# The European Financial and Refugee/Immigrant Crises in the Press: Similarities and Differences of the Greek and German Public Spheres

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**Abstract:** Having as theoretical basis the notion of the public sphere and its manifestations within the EU, the current paper seeks to trace similarities and differences in the public discourse developed in German and Greek news sites, regarding the financial and refugee crises. Our quantitative content analysis shows that there are both similarities and differences in the two distinct public spheres, regarding the evaluation of the EU, its policies on the aforementioned issues and the ways in which the public discourse is being articulated mainly on behalf of politicians and journalists, who appear to be the main carriers of the public discourse in the media under scrutiny.

**Keywords:** Public sphere, Greece, Germany, content analysis, refugee crisis, financial crisis, Europe

## Introduction

Moments/events of crisis are–among other things–crucial for the ethically based negotiation of Europe and/or the nation (-states). It is within those crises, understood as disruptive moments of history that sensitive perceptions of common objects of reference (e.g. Europe, 'nation-state' and the relations between them) become particularly salient and vibrant, and open for a context dependent (re-)negotiation and (re-)appropriation (Preston & Metykova, 2009, p.38). By the same token, the diachronic examination of the context-specific negotiations of different values at times of crisis allows one to assess whether Europe still remains the sole 'invention of nation-states' or whether it has already become a concept for post-national ways of thinking and talking about Europe (Krzyzanowski, Triantafyllidou & Wodak, 2009a, p.6).

The economic and refugee crises in Europe became triggers for convergence and matters of contention in the national and European public spheres. They are examples of political discourse driven by conflict and polarization (Nguyen, 2016, p.211; Poulakidakos & Karoulas, 2016; Frangonikolopoulos & Poulakidakos, 2017; Poulakidakos, 2018). Therefore, texts referring to those crises in the media may be

scrutinized for inconsistencies of logic, argumentation, form and content, which serve as indicators of underlying attitudes, beliefs, opinions and ideologies towards the EU (Strath & Wodak, 2009, p.28).

Bearing that in mind, the purpose of this article is to discuss, firstly, the notion and ontology of the public sphere, and the cardinal role of the media in its formation. Secondly, to examine how the media in two countries of the EU (Germany and Greece) discuss, frame and understand the EU and its institutions. Thirdly, to examine, whether or not one can detect similarities and/or differences in the presentation of the financial and refugee crises in German and Greek newspaper sites, and whether these are related to their cultural or ideological characteristics. Finally, to examine the existence of sentimental discourse in contrast to the existence of rational argumentation, which demonstrates the emotional -or not- character of the discourse developed within the public spheres under scrutiny.

## A brief reference to the ontology of the public sphere and the role of the mass media

The public sphere is conceived as the social and communicative infrastructure of democracy, the "engine" of democratization (Trenz, 2005, p.408). In German speaking social sciences, the term 'public sphere' or 'Öffentlichkeit' means the sphere that is distinct from private life and which principally offers open access to every member of society to issues of public interest (Trenz, 2005, p.411; Neverla, 2007, p.708). The concept of the public sphere serves as a powerful theoretical junction point between political sociology and the wide field of media and communication studies, with a strong normative emphasis on the legitimacy of politics (Dahlgren, 2005, p.149; Demertzis & Tsekeris, 2018, p.1). Given its 'open' character, the public sphere relates to interactions between different actors participating in the democratic process: the mass media, politics, public opinion and professional public relations (Neverla, 2007, p.708).

The concept of the public sphere is tied to the emergence of modern mass media Gripsrud, 2007, p.481), which have become the major arena for public political and ideological struggles (Strath & Wodak, 2009, p.30). The media's ideological orientations affect and "form" the public sphere (Fowler, 2003), they offer access to public debate to more citizens than any other forum, and shape discussion in other fora as well (Van de Steeg, 2006, pp.609-610). Given their inherent ideological dimension, the media are neither a rational actor nor the sphere for rational discourse (Trenz, 2004, p.312), at least not only for rational discourse.

Public spheres are arenas in which (political) issues and positions are discussed, as they emerge through the public debate of controversial issues. The more we debate issues, the more we engage each other in public discourses, the more we actually create political communities (Greenwood & Tuokko, 2017, p.3). In democracies,

public spheres are the crucial mechanism linking politics to citizens as they make elites' decisions and citizens' concerns transparent. In mass democracies, in which citizens have hardly any direct experiences with politics, the mass media is the most important channel for such public spheres (Adam, 2015, p.1).

In recent times, the place of emotion in civic culture has been changing. It has become more visible and explicit, and a more prominent part of everyday life (Richards, 2007, p.30). In this sense, contemporary public spheres are spaces wherein the disposition of emotions at any given time will shape the contours of public opinion, will broadly determine the range of political alternatives on offer, and will set parameters and probabilities for all kinds of civic participation (Demertzis & Tsekeris, 2018, p.17).

