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The Europeanization of the Spanish public sphere: under what circumstances do political actors gain visibility in EU related debates?

Miguel Ansemil Pérez

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The Europeanization of the Spanish public sphere: under what circumstances do political actors gain visibility in EU related debates?

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Abstract

This doctoral thesis explores under what circumstances executive actors, political parties and interest groups gain visibility in EU (European Union) related debates in the Spanish media for the period 2005-2015. The case of Spain allows exploring aspects so far subjected to little empirical investigations. For example, the motivations of Europhile parties' to pay attention to the EU, to what extent parties use an EU frame to achieve political goals in a multilevel system of government, or the changing patterns of politicization of EU issues in one of the countries more seriously hit by the euro crisis. The analysis relies on the content analysis of 40.000 stories and 354.000 claims of political actors published in *El País* and *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015. The first chapter, devoted to the analysis of executive actors and political parties, corroborates that political actors react to top-down pressures. Executive actors, those with more media visibility, mainly react to the approval of new EU normative and events, such as European Council meetings, while the visibility of political parties is more associated to European parliament elections. Yet, the thesis shows that political actors do not react only to EU processes and events. Even if European integration is not a politicized issue in Spain, the analysis of public debates on EU affairs show that parties use Europe strategically, as part of their competition to each other in the domestic political arena. Results also illustrate that the euro crisis did not redistribute significantly political actors' visibility in the media. Even if challenger parties were very critical of most decisions adopted to overcome the crisis, their visibility on EU related public debates did not significantly increase during this critical juncture. Finally, even if European integration is not a politicized issue, as far as the EU is associated with domestic political debates, patterns of media political parallelism emerge. For example, the visibility of secessionist Catalan parties in EU related debates only increases parallel to increasing support for independence in *El Mundo*.

The second chapter, devoted to the analysis of interest groups, corroborates that in this case top-down processes do not play an important role in explaining their visibility in EU related debates. Interest groups do not obtain more media coverage when new normative is discussed at the EU level, not even on those policy areas where the EU has more competences. Yet, stories where new EU regulation in the fields of energy, environment, labor and social issues is discussed, show higher diversity of interest groups

than policy domains of economic nature, which are monopolized by few groups. The analysis also shows that debates related to the European parliament and the European Commission are generally associated with a more pluralistic patterns, involving interest groups of different types, than those where the European Council participate. The visibility of interest groups does not increase neither during the approval of new EU normative, nor when their implementation is discussed at domestic level. Interest groups with a role in the implementation process have no visibility in public debates on European affairs, not even on highly politicized issues. Regarding the impact of the euro crisis, it did raise attention to previously excluded groups in EU related debates, such as labor unions or citizens groups. Yet, important differences exist between *El Mundo* and *El País*. The analysis of interest groups further corroborates that the media are not passive actors but may be actively involved in the process of giving some actors more attention in public debates to support their political allies.

Resum

Aquesta tesi doctoral explora les circumstàncies en les que actors de l'executiu, partits polítics i grups d'interès obtenen visibilitat en els debats relacionats amb la UE (Unió Europea), publicats pels mitjans de comunicació espanyols durant el període 2005-2015. El cas d'Espanya permet explorar aspectes poc investigats des d'un punt de vista empíric fins ara. Per exemple, les motivacions per les quals els partits euròfils presten atenció a la UE, fins a quin punt utilitzen un emmarcat europeu per a aconseguir objectius polítics en un sistema de govern multinivell, o els canvis en els patrons de politització dels assumptes europeus en un dels països més afectats per l'Euro crisi. L'estudi es basa en l'anàlisi del contingut de 40.000 notícies i 354.000 afirmacions d'actors polítics, publicats en El País i El Mundo entre 2005 i 2015. El primer capítol, enfocat en l'anàlisi dels actors de l'executiu i els partits polítics, corrobora que els actors polítics reaccionen a pressions *top-down*. Els actors de l'executiu, aquells amb més visibilitat mediàtica, reaccionen principalment a l'aprovació de nova normativa i esdeveniments europeus, com, per exemple, reunions del Consell Europeu, mentre que la visibilitat dels partits polítics està més associada amb les eleccions al Parlament Europeu. No obstant això, aquesta tesi mostra que els actors polítics no només reaccionen a processos i esdeveniments europeus. Fins i tot si la integració europea no és un assumpte polititzat a Espanya, l'anàlisi dels debats públics sobre assumptes europeus mostra que els partits utilitzen Europa de manera estratègica, com a part de la competició partidista en l'arena política domèstica. Els resultats il·lustren que l'Euro crisi no va implicar una redistribució significativa de la cobertura mediàtica dels actors polítics. Malgrat els partits *challenger* van ser molt crítics amb la majoria de les decisions adoptades per a superar la crisi, la seva visibilitat en els debats públics relacionats amb la UE no va augmentar significativament durant aquesta conjuntura crítica. Finalment, la tesi mostra que tot i que la integració europea no és un assumpte polititzat, en la mesura en que la UE s'associa amb debats polítics domèstics, emergeixen patrons de paral·lelisme polític en la cobertura mediàtica. Per exemple, la visibilitat dels partits catalans secessionistes en debats on es fa referència a la UE només augmenta paral·lelament a l'increment del suport a la independència a El Mundo.

El segon capítol, centrat en l'anàlisi dels grups d'interès, demostra que els processos *top-down* no juguen un paper important a l'hora d'explicar la seva visibilitat en els debats relacionats amb la UE. Els grups d'interès no obtenen major cobertura

mediàtica quan es debat nova normativa europea, ni tan sols en aquells àmbits en els que la UE té més competències. No obstant això, notícies sobre l'aprovació de nova regulació europea en àmbits com l'energia, el medi ambient, el treball o els assumptes socials mostren una major diversitat de grups d'interès que aquelles sobre assumptes econòmics, monopolitzades per pocs grups. L'anàlisi també mostra que els debats relacionats amb el Parlament Europeu i la Comissió Europea, generalment es troben associats amb patrons més plurals, involucrant diferents grups d'interès, que aquells en els quals participa el Consell Europeu. La visibilitat dels grups d'interès no és elevada durant la discussió de normativa a nivell europeu ni tampoc durant el procés d'implementació a nivell domèstic. Els grups d'interès amb un rol en el procés d'implementació no obtenen visibilitat en els debats públics sobre els assumptes europeus, ni tant sols en assumptes molt polititzats. Respecte a l'impacte de l'Euro crisi, aquesta va augmentar l'atenció a grups prèviament exclosos dels debats sobre la UE, com, per exemple, sindicats i grups de ciutadans. No obstant, existeixen diferències importants entre El País i El Mundo. L'anàlisi sobre els grups d'interès corrobora que els mitjans de comunicació no són actors passius, sinó que participen activament en el procés, donant més cobertura mediàtica a determinats actors amb l'objectiu de donar suport als seus aliats polítics.

Resumen

Esta tesis doctoral explora las circunstancias en las que actores del ejecutivo, partidos políticos y grupos de interés obtienen visibilidad en los debates relacionados con la UE (Unión Europea), publicados por los medios de comunicación españoles durante el periodo 2005-2015. El caso de España permite explorar aspectos poco investigados desde un punto de vista empírico hasta el momento. Por ejemplo, las motivaciones por las que los partidos eurófilos prestan atención a la UE, hasta qué punto usan un enmarcado europeo para lograr sus objetivos políticos en un sistema de gobierno multinivel, o los cambios en los patrones de politización de los asuntos europeos en uno de los países más afectados por la Euro crisis. El estudio se basa en el análisis del contenido de 40.000 noticias y 354.000 afirmaciones de actores políticos, publicadas en *El País* y *El Mundo* entre 2005 y 2015. El primer capítulo, centrado en el análisis de los actores del ejecutivo y los partidos políticos, corrobora que los actores políticos reaccionan a presiones *top-down*. Los actores del ejecutivo, aquellos con más visibilidad mediática, reaccionan principalmente a la aprobación de nueva normativa y eventos europeos, como, por ejemplo, reuniones del Consejo Europeo, mientras que la visibilidad de los partidos políticos está más asociada con las elecciones al Parlamento Europeo. Sin embargo, esta tesis muestra que los actores políticos no sólo reaccionan a estos procesos y eventos europeos. Incluso si la integración europea no es un asunto politizado en España, el análisis de los debates públicos sobre asuntos europeos muestra que los partidos usan Europa de forma estratégica, como parte de la competición partidista en la arena política doméstica. Los resultados también ilustran que la Euro crisis no implicó una redistribución significativa de la cobertura mediática de los actores políticos. A pesar de que los partidos *challenger* fueron muy críticos con la mayoría de las decisiones adoptadas para superar la crisis, su visibilidad en los debates públicos relacionados con la UE no aumentó significativamente durante esta coyuntura crítica. Finalmente, la tesis muestra que a pesar de que la integración europea no es un asunto politizado, en la medida en que la UE se asocia con debates políticos domésticos, emergen patrones de paralelismo político en la cobertura mediática. Por ejemplo, la visibilidad de los partidos catalanes secesionistas en debates en los que se hace referencia a Europa solo aumenta paralelamente al incremento del apoyo a la independencia en *El Mundo*.

El segundo capítulo, centrado en el análisis de los grupos de interés, demuestra que los procesos *top-down* no juegan un papel importante para explicar su visibilidad en los debates relacionados con la UE. Los grupos de interés no obtienen mayor cobertura mediática cuando se debate nueva normativa europea, ni siquiera en aquellos ámbitos en los que la UE tiene más competencias. No obstante, noticias sobre la aprobación de nueva regulación europea en ámbitos como la energía, el medio ambiente, el trabajo o los asuntos sociales muestran una mayor diversidad de grupos de interés que aquellas sobre asuntos económicos, monopolizadas por pocos grupos. El análisis también muestra que los debates relacionados con el Parlamento Europeo y la Comisión Europea, generalmente se encuentran asociados con patrones más plurales, involucrando diferentes grupos de interés, que aquellos en los que participa el Consejo Europeo. La visibilidad de los grupos de interés no es elevada durante la discusión de normativa a nivel europeo ni tampoco durante el proceso de implementación a nivel doméstico. Los grupos de interés con un rol en el proceso de implementación no obtienen visibilidad en los debates públicos sobre los asuntos europeos, ni siquiera en asuntos muy politizados. Con respecto al impacto de la Euro crisis, ésta aumentó la atención a grupos previamente excluidos de los debates sobre la UE, como, por ejemplo, sindicatos y grupos de ciudadanos. No obstante, existen diferencias importantes entre El País y El Mundo. El análisis sobre los grupos de interés corrobora que los medios de comunicación no son actores pasivos, sino que participan activamente en el proceso, dando más cobertura mediática a determinados actores con el objetivo de apoyar a sus aliados políticos.

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1. Introduction: goals, research questions, methodological approach and structure

The democratic deficit [of the European Union] can only be resolved if a European public sphere emerges in which the democratic process is embedded (Habermas 2001, cited and translated by Brüggemann et al. 2006)

This doctoral thesis explores under what circumstances executive actors, political parties and interest groups gain visibility in EU (European Union) related debates in the Spanish media for the period 2005-2015. The analysis of this question is interesting for many reasons. EU affairs have reached increasing visibility in the media as member states pool more and more sovereignty to the supranational level (de Wilde 2014). The gradual transference of power to the EU in policy domains, such as, for instance, economic and monetary policies, agriculture, fishing, or environment has resulted into a substantial increasing Europeanization of policy-making processes in member states. In Spain, the percentage of legislation passed in the Spanish parliament totally or partially decided in Brussels has progressively increased, representing 26% of the total legislation passed in the late eighties and reaching up to 76% in 2015 (Palau 2019:12). Overall, domestic institutions are no longer capable of designing policy alternatives to solve most domestic problems, due to the lack of resources but also because of dependency from decisions already taken in EU institutions (see Brouard et al. 2011 or Mair 2011).

In addition, since the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty (1991-1992), public concerns on the implications of the EU integration for national spheres have gradually increased as the permissive consensus has been eroded (Hooghe and Marks 2009). These public anxieties have been further exacerbated, because of the consequences associated with some recent events such as the Euro crisis, the refugees' crisis, and the Brexit. As a result, the EU has been placed at the centre of the political and public debate, even being questioned the future of the integration process itself. EU affairs have entered domestic agendas, "with potentially far-reaching consequences on public opinion, party behaviour, electoral alignments and the functioning of democracy" (Guinaudeau and Palau 2016). Even in countries where the EU integration is a consensual issue, these events have posed a threat to the European project and raised critical voices regarding EU policies (Monza 2019). In Spain, for example, Eurobarometer data illustrates that, following the outbreak of the Euro crisis, a large majority of Spaniards (86%) thought that if the EU continued to implement austerity measures, then it will no longer be "useful" (CIS Barometer, May

2013). Yet, even at the risk of calling into question the legitimacy of EU institutions, political debate and communication on the EU is necessary to hold both domestic and EU institutions accountable for their actions (Meyer 1999). To achieve this aim, issues and debates must be visible before decisions are taken, the decision-making process and existing political conflicts made transparent, and the voice of a plurality of actors heard in public debates.

The public sphere is precisely the communicative space in which a “relatively unconstrained debate, analysis and criticism of the political order can take place” (Fossum and Schlesinger 2007). In democratic societies, with recognised freedom of the press and expression, this debate mainly takes place in the media. The media are the most important intermediaries between political parties and citizens, replacing direct interactions and exchanges between them (Gerhards and Neidhardt 1990). On the one hand, political parties try to reach voters almost exclusively via the media coverage (e.g. Kepplinger 2002). On the other hand, citizens learn about politics from the media, which are the best source of access to the political system for them (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). The media give information about important events and actions within institutionalized arenas of the political system (e.g. McQuail 1992). As providers of political information the media should contribute to make the political process more transparent for public opinion (e.g. McQuail 1992), but also for other actors such as interest groups and opposition parties. This is especially the case regarding issues related to EU integration. According to the classic division between obtrusive and unobtrusive affairs (Gene Zucker 1978; Soroka 2002; McCombs 2004), the EU integration is an unobtrusive issue, one perceived as an abstract phenomenon and removed from everyday life (Kriesi et al. 2012). With the exception of executive actors, which have a privileged access to the EU decision-making process, a substantial number of political actors and public opinion need for orientation on the topic which may be obtained through the media (McCombs and Weaver 1973).

