

Greeks talking Brexit: Greek EU correspondents' accounts of Brexit

Abstract

Despite the interest in how the British media covered Brexit, there is still paucity of research in the way in which EU correspondents have accounted for the issue, especially in the context of European integration. In this context we wish to explore EU correspondents' accounts of Brexit - and in particular, Greek EU journalists' accounts of it. Our main objective is to understand the narratives and discourses through which Greek EU journalists interpret Brexit and European integration and reconstruct them within the public sphere. For the aim of this study we have interviewed Greek journalists working as EU correspondents in Brussels. We asked them about Greek media coverage of Brexit, European integration in the light of Brexit, European cultural identity and European integration journalism. Interview material have been analysed via thematic and critical discourse analysis in an attempt to acquire a deeper insight into the discursive constructions of Brexit and European integration.

Keywords

Brexit, EU integration, Politics, news, journalism

Introduction

This paper discusses Greek EU correspondents' accounts of Brexit in the light of a broader discussion about European integration journalism. We use this term to talk about journalism that systematically covers EU affairs, also adopting a European rather than a domestic perspective. In effect, such a journalistic approach embraces the narrative of European integration more effectively. Actually, especially now that negotiations about the nature of the Brexit deal are still ongoing, interesting discussions about EU identity, EU integration and the role of news media in this context emerge. Furthermore, since 2015, when Greek economy and Greece's EU membership has been central in discussions within the EU establishment, EU discourse has become dominant in the Greek public sphere. Last but not least, there is a long-lasting relationship between Greece and the UK at the level of tourism, citizenship and business relations (i.e. Greeks who study or work in the UK; Greek citizens in the UK but also UK citizens living in Greece and, of course, tourists and frequent visitors). Therefore, one would expect that Brexit would be a matter of great interest within the Greek public sphere, not just from a European perspective but also from a cultural one. In this context we interviewed eight (8) Greek journalists, who discussed about Greek media coverage of Brexit, European integration in the light of Brexit, European cultural identity and European integration journalism.

Journalism and EU affairs media coverage

The majority of studies about journalism in a European context and media's role in EU integration draw mostly upon content analysis of different news formats. In trying to prove a linear relationship in agenda setting strategies between media and political elites, most studies map how media across different countries position towards the European union, European public sphere and European identity (e.g. Pfetsch et al. 2008; Polonska-Kimunguyi and Kimunguyi, 2011). There is a consensus regarding the lack of coverage of European affairs in national media agendas (e.g. Brüggemann et al. 2009; De Vreese 2003), although since 2000 and especially after issues impacting on the EU establishment media coverage has increased significantly (e.g. the expansion of EU with new member states in 2004; the negotiations and approval of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007) (Machill et al 2006), (e.g. Baiseneé, 2002; Koopmans and Erbe, 2003; Firmstone, 2007).

The majority of researchers, however, have measured EU affairs coverage in periods without significant political events or issues and argued that there is a general disinterest in this sort of news given that they are not considered attractive or newsworthy (Peter and De Vreese 2004). In addition, some accounts focus on the transnational nature of EU affairs and the attempt (or not) of national media and journalists to engage with it (e.g. Machill et al. 2006; Heikkilä and Kunelius, 2008; Cornia et al. 2008; Firmstone, 2008). It also seems that a domestic/local perspective of covering EU news is shared by most media cultures across Europe (De Vreese, 2003; Peter and de Vreese, 2004).

In particular, when asked in the context of research, journalists point at the lack of professional skills of their colleagues or lack of motivation to address the inefficacy of the media in their countries to cover EU affairs (e.g. low salaries, pressures within media groups and newsrooms) (e.g. Firmstone, 2008; Statham, 2008). Moreover, they also point at the 'communication deficit' of the EU institutions, including the criticism that they are far away from citizens' actual locations, about the lives of whom they are taking significant decisions (e.g. d' Haenens, 2005; Heikkilä and Kunelius, 2008). This goes hand in hand with the criticism about the bureaucratic and complex nature of EU texts, decision processes and policies, claimed to make EU reporting difficult, less newsworthy and less attractive to audiences (De Vreese 2003). Last but not least, there is also a consensus in that both media and political elites in most of European countries play a significant role in how and how much EU affairs will be covered, not just through certain news prioritization processes (e.g. business or political interests of media owners) but also through certain techniques of information flow (e.g. information disclosed by EU officials to key journalists) (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Lecheler, 2008; Statham, 2008).