All along the public sphere has been a locus of both rational debate and emotional expression. It is the emotionalization process (Richards, 2007), however, mostly manifested in politics and political discourse through the professionalization of politics (Negrine et al., 2007), which has transformed Western popular and political cultures (Demertzis & Tsekeris, 2018, p.17). This in turn brings us to thinking about the media, not only as the conduit for politicians' messages but also as major, autonomous producers of political communication, which are focused on the production of emotional messages as well (Richards, 2007, p.4). The evocation to feelings is realized using discursive practices that seek to cause an emotional reaction on behalf of the audiences. It is implemented through the immediate or intermediate articulation of meanings such as fear, hatred, dead-end, envy, pessimism (evocation to negative emotions), hope, pleasure, joy, belonging, pride, optimism (evocation to positive emotions) (Auerbach & Castronovo, 2013, p.10). All these meanings seek to create an impression of an either utopian or dystopic reality.

The production of (emotional) messages in the public sphere originates from three different sources, all of which form the context of the current research: 'events'- things that happen and provoke emotional responses (e.g. the financial and refugee crises), 'statements'- communications from public figures (e.g. officials talking about these events) and 'mediations', i.e. inputs from the media. The last source covers two broad and overlapping types of input. Firstly, it includes the ways in which the media bring the statements of public figures to us, by framing them, selecting from them, contextualizing them or associating to them, focusing on parts of them, editing and elaborating on them. Secondly, it includes all those separate inputs, which journalists and other media professionals make to public debate through their own commentaries and other contributions (Richards, 2007, p.58). All these sources designate the cardinal role of mass media in the negotiation of any given issue in the public sphere.

The European public sphere constitutes itself predominantly via the national public spheres (Neverla, 2007, p.715), with the media assuming central importance

(Machill, Beiler & Fischer, 2006, p.78). The ways in which the public discourses in the different public spheres are articulated are not unanimous for all different (national) public spheres, since the national public exists within the public sphere of a shared media space (Richards, 2007, p.28). These media spaces are dependent upon different but interwoven factors, such as: 1) the structural characteristics of the media systems in different countries or cultural backgrounds, 2) the ideological background of the media, 3) their ownership and other parameters affected by these three basic factors.

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), throughout Europe there are different media structures, which -inter alia- affect the articulation and presentation of public discourse, hence the formation of public spheres. Due to our focus on the public spheres of Germany and Greece, we are particularly interested in the North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist Model and the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), and how they describe the function of the mainstream media -predominantly press- in the countries of our interest.

The Democratic Corporatist Model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 143-197) is characterized by a relatively high degree of political parallelism, political (ideological) advocacy, external pluralism in the press, strong development of media markets and journalistic professionalism. The protestant tradition of the North/Central European countries contributed to the spread of literacy and thus to the development of mass-circulation media, but also pioneered the tradition of using print as a tool for religious and, by extension, political-ideological and social advocacy. Protestantism had, in some of its forms at least, a close affinity to the rationality of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on debate and critical reasoning. Habits of discourse were transferred from religion to the secular public sphere, producing a cultural model that favored reading, reasoning, diffusing, and defending one's own ideas, that encouraged the public "to compare the two sides, think for themselves, and choose between alternatives instead of doing as they were told" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 151).

The Polarized Pluralist Model describes a condition in which the mass media in the southern European countries are intimately involved in the political-ideological conflicts that mark the history of this region, and there is a strong tradition of regarding them as means of ideological expression and political mobilization. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004) and Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002), the media in the Southern European countries are strongly politicized, and political parallelism is relatively high. Newspapers tend to represent distinct political tendencies (Demertzis, Papathanassopoulos & Armenakis, 1999), and this is reflected in the differing political attitudes of their readerships; at times, they play an activist role, mobilizing those readers to support specific political causes (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p.98). This context results in the development of a polarized and emotionalized discourse (Demertzis, Papathanassopoulos & Armenakis, 1999), es-

pecially in the context of contemporary crisis in Greece (Poulakidakos & Veneti, 2016).

Both systems entail differences and similarities, with the former being focused on the media articulated discourse that hits the public sphere (in terms of sentimentality), and the latter being evident in the rationale of political parallelism, hence ideological conflict, which is evident in both media systems.

## Politics, Public opinion and the EU in Greece and Germany

Before we discuss the methodology and analyze the results of our research, it is important, in order to further contextualize our findings, to briefly present (a) the political condition of the two countries as well as (b) the tendencies of public opinion in Germany and Greece during the period examined.