The media are also important platforms for interest groups to send signals to policymakers and public opinion (e.g. Beyers 2004). They allow them to inform on their political positions, compete with each other, try to alter the status quo, put pressure on policymakers, foster new policy proposals, shape political actors’ beliefs or obtain public support (e.g. Kollman 1998). Furthermore, interest groups which obtain media visibility may reassure current and potential supporters, showing themselves as active participants in the political and public arenas (Ainsworth and Sened 1993). Existing research has

argued that the media can benefit those groups excluded from the insider access to the decision-making process (Wolfsfeld 1984b). Nevertheless, other scholars have proved that even resourceful and powerful interest groups may seek to access to the media arena as well (e.g. Beyers 2004). Combining different lobbying strategies is the most effective form to influence the decision-making process (e.g. Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2005).

Overall, the media work as platforms used by many actors to achieve political goals and perform important functions to overcome information asymmetries. In this context, the plurality of the debate is an indicator of the democratic quality of media systems. According to the idea of the media as a civic forum (Norris 2001), a public debate must involve a diversity of viewpoints on the topic, including executive actors, opposition parties and interest groups. At the same time, democracy functions best when political actors and citizens can obtain information on policy problems (Tiffen et al. 2014). However, because the available communication space is limited, not all issues and political actors are likely to get access to the media agenda. As a result, in a context of limited agenda capacity, a key question is which actors reach media visibility and which not and under what circumstances.

Existing literature has already approached the question of who influences public debates on European affairs in the media. These studies have mainly focused on analysing the degree of Europeanization of national public spheres (e.g. Gerhards 1993, 2000; Schlesinger 2003; Koopmans 2007), the politicization around the EU integration and the role of Euroscepticism in EU related stories (e.g. Kriesi et al. 2006; Kriesi 2007). Existing research has highlighted that the Europeanization of public communication is a required condition to improve the legitimacy of EU institutions in an elite-driven political integration process. This forum for processes of communication may offer information about the European politics, increase the public accountability of European and domestic actors and public involvement in the EU integration (e.g. Koopmans and Pfetsch 2006; see also de Vreese 2007).

Nevertheless, there is a common agreement among existing literature than a genuine transnational European public sphere as a replication of domestic ones is unlikely (e.g. De Vreese 2007; Gerhards 1993, 2002). Even though Brüggemann and Schulz-Forbeg (2009) show that transnational pan-European media are raising and attracting a bureaucratic, elite, and expert audiences, they fail in reaching out a broaden European public. Transnational spheres are “hardly any replacement of national public sphere” (De

Vreese, 2007) as “Europe audiences remain nationally segmented” (Trenz 2008). Because of linguistic diversity, cultural heterogeneity, media systems focused on attracting domestic audiences and media traditions (e.g. Gerhards, 1993, 2002). As a result, existing studies have mainly focused on the Europeanization of the national public spheres (Gerhards, 1993, 2000; Trenz 2004, 2008; Koopmans and Pfetsch 2006; Schlesinger and Kevin 2000; Van de Steeg et al. 2003).

These scholars have mainly based their conclusions on the degree of vertical and horizontal Europeanization in national public spheres (e.g. Brüggemann and Von Königslöw 2007; Kleinen-von Königslöw 2012; Wessler et al. 2008; Koopmans and Statham 2010; Koopmans 2004; Koopmans and Erbe 2004). Vertical Europeanization refers to the participation of European institutions in public debates in the media, whereas horizontal Europeanization is the increasing attention to speakers and events from other member states. These analyses have already illustrated that public discussions on European affairs are likely to follow a pattern of “segmented” Europeanization (Kleinen-von Königslöw 2012). In this sense, there was an increasing pattern of vertical Europeanization between 1990 and 2003, while horizontal Europeanization remained moderated and even declined over time (e.g. Meyer 2005; Hutter and Grande 2014; Kleinen-von Königslöw 2012).

Similarly, the *EUROPUB* project has illustrated that public debates on European affairs reflect the current distribution of power, position and influence of political actors in the EU decision-making process (e.g. Koopmans 2004 2007, Koopmans and Pfetsch 2006). According to this strand of literature, executive actors, both European and domestic, as well as central banks are the main beneficiaries of the increasing Europeanization of national public spheres, weakening the position of political parties and interest groups (e.g. Koopmans 2004, 2007; see also: della Porta and Caiani 2006; Kriesi and Tresch 2007; della Porta 2003; Trenz 2004). The high agenda-setting capacity of executive actors in EU related stories is also in line with the indexing theory developed by Bennet (1990). The media tend to emphasize official sources and actors with an authoritative position in the political system, discounting those which are perceived as marginal. In this regard, the media give priority to the coverage of executive actors’ positions, because of their privileged position at the European political level (Koopmans 2007). More recently, Monza (2019) has also illustrated, in his analysis on discursive interactions in the national public spheres of nine countries, that state actors had the

highest capacity to obtain media attention for their claims in EU related debates on economic issues during the Euro crisis, except in the United Kingdom. Conversely, actors from the civil society were missing from these discursive exchanges. The goal of this thesis is to contribute to this line of research exploring aspects so far not subjected to empirical investigation.

Research goals

The objective of this doctoral thesis is to address the following research question: under what circumstances do political actors (executive actors, political parties and interest groups) obtain media visibility in public debates on European affairs in Spain? The research focuses on the case of Spain even though the typical approach followed by media studies is comparative, as single country analyses run the risk of producing results that are idiosyncratic to a context (Blumler et al. 1992). Yet, the Spanish case is interesting because it allows exploring aspects so far subjected to little investigation, like the circumstances under which Europhile parties gain visibility in EU related debates. In Spain, party conflict around European integration cannot explain the media attention to domestic political actors. Even during the Euro crisis, the Spanish party system did not experienced the emergence and consolidation of radical Eurosceptic positions. The case of Spain allows also exploring to what extent regional parties use the EU to achieve political goals in a multilevel system of government. The analysis of this question is particularly interesting given the secessionist Catalan process, where both those in favour and against the creation of an independent Catalan state have used an EU frame to support their arguments (Palau 2018). Regarding interest groups, the growing impact of the EU decision-making process on key policy domains and the development of domestic legislation has incentivized interest groups to allocate increasing resources to obtain information and develop lobbying strategies to influence EU decisions according to their interests and aims (e.g. Mazey and Richardson 2006). As a result, the number of interest groups actively participating at the European political level has substantially increased since the mid-1980s (Greenwood 2007). Moreover, the EU played a key role in the management of the Euro crisis which might have contributed to increase the mobilization of interest groups around European affairs, because of the existence of budgetary austerity measures and the restructuration of the financial banking system. Because it was one of the countries more seriously hit by the economic crisis, Spain is also an appropriate case

for exploring changing patterns of politicization of European affairs in response to critical junctures.

Adopting an actor centred approach allows exploring Europeanization going beyond top-down approaches. The thesis takes into consideration whether domestic actors react to EU process and events, such as European parliament elections or ratification of EU treaties, but also to what extent they make a strategic use of Europe as part of their competition to each other, to achieve political goals at domestic level. Regarding **executive actors and political parties**, the goal is to explore their visibility in EU related stories, with a focus on the following aspects:

- 1) The media attention to Europhile parties in public debates on European affairs. Existing research has tended to analyse the impact of Euroscepticism and the degree of politicization and conflict around the EU integration in EU related stories (e.g. Kriesi 2007; Kriesi et al. 2006; Schuck et al. 2011). Analyses on the parliamentary arena has already illustrated that these Europhile parties may use the EU, not to politicize the EU integration, but to emphasize issues that they have ownership over (Palau 2019). However, it is still little known under which circumstances Europhile parties obtain media visibility in public debates on European affairs. This research seeks to corroborate whether these parties may be also associated with political issues that they “own” in the media arena. The goal is to explore whether parties react to top-down processes, like European Parliament elections, but also, following the “issue-ownership” theory (Petrocik 1989, 1996), to what extent Europhile parties obtain more media attention in public debates on European affairs to emphasize issues they “own”. For example, do green parties use the EU to give visibility to environmental issues?
- 2) The media visibility of regional parties in EU related debates. Existing research has already shown that these political actors are more likely to use the EU to obtain credibility and legitimacy for their political demands on increasing self-government or the independence of their region (e.g. Dardanelli 2009). We know also that they use an EU frame to emphasise the interests of their regions in the parliamentary arena (Palau 2018, 2019). However, existing empirical literature has not explored whether these actors obtain visibility in public debates on European affairs to raise public debate and legitimate their claims for more political autonomy. Are regional parties more likely to obtain visibility in EU

related debates emphasizing regional interests? In the context of the Catalan secessionist process, as support for secessionism raised, did parties reach the media agenda using an EU frame to make their case in favour of the independence?

- 3) The media attention to executive actors. Research conducted by the *EUROPUB* project has already demonstrated that these actors dominate the media coverage related to the EU, considering the degree of European competences in diverse policy domains. However, it is still little known how the approval of new European normative or the celebration of European events influence the media visibility of executive actors' claims in EU related stories. This research seeks to provide news insights into to what extent the media reflect the favourable information asymmetries and the privileged position of executive actors in the EU decision-making process. Because their privileged position in the policy-making process at the European political level, do executive actors obtain more media visibility in public debates related the approval of new European normative compared to opposition parties? Similarly, do these actors also obtain more media attention when there are relevant European events?
- 4) Finally, to what extent the Euro crisis have changed the patterns of media visibility of political parties in the media. Existing research has already demonstrated that executive actors are still the main beneficiaries from the Europeanization of public debates during the Euro crisis (e.g. Kriesi and Grande 2015; Monza 2019). Yet, to my knowledge, with some exception (Palau and Ansemil 2020), these existing studies base their conclusions on the analysis of the Euro crisis period, without exploring dynamics before the outbreak of the crisis, namely without comparing the routine (non-crisis) period and this critical juncture. This research seeks to provide new insights into how the devastating consequences of the Euro crisis may have also increased the visibility of challenger parties and regional parties in public debates on European affairs compared to non-crisis periods. Have the negative economic and social impact of the Euro crisis increased the visibility of claims made by challenger parties? Is media attention to regional parties in EU related news during the crisis related to raising support for independence?

Regarding **interest groups**, Baumgartner and Leech (1988) argue that there is an excessive fragmentation in the analyses of interest groups, where most of them are based on case studies. Similarly, Arnold (1982) states that this literature has been rich from a theoretical perspective, but poor in the case of empirical studies. As Medina and Muñoz (2016) summarise, there are three main reasons for this trend: 1) the political science focuses on obtaining knowledge about the relationship between the state and the society, where research has tended to explore citizens' attitudes and public opinion in electoral and protests contexts (Wilson 1990); 2) the literature developed in Europe and the United States has pursued different objectives. While European research has centred on public policies, scholars from the United States have paid more attention to the strategies of influence (Mahoney and Baumgartner 2008); and 3) interest groups are only a small part of the political system. There are difficulties to analyse their capacity to exert influence, due to their internal dynamics and how these factors may affect their chances of success. In this respect, some studies have come to a conclusion that these political actors do not have any influence in the political process (e.g. Bauer et al. 1963; Fowler and Shaiko 1987).

Recently, some research has focused on analysing the access of interest groups to the media and parliamentary arenas (Bouwen 2004; Marshall 2014; Bernhagen et al. 2015; Binderkrantz et al. 2015; Chaqués-Bonafont and Muñoz 2015). Beyond the research conducted by the *EUROPUB* project, most media studies have explored the media attention to these organizations considering specific factors, such as their organizational resources (e.g. Thrall 2006) or the type of interest group (e.g. Binderkrantz 2012), their preferences between inside and outside strategies (e.g. Beyers 2004), the impact of conflict in the development of European normative (De Bruycker and Beyers 2015) or considering specific policy domains (Bouwen 2002; Maloney et al. 1994; Geddes 2000; Warleigh 2000, 2001). In addition, when these analyses are focused on the EU and interest groups, they are characterized by their emphasis on collective action (Greenwood et al. 1992; Mazey and Richardson 1993; Greenwood and Aspinwall 1998), whereas individual political actors like firms have been analysed more infrequently (some exceptions: McLaughlin et al. 1993; Coen 1997). The aim of this research is to contribute to this line of research by exploring under which circumstances interest groups obtain media visibility in public debates on EU affairs, focusing on the following aspects:

- 1) The media attention to interest groups during the approval of new European normative. Existing research has mainly focused on the visibility of these actors in the media coverage of public debates, considering the degree of European competences in a set of European issues (e.g. Koopmans 2007). Few studies have considered whether the approval of new EU normative coincides with increasing media visibility of interest groups. An exception is the research conducted by De Bruycker and Beyers (2015). These scholars analyse how the presence of conflict during the approval of new European normative increases the media attention to interest groups in public debates on European affairs. However, they obtain their conclusions by means of a sample of European Directives. This research, instead, seeks to provide new insights into the visibility of interest groups when new regulation is discussed at the EU level, considering a long-term analysis and all Directives and Regulations that obtained visibility in public debates on European affairs. Is the visibility of interest groups related to the EU decision-making process? Is the visibility of interest groups higher in issue areas where the EU has more competences?
- 2) How the European institutions and interest groups are related in public debates on European affairs, reflecting the supranational and intergovernmental dynamics of the EU decision-making process. Previous literature has already explored the degree of vertical Europeanization in public debates on European affairs (e.g. Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2007; Kleinen-von Königslöw 2012). However, it has not been explored whether EU related stories reflect the diversity and accessibility of interest groups to these political institutions. Therefore, this research seeks to obtain insights into the intensity of the existent relationship between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council and interest groups in the media. If the media act as a mirror of the dynamics and the relationships between interest groups and European institutions within the political process, then, is there a higher diversity of interest groups in public debates related to the European Commission and the European Parliament than the European Council?
- 3) The media visibility of interest groups during the implementation process of European decisions. Existing literature has mainly based their conclusions on the relationship between the media attention to interest groups in public debates on European affairs and their position within the EU decision-making process (e.g.

Koopmans 2007). Scholars, instead, have largely neglected the impact of the implementation process in the media visibility of interest groups in these public debates. In this sense, interest groups which participate in parliamentary hearings to implement European normative may also obtain visibility in EU related debates published by the media. Hence, this analysis seeks to obtain more insights into how the visibility of interest groups is dependent on the European policy-making process, not only at the European political level, when new EU normative is discussed at the EU level, but also during its implementation at domestic level. Do interest groups invited to participate in the implementation of European normative obtain visibility in public debates on European affairs? Under what circumstances?