Most studies in the field employ a quantitative approach, largely excluding qualitative approaches that offer a deeper insight to why and how EU affairs are covered. Notable exceptions include the work of Heikkilä and Kunelius (2008; 2006) who conducted 290 interviews with journalists from 11 countries to identify the discursive constructions of journalism in an EU context, through tackling established approaches about the shaping of professional journalism in a national context. Equally, Statham (2008) examines how Press journalists consider different journalistic practices in the process of media performance and European governance, via analysing qualitative data collected in the context of a quantitative study. Firmstone (2008) has focused on transnational journalism as a precondition for

European public sphere, while Cornia et al. (2008) have conducted a combined methods qualitative case study about the way in which political communication practices of the EU are negotiated and perceived by professional journalists.

From an analytical perspective, the ways in which journalists account of media cultures at a national or international level has already been discussed (Kevin, 2003; Tjenström, 2008), as have news values and the organizational structure of media (Kunelius, 2008; Statham, 2008). Nevertheless, as Statham (2008) argues, there is little to have been said about how journalists construct themselves as part of this political and social circuit, especially from the perspective of European journalism. Again, one of the few studies that focus on this particular angle is Heikkilä and Kunelius's (2008) work on the chronotropes of EU journalism. The researchers detect discourses of classical professionalism, secularization and cosmopolitanism, through which journalists sustain professional identities and are employed in the justification or critique of news practices.

Overall, the existing body of research explores the existence and potential of EU journalism and its contribution to European integration, as much as the existence or sustainability of a European public sphere. Our study is in many ways confirming earlier studies about the extent to which a form of EU journalism already exists or is sustained by journalists and media across Europe (e.g. Heikkilä and Kunelius, 2008; Statham, 2008); about the structural and political restraints in the media workplaces (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Firmstone, 2008) and about a possible 'communication deficit' on behalf of political institutions such as the EU (van Noije, 2010). It offers a reading of how journalists construct the profession of EU journalist through discourses about cosmopolitanism and ethics, an analytical approach that has not yet appeared extensively in research. It attempts to add to the body of research that offers a deeper understanding of how journalists talk about their job in an EU context; not just by projecting cosmopolitan, ethical and pedagogical professional identities, but most significantly via building sophisticated accounts about the EU and its member states through historical and political knowledge. Last but not least, it contributes to the increasing discussions about Brexit, as does to the existing body of research with data from Greece - which largely misses from the research map (one of the few examples is Plios et al. (2011) study about the Greek crisis coverage in the European press).

Brexit as a reflection of Britain's relation to the EU

EU discussions about Brexit abound within both academia and the public sphere, examining the societal, political and financial impact of the referendum upon the country and the EU (Jackson et al. 2016). Britain's special relation with the EU has also been a recurring theme in academic discourse (Gowland and Turner, 2014; Wilkes and Wring, 1998). In fact, the EU referendum revived discussions about European integration insofar as how the media covered the campaign, and about related political events and prominent figures (Berry 2016). The impact of social media on the outcome of the EU referendum, as well as the use of political memes within the Brexit media discourse and the campaigns on Twitter form part of the academic work that has taken place during and right after the Brexit outcome (e.g. Mitchell, 2016; Usherwood and Wright, 2016).