In 2010, Greece found itself unable to refinance its debt and resorted to a massive bailout from its eurozone partners along with the IMF, in exchange for which it began to implement fiscally restrictive policies and structural reforms. These policies not only led to an acute economic recession, but also facilitated a massive political realignment and the coming to government of the anti-austerity and left-wing party, SYRIZA in 2015. Headed by Alexis Tsipras, the new Greek government made an effort to renegotiate its bailout deal and if possible, also extract favorable conditions, such as a steep debt reduction. However, a debt haircut was extremely unpopular among creditor eurozone countries, some of which were poorer than Greece. Other member countries feared that it would set a precedent and make the eurozone subject to blackmail by member states. In addition, most investors did not see a Greek default as posing a critical eurozone risk. Faced with this reality, Tsipras called a referendum in the summer of 2015, advocating the rejection of the bailout agreement's austerity policies. Despite his victory, the eurozone did not retreat, in fact, Germany went as far as to propose that Greece exit the eurozone (Kyriakidou, 2015; Traynor, Hooper & Smith, 2015; Economist, 2015). Thus, and faced with the risk of economic implosion, Tsipras not only accepted the conditions and unpopular policies of the 3rd bailout agreement in 2015, but he had also began rebranding SYRIZA and presenting it as a social democratic, center-left party (Smith, 2018). At the same time, he also made a concerted effort to shift the national conversation away from 'Grexit', presenting the end of the bailout program in August 2018 as good for the development of the economy, business and entrepreneurship (Smith, 2017).

But unlike his predecessors, and this is important to stress, Tsipras received unprecedented support from fellow EU leaders, who, after the 'shock' Brexit in 2016, where desperate to underline that, far from the EU being in decline, it was bouncing back – with its weakest member still on board and 'successful'. In Greece this led to a strong convergence of interests between the Greek government, the Euro-

pean Commission and Eurozone Member States on a 'clean' exit from the Third Economic Adjustment Programme in August 2018 (Galbraith, 2018; Taylor, 2018; Deutsche Welle, 2018; Elliot, 2018). This is not only explained by the need to reduce risks and favor a smooth and successful return to normality (Codogno, 2018), but also with the fact that Greeks seem to be 'returning' to Europe, gradually abandoning their strong anti-EU narrative which had been prevalent in the country in recent years. According to Georgakopoulos (2017) the acceptance of the euro is stronger while the number of those who believe Greece will still be in the European Union in a decade's time has increased significantly. However, another survey in 2018 also points to certain fundamental contradictions that define the Greek political scene. In particular, in 2018 an overwhelming 68% (from 53.5% in December 2016) said that Greece's participation in the EU has been positive. At the same time, acceptance of the single currency, which stands at 66% (from 60% in 2016), is on the rise. Of course one should not underestimate the 26% of people who want an exit from the Euro, the 28% who insist Greece should leave the European Union and the 48.9% who, under the strain of the economic hardships of the past few years, say Greece has been hurt by its participation in the EU, particularly in terms of economic development and prosperity. We cannot also overlook the solid undercurrent of discontent exposed by the 57% who believe that Greece's entry into the eurozone was a mistake and the 58.2% who claim that the EU benefited the most from Greece's membership (Dianeosis, 2018).

The reassessment of Greece's position in European institutions could be associated with the unimpeded progress in the implementation of the adjustment program. However, as the abovementioned survey indicates, it is also clearly affected by a resurfacing of concerns about peace and security. A total of 84% of participants foresee that Greece will still be part of the EU 10 years from now (compared with 59% in Decmember 2016). However, 24.1% believe the country's interests would be better served by a privileged relationship with Moscow. Last, but not least, three in four state that the prolonged crisis is mainly due to "our weaknesses," which are specified as the "inefficiency and corruption of Greek governments" (92.6%), society's addiction to "borrowing and consuming beyond its means" (77.1%). At the same time, the vast majority of participants (78%) still maintains that "the bailouts damaged, rather than helped the country's growth," that it was "an invention by Europeans to take advantage of us" (71%) and that Greece could have overcome the crisis on its own, without aid from Europe (57.7%).

Regarding the refugee 'crisis', although 92% of the Greeks felt that the EU had not supported Greece in tackling the problem, a study conducted by DiaNEOsis (Georgakopoulos, 2016) shows that Greeks expressed strong feelings and opinions of sympathy and solidarity towards the refugees themselves. In particular an impressive 58% of respondents declared that they have actively demonstrated solidarity with the refugees, offering food (39%), clothing (31%), and financial assistance (10%). In addition, (a) 67% of respondents expressed positive feelings towards the refugees, (b) 66% had a positive perception of the word 'asylum,' (c) 58% had a

positive perception of the idea of a "multi-cultural society", while 66% responded that they did not wish for Greece to close its borders – and thus to stem refugee flows – as other European countries had done, or intended to do. Indeed, 66% agreed that "refugees could be absorbed into Greek society because most are 'family men' and peaceful people" and 61% agreed that "they could make Greece their second homeland". Only 45% of those who identified as 'right-wing' wanted the borders to be closed and refugee flows to be stopped (compared to 30% of the general population and 10% of those identifying as 'left-wing').