- 4) Finally, to what extent the Euro crisis may have changed the patterns of visibility of interest groups in the media, concretely regarding those previously excluded or not interested in getting involved in EU related debates. Existing literature has already demonstrated that executive actors and central banks are the main beneficiaries from the Europeanization of national public spheres during this critical juncture (e.g. Kriesi and Grande 2015). However, this strand of research has based their conclusions only considering the Euro crisis as the period under study, without exploring dynamics before the outbreak of the crisis, namely without comparing the non-crisis periods and this critical juncture. The negative impact of the Euro crisis over citizens' daily life may have modified the distribution, visibility, capacity, and incentives of interest groups to obtain visibility in public debates on European affairs. During non-crisis periods, participation of interest groups may be more linked to the approval of European decisions and its subsequent domestic implementation. Instead, the Euro crisis may have act as a catalyst for increasing attention to interest groups. Has the Euro crisis increased the visibility of interest groups in public debates on European affairs? Concretely, have interest groups previously excluded or with low incentives to participate in public debates on European affairs, such as, for example, citizens' groups and trade unions, increased their media visibility during this critical juncture?

Methodological approach

This research is based on a database including more than 40.000 EU related stories and 354.000 claims in *El País* and *El Mundo*, the most read newspapers in Spain, and covering the period January 2005 – December 2015. The selection of the period under study allows to explore the media attention to different political actors in the Spanish media over time, covering the most important events and developments in the EU during a decade. For instance, it allows to observe the possible differences in these patterns of media coverage between non-crisis periods and the Euro crisis. With the aim to analyse the impact of independence processes within an EU framework, this period also covers the beginning of the Catalan independence process including the celebration of the first popular consultation in Catalonia.

In order to approach the analysis of all the questions exposed above, the thesis relies on an automatic coding analytical approach based on the claim-analysis methodology developed by the *EUROPUB* project (e.g. Koopmans and Statham 1999). This is a quantitative method that takes public actors' claims as the dependent variable, focusing on the analysis of newspapers as the main sources of information where these claims get visibility in public debates. The claim-analysis approach, instead, focuses on the mobilized public opinions in the media. Statham and Koopmans (2009) argue that, by considering each claim in public debates, it can be classified who speaks publicly to whom, their overall participation in shaping the development of the public discussion, in whose interest, in which issues and argumentative frames. Despite using newspapers as the main source of information on public discourse has been criticized by existing literature, due to the selection biases resulted from the rules of journalist coverage, this risk is limited in this research, as it focuses on claims that have obtained media visibility and only those who become public can contribute to shape the public debate on European affairs (e.g. Koopmans 2007).

The analysis relies on the EU related stories published in *El País* and *El Mundo*, to control for media political parallelism. We need to have in mind that the media may be actively involved in the process of giving some actors more media visibility in public debates to benefit their political allies (Chaqués-Bonafont and Baumgartner 2012). Political actors' capacity to access to the media is likely to vary according to the media system, the dimensions of political ideology of media outlets and journalists (the extent of media political parallelism), and the role of the state in regulating the media (Hallin

and Mancini 2004). According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the Spanish media belong to the so-called Polarized or Mediterranean media system characterized by high media political parallelism in the coverage of public debates, a high state intervention, a low degree of journalistic professionalism and low newspaper circulation. In countries with a high degree of media political parallelism like Spain, media outlets are more likely to pay attention to actors with a similar ideological orientation. Nevertheless, the media may also be interested in associating the rival party, especially when it is in office, with bad news as a part of the political game played in the media arena (Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont 2015). The main question is whether these dynamics are present in the media coverage of a depoliticized issues in Spain, like European integration.

Structure of the thesis

This doctoral thesis is structured in two main chapters. The first explores the media visibility of executive actors and political parties in public debates on European affairs. The second chapter focuses on interest groups. Both chapters are organized as following. First, it is set the theoretical framework and developed several hypotheses on the factors explaining the possible variations in the media attention to these actors. Next, it is explained the methodology used for the analysis and the measurement of the different variables. The chapters conclude by testing the hypotheses and presenting the results. Briefly, results show that, as expected, the media visibility of executive actors and political parties react to top-down pressures. Executive actors, those with more media visibility, mainly react to the approval of new EU normative and events, while the visibility of political parties is more associated to European parliament elections. Yet, also as expected, political actors do not react only to EU processes and events, but they also use Europe strategically, as part of their competition to each other in the domestic political arena. Political parties use the EU to give visibility to issues they own, to achieve political goals, and this is especially the case of regional parties, which use an EU frame to give visibility to the interests of their regions. Interestingly, results also illustrate that the euro crisis did not redistribute significantly political actors' capacity to set the media agenda. Even if challenger parties were critical of most decisions adopted to overcome the crisis, their visibility on EU related public debates did not significantly increase during this critical juncture. Finally, results illustrate that even if European integration is not a politicized issue, as far s the EU is associated with the domestic political game, patterns

of media political parallelism emerge. For example, the visibility of secessionist Catalan parties only increases parallel to growing support for independence in *El Mundo*.

The analysis of interest groups corroborates that top-down processes do not play an important role in explaining their visibility in EU related debates. Interest groups do not obtain more media coverage when new normative is discussed at the EU level, not even on those policy areas where the EU has more competences. Yet, stories where new EU regulation in the fields of energy, environment, labor and social issues is discussed, show higher diversity of interest groups than policy domains of economic nature, which are monopolized by few groups. The analysis also shows that debates related to the European parliament and the European Commission are generally associated with a more pluralistic patterns, involving interest groups of different types, than those where the European Council participate. The visibility of interest groups does not increase neither during the approval of new EU normative, nor when their implementation is discussed at domestic level. Interest groups with a role in the implementation process have no visibility in public debates on European affairs, not even on highly politicized issues. Regarding the impact of the euro crisis, it did raise attention to previously excluded groups in EU related debates, such as labor unions, professional associations, or citizens' groups. Yet, important differences exist between *El Mundo* and *El País*. The analysis of interest groups further corroborates that the media are not passive actors but may be actively involved in the process of giving some actors more attention in public debates to support their political allies. Following these two chapters, the thesis finishes with a concluding chapter that summarizes the main findings, the limitation of the research and identifies future lines of inquiry in the light of results.

2. The visibility of executives and political parties in public debates on European affairs

2.1. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Public discourse is the primary medium for the development of public knowledge, values, interpretations and self-understandings for change and innovation, as well as reproduction or transmission over time in the inventory of ideas and arguments that are available in a given public sphere (Peters 2005).

This chapter explores the visibility obtained by executives and political parties in public debates on European affairs. Previous literature has mainly focused on analysing the degree of Europeanization of national public spheres (e.g. Gerhards 1993, 2000; Schlesinger 2003; Koopmans 2007). Concretely, most scholars have based their conclusions on the degree of vertical and horizontal Europeanization (e.g. Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2007; Kleinen-von Königslöw 2012; Wessler et al. 2008; Koopmans and Statham 2010; Koopmans 2004; Koopmans and Erbe 2004). Vertical Europeanization refers to the visibility of European institutions in public debates on European affairs, whereas horizontal Europeanization is the increasing attention to speakers and events from other member states. This research has argued that EU related stories tends to follow a pattern of “segmented” Europeanization (Kleinen-von Königslöw 2012). There was an increasing vertical Europeanization between 1990 and 2003, whereas horizontal Europeanization remained moderated and even declined over time (e.g. Meyer 2005; Hutter and Grande 2014; Kleinen-von Königslöw 2012).

Similarly, the *EUROPUB* project has already highlighted that public debates on European affairs reflect the current distribution of power and influence of political actors in the EU decision-making process (e.g. Koopmans 2004, 2007, Koopmans and Pfetsch 2006). Executive actors, both European and domestic, together with central banks are the main beneficiaries of increasing Europeanization of public debates in the media, weakening the position of political parties and actors from civil society (Koopmans 2004 2007; della Porta and Caiani 2006; Kriesi and Tresch 2007; see also by della Porta 2003 and Trenz 2004).

However, post-functionalist theories of integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009), developed on public opinion and political parties, emphasize that Europeanization cannot just be reduced to a top-down process. It also involves domestic actors and processes that

are able to influence the course of integration actively, shaping the way that European affairs are perceived at the domestic arena (Radaelli 2006; Woll and Jacquot 2010) and reported in the media (see, for example, Guinaudeau and Palau 2016). Whether a certain event obtains increasing visibility in the media depends on the attention paid by domestic actors. The media visibility of these actors may not only respond to structural and institutional factors related to the European political level, but they are more likely to use the EU as a parcel of their political strategy in domestic processes.

There are several scholar sources around the idea of issue competition between political parties. Robertson (1976) states that political parties are more likely to focus with a selective emphasis on certain issues rather than engage in direct confrontation. The Carmines and Stimson's model (1986), which is based on race elections in the United States, also shows that party differentiation through the notion of "issue emphasis" is crucial in raising voters' perceptions on political affairs. Similarly, the "issue-ownership" theory illustrates that political parties are more likely to pay attention to issues that they "own", instead of assuming divergent positions in affairs more related to their political adversaries (e.g. Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1989, 1996). According to Carmines (1991), successful politicians understand which issues benefit them and their political party and which not, so they try to politicize the former and depoliticize the latter. "Issue ownership" research was originally conducted in Europe by Budge and Farlie (1983) and in the United States by Petrocik (1989, 1996) to explain political parties' behaviour during domestic elections. Concretely, this literature has already demonstrated that electoral results may be at large explained by the salience of certain issues during the prior electoral campaign.

From an agenda-setting perspective, the "issue ownership" approach has also been used to explain how political parties emphasize certain issues that they "own" to set the media and political agendas (e.g. Walgrave et al. 2014; Walgrave and De Swert 2007; Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010; Meguid 2005). This is crucial for them, as political parties are usually associated to certain affairs in such a way that when citizens "think about an issue, they think about the party" (Walgrave and De Swert 2007). In this respect, political parties depend on their original social basis which is rooted in deep cleavages dividing the society (Petrocik 1996; Lipset and Rookan 1967; Klingemann et al. 1994). For example, social democrats are traditionally associated to social welfare issues, whereas green parties are more related to environmental affairs. From a competence

perspective, political parties that have the “ownership” over a issue are perceived by citizens as the most competent, reliable, and credible to deal with it and implement the best political measures (Petrocik et al. 2003). This dimension relates the citizens’ beliefs, the electoral factor, to the ability of the political party to make a good performance in the development of the issue, namely the policy factor (Walgrave et al. 2012). Citizens do not expect that political parties talk about issues not related to them and, even whether they make so, they are not likely to be perceived as credible and competent speakers (Van der Brug 2004).

Existing research has also demonstrated that political parties are more likely to reinforce their “ownership” on issues by means of their external communication. Influencing the media coverage is one of their most important tools to reinforce this “ownership” (Klingemann et al. 1994), mainly because citizens obtain most of the information related to policy issues through the media. Political parties find three significant incentives to insert issues that they “own” in the media agenda. First, they emphasize these issues to differentiate themselves from their political competitors in the eyes of citizens (Wagner 2012). Second, political parties may emphasize (or de-emphasize) these issues to reinforce and obtain reputation as the most competent to deal with them adequately (Holian 2004; Petrocik 1996). Thus, they may strengthen this identification into the citizens’ minds through the media exposure (Aalberg and Jenssen, 2007; Walgrave and De Swert 2007; Walgrave et al. 2009). Finally, there is a correlation between the issues emphasized by political parties and the electoral public concerns: the more an issue is discussed among political actors, the more the electorate is concerned about it (Iyengar and Kinder 1987).

In EU related literature, it has been argued that radical Eurosceptic parties pay attention to European affairs, because they have issue “ownership” on the topic (De Vries 2007; Green-Pedersen 2012; Navarro and Brouard 2014). In this line, previous literature has already demonstrated the influence of hard Euroscepticism and the politization around the EU integration in the media attention to European affairs (e.g. Kriesi 2007; Kriesi et al. 2006; Adam and Maier 2011; Boomgaarden et al. 2013; Schuck et al. 2011). Departing from this, the goal of this research is to provide new insights into the extent to which in a country where the EU integration is a consensual topic Europhile political parties use the EU as part of their political strategies. To do so, in the following section it is explored the incentives of political parties to pay attention to the EU integration in the

media according to their degree of Euroscepticism. It is expected that Europhile parties will obtain visibility in public debates on European affairs, not to politicize the EU integration, but to emphasize issues that they have ownership over.

2.1.1. Degrees of Euroscepticism: why do Europhile parties pay attention to European affairs

(Associative issue ownership) is the spontaneous association between issues and parties in the minds of voters, resulting from a history of attention (Walgrave et al. 2012).

Taggart (1998) argues that Euroscepticism “expresses the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration”. The literature on Euroscepticism is rich and of quality (for a review see Rodríguez-Aguilera de Prat 2012). These analyses have mainly focused on analysing public opinion (Lubbers and Scheepers 2005), political parties (Kopecky and Mudde 2002; Sczerbiak and Taggart 2008) and its conceptual dimension (Flood 2002). Nevertheless, this strand of research has not provided a unanimous interpretation or categorization of the Eurosceptic phenomenon yet¹.

¹ The most comprehensive theoretical framework in this topic has been provided by Flood (2002), including six categories with subcategories to cover the range of different positions towards the EU integration: 1) Rejectionists. This category includes: 1.1) those opposed to the EU membership; and 1.2) those that maintain opposition to participate in some of the basic European policies; 2) Revisionists. This category is composed by: 2.1) those who seek to regain national sovereignty over political competences that have been transferred to the European political level; and 2.2) those that seek to do so only regarding some very specific affairs; 3) Minimalists which includes: 3.1) those which accept the current EU integration as the maximum current status quo; and 3.2) only in certain affairs; 4) gradualists, including: 4.1) those who support a greater integration; and 4.2) only for some affairs; 5) Reformists which are in favour of greater European commitment and apply a gradual increasing in integration of member states; and, finally, 6) Maximalists which seek to obtain: 6.1) the maximum degree of EU integration; 6.2) only in certain affairs. However, these classifications are more appropriate for its comprehensive conceptual framework than conducting effective empirical research (Rodríguez-Aguilera de Prat 2012).

Kopecky and Mudde (2002) frame the attitudes towards the EU integration and specific European policies in four variants within two main dimensions (see Annex I). Euroenthusiasts, who are simultaneously Europhiles and Eurooptimistics, support and are optimistic about the current trajectory of the EU integration. Eurosceptics, which are at the same time Europhiles and Europessimists, tend to favour the EU integration in principle, but criticize the current development of the EU. Concerning Europragmatics, which are Europhobes and Eurooptimistics, they maintain an opposition towards the broad project of the EU integration but are positive about the current development of the EU, as it serves domestic or sectorial interests. Finally, Eurorejectors, who are included within the Europhobes and Europessimists dimensions, criticize the integration project and the specific form taken by the EU.