Debates about the position of the UK in the Europeanization process (e.g. Adler-Nissen et al. 2017; Kumar, 2003) as well as analyses about the country's relationship to the EU -including its institutions (see Kaiser 2002 for a brief overview), highlight the complex historical, political and cultural aspects of this relationship's nature. Its relationship to particular member states (especially old rivals such as France or Germany) (e.g. Rovisco, 2010) and its position in the context of European integration (Wilkes and Wring, 1998) have been well cited. Works on the topic draw upon disciplines such as politics and international relations, history, media and cultural studies among others. There is a strong body of theoretical work on how British identity fits (or not) in the context of EU: for instance, Kaiser (2002) offers a rather critical overview of the main works on the relationship of Britain to the EU through the lens of political science, pointing at the gaps of existing academic or quasi-academic analyses and the need to reconsider this relationship through a transnational political and historical perspective. Moreover, Kumar's (2003) widely cited work analyses the historical and geopolitical angles of the relationship between England and Europe explaining the diverse relations of the different parts of the United Kingdom to an increasingly unified Europe. Last but not least, Gowland and Turner (2014) provide an account of the historical engagement of Britain with Europe in the light of European integration from 1945 to 1998, considering the wide variety of factors that have shaped and possibly still shape British policy in this context. Empirical research mostly draws upon political science as well as media studies. For instance, Hobolt (2016) provides a profile analysis of *Leave vs Remain* voters arguing about the political and historical significance of Brexit referendum to the EU establishment overall. On another

level, Kauffmann (2016) comments that one should not only focus on the socio-demographic profile of the Brexit voters; instead perceptions and attitudes on topics like death penalty, or the importance of disciplining children, signify perspectives towards 'keeping the nation safe, protecting social order and scepticism correlate with Brexit sentiment' (Kauffmann 2016: 4). Deriving from a cultural sociological approach, Rovisco (2010) explores cultural understandings of Europe in France and Britain, especially in times of crisis. Along similar lines, Adler-Nissen et al (2017) provide a socio-cultural account of how Brexit, Britain and the related political actors are discursively constructed in public spheres outside the UK, drawing upon the Butlerian concept of performativity (1993) and Austin's (1962) speech act theory. Drawing upon approaches within media studies, Morgan's (1995) study about how British correspondents talk about reporting from Brussels is one of the systematic quantitative studies that attempts to map how British journalists provide EU news to British audiences. Not least, Negrine (2014) studied the representations of European political parties in British media during the European parliament elections in 2014, in the light of the rise of populist 'anti-EU' parties.

Methodological note

Having briefly discussed the current state of the art in research about journalism in the context of the EU as well as the relationship of Britain to the EU, we provide below a methodological note of our own research. This paper is the result of a qualitative study with eight (8) Greek journalists (four women and four men) working for transnational media, as Greek media correspondents in Brussels or as EU affairs journalists in Greece, TV and the Press.

We contacted twenty journalists mainly via snowballing sampling. Nevertheless, in most cases (12/20) they either did not reply to our emails or SNS messages or denied participating claiming lack of knowledge or expertise on the case of Brexit. Not managing to conduct as many interviews as planned, is, we would argue a finding itself, allowing us to assume not just a lack of interest in academic research about European journalism, but a broader lack of interest about non-domestic news.

*'A lot of media across Europe are not interested to cover certain issues in depth'
(J6- Transnational media)*

<i>n/n</i>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Location</u>
<i>J1</i>	Male	National broadcaster	Brussels
<i>J2</i>	Male	National broadcaster	Athens
<i>J3</i>	Male	European broadcaster	Athens
<i>J4</i>	Female	European broadcaster	Brussels
<i>J5</i>	Female	National Press	Athens
<i>J6</i>	Female	Transnational media	Athens
<i>J7</i>	Male	Transnational media	Brussels
<i>J8</i>	Female	National media	Brussels

Table. Participants' list

We are able to make such a point, also drawing upon our participants' views that journalists in Greece do not have adequate knowledge of international news or EU affairs that do not relate to their country.

'EU affairs coverage is very inadequate, and I 'd say, there is significant lack of knowledge [in these topics]' (J4, European broadcaster)

As a result, we ended up with eight participants who discussed about how media covered Brexit, about journalism more broadly, international news reporting, the political engagement of media organisations and European integration journalism. In talking about European journalism and in effect European integration journalism, we refer to three things:

- a) covering news from a European and not a merely domestic perspective
- b) covering EU affairs systematically while focusing on the importance of the procedures and decisions taken within the EU establishment for citizens across the EU
- c) promoting the narrative of European integration in covering EU affairs but also in explaining how decisions at the national level are seen within a broader European perspective.

It is probably not coincidental, that our participants who are all experienced professionals living abroad or travelling frequently to cover news stories, work for either transnational media organisations, or large national ones. This seems to result in large news organisations' investment in international news reporting *via* investing in professionals who work for the medium abroad.