On the other hand, in Germany, during the period examined, the support for the EU was the highest since 1992. A poll among some 1,000 Germans, conducted by the GfK research group in March 2017, showed that 45% of the respondents share the view that Germany benefits from its EU membership. In a theoretical referendum about Germany's EU membership, 75% answered that they would vote to remain in the Union and only 10% would opt out (Nienaber, 2017). However, in 2017, the election results of September also indicated there was also a rise of populism and Euroscepticism. The Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, although it won the highest percentage of the vote with 33%, it suffered a large swing against it of more than 8%. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) achieved its worst result since the Second World War with only 20% of the vote. The Alternative for Germany (AfD), an extreme right-wing party -which was previously unrepresented in the Bundestag- became the third party in the Bundestag with 12.6% of the vote (Conolly, 2017a).

This result marked Merkel's eroded domestic influence after 12 years in power. Although her party was the clear leader, voters for the first time gave six parties enough support to sit in the Bundestag. Yet while this rearrangement of Germany's political order may seem sudden, it has been a while in the making. When we look back, we see that the German voter dissatisfaction of 2017 has its roots in some of the actions taken by Merkel and her government (Dempsey, 2017; Conolly, 2017b).

The result was brought about by the 2015 refugee crisis, which shook her chancellorship. Merkel made a bold move, opening Germany's borders to Syrian refugees. The euphoria was short-lived, however. As the German 'welcome culture' began to crumble on New Year's Eve in 2015, the AfD shifted its focus to immigration issues. Merkel shifted, too, though more slowly, and in the run-up to the federal election of 2017 she began musing about the need for a burka ban. But this rightward movement did little to stave off the AfD's increasing popularity (Rappold, 2015).

The European debt crisis of the early 2010s also did Merkel no favors. Protesters in Greece weren't shy about presenting Merkel as Hitler after Germany led the EU in demanding severe austerity measures from Greece in return for loans to prop up the country. Merkel also paid the price at home. The AfD came into being in the spring of 2013 and garnered a surprising 4.7 per cent of the vote in the federal elec-

tion that September. The party had a simple economic message: Germany – and all of Europe – should abandon the Euro — otherwise, Germany would have to continue propping up the entire European financial system (Posen, 2011).

An increasing number of Germans feel that certain issues -including immigration, EU integration and social and economic reforms- have become 'depoliticized'. Elite consensus around those policies is treated as foregone conclusions and not the subject of genuine debate. This has alienated voters creating opportunities for populist parties that promise alternatives, as well for the media to be more critical (Mudde, 2016, 2017).

In addition, the perceived unresponsiveness of the EU on matters of immigration and border security create a sense, for many Germans, that they have lost control over their country. The refugee crisis has brought an influx of over a million immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, many of whom have settled in towns and cities that were once overwhelmingly white. A sense that borders are open, and that immigration is uncontrolled may have made many Germans seek out a stronger sense of German identity, and a stronger Germany. Thus, although a study by the Bertelsmann Foundation in April 2017 found that a vast majority of Germans still say immigrants and refugees are "very welcome, or quite welcome", the number of people who felt Germany had reached the point where it could no longer take in refugees had risen to 54 percent, up from just 40 percent in 2015 (Rothwell, 2017).


## Research questions

Based on the aforementioned theoretical framework, as well as the political condition of the countries under examination, our main research questions are: Which similarities and/or differences can be traced in the presentation of the two crises (financial, refugee/immigrant) in the German and Greek newspaper sites? Moreover, can these similarities and/or differences be linked to their cultural characteristics (media systems), or political-ideological (leftist/right-wing media) affiliation? In addition, several other research questions will be addressed:

1. In which ways (positive, neutral, negative) are the EU, its institutions (European Commission, European Central Bank, European Parliament) and the implemented policies regarding the financial and the refugee/immigrant crises presented in the media outlets under scrutiny in Germany and Greece?

2. Does the presentation of the EU and its financial and refugee policies 'adhere' to the German and Greek public opinions as measured during the period of our research?

3. Do the differences -if any- in the positive/neutral/negative presentation of the EU and its institutions and policies appear to be influenced by our two main control variables (German/Greek public sphere and left/right-wing political affiliation)?

4. In addition, is there any significant difference in the articulation of sentimental discourse (evocation to feelings) in the media content under scrutiny (controlling for the articulation of rational argumentation as well)?

5. Could this difference in the articulation of sentimental discourse -if existent- be attributed to the differences in the characteristics of the public discourse as articulated in the two countries, according to the media systems theory?