This research relies on the classification provided by Taggart and Sczerbiak (2002). These scholars provide a dichotomous classification to classify the different forms of Euroscepticism which, even though its reductionist schematic, has the advantage of being applicable for operational objectives in empirical research. Concretely, these scholars classify Eurosceptic attitudes as hard Euroscepticism and soft Euroscepticism. Hard Euroscepticism holds a principled opposition to both the EU and the integration process. It can be perceived in political parties which seek the withdrawal of their country from the EU or/and are opposed to the whole EU integration project as it is currently conceived. Taggart and Sczerbiak define two methods to classify a political party as hard Eurosceptic: 1) it only mobilizes against the EU solely, opposing to the integration on principle; and 2) it frames the EU as “too capitalist/socialist/neo-liberal/bureaucratic, depending on ideological position (communist/conservative/socialist/populist)”, calling for a “re-casting of the terms on which their country is an EU member that is incompatible with the present trajectory of the European project”. From this perspective, the EU is perceived as an anti-national project, too bureaucratic, elitist, undemocratic and unpopular.

Soft Euroscepticism, instead, is characterized by the lack of an objection per se to the EU integration or the membership, but where concerns related to one or some policy domains leads to a qualified opposition to the EU. These political parties use the contestation over the EU as a part of their political repertoire. In this regard, the EU is problematic when its development runs counter to domestic interests, policies, or affairs that they support. They can accept the benefits from the cooperation between member states but reject the transformation of this cooperation into a supranational political authority. This implies an instrumental view of the EU and a limited perception of the integration process, as their opposition is not of principle, but practical and sectorial (Sczerbiak and Taggart 2008).

Regarding public discussions on European affairs, hard Eurosceptic parties are those more likely to politicize the EU integration in the media agenda, as they benefit electorally from raising political and public debate on the topic. As existing research has already demonstrated, this is related to the circumstances under which EU integration enters party competition.

Hix and Lord (1997) provide one of the first approaches on Eurosceptic political parties, arguing that attitudes towards the EU integration represent an independent

political dimension mainly concerned with contestation over national sovereignty (see also: Hix 1999). This dimension is orthogonal to the political left-right dimension, because they deal with different questions of resource distribution. Hix and Lord (1997) illustrate that the left-right contestation over economic and socio-political issues is related to the distribution of resources among functional interests such as social classes, whereas the sovereignty dimension refers to the distribution of resources among territorial interests (see also: Prosser 2016).

Similarly, Kriesi (2005, 2007) and Kriesi et al. (2006) illustrate that the protection of national sovereignty is considered as a response to the integration process and, concretely, the process of globalization. The EU has been part of these processes and is shaped by political (new supranational authorities), economic (market liberalization) and cultural (immigration) consequences of the integration project (Kriesi 2005, 2007; Kriesi et al. 2006; Statham and Koopmans 2009). A new structural conflict is likely to rise between the so-called “winners” and “losers” of the globalization, creating new social cleavages in some areas such as cultural competition between nationals and immigrants. The winners of these processes are educated and well-positioned citizens, owners and highly qualified employees which are open to globalization and international competition (Kriesi et al. 2006; Kriesi 2007; Gifford 2010) as well as cosmopolitan citizens (Kriesi 2007). They are more likely to be positive towards the EU integration, as they may obtain a profit of it (Gifford 2010). The losers of the EU integration process include those groups attached to economic protected sectors that are increasingly exposed to foreign competition as well as groups with a lower degree of education and economic security (Kriesi 2007). They consider immigration, the free movement of people and even a close EU as threats against national identity and values, increasing their opposition towards the integration process (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006).

These conflicts shape the attitudes towards the EU integration. From this perspective, empirical research has shown that political mobilization around the EU takes an “inverted U” pattern (e.g. Hooghe et al. 2002). Parties at the centre of the political spectrum usually behave strategically to maintain the dominance of the left-right dimension in party competition, having an interest to maintain a pro-EU position (e.g. Hooghe et al. 2002; Statham and Koopmans 2009). Concretely, these political parties tend to de-emphasize European affairs to avoid political contestation, pursuing a strategy to maintain the status quo (e.g. Hix and Lord 1997; Aspinwall 2002; Statham and

Koopmans 2009). In this regard, politicization of the EU integration is considered a “touchstone of dissident” (Taggart 1998). Thereby, Euroscepticism is a feature more related to extreme parties both on the left and the right, especially regarding the new populist right (Taggart 1998; Hix and Lord 1997; Aspinwall 2002; Statham and Koopmans 2009). These extreme Eurosceptic parties pay attention to European affairs tactically to distinguish themselves from pro-EU positions and obtain an electoral advantage (e.g. Taggart 1998; Hooghe et al. 2002; Wagner 2012). To do so, they take a position within the two-dimensional development of the EU integration: the economic and the political dimensions (Kriesi 2007). The first dimension drives the mobilization of the extreme left as a response to the threats that the market liberalization and globalization represent for the social achievements of the left at the domestic political level. Instead, the political dimension is more related to the right-wing that holds the strongest anti-EU positions against the political and cultural consequences of the integration process. This is the case of certain parties that have historically emphasized the EU integration like the British UKIP or the topic of immigration like the Austrian FPÖ and the French Front National (Kriesi 2007).

Literature on the democratic deficit has conceptualized the EU as a “sleeping giant” (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004). This standpoint is based on the fact that the EU does not reflect citizens’ preferences and opinions about the EU integration in domestic elections and, moreover, citizens have neither interest to discuss their ideas on the topic (Van der Eijk and Franklin 1997). Mair (2000) maintains that the EU has just had an impact on citizens’ preferences in the United Kingdom. In other countries, party competition still lacks a European dimension, as Euroscepticism is just a parcel of extreme parties’ oppositional strategy. They are mainly characterized by a strong opposition to immigration and a widespread resentment against mainstream elites. As Mair (2011) argues, the EU is not a potential cleavage for party competition yet, having had a little impact on domestic party systems.

Conversely, other scholars have argued that the conflict on the EU integration is structured by existing cleavages in the political system rather than being a new cleavage by itself (Marks and Wilson 2000). Hooghe et al. (2002) illustrate that the “U-pattern” pattern of the EU integration is somewhat misleading, due to the positions of fringe parties. They argue that if these parties are not considered in the analysis, then there is a linear relationship between the EU integration and the left-right dimension. This

relationship ranges from an anti-EU right to a pro-EU left. Similarly, Kriesi (2005, 2007) also notes that political parties' mobilization in some member states like the United Kingdom, where Euroscepticism resonates through deep cultural and national anxieties (Díez Medrano 2003), the EU integration has stimulated a transformation of domestic party competition through an asymmetrical "inverted U". Politicization on the topic is mainly driven by the new populist right, but also by mainstream conservatives (see also: Grande and Kriesi 2016). In this sense, this politicization "cuts right through the political system's core pitching an anti-EU right against a pro-EU left" (Statham and Koopmans 2009). Kriesi (2005) argues that conservative parties and the new populist right are those which most successfully appeal to the fears related to increasing immigration and defence of national identity and sovereignty. Some scholars have stated that the EU integration is indeed fused with the left-right dimension (Kreppel and Tsebelis 1999; Tsebelis and Garrett 2000). They illustrate that political contestation on the topic is more focused on the discussion about whether there should be more regulation across the EU rather than in the degree of integration. The regulation dimension is the same and congruous with the left-right dimension.

Nevertheless, Hooghe and Marks (1999) argue that just some aspects of political contestation on the EU integration are absorbed into the left-right dimension. EU politics do not have the same impact on all policy issues, but they are more related to economic and regulation affairs. Party contestation takes place between regulated capitalism vs neoliberalism. From this perspective, if the EU integration is more focused on neo-liberal policies, the centre-left political parties are more likely to be critical, whereas if the EU maintains more protectionist positions and a market regulation approach, then these parties are more likely to be favourably to it. The remaining political issues of the EU integration are integrated into a similar orthogonal dimension to that proposed by Hix and Lord (1997).

Hooghe et al. (2002) state that these remaining aspects of the EU integration can be explained by voters' positions on a "new politics" dimension which builds political issues around lifestyle, nationalism, culture, environment and immigration (Inglehart 1990; Kitschelt 1995). According to Marks and Wilson (2002), the EU integration is perceived as a threat to the principles defended by the "traditional-authoritarian-national" pole (TAN). As a result, these political parties are hostile towards immigration, foreign cultures, cosmopolitanism, and international institutions. Instead, parties placed on the

“green-alternative-libertarian” pole (GAL) have mixed perceptions about the EU integration. It is perceived as an opportunity to protect some aspects such as the environment, but also a possible threat for democracy. Hooghe et al. (2004) claim that the new politics dimension is more powerful than the left-right dimension to predict political parties’ support for the integration process.

Hooghe et al. (2002) also illustrate that this “new politics” dimension may explain possible variations on the party competition in different member states. There is a division between Western and Eastern member states. Regarding this geographic division, “competition over European issues tend to map more readily onto the existing party structures in eastern Europe, while in western Europe, European issues are more of a cross cutting issue” (Prosser 2016). Hence, European attitudes that are not absorbed within the left-right dimension and the “new politics” dimension may act as a potentially volatile electoral affair (see also: Prosser 2016).

Existing literature has also stressed the importance of considering internal political party dynamics to explain their mobilization in European affairs. Mainstream parties internally divided on the EU integration would avoid using the EU as a parcel of their political strategy at the domestic arena, because this topic raises internal conflict and do not bring any positive electoral results to them (Adam and Maier 2011; Green-Pedersen 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008; Parsons and Weber 2011). Hence, these mainstream parties tend to follow a “salient cartel” (Weber 2007), trying to de-politicize issues related to the EU integration (Adam and Maier 2011). However, Guinaudeau and Palau (2016) illustrate that European events, such as European parliament elections or European Council summits, make the debate inevitable, challenging the status quo that increases the newsworthiness of EU related affairs. These events open a window of opportunity, especially for extreme parties or Eurosceptic factions like sovereigntists within right-wing parties or extreme left factions in social democratic ones, to challenge the party majority (Parsons and Weber 2011) by means of politicizing the EU integration topic.

For example, the French socialist party has been divided in several factions since its creation, among which there are sectors more critical of the EU integration process. Due to the political decisions to ratify policy compromises to remain in the European Monetary Union, the most Eurosceptic factions promoted the creation of a new party, while extreme left sectors were critical of the liberal orientation of the EU during the 1992 campaign. Similarly, the conservative RPR showed mixed positions between those who

were favourable to share the pro-EU positions of its main coalition partner UDF and those who actively campaigned against the Maastricht treaty. These divisions were especially important during the failed ratification of the Constitutional project during the French referendum in 2005 (see Guinaudeau and Palau 2016).

Internal contestation was even more prominent within the British Conservative Party since the early 1990s. Eurosceptic conservative divisions were especially significant during the Major's (e.g. Usherwood 2002) and Cameron's (e.g. Gifford 2014) executives. This internal divisions within the British Conservative Party contributed towards a more internal cohesion over the European integration within the Labour Party (see Guinaudeau and Palau 2016). Tony Blair, one of the most pro-European Primer Ministers in the history of the United Kingdom, and the New Labour limited internal divisions within the party, even though there are still some divergent positions in specific issues such as the EMU (Gifford 2010).

Regarding member states where European affairs are less contested, political parties also may address the EU as a consensual topic, for example, in the case of executive actors to defend their governmental record (Guinaudeau and Palau 2016; Palau and Ansemil 2020). In Spain, for instance, European affairs are more likely to be framed with respect to the benefits attributed to the EU integration in terms of economic performance, strengthening democracy or reinforcing the country's position within the international political arena (Díez Medrano 2003). The Spanish Conservative Party (PP) in the late 1990s emphasized the successful economic policy implemented to fulfil the convergence criteria (Chaqués-Bonafont et al. 2015). In this countries, political parties are likely to be agenda-setters of European affairs, without needing EU events to set the EU on the media agenda (Guinaudeau and Palau 2016).

Palau (2019), in her analysis on the parliamentary arena, demonstrates that these actors do not only seek to reduce information asymmetries, but also they use the EU to emphasize issues that they have ownership over. This is the case of state-wide opposition parties which emphasize the EU following issue saliency strategies, pursuing an electoral motivation. For example, a Europhile green party has incentives to use the EU to give visibility to their points of view into the public debate about the approval of European Directives on environmental issues to attack the incumbent, emphasizing the low attention to green policies on the executive agenda and/or blaming it for failure policies or implementation deficits. Similarly, left political parties have incentives to influence

public debates on European affairs to express their serious concerns on the current direction of the EU integration and/or the social consequences for the country in relation to the implementation of treaties.

Hence, it is argued that Europhile opposition parties make an heresthetic use of the EU to transform their alleged unfavourable political situation, regarding executive actors and Eurosceptic positions, to a more favourable one (see, for example, Dardanelli 2009). The “heresthetics” approach (Riker 1986) illustrates that parties which face an unequal distribution of forces or an unfavourable political situation may change their current strategy, proposing a new alternative that allows them to achieve their political objectives. Riker (1986) argues that this is the art of strategic manipulation of the political dimensions of an issue by a political party, pursuing its objectives in such a way that they can obtain the support of the electorate even without persuasion. Similarly, Putnam (1988) proposes the “two-level game” perspective that have a similar lineage of the current debate on Europeanization. This concept is related to the complex interactions between national and international factors. Putnam illustrates that international agreements must be ratified at the domestic arena, being a key link between the two levels. He highlights that “bringing politics back” is a necessary step to explain the existing interactions between domestic and international factors. As the “heresthetics” approach, these interactions between the two levels allow political actors to “spot a move on one board that will trigger re-alignments on other boards, enabling them to achieve otherwise unattainable objectives” (Putman 1988).

Political parties internally divided on the European integration are not likely to use this type of strategy as a part of their political parcel, as it may raise political debate around the EU integration. They would be more prone to avoid the question. Instead, this strategy is more likely to be employed by Europhile political parties in countries where the EU integration is a consensual topic such as Spain. In consonance with the “issue-ownership” theory and previous research on electoral competition (e.g. Petrocick 1989; 1996) and parliamentary behaviour (Palau 2019), right-wing political parties are more likely to use the EU to obtain visibility in issues related to economic affairs, whereas left parties are more concerned about welfare, labour and environmental issues.

To sum, it is expected that:

H1) Europhile political parties will obtain visibility in public debates on European affairs, not to politicize the European integration, but to emphasize issues on which they have ownership.

The impact of European elections

Elections to the European Parliament have frequently been regarded as second-order elections (Hix and Marsh 2011; Hobolt and Wittrock 2011), obtaining marginal attention in the media (de Vreese et al. 2006). Nevertheless, existing literature has observed that European elections campaigns have tended to become more visible and salient in media outlets over time, even though there is still cross-country variation (e.g. Boomgaarden and de Vreese 2016). Similarly, de Vreese et al. (2006) also demonstrate, in their analysis on the European elections from 1999 to 2004, that the media have gradually been likely to pay more attention to the EU during campaign periods. Thereby, it may be expected that political parties' incentives to obtain visibility in these public debates to have gradually increased as media attention to European elections has growing over time.