'There is a crisis in media, and as a result, it's not about having good journalists but about the fact that [media in Greece] is not interested in investing in proper news reporting'
(J4, European broadcaster)

We conducted approximately forty-minute long, semi-structured interviews via skype or face-to-face, depending on each participant's location and availability. Our agenda included questions about Brexit coverage in the Greek media, its relation to the Greek case, about news media organisations and their interest in European news, the European news agenda and European integration journalism. All participants were informed about the anonymity and confidentiality of this study. Although sensitive questions (e.g. political beliefs) have not been addressed, participants' data (including workplace) have been anonymized.

Data has been analysed via thematic and discourse analysis: thematic analysis allowed us to provide a mapping of the issues raised throughout the study, while participants' discursive agendas appeared more clearly (Miles and Huberman 1994). More specifically we are looking at what issues participants prioritise in talking about European journalism and European integration. Discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1987) has been used to get a deeper insight to how participants constructed issues like European integration journalism, EU affairs reporting and the issue of European identity. For example, we will be looking at how journalists position through professional, ethical or cosmopolitan identities to talk about how they understand EU affairs reporting and the well-equipped professional.

Results

All participants of this study have been following Brexit closely since the 2016 referendum. Their positions as EU or world news correspondents and therefore an inherent interest to cover news from around EU was probably the reason of their broad knowledge about Brexit, UK's relationship to the EU as well as about European identity, European integration and the ways EU works. Overall, all participants, but one, highlighted a lack of interest about Brexit in

the Greek media, explaining it as a broader lack of interest about happens within the EU or the world and is not of economic or political interest to Greece.

'Brexit has been scarcely covered. But this didn't happen only in Greece. People don't care about world news. And journalism in most countries adopts a provincial perspective of the world'- J7 (transnational media)

They noted that it is just a few journalists whose work is notable on the analysis of the topic (and EU affairs more broadly) and all of them mentioned that only one national daily (a right-wing paper) covers the topic more extensively. In Greece this newspaper is considered as the most representative example of "quality" Press (see Plios et al. 2011). According to a Greek study about the coverage of Greek financial crisis in European media, it has been rather liberal newspapers that appeared to frame the crisis as a broader issue impacting on European integration (Plios et al. 2011); nevertheless, in this study it seems that journalists unanimously agree that a single right-wing paper follows a more inclusive perspective of the EU narrative. In most cases as one of the participants mentions *"they do cheap journalism, reporting easy-to-swallow news, writing about insignificant information such as that Prime Minister May made a ridicule of herself by dancing"* (J2, National broadcaster). This is a point that other participants also made, in their attempt to argue about the lack of investigative journalistic work in Greek media. However, five of them also acknowledged that Brexit is a long process, and sometimes there is no news to write about, in order to provide a full coverage.

'Negotiations are at such a point right now that there is not something of utmost importance to write right now'
(J6, Transnational media)

In general, however, participants discussed Brexit (but also the Greek case) in a broader context of European integration and the role of media in it, media institutions and the role of investigative journalism, and not least, they provided extended constructions of the journalistic profession. Their accounts proved insightful in the sense that in discussing Brexit, journalists account critically of how EU institutions work, how media respond to their role in covering EU affairs and contributing to the European integration and what makes an ethical journalist. Such findings, discussed below in more detail, contribute, we would argue, to a further understanding of the much-debated role of journalism in the EU narrative

(Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2009; Firmstone, 2008; d' Haenens, 2005). EU narrative in this case is an inclusive term, encompassing issues like European integration, European identity, the nature and role of the EU institutions.

As already mentioned, our findings add to the existing body of research about EU journalism. In fact, given that Greek journalists' constructions of the EU and the role of media in it have not been extensively documented yet, we would argue that our study offers a first reading of how Greek correspondents and journalists' account of major challenges for the EU establishment like Brexit and the Greek issue, as well as about EU journalism and world news reporting more broadly. In a few words, our study shows not just common ways in which participants construct the EU narrative and journalism's position in it, but also shared understandings of what ethical and professional journalism means as well as how EU affairs and world news should be reported.

