus making people more likely to vote. Additionally, as the proportion of positive and negative EU news is very low across the national media in the EU, I do not expect the tone of the news to play a significant role in the media-turnout relationship.

As in the first part of the analysis, I will compare the media effects between Western and CEE EU member states. There is no existing research on this particular issue, so my expectations are in line with those outlined in the above paragraphs. Due to the nature of CEE countries and their people's lack of trust in media, I expect weaker media effects in these countries with the tone of the news playing insignificant role in this relationship.

I will also examine the role of the tone of the news in relation to effects of exposure to various media types. I expect to find same results as to the first research question: when accounting for the tone of news, no matter whether it is positive or negative, exposure to newspapers, especially quality newspapers, is more likely to have a positive effect on turnout than exposure to television. Similarly, exposure to positive, negative or neutral news in tabloid newspapers and on commercial television channels is likely to have weak or negative effects on turnout compared to quality newspapers and public television channels, respectively.

Before starting with the data analysis, I first present the overview of the data and methods used in this study. In the following data and measurement chapter, I describe the datasets used in this study, including the voter study, media study and contextual components of the PIREDEU project. I outline how these datasets are matched and which variables are used. I include basic descriptive statistics for some of the variables and describe the calculation of the main variable in question, the content exposure, along with the numerous alterations of this variable. Finally, I outline the method used here and explain why it stands out among other methods utilized in the studies of media effects on voter participation.

CHAPTER 3

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

In this chapter, I will first tap into the various issues in the survey research of media effects including selective exposure, overreporting of exposure, and the lack of studies using media content. I will then describe the different datasets, outline how they are matched and which variables are used. I will also explain the calculation of my main variable of interest, the content exposure. Finally, I explain the statistical method used here and compare them to other methods that are utilized in the studies of media effects on voter participation.

3.1. Research Design

The study of media effects has, for a long time, been criticized for unresolved faults, mostly relating to the research design. While to an outside observer it is probably clear that media must have some impact on people's views due to their widespread presence and varied content, researchers repeatedly fail to reach a consensus (Barabas and Jerit, 2009; Bartels, 1993). The fact that a similar message can be found in studies 16 years apart suggests that, despite the efforts made, media effects research has progressed very little in the past two decades. The use of different research designs and methods seems to be behind the varying directions and sizes of media effects found across studies (Banducci, Barabas, Jerit, Pollock, Schoonvelde and Stevens, 2014; Bartels, 1993).

Media effects are generally studied using experiments, whether in the laboratory (e.g. Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon and Valentino, 1994; Iyengar, 1991) or in the field (e.g. Gerber and Green, 2000), using aggregate-level data (e.g. Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson, 2004) and individual-level survey data (e.g. Elenbaas et al., 2013; de Vreese, 2005; de Vreese and Semetko, 2002, 2004; de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006a, 2006c; Schuck and de Vreese, 2006, 2009; Peter, 2003). While experimental research shows the impact of exposure to media on people's behavior and views, and avoids some of the fall-backs of survey research, it does remove respondents from their normal context and lacks external validity (Barabas and Jerit, 2009; Bartels, 1993; Prior, 2009). Aggregate-level studies examining country-level media content and public opinion tend to be too high level to be able to distinguish between the actual media effects and those of, for example, an actual event (Bartels, 1993; Prior, 2009). Survey research is the most widely used to identify the effects of exposure to a certain message on people's opinions and behavior, but the level of statistical significance, direction, and size of the effects vary greatly between individual studies (Banducci et al., 2014; Bartels, 1993).

Furthermore, survey research faces great problems relating to selective exposure, overreporting of the exposure by respondents, and lack of direct links between the exposure and the media content. Selective exposure refers to the impact of pre-existing knowledge and views on people's selection of the media outlets that they read or watch. In other words, people are likely to read the newspaper that shares their views. The effects of exposure to these media outlets - for example, on vote choice - are then likely to be endogenous to the effects of the pre-existing beliefs. Similarly, people with higher interest in politics are generally more likely to actually be exposed to political news in the media, especially in newspapers, but at the same time these people are also more likely to participate in elections (Banducci et al. 2014; Bennett and Iyengar, 2008; Gvirsman, 2014; Price and Zaller; 1993).

While I acknowledge the potentially harmful impact of selective exposure on media effects studies, it is based on several assumptions that may not hold true in every country and for every respondent, especially when studying mainstream national media. Selective exposure assumes that different media outlets have unique, clearly identified, views behind their reporting. Although this may be true for news outlets in many countries, it certainly does not seem to be the case everywhere, especially for some of the most popular, mainstream national media, for example, that found in the Czech Republic. Selective exposure also assumes that people prefer to read or watch news that

aligns with their own beliefs. Again, though this is undoubtedly correct for many respondents, some people may like to read articles that oppose their ideas, whether to get a different perspective or strengthen one's opposition to those views. Finally, the correlations charts (Table D.3) shows very low correlation value (0.25) between the political interest variable and content exposure, the main media variable of interest. Due to these reasons, the problem of selective exposure should be approached differently in each study.

I am certain that selective exposure has little impact on the findings in this study due to the messages examined and the media outlets used. I study the visibility of news about the EU and its tone in each country in the three national newspapers with the highest circulation and the two most popular national television channels. In some countries (for example, the United Kingdom), the polarisation of the main national newspapers is relatively high with specific newspapers linked to a particular political party. This, however, tends to be an exception across the EU rather than the rule, especially in countries with a higher number of parties in the government. Television channels tend to be polarised to an even smaller degree. Furthermore, even if there are links between media outlets and political parties, it is likely to have little relationship to the amount of news about the EU that these news outlets publish. It may affect the tone of the news about the EU, but not really its actual visibility. Finally, even if there are patterns in the EU news content over time in various news outlets, and people are aware of it, it is beyond their control and knowledge to be aware of exactly what the news content will be on a particular day in a particular news outlet. For these reasons, as long as the factors influencing citizens' decision to vote are included in the model (such as party identity, interest in politics, or engagement in the election campaign) selective exposure does not play a significant role in this study.

Another issue that survey-based media effects studies must face is the overreporting of exposure by respondents (Dilliplane, Goldman and Mutz, 2013; Price and Zaller, 1993; Prior, 2009, 2009b; Vavreck, 2007). This is a relatively common occurrence in survey research as respondents have the tendency to overreport much political and non-political behavior. The act of voting is an example of this, as mentioned earlier, as well as going to church or participating in protests. Some behavior, such as turnout, can be checked against the true values, but there is no straightforward way of checking the true exposure. Respondents' self-reported exposure

has on several occasions been compared to the independent monitoring data of media companies, but even those figures are error-prone estimates (Prior, 2009, 2012).

Social desirability tends to serve as the explanation for overreporting of some of the behaviors, for example that of turnout, but in the case of media exposure, the difficulty to recall the correct answer has been put forward as the main reason (Price and Zaller, 1993; Prior, 2009). Often people cannot remember the exact details of the event or time they are asked about or may need to make an extra effort to interpret the question they are asked. For example, when asked, "How often in a typical week do you watch political programs on national network television?" and given options, "Never, rarely, sometimes, or often?" respondents have to make an effort to comprehend the question. They have to think about what 'a typical week' means to them, decipher the context of 'political program' and 'national network television', and interpret the frequency categories. Consequently, lacking motivation to give the correct answer, respondents are likely to make a guess and give an estimate of their exposure which tends to be higher than the true exposure. The accuracy of respondents' answers is therefore dependent to a great extent on how the question is asked. Although great developments have been made in the construction of the survey questions, they have yet to solve the overreporting problem (Dilliplane, 2013; Price and Zaller, 1993; Prior, 2009, 2013).

If all respondents overreported the exposure at the same rate, the statistical analysis would be able to make correction for this. Nevertheless, different people tend to overreport to different levels; for example, younger, more educated and politically interested respondents tend to overreport at a higher rate (Prior, 2009; Vavreck, 2007). Consequently, media effects may in fact be a result of the different degrees of overreporting rather than the actual differences in exposure and the effects (Prior, 2009).

The questions about media exposure used in this study ask each respondent, "In a typical week, how many days do you watch the following news programmes?", and, "In a typical week, how many days do you read the following newspapers?" They are then presented with the names of the country's two main evening newscasts (one on a public channel and one on commercial) and the names of the country's most popular newspapers, (two quality and one tabloid). Although respondents need to evaluate what 'a typical week' means to them, there should be no uncertainties about the specific media outlets and a programs they are asked about or about expressing the frequency of

exposure, thus making the recall easier. Additionally, I include age, education, and interest in politics in my model in order to check for the impact of these.

One additional critique of survey research on media effects revolves around the lack of use of media content in addition to the exposure. Including content in the research design enables researchers to link respondents' exposure to the content to which they were likely to be exposed, thus bringing important advantages to the media research (Banducci et al., 2014; Barabas and Jerit, 2009). The datasets used in this study allow me to link individual's exposure to a specific media outlet with the content in the same outlet. This enables me to create a unique measure of 'content exposure'. I will now describe the datasets used and steps carried out to create this measure.

3.2. Data

To investigate the above-described hypotheses, I use datasets developed within the framework of PIREDEU, Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union, funded by the European Union's FP 7 program. I use the voter survey data for the 27 EU countries from Voter Study part of the 2009 European Election Study (EES 2009; van Egmond et al. 2009) and media content analysis data from the Media Study (Schuck et al. 2010). Apart from these two datasets, PIREDEU also includes data on party manifestos, survey data on MEP candidates, and contextual data. Several variables included in this study come from the contextual dataset.

The magnitude of the PIREDEU datasets and their comparability across all EU countries offer researchers a unique opportunity to study elections, voting behavior and parties across the whole EU. This is especially important for the study of CEE countries because data, particularly on media content and exposure, comparable across all CEE countries are very rare.

Before looking further into the datasets, explanation is needed on the number of countries included in this study. Although there were 27 EU countries participating in the 2009 EP elections, data for the Belgian regions of Flanders and Wallonia were collected separately, creating 28 political contexts. In this study, as well as in the majority of research about the EU, 28 political contexts are generally employed due to

the different political systems in use in the two regions in Belgium (Hobolt and Spoon, 2010). Dutch is spoken in Flanders and French in Wallonia, and different parties run for office in these regions. Furthermore, due to the different languages spoken in the regions, different media outlets were collected and examined in the content analysis.

3.2.1. Voter Study

The Voter Study was carried out during four weeks after the EP elections in June 2009, starting on the first working day after the EP elections (4 to 7 June 2009). It consists of independently-drawn samples of about 1,000 respondents in each of the 27 EU member states, and approximately 500 respondents for each of the Belgian regions Flanders and Wallonia. The surveys were translated from the English version into the relevant national languages, resulting in surveys with identical questions, wording, and question order which enabled subsequent collection of national, international, and historically comparable data for all EU member states.

The survey contains 120 questions about a variety of topics, including the most important problem facing respondents country, media exposure, involvement in election campaign, attitudes toward government and politics in general, voting, political parties and party choice, economy, knowledge about and attitudes toward the EU, and demographics (PIREDEU). Data collection was done by phone interview, but in seven countries (specifically, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) to achieve a representative sample 70% of interviews were carried out in person ‘face-to-face’ and 30% by phone (EES 2009; van Egmond et al. 2009).

3.2.2. Media Study

The Media Study dataset offers a unique overview of news content measured at the same time across 28 media systems, enabling research into numerous aspects of media and news content. The ability to match this dataset with other datasets from the PIREDEU study opens up even greater opportunity for media research. Similar datasets

are available as a part of the European Election Study (EES) series for the previous EP elections, allowing for a time-series analysis.

The 2009 Media Study analyzes the content of three newspapers and two evening news programs on television channels in each EU country[6] during three weeks before the European elections. It examines national television and newspapers because these media are regularly mentioned as the most important sources of information about the EU for European citizens (Special Eurobarometer 308). In each country, the main national evening news broadcasts of the most widely watched public and commercial television stations are included, making up in total 58 television channels. Furthermore, two quality and one tabloid newspaper are analyzed in each country, making up in total 84 newspapers. The newspapers chosen had the highest circulation in the country, judged separately for quality and tabloid newspapers, and the television news had the highest viewership in a country, judged separately for public and commercial channels. These media outlets aim to provide a comprehensive image about the news coverage across the EU. The relevant news media were collected either digitally (TV and newspapers) or as hardcopies (newspapers) by research teams at the University of Exeter and University of Amsterdam.

After all material was collected, it was distributed among two teams totaling 58 coders trained specifically for this study. The majority of coders were citizens of the countries for which they were coding the material and all were native speakers of the respective languages. Following the training, but before the actual coding commenced, inter-coder reliability tests were carried out on all coders and satisfactory results returned. The coding was done electronically using an online survey and database developed specifically for the study, which allowed for automatic and real-time storage of all data, ease in following the coding progress, and immediate identification of any problems that might arise (Schuck et al. 2010).

The coding unit is a news story, defined separately for newspapers and television (see Appendix 1). All news stories from television newscasts were coded. A selection of news was coded from the newspapers, including all news stories on the main page, all

[6] As mentioned earlier, Belgium is treated as two media systems i.e. Wallonia and Flanders. There are three newspapers in each country and two television channels in most countries except for Germany (four television channels), Slovenia, and Spain (three television channels) and Luxemburg (one television channel). For the analysis in this paper, I used two television channels for all countries (except for Luxemburg that has only one) because the additional channels in the three countries mentioned did not add statistically significant explanatory power to the analysis. The list of outlets can be found in Schuck et al. (2010).

news stories on one randomly selected page, and all 'EU stories' and 'EP election stories' from the whole newspaper. To qualify as an EU story in a newspaper, "…the EU or any EU institution, policy or synonym had to be mentioned at least once in the story. In order to be classified as EU election story, the election or the campaign had to be mentioned explicitly at least once in the story." (Schuck et al. 2010: 6). It was the coders' task to select the news stories to be coded based on these conditions and detailed instructions provided in a codebook.

The topics examined are similar to those in previous European Election media studies: Europeanness of news coverage, agenda setting, economic voting, framing and mobilization (Schuck et al. 2010). All selected news stories were coded for a set of variables, including the type, length, and placement of the news story, its location, and main topic. If the story was about a specified topic (including European integration, environment, and globalization) additional items were coded, including evaluation of the situation described in the news and assignment of responsibility for the situation. Some coding questions were identical to those surveyed in the Voter Study, enabling a variety of research involving both datasets. The common variables include the most important problem facing a country, evaluation of national government and the EU, and topics involving economy, environment and immigration.

The stories classified as EU stories were coded for an additional set of variables such as the actors in the story and their evaluation, EU-specific topics, whether the story evaluated the EU or EP positively or negatively, the potential enlargement to Turkey and Croatia, or whether the story included a reference to a conflict, responsiveness of the EU, and benefits or disadvantages of EU membership. Additionally, stories about the EP election or the campaign were coded for extra variables, including whether the story mentioned polls, talked about the expected turnout at the EP elections, or included reference to the role of media in the election campaign.

The coding data were consequently collated, cleaned by the two teams, and made available to the public on the PIREDEU website. Without any doubt, the Media Study data are unique and present a valuable contribution to media research. There are, nevertheless, some aspects of the data collection that may have an impact on the quality of the data, particularly the selection of the stories to be coded, the different selection method between newspapers and television, and the human factor of the coders.

Different selection criteria applied to newspapers and television. While the entire television newscasts were coded, only a selection of pages and news items was coded in

the newspapers. Practical limitations did not allow for coding the entire newspapers as these can consist of more than 50 pages in some countries (Boomgaarden et al., 2013). For newspapers, all stories on the front page, all stories on one randomly chosen page, and all stories mentioning the EU or the EP were to be coded. The randomly chosen page and all the EU and EP stories were to be selected from specific sections of the newspapers, including political, news, editorial, and business or economy sections. Such a method does allowed the coders to obtain the total number of the EU news stories, but is does not give a clear idea of the proportion of EU news out of all news in the newspaper. Coding all news on the front page helped identify the extent of prominence that was assigned to the news stories. However, coding a randomly chosen page seems to add very little to the data.

The other issue is that for television, the entire newscasts were coded, excluding the weather forecast and sports. This clearly biases the sample toward the television news, not necessarily in the total number of stories coded, as television newscasts include less news items than a newspaper, but in the relative proportions. For television, one can safely say that, for example, across the EU, 25% of all news stories on the main evening newscasts were about the EU. For newspapers, however, it can only be assumed that 25% of all coded news stories were about the EU. Additionally, keeping in mind the story selection method and the fact that all EU news within the newspaper was coded, this is likely to bias the percentages toward newspapers.

There are also great differences in the numbers of stories coded and the numbers of stories deemed as being about the EU across countries. A great proportion of these differences is caused by the different levels of attention paid to the EU, EU popularity and EP campaign intensity as well as different media systems, journalistic cultures and other political and social factors. Nevertheless, because a different coder coded each country's media outlets, the human factor also needs to be considered.

Table 1 shows the numbers of stories in each country, first column referring to all coded stories, the second to stories that were coded as being about the EU. The numbers of all coded stories range from 1,004 in Lithuania and 1,044 in Estonia to 3,629 in Cyprus, 2,928 in Greece and 2,745 in Spain. As mentioned above, a great deal of these differences can be attributed to the variations of journalistic cultures between the countries as well as, for example, different lengths of television news, sizes of the newspaper pages or lengths of the newspaper stories. Additionally, as Cyprus, Greece and Spain were among the countries most affected by the financial crisis in 2009, it is

likely that there simply was more news. Looking at the numbers of stories about the EU, the lowest numbers were identified in the Czech Republic, 186, and Lithuania, 210. Greece and Malta have the highest numbers of stories about the EU, 1,915 and 1,245, respectively. The low numbers of EU news in the two post-Communist countries are in line with the assumptions in this paper: media in these countries paid very little attention to the happenings before the EP elections. The high number of EU news in Greece can again be explained by the impact of financial crisis and, consequently, public discussion about the EP elections and how the EU can help Greece. Skipping ahead to the contextual chapter where I examine the topics of the news, the most commonly discussed topics in Greece were campaigning in the EP elections, economic conditions, public opinion about the EU and national political corruption. Finally, as I outline elsewhere in this study, Malta is characterized by highly polarized party system, which reflects in intense election race and, consequently, high media coverage.

The table is further broken down for newspapers and television, and a similar pattern emerges, involving the same countries as to those discussed in the previous paragraph. Attention needs to be paid to the very low numbers of EU news in the television newscasts in some countries, for example the United Kingdom, Luxembourg and Ireland, as it mean the television channels, both public and commercial, pay exceptionally little attention to the EU. Finally, also noteworthy is the proportion of all stories coded in the newspapers and on television. While in some countries, the total figures for newspapers and television are very similar, for example in both parts of Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Lithuania, Malta and Slovakia, in other countries, there are large differences in the figures between the two types of media. Furthermore, not only are these figures different, the countries also vary in whether there are more news stories coded in the newspapers or on television. Although in most countries, the figures are higher in newspapers than on television, in Estonia, Spain and Romania, the total numbers of storied coded are higher for television than newspapers.

It is not my aim to explain all these differences, but it is crucial to be aware of them when I analyze the data later in this study. The Media Study data of PIREDEU form a unique dataset that allows me to study media effects surrounding the same even across 28 media context, and although much effort was made to ensure the reliability of the coding, as any data dependent of human coding, they need to be approached with caution.

Table 3.1: Number of news stories coded, by country

	Stories coded					
	All media outlets		Newspapers		Television	
Country	All	EU news	All	EU news	All	EU news
AT	1,607	868	1,286	804	321	61
BE-F	1,762	558	884	472	878	87
BE-W	1,290	315	660	269	630	48
BG	2,153	**1,010**	1,402	889	751	122
CY	**3,629**	**537**	**2,547**	**1,680**	**1,082**	**234**
CZ	1,235	**186**	598	**139**	637	47
DE	2,159	653	1,358	579	801	76
DK	1,159	553	773	500	386	54
EE	**1,044**	227	**482**	**166**	562	59
EL	**2,928**	**1,915**	**2,264**	**1,602**	**664**	**317**
ES	**2,745**	**1,022**	1,239	835	**1,506**	**191**
FI	1,338	382	917	324	421	60
FR	2,016	786	1,037	705	979	82
HU	1,626	513	897	428	729	85
IE	1,475	565	1,159	526	316	39
IT	1,751	249	1,053	203	698	46
LT	**1,004**	**210**	**507**	**158**	497	52
LU	1,358	698	1,071	672	**287**	**28**
LV	1,405	469	844	390	561	79
MT	2,212	**1,245**	1,140	831	**1,072**	**414**
NL	1,810	588	1,320	536	490	54
PL	1,659	826	1,333	736	326	93
PT	1,824	670	1,202	508	622	160
RO	1,849	309	821	235	**1,028**	75
SE	1,474	714	1,055	647	419	66
SI	1,912	814	1,186	647	726	169
SK	1,357	378	678	282	679	97
UK	1,202	416	907	393	**295**	**25**

Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

3.2.3. Contextual Dataset

In addition to the Voter Study and Media Study, country level data from the contextual part of the study were also used here. This dataset contains country level and party level data on political and economic indicators in each EU country, such as the number of voters, turnout, its number of MEPs, the number of votes each party received, age breakdown of population, unemployment figures, GDP or the government expenditure (Czesnik et. al., 2010). Contextual variables used in this study include compulsory voting, holding multiple election on the same day as the EP election, electoral threshold, and the proportionality of the electoral system.

As mentioned in the literature overview, the type of electoral system can have an effect on voter turnout with countries with a higher degree of proportionality in their electoral system likely to produce higher turnout. The EU member states have to follow certain rules regarding the electoral system and the majority of EU countries utilize some form of proportional electoral system. There are, nevertheless, some differences in the degree of proportionality and other features across the countries. The measure of proportionality of the electoral system, as calculated using a formula from Gallagher (2001) is therefore used as the indicator for the levels of proportionality in individual countries (Czesnik et. al., 2010).

3.3. Variables

3.3.1. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not a respondent voted in the 2009 EP election, taking value ‘0’ for not voting and ‘1’ for voting. The average turnout across the EU member states is 70.60%, as reported by the survey respondents. However, this is nearly twice as much as the official turnout 43%. This is a usual phenomenon in voter surveys despite the survey question being phrased such as to suggest that not voting is very common, thus: “A lot of people abstained in

the European Parliament elections of June 4, while others voted. Did you cast your vote?"

Every voter survey faces the problem of respondents' overreporting of turnout. This problem has been widely discussed (e.g. Cassel 2003, Karp and Brockington 2005, Franklin and Wessels, 2010). To avoid false estimation of coefficient and standard errors, I weighted the self-reported turnout by the actual country's turnout. When used in analysis, however, using both the weighted and self-reported turnout yielded very similar results (as also in, for example, Franklin and Hobolt, 2011). Therefore, the tables presented in this paper were carried out using non-weighted turnout. The variation in turnout both among individuals and across the EU countries is significantly large and is, therefore, fit to be used as the dependent variable. I analyze the turnout variable in more detail in Chapter 4.

3.3.2. Independent Variables: Main Media Variables – Matching the Datasets

The design of all PIREDEU datasets allows them to be matched with each other, opening great research opportunities. The voter study and media study datasets offer a unique chance to study media effects across 28 media systems in the same election. Apart from a number of topics included in both sets, the voter study contains questions regarding the number of days in a typical week that a respondent is exposed to a particular news outlet, naming specifically the news outlets included in the media study. The media dataset then contains data on the general and EU-specific content of the same news outlet. Matching these two datasets allows identification of the news content each respondent was actually exposed to, enabling quite specific examination of media effects.

These characteristics make this dataset stand out since very few datasets offer such precise measurement of the content of the media that respondents are actually exposed to. If they do, it is usually only within one country or regions within the country. The PIREDEU dataset contains this information for 28 media systems, allowing for a cross-country study capturing and utilizing the news content and exposure to the news. I will explain the exact method of matching the datasets

The main independent variables of interest are made up of media content and media exposure data. The media content data describe the visibility and tone of the news about the EU among all coded news. The relevant coding questions are described in Appendix 2. The overall amount, or the visibility, of EU news in the media outlets covered by the study across all EU member states is measured as the number of news classified as 'EU stories' (see explanation above) out of all news analyzed in the media study.

Apart from the visibility of the EU news, this study also utilizes the variable measuring the tone of the news, i.e. the proportion of news that evaluates the EU. As was mentioned previously, news stories were coded based on whether they included a positive or negative evaluation about the EU, its institutions, or representatives. The possible implications of exposure to news with positive or negative tone were discussed earlier in this paper in the literature review and will be examined further in the data analysis and results section. Both the visibility and tone variables are further described in Chapter 4, including country level aggregate descriptive statistics.

The second component of the media variables is the respondents' reported exposure to individual news outlets examined in the media study. The survey asked, "In a typical week, how many days do you follow the following news programs?" and "How many days do you read the following newspapers?" The list then included the names of the newspapers and television newscasts coded in the media study.

The media content and exposure variables were used to calculate the compound measure of EU news coverage and the respondents' exposure to it, the "content exposure". As mentioned above, the voter study included questions about the frequency (as the number of days in a typical week) of exposure to particular news media outlets. These were the same news outlets analyzed in the media study. Therefore, I am able to match the news content to the respondent's exposure to this content to obtain a measure of the amount of EU news respondents were exposed to in the three weeks prior to the election.

The actual calculation of the measure is as follows. I first obtained values for the visibility and tone of the EU news each media outlet separately, so as to know the amount and tone of EU news contained in each coded newspaper and television channel. I was also aware of the frequency of respondents' exposure to these outlets, so I matched these two variables to get a coefficient of the content exposure to EU news for each news outlet for each respondent, i.e. exposure multiplied by the content of EU

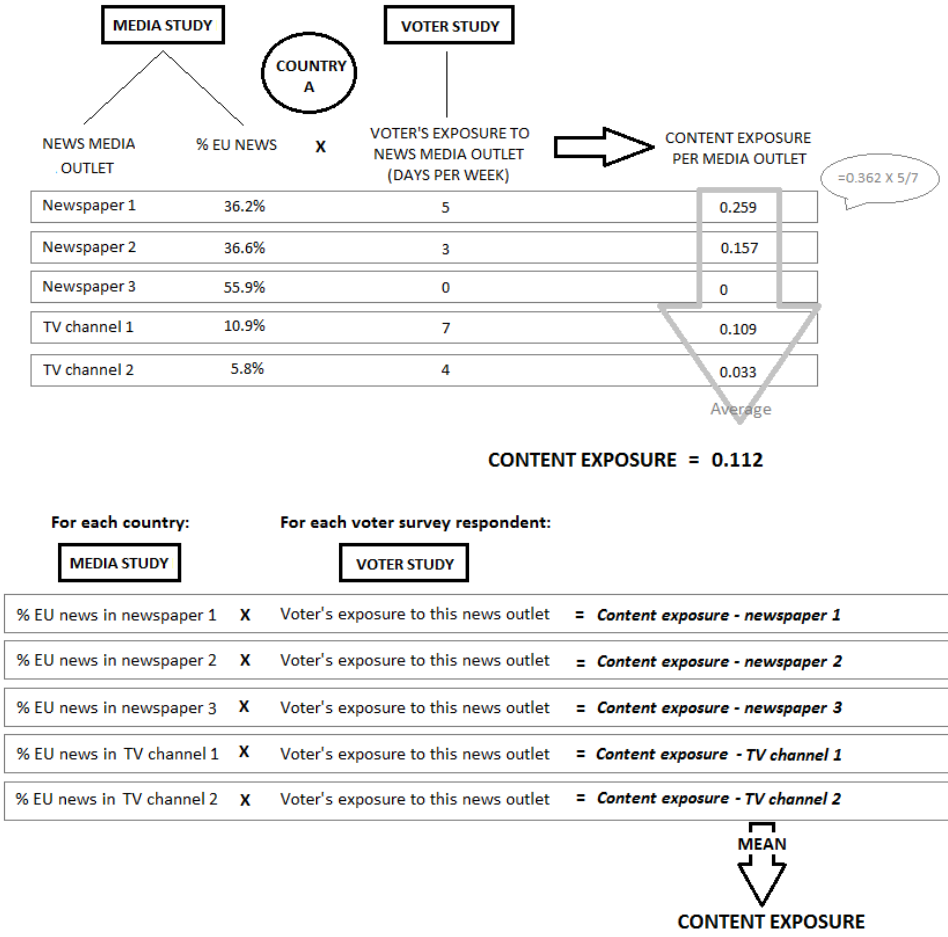
news. Since it was possible, and very common, that a respondent was exposed to more than one media outlet, the coefficients for all media outlets a respondent was exposed to were averaged for the final measure. This provides a unique measure of the potential effects the media have on respondent's behavior. A more specific example of how this measure was constructed is in the following paragraphs.

Using the media data, I created variables describing the amount of EU news for each media outlet in each country[7]. These media content variables were matched with media exposure data from the voter surveys. Respondents exposure to individual outlets was originally measured on a scale from zero to seven (days), and it was recoded to values between zero and one, i.e. the number of days divided by seven, to be used in this paper. The media variables were created as follows (as suggested by Banducci and Xezonakis, 2010): if, (for example) UK voter A reported reading *The Sun* four times per week and *The Sun* contained 14% of EU news out of its total news coverage, the content exposure of voter A to *The Sun* concerning visibility of EU news was calculated as 4/7 x 14 = 8. This was then repeated for every voter and every media outlet (in the corresponding country) resulting in a coefficient of content exposure for each outlet and respondent.

The overall value for the content exposure for all media outlets a respondent was exposed to was calculated using *rowmean* Stata function. This resulted in a single coefficient for a respondent, signifying the amount of EU news one was exposed to based on amount of time spent on media. As the coefficient gets higher, i.e. as the amount of EU news and the frequency of exposure to it increase, I expect to find a stronger, positive effect on the respondent's likelihood to vote.

[7] See Appendix 2 for detailed description of the questions and variables used.

Figure 3.1: Calculation of the main media variable – content exposure



3.3.3. Tone of the EU news and media types

The process described in the paragraph above was then applied to obtain the positive content exposure and negative content exposure; instead of the proportion of EU news, the percentages of positive and negative EU news out of all EU news in each news outlet were used. Additionally, the three variables were also constructed separately for each media type for every respondent: newspapers, television channels, tabloid newspapers, quality newspapers, public television channels, and commercial television channels[8]. The result is the following set of media variables (see Table 2) used in the data analysis in this study to determine the effects of exposure to EU news in the media on one's likelihood to vote. I present the descriptive statistics and further analysis of all the content exposure variables in Chapter 4.

Table 3.2: Content exposure variables used in this study

Media outlets included	**Media Study variables**		
	Visibility of EU news	***Positive tone of EU news***	***Negative tone of EU news***
All	Content exposure	Positive content exposure	Negative content exposure
All newspapers	Content exposure in newspapers	Positive content exposure in newspapers	Negative content exposure in newspapers
All television channels	Content exposure on television	Positive content exposure on television	Negative content exposure on television
Tabloid newspapers	Content exposure in tabloid newspapers	Positive content exposure in tabloid newspapers	Negative content exposure in tabloid newspapers
Quality newspapers	Content exposure in quality newspapers	Positive content exposure in quality newspapers	Negative content exposure in quality newspapers
Public television channels	Content exposure on public television	Positive content exposure on public television	Negative content exposure on public television
Commercial television channels	Content exposure on commercial television	Positive content exposure on commercial television	Negative content exposure on commercial television

[8] The types of media outlets were classified according to Peter et al. (2004), the European Journalism Centre Website and the natives of the countries.

3.3.4. Independent Variables – Individual and Country Level

In addition to the main media variables, numerous explanatory variables traditionally used in the voter turnout studies are also included in the data analysis in this study. Although the aim of this paper is to show the importance and explanatory power of the media variables, all other independent variables need to be included as well, as they make up the standard of a model explaining voter turnout.

On the individual level, political variables along with respondents' personal characteristics are included[9]. The political variables include the following: (1) exposure to the campaign based on five questions, indicating whether a respondent was exposed to EP election campaign in newspapers, on television, online, or attended a campaign or rally, or talked about the election with friends and family; (2) the respondent's interest in the EP election campaign; (3) the respondent's interest in politics; (4) voting habits describing whether a respondent voted in the previous national election; (5) party identity capturing whether a respondent related to a particular political party; (6) evaluation of the benefits of EU membership; and (7) the level of satisfaction with democracy in respondent's own country.

Among individual characteristics and demographic variables, the model includes; (8) whether respondent feels 'European' as opposed to his or her own nationality (i.e. level of 'Europeanness'); (9) knowledge about the EU expressed as a proportion of correct answers out of 7 questions asked in the survey; four variables measuring respondent's living standard; (10) occupation; (11) social class as respondent's own subjective evaluation; (12) whether living in a rural or urban area; and (13) respondent's subjective evaluation of his or her standard of living. Finally, included in the model is; (14) gender; (15) age; (16) education at the age when respondent finished full-time education; and (17) a dummy variable indicating if the respondent was still studying.

As this study examines voter turnout across 28 political contexts, a number of country-level variables that are traditionally used in turnout studies also apply here: (18) compulsory voting; (19) time until the next national election; (20) proportionality of

[9] See the Appendix for detailed description of these variables.

electoral system[10]; (21) electoral threshold; (22) number of members of the EP (MEPs); (23) the year of EU accession[11]; (24) post-Communist dummy variable; and (25) the aggregated country-level visibility of EU news[12]. The basic model used in this study is outlined in the method section.

3.4. Comparing Media Effects between Groups of Observations

Apart from analyzing media effects within the whole EU and comparing the effects of different media types, the media effects are compared between groups of observations with similar characteristics. The literature suggests that some variables, such as identification with a political party, interest in politics, or knowledge about politics moderate the media effects and the analysis in this study confirms this. For example, media effects are examined for those respondents who claim they feel close to a political party as opposed to those who do not. Alternatively, media effects for those with low levels of knowledge about the EU are compared to those with medium and high levels of EU knowledge.

The analyses for these groups of observations are carried out using logit model because the multilevel model is not applicable here as when individuals are split into the groups; the number of level 1 observations in each group within a level 2 group becomes too low for a meaningful analysis. The results are presented as line charts of marginal effects. The groups are based on the observations split according to the following variables: content exposure, party ID, gender, knowledge about EU, interest in politics, interest in campaign, habitual voting, feeling European, evaluating EU membership as a good thing, satisfaction with democracy in one's country, engagement in campaign, and age.

[10] Although there are some common rules, the EP elections are run under different electoral systems in most countries, and the best way to compare the systems is using the degree of proportionality of the electoral system. The measure is described in the appendix.

[11] Electoral threshold is also an explanatory variable often used to explain voter turnout. The electoral thresholds range between 0 and 5% across all EU member states (Oelbermann et al. 2010).

[12] The average for the three newspapers and two television channels in each country examined in the content analysis of the Media Study.

The media effects are also compared between groups of countries based on several indicators. First, being one of the main aims of this study, media effects are compared between Western EU member states and the CEE, i.e. post-Communist, countries. The literature suggests that, due to their history and their current political situation (which depends greatly on the post-Communist legacy) the post-Communist countries display different voter behavior, likely to be reflected in media effects patterns too. The overall turnout and news coverage statistics set out earlier in this chapter also show that these countries exhibit different characteristics. The analyses later in this study reveals that the media effects do indeed differ between these two groups according to the expectations: they are much weaker and not statistically significant in the case of CEE countries.

Furthermore, the countries are split into groups based on their average turnout and the overall visibility of EU news, in order to examine possible differences in the media effects among them. Following the hypothesis in this study, respondents in countries with higher visibility of EU news are likely to be exposed to more news about the EU and, thus, are more likely to be influenced by the news in their decision to vote in the EP elections. The aim of grouping countries according to their official turnout is to see how large a role media play in countries with diverse levels of turnout - assuming that it matters more in countries with lower levels of turnout, as the media there have more space to exert influence over voters. These analyses are shown in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.5. Method

To explain the variation in participation in the European elections within and across the EU countries, multi-level random-intercept logit analysis is used here. The dependent variable is a discrete variable, taking on only two values; thus the logit link is appropriate. The data used in this study contain approximately 1000 observations for each of the 28 contexts[13]. Therefore, it is a multi-level structure: we have citizens belonging to their respective countries, yet at the same time they all belong to the European Union, and all either participate or do not participate in the EP election. Thus, in the language of multi-level modelling, we see citizens nested within countries and the countries belonging to the larger context of the EU. Furthermore, there is significant variance of the dependent variable to be explained both between individual respondents within a country (level 1 variance, i.e. inter-class correlation) as well as between the countries (level 2 variance, i.e. variance of random intercept). I first check for heterogeneity which enables me to see if there are any differences in the values of dependent variable specific to countries, not captured by the explanatory variables on the individual level (Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart, de Vreese, and Schuck, 2010: 513).

Multilevel-structured data need to be modelled in a special way. The standard regression works on the assumption that there is no serial correlation between the errors as the sample is drawn independently. This is not the case, however, for multilevel-structured data because individuals within one country are more similar than individuals between two or more countries. Modelling such a multi-level structure using standard regression and neglecting the hierarchical structure could underestimate the standard errors, exaggerate the coefficients, produce type I errors or false positives, and lead to spurious inferences (Gallego, 2010; Hox 2010; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2008; Steenbergen and Jones, 2002).

Multilevel modelling allows for taking account of variations at both individual and aggregate level, and thus offers a unique opportunity to capture as many factors influencing turnout as possible. Furthermore, it makes the correct assumptions with this

[13] With the exception of Belgian Flanders and Wallonia where approximately 500 observations in each region make up the 1000 for the whole Belgium.

kind of data in that it is expected that the observations within one context, i.e. country, to be more similar to one another as opposed to observations from other contexts. Cross-level studies can be weakened by ecological fallacy, which is making assumptions about individuals based on aggregate data. Conclusions that may be correct for a nation or a region as a whole unit do not work always work for each and every individual. Multilevel modelling is an ideal tool that tackles many statistical problems and allows using explanatory variables on both levels and examine their effects on observations at the appropriate level (Hox, 2010; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2008; Steenbergen and Jones, 2002).

Multi-level models can be run using random effects or fixed effects; in a random effects model, the random intercepts are independent across the groups and independent of the level residuals, while in a fixed effects model they are actually related (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2008). In simple terms, random effects tend to be used when the aim of the analysis is to examine the whole sample, i.e. in this case all citizens across all countries, while fixed effects are helpful when the actual individual groups within the whole sample are of interest (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2008).

To determine whether random effects or fixed effects methods should be used in the analysis, the Hausman endogeneity test is generally used, as it compares the two alternative estimators and identifies which one "…is efficient […] if the model is true, but inconsistent when the model is mis-specified." (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2008: 122).

Given that my interest in this study is to examine the turnout of all citizens across all EU countries, rather than studying the differences between individual countries, using the random-effects model would seem to be an appropriate fit. To confirm this assumption, I ran the Hausman test in Stata. I ran two separate regressions: one with fixed effects and one with random effects. Under the null hypothesis, results from both of random effects and fixed effects are consistent, but random effects are more efficient than fixed effects. Under the alternative hypothesis random effects is inconsistent, but the fixed effects is consistent (Hausman, 1978). The coefficients I find from random effects and fixed effects regressions are very similar, and this similarity is confirmed in the Hausman test results. The Hausman test results are in favor of using random effects, because we cannot reject the null hypothesis due to a p-value of 0.7. This is provides me with justification for using a random effects model i.e. it is not only consistent but also more efficient than a fixed effects model.