Even though opposition parties tend to act as agenda-setters on their own in countries where the EU is rather a consensual topic (Guinaudeau and Palau 2016), they may also have enough incentives to obtain media attention for their claims during the celebration of elections to the European Parliament. In this sense, opposition parties may try to set the EU in the political and media agenda during these electoral campaigns, as they seek to obtain and maximize positive electoral results. Vote-seeking electoral success, defined in terms of vote maximization (Downs 1957), majority-seeking (Robertson 1976) or plurality-seeking (Hinich and Ordershook 1970), is usually perceived as the overriding aim of all political parties (Steenberg and Scoot 2004).

Moreover, it is argued that this media coverage has not tended to become more European in nature over time, but mainly different positions are focused on domestic affairs (Boomgaarden and de Vreese 2016; Shuck et al. 2011, Van der Eijk and Franklin 1997). During election periods, opposition parties must pay substantial attention to their aims, voters, and related policy issues. As a result, they must be particularly responsive to the salience of the EU when elections to the European Parliament take place (Steenberg and Scoot 2004). Most citizens learn about the functioning of the EU, the elections, and the campaign itself from traditional media outlets such as television news and newspapers

(e.g. Schuck et al. 2011; Bennet and Entman 2011). Previous research has already shown that the extent to which European affairs are presented in the media may affect both public opinion and electoral behaviour (Banducci and Semetko 2003; de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006). Hence, this media and public attention allow political parties to obtain party cohesion, keeping activists in the fold, as they are critical to the survival of the party (Aldrich 1983; Robertson 1976).

Within the media coverage devoted to European affairs, media outlets also have enough incentives to pay attention to these EU related stories. These motivations not only respond to their role as the main public forums to encourage citizens' participation, but also public debates on the European elections are usually involved in elements of conflict and dramatism. Existing literature on the news value theory (e.g. Galtung and Ruge 1965) has already illustrated that factors like negativism, dramatism, and conflict are crucial criteria for the media to elect an event as a public debate. Similarly, Neuman et al. (1992) argue that the media tend to emphasize stories related to conflict, where two parts are pitted against one another. European elections imply political debates and divergent positions around diverse affairs that may increase the media attention to opposition parties during these European events.

Thus, it is expected that:

H2) Opposition parties will obtain more visibility in public debates on European affairs during European Parliament elections.

Even though the left-right dimension is important, in decentralized or federal states there is another key dimension of party competition: the centre-periphery dimension. In a similar way than the "issue-ownership" approach (e.g. Petrocik 1989), regional parties tend to use the EU to emphasize interests related to their region in the parliamentary arena (Palau 2018; 2019). Next, it is analysed to what extents these incentives are also reflected in the media arena to achieve and obtain legitimacy for their political demands and aspirations.

2.1.2. The strategic use of the EU on the part of regional parties

If the EU process moves in the direction of an alliance of states (rather than an institutional framework that de-emphasizes state boundaries), substate nationalists may look to secessionism as a way of becoming equal members with other European nations (Csgero and Goldgeier 2004).

Following existing debates between the intergovernmentalism, the neofunctionalism and the multilevel governance approaches, one of the most important questions analysed by existing literature is how the EU has affected the power of regions, with contradictory results. Some scholars have argued that the EU integration has increased the power of regions within member states, whereas others have concluded that it has had a rather limited effect or even it has reduced their power. Next, I explore both perspectives.

The multilevel governance perspective (Marks 1993; Hooghe and Marks 2001) is an abstract model and interpretative scheme that explains the transformation of the relationships between the different political levels in the EU (Caciagli 2006). This concept illustrates a positive impact of the EU integration over regions, as it has increased their power at the expense of member states through three type of mechanisms.

First, legitimate mechanisms. The EU is perceived as an ideal arena, where regional political objectives can be achieved as well as obtain resources and allies against possible centralizing tendencies within member states (Keating 2000). This political arena is significant for regions, mainly from a symbolic level. They can present themselves as key participants with the capacity to influence the EU decision-making process, to assume responsibility for governance, together with its costs and invest for its effectiveness, and to promote their regional interests (e.g. De Winter 2001). The EU integration has provided a new discursive space, acting as a counterpoint of member states, in which regions may give visibility to issues that are of interest to their region, such as, for example, aspirations for self-government or promoting linguistic and cultural demands, and electorally appealing for their voters (Coakley 1992; Högenauer 2017; Palau, 2019; see also De Winter 1998; Keating 2000, 2001; Schmitt-Egner 2002; see also Martin 2011).

Similarly, it is argued that the Lisbon Treaty has strengthened the involvement and legitimacy of domestic parliaments as formal and active participants in the European political level (Vara Arribas and Högenauer 2015). This reinforcement responds to the

need to reduce the so-called EU democratic deficit, bringing the EU and European affairs closer to citizens. As a result, regions have obtained an increasing importance at the European political level, as they are more capable of communicating European affairs to citizens, carrying public concerns and legitimating political demands into the European political arena (Högenauer, 2017).

Second, relational mechanisms. The EU has provided a new and complex institutional arena, organized in an asymmetrical manner, where member states and regions can interact each other, influence political decisions and seek expression and support for their political demands (Keating 2000). Moreover, it is argued that the European institutions have become in potential unwitting regions' allies against member states (see Jolly 2007). From Maastricht and the Amsterdam treaties, the multilevel governance has not only involved a transference of competences from member states to the European political level, but also to regions (e.g. Caciagli 2006; Boronska-Hryniewiecka 2017). There is an evolution within member states towards an internal multilevel governance, where regions have increasingly obtained political competences in a large set of European policies (Cloots et al., 2012). The increasing power of regions as well as the emergency of the territory as an economic area of development and social transformation have gradually weakened member states, prompting discussions on national sovereignty within a European context and turning regions into active participants in the European framework (e.g. Caciagli 2006; Elias 2008).

Finally, administrative mechanisms. The EU has turned regions into administrative actors of European politics, giving them new administrative responsibilities and technical, political, and economic resources (Smyrl 1997). Regions can invest in administrative resources to engage in networking with legislative and executive actors, both vertically and horizontally (Bursens and Högenauer 2017; Boronska-Hryniewiecka 2017). Interparliamentary networks and cooperation with regional executives allows regional actors and their staff to learn more about the functioning of the EU, improve their EU-oriented expertise and undergo into processes of Europeanization (Boronska-Hryniewiecka 2013a). By means of expertise exchange, coalition building or "good practices", regions can directly improve their administrative performance in the EU, gaining the right to obtain information on European drafts of legislative acts or even pass reasoned opinions at the domestic arena (Bursens and Högenauer 2017). Regions can also indirectly obtain information on European decisions

and technical support through, for example, their organizations settled at the European political level. On the one hand, regions obtain more information related to certain European policies such environment or European funds. On the other hand, regional offices help their regions to understand the development of European projects and resolve technical questions about European procedures and current relationships with other regions (Caciagli 2006).

Scholars who have argued that the EU integration has reduced the power of regions have considered that member states still dominate the EU policy-making process through the European Council, where final political decisions are taken (Keating 2000). These political decisions usually affect several political competences that have previously been delegated to regions. There are diverse mechanisms for participation of regions in the European institutions, but they are strictly controlled by member states who may choose whether to guarantee the participation of regions (Nagel 2004; Palau 2018). In this regard, member states are free to decide who is sent to the Committee of the Regions² and usually they choose local representatives instead of regional ones (Nagel 2004).

Regarding studies that has concluded that the EU integration has not had any effect on regions, or this has been rather limited, it illustrates that member states may prevent the formation of alliances between the European integration and regions. Nagel (2004) argues that the members of the European Commission are chosen by member states. Even when this political institution has conflicts with the Council of Ministers, it does not appeal to regions, as the contacts between the European Commission and regions are mediated by member states, except for the regional policy (Hooghe 1996; Leonardi 1993). Member states still monopolize interest' aggregation and conflict mediation, as they exercise the control over resources and their allocation. As a result, they inevitable have become the main and almost exclusively interlocutors with the European institutions (Caciagli 2006).

From an intergovernmental perspective, regions still remain in a weak position in the EU, where few of them have actually representation in the Council of Ministers and none of them are represented on a regular basis (Caciagli 2006). Only the most powerful regions, concretely the German Landers and the Belgium regions, can send their regional

² As Caciagli (2006) illustrates the Committee of the Regions was defined by the Maastricht Treaty and definitively settled in 1994, ratified in the Amsterdam Conference in 1997 and, finally, renewed in 1997, becoming a representative European institution together with the Council of Ministers.

representatives to the Council of Ministers in those matters that affect their political competences. Moreover, there are considerable differences in the development of regions, because of the existence of different forms of state territorial organization: there is a different degree of competences among regions, different economic and social developments, some of them have legislative power, whereas other not and, finally, there may also be differences among their cultural and social regional demands. Thus, the strongest regions can have more chances to influence their member states and the EU integration, whereas the weakest ones depend on their member states (Bullmann, 1996).

Overall, this previous literature has analysed the impact of the EU integration on regions at the macro-level. However, it is still known little about to what extent it has influenced the political strategies followed by regional parties. Next, it is explored and developed hypotheses on this question, emphasizing their motivations for using the EU to attach their political demands. First, it is provided a brief description of the different types of regional parties and their characteristics. After that, it is explained how these actors may use the EU to achieve their regional demands or raise political debate around the independence of the region.

It has already been illustrated the multi-dimensionality of regional parties' ideology (Coakley 1992; De Winter and Türsan 1998; De Winter et al. 2006), emphasizing that they tend to be more heterogeneous than other political parties in the left-right dimension (De Winter 1998). The significant amount of regional political parties allows to consider them as other type of party family together with the liberals, the conservatives, the extreme left, the extreme right, the social-democrats, or the greens (Caciagli 2006). Regional political parties are also mobilized around another key dimension of party competition: the centre-periphery dimension. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identify the centre-periphery as one of the four most important cleavages³ related to political parties. More specifically, it is mainly referred to the existing relationships

³ Lipset and Rokkan (1967) enumerate four cleavages that shape party systems and the division of the electorate: 1) centre-periphery cleavage. This cleavage is related to the established relationships between the central state and the different regions. 2) state-church cleavage: this cleavage is related to the conflict between religious and secular electorate; 3) land-industry cleavage: conflicts produced because of Industrialization between agricultural and industrial interests. It is referred to the debate between whether the state would maintain custom duties to protect the agricultural sector or favouring exportations and cheaper importations; and 4) Owner-worker cleavage: the class cleavage that establishes the division among owners and employers, on the one side, and workers and tenants, on the other side. This cleavage is the origin of the division of political parties between left and right parties.

between regions and the state, by which regional parties can develop a “sub-state national identity” (Hoppe 2005).

Strmiska (2005) illustrates that regional parties are those which constitute an “autonomous party formation of regional obedience, whose ideological, program and organizational identity (...) are of regional identity”. They perceive the centre, namely the state-wide institutions, as “the others” that differ “in cultural, economic and political terms” from their sub-state nation (Hoppe 2005). Thus, regional parties have been more likely to be supportive of political decentralization and increasing regional autonomy than state-wide political parties (e.g. De Winter 1998), as their existence is more related to their regional identity rather than their ideological dimension (see: Jensen and Spoon 2010). Consequently, they focus on political demands for increasing self-government, redistribution of competences and power between the central government and the regions or the restructuration of the domestic political structure (De Winter 1998). Similarly, Dandoy (2010) identifies this type of regional demands as a required condition for a political party to be considered as regional. Thus, he excludes as a regional political party, all political parties that do not have the territorial reorganization as a primary aim.

Many regional parties can be identified as ethno-regional (e.g. Urwin 1983). Ethno-regional parties have an exclusive national history, culture and/or linguistic features that link the community with the region (Csergo and Goldgeier 2004). They use these exclusive attributes to stress the existent differences between their region and the state (De Winter 2001; Hoppe 2005). They are considered as “peripheral historical minorities” (Muller-Rommel 1998), challenging the current nation-state, its political system, the current power of the region or even its democratic order to seek a major recognition of their cultural identity (Muller-Rommel 1998) or some form of self-government (e.g. Csergo and Goldgeier 2004). Some examples of ethno-regional parties are the Catalan *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC), the Scottish National Party (SNP) or the *Welsh Plaid Cymru* (Nagel 2004).

However, ethno-regional political parties are just a sub-type of regional parties. As stated earlier, the territorial issue is still the most important characteristic to consider a political party as regional, so not all regional parties are ethno-regional parties and not all ethnic parties are regional parties (Strmiska 2005). Strmiska (2005) argues that it is not a required condition that a political party is built along an ethnic discourse or identification, as there may be other types of regionalism discourses focused on a purely

geographic nature or with the aim to increase economic or political benefits for the region. For example, in Spain the most moderate regional parties are found in regions where ethnic divisions are absent, such as in Cantabria or Andalusia, or even weak such as the Canarias Islands or Aragon (Masseti 2009).

Regional parties can also be classified according to their objectives and the means that they use to achieve them. Their political demands may be fulfilled by means of peaceful and consensual means, participating within the institutional structure, or through the path of the violence establishing links with terrorist groups (Masseti, 2009). The Catalan ERC, the Scottish SNP and the Welsh *Plaid Cymru* are some regional political parties that pursue their objectives through the consensual way, whereas the Basque *Herri Batasuna* (HB) was associated to the terrorist group *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA). Moreover, their political demands and objectives can vary from increasing cultural and linguistic protectionism to straight-forward self-determination (De Winter 1998). De Winter (2001) proposed a pragmatic classification to classify regional parties according to their political demands and objectives: protectionist regional parties, decentralist regional parties and, finally, secessionist political parties⁴.

⁴ According to De Winter (2001), protectionist regional parties seek to defend the interest of their regional minority and their cultural and linguistic characteristics. They neither seek the self-determination of their region nor question the centrality of the central institutions. There are two sub-types of protectionist regional parties: conservative and participationist parties. The formers are favourable to preserve the status-quo regarding the current domestic political structure. Their aims are to prevent even more discrimination over their political rights and their cultural and/or linguistic situation. Participationist regional parties also seek an improvement in their political situation. They focus on moderate regional demands such as the use of proportional electoral systems or the establishment of positive linguistic quotas. This would be the case of French Basque regional parties (Izquierdo 2005) like the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV) or *Euskal Batasuna* (EB).