Cosmopolitanism and Ethics in journalist's constructions of EU affairs coverage

As already argued in research, journalists in many cases understand and project themselves as political actors in the Europeanization process, reflecting critically upon the ways in which the EU establishment and EU institutions work and relate to media but also to citizens across Europe (Statham, 2008; Firmstone, 2008).

'I follow EU affairs closely for many years now, I was also chair of the Greek federalists for some time. My perspective of things is entirely European.'

(J1 National Broadcaster)

In talking broadly about world news coverage and not just EU affairs, most of our participants position themselves towards Brexit and world news reporting, through cosmopolitan identities and most significantly through cosmopolitan professional selves (Heikkilä and Kunelius, 2008).

'I want to do a piece on Elgin marbles with a colleague from the UK. He 'll present the Greek perspective in the UK and I will present the British perspective in Greece [...]. I can do it only because I work for Euronews [...]. The Greek [journalist] won't think that way; they'll say it's ours and we want it back. That's the way the journalist will think and that's what the editor-in-chief will want too.'

(J3 European broadcaster)

'The first thing I do before getting out of bed is check my news alerts. [...] If you don't love news journalism, if you are not interested in what happens around the world you can't do news journalism. In Greece, even those who love doing news journalism, senior journalists included, do only domestic news'

(J7 Transnational media)

An inherent, almost ontological interest in doing news might be a result of the fact that they either live and work abroad or travel frequently to cover non-domestic news. Some of them even employ such identities to account critically of the national perspective through which Europe or the world is constructed in the domestic public sphere. Especially in the case of J7 who works for a transnational media, the narrow, domestic perspective of Greek media on Europe and the world is seen as banal and is constructed in elitist terms.

'Journalism [in Greece and elsewhere] is provincial and cares only about what happens in their village; first, it's a bad thing to be like that- ok I get it that cutting pensions is of great interest to [Greek] readers but how much will you write about this? [...] In my experience as a journalist I 've seen that a national-geographic perspective of the weird things happening around the world is interesting for the audiences'

(J7 Transnational media)

Apart from the dominant discourse of cosmopolitanism, ethics and the construction of the 'good' journalist runs almost through all journalists' accounts. Through the construction of world news and EU news reporting as something challenging and complex, participants argue that to make a worthy journalist of this kind one should have, firstly, the motivation to do news.

'I was always into investigative journalism, to ask, study, look for information out there; and I find very boring the way people cover EU affairs, and as a reader I don't like boring Barnierⁱ statements or details about Brexit- you have to make it sexier' (J8 National media).

Secondly, the agency to balance his/her workplace's demands with their own journalistic values and experience in reporting.

'Because of my experience and of what I 've done so far, I would try to combine domestic journalistic practices with the European perspective; you still can adapt'

(J3 Transnational broadcaster)

Thirdly, the professional skills (be an experienced journalist) and educational and cultural capital (e.g. good knowledge of languages but also good knowledge of history and geopolitics).

'World news reporting –especially finance- is something that constantly changes. You have to study as much as possible. Be well informed and knowing what's going on. [...] It requires a lot of studying, you 'll write about Brexit and then about Venezuela. And you have to be as objective as possible, because you tell a story and the reader needs to know both sides.'
(J5 National press)

'[In Greece] we have too much media, too many people who don't get paid, too many people who are not well educated to work as journalists. [...] In my 20 years of experience, many people who do world news do not speak foreign languages.'
(J6 Transnational media)

What comes across in their discussions is the importance of being agentic in working as an EU/world news correspondent. Given that one cannot easily overcome the restraints of the workplace defined by business and political interests, being able to incorporate their experience and journalistic skills in their reporting is very important for the participants.

'I feel lucky because I have an editor-in-chief that likes EU oriented topics and he thinks they are important for the paper and asks for them. It's not though common practice'
(J8 National media)

In this process being able to address national audiences through promoting the EU narrative and in the context of European integration is considered a very significant part of a reporter's job.