The full multilevel model used in the analysis is following:

$$Logit(epvote)_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}Content\ exposure_i + \gamma_{20}Campaign\ exposure_i + \gamma_{30}Campaign\ interest_i + \gamma_{40}Politics\ interest_i + \gamma_{50}Habitual\ vote_i + \gamma_{60}Party\ ID_i + \gamma_{70}cEU\ membership\ evaluation_i + \gamma_{80}Democracy\_satisfaction_i + \gamma_{90}Europeaness_i + \gamma_{100}EU\ knowledge_i + \gamma_{110}Occupation_i + \gamma_{120}Social\ class_i + \gamma_{130}Rural\text{-}urban\ living_i + \gamma_{140}Living\ standard_i + \gamma_{150}Male_i + \gamma_{160}Age_i + \gamma_{170}Education_i + \gamma_{180}Still\_study_i + \beta_{01}Compulsory\_vote_j + \beta_{02}Next\_election_j + \beta_{03}Proportionality_j + \beta_{04}Treshold_j + \beta_{05}Numbers\ of\ MEPs_j + \beta_{06}Accession_j + \beta_{07}Post\text{-}Communist_j + \beta_{08}Country\_visibility\_EUnews_j + \sigma_{0j} + \sigma_{1j}x_{ij}$$

The content exposure is the one media variable that changes in the models based on whether the visibility or the tone of EU news is examined and whether all news outlets are included or only specific media types.

Multilevel models are used in the main analyses in this study where all observations are included in the analysis. Where groups of observations, based on individual and country characteristics, are examined, a simple logit model is used, because when individuals are split into the groups the number of level 1 observations in each group within a level 2 group becomes too low for a meaningful analysis, and the groups within a variable often include different number of observations. Additionally, different numbers of observations from each country are included in the groups which would skew the standard errors and the level 2 variance indicator.

The following two chapters present the data analysis and results. Chapter 4 examines the first research question, taking account of the visibility of EU news: did more frequent exposure to media outlets with higher visibility of EU news increase voter participation in the 2009 EP elections? Chapter 5 then looks into the importance of tone of the EU to examine the second research question: did more frequent exposure to media outlets with more EU news with positive or negative tone increase voter participation in the 2009 EP elections?

Both chapters are structured in the following way: first, multilevel models including content exposure to all media outlets are presented. Second, effects of media exposure are compared among groups of observations split by several individual level

variables. Third, the effects of exposure to different media types is examined using multilevel models, including comparisons between newspapers and television, quality and tabloid newspapers, and commercial and public television. Fourth, the media effects are compared across groups of countries. These groups are based on whether a country is post-Communist, the official turnout, and the proportion of EU news in the country's media.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT OF THE 2009 EP ELECTIONS

In the previous chapters, I first presented the existing research in the fields of voter turnout, EP elections and media effects. I then described the datasets and variables that I use to show that higher exposure to more news about the EU leads to higher participation in the EP elections. In this chapter, I discuss the background of the 2009 EP elections, including the low intensity campaign and the declining turnout trend. I also describe in details the news coverage of the elections across the EU member states, looking at the visibility and tone of news about the EU and the EP as well as at the topics and actors presented in the media. I link the findings to the results in the latter chapters. I end this chapter with a detailed analysis of my main variable of interest, the content exposure, calculated using people's exposure to a particular media outlet and the news content in this outlet. In the following chapter I then analyze the effects of content exposure on respondents' likelihood to vote in the 2009 EP elections.

The EP elections represent one of the largest democratic events in the world. In 2009, there were over 380 million registered voters; fewer than 170 million of them actually cast their vote. Candidates from more than 300 political parties competed for 736 seats in the EP; 168 national parties were represented in the EP following the elections, aligned in EU-wide party groupings. Despite this large nature, the 2009 EP election displayed the same characteristics as Reif and Schmitt defined in 1980 under the term 'second order elections'; namely, low voter turnout compared to national elections, great gains for small newer parties and losses for governing parties, and campaigning based on national issues (Trechsel, 2009). Similarly, as shown for previous EP elections, the national news media publish very few stories about the campaign and the election itself.

Before I proceed to outlining the details of the voter turnout, EP election campaign and its media coverage, I will first explain the EU member states groups that I refer to throughout this thesis. Over the past decade, a comparison between the "old", i.e. the founding member states and those joining the EU prior to 2004, and the "new" EU members, i.e. those joining in and after 2004, was often carried out. I, however, distinguish between "Western European (WE)" and "Central and Eastern European (CEE)" / "post-Communist" EU member states which is a similar grouping with the exception of Cyprus and Malta, two "new" member states, assigned to the "Western" group. I believe that this is a more appropriate grouping as the countries in the CEE group share similar characteristics, arising from their post-Communist past, and Cyprus and Malta fit better in the group along with the Western member states (Rose, 2004). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the following countries are considered "Western": Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Austria, Finland, Cyprus, and Malta; in 2014 this also includes Croatia. The post-Communist countries include the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia; from 2009 also Bulgaria and Romania.

4.1. Campaign

The elections took place across the EU over four days between 4 and 7 June 2009 as the member states followed their usual voting schedule. For example, people in the UK voted on Thursday, while in the Czech Republic they could cast their votes over two days on Friday and Saturday. Seven countries held other elections, either national or local, at the same time, and several others held them within a year before or after June 2009. The timing of other national or local elections, i.e. the positioning of the EP election in a country's electoral cycle, has a great impact on the extent of interest in it for both voters and candidates, including the degree and style of campaigning, as well as voter turnout. Generally, if the EP and national, or local, elections are held on the same day, the campaigning tends to focus more or national or local issues but the turnout in the EP elections is likely to be higher. However, if the EP elections are held within a short time of the national election, campaigning would still concentrate on

national issues but voter turnout is likely to be lower due to voter fatigue. This seemed to be the case in the CEE countries in the 2004 EP elections, and voter fatigue was likely to be blamed for low turnout in a number of countries in the 2009 EP elections as well.

The 2009 EP elections took place amid the peak of the world economic crisis. This seemed to reinforce the second-order nature of the elections, leading to loss of votes for governing parties who were likely being 'punished' by the electorate. Additionally, center-right parties performed better than center-left parties compared to previous elections, and there was a rise in anti-EU and extreme right parties, in, for example, the UK, Netherlands, and Bulgaria. This could have signified voters' disillusionment with how the EU and their respective national governments had dealt with the economic crisis (Trechsel, 2009). It nevertheless did not motivate the citizens enough to turn up to the elections and express their opinions in large numbers.

In previous election campaigns run by the EP, EU citizens were encouraged to vote because it was 'good' for the EU. Aware of the declining turnout and people's interest in the EU, the EP's campaign in the 2009 elections was different; instead, it aimed to persuade its citizens that voting in the EP election was in their own interest. This EU-wide campaign was delivered by a professional marketing company and communicated in various forms, including television and radio advertisements, billboards, 3-D installations in public areas or EU branding at Brussels airport. All activities were created to raise awareness of just how much the EU and the decisions made by the EP affected people's everyday lives, and involved a variety of topics ranging from consumer rights to financial markets. The campaign was also presented widely on social media where it included, for example, a series of comic videos delivering a message that having no time is not an acceptable reason for not voting (Meyer, 2009).

While this was unarguably a grand campaign, it remains disputable how much impact on voter participation it actually had. The media content data analyzed later in this chapter does not suggest that the news media covered a great deal of the campaign. Media, however, did not seem to pick up on much of the campaigning done by national parties either, although this is likely to be due to the low intensity and visibility of their campaigns.

As the second-order election theory suggests, and the reality does indeed show, EP elections campaigns by national political parties are less intense and funded by

fewer financial resources compared to national elections. Yet they are based around the same national issues. While most parties running in the EP elections compiled EU-related manifestos, the EU issues from the manifestos were rarely mentioned in the campaigning. It is believed that parties structure their campaigns in this fashion because they are aware that citizens lack knowledge of, and interest in, EU matters. It is therefore seen as more effective to stress national issues that people are familiar with rather than potentially alienate them talking about the EU. As each country concentrates on its own respective national issues, the campaigns appear differently across the individual member states. This is further reinforced by each country's own campaigning rules that often put a cap on campaign spending or regulate television advertising (Gagatek, 2009).

Analysis of news content later in this chapter explores in more detail how and whether media took part in and promoted the campaigning. It will demonstrate the differences across individual member states and will show the clear division between Western EU and Central and Easter EU member states. First, however, I will analyze voter turnout in the 2009 EP elections and look at how it has changed since the first EP elections in 1979.

4.2. Turnout

With the above picture of the 2009 EP elections campaigns in mind, I will now explore voter turnout, the dependent variable in this study. As there is "less at stake" at the EP elections, the voter turnout tends to be lower than in national or local elections. While this is true for most of the countries, EU member states with compulsory voting display little difference and keep their participation rates high. Figure 4.1 clearly shows the wide range of turnout from the lowest 19.6% in Slovakia to the highest 90.4% in Belgium and 90.8% in Luxembourg, both of the latter two countries have compulsory voting. The map also taps into the differences between the CEE and WE member states, with the eastern part of the map shaded in lighter colors than the western part, hinting that the turnout in the CEE countries is on average lower.

Such varied levels of voter turnout in the EP elections may reflect the usual turnout in a country during other elections, but they also signify diverse attitudes toward

the EU. As my analyses in the following chapters show, majority of the variables used in studies on turnout in national elections also have statistically significant impact in the model explaining turnout in the EP elections. And as also shown in other studies, variables capturing citizens' EU attitudes rarely have a significant impact on participation in the EP elections.

Table 4.1 shows the turnout percentages for each country as well as the averages for the whole EU and the two groups of the Western and CEE EU member states. The average turnout across the whole EU is 43%, while the average turnout for the 10 CEE countries is 28.3%, and for the Western EU member states 47%. This difference of just below 20% is the main drive behind this study. Although voters in the whole EU casted their voters in the same elections, these figures suggest that different political and cultural processes are in place in these two groups of countries. I will investigate this further in the following chapters.

Figure 4.1: Official turnout in the 2009 EP elections, by country – map

Table 4.1: Official and self-reported turnout in the 2009 EP elections, by country

Country	Turnout	Self-reported turnout
AT	46.0%	79%
BE	90.4%	93%
BG	39.0%	64%
CY	59.4%	83%
CZ	28.2%	51%
DE	43.3%	78%
EE	43.9%	67%
FI	40.3%	70%
FR	40.6%	69%
DK	59.5%	90%
EL	52.6%	76%
HU	36.3%	58%
IE	58.6%	85%
IT	65.1%	88%
LV	53.7%	73%
LT	21.0%	44%
LU	90.8%	86%
MT	78.8%	90%
NL	36.8%	70%
PL	24.5%	46%
PT	36.8%	67%
RO	27.7%	55%
SK	19.6%	47%
SI	28.3%	66%
ES	44.9%	71%
SE	45.5%	82%
UK	34.7%	59%
EU 27	43.0%	70.6%
WE	47.0%	78.7%
CEE	28.3%	56.9%

Source: *European Parliament 2009; PIREDEU Voter Study. Author's own compilation.*

Additionally, Table 4.1 shows both the official turnout, as published on the EP website, and the self-reported turnout based on the election survey data used in this study. As outlined in the previous chapter, the gap between the self-reported and official turnout is a well-known phenomenon. This is believed to be due to two main reasons. First, although all effort is made to choose a representative sample of respondents for the surveys to avoid selection bias, people interested and involved in politics and their community are more likely to respond to election survey. At the same time, these are the people that are already more likely to vote in an election, consequently boosting the turnout as reported in the surveys.

Secondly, responses in, not only, election surveys tend to be driven by social desirability. People often feel that they should be voting because it is their social duty, and therefore they would often say that they voted when in fact they had not. Researchers and survey designers put much effort into the development of survey questions that would ease this pressure and make non-voting seem as the normal thing that most people do. Nevertheless, overreporting of turnout in electoral surveys remains a widely present and, recently, well-researched phenomenon.

The average self-reported turnout for the whole EU is 70.6% and for the Western countries it is 78.7% and 56.9% for the CEE countries. The 20%-gap between these two country groups remains intact, and, for most countries, the figures suggest a link between the official and self-reported turnout. As can be seen in the table, the overreporting varies across the individual countries. While the official turnout is higher in the WE countries, respondents in these countries also seem to overreport turnout to a higher degree. On average, WE citizens overreport their turnout by 3.1% more than respondents in CEE countries.

It is important to keep this overview in mind when interpreting the results in this study. The extent to which both self-reported turnout and the self-reported exposure to media are exaggerated varies across countries. These variations could consequently be reflected in the effects found in studies when the results found may not be only the outcome of the differences across countries, but also the consequence of the different extents of turnout and exposure overreporting. This issue is further discussed at the beginning of Chapter 3.

The picture of turnout in the 2009 EP elections raises several questions: has the turnout in the EP elections always been so low? Has the gap between the Western and the CEE EU member states changed between the 2004 and 2009 elections? What was

the situation like in the latest elections in 2014? Figure 4.2 offers answers to all these questions as it shows the turnout in the EP elections from their beginning in 1979 until the latest election in 2014. While some stress that the 2014 saw the lowest turnout in the history of EP elections, it is necessary to see the whole picture and the actual changes in the turnout rates over the years.

The overall turnout in the EP elections has been declining ever since they first took place. The rate of decline was slight at first but became steep from 1994 to 2004, slowing down again in the past decade. The decline in turnout between 2004 and 2009 was just 2.5% and this further diminished in 2014 when the turnout fell just by negligible 0.36% compared to the previous EP elections. While this certainly seems as a good sign, at this moment it can only be speculated about the reasons for this stability. The average EP turnout has stayed under 50% for the last three elections, which could suggest that it simply reached the lowest possible values because there is a certain proportion of habitual voters in every country who always vote in any election, any situation. Furthermore, there are several countries in which respondent comply with compulsory voting, and this also boosts the overall turnout rates. Researchers and politicians will for sure be anxious to see how this situation develops in the 2019 EP elections.

The above mentioned two groups of countries can be tracked from the 2004 elections, although their composition changed slightly. The Western EU group stayed the same in 2004 and 2009, formed by the "old" EU members and Cyprus and Malta that joined the EU in 2004. In 2014, Croatia was also part of this group. The CEE group was formed by the eight post-Communist countries that joined the EU in 2004 and was joined by Bulgaria and Romania in the following two elections.

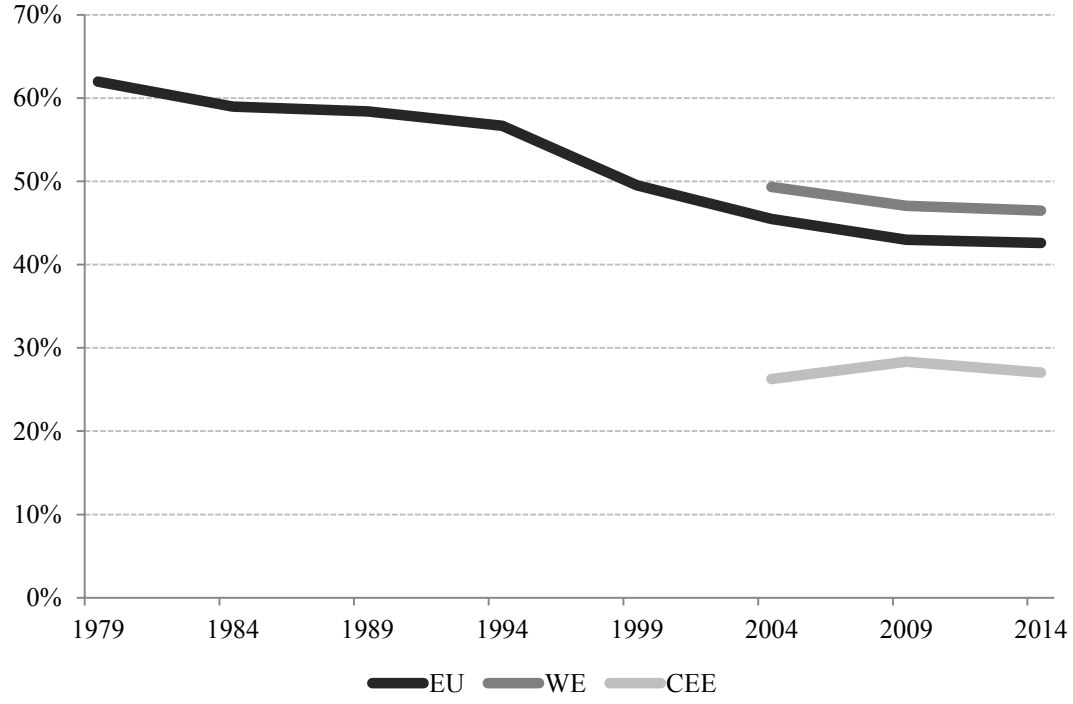
The turnout gap between the two groups is obvious from the first look at the graph. What is also evident, however, is the slight 2%-increase in turnout in the CEE countries between 2004 and 2009. This is on the contrary to the first election boost theory, mentioned earlier in the literature chapter, suggesting that when the EP election takes place for the first time in a country, the turnout is likely to be high due to the excitement and novelty. One would expect the CEE citizens to be eager to exercise their hard-earned EU voting rights. However, the low turnout in the first EP election in 2004 is likely to be the result of election fatigue as the 2004 EP elections followed too shortly after the EU accession referenda held in the CEE countries throughout 2003. In the months prior to joining the EU on 1 May 2004, citizens, political elites and media in

these countries were oversaturated with information about the EU. Consequently, once they became a part of the EU just days before the 2004 EP elections, these countries reached their goals and had no longer the need to occupy themselves with the matters of the EU, such as the elections.

Nevertheless the turnout remains very low in the CEE countries compared to their Western counterparts. While a number of possible explanations for this phenomenon have been put forward and are outlined at the end of Chapter 2, my aim in this study is to show the extent of influence national media in the CEE countries have over the low participation rates.

The declining turnout in the EP elections has enormous impact on the legitimacy of the EU. The fact that just above 40% of EU citizens elect their representatives in the EP shed a negative light on EU legitimacy; the direct elections to the EP were started to overcome the output, i.e. institutional, legitimacy, but with the lack of citizens' participation in the elections, they lose their main aim. Furthermore, citizens of CEE countries are clearly underrepresented in the elections which further deepens the legitimacy crisis in their direction.

Figure 4.2: Official turnout in the 2009 EP elections - trend



Source: *European Parliament 2014. Author's own compilation.*

4.3. Visibility of News about the EU

Visibility of news about a specific topic is defined as the proportion of news referring to that topic out of all news in the analyzed media outlets (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; Çarkoğlu, Baruh and Yıldırım, 2014; De Vreese et al. 2006; Peter et al. 2004; Schuck et al. 2011). Detailed information about the coding process for the media content data used here are provided in Chapter 3.

One could suggest that assessing the size of the EU news story would be more suitable. Measuring the proportion of a page that the story takes up in a newspaper or the length of the news item on television broadcast would, however, present a measure of the prominence rather than visibility. Visibility encompasses the number of mentions about the EU within a media outlet, while prominence covers the importance that the journalists and editors assign to particular stories. In this study, I am interested in the number of stories reported about the EU, not their depth, so I utilize the visibility aspect. Additionally, the size of news stories is greatly dependent upon the journalistic culture and tradition of a country as well as the actual size of a newspaper and length of a television newscast. These aspects often vary between countries. Therefore, such measure would not be suitable for the cross-country comparisons that I present in this chapter. Later in this chapter I nevertheless consider this measure briefly to show the variation in sizes of a typical news story and a typical EU news story in newspapers and on television. Furthermore, while considering circulation and viewership figures may be helpful for studies covering one country, it is not beneficial in a study, such as this one, where news in various media types is analyzed across 28 political and media systems. Including circulation figures would take the focus away from the actual visibility of the news by looking at the market share of the individual news outlets, which is again dependent on the actual media system and regulations in a country.

Utilizing visibility as the proportion of news referring to the EU or the EP among all news coded, the average visibility of EU news across the EU is nearly 36%, but the variations between countries are great (see Figure 4.3 and Table 4.2). The highest visibility of EU news is found in Greece and Malta, at 62% and 58% respectively, followed by Luxembourg and Cyprus with the proportion of EU news

among all examined news just under 50%. Italy is at the bottom of the table with 14.3%, followed by Czech Republic and Romania with 15.5% and 18.6% respectively.

The overall visibility of EU news in the CEE countries is 30.6%, and in the Western EU member states it is 38.3%. Although the pattern of EU news visibility across countries is not the same as the turnout pattern, the great differences between countries nevertheless deserve attention. These differences in the visibility are reflected in the analysis when the impact of exposure to the news in question is examined. As I hypothesize, diverse country levels of EU news visibility lead to varying media effects.

This study does not examine the factors affecting the varying EU news coverage as was undertaken elsewhere (e.g. Boomgaarden et al., 2010), but utilizes this information to determine the effects such news coverage can have on people's likelihood to vote.

Figure 4.3: EU news visibility – map

Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

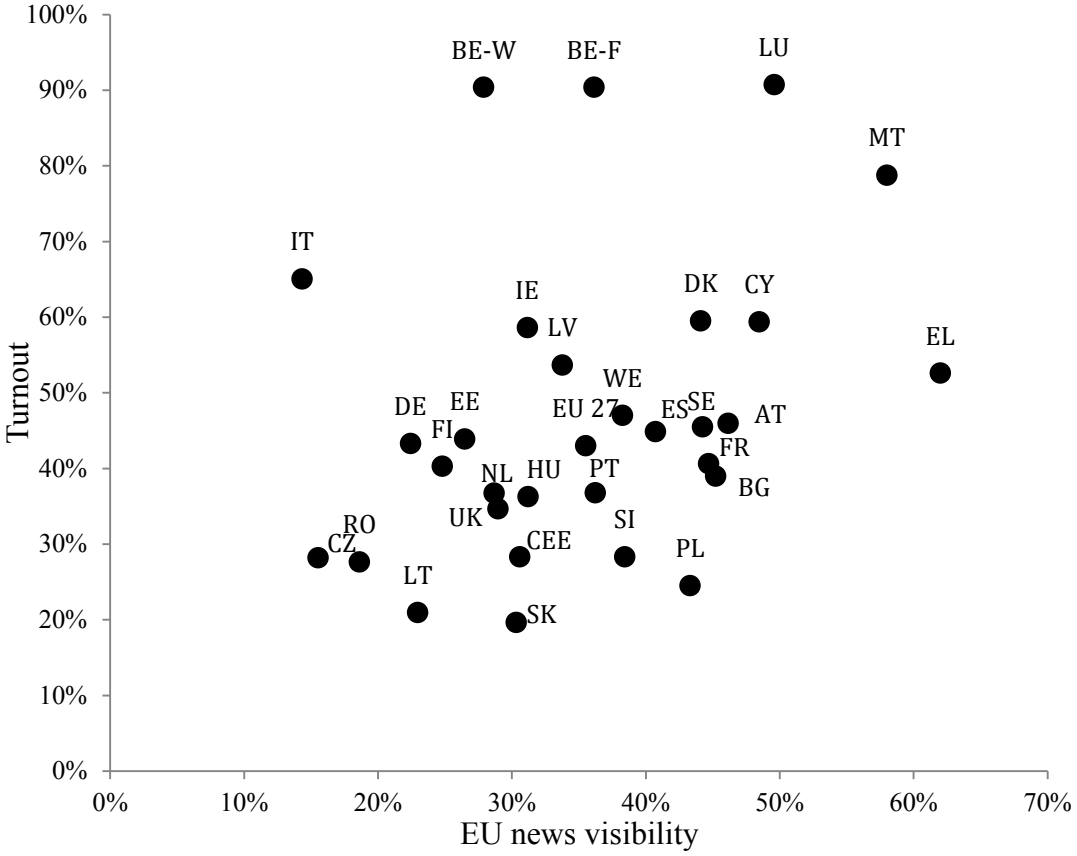
Table 4.2: EU news visibility

Country	**EU news visibility**
AT	46.1%
BE	32.0%
BG	45.2%
CY	48.5%
CZ	15.5%
DE	22.4%
EE	26.5%
FI	24.8%
FR	44.7%
DK	44.1%
EL	62.0%
HU	31.2%
IE	31.1%
IT	14.3%
LV	33.8%
LT	23.0%
LU	49.6%
MT	58.0%
NL	28.7%
PL	43.3%
PT	36.2%
RO	18.6%
SK	30.3%
SI	38.4%
ES	40.7%
SE	44.2%
UK	29.0%
EU 27	35.5%
WE	38.3%
CEE	30.6%

Figure 4.4 shows a scatter chart with official turnout on the y-axis and visibility of EU news on the x-axis. This chart shows the relationship that is my main concern in this study; here, I show the EU news – visibility relationship on a country aggregate level, and then I examine this on individual level in the following chapters. The graph shows a slight positive pattern, suggesting that countries with higher turnout also have a higher visibility of EU news. Most of the countries are somewhere between 30% to 65% for turnout and 25% to 50% EU news visibility. Out of the CEE countries with the lowest turnout, Poland has relatively high EU news visibility. Italy, on the other hand, has relatively high turnout, likely due to the legacy of compulsory voting, but a very low visibility of EU news. The other clear outliers are the countries with compulsory voting, both parts of Belgium and Luxembourg, and average EU news visibility. Greece, on the other hand, has turnout slightly above the average but very high EU news visibility, the highest across all EU member states. This is likely to be the result of the harsh impact of financial crisis on Greece and wide discussion regarding EU's role in the recovery. Finally, due to its peculiar, polarized party system and intense competition between political parties, Malta scores highly on both turnout and EU news visibility axes.

When analyzing the results of the multilevel and marginal effects models in the following chapters, the characteristics of these outliers need to be considered as their extreme values of either variable can have an impact on the size of the content exposure variable. Similarly, due to the low visibility of EU news as well as voter turnout, the citizens in those countries on the bottom left end of the graphs are likely to have lower levels of content exposure and possibly also weaker media effects. While I do not examine variations in media effects across individual countries, these differences are likely to be reflected in the analysis of WE and CEE country groups as the countries in the bottom left end are all CEE, while those outliers in the top right end are all WE countries.

Figure 4.4: 2009 EP elections EU news visibility and turnout



Source: *European Parliament 2009; PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

4.4. Tone of the EU News

Tone of the news is calculated as the proportion of news about the EU that evaluates or describes the EU, its representatives or institutions, in a positive or negative way.[14] The findings here support previous research, in that the majority of news about the EU is neutral i.e. not evaluating the EU in any way (see Figure 4.5 and Table 4.3). The percentage of positive and negative EU news among all EU news ranges from 1% in Estonia to 18.3% in Wallonia. On average, 3.1% of all EU news is positive and 4% negative across the EU countries. The maps clearly show the variation across countries and the difference between the percentages of positive and negative news.

As mentioned in the visibility section on previous pages, those countries at the two opposite ends of the graphs are likely to show different levels of content exposure and, consequently, different sizes and strengths of the media effects. Knowing the actual proportions of news with positive and negative tone is crucial for correctly interpreting the direction and size of the media effects in the next two chapters.

Wallonia has the highest proportion of negative news (12.3%) while Malta has the highest proportion of positive news (10.3%). Malta is generally very pro-EU and its two main parties agree on EU support. The lack of negative emotions toward the EU from the political elites was likely the reason for such a high proportion of EU news with positive tone. Austria, Sweden, and Finland also have a high percentage of negative EU news, at 10.4%, 9.5% and 8.2% respectively. In the 2004 EP elections, the three latter countries saw a boost in the popularity far-right and anti-EU parties which is likely to be related to the high proportion of negative news.

A high proportion of positive EU news is found in Wallonia and France, at 6.3% and 5.9% respectively, although this is just over half of the positive news seen in Malta. On the other hand, Germany, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Estonia have the lowest percentage of negative EU news, all less than 1%, while Estonia, Slovakia, and the UK have the lowest proportion of positive EU news, 0.2% in Estonia, and 0.9% in Slovakia and the UK.

[14] See Chapter 3 for more details on the coding procedure.

These low percentages of news do in some cases translate into just tens of newspaper or television stories. Consequently, the effects on participation in the elections caused by exposure to such small numbers of stories can be greatly exaggerated as is seen in the analyses in the following chapters. These results need to be treated with caution because there are likely to be other factors playing alongside the exposure to the positive EU news.

There is not a clear relationship between the proportion of EU news, out of all coded news, and the proportion of positive or negative EU news, which is measured out of all news about the EU. Slovakia has the lowest turnout and percentage of positive and negative EU news, but its overall visibility of EU news is close to the EU average. Estonia, on the other hand, has turnout higher than the EU average but very low visibility of EU news and news with a tone. Yet, Austria and Sweden have a very high proportion of negative EU news, quite high EU news visibility, and turnout higher than the EU average. These few examples suggest that if there is a relationship between the EU news coverage and voter turnout, it is not straight-forward. The proportion of positive and negative EU news will be used in the models to determine the effects of people's exposure to such content; however, the percentages are very low and thus likely to have little impact on the media-turnout relationship.

Figure 4.5: EU news with positive and negative tone – map

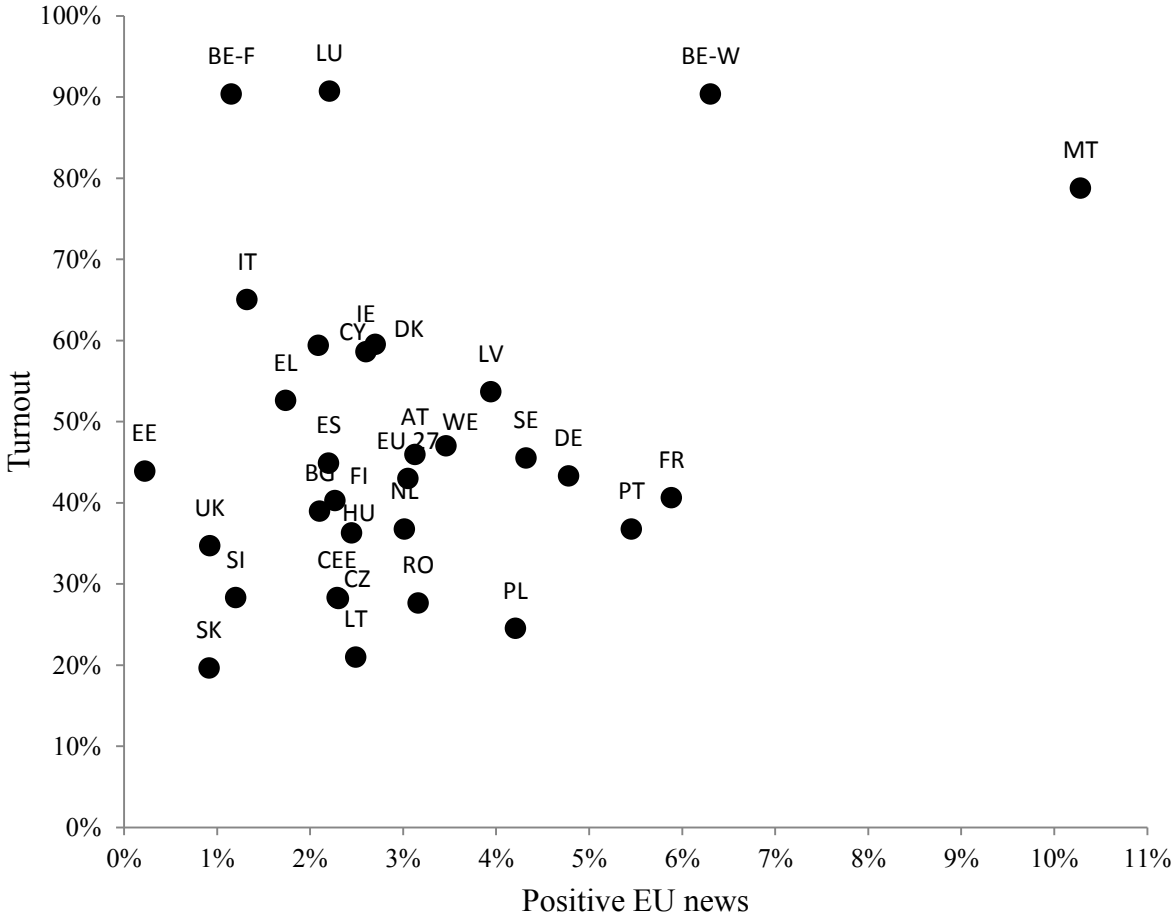
Table 4.3: EU news with positive and negative tone

Country	Positive EU news	Negative EU news
AT	3.1%	10.4%
BE	3.7%	7.4%
BG	2.1%	1.4%
CY	2.1%	2.5%
CZ	2.3%	4.8%
DE	4.8%	0.5%
DK	2.7%	5.3%
EE	0.2%	0.9%
EL	1.7%	5.5%
ES	2.2%	2.9%
FI	2.3%	8.2%
FR	5.9%	6.1%
HU	2.4%	1.9%
IE	2.6%	1.5%
IT	1.3%	3.6%
LT	2.5%	0.7%
LU	2.2%	3.8%
LV	3.9%	2.4%
MT	10.3%	2.0%
NL	3.0%	5.6%
PL	4.2%	3.4%
PT	5.5%	4.0%
RO	3.2%	1.9%
SE	4.3%	9.5%
SI	1.2%	3.1%
SK	0.9%	0.8%
UK	0.9%	5.7%
EU 27	3.1%	4.0%
WE	3.5%	5.1%
CEE	2.3%	2.1%

Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

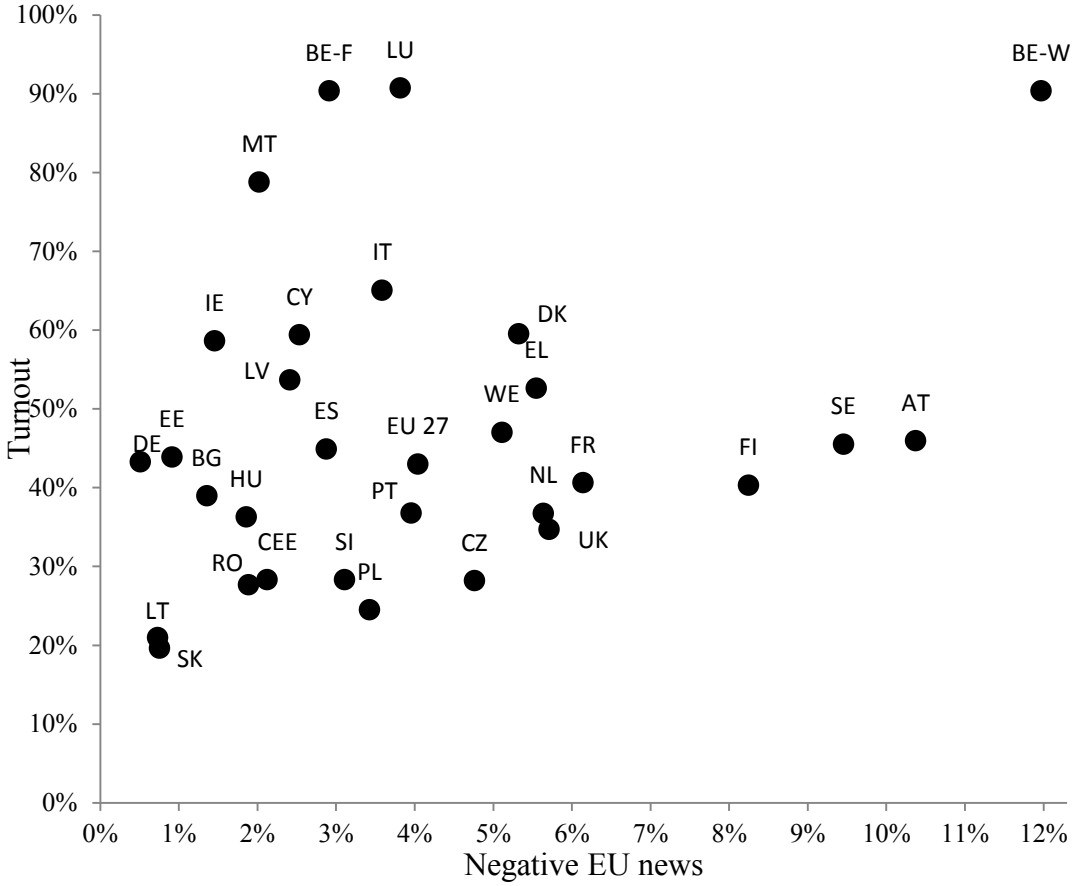
The following two figures give an insight into the aggregate-level relationship between the voter turnout in the 2009 EP elections and the EU news with positive or negative tone. This relationship is analyzed on individual level in the following chapters, but these two figures suggest that if there is some relationship, it is a very weak one. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 below show, respectively, turnout relative to the visibility of positive and negative EU news. While the majority of countries find themselves somewhere between 30% to 60% on the turnout axis, and between 1% to 5% on the positive EU news axis, among the countries with the highest turnout Malta stands out with the highest proportion of positive EU news. The scatter chart showing turnout and the visibility of negative EU news offers a slightly more diverse picture. Despite highest turnout, Wallonia stands out with the highest proportion of negative EU news, followed by Austria, Sweden, and Finland.

Figure 4.6: EU news with positive tone and 2009 EP elections turnout



Source: *European Parliament 2009; PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Figure 4.7: EU news with negative tone and 2009 EP elections turnout



Source: *European Parliament 2009; PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation*

4.5. Visibility of News about the EU in Different Media Types

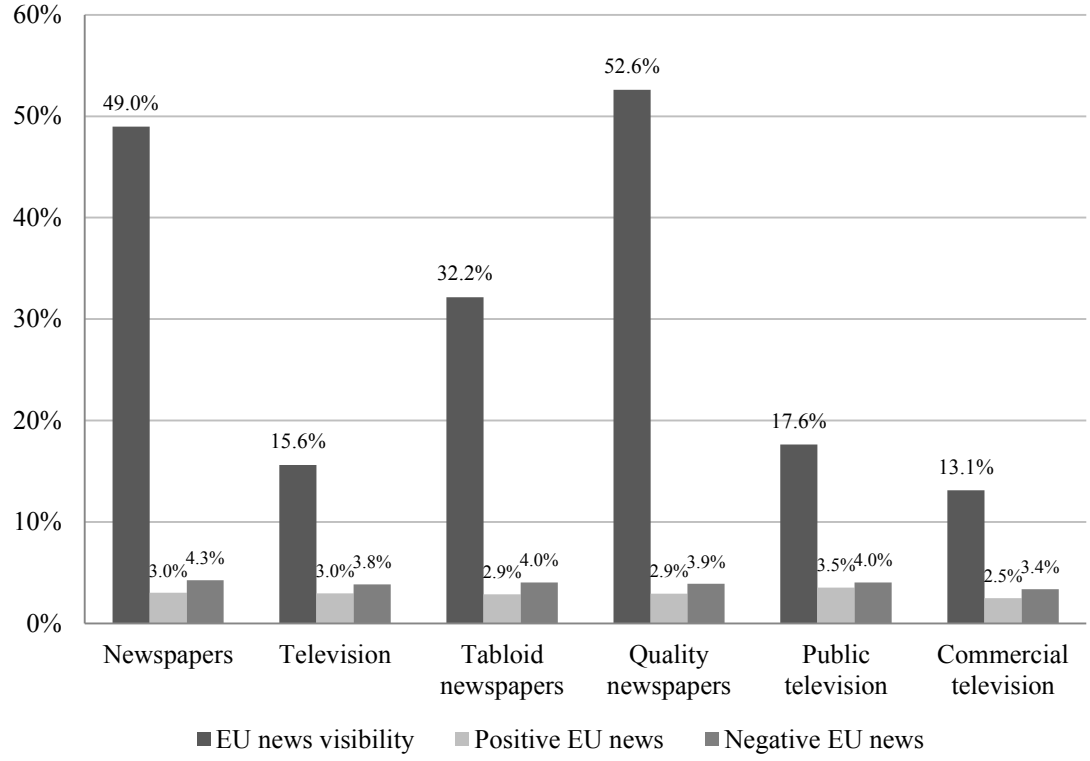
Figure 4.8 shows the overall visibility of EU news and of positive and negative EU news across media types. This is beneficial when the diverse effects of exposure to EU news in different media types are examined in the following two chapters. As expected and shown in other studies, newspapers include more than three times as much EU news than television, 49% compared to 15.6%, and quality newspapers have the highest visibility of EU news, at 52.6%. When looking at television, as expected newscasts on public television contain more EU news than newscasts on commercial television (17.6% compared to 13.1%).