The second type of regional parties are decentralist parties that challenge the current structure of power between the region and the state. They seek obtain competences related to culture, language, education, media, budget, taxes, regional development or increasing influence in domestic and EU decision-making processes. There are three sub-types of decentralist parties: autonomist, federalist and confederalist parties. Autonomist parties stress the singularity of their region in comparison with the other regions of the state, receiving more self-government and responsibilities. This aim was pursued, for example, by Jordi Pujol and the former Catalan party *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), employing the EU in the past to obtain the recognition of the singularity of Catalonia within Spain (Nagel 2004). Even though they do not exclude self-determination as a future option, their principal aim is to obtain the maximum of autonomy possible for their region. Some examples of autonomist parties would be *Coalición Canaria*, the Basque PNV or the Brittany *Union Démocratique Bretonne* (Keating 1988; Schrijver 2006). Federalist parties seek to implement federalism, implying a sharing power between the state and the regions of the country. Some federalists regional parties are the Dutch *Fryske Nasjonale Partij* (FPN) or the Catalan *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* (PSC). Finally, confederalists regional parties have similar positions than their federalist counterparts, but with the main difference that the regions hold the sovereignty and can decide

Concerning secessionist parties, their main difference with other regional counterparts is that they base their political position on a “territorial imperative” (Kellas 2004). Their political mobilization is not only focused on a population or a strong political demand, but also on the effective exercise of sovereignty over a defined territory (Premdas et al. 1990). Dardanelli and Mitchell (2014) have illustrated that some prominent regions as Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain or the Quebec in Canada, a significant proportion of the population see themselves as a “stateless nation” and secessionist parties are the most voted political parties within the region. According to them, in these regions were a clear shift towards a secessionist direction in recent years rather than increasing autonomy. This was particularly the case of the Catalan party *Convergència i Unió* (CiU). After the regional elections of 2010, CiU formed a minority executive after seven years in opposition. The PP was the preferred option to become in its partner, but the situation changed after the PP’s electoral victory by absolute majority in the general elections on 2011 (Martín and Urquizu-Sancho 2012). Due to its prior experience with the absolute majority of the José María Aznar’s executive, CiU became aware of the harm that depending on the state-wide conservative party without the capacity to condition their policies had done to its reputation as the defender of the Catalan interests (Rico 2012). This forced the regional party to look elsewhere for the support that it needed, especially in the context of the Euro crisis and austerity measures (Rico and Liñera 2014).

As a result of the negative economic and social consequences of the Euro crisis, the Catalan executive lost access to financial markets in 2012 that might solve or alleviate the problem of increasing public debt. CiU managed to pass a proposal for a new fiscal arrangement in the region which would repair the existing fiscal imbalance between

which competences and decision-making processes they delegate to the state. The Belgian *Sociaal-Liberale Partij* is an example of confederalist party.

Finally, there are three sub-types of secessionist regional parties: irredentist parties, rattachist parties and independentist parties. Independentist want to obtain the full independence of their region. They challenge the conceptual hegemony of the state by offering an alternative national structure (Sutherland 2005). Some examples of these regional parties are the Catalans ERC, *Junts per Catalunya* (JuntsXCat), the Scottish SNP, the Welsh *Plaid Cymru* or the Sicilian *Movimento per l’Indipendenza Siciliana* (MIS). Irredentist regional parties not only seek the independence, but also the annexation of some regions that belongs to another state to their territory (De Winter 1998). Examples of these parties are the Catalan ERC that seeks the creation of Catalan Countries from other regions in Spain and France. Finally, rattachist regional parties want to separate from their current state and join to another one, avoiding the independence of their region. In this regard, some Wallonia movements, for example, seek to leave Brussels and join to France.

Catalonia and the central state. This party expected that the march traditionally held on 11 September to translate into popular support for the proposal before the meeting between the Catalan regional president Artur Mas and the President of the central executive Mariano Rajoy. The march eventually became into a massive popular demand for the independence of Catalonia. After the failure to reach an agreement with the central government, the popular support for secessionism encouraged CiU to pursue a more radical course (Rico and Liñera 2014). After the celebration of new regional elections, the two main regional political parties, CiU and ERC, formed an unprecedented governmental coalition in 2012 with the political objective to hold a non-binding referendum on independence in 2014. This event was eventually blocked by the central executive (Dardanelli and Mitchell 2014). Posteriorly, the electoral coalition *Junts pel Sí*, composed by several secessionist regional parties, such as ERC or CiU, formed government with the commitment to hold a new referendum in 2017.

Considering the European context, existing literature has focused on analysing how the EU has actually affected regional parties' demands for increasing self-government and other political rights, considering both the EU as a whole (e.g. Feld 1975; Kellas 1991) and individual member states such as the United Kingdom (e.g. Rhodes 1973; Dardanelli 2009), Spain (e.g. Keating 2000; Giordano and Roller 2002) or Italy (e.g. Giordano 2000). These actors have usually used the "European card as a resource" in domestic politics (John 2000). For example, by emphasizing their position on the EU integration in clear opposition to state-wide political elites (e.g. Giordano 2000). This is the case of the Scottish SNP that hold a pro-EU stance in clear contrast to the Euroscepticism of the British Conservative Party (see Dardanelli 2009).

How regional parties use the EU at the domestic arena depends on their political position on the EU integration. Some scholars have argued that fringe parties, or non-mainstream parties, such as regional parties, are more likely to hold Eurosceptic positions (Taggart 1998; Taggart and Sczerbiak 2001; Aspinwall 2002). Conversely, current literature has illustrated that many regional parties are more supportive of the EU integration than other party families (Hix and Lord 1997; Ray 1999; Jolly 2007; Winter 2001; Lynch and Lynch 1996; De Winter and Cachafeiro 2002) such as the greens, the extreme right, the extreme left and conservatives and almost as favourable as the liberals, the Christian democrats, and the social democrats, because of its impact over states (Jolly 2007). Europhile regional parties are those that have mainly emphasized a "civic"

nationalism characterized by democratic, territorial, and inclusive nationalism rather than racism or “ethnic exclusiveness” (Keating 2004). This “civic” nationalism is in line with the “European values” of the EU, as they tolerate diversity within its national borders (Csergo and Goldgeier 2004). Furthermore, it is argued that they will have a key role both in domestic and European political systems, because the ethno-regional aspect is increasing in its importance within the EU (Caciagli 2006). Such Europhile regional parties include the Scottish SNP or the Catalan ERC.

The EU integration and related policies have provided hope to many regional parties, perceiving that they will be more able to achieve their purposes within the EU (Caciagli 2006). Thus, these parties have tended to Europeanize their political demands, stimulating the cooperation among them to pursue a common European strategy (Lynch and Lynch 1996). Furthermore, if they perceive the current EU integration as a community of states, they may seek independence to obtain a more equal position and recognition as just any other member state (Csergo and Goldgeier 2004). This view is more in line with the intergovernmental perspective of the EU, where member states pool their sovereignty, but they still remain in control of the diverse processes and retain the control of important issues of their interest (Hoppe 2005). For example, the Scottish SNP has favoured this vision, because it is in line with the idea of an independent state, having a pragmatic view of the EU as a resource for achieving independence (Dardanelli 2009).

Similarly, Dardanelli (2009) argues that the EU has also provided to Europhile regional parties with favourable political and economic incentives to seek “independence in Europe” (see also Lynch and Lynch 1996; Mitchell 1998; Dardanelli 2003), as the EU reduces the negatives costs associated to secession such as isolation in symbolic terms (Sillars 1986). The EU makes smaller states more viable and prosper by dismissing the advantages of larger states (Dardanelli and Mitchell 2014; Alesina and Spolaore 2003), as a result of the existing interdependence within the EU (Dardanelli 2003). First, from an economic perspective, “independence in Europe” would still allow new states to access to domestic and European markets, reducing the earlier potential costs of independence (Csergo and Goldgeier 2004; Hoppe 2005). Furthermore, international producers find small countries attractive for economic investments as long as they are still part of an open economy and supportive of business interests (Winter 2001). Second, from a political perspective, the European institutional framework over-represents interests of small countries in the main European institutions such as the Council of Ministers, the

European Commission, and the European Parliament (Dardanelli, 2001; Hoppe 2005). Third, the EU would avoid isolation from the international community (Hoppe 2005), reducing, for example, economic and military costs associated to the national defence through the current international cooperation (Winter 2001). Finally, the idea of achieving “independence in Europe” may also be more attractive to public opinion, as it reduces their perception as a radical option (see, for example, Dardanelli 2009).

Nevertheless, not all regional parties are enthusiastic of the EU integration, but there are some Eurosceptic outliers such as the Belgian *Vlaams Belang* (Jolly 2007) or the Catalan *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (CUP). These parties are usually at both extremes of the political spectrum, holding similar political positions on the EU integration than state-wide extreme left and right parties (see, for example, Jolly 2007). On the one hand, extreme right regional parties consider that some processes such as the globalization or the EU integration threaten the culture of the region (Van Houten 2003; Jolly 2007; Csergo and Goldgeier 2004). They consider that the economic integration also threatens the region itself through economic competition (Jolly, 2007). More generally, a common criticism is that the “European values” associated to the EU are against to their protection of national culture and citizens. Their xenophobic political position against immigration has limited their capacity to obtain allies among the different regions across the EU (Keating 2004). They are also opposed to the transfer of sovereignty towards the European level (Taggart 1998), being more favourable to federalism or confederalism forms of political organization rather than the current political construction of the EU (Hoppe 2005 or Keating 2004). For example, the Belgian *Vlaams Belang* favours a European confederation of peoples or ethnic states, including also the Central and Eastern Europe (Keating 2004). Similarly, the Italian *Lega Nord* has always defined itself as a European party and the EU has play a key role in their political agenda (Gohr 2001), establishing regions and confederal communities as the basic organization of the EU (Hoppe 2005). This regions and confederal units should maintain a maximum level of sovereignty and autonomy, deciding on most political issues independently, except for some affairs such as currency, foreign policy and defence (Gohr 2001). Initially, the *Lega Nord* was interested in the EU as long as only the North regions of Italy were integrated within it (Caciagli 2006). From 1998, with the entry of Italy within the single currency, the *Lega Nord*'s initial support became in strong hostility towards the EU, performing a “U-turn pattern from Europe” (Chari et al. 2004; Giordano, 2004), as it perceives the EU

as an enemy construction that destroys national differences with the help of the Left (Hooghe 2005). On the other hand, extreme left regional parties are also opposed to the EU integration, as they perceive that the EU is “a capitalist club dominated by larger states” (Keating 2004). Some examples are the Basque HB, the North Irish *Sinn Féin* and the Catalan CUP. Thus, they use the EU to attack the current development of the integration process, both politically and economically, to defend the devolution of political competences to the region or even the self-determination outside the EU.

Hence, regional parties may use the EU strategically, emphasizing issues related to regional interests and political demands such as language affairs, transportation and other political competences, increasing European funds, recognition of their political rights and national identity, the application of the principle of subsidiarity, implementation of European policies, giving visibility to issues that would otherwise be ignored by the incumbent or political issues that are not defended properly by executive actors in front of the European institutions (Keating 2000; Palau 2019). Furthermore, they also seek to give visibility to political demands for increasing participation and representation at the European political level. For example, Spanish regional parties demanded a place in the Spanish permanent representation to the EU and its delegation in the Council of Ministers, as these institutions deal with matters and issues that affect their competences, as well as membership within Commission working parties (Keating 2000).

Previous research has not empirically analysed how these political actors use the EU to promote their own issues, except for studies focused on the parliamentary arena (Palau 2019). Moreover, this strand of research has not paid attention on how regional parties seek to give visibility specific issues that are interest of their region in the media in order to raise public debate and legitimate their political demands.

Additionally, secessionist parties may also use the EU, not only for this increasing devolution of political competences from the central state, but also to legitimate their aspirations of self-determination (e.g. De Winter 1998; Palau 2018). Previous research has not explored whether the strategies of regional parties based on the use of an EU frame to legitimate their political demands for self-determination, reach media visibility. Europhile regional parties will use the EU to legitimate and obtain credibility for their political self-determination demand, as the “independence in Europe” reduces the costs of the secession and benefits economically and politically to the region.

Thus, it can be expected that:

H3) Regional political parties will obtain visibility in public debates on European affairs, emphasizing political issues related to the interest of their regions.

H4) Secessionist regional political parties will obtain more visibility in public debates on European affairs as public support for the independence of their region increases.

2.1.3. Executive actors and the EU integration

Structural and institutional factors are important to understand the privileged access that certain actors have to the media agenda and therefore, to influence public debates on EU affairs. The media gives more visibility to members of the executive and the President of the Government, those with an authoritative position in the EU decisions making process (Palau and Ansemil 2020).

Previous empirical research on issue emphasis within electoral competitions has systematically found issue overlap (Sigelman and Buell 2004; Damore 2005; Green-Pedersen 2007). Even though political parties may in general terms prefer to focus on issues that they “own”, the reality is that they must pay attention to issues “owned” by their opponents as well. The agenda-setting literature illustrates that relevant parties must pay attention to a hierarchy of issues at a certain point in time, even as these actors compete about the future of this hierarchy (e.g. Dearing and Rogers 1996). Thus, the agenda is perceived as a structural phenomenon that constraints their capacity to emphasize issues that these parties “own” at any given time. Political parties must address the most prominent issues in the agenda, whereas at the same time they compete to influence its composition (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010).

In this sense, the party-system agenda (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010) is a consequence of the continuous political debate among parties. These actors have a strategic interest in shaping the common party-system agenda, even when this implies paying attention to unfavourable issues. It may be tempting to ignore these latter issues, as addressing them might increase political contestation on them. However, ignoring an issue on the party-system agenda may be difficult and risky. Difficult because it is expected that political parties to have an opinion on all issues. Moreover, it may also come under pressure from various actors, especially the media, to address those which

are prominent on the agenda (Green-Pedersen and Mortesen 2010). And risky because political debates have a certain tone or frame attached to it (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Stone 1997), so ignoring the issue means relinquishing influence on how this will be framed (Jerit 2008). To win elections, it may be necessary to reframe salient issues such as the Democratic Party made with the crime during American presidential campaigns (Holian 2004).

However, some scholars have demonstrated that the capacity to carry out a selective emphasis on favourable issues may be dependent on the political parties' position during the legislature (Green-Pedersen and Mortesen 2010). Green-Pedersen and Mortesen (2010) argue that "issue competition is an ongoing struggle between government and opposition parties over the content of the party-system agenda in which opposition parties enjoy a structural advantage over government parties". Therefore, opposition parties have higher control over the issues that they choose to emphasize, while governments suffer from considerable constraints.