'We want an agenda that is European, but all this has to be adapted to your [national] audiences, I mean I have to build a European agenda that I will be able to communicate to Greek audiences'
(J4 European broadcaster)

It is in this sense as well that journalists become political actors and understand themselves as ambassadors of the EU identity and the EU narrative in national audiences (Statham 2008). Last but not least, objectivity, acknowledgement of the sensitive nature of issues like underage refugees, following the rules, and an authentic interest in doing news are the

elements of the ethical journalist, the ethical professional who does his/her job balancing between their personal values, the shared values of the profession and the agenda of his/her workplace.

'There are good and bad professionals, ethical and unethical, all kinds of them: in what concerns immigrants, officials told us "the cameras won't get where underage immigrants are". My workplace respects that; I know people who tried to enter. That's unethical; we 're not same level professionals'
(J3 transnational broadcaster)

'There are journalists who come to a summit and think that they 'll get an easy response about Brexit; no. Because EU affairs is a challenging kind of reporting that follows certain rules. If someone runs after people in the corridors, if they are pushing too much, they have the right to disbar them'
(J4 transnational broadcaster)

The fact that being a skilled, ethical journalist is a prerequisite for EU journalism, as for any kind of journalism, is common knowledge and hardly a new observation in research (see Holt, 2012; Rao, 2005; Perkins, 2002). Nevertheless, in this subsection there is an interesting distance which our participants take from the national/domestic approach to EU affairs and world news reporting. They position as authentic, objective and agentic reporters, celebrating their success in keeping away from an almost authoritarian and almost suffocating media system; bringing forward the fact that the media they work for (or the editor-in-chief) embrace the European perspective of things and allow them to be agentic and to report from a European perspective.

Media crisis, media cultures, and the EU narrative

Another set of findings concerns thinking critically about media cultures across Europe. As expected, journalists focused a lot on the Greek economic crisis affecting the very existence of media and as a result people's jobs. Indeed, in a media landscape where powerful and well-established TV channels and newspapers have gone bankrupt, a lot of jobs have been lost and journalists are not paid well.

'There is a huge media crisis, that is not about being a good journalist or not; [journalists] reproduce [Associated Press] news because there is no means [to conduct primary research], and there is no interest in investing in proper news production'

(J4 Transnational broadcaster)

Piling up with the domestic perspective through which the media see the world, and the lack of journalistic skills, education, capital and motivation, our participants raise the inadequacy of national media to develop proper EU affairs news coverage. However, as already mentioned elsewhere, the gap in world news and EU affairs coverage does not just take place in Greece, while there are more factors contributing to this: EU news are thought to be unattractive to the audiences not least because they are less dramatic, and either focus predominantly on economics or on complex policies and terms that are difficult even for journalists themselves to understand (de Vreese, 2003).

'EU itself has this problem, when trying to read a Commission text, it's not possible that someone will understand what it is about; the language is rigid and, overall, the way of getting messages across is so complex that poses problems in individuals' relationship to the EU'

J6 (transnational media)

'There is a confusion in communicating EU affairs, caused by the EU mechanisms themselves. [...] Sometimes EU communicates nonsense to make impression.'

(J1 National broadcaster)

Drawing upon such views participants believe that a journalist's task is to educate audiences in EU affairs via making difficult concepts simpler to understand; both European matters but also the broader consequences of policies and decisions. As it appears in the extract below, this participant draws upon a pedagogical discourse to imply that audiences should have certain expectations of the texts.

'Reading a good piece on EU affairs, should make you wiser, more knowledgeable about the EU; and it should explain why [what it says] is important'

(J7 Transnational media)

Moreover, the lack of transparency in decision making processes within the EU, in the ways policies and the overall EU narrative are communicated by the EU institutions -the so called 'communication deficit' (van Noije, 2010; Lecheler and de Vreese, 2012), is according to our participants another obstacle in reporting EU affairs and is constructed mostly in ideological terms.

'EU affairs coverage should be about the decisions taken by the EU council; nevertheless, the council merely does PR, which is something that the Commission and the European parliament do to a great extent because they have a whole communication service to do their propaganda'

(J1 National broadcaster)

'Barnier's team has taken up on everything and it's totally sealed. What comes out is only what they want to let out. Even British journalists in large-pro EU- media corporations get very little information about Brexit'

(J8 National media)

Last but not least, in this context, our participants point at the distance of Brussels from each country's national audiences, which leads more easily to a demonization of EU officials, of Brussels and the EU. Journalists discuss that national media illustrate a conflicting relationship between the national political elites and the EU who decide 'cruelly' upon people.