This large gap can well be the result of the different scope of the two media types; as my professor in an undergraduate journalism course once said, all news stories from the main television newscasts could fit on less than a quarter of the front page of a newspaper. Given the limited time and space, those deciding about what goes into a newscast want to ensure that the content is appealing to their viewers and, unfortunately, news about the EU rarely falls into this category. The low visibility of EU news on television is likely to be behind the lack of statistically significant media effects when content exposure on television is examined.

The amount of EU news with a positive or a negative tone is low overall across all media outlets and varies little across all media types (3% to 4%). Both newspaper types include 2.9% of positive EU news and 4% of negative EU news, while there is 3.5% of positive and 4% of negative EU news on public television, and 2.5% of positive and 3.4% of negative EU news on commercial television, suggesting that EU news on public television is more opinionated than news on commercial station. Nevertheless, these differences are very small.

As I show in Chapter 6, the effects of positive and negative content exposure vary greatly when examined for individual media types. For example, both positive and negative content exposure to tabloids has a negative effect on one's likelihood to vote, while both of these variables have positive effects when examined for quality newspapers only. Such results seem to be the outcome of the different nature of the stories presented across the various media types, rather than just the outcome of the low numbers of positive or negative EU news.

Figure 4.8: EU news visibility and tone across media types (EU average)



Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Of course, the proportions of all EU news as well as positive and negative EU news vary across media types, and these further differ between the individual EU member states. Figure 4.9 and Table 4.4 present the visibility of EU news in different types of newspapers across the EU member states; Figure 4.10 and Table 4.5 then present the same measure for the various television types. The shading of all six maps is based on the same range, and the set of maps clearly shows not only the variations between different media types but also the cross-country differences.

Comparing the newspapers and television channels between the WE and the CEE countries, media outlets in the latter group include less EU news across all categories. The difference is especially great for newspapers with 53.2% EU news in newspapers in WE countries and 41.3% in the CEE countries but falls to just few percentage gap for tabloid newspapers and all television outlets. There are, however, great differences across individual countries. Spain, France and Greece see just around 70% EU news in their quality newspapers, the highest across the EU. Although tabloid newspapers in Spain publish a similar amount of EU news (66.9%), there is no EU news in French and Greek tabloid newspapers. Greece scores high on television news as well (47.8%), but France is on the lower end with 8.5%, along with the Czech Republic (6.8%) and Italy (6.6%).

These figures and tables present a unique insight into the cross-country and cross-media variations in EU news visibility. These are then analyzed on individual level in the following two chapters. While I do not examine the effects separately in each EU member state, the maps give an insight into how the effects look in the CEE countries as compared to the WE countries. The overall EU news visibility is lower in the CEE countries on average, and the maps below suggest that, with some exceptions, this is the case for every media type.

Figure 4.9: EU news visibility across newspaper types - map

Table 4.4: EU news visibility across newspaper types

Country	Newspapers	Quality newspapers	Tabloid newspapers
AT	64.7%	61.6%	71.0%
BE-F	53.5%	66.1%	28.3%
BE-W	41.2%	49.7%	24.0%
BG	64.5%	67.0%	59.7%
CY	66.4%	66.4%	0.0%
CZ	21.4%	27.8%	8.5%
DE	40.0%	52.9%	14.0%
DK	64.2%	65.9%	0.0%
EE	36.4%	35.3%	38.6%
EL	71.5%	71.5%	0.0%
ES	68.6%	69.4%	66.9%
FI	31.8%	38.7%	18.1%
FR	68.8%	68.8%	0.0%
HU	43.8%	58.9%	13.8%
IE	43.9%	51.8%	28.3%
IT	19.5%	19.6%	19.1%
LT	31.4%	35.1%	24.1%
LU	62.8%	67.1%	54.4%
LV	46.7%	38.0%	63.9%
MT	72.8%	70.0%	78.4%
NL	40.4%	41.2%	38.7%
PL	53.1%	61.2%	37.0%
PT	43.1%	40.2%	49.0%
RO	26.3%	31.1%	16.5%
SE	62.5%	60.1%	67.2%
SI	48.2%	49.9%	23.5%
SK	41.1%	61.6%	21.3%
UK	42.7%	46.0%	36.2%
EU 27	49.0%	52.6%	32.2%
WE	53.2%	55.9%	33.0%
CEE	41.3%	46.6%	30.7%

Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Figure 4.10: EU news visibility across television types - map

Table 4.5: EU news visibility across television types

Country	Television	Public television	Commercial television
AT	18.3%	21.0%	15.6%
BE-F	10.1%	12.9%	7.2%
BE-W	7.9%	11.7%	4.2%
BG	16.2%	16.8%	15.7%
CY	21.5%	24.1%	18.9%
CZ	6.8%	9.1%	4.4%
DE	10.8%	11.8%	8.8%
DK	13.9%	18.3%	9.5%
EE	11.5%	17.5%	5.6%
EL	47.8%	50.3%	45.3%
ES	12.8%	15.5%	7.5%
FI	14.3%	13.7%	14.9%
FR	8.5%	8.2%	8.8%
HU	12.3%	17.7%	6.8%
IE	12.0%	13.3%	10.6%
IT	6.6%	7.4%	5.8%
LT	10.3%	13.7%	6.9%
LU	9.8%	9.8%	0.0%
LV	14.4%	17.1%	11.7%
MT	35.8%	27.6%	43.9%
NL	11.2%	15.6%	6.8%
PL	28.6%	29.4%	27.8%
PT	25.9%	25.1%	26.8%
RO	7.1%	10.1%	4.1%
SE	16.9%	22.3%	11.5%
SI	23.8%	26.7%	20.9%
SK	14.2%	16.1%	12.3%
UK	8.3%	10.9%	5.8%
EU 27	15.6%	17.6%	13.1%
WE	16.2%	17.7%	14.0%
CEE	14.5%	17.4%	11.6%

Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

The following several figures and tables present an alternative measure to the EU news visibility, the prominence of the EU news. This is measured as the average size of a news story in newspapers and as the average length of a news story on television newscast. While these measures are not directly comparable between the two media types, the variations across the EU can be examined for each of them. Such analysis offers an insight into a different dimension of EU news visibility.

For each newspaper story, the coders were asked to specify the proportion of a page that the story covers. As is shown on Figure 4.11, around 68% of all EU newspaper stories cover less than a quarter of a page, 20% cover between a quarter and a half, and just 7% and 5% of EU newspaper stories were between a half and three quarters and over three quarters of a page, respectively. These proportions are nearly identical for the WE and CEE countries, but there are some significant differences across the individual countries. Germany and the Netherlands have the highest proportions of stories taking up just less than a quarter of a page with 82% and 90%, respectively. On the other hand, Sweden and the Flanders part of Belgium have the highest proportions of news larger than three quarters of a page, while the highest figures of newspaper EU stories larger than a half of a page are found in Denmark (24%), Estonia (25%), Spain (26%), Latvia (22%) and Sweden (26%).

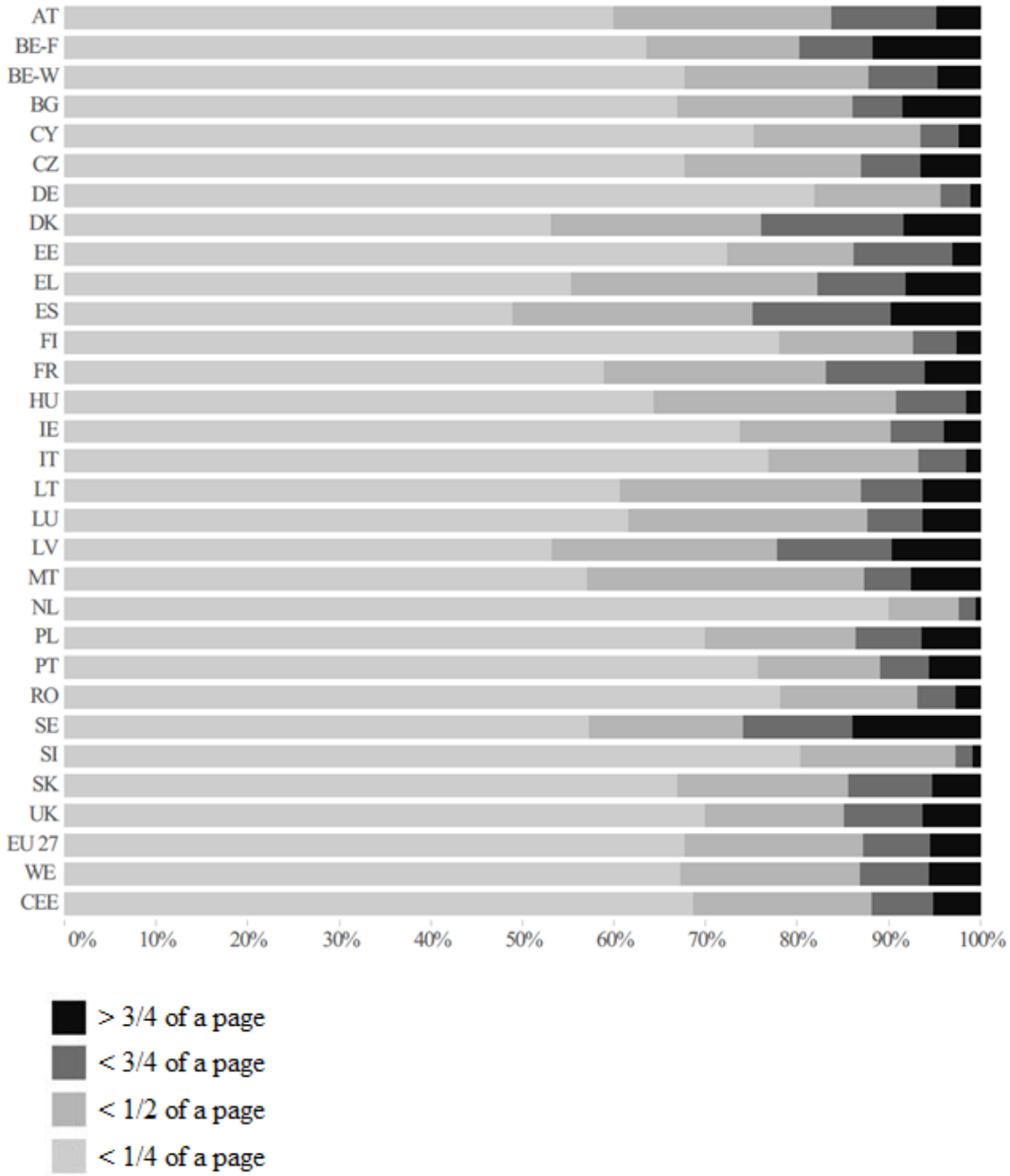
The little space devoted to the EU news goes in line with the claims mentioned earlier, stressing that the national media fail to make the EU news visible and prominent. The journalistic style may also be at fault here as journalists in some countries may simply write shorter news. Furthermore, the actual sizes of the newspapers themselves vary between countries; for example, the newspapers published in the Czech Republic have a smaller format than those published in the UK, so this needs to be considered when looking at the cross-country variations.

Utilizing the same measure, Figure 4.12 and Table 4.6 present the average size of an EU news story across the EU. This is expressed as a proportion of a page and varies just between 0.3 and 0.5, bringing the average of the whole EU, as well as of the two groups, to 0.4. As suggested in the previous figure, the average size of an EU newspaper story is half a page in Sweden, Flanders and Spain, but just a third in the Netherlands and Slovenia.

Table 4.6 points to an interesting feature: EU stories in WE newspapers are on average one tenth larger than stories not about the EU; this difference is just one twentieth, or 5%, for the CEE countries. Nevertheless, Figure 4.13 shows a slight,

positive relationship between the average size of non-EU stories in newspapers and EU stories. Figure 4.13 confirms my expectations in that the size of the EU newspaper stories relates greatly to the actual characteristics of the newspaper and the journalistic culture in a country and, consequently, is not a suitable measure for the visibility of EU news.

Figure 4.11: Size of EU newspaper stories



Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Figure 4.12: Average size of EU newspaper stories - map

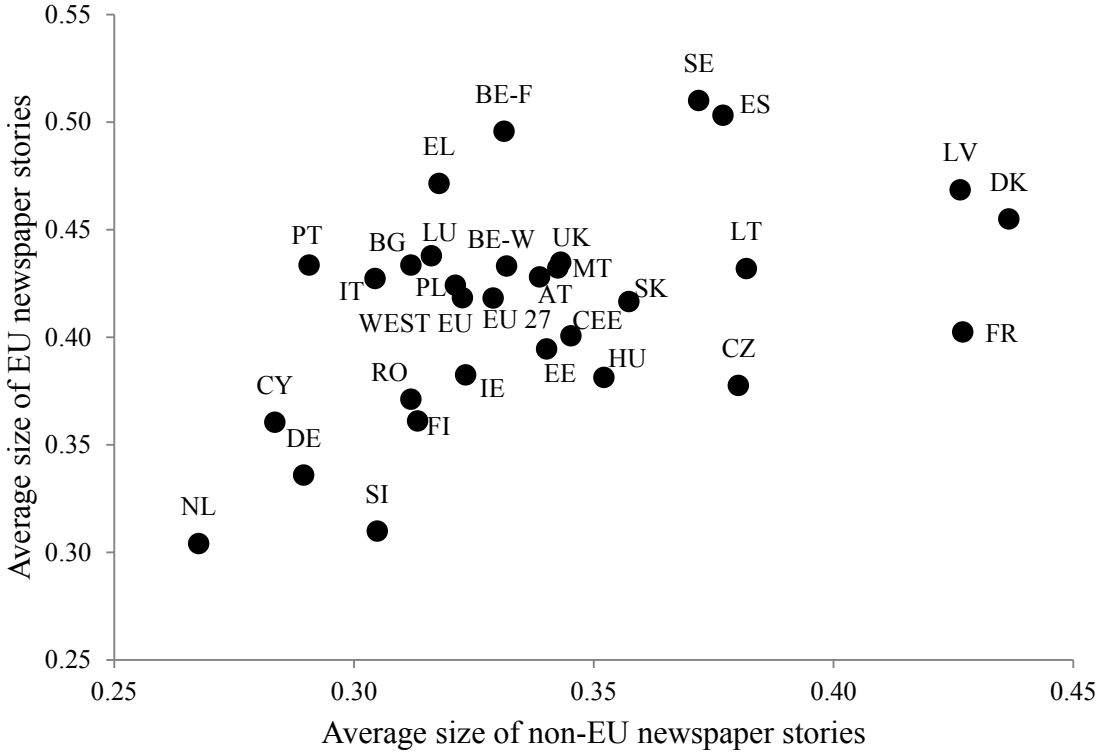
Table 4.6: Average size of EU and non-EU newspaper stories

Country	Average size of EU story	Average size of non-EU story
AT	0.43	0.34
BE-F	0.50	0.33
BE-W	0.43	0.33
BG	0.43	0.31
CY	0.36	0.28
CZ	0.38	0.38
DE	0.34	0.29
DK	0.46	0.44
EE	0.39	0.34
EL	0.47	0.32
ES	0.50	0.38
FI	0.36	0.31
FR	0.40	0.43
HU	0.38	0.35
IE	0.38	0.32
IT	0.43	0.30
LT	0.43	0.38
LU	0.44	0.32
LV	0.47	0.43
MT	0.43	0.34
NL	0.30	0.27
PL	0.42	0.32
PT	0.43	0.29
RO	0.37	0.31
SE	0.51	0.37
SI	0.31	0.30
SK	0.42	0.36
UK	0.43	0.34
EU 27	0.42	0.33
WE	0.42	0.32
CEE	0.40	0.35

Size of the newspaper story is expressed as a proportion of a page.

Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Figure 4.13: Average size of non-EU and EU newspaper stories



Size of the newspaper story is expressed as a proportion of a page.

Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

A similar set of tables and figures is presented below for news on television. Here, I examine the length of the news story in seconds. Figure 4.14 and Table 4.7 show the breakdown by country, with the average EU television story lasting just over two minutes (133 seconds). In the WE television newscasts, the average length is two minutes and a third (142 seconds), while in the CEE the news stories last just under two minutes (114 seconds). As in the case of newspapers, Greece and Sweden lead with the longest EU news stories of 220 and 189 seconds, respectively. Television newscasts in Hungary, Spain and Slovakia have the shortest EU television news, lasting just over 80 seconds.

And as with the size of the newspaper stories, the average EU television story takes up more time than non-EU story with a difference of just over half a minute (37 seconds) across all EU member states, 44 seconds in the WE and 22 seconds in the CEE countries. Figure 4.15 shows a very strong, positive relationship between the average length of non-EU news and average length of EU news. The figure clearly points to Greece, an outlier with the longest television stores, and a group of five countries (Sweden, the UK, Denmark, Poland and Portugal) that also have higher than average size of both all news and EU television news. This figure once again confirms that the average size and length of a news story varies across countries depending on their journalistic styles and cultures. Therefore, using this measure to identify the proportion of EU news would be highly correlated to the average size of a non-EU news story, and it would tell us little about the importance that is placed on the actual issue of the EU.

Figure 4.14: Average length of EU television stories - map

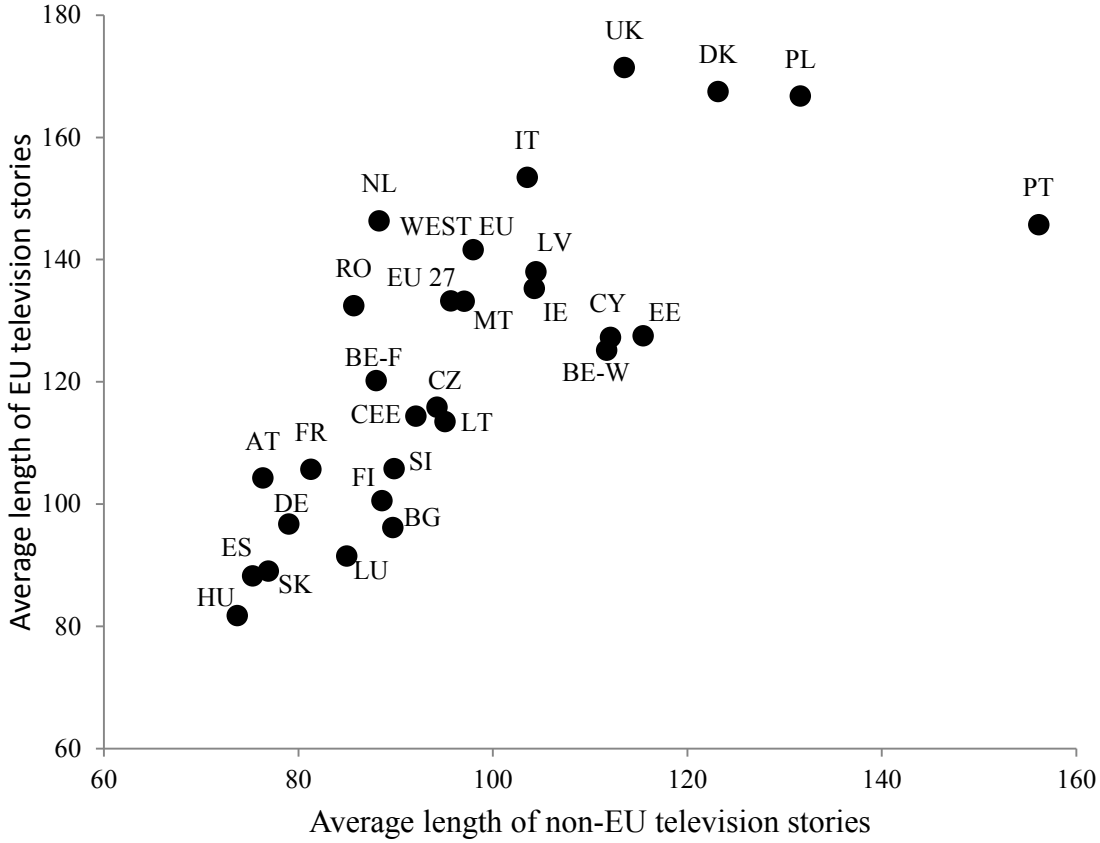
Table 4.7: Average length of EU and non-EU television stories

Country	Average length of EU story	Average length of non-EU story
AT	104	76
BE-F	120	88
BE-W	125	112
BG	96	90
CY	127	112
CZ	116	94
DE	97	79
DK	167	123
EE	128	115
EL	220	151
ES	88	75
FI	101	89
FR	106	81
HU	82	74
IE	135	104
IT	153	104
LT	113	95
LU	92	85
LV	138	104
MT	133	97
NL	146	88
PL	167	132
PT	146	156
RO	132	86
SE	189	99
SI	106	90
SK	89	77
UK	171	114
EU 27	133	96
WE	142	98
CEE	114	92

Length of television story is expressed in seconds.

Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Figure 4.15: Average size of non-EU and EU television stories



Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

4.6. Topics and Actors in the News

4.6.1. Topics in All Analyzed News

While I center my study purely around the visibility of EU news, having a look into the actual topics in the news can offer yet another point of view on the media effects. The following two sections examine the topics first in all the coded news and then in the EU news only. The results show that non-political stories prevail across all media types, especially in the CEE countries, which can help explain the varying and relatively low effects of the combined content exposure.

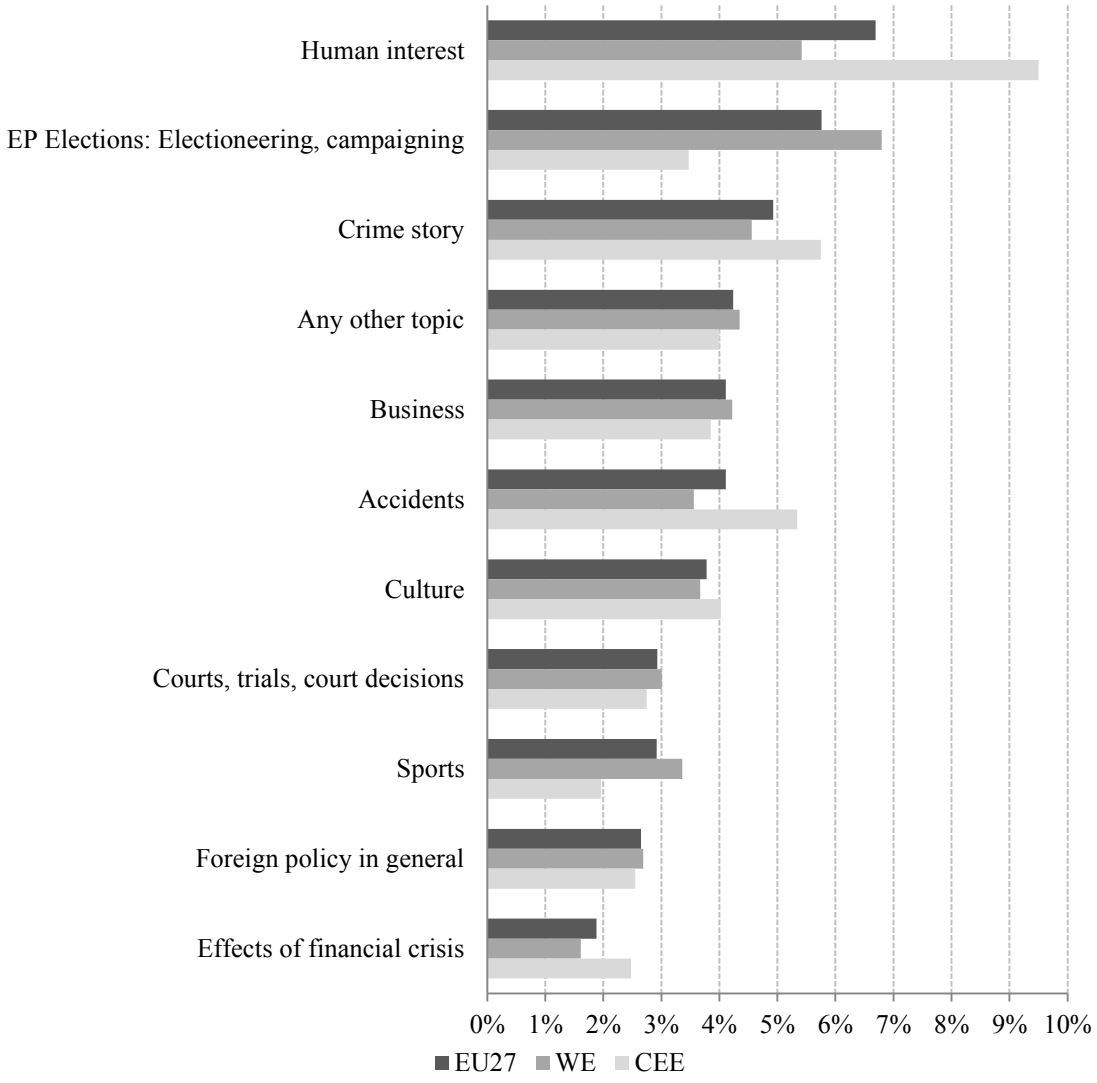
Each news story included in the media study was coded for its primary topic, with the option to code up to three topics. A topic refers to the major subject of the story that would generally take the most space in a newspaper story and the most time in a television newscast. To qualify as a topic for the purposes of this study, the subject needs "…to be referred to/mentioned at least twice in the article or newscast and not just mentioned in passing" (Schuck et al. 2010, 32). Coders used predefined list of wide-ranging topics, including detailed topics relating to politics and economics. Despite the extensive list of topics, "Any other topic" category made up just over 4% of all coded stories and was the number four most used category for the news stories across all EU countries. Stories referring to the EU were coded for an additional EU-related topic, list of which was also provided. Up to five EU-specific topics could be coded per story in order of appearance.

The top ten topics are nearly identical in both groups of countries examined here; the one topic that WE countries show in the top ten but not CEE countries (there it ranks 13) is Sports, the one topic present in CEE but not in WE is Effects of financial crisis on domestic/ EU/ global economy (number 19 in WE) - this scores relatively much higher in the CEE (2.5% of all coded news) compared to the WE (1.6%). Sport on the other hand. This is why the graphs in Figure 4.16 include 11 categories, to allow for the inclusion of top ten topics for both WE and CEE groups.

While the most common topics are similar in both groups, the proportions of individual topics differ greatly. To illustrate this, human interest is the most popular in

the CEE countries averaging 9.5% of all news, but in the WE countries this is just 5.4%. The most common topic in all news in the WE countries is EP elections: Electioneering, campaigning making up 6.8% while just 3.5% of all news in the CEE countries talk about this. The very first look immediately tells us that there indeed are different processes, media systems and journalistic cultures operating in the two groups of countries: while media in the WE actually publish a substantial amount of news about the EP elections during the three weeks before the elections, only 3.5% of news in the CEE media outlets are devoted to this topic. This would suggest that the WE national media do realize their responsibility to inform citizens about the EP elections and campaign, but media in the CEE fall behind.

Figure 4.16: Main topic in all news stories, top 11



Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Figure 4.17 and Table 4.8 show the top 3 topics in the EU across the individual countries, pointing to additional differences on this level. The three maps are shaded within the same range and provide further evidence for the WE – CEE split for the two most common topics. The highest proportions of news including a human interest topic are found in the CEE countries, namely Romania (16.6%), Estonia (15%), and the Czech Republic (14.9%), while the lowest levels can be seen in Luxembourg (1.8%) and Denmark (2.2%). As I have shown earlier in this chapter when examining the EU news visibility, Malta and Greece have the highest proportion of news discussing European Elections: Electioneering, campaigning: 15.4% and 14.2%, respectively. Interestingly, the crime story topic is presented relatively similarly across most countries, with the highest proportion seen in the Czech Republic (13%) and the lowest in Luxembourg (0.7%).

Figure 4.17: Main topic in all news stories, top 3 – map

Table 4.8: Main topic in all news stories, top 3

Country	Human interest (soft news)	European Elections: Electioneering, campaigning	Crime story
AT	4.4%	7.4%	4.3%
BE	8.9%	1.1%	4.8%
BG	5.7%	4.5%	3.7%
CY	3.1%	11.0%	1.9%
CZ	14.9%	4.6%	13.0%
DE	2.2%	3.4%	4.8%
DK	5.5%	1.1%	3.0%
EE	15.0%	2.2%	5.6%
EL	2.7%	14.2%	1.6%
ES	4.5%	11.5%	6.8%
FI	11.6%	2.7%	6.4%
FR	6.8%	6.9%	5.5%
HU	7.6%	5.9%	7.0%
IE	9.4%	5.3%	9.2%
IT	7.1%	1.9%	9.3%
LT	7.3%	0.4%	10.2%
LU	1.8%	1.0%	0.7%
LV	9.4%	0.4%	4.1%
MT	4.7%	15.4%	3.4%
NL	5.4%	1.6%	3.9%
PL	6.5%	6.3%	4.3%
PT	5.4%	11.2%	7.4%
RO	16.6%	1.2%	5.3%
SE	4.3%	4.5%	4.0%
SI	3.7%	3.7%	4.0%
SK	12.6%	3.7%	4.5%
UK	8.5%	1.1%	5.0%
EU 27	6.70%	5.80%	4.90%
WE	5.40%	6.80%	4.60%
CEE	9.50%	3.50%	5.80%

Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

4.6.2. Topics in News about the EU

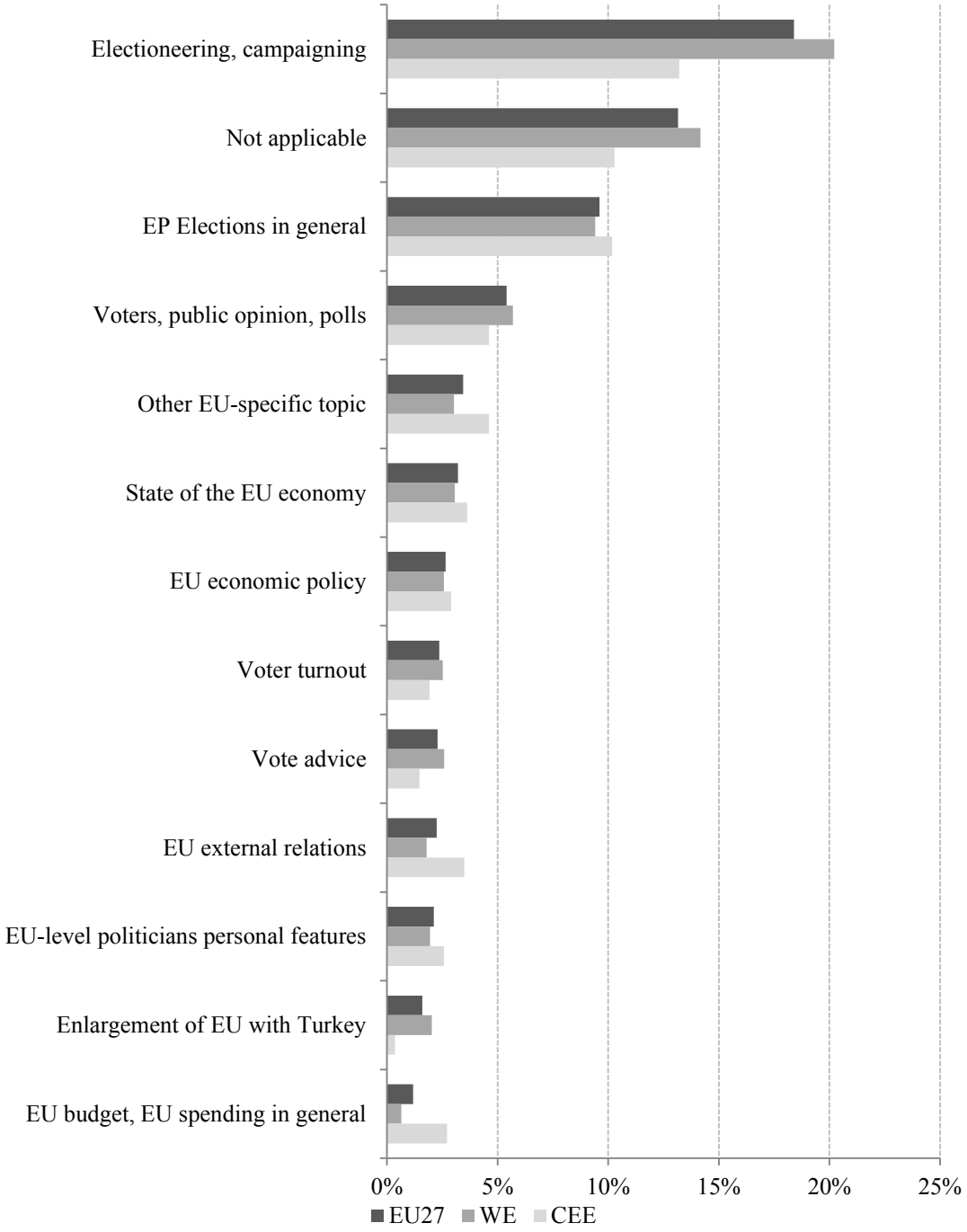
The news stories that mentioned the EU or the EP were further coded for EU-specific topics. These topics are more relevant to this study. They may help us better understand the reasons for why people are or are not affected by exposure to EU news and why these effects differ between the WE and CEE countries.

Figure 4.18 presents 13 most common EU topics across the EU. I include 13 topics to enable for inclusion of top ten topics from each WE and CEE group of countries; these two groups have seven topics in common in the top then, but each group's top ten includes three topics that the other group does not. Vote advice, Voter turnout, and Enlargement of EU with Turkey were the three topics included in the WE countries' ten most common topics but were ranked lower among the CEE countries. Especially interesting is the topic regarding enlargement with Turkey as it is present in 2% of EU news in the WE countries, but only in 0.4% of EU stories in the CEE countries. This could be interpreted as confirming what has been brought up in the literature review earlier: the elites and citizens in the CEE countries feel that they play a lesser role in the EU, following on what is imposed on them, and are not interested in issues such as further enlargement because they probably do not believe that it has a direct impact on them.

Conversely, the three topics included in the CEE countries' top ten but not shown in the WE group's top list are EU external relations and European neighborhood policy, EU budget and EU-level politicians' personal features. The last topic is expected to appear on the list based on the analysis of the main topics on the previous pages: media in CEE countries publish a high proportion of soft news and this is what a story about politicians' personal features is. A more challenging occurrence to explain is that news about EU budget are relatively common in the CEE countries with 2.7% occurrence, but in the WE countries, just 1.2% of EU news were about the budget.

Another interesting feature of Figure 4.18 is that although both groups yield Electioneering and campaigning as the most common EU topic, the percentages differ greatly with 20.2% in the WE and 13.2% in the CEE countries. This can be seen as reflecting the lack of EU campaigning in the CEE countries, a feature discussed earlier in this chapter.

Figure 4.18: Main EU topic in EU news stories, top 13



Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Figure 4.19 and Table 4.9 present country-level details for the three most common topics. Several countries clearly stand out with the darkest colors and highest proportions of the topic on Electioneering and campaigning: Malta (38.1%), Portugal (35.7%), Spain and, surprisingly a CEE country, the Czech Republic (both 31.7%). These numbers give us an idea about the intensity of the election campaigns and media's coverage of them in these countries.

Coders were able to choose from a long list of predefined topics; yet, relatively large proportions of EU news are classified as not applicable: 13.2% across the EU, 14.2% in the WE and 10.3% in the CEE EU member states, with great differences across the individual member states. To be classified as a topic, the particular issue had to be mention at least twice in the story. It is highly probable that in these 13.2% of cases the EU was mentioned in the news story only once; consequently, although such a story would be classified as an EU story, it could not have assigned an EU topic. This again demonstrates that even when a news story talks about an EU issue, it is often done so in the background of a national issue.

The proportions of news about EP elections in general are on average lower than for the previous two topics and vary from 4.5% in Hungary and 4.6% in the UK to 18% in Spain and 15% in Estonia. The figures described in these few pages give us a clear overview of the relative proportions of the most common EU-specific topics across the EU countries. This then also helps us explain and understand the varying effects of exposure to these news on voter turnout as well as the lack of these effects in the CEE countries.

Figure 4.19: Main EU topic in EU news stories, top 3 - map

Table 4.9: Main EU topic in EU news stories, top 3

Country	Electioneering, campaigning	Not applicable	European Elections in general
AT	18.3%	9.5%	5.8%
BE	5.2%	28.2%	10.8%
BG	10.3%	14.8%	13.5%
CY	21.5%	28.1%	5.7%
CZ	31.7%	7.0%	7.0%
DE	10.1%	37.8%	5.2%
DK	5.2%	2.5%	13.2%
EE	12.8%	16.3%	15.0%
EL	29.5%	8.9%	7.8%
ES	31.7%	3.7%	18.0%
FI	13.4%	6.8%	8.9%
FR	20.7%	2.7%	11.8%
HU	19.1%	3.5%	4.5%
IE	17.0%	26.7%	4.8%
IT	12.9%	40.2%	7.2%
LT	2.9%	11.9%	10.5%
LU	3.3%	11.2%	13.3%
LV	5.3%	0.9%	4.7%
MT	38.1%	3.1%	13.2%
NL	7.8%	4.6%	10.5%
PL	18.6%	1.8%	13.6%
PT	35.7%	1.9%	9.1%
RO	8.7%	25.9%	9.7%
SE	15.3%	13.7%	7.7%
SI	10.0%	7.6%	7.0%
SK	18.5%	27.8%	14.3%
UK	6.3%	35.8%	4.6%
EU 27	18.40%	13.20%	9.60%
WE	20.20%	14.20%	9.40%
CEE	13.20%	10.30%	10.20%

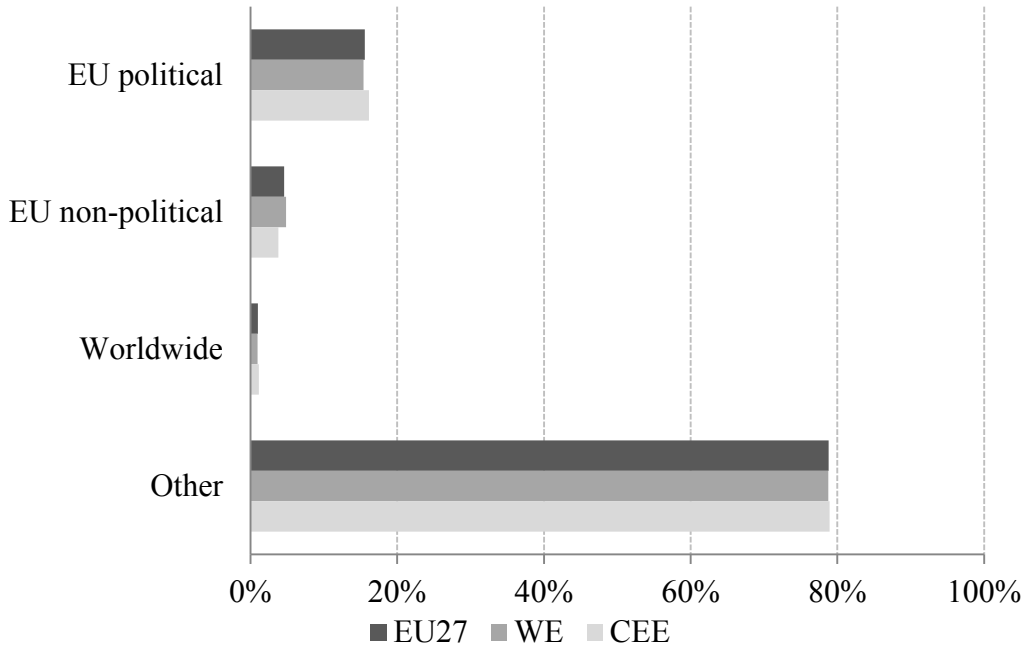
Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

4.6.3. Actors in News about the EU

While a topic of a story, whether general or EU-related, gives us the idea of the subject discussed in the story, it does not necessarily specify who is being talked about in the story. This is important because, as shown in previous sections, people like news stories about people, so it matters to a great extent what people the news talks about. Such information again helps us better interpret the results in the following chapters.