Opposition parties are not held responsible for providing answers and policy solutions in the same extent that executive actors are (Green-Pedersen and Mortesen 2010; Meguid 2005). They can focus on criticise executive actors and emphasizing issues that are advantageous for them. Thereby, executive actors may not only be forced to face with the party-system agenda, but also more directly to those issues that are emphasized by opposition parties (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). An example of how these dynamics work can be seen in the case of the immigration issue during the left-wing governments in Denmark from 1993 to 2001 (see Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008). The right-wing opposition paid attention to the issue, as it was electorally advantageous for them because they have the "ownership" in this policy domain. Consequently, executive actors were forced to pay attention to it and respond with the development of policy measures.

Conversely, executive actors suffer from higher constraints to emphasize issues that they "own" than opposition parties (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). Executive actors are expected to give solutions to public and policy problems facing modern societies, even in the case that they do not have any direct responsibility for them and even whether they may be not amenable to executives' solutions in the first place. In this sense, avoiding blame for many unsolved problems is a key element of being in the executive (Weaver 1986). In the case that executive actors do not give an answer to these

issues, it is accused of being unable to deliver expected policy solutions. As a result, ignoring salient issues on the party-system agenda is almost impossible for parties in the office (Green-Pedersen and Mortesen 2010).

Even though executive actors have various means of opening policy windows (Kingdon 1995) to try to influence the party-system agenda, they have to assume responsibility for delivering proper policy solutions, the effects of which might translate into criticisms by other political actors. Furthermore, they may also be held accountable for negative effects of these solutions in the future. For example, the decision to start a war may involve substantial risks, as it may be quite difficult to move away to other issues if it becomes disadvantageous for the executive. The Iraq War is a good example of how executives can become locked into disadvantageous issues. Executive actors can possess several policy-making tools, but they must at the same time think in terms of policy solutions, and not just policies, when they want to increase the attention over an issue (Green-Pedersen and Mortesen 2010).

Nevertheless, European affairs may allow further room for manoeuvre to them than in domestic issues. In this sense, it may be expected that these actors to benefit from the internal dynamics of the European political level, driving and monopolizing public debates associated with the EU decision-making process and framing the EU in a favourable way. Existing literature has already highlighted that public discussions on European affairs reflect the current distribution of political actors' power and influence within the EU decision-making process (e.g. Koopmans 2004, 2007; della Porta and Caiani 2006; della Porta 2003).

As Moravcsik (1994) illustrates, functional theories of international cooperation stress the absolute benefits to unitary and rational states, whereas it overlook the domestic distribution of those benefits. Supranational negotiations and institutions reallocate political resources by modifying the domestic "institutional and ideological context in which domestic policy is made" (Moravcsik 1994). This reallocation of control on domestic resources usually favours those who participate directly, mainly executives, in the EU decision-making process or other supranational institutions (see, for example, Keohane 1984). Affairs that were one handled by domestic parliaments are currently bargained in secret sessions within the European Council. As a result, executive actors may choose policy goals and bargaining strategies, provide political and technical

information, and establish the legitimacy of EU policies, in a similar way than in issues related to other foreign affairs (Moravcsik 1994).

Domestic executives are the main representatives of member states within the EU decision-making process and, moreover, public, and parliamentary oversight is more limited than at the domestic arena. Within the EU, the primary legislative authority does not reside in the European Parliament, but in the Council of Ministers, political institution that only represents domestic executives. Moreover, supranational rules generally grant domestic parliaments with even less power to amend, alter or reject EU normative than treaty revisions. Most EU normative takes the form of Regulations and Decisions which are directly applicable at the domestic political level. Even European Directives, the legal form for broader and significant normative, do not always need to be legally implemented by domestic parliaments. In fact, most Directives are reviewed by neither domestic parliament nor courts. For example, in France only the 8% of European Directives were considered by the *Assemblée Nationale* (Moravcsik 1994).

Likewise, according to the classic division between obtrusive and unobtrusive affairs (Gene Zucker 1978; Soroka 2002; McCombs 2004), the EU integration is an unobtrusive issue, one perceived as an abstract phenomenon and removed from everyday life (Kriesi et al. 2012). Citizens do not possess their own information sources on European affairs and, furthermore, there are important information asymmetries among political actors. In this regard, executive actors, with direct participation in the EU decision-making process, possess more information than opposition parties at the domestic parliamentary arena. Their role as the main negotiators or coordinators of the domestic position allows them to have direct access to information generated by supranational cooperation. Privileged access to reliable and technical political information increases executives' influence over the domestic parliamentary arenas regarding European affairs (Moravcsik 1994). A substantial number of political actors, including opposition parties, and public opinion are in need for orientation on the topic (McCombs and Weaver 1973). Informational asymmetries increase the cost of effective opposition and at the same time create opportunities and incentives for executives to manipulate domestic perceptions (Moravcsik 1994).

Collective actions problems, moreover, make effective daily monitoring of such negotiations at the European political level relatively costly. Even when information is available to opposition parties, it is of limited utility, as the terms of the agreements

usually change before they can be deliberated at the parliamentary arena (Bulmer 1986). In addition, because of the high transaction costs of renegotiation, opposition parties rarely develop full-fledged alternatives to the executive's positions. So, once a European decision has been reached, renegotiation is too costly and risky, as it delays its implementation, creates uncertainty about its precise implementation, and intensifies the risks that negotiations will finally collapse altogether (Moravcsik 1994).

As a result, executive actors enjoy disproportionate control on ideological and political discussions at the supranational system. This privileged position allows them to influence the ideas that are introduced into domestic political debates (Ikenberry 1988). They can introduce an initial ideological frame on an issue and set the subsequent discussions (Moravcsik 1994). Media analyses have already demonstrated that obtaining visibility in public debates on European affairs is not only dependent on political actors' incentives, but also in their capacity. The media are more likely to emphasize official sources and discount opinions perceived to be marginal. As Bennet (1990) argues, the media give priority to the routine reporting of elite claims. Regarding European affairs, executive actors are those with more capacity to set the EU in the media agenda (see, for example, Koopmans 2007).

Thus, because of their privileged position in the EU decision-making process and the existence of information asymmetries, it is expected that executive actors to obtain more visibility in discussions on the approval of new European normative than opposition parties:

H5) Executive actors will obtain more visibility in public debates on European affairs during the approval of new EU normative than opposition parties.

Moreover, media coverage of public debates on European affairs has also been, so far, frequently explained from a functionalist approach, in which it is more likely to reflect the current development of European events. Several studies have concluded that while marginally covered during routine periods, the EU attracts more media attention around certain key events (de Vreese 2001; Netjes and Binnema 2007; Norris 2000; Peter and de Vreese 2004; Steenbergen and Scott 2004; see also Boomgaarden et al. 2010: 508–509 for a review). Boomgaarden et al. (2010), in their study based on weekly data on media coverage of EU related stories from 1990 to 2006, observe that all policy-related or institutional events increase the media visibility of the EU, especially infrequent ones,

such as elections to the European Parliament, the appointment of a new European Commission and referenda. According to them, media attention to the EU is primarily driven by current developments at the European political level rather than by other factors more endogenous to member states. De Vreese (2001) also comes to a similar conclusion by which the media visibility of European affairs was peaking during certain events, but almost non-existent before and after them (see also Semetko et al. 2000).

Similarly, the EU also increases its media attention around the celebration of European Council summits (see Peter and de Vreese 2004; Norris 2000). In this sense, Norris (2000) concludes, in her analysis on the media coverage to European affairs between 1995 and 1997, that the EU only obtains marginal coverage in routine times, while it peaks around these European events. This cyclical pattern suggests that the routine coverage of political debates at the European Parliament, European Commission business and presidential initiatives remains almost invisible in the media. By contrast, key summits provide factors such conflict and drama that attracts the attention of the international media.

Several key events, such as European Council summits, negotiations around treaties or meetings at the Council of Ministers, are characterized by their intergovernmental dynamics. Both the European Council and the Council of Ministers, the main institutions where EU decisions are finally “set”, are only composed by domestic executive actors. Like the expectations around the media attention on the approval of new European normative, executive actors may also take advantage of their privileged positions at the European political level to use the EU to insert a favourable frame and drive public debates related to events. Not only may these actors have the incentives to obtain visibility in public discussions on European events, but they have more capacity to set the EU in the media agenda than opposition parties as well. Following the Benet’s indexing theory (1990), the media will pay more attention to executive actors’ claims during these European events, because their position as the main domestic representatives at the European political level.

Thus, it can be expected that:

H6) Executive actors will obtain more media visibility in public debates on European affairs during EU events than opposition parties.

2.1.4. The impact of the Euro crisis: a change in the redistribution of attention?

Podemos adopts a vision of society in which different groups – for instance workers, the youth and immigrants – are considered to be victims of dominating political and economic elites [...] a vision of society in which Southern countries are presented as the victims of the European political and economic elites is recurrent in party speeches (Font et al. 2019).

The economic recession of 2008 may have changed the patterns of visibility and incentives of domestic actors to influence public debates on European affairs. So, next, this research focuses on the existing differences in the visibility of political actors in the media between the routine period and the Euro crisis.

The Great Recession of 2008, originally initiated by the US sub-prime mortgage crisis, rapidly spread to domestic economies of EU's member states (Cordero and Simón 2016). It was the most serious economic crisis experienced by both the EU and the United States since the Great Depression of 1930. Despite being initially characterized as a financial recession, several member states began to suffer from growing public deficit and sovereign debt since the year 2008, because of financial pressures. This situation alarmed international investors who lost confidence in the economic performance of these countries. Although the negative social and economic consequences of the Euro crisis affected the EU as a whole, public conflict and mobilization from private actors and the society itself were especially substantial in periphery states such as Italy or Spain (Pianta 2013).

Morlino and Sottilotta (2019) illustrate that in order to face with the consequences of the Euro crisis, a European Financial Stabilization Mechanism (EFSM) was created in May 2010 under the control of the European Commission, whereas it was also set up the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) in June 2010, a temporary “special purpose vehicle” managed by the European Investment Bank. Nevertheless, the increasing risk premiums of Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain as well as their temporary nature made apparent that both financial mechanisms were far from being enough to solve the financial turbulence in the Eurozone (Sibert 2010).

Eurozone member states finally signed an intergovernmental treaty to establish the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) in July 2011 to guarantee permanent financial

assistance. Furthermore, the so-called Six Pack was introduced in December 2011 with the objective of solving public deficits and macroeconomic imbalances through economic and fiscal surveillance in member states. In December 2011, the EU recognized that not all the measures could be introduced by means of secondary law. Concretely, some member states were reluctant to introduce new solidarity measures without a parallel common credible constraint on expenditure in member states (Mortensen 2013), leading to the negotiation of the Fiscal Compact and signed in March 2012. Moreover, in the preamble to the Fiscal Compact was stated that the financial assistance from the ESM was “conditional on the ratification of the Fiscal Compact itself (Morlino and Sottolotta 2019).

The Euro crisis and the conditions imposed by the European institutions to access these financial supports have dramatically limited political choices available to citizens. This was even worst in periphery countries such as Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain which existing research has usually presented them as a homogeneous set of debtor countries (Hall 2012; Schimmelfennig 2015; Copelovitch et al. 2016). They were asked to implement severe austerity measures, spending cuts and structural reforms to receive bailouts from the EU (Cramme and Hobolt 2014; Hobolt and Tilley 2014, 2016). The implementation of these austerity measures implied serious economic and social consequences such as unprecedented levels of unemployment, low levels of GDP growth and the deterioration of the public deficit (e.g. Lisi and Borghetto 2018). Even though the imposition of budget constraints seriously difficulted their ability to respond citizens' demands, debtor executive actors voted in favor of these measures (Morlino and Sottolotta 2019; Hall 2012; Schimmelfennig 2015; Copelovitch et al. 2016).

In these countries, political decisions made by mainstream parties in the office, on both left and the right, mainly focused on tackling public debt rather than reducing unemployment or facing with other social consequences (Cramme and Hobolt 2014; Hobolt and Tilley 2014, 2016). For example, in the case of Spain, the enabling conditions for the economic recession was the construction bubble burst in 2011, where the shock spread to all the sectors of the economy. Tightening financial conditions reduced demand for housing, pushing down houses prices and having a negative impact on unemployment and on the banking sector, especially in the case of regional cajas. These economic circumstances led to the decision of the Spanish executive actors in June 2012 to accept a loan by the ESM to recapitalize the banking system. A formal MoU was finally avoided,

although to receive financial assistance the executive actors accepted hard conditions, with nationalized banks and imposing losses on their creditor bondholders (Morlino and Sottiolotta 2019).

The implementation of austerity measures together with the poor evolution of domestic economies and labour markets had substantial consequences in the political landscape in several member states. The higher socio-economic inequality and the shrinking of welfare states (e.g. Wulfgramm et al. 2016) resulted in intense citizens' mobilization against economic decisions from the EU, democratic dissatisfaction as well as mistrust of public opinion towards both European institutions and domestic executives (e.g. Lisi and Borghetto 2018). Citizens are more likely to punish incumbent executive actors for slow economic growth (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000). However, heightened perception of the EU economic responsibility somewhat reduced domestic economic voting in Southern member states (Lobo and Lewis-Beck 2012). This increasing political instability (Bosco and Verney 2012, 2016) in member states has contributed to the growth of Euroscepticism (Verney 2017) and the raise of challenger political parties (Morlino and Raniolo 2017).

Existing research has already demonstrated that the Euro crisis has taken place through an intergovernmental channel. Especially supranational institutions, governments from other countries together with domestic executive actors are still the main beneficiaries of the Europeanization of public debates during the Euro crisis (Kriesi and Grande 2015; Palau and Ansemil 2020). As Palau and Ansemil (2020) demonstrate, the Euro crisis did not change the patterns of media attention to domestic executive actors. However, what is new during this critical juncture is that these actors no longer use the EU in the media following credit-claiming strategies. Hence, this research focuses on analysing how the Euro crisis has may affected to the media coverage of specific opposition parties in public debates on European affairs.

Regarding opposition parties, Raunio (2015) argues that political debates on European affairs at domestic parliaments seem to become more frequent since 2010, mainly in those countries where there is no strong partisan conflict and Eurosceptic opinion. For example, according to him, in Germany where political parties are more likely to be more cohesive in their pro-EU positions and with a broad public support for the EU, there are not a fear for electoral backlash due to anti-EU sentiments. Hence, political parties do not have any reasons for avoiding debates on European affairs in the

plenary, so both the executive actors and opposition parties use opportunities to put them on the agenda. Instead, in countries with Eurosceptic positions or political parties with internal divisions about the EU integration, mainstream parties still have less incentives to politicize this type of affairs through plenary debates during the economic recession.