## Methodology, operationalization of theory and conduction of research

The abovementioned parameters are researched in a comparative way through the relevant content of four mainstream newspaper sites, two from Greece (the liberal centre-right Kathimerini and the left-wing EFSYN) and two from Germany (the conservative FAZ and the center-left SZ). The newspapers' sites are chosen for both their popularity and their ideological orientations. Starting from the Greek news-sites, kathimerini.gr (the news-site of the conservative Kathimerini/ The Daily Newspaper) sums more than seven million visits per month, while efsyn.gr (the news-site of the left-wing Efimerida Sintakton/The editors' newspaper) sums almost three million visits. On the German side, faz.net (the news-site of the conservative Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) gathers more than 35 million clicks per month and sueddeutsche.de (the news-site of the center-left Süddeutsche Zeitung) gathers more than 30 million users. For the scope of the ideological part of the analysis of the current research, we treat Kathimerini and FAZ as right-wing newspaper sites, while EFSYN, and SZ as leftist newspaper sites.

The content under scrutiny covers the whole of 2016 and half 2017 (until 30th of June). During this period, both issues co-exist and occupy a significant part of the German and Greek public spheres as issues of pan-European interest.
For the scope of the current research, we focus on the news sites of print media as the main forum for the representation of the public sphere. Newspapers -and their web sites- have been the primary data source in virtually all recent empirical studies on the European public sphere (Tresch, 2012, p.65). On the one hand, newspapers, and especially their online editions, are readily available, and can easily be retrieved and coded over a long period. On the other hand, and most importantly, newspapers have a broader thematic scope, offer more space, are less event-orientated and allow a greater discursive elaboration and argumentation than television or radio (Tresch, 2012, p.65). In addition, online media serve to disperse political content and connect political actors with public audiences, their supporters

and antagonists (Karatzogianni, 2006, p. 53; Nguyen, 2016, p. 212).

For the data collection and analysis, we use the method of quantitative political claim analysis (Koopmans & Statham, 1999), which takes individual instances of claims-making by public actors as the unit of analysis (Temple et al., 2016). An instance of claim-making (a 'claim') is a unit of strategic action in the public sphere defined as the purposive and public articulation of political demands, calls to action, proposals, criticisms or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors (Koopmans, 2007, p.189). To qualify as an instance of claim-making, the text must include a reference to an ongoing or concluded physical or verbal action in the public sphere. These may include attributions of positions, activities or opinions to actors by journalists (Berkhout & Sudulich, 2011, p.6). A first example of a claim we analyzed, concerning the refugee issue is the statement of the UNHCR representative in early 2016 Melissa Fleming: "If there was more consensus, the refugee relocation program would work better and not so slowly, the families would come together, the refugees would have better information. If one did not handle the refugee issue well, that is Europe, not Greece" (EFSYN, 17/01/2016). Similarly, the Greek PM Alexis Tsipras talking about the financial crisis claimed: "Whoever 'plays' with a Eurozone of two and three gears, with cleavages and divisions, plays with fire" (SZ, 11/02/2017).

As evident from our theoretical background, we are interested in the existence of sentimental discourse in the claims we analyze. For that reason, we have coded for both emotionality and rational argumentation (e.g. with the reference to specific data related to the two crises), since claim analysis, after its definition and description, is not restricted only to the articulation of rational argumentation. The two examples mentioned above are indicative for their different 'approaches': Mrs. Flemming appears to approach the refugee relocation program's difficulties in a rational way, whereas Mr. Tsipras 'accuses' the supporters of the creation of a "multi-gear" Eurozone by including in his discourse a -negative- sentimental expression ("plays with fire").

With the use of a coding frame, we coded for 829 claims (kathimerini.gr-170, efsyn.gr-159, faz.net-189, Sueddeutsche.de-311) – an average of 2,07 claims per article – expressed mainly by politicians (451), journalists (174) experts (140) and to a lesser degree by civilians (21). Of the 829 claims, 430 refer to the refugee crisis and 344 to the financial crisis, whereas we found 50 claims referring to both crises. The political claims have been derived from 400 articles, 100 from each newspaper of our research. Half of these articles per newspaper were published in 2016 and half of them until mid-2017. We collected the fifty most highly ranked articles for each year from each newspaper, i.e. the articles whose main thematics were the two crises as they appeared in the search engines of the four newspaper sites using the key words "financial crisis" and "refugee crisis".

The elaboration of the data is conducted with SPSS 25.0 and the statistical test used for the comparison of the data is the t-test (independent samples t-test, presented in Tables 1-5 and one sample t-test, presented in Tables 6 & 7). In order to apply the t-test, we 'converted' the nominal variables (country-Germany/Greece, ideology-right-wing/leftist, evocation to feelings-no/yes, evocation to positive feelings- no/yes, evocation to negative feelings- no/yes, reference to data- no/yes), into interval/ratio dummy variables with values 0 and 1 that provide us with a specific ratio concerning the existence or not of the discursive characteristics under scrutiny (e.g. feelings, data). In addition, the variables referring to the evaluation of the EU as a whole and the EU policies on the financial and refugee crises are coded as ordinal variables (1=Negative, 2=Neutral, 3=Positive) and analyzed as interval variables, in which higher mean stands for more positive evaluation. Even though the categories are only three and we acknowledge that we treat these variables as interval in a rather excessive way, we do that in order to get a good hint of the assessment rationale and be a bit more accurate on our estimations, compared to the nominal by nominal chi-square statistical test. Lastly, the data entry was conducted by a team of four coders, whose reliability was tested with the use of the Cronbach's Alpha (Field, 2013) .