Each news story that referred to the EU was also coded for the main actors, i.e. who the main person or institution in the story is. Coders could choose from several groups of predefined, specific actors including EU political and non-political actors, worldwide actors and country-specific actors, including political elites and parties. Figure 4.20 shows a clear pattern across all EU countries with 15.6% of news devoted to EU political actors, 4.6% to EU non-political actors, just 1% to worldwide actors, and nearly 79% of all news mentioned country- specific actors, grouped under 'Other' in this figure. These figures do not differ between the WE and CEE countries. These findings further support the claim that not only the EU news visibility is low, when there is news about the EU, it is likely to be framed within a national issue or to feature a national actor.

Figure 4.20: Main actors in EU news stories



Source: *PIREDEU Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

4.7. Exposure to Media

4.7.1. Exposure Only

On previous pages I described the content of the news in the weeks leading to the 2009 EP elections. The news content from the media study makes up one part of the content exposure measure, the main variable of interest in this study, whose impact on voter turnout I examine in the next two chapters. The second component of the content exposure variables is the respondents' reported exposure to individual news outlets examined in the media study. I discussed the possible issues with this measure, selective exposure and overreporting of the measure, at the beginning of Chapter 3.

The EES survey asked, "In a typical week, how many days do you follow the following news programs?" and "How many days do you read the following newspapers?" The list then included the names of the newspapers and television newscasts coded in the media study. Figure 4.21 and Table 4.10 show respondents' average exposure to all relevant newspapers and television newscasts. It is an aggregate of exposure to each outlet, calculated as a weekly proportion: for each news outlet, the reported number of days of exposure was divided by the possible maximum of 7 days and an average for all news outlets was then calculated.

There are clear differences in the media exposure across countries. The EU average exposure is less than two days a week but there is a difference between the WE and CEE countries with the average exposure of 1.64 and 1.89 days. This is also clear from the shaded map, and, thinking back to the EU news visibility earlier in this chapter and keeping in mind the content exposure measure, it is clear that it is the news media content, i.e. the lack of EU news, where these countries fall behind as the exposure to media is relatively high there.

The highest exposure to media is found in Estonia, Slovakia, Finland, and the Czech Republic, with just over two days a week, while the lowest levels of exposure are in France, the UK, Greece, and Spain, with less than one and a quarter of a day per week. These values are important as they make up, along with the news content, the main variable of interest. It is also important to note the large size of standard deviations, signifying large differences across the respondents within a country. While Estonia and Malta have a standard deviation just under a day and a half, in France and the UK this is less than one day.

Figure 4.21: Respondents' average exposure to all media outlets - map

Table 4.10: Respondents' average exposure to all media outlets

Country	Exposure	Standard error
AT	1.55	0.034
BE-F	1.65	0.047
BE-W	1.55	0.055
BG	1.95	0.038
CY	1.92	0.041
CZ	2.13	0.037
DE	1.38	0.032
DK	1.74	0.033
EE	2.24	0.047
EL	1.25	0.032
ES	1.27	0.034
FI	2.14	0.038
FR	1.14	0.027
HU	1.62	0.035
IE	1.78	0.034
IT	1.86	0.036
LT	1.84	0.036
LU	1.76	0.036
LV	1.69	0.039
MT	2.09	0.044
NL	1.74	0.033
PL	1.62	0.032
PT	1.73	0.038
RO	1.56	0.037
SE	1.73	0.038
SI	2.04	0.035
SK	2.18	0.041
UK	1.14	0.029
EU 27	1.73	0.007
WE	1.64	0.009
CEE	1.89	0.012

Average exposure is expressed as number of days.

Source: *PIREDEU Voter Study. Author's own compilation*

4.7.2. Content exposure

On the previous pages, I presented the details of the variables that make up the content exposure variable, my main variable of interest: the news content and people's exposure to the news. As described in Chapter 3 and shown clearly in Figure 3.1, the content exposure measure is based on respondent' exposure to a particular news outlet and the EU news visibility in that content. This way I created a very accurate measure of the news content that each respondent was likely to be exposed to. Such a measure is relatively unique in the media effects research (Stevens and Banducci, 2013; Stevens and Karp, 2012; Stevens et al. 2011) and allows for a more clear examination of the media effects.

Figure 4.22 and Table 4.11 present the overview of the content exposure values across the EU member states. The range of values is between 2.24 and 13.8; higher values of content exposure mean more exposure to more EU news, and, consequently, stronger impact on people's likelihood to vote. On average, the CEE countries content exposure reaches 5.52, but it goes higher in the WE countries to 6.96. Looking at the individual countries, the lowest values are found in Romania (2.24) and Italy (2.91), while the highest can be seen in Malta (13.8) and Luxembourg (11.06). Based on the analysis presented on previous pages, it is clear that the low values for Romania and Italy are mainly the result of very low media coverage of the EU affairs, and for Romania this is in combination with low levels of exposure to media as well. Italy's exposure is slightly than the EU average. The high values for Malta and Luxembourg are caused by both high EU news visibility and great levels of exposure to media.

Figure 4.22: Content exposure – map

Table 4.11: Content exposure

Country	Content exposure
AT	0.092
BE	0.046
BG	0.067
CY	0.105
CZ	0.031
DE	0.030
DK	0.067
EE	0.066
EL	0.097
ES	0.059
FI	0.065
FR	0.030
HU	0.038
IE	0.065
IT	0.028
LT	0.043
LU	0.111
LV	0.050
MT	0.138
NL	0.050
PL	0.077
PT	0.075
RO	0.022
SE	0.097
SI	0.094
SK	0.064
UK	0.029
EU 27	0.064
WE	0.070
CEE	0.055

Source: *PIREDEU Voter Study and Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

As described in Chapter 3, in addition to content exposure, I also utilize measures of positive and negative content exposure where the proportion of positive or negative news about the EU is applied instead if the visibility-only measure. In the rest of this section I present the overview of the descriptive statistics for these variables.

Table 4.12 shows the characteristics of the three main media variables (all news outlets included). The minimum possible value for each variable is 0, the maximum is 1. Due to the lower content of news with positive or negative tone, the mean, median, standard deviation (SD), and variance values are much smaller for the exposure to positive and negative EU news than exposure to all EU news. All three variables exhibit statistically significant lack of normality and are positively skewed. The kurtosis for the positive and negative content exposure is higher than 10 which suggests there is a greater concentration of observations in one part of the distribution (kurtosis for normal distribution is 3). The following histograms show that this is around the value of 0 where the majority of observations fall, as most EU news contains neither positive nor negative tone.

The skewness test was run in Stata, showing that, based on the skewness, the probability that each of these variables is normal is 0.00 and based on kurtosis, the probability is also 0.00. The joint test shows Pr<0.001 and further confirms that there is statistically significant lack of normality for the three media variables. The same results were obtained for the variables capturing EU news content in the specific media types, and are now shown here.

Table 4.12: Statistics for the content exposure variables

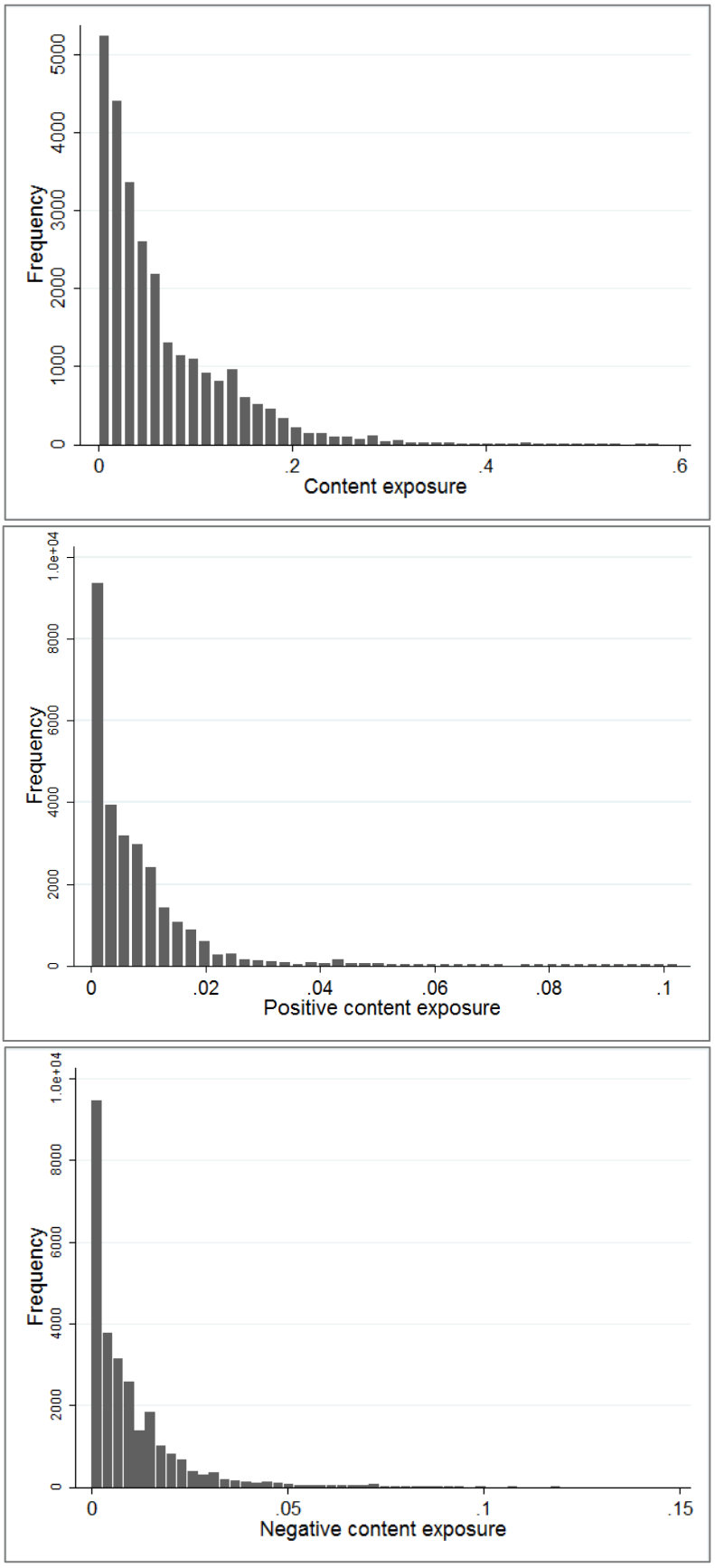
	Content exposure	**Positive content exposure**	**Negative content exposure**
Mean	0.064	0.007	0.010
Median	0.042	0.005	0.006
Standard deviation	0.067	0.009	0.012
Standard error	0.000	0.000	0.000
Lower confidence interval	0.063	0.007	0.009
Upper confidence interval	0.065	0.007	0.010
Variance	0.005	0.000	0.000
Skewness	1.970	3.260	2.521
Kurtosis	8.842	21.41	11.548

Figure 4.23 shows the distribution of content exposure and positive and negative content exposure. It is clear that the majority of observations are concentrated around 0, especially in the case where tone of the news is considered, as here 0 stands both for respondents with no exposure to any news outlet analyzed, as well as for those exposed to news outlets with no EU news, including positive or negative tone toward the EU.

For content exposure, the number of observations with 0 values is also high; since there was at least some EU news in each media outlet this means that many respondents were not exposed to any news outlet examined here. Although the values for this variables range between 0 and 1, nearly all observations are concentrated between 0 and 0.3. Higher coefficients signify exceptionally frequent exposure to media with very high visibility of EU news.

The picture is similar for the positive content exposure, where the range is between 0 and 0.1 but the majority of observations fall between 0 and 0.05, and, for the negative content exposure, the range is between 0 and 0.12, with most of the observations between 0 and 0.02. The respondents included in the content exposure are the same as those used in the measures for positive and negative content exposure; it is the content that is changing, i.e. very low proportions of EU news contain positive or negative tone toward the EU. Therefore, the concentration of observations 0 is likely to be caused by the lack of positive and negative news in the figures for the positive and negative content exposure, rather than by respondents' lack of exposure to the news examined in this study.

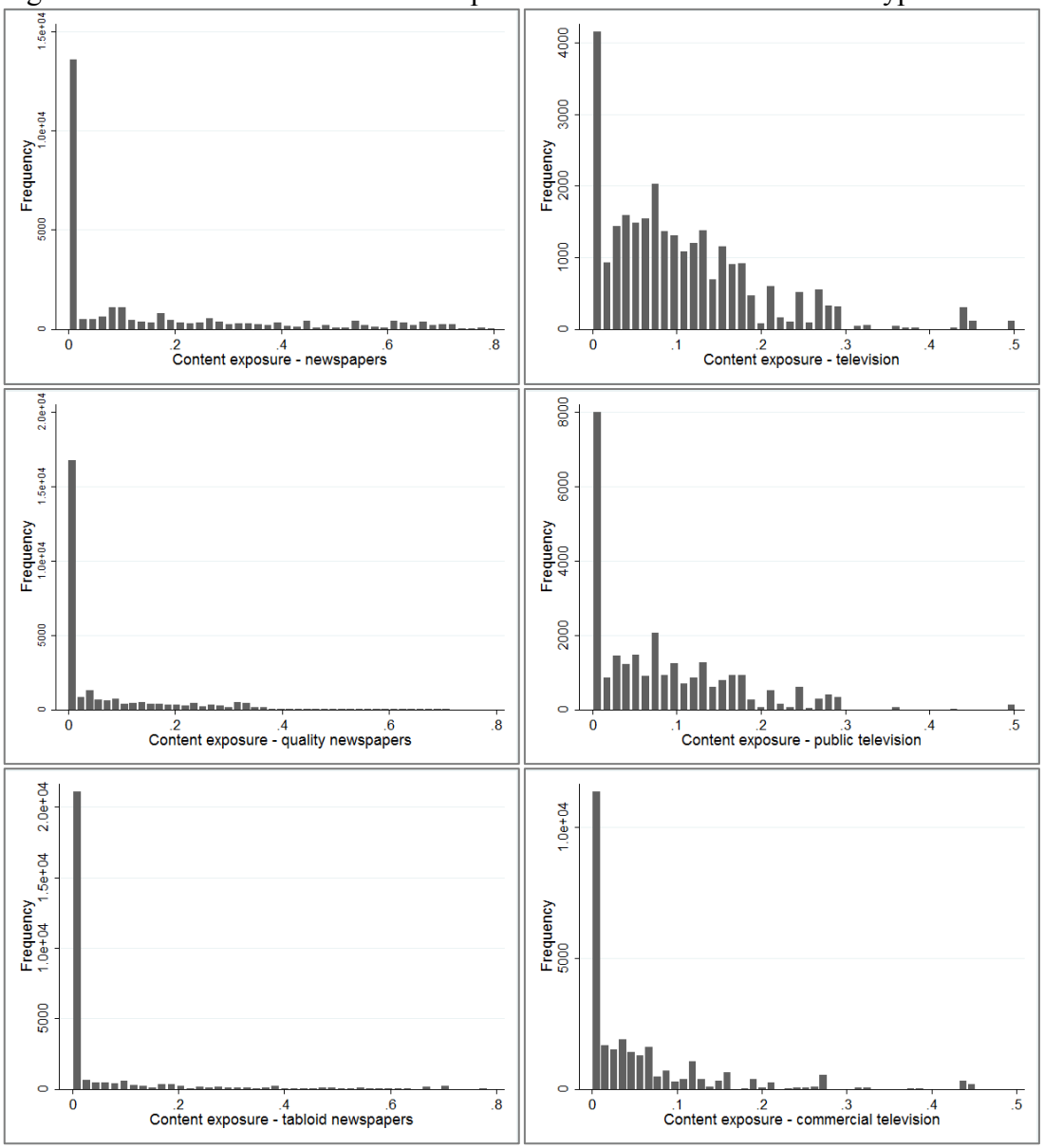
Figure 4.23: Distribution of Content Exposure



Source: *PIREDEU Voter Study and Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Charts in Figure 4.24 outline the distribution of content exposure to EU news for each media type. The patterns are similar to that for all media, but here we can see where the exceptions with high values come from. For both types of newspapers, the values reach up to 0.8, while for television channels this value is 0.5.

Figure 4.24: Distribution of content exposure to EU news across media types

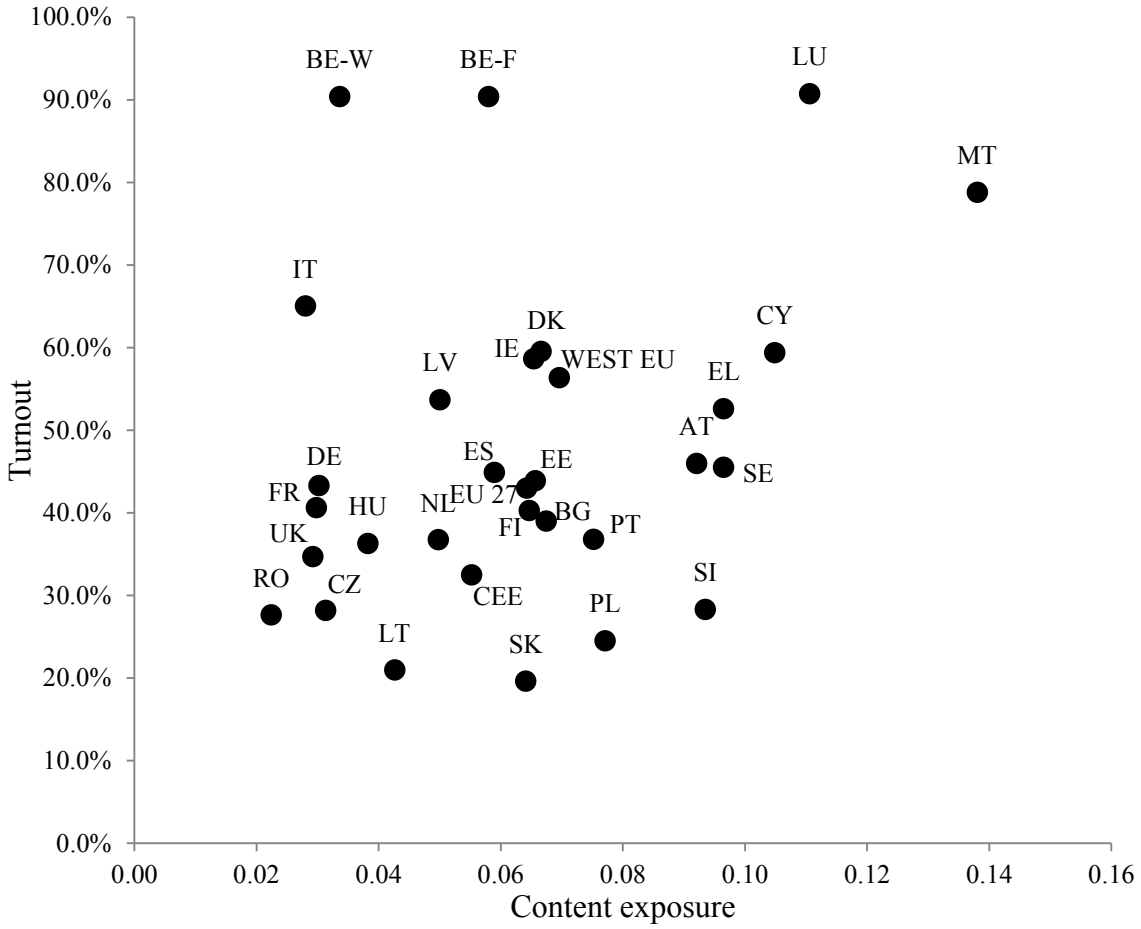


The ranges on both x and y axes vary between the graphs.

Source: *PIREDEU Voter Study and Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

Figure 4.25 then shows countries' content exposure in relation to turnout. The pattern is very similar to the scatter chart with turnout and visibility of EU news (Figure 4.4). There seems to be a positive trend; while most countries are found within turnout of 30% to 60 % and content exposure values of 0.02 to 0.1, Malta, Luxembourg, and Cyprus stand out with the highest values for the content exposure and a high turnout as well. Poland and Slovenia have relatively high content exposure to EU news but have among the lowest turnouts. Countries such as Romania, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and the UK are low for both measures.

Figure 4.25: Content exposure and 2009 EP elections turnout



Source: *PIREDEU Voter Study and Media Study. Author's own compilation.*

4.8. Summary

In this chapter, I presented the overview of the context of the 2009 EP elections, looking at voter turnout, visibility and tone of EU news as well as the topics and actors in the news. I examined the downward trend in the EP elections turnout from 1979 up to 2014, pointing to the 20% turnout gap between WE and CEE countries in the latest three elections. Explaining this turnout gap is one of my main motivations behind this study. I am to show that more frequent exposure to more news about the EU leads to higher likelihood in participation in the 2009 EP elections.

The figures showing proportions of EU news across the EU member states show clear differences between the individual states as well as between the groups of WE and CEE member states; there was 38.3% of EU news in the WE countries, and 30.6% in the CEE. The variations between the two groups present a further motivation behind this study. The visibility of EU news in each media outlet examined here also makes up half of the main content exposure measure; therefore, the variations in the EU news visibility across the EU is reflected in the media effects results.

The majority of the news about the EU is neutral, i.e. the stories do not evaluate the EU in a specific way. On average, just 3% of EU news have a positive tone toward the EU and 4% show negative evaluations. In many countries, these small percentages translate into just several tens of stories with some tone, and there are great outliers on both ends of the spectrum. This is important when the effects of exposure to the positive and negative EU news are examined as these outliers boost to the effects to great sizes.

As shown in other studies, the EU news visibility and the tone of the news also differ across media types: newspapers have higher proportion of EU news than television, 49% compared to 15.6%. The visibility of EU news in quality newspapers reaches 52.6%. In the following two chapters I examine effects of exposure to EU news across the different media types, so it is necessary to be aware of these differences in news coverage as they have an impact on the size of the media effects.

To see the EU news content from a different perspective, I examined the topics that were discussed in the news. The most common topic across all news analyzed was ‘human interest’ shown in 5.4% of stories in the WE countries and in 9.5% of stories in

the CEE countries. The most popular EU-related topics across all the news coded was about the campaigning in the EP elections and its coverage received 6.8% of news in the WE countries and 3.5% in the CEE countries. The relatively small proportions of both these topics imply that there were many diverse topics across all the news, so people were likely to be exposed to a great mix of news. This could consequently suppress the effects of exposure to EU news.

I also examined the EU-specific topics that were coded only for the news that actually mentioned the EU. The most common topic there is the same one as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, news about the EP election campaigning, found in 20.2% of EU news in the WE countries and in 13.2% in the CEE countries. These percentages are higher than those for topics in all coded news shown above because the base for the EU-specific topics includes only the stories about the EU, i.e. those 38.3% of news in the WE and 30.6% of news in the CEE countries.

It is necessary to point to the relatively high proportion of EU news with 'not applicable' EU topic, 14.2% in the WE and 10.3% in the CEE. To classify as a topic, that particular subject had to be mentioned at least twice in the news story. This means that more than a tenth of EU news across the EU does not have a clear topic but possibly mentions a variety of subjects. It is also likely that although these stories do mention the EU, they are in fact about a non-EU topic, just mentioning the EU or its institutions in passing. This may mean that people are not be getting a clear message from the media, which can in turn lower the potential effects of exposure to EU news.

Towards the end of the chapter, I looked into the exposure to media, in particular exposure to the five news outlets examined in this study. This is the second half making up the content exposure measure, along with the EU news visibility. On average, respondents in the WE countries reported they are exposed to the five news outlets 1.6 days per week, while those in the CEE member states reported slightly higher exposure of 1.9 days. While it is possible that citizens in the CEE countries are exposed more often to the media, it is also likely that the rate of overreporting of this self-reported exposure is higher in the CEE countries, i.e. people there feel more obliged to say that they are exposed to media when in fact they are not. Overreporting of the exposure measure is a well-known issue of survey media effects research, and it needs to be considered when I analyze the results in the following two chapters.

At the end of this chapter, I described the content exposure variable, my main variable of interest in this study. It is calculated from people's exposure to a particular

media outlet, expressed as a proportion of a week, and the EU news content in this outlet, expressed as a proportion of news about the EU. Consequently, content exposure ranges between 0 and 1, and the mean is 0.064. The variable is not normally distributed, and there is a high concentration of the observations around 0. I also utilize positive content exposure and negative content exposure, i.e. exposure to positive and to negative EU news. These two variables, while also ranging between 0 and 1, have means of 0.007 and 0.010, respectively. They are even further skewed, with the majority of observations concentrated around 0. The low values of these three variables are caused by respondents' low exposure to the news outlets and the outlets' low content of EU news, as well as the very low proportion of the positive and negative EU news. In the next two chapters I analyze the effects of these content exposure variables on respondents' likelihood to vote in the 2009 EP elections. The results reflect the specific characteristics of each of these measures.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS: VISIBILITY OF EU NEWS

Including more news about the EU and the EP elections in the national media could help ease the EU legitimacy crisis because EU citizens would be able to learn more about the EU and then would be more likely to voter in the EP elections. Up to this point, I have been building the reasoning behind my main argument that a higher exposure to more news about the EU, i.e. the content exposure, is likely to boost voter turnout, but that this is going to be the case only for Western EU countries, not in the CEE member states. Following the introduction, I discussed the problem of EU legitimacy and the communications deficit, and outlined how easily available information in the media can help improve the situation. I then discussed the existing literature on voter turnout, outlining the factors known to have an impact on voter turnout and also presenting the special characteristics of the EP second-order elections, such as low saliency of the election campaign and the persistent low levels of turnout. I outlined the various findings in the media effects literature pointing to the lack of consensus on whether and to what extent exposure to media has an impact on people's beliefs and political behavior. I also discussed that the lack of national news coverage of the EP elections is linked to both low saliency of the EP election campaign and the low levels of voter turnout. At the end of the literature review I explained that the post-Communist legacies in the CEE countries, including unstable governments, volatile party systems, corruption among politicians, and citizens' distrust of politicians and media, relate to the lower levels of voter turnout as well as to the poorer chances of media having an impact on citizens' likelihood to vote.

In Chapter 3, presented the main issues in survey-based media effects studies, the selective exposure and overrepoting of media exposure, and I explained how I aimed to avoid these in this thesis. I then presented the datasets I used to provide

empirical evidence for my arguments and described the individual variables utilized in my model. Finally, in the previous chapter I outlined the context of the 2009 EP elections. I mentioned the low salience of the election campaign with the world financial crisis at the forefront and discussed the downward trend of voter turnout over the last few decades. I also described in detail the media coverage of the EP elections: the lack of visibility of EU news with its great variations across EU member states and different media types, and the prevalence of news without any tone toward the EU as opposed to news that positively or negatively evaluate the EU. Furthermore, I showed that human interest and crime stories are the most common, with just one EU-related topic appearing among the ten most common topics in all the news analyzed. General news about the EP elections and news on electioneering and campaigning were among the most common EU topics, with a substantial proportion of news being classified as not including any predefined EU topic. At the end of the previous chapter, I presented the descriptive statistics of my main variable of interest, content exposure. Content exposure is calculated using respondents' exposure to a specific media outlet and the actual content of that outlet, obtaining a unique measure of each respondent's average EU content exposure[15].

I will now analyze the effects of the content exposure variables on voter turnout in the 2009 EP elections. Using empirical evidence, in this chapter I inspect whether more frequent exposure to media outlets with higher visibility of EU news increases voter participation in the 2009 EP elections. In the following Chapter 6, I then examine the role of tone of the EU news in this relationship.

Based on the cognitive mobilization theory of media effects and the rational choice and mobilization theories of voter turnout, I expect exposure to EU news in the media to boost people's knowledge about the EU, help them see the EP elections being relevant to their everyday lives, and consequently increase their chances of voting. I am especially interested in the different patterns of media effects in the Western and the CEE EU member states. The very low turnout in the latter group along with their unique characteristics indicate that also media effects may show different patterns there compared to the Western EU countries. The post-communist legacy of lack of trust to media and to politicians, of party identification and political participation all lead to the assumption that media effects are weaker in the CEE countries. The size of the effects

[15] Please see figure 3.1 for a detailed explanation of this measure.

will nevertheless be affected by the visibility of the EU news in the media; low visibility would lead to practically non-existent effects while higher visibility could boost the effects.

The data analysis provides evidence supporting my claim: greater exposure to news about the EU increased the likelihood of an EU citizen voting in the EP election, but when comparing the media effects between countries of Western Europe and CEE, they were not found to be present in the latter group. The differences in the effects of exposure to various media outlets also support findings from existing research, namely that exposure to newspapers had a stronger impact than to television, and that quality newspapers, along with public television channels, had a stronger impact than tabloid newspapers or commercial television channels.

This chapter is organized in the following way: first, multilevel models, including content exposure to all media outlets, are presented; second, the media effects are compared across groups of countries. These groups are based upon whether a country is post-Communist, official turnout, and the proportion of EU news in the country's media. Third, effects of media exposure are compared among groups of observations, split by numerous variables such as age, knowledge about the EU, interest in politics, etc. Fourth, the effects of exposure to different media types are examined using multilevel models, including comparisons between newspapers and television, quality and tabloid newspapers, and commercial and public television.

5.1. Multilevel Model, All Media

Table 5.1 shows the results as odds ratios for three multilevel models, examining the effects of content exposure: random intercept model, model including only individual level variables, and a full model including country level variables. Variables that were not statistically significant do not feature in the table but are shown in the model in the previous chapter.

The first random intercept model (i.e. model with only the dependent variable) shows the degree of variance to be explained at both levels**.** At level 1, the individual variance (the intra-class correlation) *rho* is 16%, while the level 2 variance, or the

variance of random intercept (calculated as sigma_u^2), is 79.3%. The explanatory variables in the following models decrease this variance.

The second model contains only individual level variables. Before examining the effects of individual variables, the variance offers an important insight on the explanatory power of this model. Interestingly, both individual level variance and level 2 variance remained unchanged compared to the random intercept model signifying that, despite many variables being statistically significant, individual level variables alone do not explain any variance in this model. To put into context, this means that respondents' characteristics, such as interest in politics, engagement in campaign or age, do not explain whether they would or would not vote in the EP elections. Nevertheless, the fact that many of the explanatory variables do show statistically significant effects implies that they do matter in the equation and do influence one's decision to vote but do not fully explain the differences in the likelihood to vote among respondents.

The dependent variable of interest to this paper, the content exposure, has a statistically significant effect at 0.1% level, increasing one's odds of voting by a factor of 4.1. This suggests that with a unit increase in content exposure, i.e. the combination of EU news content and respondent's exposure to it, the odds of voting increase four times. Compared to the other explanatory variables, this is the strongest impact. Exposure to campaign, a variable closely related to the above mentioned media variable, also has a strong impact on the likelihood of voting, increasing the odds of voting by 135%, or a factor of 2.35, thus providing further evidence to support my hypothesis.

Similarly, interest in the election campaign and, to a lesser extent, habitual voting, signifying whether the respondent voted in the previous national election, also greatly increased the odds of voting by a factor of 2 (104%) and by 57%, respectively. Additionally, being close to a political party increased the odds of voting by 29%, evaluating EU membership as positive by 17.6%, and satisfaction with democracy in one's country by 10%. All the variables depicting an individual's political attitudes have effects statistically significant at the 0.1% level.

The demographic variables also have statistically significant effects although they are much weaker, suggesting that, despite the findings of research on voter turnout in national elections, these do not play a large role in determining whether one votes in the EP elections. Gender does not have a statistically significant effect either, while older age slightly increased one's odds of voting by 2%, and higher education by 1.4% -

both statistically significant at the 0.1% level. On the other hand, being in tertiary education decreased the likelihood of voting by 64%, making it a stronger indicator than age, as it is reasonable to assume that it is mainly younger people who are still in education.

In addition to the individual level variables, the full model also includes country level variables such as compulsory voting, proportionality of electoral system, whether a country is post-Communist, and aggregate level of EU news in the country's media. Both variance indicators decreased greatly in this model with the individual variance falling to just 5.2% and the level 2 variance to 42.4%.

The strength and statistical significance of the individual level variables are very similar to the previous model; therefore I will now look only at the country level variables. Compulsory voting - traditionally a robust determinant of voter turnout - is also strong in this model, increasing the odds of voting for citizens in countries with compulsory vote almost three times. The variable used in studies on EP elections depicting the time until next national election also has a statistically significant effect here: as the next national election is farther away, one's odds of voting increase by 20%. The other country level variables deemed to be important here, including the post-Communist dummy, year of accession to the EU, and country level aggregate proportion of EU news in the media, do not have statistically significant effects.

Table 5.1: Multilevel model, content exposure

	Random intercept model	**Individual level model**	**Full model**
Media variables			
Content exposure		4.102 (0.000)***	4.027 (0.000)***
Political variables			
Exposure to campaign		2.351 (0.128)***	2.357 (0.128)***
Interest in campaign		2.039 (0.046)***	2.041 (0.046)***
Interest in politics		1.087 (0.024)***	1.086 (0.024)***
Habitual vote		1.572 (0.057)***	1.569 (0.057)***
Party ID		1.291 (0.045)***	1.29 (0.045)***
Evaluating EU membership as good		1.176 (0.022)***	1.174 (0.022)***
Satisfaction with democracy in country		1.1 (0.023)***	1.097 (0.023)***
Demographic variables			
Gender (male=1)		0.941 -0.031	0.941 -0.031
Age		1.021 (0.001)***	1.021 (0.001)***
Education (in years)		1.014 (0.004)***	1.014 (0.004)***
Still studying (dummy)		0.363 (0.102)***	0.368 (0.103)***
Contextual variables			
CEE			0.572 -0.194
Year of accession			0.987 -0.008
Compulsory vote			2.738 (0.790)***
Time till next national election			1.215 (0.090)**
Country level visibility of EU news			0.996 -0.009
Observations	27069	27069	27069
L2 observations	28	28	28
Log likelihood	-15130	-12433.331	-12415.909
lnsig2u	-0.464	-0.448	-1.715
SE (lnsig2u)	(0.272)	(0.274)	(0.281)
Sigma_u	0.793	0.799	0.4243
SE (sigma_u)	(0.108)	(0.274)	(0.0596)
rho	0.16	0.163	0.0519
SE (rho)	(0.0367)	(0.0374)	(0.138)

Standard errors in parentheses

Media effects studies often use either media exposure or the news content to determine the effects. A combination of the two is rarely used, but this leads to numerous problems. In survey research, it is often only known how often a respondent was exposed to a particular medium, but it is not known what kind of message the person was actually exposed to. Conversely, the content of the news or the message is often utilized in aggregate studies, but such a measure does not enable the researchers to see whether the respondents were actually exposed to that message. Using a combined content and exposure measure enables us to get the complete picture.

My analyses in this study confirm the significance of the combined measure of news content and respondents' exposure to it. The combined content exposure measure presents relatively strong, statistically significant effect on respondents' likelihood to vote (Table 5.1). I ran the same model specification but this time using exposure only instead of the combined content exposure, and the exposure measure did not reach levels of statistical significant (Table 5.2). In this analysis, the exposure measure is respondents' average exposure to the five outlets examined in this study and is expressed as a proportion of a week. It is essentially the exposure part of the content exposure measure. While the effects of other variables are similar to the original model with content exposure, exposure to media, on its own, does not have an effect on one's likelihood to vote.

As mentioned above, aggregated news content is also often used in media effects studies. I include such measure, the country-level visibility of EU news, in the multilevel models (Table 5.1). Nevertheless, this variable does now have a statistically significant effect in any model I ran. These results clearly show that, to correctly examine media effects, the analysis needs to account for all aspects that the media environment, i.e. needs to include both the content of the news and people's exposure to it.

Table 5.2: Multilevel logistic regression model including exposure measure only instead of content exposure

	Exposure only model
Media variable	
Mean exposure	1.221
	(0.131)
Political variables	
Exposure to campaign	2.418
	(0.132)***
Interest in campaign	2.039
	(0.046)***
Interest in politics	1.091
	(0.024)***
Habitual vote	1.573
	(0.057)***
Party ID	1.289
	(0.045)***
Evaluating EU membership as good	1.176
	(0.022)***
Satisfaction with democracy in country	1.097
	(0.023)***
Demographic variables	
Gender (male=1)	0.945
	(0.031)
Age	1.021
	(0.001)***
Education (in years)	1.015
	(0.004)***
Still studying (dummy)	0.344
	(0.096)***
Contextual variables	
CEE	0.567
	(0.191)
Year of accession	0.987
	(0.008)
Compulsory vote	2.728
	(0.782)***
Time till next national election	1.212
	(0.089)**
Country level visibility of EU news	0.841
	(0.771)

Observations	27,069
L2 observations	28
Log likelihood	-12423.997
lnsig2u	-1.729
SE (lnsig2u)	(0.281)
Sigma_u	0.421
SE (sigma_u)	(0.059)
rho	0.051
SE (rho)	(0.014)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Exposure is expressed as a proportion of a week a respondent is on average exposed to the media outlets examined in this study.

5.2. Content Exposure in Western vs. Central and Eastern European Countries

The tables on previous pages fail to falsify my expectations that more frequent exposure to more news about the EU increases one's likelihood to vote. The effect is relatively large: a unit change in the combined content exposure, which is measured on a scale 0 to 1 and combines the percentage of EU news with the proportion of time a person was exposed to this news, results in 4-time increase in respondents' likelihood to vote. One of the main goals of this study is to examine differences in the media effects on voter turnout between the Western and CEE EU member states. The following set of tables and figures examines these differences.

Due to the lack of existing research on media effects, my expectations were based on the assumption that because of the low visibility of EU news in the post-Communist media, and the lack of trust in the media and politics, the media effects would be weaker in CEE countries. The post-Communist dummy variable is not statistically significant in the multilevel model in Table 5.1. This suggests that living in a post-Communist country does not alone decrease one's likelihood of voting but may be related to individual or country characteristics connected to the post-Communist legacy.