'People are convinced [that EU takes such decisions] because their leaders and the parties look for scape goats; and exactly because Brussels is far, it's easy [for media and politicians] to target 'mean Brussels'.

(J4 Transnational media)

Such discursive constructions contribute to a broader construction of an assumed 'democratic deficit' of the EU (Bauer, 2004; Adler-Nissen et al. 2017) which has already been documented as a dominant discourse of journalists about European integration and the EU establishment on the whole.

Aspects of Literacy in journalists' coverage of EU affairs

A finding we consider particularly interesting is that the diverse identities that our participants employ in talking both about Brexit but also about EU affairs are defined and articulated through assertions of different forms of literacy; also, through assertions of cultural and educational capital. For example, a journalist from a national daily spent most of the interview time to explain the political, financial and historical dimensions of Brexit even when the questions asked were primarily about journalism practices in Brexit coverage.

'It is also related to the source you choose to read about a topic. It's different to read the Financial Times and a different thing to read the Guardian'.

(J5 National Press)

As Adler-Nissen et al. (2017) note EU journalists appear to have extended knowledge about the UK affairs although the opposite is highly unlikely. We would argue that through exhibiting sophisticated knowledge about the UK history and political relations, and about the geopolitical landscape in Europe more broadly, Greek journalists assert this knowledge to project themselves as citizens of Europe and cosmopolitan professionals. As Rovisco (2010) argues, European integration is realised further through developing shared cultural understandings and via sharing each other cultures and not just via merely consuming the same messages, something that our participants employ in constructing their European identity but also reflect upon.

'If you travel from Norway to Turkey, you 'll see that youth is dressed the same way, listens to the same music, shares common practices, consume the same products- and that's Europe actually'
(J2 National broadcaster)

Our participants bring forward a wide range of information about UK's relation to the EU, about the country's bilateral relations with old rivals like Germany and France, as well as sophisticated knowledge about the UK's politics, economy, and imperial background.

'As you know Brexit means three things: first, it is about what will happen with those who live in the UK and Brits who live abroad; second, post-Brexit relationship between the UK and Europe; third, UK's relations with other countries'
(J1 National Broadcaster)

'There is a balance of power leaning towards Germany, and that –because they are two powerful countries competing each other- annoys the UK [...] Don't forget that the whole Eurozone infrastructure was created by Britain. I mean they know how to go around economics, finance etc.'
(J5 National Press)

Many of them are also claiming agency in positioning towards Brexit, by reflecting upon their engagement with the country's media culture, either via access to and networking with high profile commentators and correspondents in the UK or via their professional experience with their UK colleagues in the context of EU affairs news reporting.

'I worked a lot on the post-Brexit era, i.e. what will happen if the UK goes on elections now; I talked with journalists like Paul Mason and Hugo Dixon; we went to the LSE and talked about the financial consequences of Brexit.'
(J2 National Broadcaster)

'I had the chance to meet very popular colleagues from large media corporations and they were affirmative that Brexit would happen.'
(J6 Transnational media)

'There was this British journalist in the briefing room, sitting loosely at the chair, who asked a follow up question in a really British manner without asking for permission, and he was told off by the commissioner. [...] Look, the best for Brexit is Jennifer Rankin from Guardian and Ian Wishart from Bloomberg'
(J8 National media)

In effect, they employ such advanced literacy about the UK affairs, not just to assert cultural, political and historical capital but also to establish themselves as legitimate actors in talking about how EU affairs reporting should be taking place in Greece and across Europe more broadly. In establishing the validity of their claims, they also bring forward their personal interest and relationship to the UK, either mentioning the time spent for studies, or the frequency of travelling to work and engage with culture and lifestyle

'I 've followed Brexit from a distance but I have a personal interest for Britain, I 've been travelling there a lot'
(J6 transnational media)

'I proposed to do a piece about the marbles [Elgin marbles]; I have studied ancient history and archaeology, my BA, political sciences and media, my first MA and TV journalism was my second MA'
(J3 transnational broadcaster)