## Results

Our first table focuses on the references to the EU as a whole in the Greek and the German newspapers web sites. We counted the claims that referred to the EU in general, without focusing on any specific institution, politician, or policy. As evident, the political claims published in the German news sites evaluate the EU in a significantly more negative way (mean of 1,74) compared to the Greek news sites (mean of 2,27). We should note here that both means are closer to the neutral evaluation (mode value-2) than the two edges of the evaluation scale (1 for negative evaluation, 3 for positive evaluation).

**Table 1: Evaluation of the EU as a whole per nationality and ideology of the news site**

| Independent variables | Number of cases | Mean | Standard Deviation | T-test value | P value (sig.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| German news sites (0) | 103 | **1,74** | 0,685 | **-5,865** | **.000** |
| Greek news sites (1) | 169 | **2,27** | 0,754 | | |
| Right-wing news sites (0) | 107 | 2,08 | 0,715 | 0,251 | .802 |
| Leftist news sites (1) | 165 | 2,06 | 0,809 | | |

Contrary to the statistically significant difference caused by the different nationality as independent variable, the different ideology does not produce any statistically significant means difference as shown in Table 1, since both values (for right-wing and leftist news sites) approach the "neutral" level, being slightly on the positive side (2,08 and 2,06 respectively). A last interesting observation is the fact that the EU is being assessed mainly in the Greek and leftist news sites of our

research, rather than German and right-wing ones.

These results, a moderate negativity in the German media and a moderate positiveness in the Greek media, along with the lack of opinion expression for the major institutions of the European Union (European Commission: no reference in more than 92% of claims, European Parliament: no reference in more than 95% of claims, European Central Bank: no reference in more than 92% of claims), might have a two-fold interpretation. On one hand it might bring about a weakening of a "shared European perspective" (Preston & Metykova, 2009, p.38), since the statements concerning the EU do not refer to specific European institutions and their actual role in the European Union. This lack of actual information on what each institution within the EU stands for undermines the public knowledge on the EU's internal system and 'distantiates' the citizens from it. On the other hand, though, the lack of (negative) references to the EC, the EP and the ECB might as well promote a rationale of non- contestation of the EU and its role as a supra-national institution.

Another important point linked directly to the EU, are the implemented policies concerning the interception of the financial crisis and the refugees/immigrants flows. Starting from the financial crisis (Table 2), the nationality rather than the ideology factor seems to provide us -once again- with statistically significant differences in the means between the news sites of our research. The claims in the Greek news sites appear to assess in a significantly more positive way the implemented EU policies (mean of 2,18 against 1,75 on behalf of the German news sites) on tackling the financial crisis. This attitude coincides in Greece with the emergence of an optimistic rhetoric on the exit from the memoranda and an -after several years of serious recession- alleged growth of the Greek economy. The mean values for the evaluation of the financial policies are marginally closer to the "neutral" value (2), compared to the evaluation of the EU as a whole (1,74/1,75 and 2,27/2,18). Hence the EU policies are evaluated slightly worse through the claims published in the Greek news sites, compared to the EU as a whole. In addition, based on the number of cases, the EU financial policies appear to interest more the German and leftist news sites.

**Table 2: Evaluation of the EU financial policies per nationality and ideology of the news site**

| Independent variables | Number of cases | Mean | Standard Deviation | T-test value | P value (sig.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| German news sites (0) | 92 | **1,75** | 0,689 | **-3,494** | **.001** |
| Greek news sites (1) | 67 | **2,18** | 0,815 | | |
| Right-wing news sites (0) | 43 | 1,88 | 0,762 | -0,467 | .641 |
| Leftist news sites (1) | 116 | 1,95 | 0,778 | | |

In terms of the evaluation of the EU refugee/immigrant policies (Table 3), we encounter a much more critical approach on behalf of all media outlets we

examined. Once again, significantly more critical appear to be the claims in the German news sites that focus much more on migration policies compared to the Greek ones (mean value of 1,56). The German news sites appear in fact more critical towards migration policies compared to the financial policies and the EU as a whole. On the other hand, the Greek news sites appear to adopt a "neutral" stance (2,01).

In terms of the ideological discrimination of the media, the claims published in both right-wing and leftist media -with the last ones focusing much more on the refugee issue- appear to be significantly more critical than in the previous instances, but once again without significant difference in ideological terms.