Table 5.3 presents three logistic regression models (not multilevel) including the observations from (1) all EU countries, (2) CEE countries only and (3) WE countries only. The goal of this analysis is to examine the media effects, and effects of other variables, in the two diverse groups, using the same specifications. While I have explained the appropriateness of a multilevel model for the data I use, to run the analysis separately for WE and CEE countries, a basic logistic model needs to be used as these groups each on their own do not have a sufficient number of observations on level 2, i.e. there are only 10 countries in the CEE group. The logistic model (1) for all EU member states is run for comparison only, but I want to point to the CEE dummy variable there: it is statically significant at 0.1% level, suggesting that those in the CEE countries are just half as likely to vote in the EP elections compared to those in the WE countries.

Results in Table 5.3 clearly show the differences between the two groups of countries. The main variable of interest, content exposure, does not have a statistically

significant effect in the CEE countries, but it does have it in the WE countries, with nearly identical size of the effect as in the multilevel model for all countries (Table 5.1). This immediately suggests that the decisions on whether to vote in the EP elections for the citizens in the CEE countries are not influenced by their exposure to EU news in the media. As shown in Chapter 4, this is likely to be due to the low levels of EU news visibility in the CEE countries rather than people's exposure to EU news, which seems to be relatively high. On the other hand, although the exposure to media in many CEE countries is higher than in the WE countries, we need to keep in mind that this is a self-reported exposure measure which respondents tend to exaggerate. As I mentioned briefly at the beginning of Chapter 3, the fact that both turnout and exposure survey measures are likely to be overreported, and at different rates across the countries, could in fact be the cause for some of the effects reported here.

Examining the political variables in the models (2) and (3), many variables have similar effects in both groups. There is a large difference though in the effect of exposure to campaign, i.e. how frequently the respondents were exposed to or participated in events relating to the EP elections in the weeks prior it, measured as often, sometimes or never. A unit increase in the exposure to campaign increases one's chances to vote by a factor of nearly 3 in the CEE countries and a factor of 2 in the WE countries. Having voted in the previous national election and being close to a political party have slightly stronger effects in the CEE countries. Looking at demographics, the effects of education are the only ones to vary between the two groups. The effect of education actually does not reach levels of statistical significance in the WE countries, but in the CEE countries, each extra year of education increases one's likelihood to vote by 4%. Also, those still in education are 60% less likely to vote than those not studying any more.

Lastly, there are diverse effects of the contextual variables. Time till next national election has statistically significant, positive effect only in the WE countries, and the year of EU accession has a significant, slightly positive effect in the CEE countries but a negative effect in the WE countries. This suggests that in the CEE countries, people are more likely to vote as the next national election is farther away, but in the WE countries, people are less likely to vote in the EP election when the national election is far away. Overall, the results in Table 5.3 confirm diverse effects not only of content exposure but also of other variables between the WE and CEE countries, thus supporting my expectations.

Table 5.3: Logistic regression showing odds ratios. 3 models including (1) all countries, (2) CEE countries only and (3) WE countries only

	EU27	**CEE**	**WE**
Media variable	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**
Content exposure	2.893	1.685	4.403
	(0.875)***	(0.896)	(1.695)***
Political variables			
Exposure to campaign	2.577	2.981	2.036
	(0.135)***	(0.242)***	(0.143)***
Interest in campaign	2.049	1.879	2.186
	(0.045)***	(0.062)***	(0.067)***
Interest in politics	1.073	1.089	1.077
	(0.023)**	(0.038)*	(0.031)*
Habitual vote	1.472	1.774	1.380
	(0.052)***	(0.093)***	(0.068)***
Party ID	1.240	1.470	1.116
	(0.042)***	(0.076)***	(0.051)*
Evaluating EU membership as good	1.144	1.168	1.135
	(0.021)***	(0.032)***	(0.028)***
Satisfaction with democracy in country	1.055	1.072	1.105
	(0.021)**	(0.034)*	(0.030)***
Demographic variables			
Gender (male=1)	0.927	0.945	0.944
	(0.030)*	(0.046)	(0.041)
Age	1.020	1.018	1.022
	(0.001)***	(0.002)***	(0.002)***
Education (in years)	1.011	1.043	1.003
	(0.003)**	(0.007)***	(0.004)
Still studying (dummy)	0.434	0.040	0.797
	(0.116)**	(0.022)***	(0.246)
Contextual variables			
CEE	0.575		
	(0.038)***		
Year of accession	0.989	1.101	0.988
	(0.002)***	(0.027)***	(0.002)***
Compulsory vote	2.245		2.676
	(0.145)***		(0.197)***
Time till next national election	1.133	0.938	1.277
	(0.016)***	(0.031)	(0.023)***
Country level visibility of EU news	1.091	1.569	0.613
	(0.199)	(0.502)	(0.154)
Observations	27,069	10,054	17,015
Log likelihood	-12707.838	-5333.524	-7135.821
Pseudo R2	0.225	0.224	0.191

Standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.001
** p<0.01
* p<0.05

5.3. Marginal Effects for Groups of Observations

Next, the analysis was run for groups of observations based on their values for several characteristics. For example, keeping all other variables at their means, the size of the media effects (content exposure) is examined for voters with low, medium, and high levels of content exposure or for those with low, medium, and high levels of knowledge about the EU. This allows for closer examination of the role that different variables play in relation to media effects. The following charts display the marginal effects, obtained with the *margins* command in Stata, of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for various groups of individuals. The groups were formed according to the values for a number of explanatory variables, including party ID, knowledge about the EU, or interest in politics. The light grey lines in the graphs then show the 95% lower and upper confidence intervals. Where the effects are statistically significant, stars (*) are shown next to the group name within the chart, following the usual rules where *** for $p<0.001$, ** for $p<0.01$, and * $p<0.05$.

Compared to the previous table showing the results of multilevel analyses, the charts below show the marginal effects based on the logit model. The multilevel model is not used here because when individuals are split into the groups, the number of level 1 observations in each group within a level 2 group becomes too low for a meaningful analysis and the three groups within a variable often include different number of observations. Additionally, different numbers of observations from each country are included in the three groups, which would skew the standard errors and the level 2 variance indicator.

The first chart (Figure 5.1) shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the same variable, namely content exposure. This analysis aims to show whether high levels of exposure to news about the EU are crucial for this variable to impact one's likelihood to vote. And, indeed, it is only for the group with the highest level of content exposure that the marginal effect is significant, at the 5% level. Keeping other explanatory variables at their mean, the predicted benefit for individuals in the group with the highest level of content exposure is 14.9%, suggesting a nearly 15% increase in one's likelihood to vote

with one unit increase in the content exposure. Despite the effect not being large, the fact that it is statistically significant for only the group with the highest levels of content exposure supports my hypothesis that suggests that the more frequently people are exposed to news about the EU, the more likely they are to vote in the EP elections.

Figure 5.1: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the content exposure

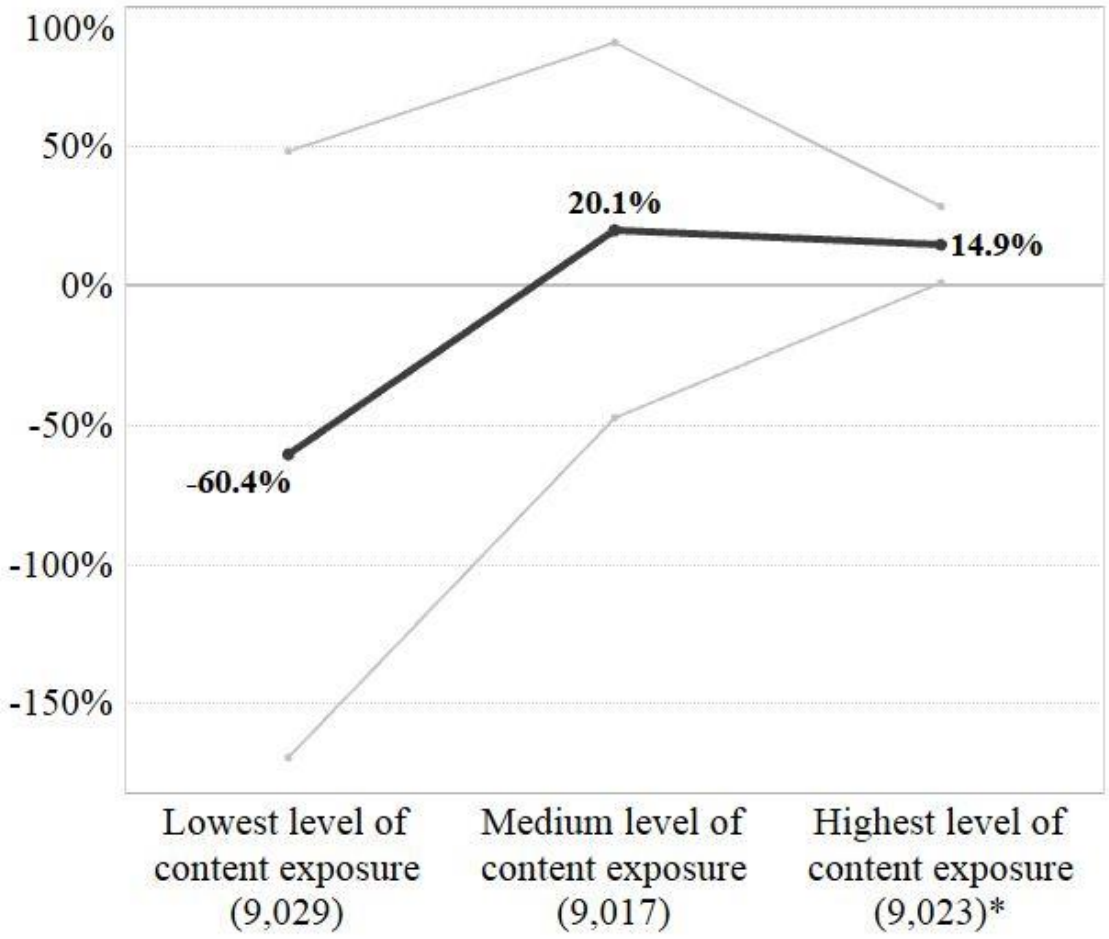


Figure 5.2 shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the party ID variable, which is a dummy variable describing whether the individual is close to a political party. This is a strong determinant of voting participation on its own, but this analysis aims to show what role being close to a political party plays in mediating the effect of exposure to EU news. For those not close to a political party, the marginal effect of content exposure is statistically significant at the 5% level, showing a 23% increase in the probability to vote with a unit change in content exposure for those not feeling close to a political party. This is an expected result as those respondents who do not identify with a political party tend to vote to support their party, but it is those people who do not identify with a party that often fail to find reasons to vote, especially in the EP elections.

Figure 5.2: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their party ID

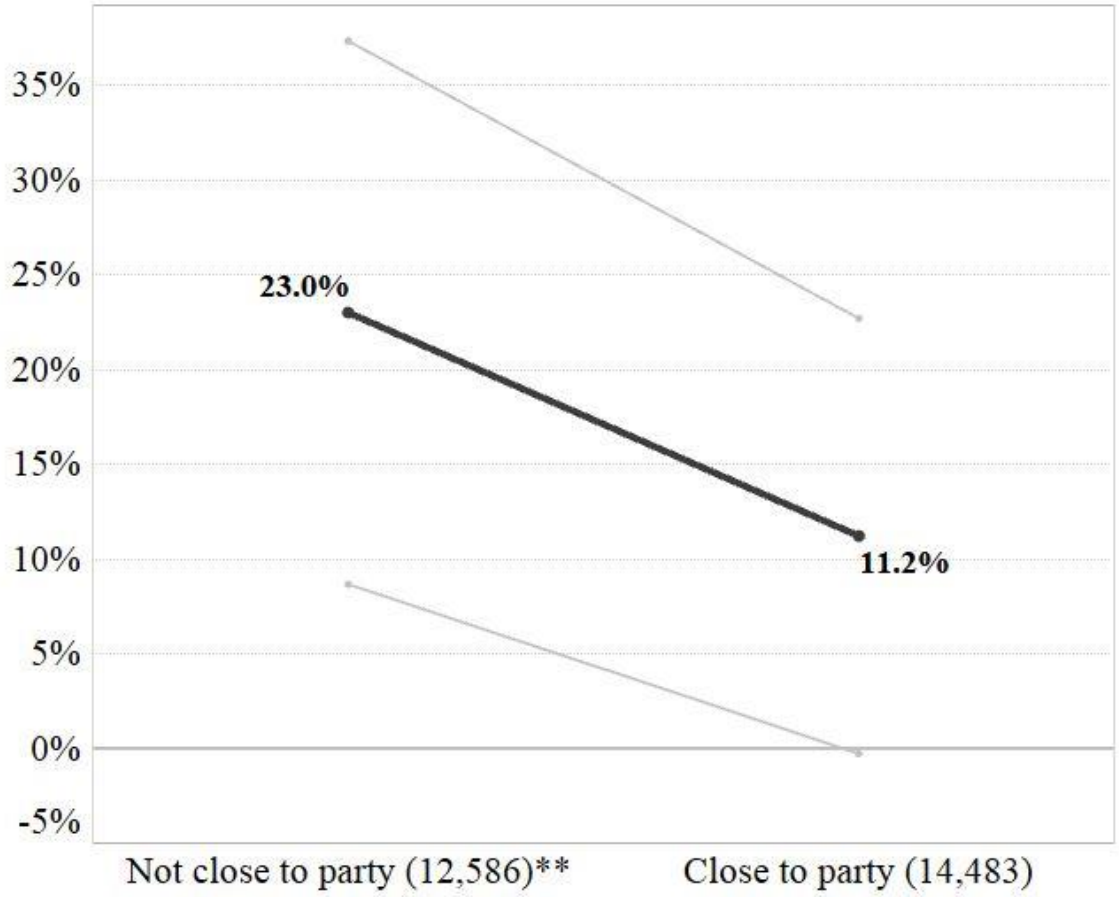


Figure 5.3 shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for men and women. Gender is a variable traditionally included in voter participation studies as the gender gap remains an important topic. The results show that the marginal effects of content exposure are higher for men than for women and are statistically significant - at the 0.1% level - only for men. The results reveal that for men, the likelihood of voting increases by 21.1% with a unit of increase in the content exposure.

Figure 5.3: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their gender

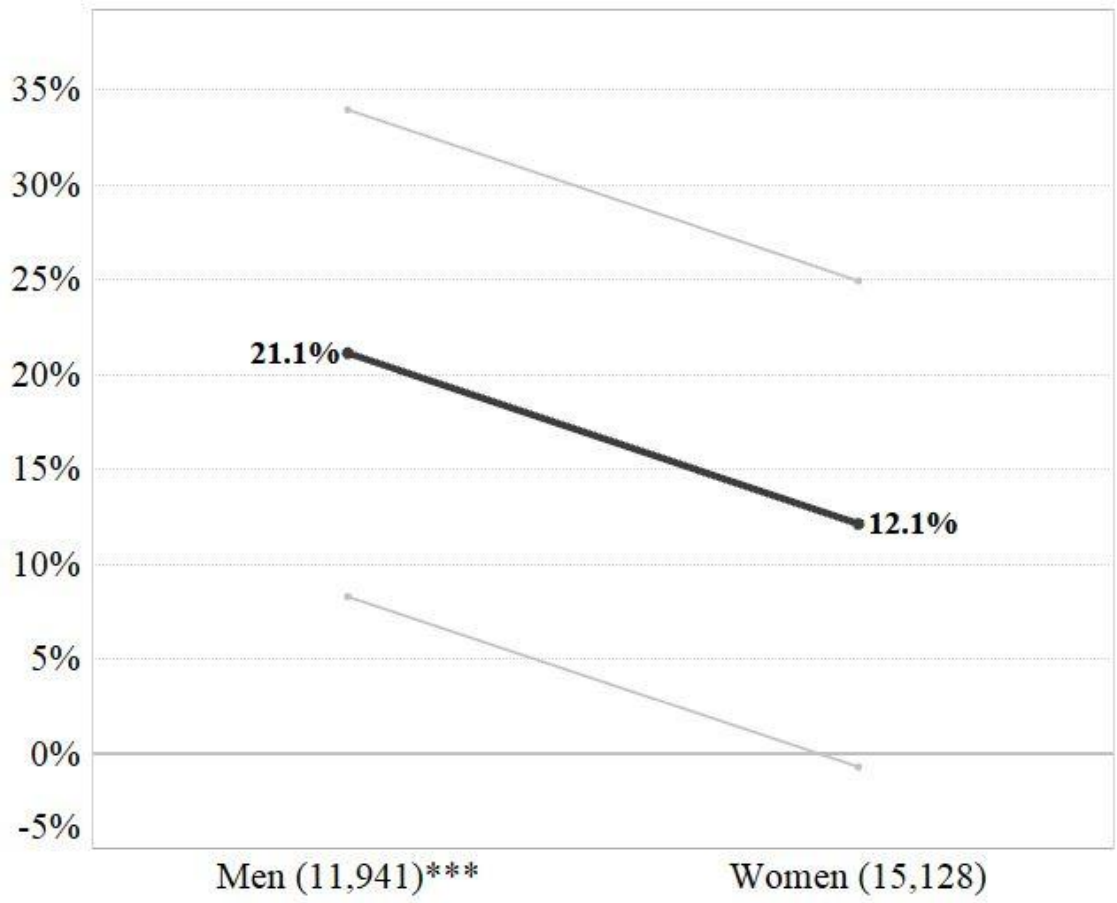


Figure 5.4 shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their knowledge about the EU. Knowledge is an interesting and important variable in relation to the media effects, as the effect of exposure to media on knowledge is often examined and it is also frequently considered as a mediator of media effects. In this case, knowledge is based on respondents' answers to seven questions about the EU. This analysis aims to show what role different levels of knowledge about the EU play in determining whether one voted in the election. The findings provide an interesting insight into this topic. For those with the lowest level of knowledge about the EU, the marginal effect is the smallest and is not statistically significant. For people with medium level of knowledge about the EU, the marginal effect is largest and statistically significant at 0.1% level: a unit increase in the content exposure for those with medium level of EU knowledge results in 25.2% increase in one's likelihood to vote. For those with the highest level of EU knowledge, the marginal effect is slightly lower than for the previous group, at 20.1% and statistically significant at the 5% level.

This is a very interesting scenario. Keeping all other explanatory variables at their means and considering media as providing information to voters, for a person with little knowledge about the EU, exposure to EU news does not influence their decision-making about participation in the election. These people may just not be interested in the EU or politics at all and would not pay attention to media discussion. For people who have some knowledge about the EU, being exposed to EU news increases their likelihood to vote. These people may possibly be searching for additional information to help them decide whether to vote and who to vote for, and the media are likely to be providing them with this information. Finally, although exposure to EU news increases the likelihood of voting for people with the highest level of EU knowledge, the marginal effect is smaller than for the previous group. Many of these people may have already made their decision about participation in the election, while, for the remainder, the extra information they find in the media can make the difference between voting or not.

Figure 5.4: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their knowledge about the EU

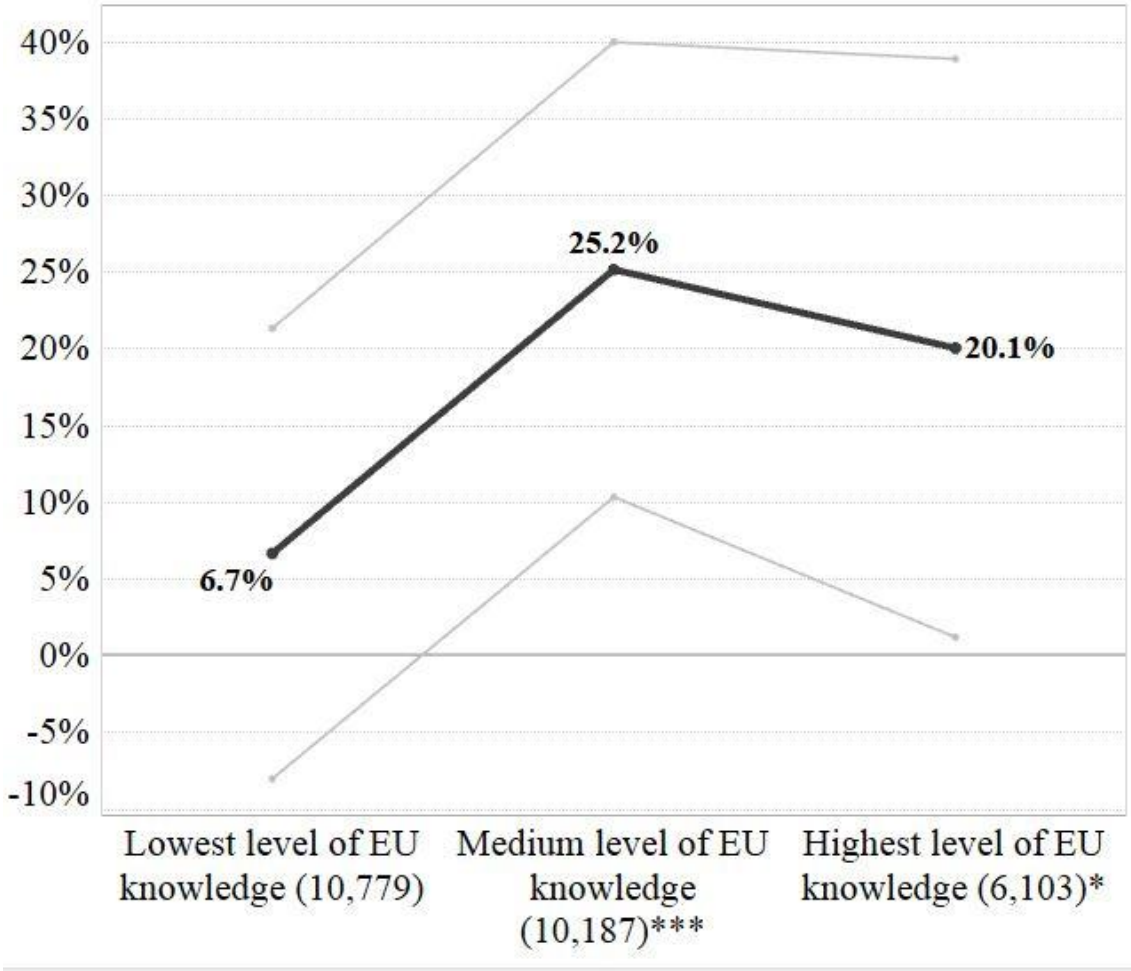


Figure 5.5 shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their interest in politics. While high knowledge about politics of the EU does not necessarily mean that the person will vote, one would expect people highly interested in politics to exercise their franchise; nevertheless, the correlation between these two variables is just 0.3.This analysis aims to show what role exposure to EU news plays in the relationship. For groups of people both with no or low interest in politics and with medium interest, the marginal effects of content exposure are statistically significant on the 5% level. The effect is slightly higher - by 0.4% - for the no/low political interest group where a unit of change in the content exposure results in 17.4% increase in the likelihood to vote. The marginal effect is not statistically significant for those with high interest in politics. This could suggest that these people have already decided to vote and, thus, exposure to EU news does not make an impact on their decision.

Figure 5.5: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their interest in politics

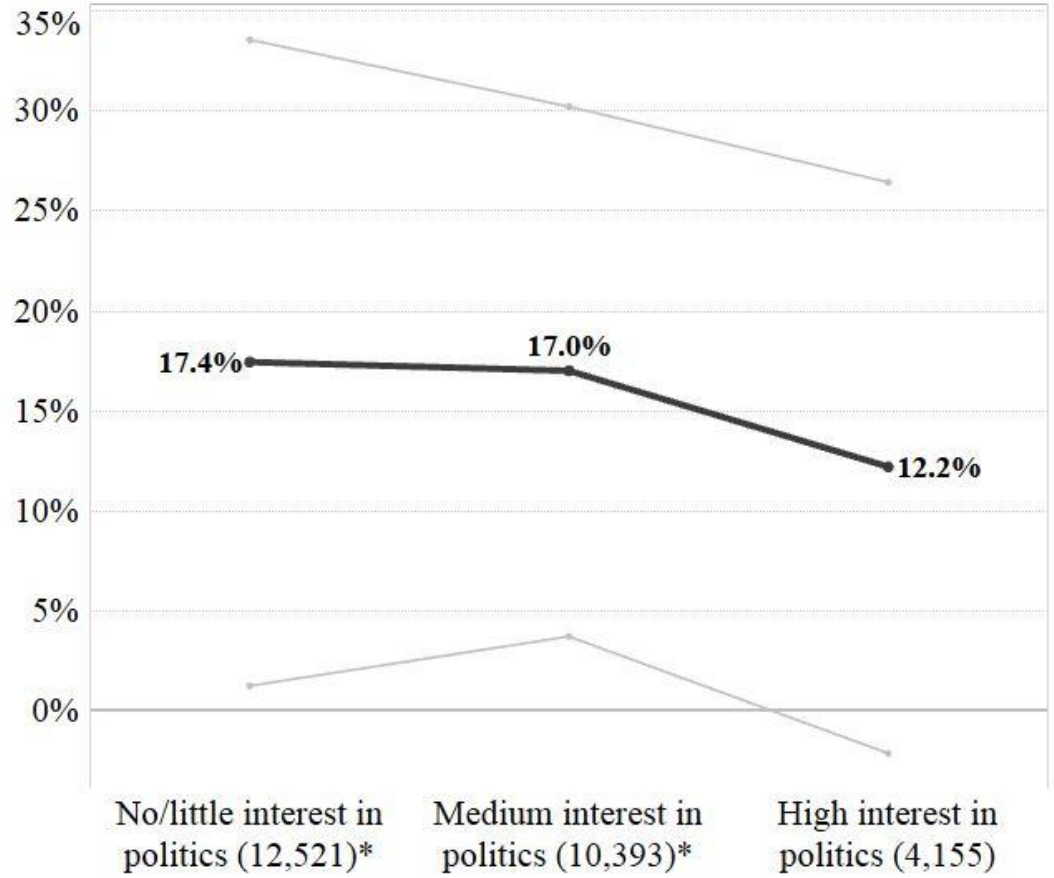


Figure 5.6 shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their interest in the EP election campaign. This was determined by a direct question to respondents about how interested they were in the campaign. As these two measures, interest in politics and interest in the campaign, seem to be closely related, it is important to note that the correlation coefficient between them is just slightly over 0.5, signifying a rather weak relationship. Nevertheless, the analysis shows a pattern similar to the previous three charts: exposure to EU news does not have a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of voting for people with high interest in the campaign, and has the largest effect for those with medium interest in the campaign. For people with no or little interest in the EP election campaign, the marginal effect is 14.7% and statistically significant at the 5% level. For those with medium interest in the campaign, the marginal effect is larger and statistically significant at 1% level: for these respondents, likelihood to vote increases by 18.7% with a unit increase in the content exposure.

Figure 5.6: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their interest in campaign

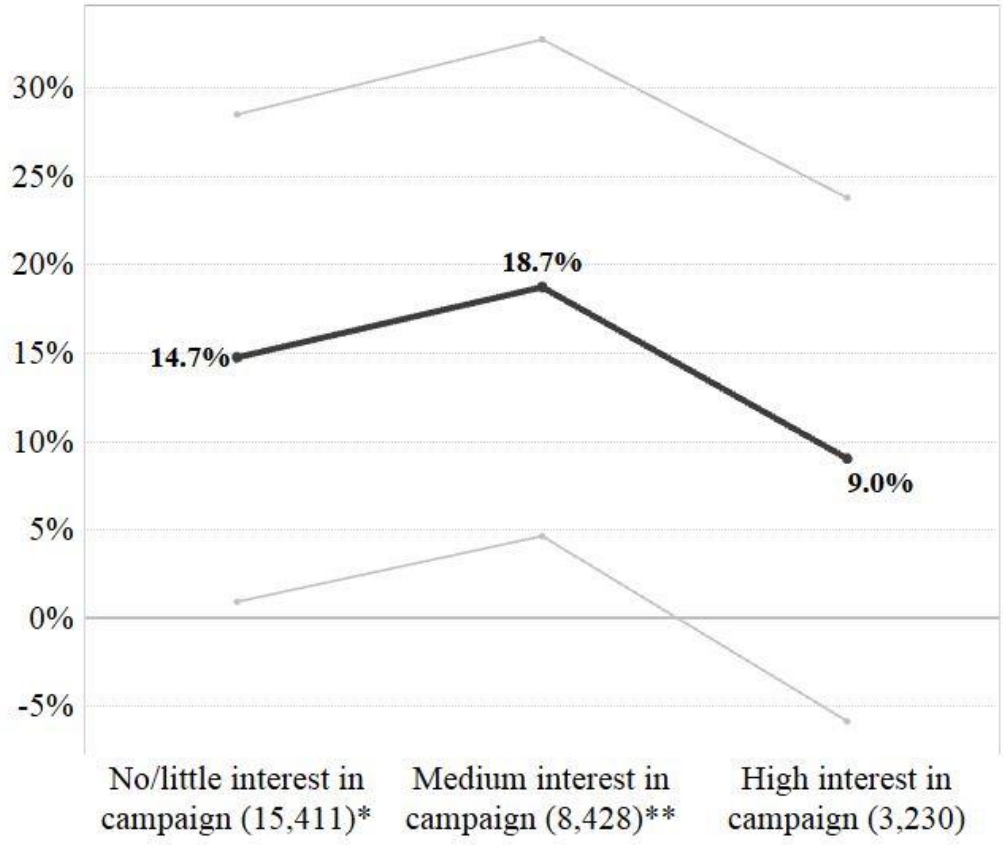


Figure 5.7 shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their level of feeling European. This is signified by responses to a question that asks people whether they identified themselves with their own nationality, being European, or a combination of these. This analysis aims to show the connection of 'Europeanness' to voting in the EP elections. The results show that the marginal effect of the content exposure is statistically significant only for the group with medium level of feeling European: for respondents in this category, one unit change in the content exposure results in 23.8% increase in the likelihood to vote.

An account for this could entail a similar explanation to that suggested for the previous charts: people who do not feel European are probably not interested in voting in the EP elections and would not be influenced by the media. On the other hand, people with a high level of feeling European most likely intend to vote anyway, so exposure to EU news does not influence their decision-making. It is respondents between these two categories that may feel European to a certain extent but need additional information, from the media, to make them decide whether or not to vote.

Figure 5.7: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the feeling European variable

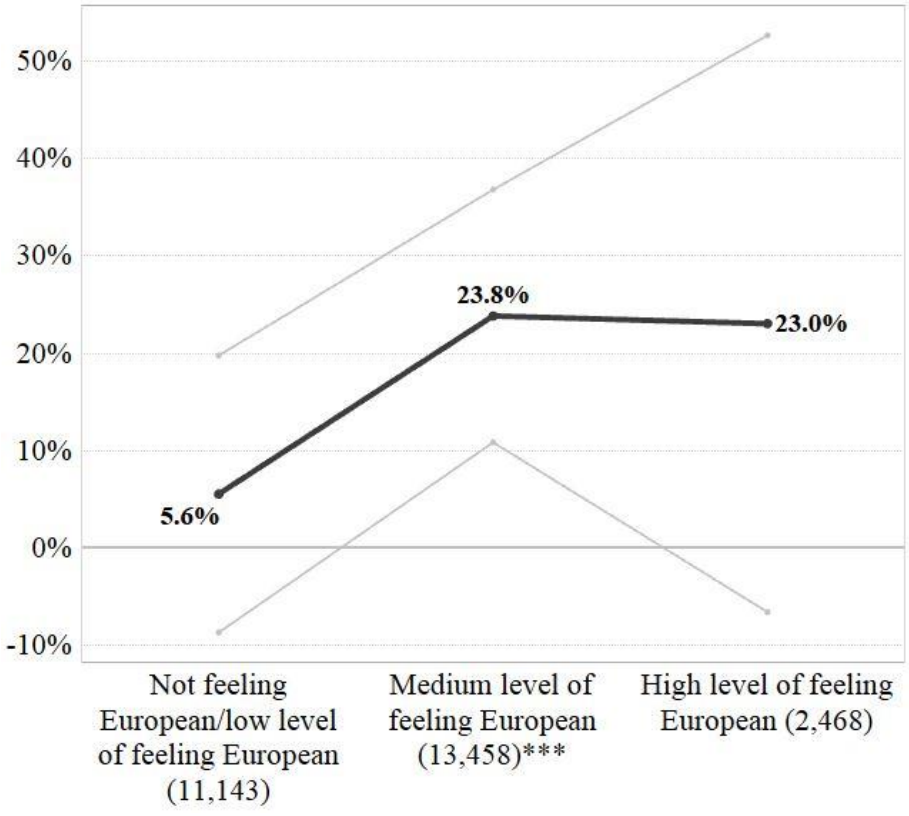


Figure 5.8 shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their evaluation of their country's EU membership. This analysis aims to show how attitude toward the EU membership filters the media effects. The marginal effect of exposure to EU news is statistically significant at the 0.1% level for those who see their country's EU membership as a good thing: a unit change in the content exposure increases the likelihood to vote by 17.7%.

Following the reasoning used in the previous chart, one could suggest that those who do not see EU membership as a good thing have made their decision on whether to vote or not, to abstain or to vote for someone with a similar opinion and exposure to media does not impact their decision. On the other hand, the information in the media has a great impact on the voting decision of those who do see EU membership as a good thing.

Figure 5.8: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their evaluation of the EU membership

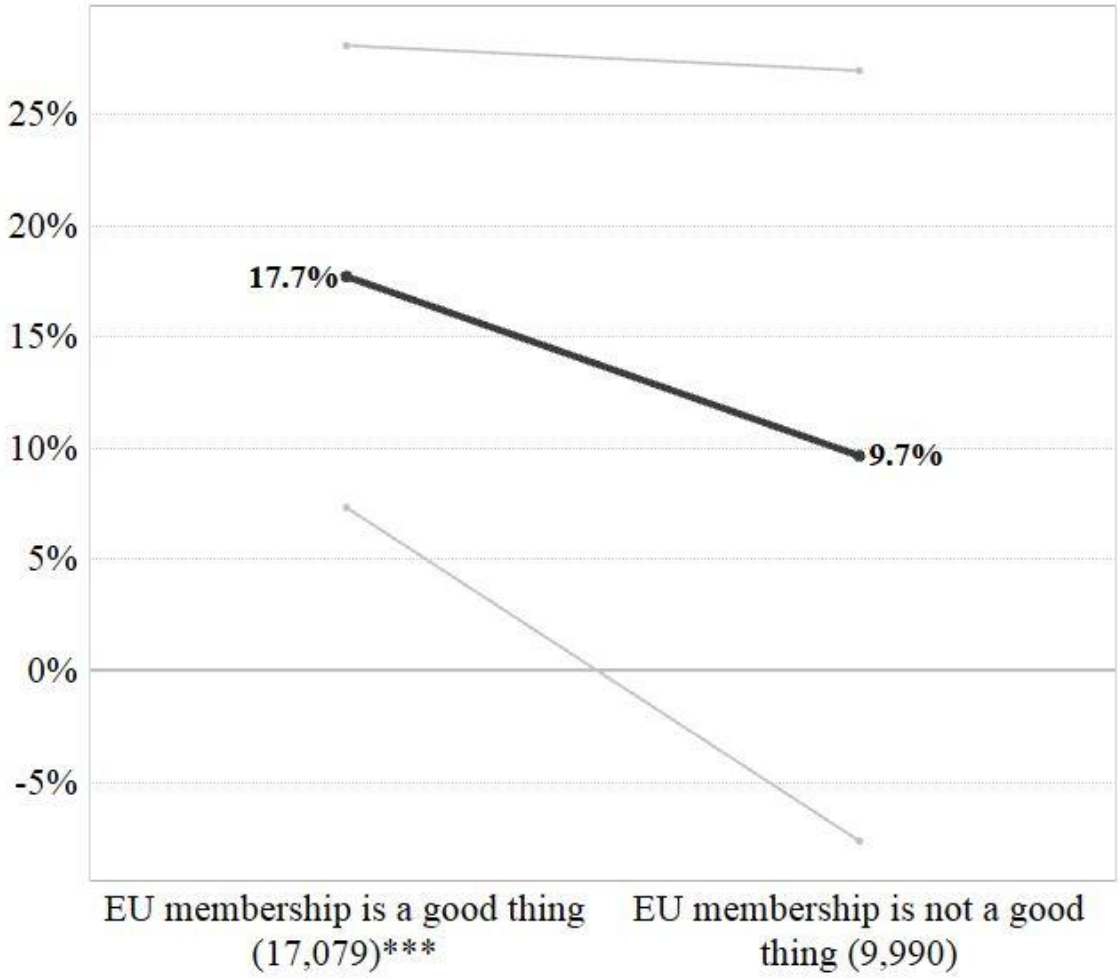


Figure 5.9 shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their engagement in the EP election campaign. This is measured by respondents' answers on how often in the weeks leading up to the election they were exposed to news and information about it in various media outlets, or whether they attended a political rally. This variable is closely related to the interest in campaign variable, with a correlation coefficient just above 0.5, but they each measure a different aspect of respondent's attitude to the campaign. Similarly, this variable, as the main variable of interest, content exposure, captures the exposure of respondents to media in the weeks prior to the election. The engagement in campaign variable includes very little information about the content of the information respondents were exposed, thus capturing less specific media effects.

Interestingly, the largest marginal effect, statistically significant at 1%, is for those with no or low levels of engagement in the campaign: a unit change in the content exposure results in 26.2% increase in the likelihood to vote. For those with medium level of engagement in campaign the marginal effect is slightly smaller at 17.9% and statistically significant at 5%. The effect for those with high level of engagement in the campaign is not statistically significant.