In this sub section we attempted to illustrate how the literacy our participants exhibit in talking about Brexit and the UK reflect an active and multifaceted engagement with what constitutes proper EU affairs reporting, the UK culture, and their European identity. To this we add what has been discussed in the other two subsections about participants' articulation of cosmopolitan and ethical identities through which they construct EU journalism and themselves as such; moreover, their critical reflections of media cultures and the EU narrative. Therefore, it appears that the complex ways in which they are articulating their

European identity and contribute to a broader European integration narrative cannot go unnoticed, given that previous research argues that journalists construct the European Union through a national and sometimes ideological angle (e.g. van der Eijk et al. 1996; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Kunelius, 2008). Nevertheless, instead of being more critical and less inclusive towards the European narrative they seem to critically embrace European integration and stress the need for a well-structured EU journalism to flourish.

Conclusions

To sum up, it seems that many studies discuss the topic either from the perspective of content analysis (therefore a researcher-driven hermeneutic approach) (e.g. Machill et al. 2006; De Vreese, 2003; d' Hanens, 2005; Pleios et al. 2011) or through the perspective of media professionals (Statham, 2008; Heikkilä and Kunelius, 2008). That means that audiences' responses to the topic are missing, and in the few cases that data about audiences is mentioned, this mostly comes from Eurobarometer measurements (Machill et al. 2006). Therefore, perceptions of how Europe is covered seems to beg for further investigation in the field from an audience perspective. Drawing upon this point, it seems that in most cases there is an assumption –if not a clear argument- that agenda setting processes and the ways news appear on media have some sort of impact or effect on audiences' priorities, perceptions or lives (e.g. Peter and de Vreese, 2004; d' Haenens, 2005). This observation leads us to the point that audience reception research may be needed to a greater extent to fill the gap of how citizens, the consumers of news about European Union are reflecting on the information they get.

Unlike other research of this kind, we would argue that what is defined as EU journalism is a complex ongoing process, not easily realised because of its inherently political nature and its dependence upon politics and media cultures. Moreover, discussions about the relationship between the EU establishment and different journalism cultures still abound, as do discussions about the ways in which journalism across Europe engages with the EU narrative and the concept of European integration. An interesting finding that -we would argue- begs for further research, is our participants' lack of references to how online media and journalistic practices through SNS could help in establishing EU journalism further. Given audiences' everyday news consumption through online media but also journalists' reporting

through SNS, a study on how such technologies contribute to establishing EU journalism more concretely appears paramount.

What we have attempted to offer so far is a mapping of how Greek journalists, coming from a country still in economic crisis, employ their European identity to discuss about European journalism, European integration and the challenges within its context (i.e. Brexit). As most studies in this field, our study is not examining audiences' responses to the topic, a factor that would add further epistemological value to our findings. It would be therefore very important to target audiences' understanding of journalists' performance in an EU context, the construction of major political developments like Brexit, and not least the construction of journalists' profession at a future qualitative study like this one.

Also, drawing upon our findings our research suggests that the characteristics of Brexit (a powerful member-state of the EU and actor of the global economy voting to leave the EU; first time the EU is expected to follow formal member-state exit procedures; Brexit takes place at a politically sensitive time for the EU establishment) stresses the need for the case of its media coverage to be examined at a cross-national level. Major political challenges like this one, also the Greek case, and of course the consequent rise of populism across the EU create an interesting context for cross-national and cross-cultural research.

We would also argue that there is a need to further investigate how big challenges for the EU such as Brexit, the Greek debt issue and changes in national political cultures (e.g. rise in populism and extreme right), possibly beg for more inclusive ways of news reporting of EU affairs in the light of the European narrative. Pickering's (2004) 'horizons of expectations' - could be a useful hermeneutical framework to understand the expectations with which audiences come to texts like EU news, given that pieces of investigative journalism may provide ways of expanding one's knowledge which are usually not related to the current status of one's knowledge of things. Last but not least, we would suggest that there is a need for researchers to examine the ways in which the profession of the journalist is discursively constructed in the context of reporting EU affairs more thoroughly and as an autonomous agent contributing to European integration.

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ⁱ Michel Barnier is the Chief Negotiator of the Task force for the negotiations, preparation and conduct of Brexit (European Commission, 2018).