**Table 3: Evaluation of the EU refugee/immigrant policies per nationality and ideology of the news site**

| Independent variables | Number of cases | Mean | Standard Deviation | T-test value | P value (sig.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| German news sites (0) | **172** | **1,56** | **0,711** | **-4,237** | **.000** |
| Greek news sites (1) | **92** | **2,01** | 0,883 | | |
| Right-wing news sites (0) | 82 | 1,76 | 0,854 | 0,545 | .586 |
| Leftist news sites (1) | 182 | 1,70 | 0,781 | | |

Another important parameter of the public sphere under scrutiny is its emotional aspect (Richards, 2007). The mean value of evocation to feelings per claim, through the published statements, is significantly more evident in the Greek media (0,72), compared to the German media (0,22). Once again, the ideology does not seem to play an important role in the sentimental characteristics of the published claims (Table 4).

This result signifies the formation of two different emotional public spheres: One that seems to rely rather heavily on emotions and another that appears to rely less on sentimental discourse. At least since the emergence of the financial crisis, from 2010 onwards, the Greek public sphere demonstrates a rather strong tendency towards sentimental discourse (Poulakidakos & Veneti, 2016). Of course, further research is needed, even before the emergence of the crisis, to investigate the emotional aspect of public discourse in diachronic terms, given that the Greek media are more prone to polarization, compared to the German ones, due to inherent characteristics of the Greek media system, such as the strong political partisanship (Demertzis, Papathanassopoulos & Armenakis, 1999, pp.30-31).

**Table 4: Sentimental discourse per nationality and ideology of the news site**

| Independent variables | Number of cases | Mean | Standard Deviation | T-test value | P value (sig.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| German news sites (0) | 500 | **0,22** | 0,412 | -16,334 | .000 |
| Greek news sites (1) | 329 | **0,72** | 0,450 | | |
| Right-wing news sites (0) | 359 | 0,45 | 0,498 | 1,504 | .133 |
| Leftist news sites (1) | 470 | 0,39 | 0,489 | | |

Since the claims do not include only sentimental discourse, but rational argumentation as well, we coded for the existence of -even selective- data in the claims of the talking heads. As shown in Table 5, the claims published in the German news sites appear to contain more references to data, compared to the ones published in the Greek news sites. On the one hand, the t-test though, whose p value is slightly over the 95% confidence interval (.052), does not provide us with a statistically significant difference in the articulation of data in 'national' terms. On the other hand, it does provide us with a significant difference in the mean of reference to data between right and leftist news sites, since the right-wing ones appear to publish statements including significantly more data, compared to the left-wing ones.

In addition, from Tables 4 and 5 one can assume that the German news sites include a higher mean of rational discourse in the form of data per claim (0,28), compared to sentiments (0,22), whereas the Greek ones seem to favor the publication of predominantly sentimental claims (0,72) over the projection of data (0,22).

**Table 5: Reference to data per nationality and ideology of the news site**

| Independent variables | Number of cases | Mean | Standard Deviation | T-test value | P value (sig.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| German news sites (0) | 500 | 0,28 | 0,448 | 1,947 | .052 |
| Greek news sites (1) | 329 | 0,22 | 0,414 | | |
| Right-wing news sites (0) | 359 | **0,31** | 0,462 | **2,964** | **.003** |
| Leftist news sites (1) | 470 | **0,21** | 0,411 | | |

As shown in Table 6, the mean of reference to data per claim differs significantly from the mean of emotional discourse in the German media. Having as test value the mean of sentimental discourse in the German and Greek news sites the t-test shows that in both cases the reference to data differs significantly. In the case of the German sites the mean of the reference to data per claim is significantly higher, compared to the mean of sentimental discourse. In the Greek sites, the findings demonstrate exactly the opposite, since the sentimental discourse appears to 'dominate' the claims under scrutiny (0,72).

**Table 6: Comparison between data and sentimental discourse per nationality of the news site**

| Independent variables | Number of cases | Mean of data | Mean of sentimental discourse | One sample t-test value | P value (sig.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| German news sites (0) | 500 | **0,28** | 0,22 | **2,892** | **.004** |
| Greek news sites (1) | 329 | 0,22 | **0,72** | **-21,952** | **.000** |

In the case of the ideological orientation of the news sites, both left- and right-wing sites appear to 'favor' through the published claims the promotion of a sentimental discourse, over the projection of data for the support of the arguments presented

(Tables 4 & 5). Furthermore, as shown in Table 7, the mean of sentimental discourse is significantly higher, compared to the mean of reference to data per claim in both right- and left-wing news sites. This finding might relate to dramatization that in one way or another is contained in the content of contemporary media, serving -in quite a few occasions- ideological aims as well (Ellinas, 2010).