Figure 5.9: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their engagement in the campaign

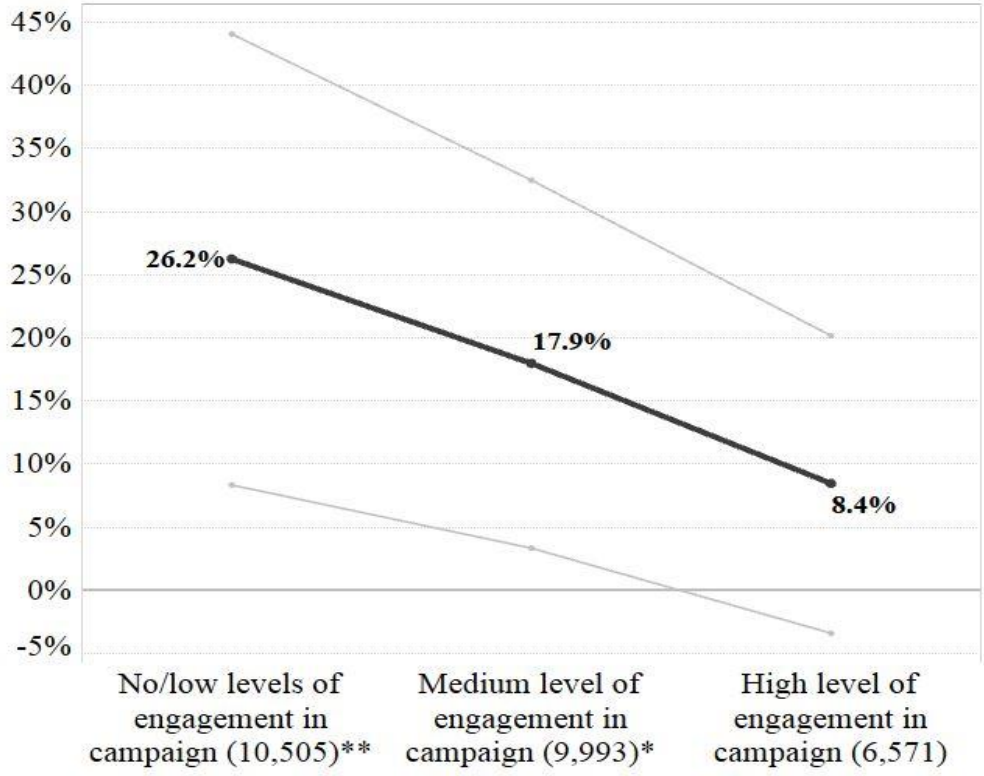
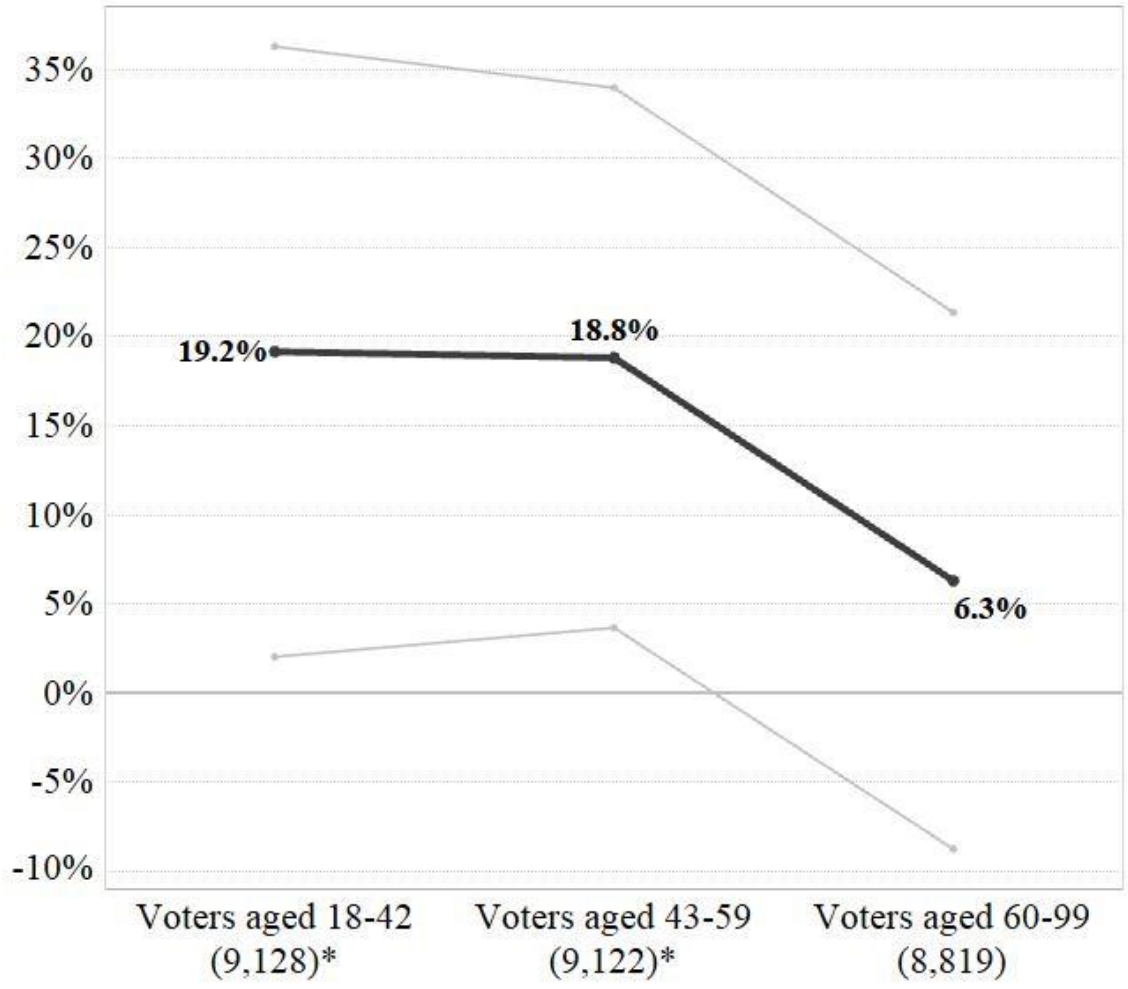


Figure 5.10 shows the varying marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their age. This analysis aims to show if and how age mediates media effects on voting. The results reveal that the marginal effects of exposure to EU news are the highest and statistically significant at the 5% level for groups of voters aged between 18 - 42 and 43 - 59 (19.2% and 18.8% respectively) signifying a little over 1% increase in the likelihood of voting with a unit change in the content exposure. Such results can well be explained with the usual reasoning that older people have developed a habit of voting, or non-voting, and thus exposure to media does not impact their decision. Young people, on the other hand, are less likely to have developed a habit of voting and are probably searching for additional information to help them decide whether to vote.

Figure 5.10: Marginal effects of the content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their age



5.4. Multilevel Model, Media Types

Tables 5.4 and 5.5 present results of multilevel analysis, comparing the effects of exposure to EU news between media types; Figure 5.4 shows results for exposure to newspapers, and Figure 5.5 outlines the effects of exposure to television. Existing research suggests that there are differences and the analysis here provides additional evidence for this. The data analyses are run using the same model as in the previous multilevel model (see the model in the previous section) but, as the coefficients for other explanatory variables remained nearly unchanged compared to the previous analysis, the table only shows the odds ratios for the media variables of interests: content exposure in all newspapers (quality and tabloid) and on all television channels (commercial and public television). Both individual level and level 2 variance measures are the same as in the full model including all media; examining particular media types does not add any further explanatory power to the model.

The tables clearly shows that exposure to EU news in newspapers has a statistically significant effect on one's likelihood to vote, significant at the 0.1% level. A unit increase in the content exposure to EU news in newspapers increases one's likelihood of voting by 57.5%. We get a clearer picture of this relationship when looking separately at tabloid and quality newspapers: a unit increase in content exposure to EU news in tabloid newspapers decreases one's odds of voting by 38% while exposure to quality newspapers increases those odds by a factor of 4.2 These findings are in line with the existing literature and expectations due to the nature of the content of the two newspaper types; that is, the tabloids publish rather negative and sensational news compared to the more objective and informative news in the quality newspapers.

Content exposure to EU news on all television channels and on commercial television channels does not have a statistically significant effect. Nevertheless, a unit increase in content exposure to EU news on public television boosts one's odds of voting by 65%. As with newspapers, these findings reflect the nature of the content of the commercial and public television: the latter is likely to present more news on politics and economics, while commercial television channels tend to broadcast lots of soft, sensational news, in which the EU rarely fits.

Table 5.4: Multilevel model, content exposure by media type - newspapers

Content exposure / media outlet	Newspapers	Tabloid newspapers	Quality newspapers
Media variables			
Newspapers	1.575 (0.000)***		
Tabloid newspapers		0.616 (0.000)***	
Quality newspapers			4.153 (0.002)***
Observations	27,069	27,069	27,069
L2 observations	28	28	28
Log likelihood	-12414.02	-12419.59	-12395.26
lnsig2u	-1.699	-1.726	-1.689
SE (lnsig2u)	(0.2807)	(0.2809)	(0.2808)
Sigma_u	0.4277	0.4220	0.4297
SE (sigma_u)	(0.06)	(0.0593)	(0.0603)
rho	0.0527	0.0513	0.0531
SE (rho)	(0.014)	(0.0137)	(0.0141)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * <0.05

Table 5.5: Multilevel model, content exposure by media type – television

Content exposure / media outlet	Television	Commercial television	Public television
Media variables			
Television	1.569 (0.054)		
Commercial television		0.895 (0.662)	
Public television			1.650 (0.026)*
Observations	27,069	27,069	27,069
L2 observations	28	28	28
Log likelihood	-12423.87	-12425.64	-12423.27
lnsig2u	-1.727	-1.725	-1.724
SE (lnsig2u)	(0.2807)	(0.2809)	(0.2807)
Sigma_u	0.4217	0.422041	0.4224
SE (sigma_u)	(0.0592)	(0.0593)	(0.0593)
rho	0.0513	0.0514	0.0515
SE (rho)	(0.0137)	(0.0137)	(0.0137)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * <0.05

5.5. Summary

The data analysis failed to falsify my hypotheses tested in this study. Examining the visibility of EU news and the effects of exposure to EU news on likelihood to vote, those with higher values of the content exposure, i.e. those more frequently exposed to news about the EU are more likely to vote in the EP election. The effects in the multilevel model show a relatively large, statistically significant impact of content exposure: for a unit increase in the combined content and exposure measure, people's likelihood to vote increases four times.

The logistic regression results show diverse effects of numerous variables between the countries of Western and Central and Eastern Europe. Importantly, the content exposure effects are, as expected, not statistically significant in the CEE countries. Furthermore, the statistically significant CEE dummy used in the full logistic model shows that respondents in the CEE countries are almost just half as likely to vote in the EP elections compared to those in the WE countries. This is supported by the actual turnout figures.

I also examined the media effects across groups of observations based on different characteristics. The findings are in line with previous research. For example, media effects on the likelihood to vote are higher for those with medium levels of knowledge about the EU than those with the lowest levels, for those not close to a party than those close to one, and for those who see the EU membership as a good thing than for those who do not.

Findings about the differences in the effects of exposure to EU news on various media outlets also support previous research: exposure to EU news in newspapers, both quality and tabloid, has stronger impact on the likelihood to vote than news on television, and exposure to EU news in tabloid newspapers is likely drive people away from voting compared to exposure to quality newspapers, which is conversely likely to mobilize people.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS: TONE OF EU NEWS

In the previous chapter I examined the effects of exposure to EU news on likelihood to vote, looking for evidence that those respondents with higher values of the content exposure, i.e. those more frequently exposed to news about the EU, are more likely to vote in the EP. I found small but statistically significant effects aligning with the "minimal effects" findings from previous studies. As expected, these effects were not statistically significant in the CEE countries, suggesting that these countries' unique post-Communist characteristics diminish any potential impact of exposure to EU news. I further analyzed the media effects across groups of observations based on different characteristics, including identification with a political party or knowledge about the EU. The findings are in line with previous research, pointing to the influence of other factors on the effects of media exposure. Finally, I also looked into the differences in the effects of exposure to EU news on various media outlets, finding results that support previous research: exposure to EU news in newspapers has stronger impact on the likelihood to vote than news on television, and exposure to EU news in quality newspapers is likely to mobilize people compared to exposure to tabloid newspapers which, conversely, tends to drive people away from voting.

These lastly mentioned findings are likely to be related to the actual content of the various media types rather than purely their classification. Tabloid newspapers and commercial television channels tend to include less political news and, therefore, less news about the EU compared to quality newspapers and public television channels. Tabloid newspapers are also more likely to publish sensational news, which can often be negative news about the EU, compared to the other media types. In this chapter, I therefore test the role of the tone of EU news in the relationship between exposure to EU news and voter turnout. I examine whether more frequent exposure to media outlets

with more EU news with positive or negative tone increase voter participation in the 2009 EP elections.

The tone of the news summarizes how the news evaluates the EU, whether it refers to the EU, its representatives and institutions in a positive or negative way. The effects of exposure to news with a specific tone have been widely discussed, but researchers have yet to reach a consensus. Some suggest that positive news mobilizes while negative news demobilizes, but others believe that any tone in the news makes the information more easily memorable, thus any tone of the news would be likely to mobilize people to vote. I base my assumptions on the latter approach, expecting to find no difference between the effects of exposure to positive and negative news as they both provide information about the EU and the elections. Additionally, the little presence of positive and negative EU news in the media is likely to cause these variables to play an insignificant role in the media-turnout relationship.

As in the previous part of the analysis, I expect to find weaker media effects in the CEE countries with the tone of the news playing insignificant role in this relationship. Regarding the various media types, I expect to find stronger, positive effects of exposure to both positive and negative EU news in the newspapers, especially quality newspapers. Finally, as tabloid newspapers and commercial television tend to present a higher proportion of news evaluating the EU in a negative light, I expect exposure to negative news in these outlets to have demobilizing effect on participation in the elections.

In the analyses on the following pages, I find a number of mixed results. The effects of positive and negative content exposure lack statistical significance in the multilevel model, suggesting that neither exposure to positive or negative EU news has any impact on one's likelihood of voting. However, examining marginal effects for the various groups of countries and observations does bring noteworthy results. Comparing the effects in the Western and CEE EU member states, I find statistically significant effects of exposure to positive EU news in the Western EU member states. Similarly, looking at the different groups of observations, based on, for example, respondents' gender or interest in politics and the EP election campaign, I find positive effects of exposure to positive EU news with the size of the marginal effects higher than in the previous chapter. Finally, comparing the effects across the various media types, I find significant, relatively strong, mobilizing effects for positive EU news in quality newspapers and negative effects for exposure to positive EU news in tabloids and on

commercial television. Exposure to negative EU news does not yield any statistically significant results. These mixed results suggest that there indeed are diverse media effects of exposure to positive and to negative EU news, but they vary across the various media types as well as groups of observations, likely to be dependent on the actual amount of news with positive or negative tone that respondents are exposed to.

The chapter is organized in the following way: first, multilevel models including positive and negative content exposure to all media outlets are presented; second, the media effects are compared across groups of countries. These groups are based upon whether a country is post-Communist, official turnout, and the proportion of EU news in the country's media. Third, effects of positive and negative content exposure are compared among groups of observations split by numerous variables, such as age, knowledge about the EU, interest in politics, etc. Fourth, the effects of exposure to positive and negative EU news in different media types are examined using multilevel models, including comparisons between newspapers and television, quality and tabloid newspapers, and commercial and public television.

6.1. Multilevel model, all media

To obtain more insight into whether the type of news can impact differently on one's likelihood of voting, I examined the exposure to positive and negative EU news, i.e. news that evaluates the EU and its representatives or institutions in a positive or negative light. Existing research suggests that there may be no difference in the size and direction of the effects between positive and negative news provided there is 'tone'; both types of news are equally memorable because the specific tone (as opposed to neutral news) helps people interpret and thus remember the information. The other strand of research suggests that negative news is likely to discourage people from voting, while positive new makes them more likely to vote.

Nevertheless, there is very little EU news with tone - around 4% on average - and most is neutral. This, of course, varies greatly between countries, but less so between media types. The low proportion of EU news with a positive or negative tone may explain the lack of statistical significance for the two main variables a Nevertheless, charts on the following examine the effects of exposure to positive and

negative news across groups of observations and offer additional findings. Table 6.1 presents the results of multilevel analysis of the effects of positive and negative content exposure. The effects shown do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance, suggesting that being exposed to positive or to negative EU news content does not have any impact on one's likelihood to vote. All the other variables show similar size, direction and significance of the effects. Such findings make one believe that being exposed to more news about the EU that positively or negatively evaluate the EU and its institutions has no impact on one's decision to vote. We'll nevertheless see some positive findings later in this chapter, examining various media types.

Table 6.1: Multilevel model, positive and negative content exposure

	Positive content exposure	**Negative content exposure**
Media variables		
Positive content exposure	19.894	
	(0.274)	
Negative content exposure		1.054
		(0.977)
Political variables		
Exposure to campaign	2.448	2.466
	(0.132)***	(0.133)***
Interest in campaign	2.040	2.041
	(0.046)***	(0.046)***
Interest in politics	1.093	1.094
	(0.024)***	(0.024)***
Habitual vote	1.575	1.577
	(0.057)***	(0.057)***
Party ID	1.290	1.289
	(0.045)***	(0.045)***
Evaluating EU membership as good	1.177	1.177
	(0.022)***	(0.022)***
Satisfaction with democracy in country	1.098	1.098
	(0.023)***	(0.023)***
Demographic variables		
Gender male=1	0.944	0.946
	(0.031)	(0.031)
Age	1.022	1.022
	(0.001)***	(0.001)***
Education in years	1.015	1.015
	(0.004)***	(0.004)***
Still studying dummy	0.344	0.341
	(0.096)***	(0.095)***
Contextual variables		
CEE	0.580	0.570
	(0.194)	(0.193)
Year of accession	0.987	0.987
	(0.008)	(0.008)
Compulsory vote	2.740	2.731
	(0.781)***	(0.784)***
Time till next national election	1.205	1.213
	(0.088)*	(0.089)**
Country level visibility of EU news	0.998	0.998
	(0.009)	(0.009)
Observations	27069	27069
L2 observations	28	28
Log likelihood	-12425.137	-12425.739
lnsig2u	-1.742	-1.728
SE (lnsig2u)	(0.281)	(0.281)
Sigma_u	0.4186	0.4216
SE (sigma_u)	(0.0589)	(0.0592)
rho	0.0506	0.0512493
SE (rho)	(0.0135)	(0.0137)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

6.2. Positive and Negative Content Exposure in Western vs. Central and Eastern European Countries

In the previous chapter, I examined the diverse effects of, not only, content exposure, on respondents' likelihood to vote between WE and CEE countries. The results failed to falsify my hypothesis, showing that the effect of content exposure is statistically significant in the WE countries, but not in the CEE countries. On the following pages, I examine the effects of positive and negative content exposure, i.e. exposure to news that positively or negatively evaluate the EU, and the variations of these effects between the two country groups.

Tables 6.2 and 6.3 show the results of the logistic analysis run under three different specifications: (1) for all observations across all countries, (2) for CEE countries only, and (3) for WE countries only. In these two tables, I only show that main variables of interests as the effects for all other variables included in the models were nearly identical to the results shown in Table 5.3.

The results in Table 5.2 are in line with those in Table 5.3: positive content exposure has a large statistically significant effect across the whole EU and in the WE countries only, but it is not significant in the CEE countries. The odds ratios are of a great size; this is likely to be caused by the fact that more than a half of all observations have been assigned positive content exposure of the value of zero; therefore, the large odds ratios, and coefficients not shown here as well, are likely to be caused by outliers with extreme values. To further support this lack of media effects in the CEE countries, the CEE dummy in the first model is negative and statistically significant, showing that those in the CEE countries are 40% less likely to vote in the EP elections.

Table 6.3 shows the results for the logistic model with the negative content exposure. While the odds ratios do show negative effect, these effects do not reach the levels of statistical significance. Nevertheless, the CEE dummy in the first model again shows that those in the CEE countries are around 45% less likely to vote in the EP elections compared to those in the WE countries.

Table 6.2: Logistic regression showing odds ratios, positive content exposure. 3 models including (1) all countries, (2) CEE countries only and (3) WE countries only

	EU27	**CEE**	**WE**
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Positive content exposure	13,661.136 (32,093.825)***	2,292.957 (11,167.256)	2,434.133 (7,014.113)**
CEE	0.610 (0.041)***		
Observations	27,069	10,054	17,015
Log likelihood	-12705.66	-5332.74	-7139.69
Pseudo R2	0.23	0.22	0.19

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 6.3: Logistic regression showing odds ratios, negative content exposure. 3 models including (1) all countries, (2) CEE countries only and (3) WE countries only

	EU27	**CEE**	**WE**
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Negative content exposure	0.185 (0.293)	0.753 (2.888)	0.149 (0.265)
CEE	0.557 (0.039)***		
Observations	27,069	10,054	17,015
Log likelihood	-12713.53	-5334.00	-7142.88
Pseudo R2	0.22	0.22	0.19

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

6.3. Marginal Effects for Groups of Observations – Positive and Negative Content Exposure

The following pages include the same analysis as in the previous chapter, only using positive content exposure and to negative EU news. The patterns in the results are similar to those in the previous section, but the marginal effects of content exposure are much higher here compared to when only the visibility of the news is considered, regardless of tone. This suggests that the tone of the EU news does matter and more EU news with positive or negative tone leads to higher likelihood of voting. This confirms previous research suggesting that news with some tone makes the information more memorable and, thus, is more inclined to have an effect on one's likelihood to vote.

Figure 6.1 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the same variable, positive content exposure. As in the previous section that looked at the visibility of EU news, this analysis aims to show the difference in the effects of exposure to media based on the amount of positive EU news and the extent of respondents' exposure to it. Interestingly, the results are highest for the group with the lowest and medium levels of positive content exposure; nevertheless, they are not statistically significant. For those with the highest levels of content exposure, the marginal effect is still higher compared to the effects of content exposure considering visibility not the tone, at 144.2% and statistically significant at the 5% level. The large size of the effects is likely due to the lack of normal distribution in the data, the very high proportion, more than 50%, of observations being assigned zero for this measure, and outliers with extreme values.

Figure 6.1: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the same variable, positive content exposure

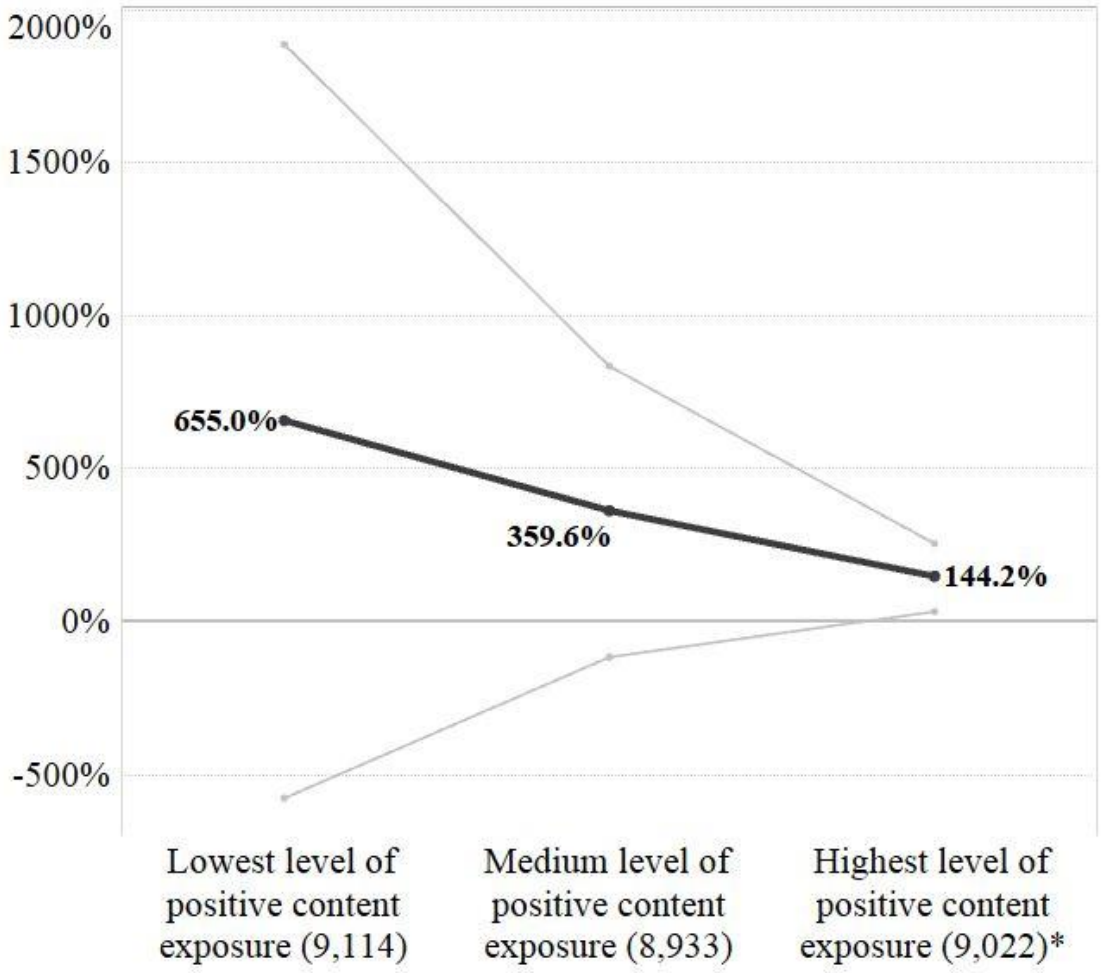


Figure 6.2 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their party ID. This analysis aims to show how being close to a party and being exposed to EU news impact one's chance of voting. As in the previous section with the visibility of EU news, the marginal effect is higher for those who are not close to a party; nevertheless, the effects for both groups here are much higher than in the previous section and both are statistically significant. For those not close to a party, a unit change in the positive content exposure brings 214.7% increase in the likelihood of voting; for those who report being close to a party, this is just a half, 98.1% increase. These findings are in line with existing research as those who are close to a party are likely to know who to vote for, and, thus, they are decided to vote. On the other hand, for those not close to a party, there is much space left for information from the media to help them decide who to vote for and whether to vote at all. And as this chart shows, being exposed to positive news is likely to help people decide to vote.

Figure 6.2: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their party ID

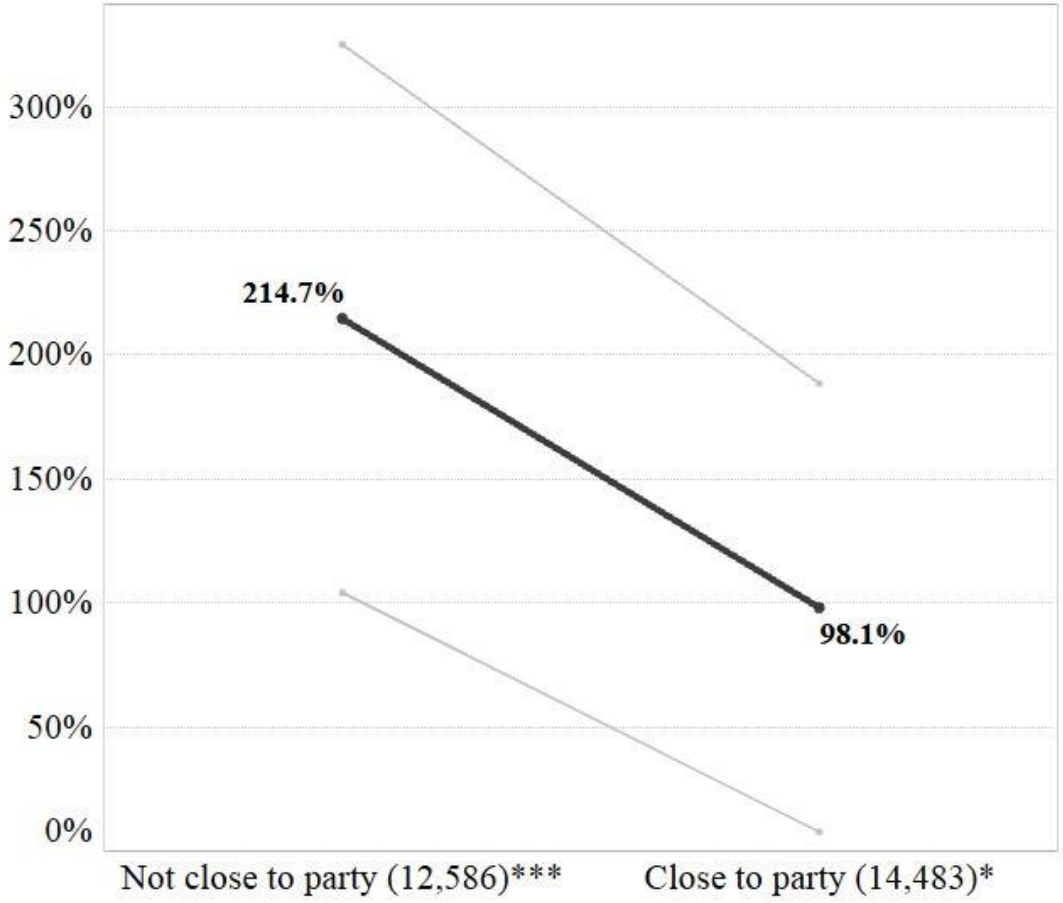


Figure 6.3 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to gender. In relation to the effects of exposure to positive EU news, there is very little difference in the effects on the likelihood to vote between men and women and they both are statistically significant at 1% level. For women, a unit change in the positive content exposure results in 137.2% increase in the likelihood of voting; for men this is 152.6%.

Figure 6.3: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to gender

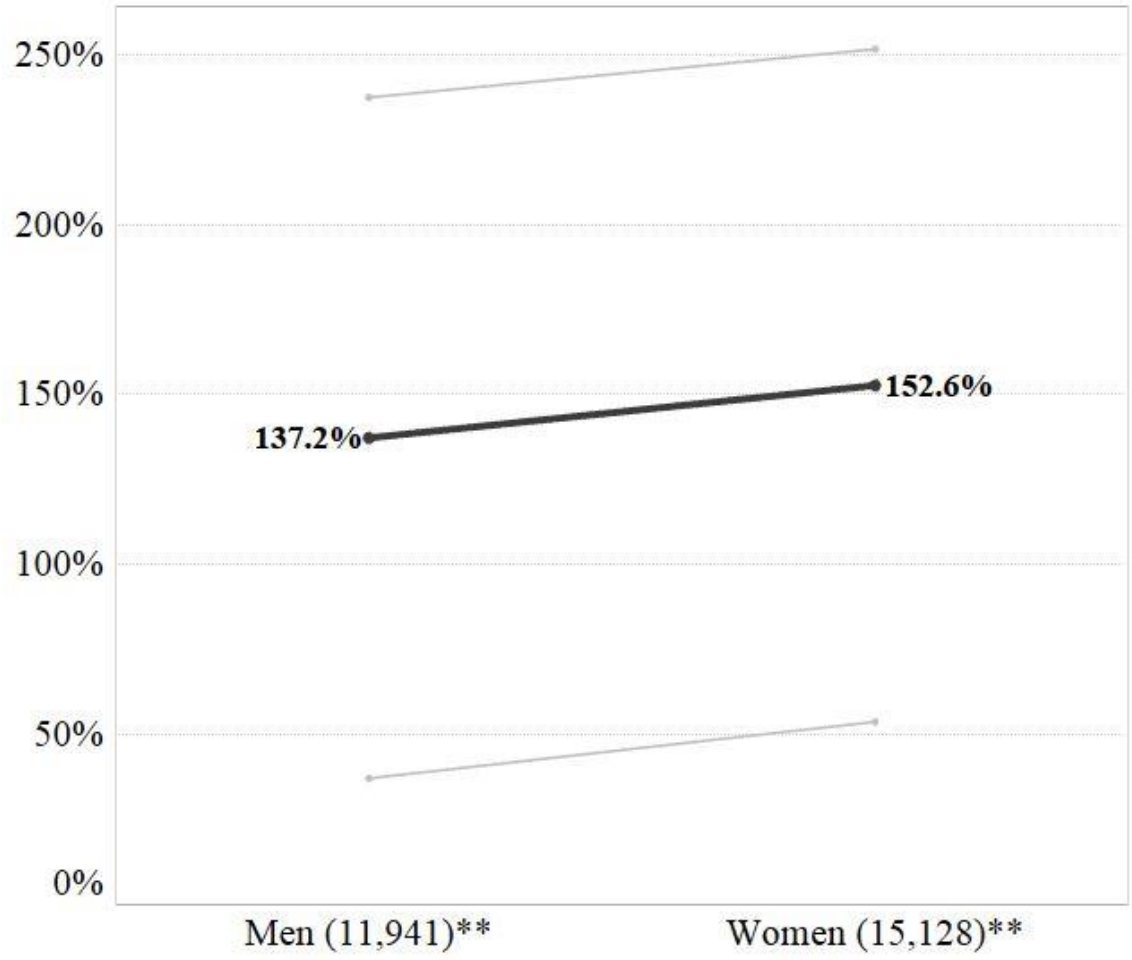


Figure 6.4 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their knowledge about the EU. As in the previous section, this analysis aims to show how knowledge mediates media effects. This chart shows statistically significant marginal effects for all groups of respondents. The effects are again much stronger than when only the visibility of EU news, without the tone, is considered. For those with the lowest levels of knowledge about the EU, a unit change in the content exposure results in 177.7% increase in the likelihood to vote; for those with the medium knowledge levels, this is 120.1%; and for those with the highest levels of knowledge about the EU, this is 104.1%.

This, indeed, suggests that for those who know the most about the EU, exposure to positive news has little impact on their decision to vote as they are probably decided whether to vote and who to vote for and do not require any additional information. On the other hand, for those with less knowledge about the EU, exposure to positive news about the EU provides them with additional information necessary to vote and as the information is positive, evaluating the EU and its institutions and representatives in a positive light, it helps them make the decision to vote.

Figure 6.4: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their knowledge about the EU

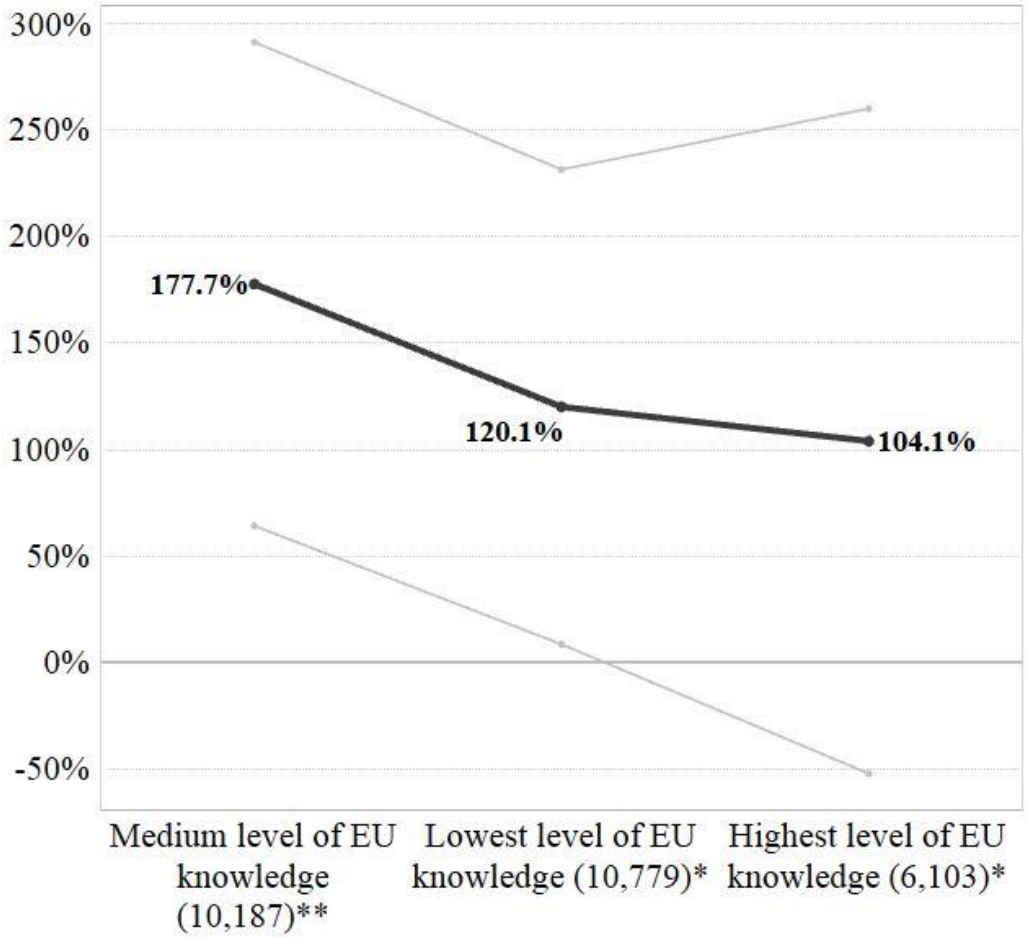


Figure 6.5 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their interest in politics. We see a similar pattern as in the previous chart examining knowledge about the EU as well as in the corresponding charts examining the impact of the exposure to EU news in the previous section. The analysis shows that being exposed to positive EU news has the highest and most statistically significant marginal effects for those with either no, little, or medium interest in politics. For those with no or little interest in politics, a unit change in the exposure to positive EU news increases the likelihood of voting by 206.1%; for those with medium level of interest in politics, this is 125.1%%. The effect for those with the highest interest in politics is not statistically significant.

It seems to be exactly those people who are not interested in politics that are the most susceptible to be influenced by positive news; they probably will not be consciously looking for information, so if they are exposed to positive news about the EU it is likely to have a strong impact on their decision to vote.

Figure 6.5: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their interest in politics

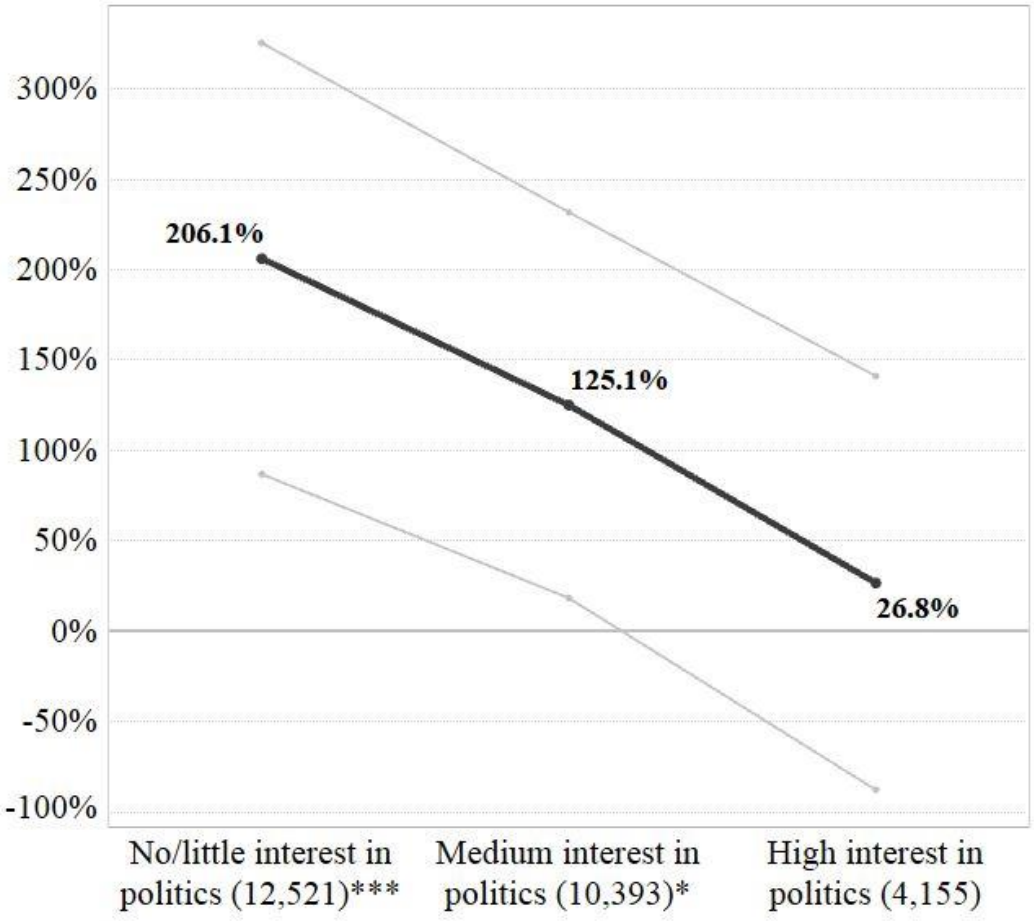


Figure 6.6 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their interest in campaign. This analysis shows similar results to the previous chart; it is again those with no or only little interest in the election campaign that are most likely to affected by a change in the positive content exposure. For this group of respondents, the marginal effect is 198.3%, statistically significant at the 0.1% level. The effects are not statistically significant for groups of respondents with medium or high interest in the election campaign.

Figure 6.6: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their interest in campaign

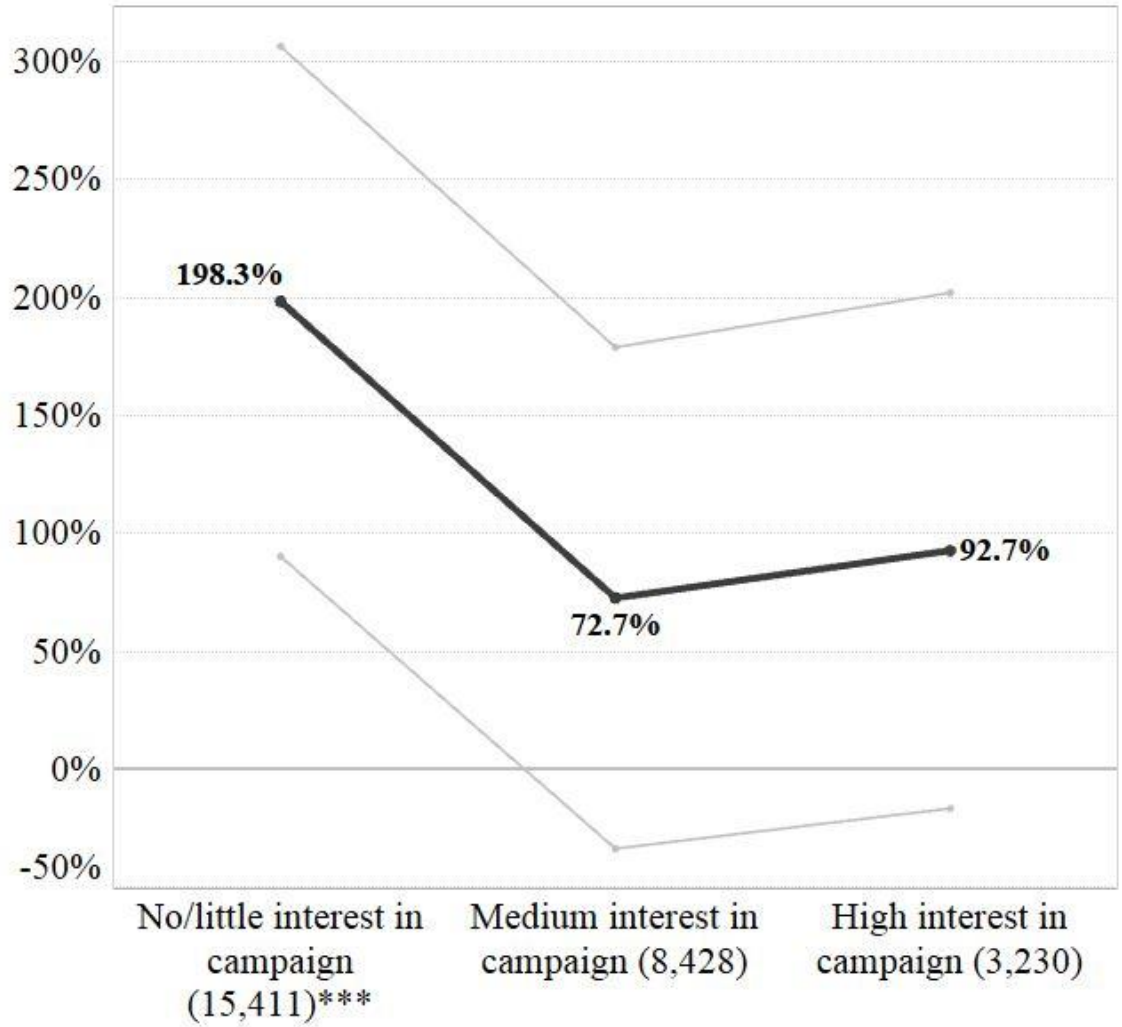


Figure 6.7 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the extent they feel European. The results further support what previous analyses in this paper has suggested: those groups of respondents who do not have the highest levels of interest in politics or election campaign or who do not feel very European are the most likely to decide to vote based on a small change in the content exposure. In other words, these respondents are the most likely to decide to vote after reading or watching additional news story that positively evaluates the EU or its institutions and representatives.

In this case, for those not feeling European or those with low levels of feeling European, the marginal effect is 125.5% and is statistically significant at 5% level. For those with medium levels of feeling European, the effect is higher at 184.2%, and significant at 0.1% level. The marginal effect is the weakest and not statistically significant for those with high levels of Europeanization.

Figure 6.7: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the extent they feel European

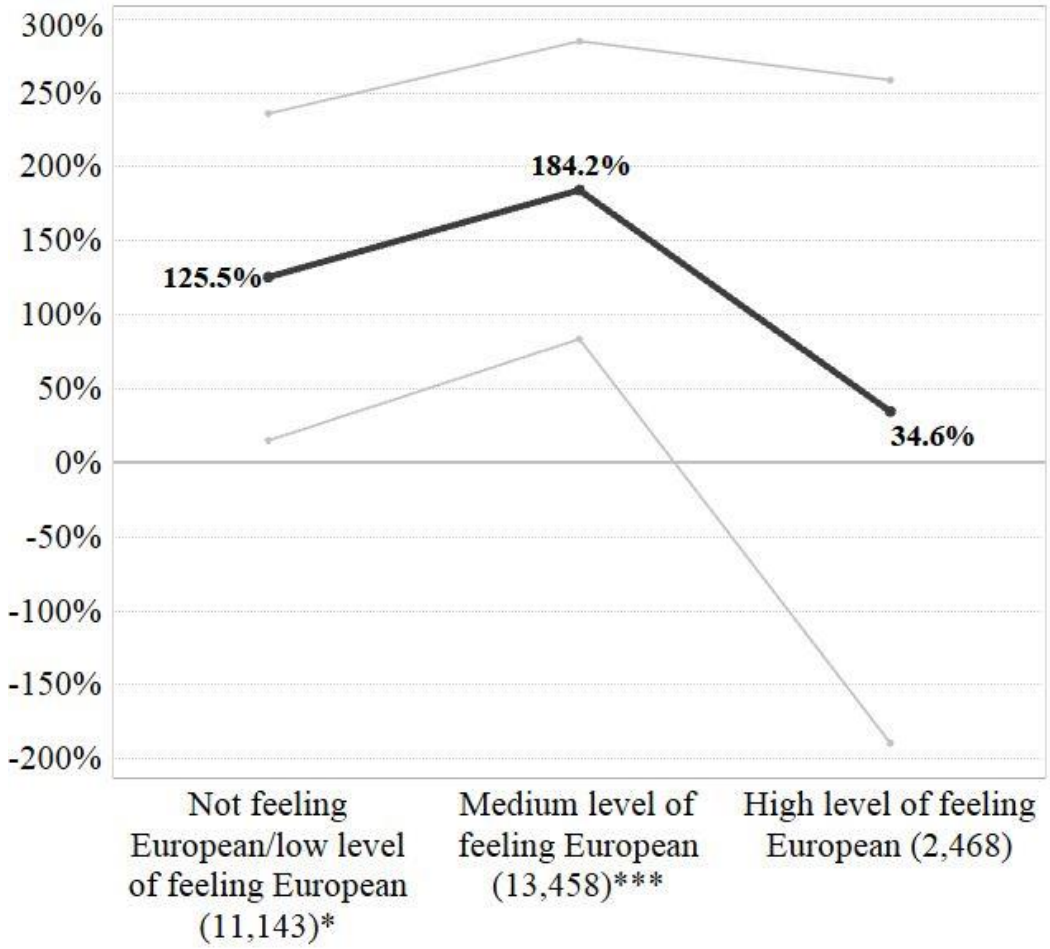


Figure 6.8 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their evaluation of EU memberships. The results show a 30% difference in the marginal effects of positive content exposure between those not evaluating EU membership as a good thing and those doing so. For those not evaluating EU membership as good, a unit change in the positive content exposure results in 123.6% increase in the likelihood of voting; this is 173.4% less for those evaluating EU membership as good, and effects for both groups are statistically significant at 1% level. These results suggest that those not in favor of EU membership are more likely to be positively influenced by positive EU news than those already in favor of the EU membership.

Figure 6.8: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their evaluation of EU membership

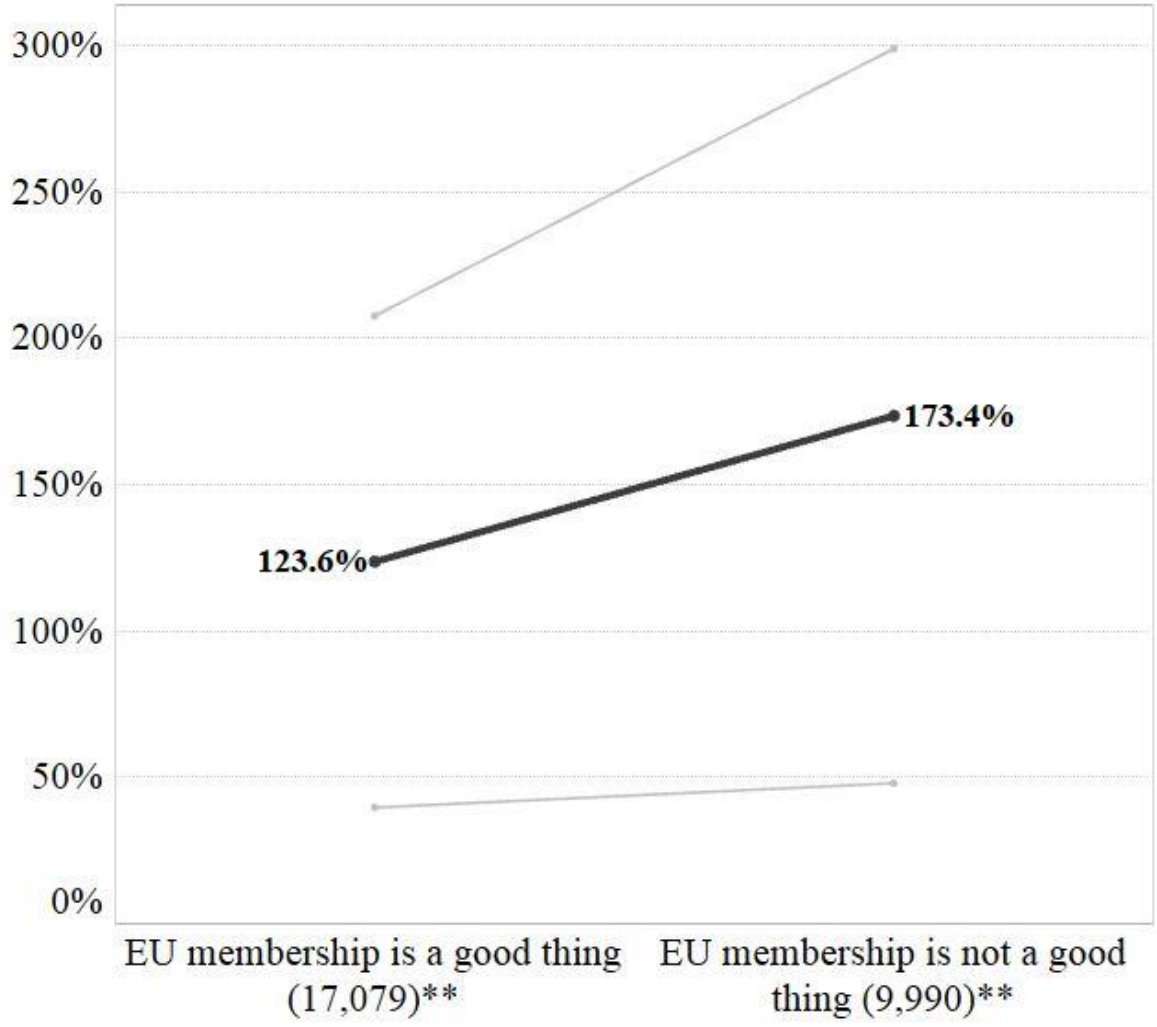


Figure 6.9 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals' grouped according engagement in the EP election campaign. The results follow the patterns from previous figures: the effect is the strongest and statistically significant at 0.1% level for those with no or low levels of engagement in the campaign. For the respondents in this group, a unit change in the positive content exposure results in 226.5.1% increase in the likelihood to vote. For respondents with the medium levels of campaign engagement, this makes marginal effect of 118.2%, statistically significant at 5% level. The effect is not statistically significant for those with high levels of engagement in the campaign.

Figure 6.9: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals' grouped according engagement in the EP election campaign

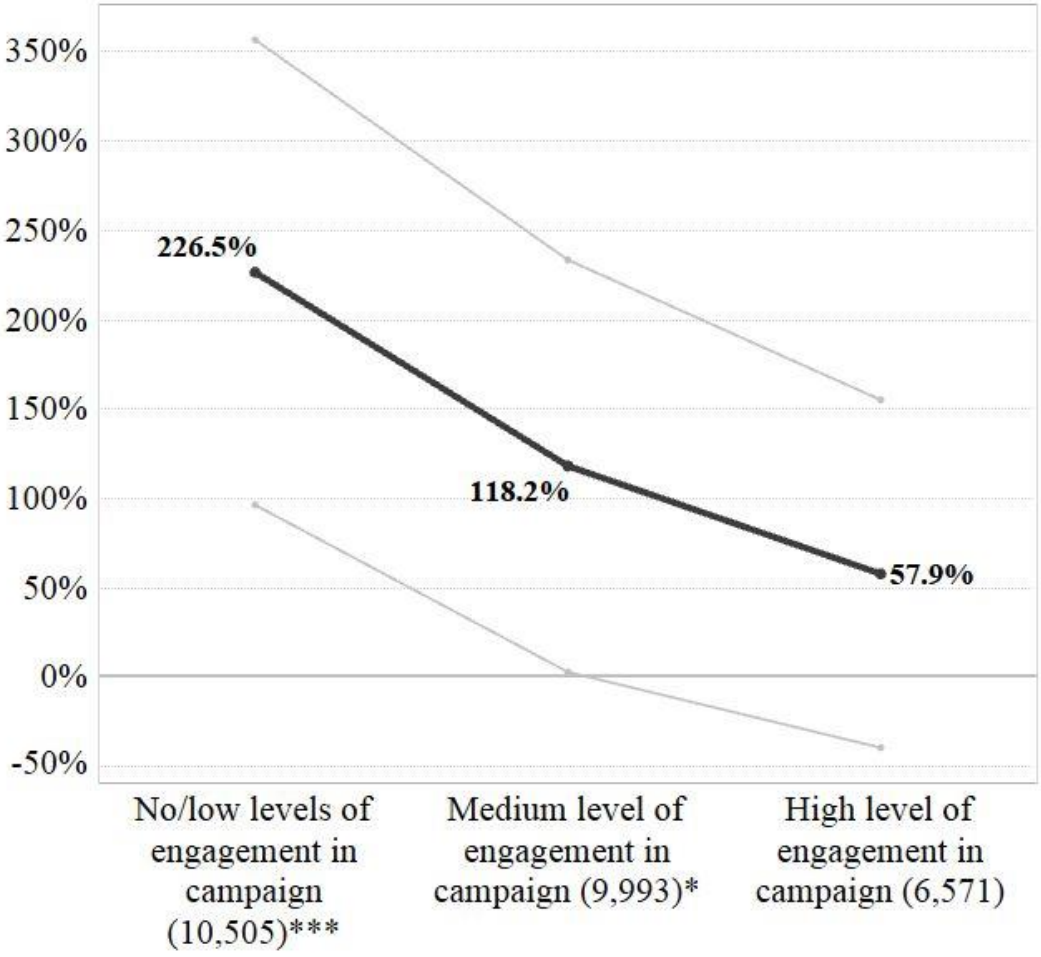
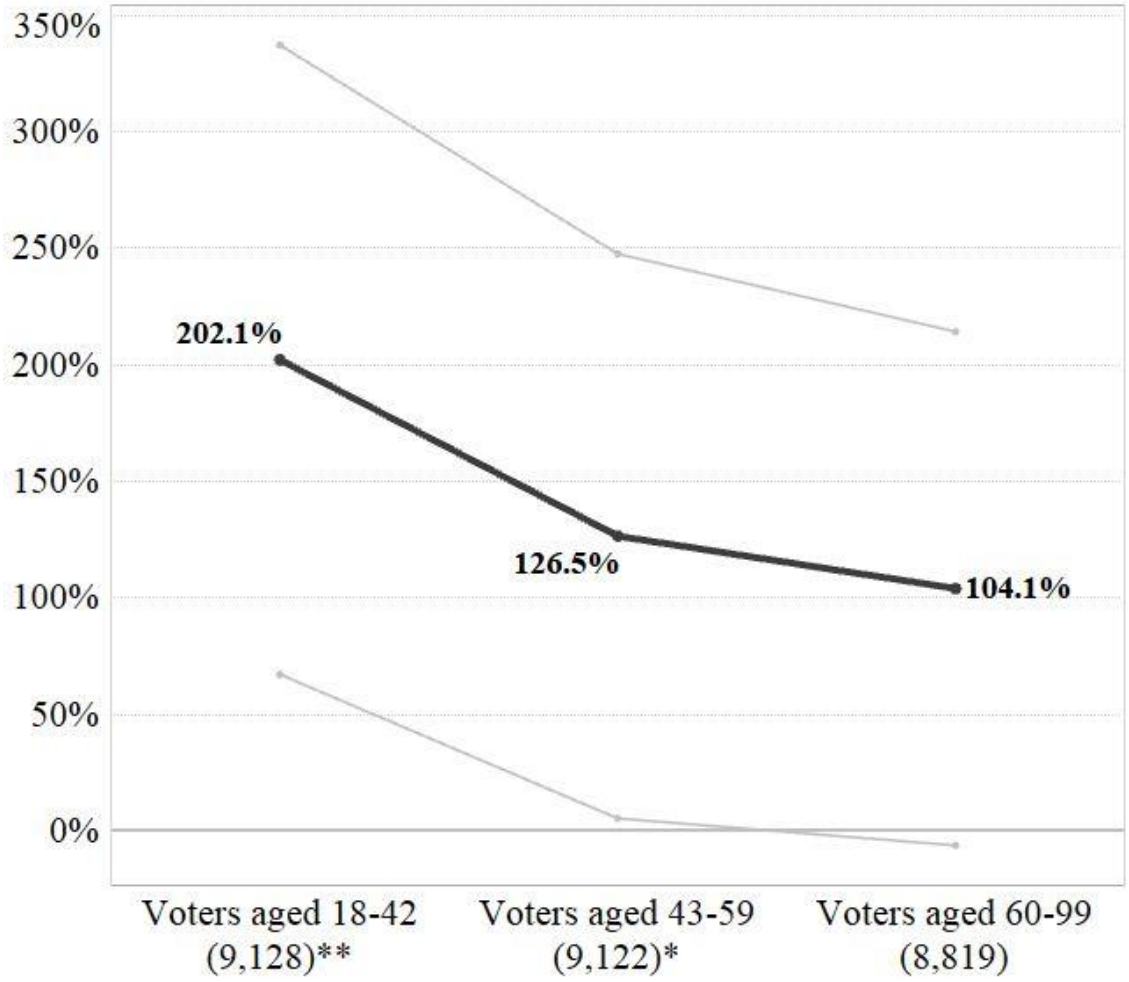


Figure 6.10 shows the varying marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their age. This analysis confirms that effects of media are strongest for younger respondents who most likely have not developed a voting habit. For the youngest voters aged 18 - 42, a unit change in the positive content exposure results in 202.1% increase in the likelihood to vote, statistically significant at 1% level, and for those aged 43 - 59, this is 126.5% increase. The marginal effect on the likelihood to vote for respondents older than 60 is not statistically significant.

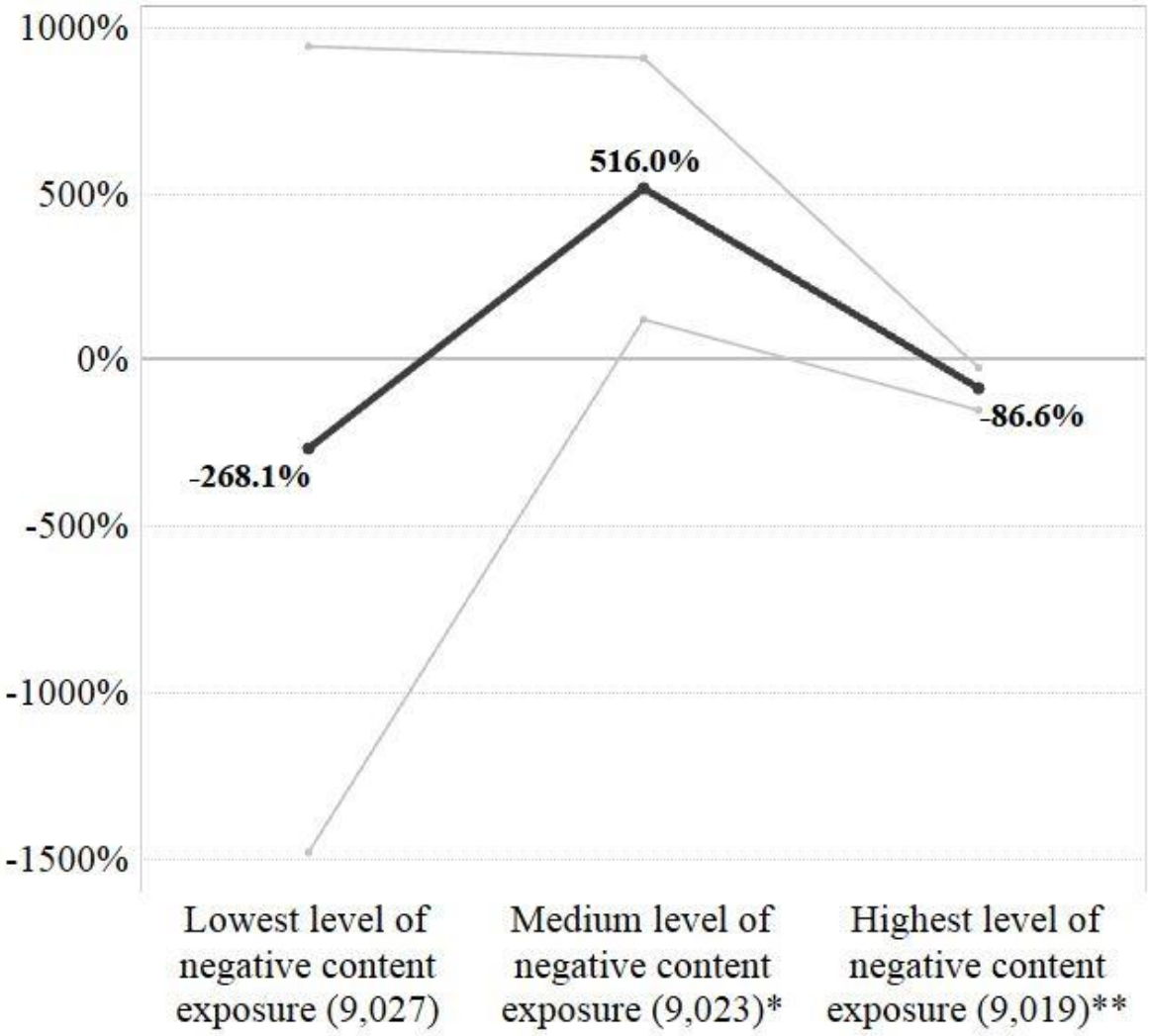
Figure 6.10: Marginal effects of the positive content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to their age



The marginal effects of the negative content exposure were not statistically significant for most of the groups used. Only the two variables used to create groups, the actual negative content exposure and gender, have shown statistically significant results and are shown here.

Majority of marginal effects for the different groups of observations did not yield a statistically significant effect; therefore these charts are not shown here. Figure 6.11 shows the varying marginal effects of the negative content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the same variable, the negative content exposure. The marginal effect is statistically significant for those with medium and the highest exposure to negative EU news. For those with medium levels of negative content exposure, the marginal effects are positive 516%. For those with the highest levels, a unit change in this variable result in 86.6% decrease in respondents' likelihood to vote, statistically significant at the 1% level. This is the first occurrence where exposure to negative EU news lead to lower levels of likelihood to vote. As mentioned previously for the case of positive content exposure, the very large size of the marginal effects is cause by the lack of normal distribution in the data as well as skewness; a very high proportion of observations have been assigned a zero value for the negative content exposure. Consequently, the outliers with extreme values for this variable are likely to boost to marginal effects to such great sizes.

Figure 6.11: Marginal effects of the negative content exposure on voting in the EP elections for individuals grouped according to the negative content exposure



6.4. Multilevel Model, Media Types

The following two sets of tables examine the varying effects of the exposure to positive and negative EU news across different media types. Tables 6.4 and 6.5 look at positive news. The variance on both individual level and level 2 stays around the same percentage as in the main multilevel mode, over 5% at the individual level and over 42% at level 2.

Comparing exposure to positive EU news in all newspapers and on all television channels, only the first variable has a statistically significant effect, but a large one, increasing the odds of voting more than 39 times. This might be because newspapers not only include more news stories than television; newspapers also tend to report more positive news than television news. It is important to keep in mind that there were fewer news coded in the television broadcasts than in newspapers overall, and that the proportion of positive news within both, but especially on television, is very low.

Looking within newspapers, a unit increase in the exposure to positive EU news in tabloids decreases one's odds of voting by 95%. Reading positive EU news in quality newspapers increases the odds of voting by a great amount - the strongest media effect we have seen so far, shown in millions in the table. This effect is large but it is important to remember that not only the proportion of positive EU news is very low, more than 50% of observations score 0 on the positive content exposure to quality newspapers, which means that this effect is based in a relatively small sample. It appears, however, that, even if positive, the 'sensational' quality of news in tabloids results in people tending to trust less them than quality newspapers. Therefore, if they read something positive about the EU in a quality newspaper, they are more likely to believe it and allow it influence their decision to vote.

From the two types of television channels examined here, it is the exposure to positive EU news only on commercial television that has statistical significance and, as with the case of tabloids, it is negative significance, decreasing the odds of voting by 94%. Commercial television also tends to have lower reputation than public television when it comes to the trustworthiness of the news; thus, even when the news is positive, people tend to not believe it. The coefficients for other variables are the same as in the previous tables, thus are not shown here.

Table 6.4: Multilevel model, positive content exposure by media type - newspapers

Positive content exposure/media outlet	Newspapers	Tabloid newspapers	Quality newspapers
Media variables			
Newspapers	39.452 (0.002)**		
Tabloid newspapers		0.049 (0.025)*	
Quality newspapers *(in millions)*			*191.0* (0.000)***
Observations	27,069	27,069	27,069
L2 observations	28	28	28
Log likelihood	-12420.705	-12423.316	-12403.724
lnsig2u	-1.731	-1.709	-1.694
SE (lnsig2u)	(0.2810)	(0.2810)	(0.2810)
Sigma_u	0.4208	0.4256	0.4287
SE (sigma_u)	(0.0591)	(0.0598)	(0.0602)
rho	0.0511	0.0522	0.0529
SE (rho)	(0.0136)	(0.0139)	(0.0141)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 6.5: Multilevel model, positive content exposure by media type - television

Positive content exposure/media outlet	Television	Commercial television	Public television
Media variables			
Television	0.307 (0.119)		
Commercial television		0.063 (0.012)*	
Public television			2.631 (0.292)
Observations	27,069	27,069	27,069
L2 observations	28	28	28
Log likelihood	-12424.526	-12422.604	-12425.182
lnsig2u	-1.698	-1.748	-1.756
SE (lnsig2u)	(0.2810)	(0.2810)	(0.2820)
Sigma_u	0.4279	0.4173	0.4156
SE (sigma_u)	(0.0602)	(0.0587)	(0.0587)
rho	0.0527	0.0503	0.0499
SE (rho)	(0.0140)	(0.0134)	(0.0134)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 6.6 and 6.7 shows the results of the multilevel models analyzing the effects of negative content exposure across different media types. Exposure to negative EU news in all newspapers or all television channels does not have a statistically significant impact on the likelihood of voting. Nevertheless, examining the two newspaper types separately brings more insight to the issue. Being exposed to negative EU news in tabloid newspapers decreases the odds of voting by 85%, while exposure to such news in quality newspapers increases the odds by a great factor, shown in millions in the table. This suggests that it is really the type of media that matters, not the actual content or tone of the news; negative news has a different influence on respondents when it appears in tabloid or in quality newspapers. As with positive news in quality newspapers on the previous pages, the very low proportions of negative EU news are likely to be behind the large results here.

On the contrary to the results for positive content exposure on various television types, examining the negative content exposure presents statistically significant effect for public television, with a unit increase boosting the odds of voting by a factor of 7. As in the case of negative news in quality newspapers, it is clear that the tone of the EU news does not play a role, but it is the actual media type that matters here.

Table 6.6: Multilevel model, negative content exposure by media type - newspapers

Negative content exposure/media outlet	**Newspapers**	**Tabloid newspapers**	**Quality newspapers**
Media variables			
Newspapers	0.693 (0.511)		
Tabloid newspapers		0.147 (0.001)***	
Quality newspapers *(in millions)*			*0.295* (0.000)***
Observations	27,069	27,069	27,069
L2 observations	28	28	28
Log likelihood	-12425.524	-12420.223	-12410.583
lnsig2u	-1.735***	-1.756***	-1.694***
SE (lnsig2u)	(0.2810)	(0.2810)	(0.2800)
Sigma_u	0.4200	0.4156	0.4287
SE (sigma_u)	(0.0590)	(0.0585)	(0.0601)
rho	0.0509	0.0499	0.0529
SE (rho)	(0.0136)	(0.0133)	(0.0141)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 6.7: Multilevel model, negative content exposure by media type - television

Negative content exposure/media outlet	Television	Commercial television	Public television
Media variables			
Television	0.992 (0.992)		
Commercial television		0.295 (0.144)	
Public television			7.038 (0.027)*
Observations	27,069	27,069	27,069
L2 observations	28	28	28
Log likelihood	-12425.739	-12424.672	-12423.284
lnsig2u	-1.728***	-1.707***	-1.724***
SE (lnsig2u)	(0.2810)	(0.2810)	(0.2810)
Sigma_u	0.4216	0.4259	0.4223
SE (sigma_u)	(0.0592)	(0.0598)	(0.0593)
rho	0.0512	0.0522	0.0514
SE (rho)	(0.0137)	(0.0139)	(0.0137)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

6.5. Summary

The multilevel model examining the effects of positive and to negative content exposure did not produce any statistically significant result, suggesting that neither exposure to positive or negative EU news has any impact on one's likelihood of voting. Nevertheless, when I examined the marginal effects of these variables for various groups of observations, the direction of the effects is in line with those in the previous chapter (where only the visibility of EU news was taken into account) but in the case of positive EU news, the marginal effects are much higher. This suggests that the tone of the EU news does matter and more EU news with positive or negative tone leads to a higher likelihood to vote. This confirms previous research suggesting that news with some tone makes the information more memorable, and, thus, the news is then more likely to have an effect on one's likelihood to vote.

However, this seems to be the case only for exposure to positive EU news as the majority of models run for the groups using negative content exposure are not statistically significant. The results that are statistically significant are demobilizing to women more than men and to those with high levels of exposure to negative EU news. These findings support the line of research claiming that positive news mobilizes voters, while negative news demobilizes them. In this case, it is mostly that negative news does not have any effect.

The multilevel analysis of positive content exposure in various media types showed significant, relatively strong, mobilizing effects for positive EU news in quality newspapers and negative effects for exposure to positive EU news in tabloids and on commercial television. These results are in line with existing research. Interestingly, looking at the multilevel analysis of negative content exposure in various media types, we also see mobilizing effects for quality newspapers and public television, but demobilizing effects for tabloid newspapers. This suggests that the effects are not really dependent on the tone of the news, but, rather, on the type of news, determined by the news outlet.

Examining country groups, the expectations are further confirmed in that the marginal effects of exposure to positive EU news are statistically significant only in the Western EU member states, not in the CEE countries. No results for country groups for the negative content exposure were statistically significant.

CHAPTER 7

THE POTENTIAL POWER OF THE NEWS

Having established that exposure to news, while accounting for its content, plays a significant role in explaining turnout in the 2009 EP elections, I will now explore the extent of the potential power of the news. Keeping the values for all variables the same, except for the content exposure, and using the coefficients of the current equation, I now look into how the turnout would change if the content exposure across the EU countries either increased or decreased.

I proceeded in the following steps. I first calculated coefficients from the earlier regression equation and obtained the mean values for each variable for each country. Then using these and the logistic regression specification, I predicted the probability of voting in each country and obtained an estimated turnout for each country. After this, I introduced a single deviation increase to the content exposure, keeping everything else the same. I added one standard deviation, calculated for each country, to the content exposure for each country and used the coefficients and other variables at country-level means to compute a new probability of turnout estimates. Therefore, I computed the turnout probability once more but now with a standard deviation increase in the content exposure.

Lastly, I followed the above procedure with two standard deviations rather than one, and then I followed the same steps decreasing the means of the content exposure in each country by one and two standard deviations. The results clearly show that if people were exposed more often to more news about the EU, the turnout could increase. The degree of the turnout change caused by the alternation of the media variable differs across countries, but it is clear that there is a positive relationship between turnout and media exposure. The data contained in the Figures below illustrate the results. It is also important to note that what is shown in this section is the turnout estimate based on the voter survey, as opposed to the official turnout. As I have mentioned earlier, turnout is

generally overreported in voter surveys (e.g. Cassel 2003, Karp and Brockington 2005, Franklin and Wessels 2010); thus, the figures shown here are higher than the officially reported turnout.

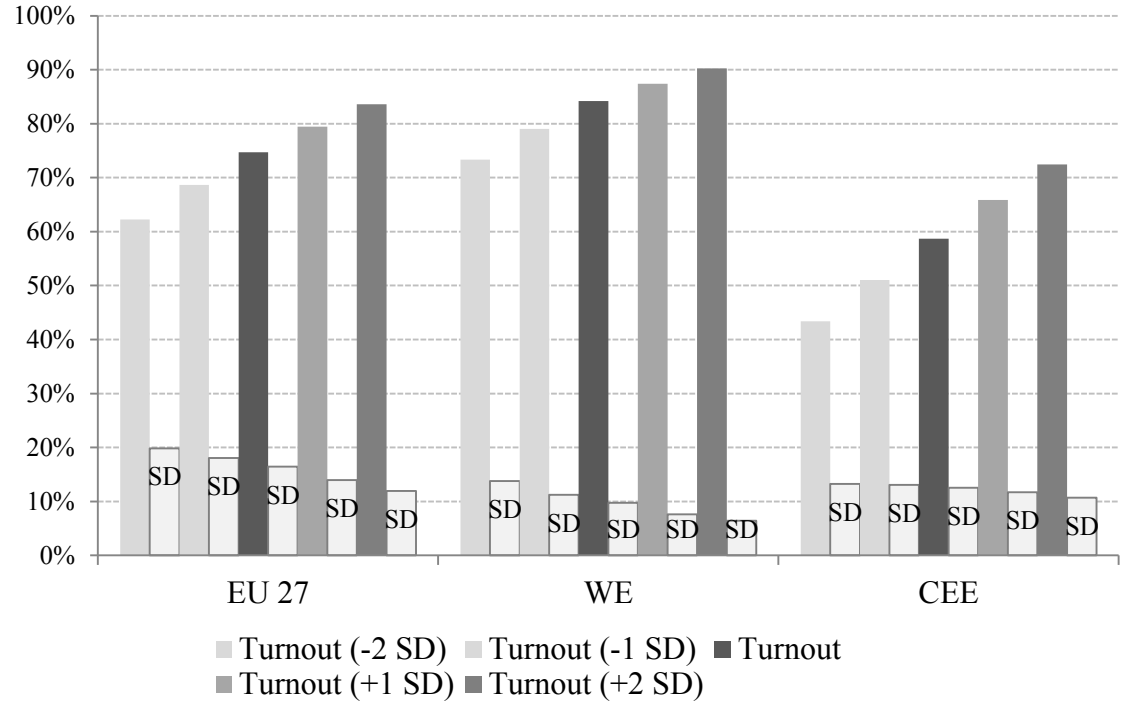
The logistic analyses examining the media effects across the CEE and WE groups of countries in the previous two chapters showed that the effects of content exposure did not reach levels of statistical significance for the CEE countries. While this suggests that in these countries media do not play a role in people's decision to vote in the EP elections, it could also be caused by the fact that the visibility of EU news is lower in these countries compared to the WE countries. This current chapter is purely hypothetical and works on the assumption that exposure to EU news does have an impact on one's decision to vote in the EP election. While the strongest potential effect of the increased content exposure measure on turnout is shown for the CEE countries, these results need to be treated with caution.

Figure 7.1 shows the estimated turnout and how it changes based on the variation in the content exposure as explained above. The graph clearly shows that the more the content exposure increases then turnout, too, increases - and vice versa. One can also see that the difference in the turnout between two standard deviations less and two more is steepest for the CEE countries, at 29%.

Comparing the current turnout estimate with its change prompted by 2-standard deviation increase in the media variable, the turnout increases by 9%, 6% and 14% for the whole EU, the Western EU countries, and the CEE countries respectively. As everything else is being kept constant, this could be interpreted as the largest impact of the change in the media variable taking place in the CEE countries. In the discussion of hypotheses earlier I suggested that as citizens in the CEE countries tend to know less about the EU in general, just some exposure to news about the EU can make a great difference to their knowledge about the EU and, consequently their turnout. Also, turnout in the Western EU countries is already relatively high compared to the CEE countries, so there is not that much space in that country group for further increase.

It is also important to notice the sizes of the standard errors for the estimated turnout which decrease as turnout increases. This decrease is the most visible for the whole EU, by approximately 8%, around 7% for the Western EU countries, and only 3% for the CEE countries. Nevertheless, these differences could also be the result of the number of observations in each group of countries as this is the smallest for the CEE group.

Figure 7.1: Estimated turnout and its variations, EU



Figures 7.2 and 7.3 then show the turnout estimates for each country and their changes based on one and two standard deviation changes in the media variable respectively. The countries are ordered according to the size of the difference ranging between the lowest and the highest turnout within each country. Table 7.1 gives the overview of all the turnout estimate values following the changes in the content exposure to media. It is clear and somewhat expected that change in the content exposure by two-standard deviations produces larger deviations in the turnout estimates compared to the one-standard deviation changes.

As noted above, it is the CEE countries where the change in turnout is the largest depending on the alternation of the content exposure, with Hungary and Poland leading the table. Increasing current values of content exposure in Hungary by two-standard deviations increases turnout estimates by 18% and in Poland by nearly 20%. The difference between the lowest and the highest turnout for these two countries is 39% for Hungary and 37% for Poland.

The exception to this are Finland, The Netherlands, and Portugal, where two-standard deviation increases raises turnout by 39%, 36%, and 27% respectively, from the lowest to the highest points, and by 14%, 14%, and 12% respectively, from the current, unchanged, turnout estimate to the highest. On the other end of the graph, Malta, Wallonia and Italy have the lowest differences in turnout between their lowest and highest points of 0.9%, 3.6%, and 3.8% respectively.

There is an interesting situation for Flanders where an increase in the content exposure actually lowers turnout, by just 2% between the lowest and the highest turnout point, while decrease in the media variable actually boosts turnout. A further examination of the content of the media in the Belgian Flanders region would be required to help solve this interesting puzzle.