**Table 7: Comparison between data and sentimental discourse per ideology of the news site**

| Independent variables | Number of cases | Mean of data | Mean of sentimental discourse | One sample t-test value | P value (sig.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Right-wing news sites (0) | 359 | 0,31 | **0,45** | -5,894 | **.000** |
| Leftist news sites (1) | 470 | 0,21 | **0,39** | -9,232 | **.000** |

## Discussion

The claims appearing in the German public sphere seem to be significantly more critical towards the EU and its financial and – especially – refugee/immigrant policies, compared to the Greek one. On the other hand, Greece seems to leave behind the recent turbulent past and proceed with a bit more optimism. The EU, as mentioned before, does not appear to be significantly contested and the financial policies appear to be presented in more neutral or even positive terms (the means in the presentation of the EU and its financial policies in the Greek news sites are both higher than the average value). This finding – though the formation of a more accurate picture requires further in-depth research – provides us with a first clue on the differentiation between the national public spheres among the different EU member-states (Kunelius & Sparks, 2001).

What seems to follow the media systems theory is the difference in the 'amount' of emotions imported in the claims published in the Greek media. Influenced by the crisis context and the inherent characteristics of the Greek media system as described by Hallin and Mancini (2004), the Greek news sites seem to include more emotions in the claims, compared to the German ones. The news in the mass media maintains its national orientation, with the ethnocentric narrative characterized more by a sentimental cultural rather than political angle, with Greece presented usually as a 'brotherless nation', a righteous victim, a nation haunted almost everywhere and by everyone, a nation that has to defend its historical rights to friends and foes. This is hardly a surprise, given the weak character of Greek civil society and the media's quasi-clientelist dependence on government and political parties (Demertzis, Papathanassopoulos & Armenakis, 1999, pp.30-31).

The significant differences in the claims for the EU and its policies in the public spheres formulated in the media systems of Greece and Germany do not seem to be based on the different ideological orientations of the media of our research, since the relevant differences are statistically insignificant. We acknowledge at this point that there are several differences between the right- and left-wing media of the different countries (i.e. EFSYN is not 'identical' to the Süddeutsche Zeitung and Kathimerini is quite different in several aspects to FAZ). In this rationale, an ideology-oriented research should be conducted in order to highlight in a more detailed way the similarities and differences in the claims of ideologically related newspapers. Additionally, our two independent/control variables for the scopes of the current paper (media systems and ideologies) are intertwined in the real world and should be combined in the case of a more detailed discourse analysis. This becomes all the more important considering not only that the refugee crisis has dramatically changed the nature of democratic politics on the national level, but also that we are witnessing in Europe an increasing dissatisfaction against the establishment. This not only generates an identity crisis on both the left and the right but also undermines the liberal consensus governing Europe for decades (Berman, 2019).

Another interesting point is the non-reference to the basic EU institutions (EC, EP, ECB), since in most cases the EU was referred as a generic and 'intangible' entity. Though this might (Krzyzanowski, Triantafyllidou & Wodak, 2009b) or might not signify a contestation of an EU-centric rationale, it does contribute to the dissemination of insufficient information regarding the function of the EU political decision-making system, by presenting a rather superficial image of an extremely complex political and administrative mechanism. Contents and agendas, occupational ideologies and routine practices of journalism have all been deeply synchronized with apparatuses and identities of nation states. Nation-states constitute the main reference to how functions of journalism are being defined (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2007). The EU is depicted, by politicians and journalists, as different and less important than the state, as a political process that is distant, cold and strange, even hostile. Politicians blame 'the EU' for decisions they have taken and made at 'Brussels'. They take credit for popular EU actions and blame the unpopular ones on 'the EU'. Reporters argue that people do not want to read/watch/listen about news from 'Brussels' (Lloyd & Marconi, 2014).

But, as Melchior (2017) rightly argues, if we look at the general scheme of decision-making at the EU level, we see that no EU law can pass if the Council of Ministers says no. And in the Council of Ministers, each national minister has a seat at the table. For some decisions, every country has the right of veto. In those cases, it is technically impossible for 'the EU' to have decided something national governments have not also agreed to. In other cases, the decision requires a majority vote. But even then, almost all votes are still taken with unanimity. Failure to understand this reality contributes to the feeling that the EU is not part of 'normal' politics, that is, national, regional and local politics. Laws made at EU

level are depicted as different and less important than those made at national level and the EU political process is shown as distant, cold and strange, even hostile. The only solution to giving EU questions the attention they deserve is for journalism to start incorporating the EU and its institutions into their everyday reporting, because there is hardly any part of political life today that does not have an EU dimension to it. In this direction, the media should serve as the crucial link between political power and the citizen, with the power and responsibility to investigate, explain and put EU developments and policies into context. The EU represents a historically unique field into which journalism has to adapt itself, in order for citizens to make sense of the ongoing European integration process. Either one agrees or not, one needs to be adequately informed about its advantages and drawbacks in order to engage himself/herself in an EU-oriented political way of thinking and acting.

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