Figure 7.2: Estimated turnout and its variations, +/- 1 standard deviation, by country

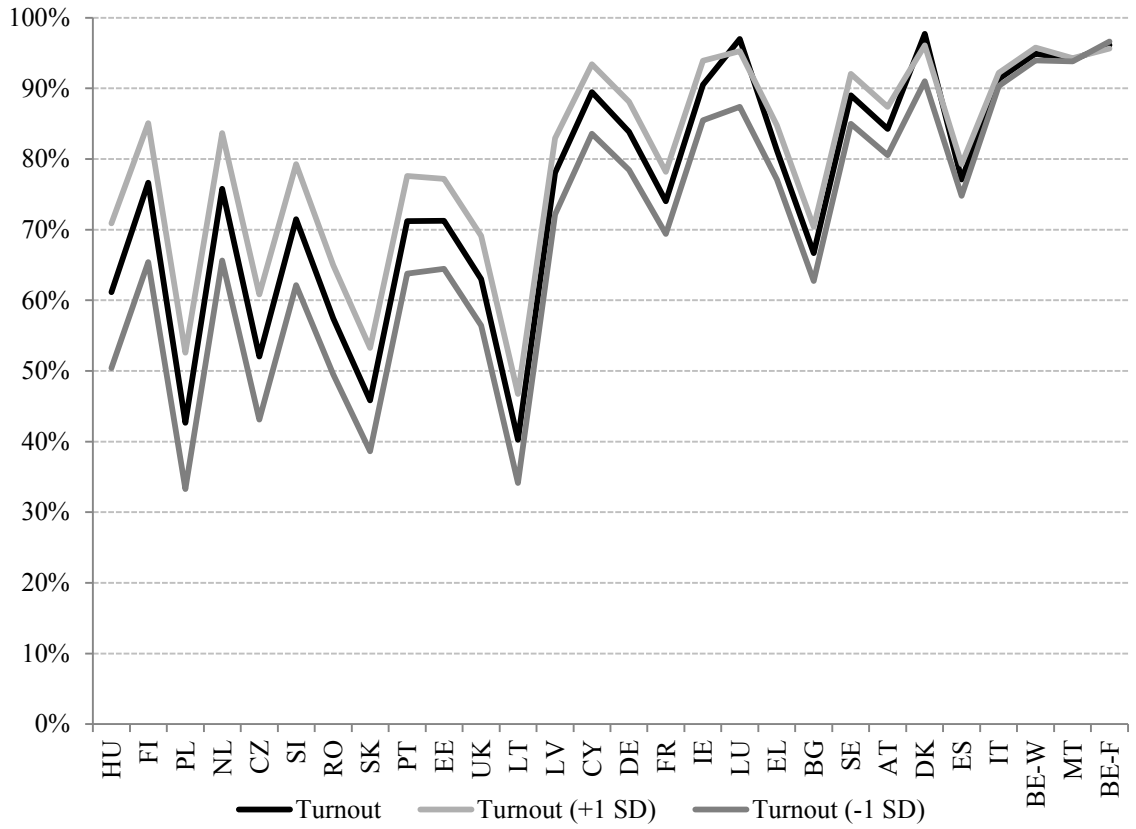


Figure 7.3: Estimated turnout and its variations, +/- 2 standard deviations, by country

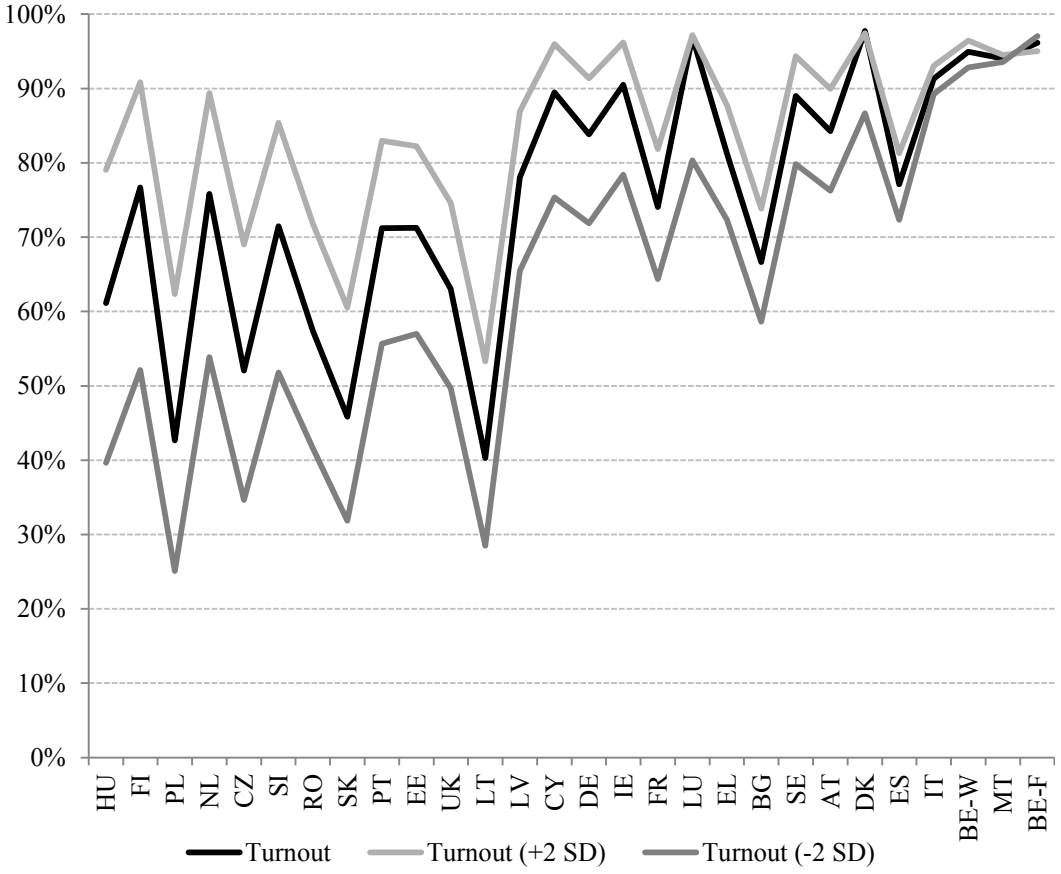


Table 7.1: Estimated turnout and its variations, by country

	Turnout (-2 SD)	**Turnout (-1 SD)**	**Turnout**	**Turnout (+1 SD)**	**Turnout (+2 SD)**
AT	76.2%	80.6%	84.3%	87.4%	89.9%
BE-F	97.0%	96.6%	96.2%	95.6%	95.0%
BE-W	92.8%	94.0%	94.9%	95.8%	96.5%
BG	58.6%	62.7%	66.7%	70.4%	73.8%
CY	75.3%	83.6%	89.5%	93.4%	95.9%
CZ	34.6%	43.1%	52.1%	60.9%	69.0%
DE	71.8%	78.4%	83.8%	88.1%	91.3%
DK	86.7%	91.0%	97.7%	96.1%	97.4%
EE	57.0%	64.4%	71.2%	77.2%	82.2%
EL	72.3%	77.1%	81.2%	84.8%	87.7%
ES	72.3%	74.8%	77.1%	79.3%	81.3%
FI	52.1%	65.4%	76.7%	85.1%	90.8%
FR	64.4%	69.4%	74.0%	78.2%	81.8%
HU	39.6%	50.4%	61.2%	70.9%	79.0%
IE	78.4%	85.5%	90.5%	93.9%	96.2%
IT	89.2%	90.3%	91.3%	92.2%	93.0%
LT	28.5%	34.1%	40.3%	46.7%	53.3%
LU	80.3%	87.4%	97.0%	95.3%	97.2%
LV	65.5%	72.2%	78.0%	82.9%	86.9%
MT	93.6%	93.8%	94.0%	94.3%	94.5%
NL	53.8%	65.7%	75.8%	83.7%	89.4%
PL	25.1%	33.3%	42.7%	52.6%	62.3%
PT	55.7%	63.8%	71.2%	77.6%	83.0%
RO	41.6%	49.5%	57.4%	65.0%	71.8%
SE	79.8%	85.0%	89.0%	92.1%	94.3%
SI	51.8%	62.1%	71.5%	79.3%	85.4%
SK	31.9%	38.6%	45.8%	53.3%	60.5%
UK	49.7%	56.5%	63.0%	69.1%	74.6%
EU	62.2%	68.6%	74.7%	79.4%	83.6%
WE	73.3%	79.0%	84.2%	87.4%	90.2%
CEE	43.4%	51.0%	58.7%	65.9%	72.4%

7.1. Summary

The analyses on the previous pages give a strong indication that a change in the amount of exposure to EU news on its own evokes variations in turnout. The relationship is positive here, showing that with an increase in content exposure (i.e. the frequency of exposure to the news on the EU, as well as the number of these news) turnout increases as well, keeping all other variables constant. The same process is observed when the media variable decreases and turnout becomes lower.

While the results of the logistic analyses in the previous two chapters suggest that that the effects of content exposure are not statistically significant for the CEE countries, this could be an implication of the lower visibility of EU news in the CEE countries compared to the WE countries. The analysis presented in this chapter is purely hypothetical and works on the assumption that exposure to EU news does have an impact on one's decision to vote in the EP election. The discussion here is therefore hypothetically discussing how the turnout would change, if the content exposure, including visibility of EU news and people's exposure to it, changed.

Across the whole EU, one-standard deviation increase in the content exposure raises the turnout estimate by nearly 5%, while two-standard deviation increases boost it by 9%. There are great differences across groups of countries as well as individual countries; these differences may originate from numerous factors, including the size of the existing (original) turnout estimate, the current visibility of EU news as well as the characteristics of individual countries and their citizens. With some exceptions, the potential power of the news seems to be larger in the CEE countries, suggesting that since both the turnout and the EU news visibility were lower in these countries compared to the Western EU countries, there is more scope for change. It is also very likely that if the visibility of EU news were higher in the CEE countries, the effect of content exposure on participation in the EP elections could be statistically significant there.

The analysis in this chapter assigns media a great power in boosting voter turnout in the EP elections. As I mentioned earlier in this study, news media, including newspapers and television, constitute the main source of information for most citizens, especially when it comes to remote issues that they cannot experience first-hand. While

people can often learn about local politics by talking to their neighbors and family, they are less likely to find out about the functioning of the EU and its politics through talking alone. Therefore, people rely almost exclusively on the news media for EU-related news. Even though online and social media might be playing a much larger role nowadays, in 2009, it was the traditional news media that were cited as the most used tool to access news.

Despite the media's immense responsibility to inform people about the EU, the visibility of EU news is very low, which precludes people from easily accessing the information they need to vote in the EP elections. It is therefore no surprise that increasing content exposure, i.e. both the visibility of EU-related news and people's exposure to it, might potentially lead to higher turnout in the EP elections, as shown in the analysis in this chapter. The analysis suggests that the vicious circle described earlier in this study could be prevented: if there are more news about the EU in the newspapers and on television, then, given that people are exposed to these news, they will receive the necessary information about the EU, the EP, and the elections. According to the mobilization theory, media might serve as a mobilizing force. By making the information about the elections easily accessible to the public, media help decrease the cost of voting for the citizens. It is not only learning about the functioning and policy making of the EP, but also finding out about the voting procedures and details on where to vote and how exactly to do it. Consequently, as stated by the rational choice theory of voter turnout, as the costs of voting decreased, people would be more likely to vote. Higher turnout in the EP elections would ensure that more groups of EU citizens are well represented by the EP and that the EU policies in fact respond to people's needs.

Editors of newspapers and television newscasts have the difficult job of selecting the stories that they believe would be popular among the public. While the EU may not be the easiest topic to sell, it is an important one as, increasingly more and more, the EU is really becoming an integral part of many people's lives. One of the ways to boost the interest to EU-related news is to increase the intensity of election campaigns carried out by the parties and MEP candidates. Research has shown that intense election campaigns, close races and opposing views by different candidates increase news coverage. Often the problem with the EP election campaigns is that they focus mostly on national issues, rather than EU-related issues. Intense campaigning would therefore boost news coverage but the content would still remain restricted to national issues.

A solution for this could be having EP election campaigns regulated by the EU. For example, the EU could set some minimum time that needs to be devoted to EU issues in the campaign, and they could also increase the limited funding for the EP campaigning, which varies across countries. Parties from within would also need to prioritize the EU issues in their campaigns and ensure they send out the message that the EP elections matter and that the outcome of the election will impact people's everyday lives. This along with more news about the EU and the EP elections could then draw more people to the elections polls and help improve the legitimacy of the EU. Such measures seem to be especially important in the CEE countries where the influence of the media is not statistically significant at the moment. With the help of a more visible EU-related news coverage, exposure to media could potentially play a stronger role in bringing people to EP elections polls.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Democratic legitimacy crisis of the EU has been present on academic and political research agendas since the early days of the European Community. A great deal of research has been carried out on this topic, but no one has proposed any definite solutions so far. After initial attempts to improve the crisis by concentrating on output legitimacy, i.e. the EU institutions and how they govern people, researchers shifted their interest onto the input legitimacy, looking into people's participation in the policy-making processes and the EU's responsiveness to them (Héritier, 2003; Horeth, 1999; Schmidt, 2010).

The EP is the only EU institution elected directly by its citizens, and despite an increase in its powers over the decades, it is still not nearly as powerful as, for example, the European Commission. Furthermore, as turnout figures show, EU citizens clearly do not take advantage of the opportunity to elect their respective country representatives to the EP; which directly damages the EU's legitimacy. The fact that only 43% of the EU's citizens expressed their preferences in the 2009 EP elections means that large groups of population are not represented by the MEPs. This legitimacy crisis is more pronounced in the CEE countries where the turnout was only 28.3%. Although there are great variations across the EU member states, turnout in the EP elections is generally lower than national elections and it has been decreasing ever since the first election in 1979. This decrease has slowed down only in the last two elections.

One of the solutions available to strengthen the EU's legitimacy is to boost turnout in the EP elections. Despite the EP making great efforts to attract more people to the polls, EU citizens are still reluctant to turn out to vote for the parliament. There are many reasons put forward to account for this, but one of the most persistent suggestions has been that people simply know very little about the EU and the EP. Lack

of knowledge about the EP can directly prevent people from voting because they do not know where to vote, who to vote for, or what the purpose of their vote is. It might also lead them to believe that the EU is not related to their everyday lives, and thus, there is no reason to become involved in the organization's affairs.

Easy access to information about the EU could therefore help increase people's knowledge about it and subsequently boost the turnout. By providing a wide range of relevant information about the EU, the national media could contribute to the strengthening of the EU's input legitimacy (Héritier, 2003). National media, however, have been blamed for publishing too little news about the EU affairs. At the same time, the EU has been accused of issuing information that is too technical to make sense to the general public, which renders it unlikely to be picked up by the media as well. Additionally, due to the second-order nature of the EP elections, campaigning is less intensive than it is in national elections, giving little to the media to write about.

I argue that this is a vicious circle: as there is less at stake at the EP elections and their results do not decide who runs an individual country, political parties and candidates therefore devote less interest, time, and money to the EP election campaigns compared to national election campaigns. There is then little for the media to write about, and the lack of news concerning the EU and the EP elections results in citizens not receiving sufficient information about these topics. They might also be confused about whether the elections matter since it seems that neither the media, nor the political parties, nor the candidates is actually concerned about them. As a result, many people choose not to vote in the EP elections simply because they do not know what the EP does, the specific purposes of the elections, where they can vote, or who to vote for.

This chain of events is detrimental to the EU legitimacy but, as I show in Chapter 7, it could be prevented if the media reported more on the EU, the EP elections, parties, and candidates. I show that turnout rises with an increase in people's exposure to EU-related news as well as with an increase in the visibility of this news. Throughout my thesis, I argue that, due to the reasons outlined above, people who are more often exposed to a high amount of news concerning the EU are more likely to vote in the EP elections. My results show a relatively strong, statistically significant, positive relationship between people's exposure to news about the EU in the weeks prior to the 2009 EP elections and their participation in the elections.

I further argue that the tone of the news, defined as whether the story evaluates the EU or the EP positively or negatively, does not influence the effects of the exposure

to news. As long as the EU news is well visible, exposure to it has a positive impact on people's likelihood to vote. My data analysis shows that rather than the tone of the EU-related news, it is the type of the media outlet that yields media effects of varying directions, since the content presented in the newspapers and on television shows a wide range of topics depending on the type of the media outlet. Newspapers tend to publish more EU news than television channels, and, similarly, quality newspapers and public television channels include more news about the EU than tabloid newspapers and commercial television channels. I find clear differences in the effects of content exposure across various media types. Exposure to EU news in newspapers, both quality and tabloid, has stronger impact on the likelihood to vote than exposure to EU news on television. Additionally, exposure to EU news in tabloid newspapers is likely to drive people away from voting compared to exposure from quality newspapers, which, to the contrary, is likely to mobilize people. Both of these effects occur regardless the tone of the EU news, i.e. whether the news is neutral, positive or negative.

The magnitude of the impact created by exposure to positive and to negative EU news, especially across different media types, is influenced by the low proportions of EU news with a positive or a negative tone. There are great outliers on both ends of the spectrum, i.e. news outlets with very high and with very low proportions of either positive or negative EU news. These outliers cause the media effects to reach very large sizes, and thus the results need to be treated with caution.

The relationship between content exposure and voting in the 2009 EP elections is not as straightforward in the CEE countries as it is in the WE countries. According to the conclusions I reached with a multilevel model, the most suitable model for the dataset I use, being a citizen of a post-Communist country does not have any impact on whether people vote or not. When using a basic, logistic specification, the results show that citizens of CEE countries are less likely to vote in the EP elections. However, when the logistic model is run separately for the 10 CEE countries and for the 17 WE countries, the effects of content exposure do not reach levels of statistical significance in the CEE countries. These results suggest that, as hypothesized, content exposure doesn't bear any influence on the citizens of the CEE countries in contrast to the citizens of the Western EU member states. This is likely to be the result of very low visibility of EU news in the national media of the CEE countries.

The EP elections turnout is already much lower in the CEE countries compared to the WE countries. This is due to a range of historical, political, and social reasons

related to the post-Communist legacy of these countries. CEE citizens have not been able to develop a voting habit since the fall of the Communist regime; they do not trust political parties, elites or the media. Following the EU accession negotiations in 2009, when they were required to adopt many EU rules and regulations, many feel as if their countries are inferior or insignificant members of the organization. These characteristics are also related to the lack of interest in and knowledge about the EU on the part of CEE citizens.

All these points play a role in the simulation scenario in Chapter 7: the effects of increasing content exposure on the likelihood to vote are greater in the CEE countries, compared to the WE countries. This suggests that as a result of the aspects outlined above, along with low levels of turnout and EU news visibility, there is simply more scope for change in the CEE countries. Even though the analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 show that the media effects are not statistically significant in the CEE countries, the simulation presents a hypothetical discussion about what would happen if the visibility of the EU news, as well as people's exposure to it increased. It is likely, that if both of these increased, the media effects may in fact become statistically significant.

Media might be a very powerful tool if political elites, and media editors themselves, made use of it. I have shown that when people are exposed to more news about the EU, they are more likely to vote in the EP elections. Although some of the effects are relatively modest, they do reach conventional levels of statistical significance. The relative insignificance of the effects may simply be due to the large sample size and high variation across observations, as other studies examining media across countries reach similar outcomes (e.g. Barabas, Jerit, Pollock, Banducci, Stevens and Schoonvelde, 2014).

With the aim of avoiding the typical faults of survey research on media effects and voting behavior, I utilize the respondents' self-reported exposure to specific newspapers and television newscasts. The survey questions regarding respondents' exposure to media are worded in a way to make the recall easier and increase the accuracy of the exposure level. Similarly, the question about whether respondents voted in the 2009 EP election is framed to minimize the impact of social desirability, suggesting that non-voting is a common occurrence and that many people in fact do not vote in the EP elections. Nevertheless, overreporting of both turnout and exposure has been taken into account in the outcomes of the study. While I showed the difference between the official turnout in the EP election and the self-reported turnout, there is no

possibility to check the real exposure to EU news. The turnout overreporting rate varies across the countries, and the exposure overreporting rate is likely to vary as well. Looking at the two groups of countries, the CEE and WE EU member states, citizens in CEE countries overreport their turnout to a slightly lesser degree than WE citizens, but since the exposure to media seems to be higher in the CEE countries, it is possible for the rate of overreporting to be higher there compared to the WE countries. Consequently, it is likely that the cross-country differences in overreporting these two measures, rather than actual differences in turnout across the countries, cause the diversity observed in media effects between the two country groups.

Matching respondents' exposure to particular news outlets with the news content in these outlets allows me to get a precise idea of the content that respondents were likely exposed to. This method offers great advantages for the study of media effects, but since it's quite a challenge to obtain the necessary data, it can only be used on unique occasions (Stevens and Banducci, 2013; Stevens and Karp, 2012; Stevens et al. 2011). As my analysis in Chapter 5 shows, without accounting for the content of the news, exposure alone does not have a statistically significant effect on one's likelihood to vote. Similarly, the effects of country-level aggregated measure of EU news visibility do not reach levels of statistical significance, i.e. only the content of the news does not have a statistically significant impact on voter turnout either. It is therefore crucial to combine both of these measures when studying the media effects in order to capture the whole picture.

I am not aware of any other study that compares individual-level media effects between WE and CEE EU countries (or, as they are often referred to, the 'old and new member states'). Although they both belong to the same community, the recent histories of these two groups of countries significantly differ, which impacts, among other things, the voting behavior of their citizens. This comparison offers an insight into the different mobilization processes in place in these countries prior to the EP elections. Previous research has suggested that media play a role in people's decision to vote in the EP elections and that this role is likely to be different in the CEE countries. I take this proposition further to find that not only higher exposure to more EU news boosts one's likelihood to vote across the EU, but also that this is not the case for the CEE countries where these effects are not statistically significant. Furthermore, very little is known about media effects specifically in the CEE countries, so, utilizing both media content and exposure, my findings help fill this gap.

Despite critiques of research design issues in media effects studies, it is an expanding field. Great insights have been revealed especially in the recently developed studies on the new media, including online news media and social networks. The study of news coverage in and media effects of traditional media is important since media tend to represent the public opinion in a country, or at least the opinion of the political and economic elites. They serve as a mediator between the elites, whether on a national or EU level, and the public. Independent mass media are extremely important for the functioning of a democratic country and also a democratic entity, such as the EU. On a daily basis, media provide information about the political affairs and are the essential tool for citizens to learn about events and issues that are remote to them and which they cannot experience personally, such as the EU. Media therefore play a crucial role in the democratic processes of the EU, and in this study I showed how powerful it can be to help boost voter turnout in the EP elections and, as a result, help strengthen the EU's legitimacy.

I used the PIREDEU survey and media data covering all countries in the EU. Such datasets, along with the unique setting of the EP elections, allowed me to study those participating, and not participating, in the same event across 28 political and media contexts. Utilizing multilevel modeling, I was able to include country-level and individual-level variables to examine the impact of all the variables on voter turnout. I assessed to what extent the mass media actually fulfilled their function as information providers and mobilizers, and whether they can be helpful in improving the EU's legitimacy. The findings show that at the time of 2009 EP election, national media in most EU countries did not fulfill these functions as it provided very little news about the EU and the EP elections. Exposure to this content had, nevertheless, a positive impact on people's likelihood to vote. In the CEE countries, the EU news coverage was especially low, and the media effects were not found there. Nevertheless, in Chapter 7, using simulation analysis I showed that the potential impact of media on voter turnout can be vast if the EU news content is increased substantially. Such a message could play a major role in the next EP elections campaign.

APPENDIX A MEDIA STUDY

Codebook Extract

VISIBILITY OF EU NEWS

In the 2009 media study codebook, there is a filter variable (V13) asking, "Does the story mention either the European Union (EU*), its institutions or policies or the European Parliamentary elections or the campaign? (Schuck et al. 2010)
* Or synonyms such as 'Brussels' (when EU is meant), Europe (when EU is meant), EU countries (if explicitly referred to as such), EU member states (if explicitly referred to as such). EU institutions include the European Central Bank (ECB), for instance" (Schuck et al. 2010).

1 = no
2 = yes

When chosen "yes", the coder was directed to answer numerous questions about content. One of these questions asked to choose a topic from the specific EU- topic list. This filter variable allowed me to use this measure directly and by simple cross tabulation get the share of EU news from there.

TONE OF EU NEWS

In the 2009 media study codebook, question V26 asks: "Explicitly: Does the story evaluate the EU, and if so, how? 'The EU' here refers to the EU as a political institution as such, not to single, more specific institutions such as the EP or the EC. Also code if synonyms are used which clearly refer to the EU as such, e.g., "Europe" (when in fact the EU is meant / but not if Europe is only referred to as a geographical entity) or "Brussels" (when in fact the EU is meant)." (Schuck et al. 2010)

1= not mentioned
2= mentioned but not evaluated

3= negative

4= rather negative

5= balanced/mixed

6= rather positive

7= positive

For the purpose of this study, categories 3 and 4 were recoded as ‘negative’ and categories 6 and 7 were recoded as ‘positive’. The combination of these two then created ‘biased’ news category.

For the list of media outlets coded in each country and for further details see Schuck et al. 2010.

APPENDIX B VOTER STUDY

Questionnaire Extract

The following table presents the questions from the 2009 EES Voter Survey used in this study, using UK survey wording. The table also includes the details of the construction of the measures used (van Egmond et al. 2009).

Table B.1: Voter survey questions and notes on calculations of measures

VARIABLE	SURVEY QUESTION/NOTES
Dependent variable	
Vote in the 2009 European election	Q24. A lot of people abstained in the European Parliament elections of June 4, while others voted. Did you cast your vote? (1) Yes, voted (2) no, did not vote.
Media variables	
	Respondents' exposure to news outlets was obtained from the following questions; 0 -7 (days) answers were recalculated into 0-1: Q8: In a typical week, how many days do you watch the following news programmes? Q12.In a typical week, how many days do you read the following newspapers? For media data information see above.
Content exposure	The measures between 0 - 1 were then multiplied by the visibility (amount in %) of EU news in each news outlet a respondent was exposed to. Respondent's content exposures to each outlet were then aggregated (*rowmean* function in Stata), obtaining an average measure of how much EU news a respondent was exposed to during the campaign. See Chapter 3 and Figure 3.1 for detailed overview of the calculation. Using the media exposure and content measures, variables including content exposure to particular media outlets are then created. These include content exposure in newspapers, on television, in tabloid newspapers, in quality/broadsheet newspapers, on public television channels and on commercial television channels.
Positive / negative content exposure	These measures are calculated following the same steps as the previous variable, the only difference being that instead of the amount of EU news in each news outlet, the amount (%) of positive/negative news in each outlet is used. These variables are then also recalculated into categorical and separate variables for particular media outlets are created.

Campaign	
	How often did you do any of the following during the four weeks before the European election? How often did you: (see below) Answers are then: often/sometimes/never
Read about election in newspapers	Q17. Read about the election in a newspaper?
Watched TV program about election	Q16. Watch a program about the election on television?
Looked into website about election	Q20. Look into a website concerned with the election?
Attended public meeting/rally	Q19. Attend a public meeting or rally about the election?
Talked to friends/family about election	Q18. Talk to friends or family about the election?
Exposure to campaign	Factor of the previous five variables, they all load on one factor with the factor Eigenvalue of 2.37, with all factor loadings higher than 0.45 and p>0.01; recoded onto scale 0-2.
Interest in campaign	Q23. Thinking back to just before the elections for the European Parliament were held, how interested were you in the campaign for those elections: very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?
Political variables	
Interest in politics	Q78. To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? Very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?
Habitual voter, i.e. voted in the last national election, dummy	Q27. Which party did you vote for at the General Election of xxxx? --then a list of parties was offered. I recoded all responses answering a name of a party or 'voted blank' as 1 and the others as 0.
Party ID	Q87. Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to? --I created a dummy variable: answers mentioning a party were coded as 1 (i.e. as identifying with a party), others as 0.
EU membership is good	Q79. Generally speaking, do you think that [your country's] membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?
Europeanness	Q82.Do you see yourself as…1 [respondent's country nationality] only; 2 [respondent's country nationality] and European; 3 European and [respondent's country nationality]; 4 European only
Satisfaction with country's democracy	Q84. On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [your country]?Very satisfied/Fairly satisfied/Not very satisfied/Not at all satisfied

Respondent's characteristics	
Gender (male)	Dummy; Q102. Are you male or female? 1=Male
Age	Q103. What year were you born? Variables recoded into years – how old a respondent is.
Education (age when finished full time education)	Q100. How old were you when you stopped full-time education? (age in years, 2 digits) (98) still studying
Still studying	Dummy; 1=respondent still studying
Occupation	Q122: And in your current job, what is your main occupation? Please tell us about your last job, what was your main occupation? [Open-ended]
Social class (subjective)	Q114. If you were asked to choose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to - the working class, the lower middle class, the middle class, the upper middle class or the upper class?
Living in a rural/ urban area (subjective)	Q115. Would you say you live in a rural area or village/small or middle-sized town/suburbs of large town or city/large town or city?
Living standard (subjective)	Q120. Taking everything into account, at about what level is your family's standard of living? If you think of a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means a poor family, 7 a rich family, and the other numbers are for the positions in between, about where would you place your family?
Knowledge about the EU	Set of 7 true/false questions about the EU. Knowledge calculated as number of correctly answered questions/total number of questions (7). Q92-Q98. Now some questions about the European Union and Britain. For these questions, I am going to read out some statements. For each one, could you please tell me whether you believe they are true or false?
	Q92. Switzerland is a member of the EU Q93. The European Union has 25 member states Q94. Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament. Q95. Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union Q96. The British Secretary of State for Children, schools and families is Ed Balls. Q97. Individuals must be 25 or older to stand as candidates in British general elections. Q98. There are 969 members of the British House of Commons

Country level variables	
Country-level amount of EU news in a media	Aggregated amount of EU news in all country's media outlets (see above).
Country-level campaign exposure	Aggregated campaign exposure (see above).
Country-level interest in campaign	Aggregated interest in campaign (see above).
Year of EU accession	Year
Time till next national election	In months.

APPENDIX C CONTEXTUAL STUDY

Codebook Extract

The following table includes details of the country-level variables from the Contextual dataset (see Czesnik et al. 2010).

Table C.1: Contextual variables description

Contextual variables	
Compulsory voting	Dummy; 1=compulsory voting country, 0.5 for Italy (V2.5).
Eurozone	Dummy; 1=country is a member of Eurozone (V7.17).
Multiple elections	Dummy; 1=country had more elections in the day of the 2009 EP election (V1.6).
Proportionality of electoral system	Measure of proportionality of electoral EP system in a given country - Gallagher Index See V2.1 in Czesnik et al. (2010) and Gallagher (1991).

APPENDIX D DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table D.1: Descriptive statistics, individual level variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Content exposure	27069	0.064	0.067	0	0.580
----WE	17015	0.070	0.073	0	0.580
----CEE	10054	0.055	0.053	0	0.452
Content exposure in newspapers	27069	0.147	0.213	0	0.805
----WE	17015	0.171	0.235	0	0.805
----CEE	10054	0.107	0.161	0	0.738
Content exposure on television	27069	0.103	0.092	0	0.503
----WE	17015	0.104	0.100	0	0.503
----CEE	10054	0.103	0.078	0	0.294
Positive content exposure	27069	0.007	0.009	0	0.103
----WE	17015	0.008	0.010	0	0.103
----CEE	10054	0.006	0.006	0	0.037
Positive content exposure in newspapers	27069	0.010	0.019	0	0.214
----WE	17015	0.012	0.023	0	0.214
----CEE	10054	0.006	0.011	0	0.072
Positive content exposure on television	27069	0.023	0.032	0	0.191
----WE	17015	0.025	0.036	0	0.191
----CEE	10054	0.020	0.023	0	0.074
Negative content exposure	27069	0.010	0.012	0	0.120
----WE	17015	0.012	0.014	0	0.120
----CEE	10054	0.006	0.007	0	0.048
Negative content exposure in newspapers	27069	0.014	0.035	0	0.292
----WE	17015	0.020	0.042	0	0.292
----CEE	10054	0.005	0.011	0	0.057
Negative content exposure on television	27069	0.025	0.032	0	0.167
----WE	17015	0.029	0.034	0	0.167
----CEE	10054	0.020	0.026	0	0.100
Exposure to media	27069	0.2471	0.1695	0	1
----WE	17015	0.2339	0.1646	0	1
----CEE	10054	0.2696	0.1752	0	1
Exposure to election campaign	27069	0.640	0.400	0	2
----WE	17015	0.670	0.410	0	2
----CEE	10054	0.580	0.380	0	2
Interest in campaign	27069	2.330	0.940	1	4
----WE	17015	2.400	0.940	1	4
----CEE	10054	2.210	0.940	1	4
Interest in politics	27069	2.560	0.900	1	4
----WE	17015	2.670	0.890	1	4
----CEE	10054	2.370	0.880	1	4

Evaluating EU membership as good thing	27069	1.360	0.880	0	2
----WE	17015	1.470	0.830	0	2
----CEE	10054	1.180	0.940	0	2
Feeling of “Europeanness”	27069	0.700	0.710	0	3
----WE	17015	0.700	0.690	0	3
----CEE	10054	0.710	0.750	0	3
Satisfaction with democracy in country	27069	1.480	0.850	0	3
----WE	17015	1.660	0.820	0	3
----CEE	10054	1.170	0.820	0	3
Occupation	27069	4.991	3.118	1	12
----WE	17015	4.786	3.075	1	12
----CEE	10054	5.345	3.158	1	12
Social class	27069	2.472	1.001	1	5
----WE	17015	2.536	0.100	1	5
----CEE	10054	2.365	0.994	1	5
Rural/urban living	27069	2.350	1.193	1	4
----WE	17015	2.339	1.175	1	4
----CEE	10054	2.368	1.223	1	4
Living standard	27069	4.036	1.194	1	7
----WE	17015	4.147	1.169	1	7
----CEE	10054	3.849	1.213	1	7
Age (years)	27069	50.29	16.82	18	99
----WE	17015	50.11	16.42	18	96
----CEE	10054	50.59	17.46	18	99
Education (number of years)	27069	24.67	19.05	9	98
----WE	17015	25.32	19.71	9	98
----CEE	10054	23.58	17.84	9	98
Knowledge about the EU	27609	0.557	0.268	0	1
----WE	17015	0.570	0.264	0	1
----CEE	10054	0.534	0.272	0	1
Year of accession to the EU	27069	1987	18.81	1958	2007
----WE	17015	1977	16.84	1958	2004
----CEE	10054	2005	1.200	2004	2007
Time until next national election	27069	1.870	1.330	0	5.780
----WE	17015	1.900	1.430	0	5.780
----CEE	10054	1.810	1.150	0.010	3.450
Visibility of EU news, country-level	27069	0.360	0.117	0.143	0.620
----WE	17015	0.386	0.125	0.143	0.620
----CEE	10054	0.315	0.087	0.155	0.452
Proportionality of electoral system	27069	6.184	2.754	1.93	13.43
----WE	17015	5.782	2.860	2.62	13.43
----CEE	10054	6.865	2.419	1.93	10.52

Table D.2: Descriptive statistics, country level variables

Variable	N	Count: 0	%: 0	Count: 1	%: 1
Vote in the 2009 EP election	27069	7958	29.40%	19111	70.60%
----WE	17015	3629	21.33%	13386	78.67%
----CEE	10054	4329	43.06%	5725	56.94%
Habitual vote	27069	8052	29.75%	19017	70.25%
----WE	17015	4477	26.31%	12538	73.69%
----CEE	10054	3575	35.56%	6479	64.44%
Party ID	27069	12586	46.50%	14483	53.50%
----WE	17015	7295	42.87%	9720	57.13%
----CEE	10054	5191	52.63%	4763	47.37%
Gender (male=1)	27069	15128	55.89%	11941	44.11%
----WE	17015	9194	54.03%	7821	45.97%
----CEE	10054	5934	59.02%	4120	40.98%
Still studying	27069	25489	94.16%	1580	5.84%
----WE	17015	15956	93.78%	1059	6.22%
----CEE	10054	9533	94.82%	521	5.18%
Compulsory vote*	27069	22066	81.51%	4003	14.79%
----WE	17015	12012	70.60%	4003	23.53%
----CEE	10054	10054	100%	0	0%
CEE	27069	17015	62.86%	10054	37.14%
Eurozone	27069	11040	40.78%	16029	59.22%
----WE	17015	3002	17.64%	14013	82.36%
----CEE	10054	8038	79.95%	2016	20.05%
Multiple elections	27069	25068	92.61%	2001	7.39%
----WE	17015	15014	88.24%	2001	11.76%
----CEE	10054	10054	100%	0	0

Table D.3: Correlations – individual level variables, part 1

	Vote in the EP elections	Content exposure	Positive content exposure	Negative content exposure	Exposure to campaign	Interest in campaign	Interest in politics
Content exposure	0.1714	1					
Positive content exposure	0.1265	0.5489	1				
Negative content exposure	0.1203	0.4851	0.3575	1			
Exposure to campaign	0.3178	0.2937	0.1773	0.1996	1		
Interest in campaign	0.3774	0.2245	0.1913	0.1386	0.5134	1	
Interest in politics	0.2931	0.2525	0.1598	0.159	0.481	0.5195	1
Habitual vote	0.204	0.1222	0.0451	0.1063	0.1906	0.1866	0.238
Party ID	0.1812	0.1048	0.0529	0.1004	0.1931	0.2041	0.2593
EU membership good	0.1677	0.1107	0.0207	0.0315	0.1505	0.1789	0.2197
Satisfaction with democracy	0.1299	0.0944	0.0656	0.1281	0.0837	0.1286	0.1137
Gender	0.0184	0.0622	0.0306	0.0443	0.0912	0.0348	0.1406
Age	0.1739	0.123	0.129	0.1269	0.0792	0.1548	0.1329
Education	-0.0245	-0.0212	-0.0575	-0.0072	0.0469	0.0021	0.029
Still studying	-0.0507	-0.0477	-0.0604	-0.0377	0.0071	-0.0243	-0.0185
Knowledge about EU	0.0259	0.0124	-0.0036	0.0195	0.0228	0.008	0.0238

Table D.4: Correlations – individual level variables, part 2

	Habi-tual vote	Party ID	EU memb er-ship good	Satis-faction with demo-cracy	Gender	Age	Edu-cation	Still studying
Content exposure								
Positive content exposure								
Negative content exposure								
Exposure to campaign								
Interest in campaign								
Interest in politics								
Habitual vote	1							
Party ID	0.3623	1						
EU membership good	0.114	0.1173	1					
Satisfaction with democracy	0.0973	0.0861	0.2299	1				
Gender	0.0273	0.0425	0.0769	0.0356	1			
Age	0.1517	0.1234	0.0046	0.0057	-0.0378	1		
Education	-0.0971	-0.0338	0.0646	0.0571	0.0219	-0.3903	1	
Still studying	-0.1186	-0.0415	0.0268	0.0267	0.0114	-0.3821	0.9582	1
Knowledge about EU	0.01	0.0319	0.0257	-0.0006	0.0072	-0.002	0.0231	0.0103

Table D.5: Correlations – country level variables

	Vote in the EP elections	No. MEPs	Voting procedure	Treshold	CEE	Year of EU accession	Compulsory voting	Next national election
No. MEPs	-0.0204	1						
Voting procedure	0.0082	-0.0774	1					
Treshold	-0.1603	0.1878	0.3094	1				
CEE	-0.2305	-0.2577	0.0107	0.524	1			
Year of EU accession	-0.1642	-0.5173	0.106	0.2794	0.7032	1		
Compulsory voting	0.1451	-0.1279	0.0056	-0.3553	-0.3554	-0.3458	1	
Next nat.election	0.0452	-0.092	0.1269	-0.2571	-0.0328	0.1901	-0.2185	1
EU news	0.1096	-0.2984	-0.0327	-0.1733	-0.2939	0.0784	0.3286	0.1123

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