Political parties have increasingly become more aware about the impact of the EU in the domestic political level, including electoral competition, policy outputs or constituency interests. And the more EU matters, more incentives have politicians to engage in European policies (Raunio 2015). This is reinforced by the fact that domestic parliaments have become in the gatekeeper of further integration (Raunio 2011; Sprungk 2013). They control the compliance of draft European laws through the subsidiarity principle and give their consent for treaty revision and other issues decided by unanimity, including, for example, the adoption of new intergovernmental measures with the aim to obtain more economic governance in the EU (Puntscher Riekmann and Wydra 2013).

Consequently, the negative impact of the Euro crisis and, especially, the implementation of austerity measures might have also had an important impact on the political behaviour of opposition parties. As stated above, during bad economic times, voters are more likely to withdraw their support for the current executive actors in office (Lewis-Beck 1988). Hence, De Giorgi et al. (2015) argue that opposition parties must face the following dilemma: whether to cooperate with executive actors, participating in important policy decisions and defending the domestic interests or, instead, to behave tactically, emphasizing disagreements and confrontation to weaken the incumbent and obtain electoral advantage. Previous research has already illustrated that the behaviour of opposition parties is more likely to be more adversarial regarding economic and social policies (De Giorgi 2011) as well as on more salient issues (Carammia and De Giorgi 2011; Mújica and Sánchez-Cuenca 2006). Nonetheless, in the context of the Euro crisis, this choice has even become more difficult for opposition parties. In this regard, EU institutions, particularly the European Council, the European Commission and, since the bailouts, the Troika⁵ have played a substantial role in the government-opposition relationship in Southern member states. According to existing literature, it could be expected that this choice is influenced by the mainstream or challenger status of opposition parties.

⁵ The European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

Following this perspective, on the one hand, mainstream opposition parties⁶, which alternate government in office, are more likely to be consensual and cooperative with executive actors, even though they would have opposed the same policies during the routine period. They see themselves as more “responsible” and had the will to participate in the decision-making process to influence police outcomes during the economic recession. In the eyes of public opinion, these opposition parties have more difficulties to escape responsibility in front of European institutions. In this regard, mainstream political parties, by their own nature, regardless they are in the opposition or in the office, are more cautious in mobilizing around new issues or even adopting positions far from other political parties, since both would make it difficult to enter into a coalition government (e.g. Hobolt and de Vries 2015). With regard to debtor countries, executive actors and opposition parties were among the least active in raising political debate about the EU in their domestic parliaments, as these parties have less incentives to scrutinize the economic recession management, because of both internal pressures to deal with their fiscal problems and, especially, external pressures from the EU to accept conditions and obligations for financial support (Auel and Höing 2014).

On the other hand, existing research has illustrated that political and economic crises are the “perfect storm” for the raise of challenger parties⁷ with a populist rhetoric (Kriesi and Pappas 2015; Moffitt 2016; Pirro and van Kessel 2017). The Euro crisis provided the “fertile ground” for increasing public support to this type of opposition parties that are characterized by their rejection to the consensus pursued by mainstream ones (e.g. Hobolt and Tilley 2016, Kriesi 2014). This consensus is based on shared acceptance of fiscal authority measures imposed by EU authorities (White 2014). Not only these measures eroded public support for mainstream parties, but also “it increased inter-party competition and made electoral contests more uncertain” (Lisi and Borghetto 2018). The austerity policies brought new conflict in the political landscape while

⁶ In this regard, this chapter considers as mainstream political parties as those that frequently alternate between the executive and the opposition. They are likely to be affected by both their experience in the government and their desire to gain office again.

⁷ As Hobolt and Tilley (2016) illustrate, the realm of these political parties includes several definitions as “niche parties” (Meguid 2008; Adams et al. 2006; Jensen and Spoon 2010), “challenger parties” (Hino 2012; van der Wardt et al. 2014), “populist parties” (Mudde 2007; Kriesi 2014) and “new politics parties” (Poguntke 1987). All these nomenclatures are referred to political parties that usually defy existing patterns of party competition, rejecting the traditional economic dimension of the party system and trying to mobilize around new issues or adopting extreme positions on existing issues. In the case of populist political parties, they include the rejection of the existing “corrupt” elite and the claims that they are the true voice of the people (Canovan 1999; Mudde 2007; Kriesi 2014; Stanley 2008; Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011).

intensified old grievances. Challenger parties were capable to exploit public opinion's discontent, especially of those citizens specially affected by the Euro crisis and in poor economic circumstances, transforming them from often marginal political actors to platforms which receive a substantial proportion of people's votes (Hobolt and Tilley 2016). They are increasingly assuming representative functions, responding to citizens' demands which, as a result of the gradual shift in political competences in favour to European institutions, increasingly perceive their executive actors as incapable to offer meaningful alternatives (Hernández and Kriesi 2016; Hobolt and Tilley 2016). This deterioration of previous citizens' loyalties, it has been facilitated the success of these political actors which have challenged the status of domestic party systems in the EU (Lisi and Borghetto 2018). There were several examples of successful challenger parties during the Euro crisis such as, for example, the Five Star Movement in Italy, the Alternative for Germany, *Podemos* in Spain and the election of the left-wing *Syriza*-led executive in Greece the year 2015 (Hobolt and Tilley 2016, see also Font et al. 2019).

Unlike mainstream political parties, they have not formed part of the executive yet, so challenger parties are unconstrained by the responsibilities of the government and tend to reshape the political debate by putting new issues on the agenda (De Vries and Hobolt 2012) or assuming extreme or specific issue positions (Adams et al. 2006; van der Wardt et al. 2014). As they have low probabilities of entering office in next elections, they also hold any responsibilities in front of European institutions, so were more likely to take advantage of the Euro crisis and differ themselves from mainstream parties, being more critical with the EU decisions and the EU integration (De Giorgi et al. 2015).

However, left-wing challenger parties not only include communist platforms, but also the Euro crisis was a catalyst for a "new generation" of left-wing "populist" parties like *Syriza* in Greece (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014) and *Podemos* in Spain (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016) which are characterized by the "rejection of the traditional Marxist interpretation" of social conflicts and by the attempt to build an "interclassist" approach'. Moreover, Communist, and new left challengers have usually criticized the exiting democratic deficit of the EU and domestic representative institutions (Lisi and Borghetto 2018). Right-wing challenger parties also share the rejection to the political establishment, the globalization, especially in the case of foreign immigration, and emphasize the repatriation of powers from the EU (Kitschelt and McGann 1995; van der Brug et al. 2005; Rydgren 2008).

For example, De Giorgi et al. (2015), in their study on the opposition parties' political behaviour in Portugal during the Euro crisis, illustrate that left challenger parties accused executive actors of getting the country into trouble, whereas mainstream parties opted for abstaining from voting the budget pass and negotiated with the government two additional austerity packages. In Spain, left challengers, IU, the historical radical left and former communist party, and *Podemos*, founded in 2014, have questioned neither the membership of the country nor the EU integration process, but were very critical with the policies implemented following the Euro crisis. They asked for a reform of the European economic governance and raised serious criticism towards the economic measures such as the Stability and Growth Pact and the European Fiscal Compact. In addition, the Euro crisis provided these political parties with the opportunity to use the EU, issue traditionally downplayed by mainstream parties, to attack and weaken the incumbent. They were more likely to portray it as taking decisions against citizens' social rights and not defending appropriately Spanish interest in Brussels (Palau and Ansemil, 2020).

As a result, it could be expected that the media to pay more attention to these challenger parties during the Euro crisis, because of media contents may reflect their incentives to mobilize around European affairs:

H7) Following the outbreak of the Euro crisis, challenger parties with low likelihood of entering office in the next elections, will increase their visibility on public debates on European affairs.

Concerning regional political parties, the Euro crisis has also increased the overall support for secessionism (Van Gent et al. 2013). Van Gent et al. (2013) illustrate, in their analysis on twenty-five countries, that regional parties have actively demanded more indent-based regional autonomy or even used the EU to demand for the independence of their region like never before (see also Jolly 2012). This would be the case of, for example, the Scottish regional party in the United Kingdom. The Scottish SNP obtained an absolute majority in 2011 under the Alex Salmond's popular leadership (Denver 2012). In October 2012, the SNP executive came to an agreement with its British counterpart to hold an independence referendum during September 2014. In Belgium, the Flemish nationalist parties also gained considerable support. The rise of the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* (N-VA) was remarkable as it showed the broad appeal of nationalism in Flanders. Until the year 2010, the primary Flemish nationalist party was the extremist

right-leading *Vlaams Belang*, but the N-VA, with less extremist positions, was capable to appeal to both *Vlaams Belang* and other voters (Van Gent et al. 2013).

The most prominent case of increase support for independence together with the example of Scotland is Spain, especially in the Basque Country and Catalonia. In these regions, the Euro crisis has increased the support for secessionist positions, because of the popular opposition against executive actors and the impact of the austerity measures. The Euro crisis favoured the re-scaling towards the regional level, because the central state lost credibility as a result of unwelcome redistributive budgetary claims (Van Gent et al. 2013). In this regard, economic issues lie at the centre of the regional and independence debates (Jolly 2012).

The Euro crisis has projected a quite uncertain future for the EU, as the struggle within the Eurozone and the bailouts packages in debtor countries created the impression that the EU integration was more fragile than at any time in its history. Not only was the EU more fragile in financial and institutional terms, but also to respond to the Euro crisis quickly and efficiently. By contrast, executive actors in some member states, such as the British government, were more decisive and quicker to provide bailouts, creating a space for state-wide parties to strike against regional ones favourable to the independence (Sullivan 2008). However, as the Euro crisis advanced, the implementation of austerity measures favoured and energized the positions of this type of regional parties. On both sides of the political debate, elites are trying to appeal citizens that the region is or is not viable on its own (Jolly 2012).

Thus, like state-wide challenger parties, secessionist parties might use a populist discourse to increase their public support for the independence within the EU during the Euro crisis (Barrio et al. 2008). In this sense, it has been argued that nationalism, regionalism and populism have been perceived as thin political ideologies easy to combine (e.g. Stanley 2008), especially through the negative economic and social consequences related to this critical juncture. As Barrio et al. (2018) illustrates, there are at least two ways in which secessionism and populism could be mixed. First, emphasizing that citizens of their region are the true owners of sovereignty and “the right to decide” their own future relationship with the state. And second, there is also an adaptation of the anti-elitist approach to a multilevel dimension that opposes the secessionist demands “to the corrupt and/or Machiavellian manners of the state elites”, raising a debate about the legitimacy of the state-wide institutions.

However, other scholars have argued that there are also some important differences between secessionism and populism (e.g. Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro 2002). First, Diani (1992) argues that populism has an anti-establishment appeal, whereas secessionism frequently relies on local elites. Second, a charismatic leadership may also facilitate the raise of a populism discourse (Mudde and Rovira-Kaltwasser 2014) within secessionist parties during the Euro crisis, although in this case is not a necessary characteristic. And third, regional and secessionist parties usually embrace diversity rather than external threats such as foreigners (Barrio et al. 2018).

Hence, the combination of these ideologies may be rhetorical or be even translated into political action through citizens' mobilization strategies (Barrio et al. 2018). This is the case of Spain, where Catalan and Basque parties have followed this type of strategies (Van Gent et al. 2013). As Barrio et al. (2018) argue, the case of Catalonia may be particularly of special interest, because of the drastic shift of its regional parties from regionalism within Spain towards a clear independence stance. Moreover, this independence process was directly related to the consequences of the Euro crisis, whereas this political debate had a secondary role in the case of the Scottish referendum. As these scholars argue, for years, the main Catalan regional parties discussed a reform of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy like those in Andalusia and Valencia. However, the Spanish Constitutional Court ruled against some key articles of the Statute in 2010, whereas this was not the case in other regions. This legal position was interpreted as a political grievance, the unwillingness of state-wide institutions to recognize the Catalan unique particularities, marking the beginning of broad citizens' mass demonstrations and protests in Catalonia. As a result, there was a prominent change in support for the independence of the region and a new rise of political competition among the main regional parties.

According to Barrio et al. (2018), massive demonstrations have become in a key instrument to reinforce the message and positions of unity against the state that supposedly denies or ignore the democratic demands for independence. In Catalonia, they are perceived as an icon and a representation of the "people". As stated above, the Catalan parliament demanded its regional executive actors for holding a referendum over the independence after the regional elections in November 2012 (Jolly 2012; Van Gent et al. 2013). This decision translated into new performances, "the main novelty being the introduction of referendum simulations" (Barrio et al. 2018), on 9 November 2014 and 1 October 2017.

Like massive demonstrations, referenda simulations not only highlighted the citizens' expression, but also it went a step forward: they represented the civil disobedience, forcing the Spanish institutions to intervene and stressing the clash between the "legitimate" Catalan citizens' will against the "corrupt", "repressive" and "illegitimate" law. This has even become more obvious when Catalan politicians were sentenced by the courts for leading and organization these events. The Catalan Parliament decided to pass a law on referendum and public consultations which was partially suspended by the Constitutional Court. As a result, Catalan executive actors organized a non-binding consultation that, to avoid its suspension, it was organized by volunteers. These non-binding consultations became a highly contested issue, even though Catalan executive actors denied any participation in the process. Finally, it was also suspended by the Constitutional Court. However, the Catalan government decided to disobey and proceed with the consultation (Barrio et al. 2018).

Additionally, the Euro crisis and the implementation of austerity measures by both central and regional executive actors also played an important role as a catalyst of "the idea that Spain is somehow underinvesting and economically mistreating Catalonia" (Barrio et al. 2018). Barrio et al. (2018) illustrate that this economic grievance was associated to political grievances together with blame avoidance. Since the 1980s, Catalan executive actors have been quite successful in claiming the merits for political achievements and blaming central institutions or other regions for political failures. Indeed, blame avoidance among multi-level institutions, it is not only a feature of the Catalan case, but is a typical characteristic of the ethno-territorial competition in Spain (Moreno 1995). Catalan regional parties, like similar parties in other member states, are characterized by their focus on fiscal and financial issues, factors that became more dramatic, because of the negative consequences of the Euro crisis (Jolly 2012; Van Gent et al. 2012). While there were discussions about the fiscal relationship with Spain and austerity measures were implemented, they sought to create a new state "within the EU" to overcome the obstruction of the central government. By contrast, in the Basque Country, the executive led by the PNV had not any direct plans of holding a similar referendum during the Euro crisis (Van Gent et al. 2013).

The relationship between the EU, other member states, and the status of a possible independence of Catalonia was a major point of friction during the Catalan process. Spanish executive actors and their supporters did not wish for any European involvement,

using the inaction of the EU and its political institutions as one form of support for the Spanish institutions (Wagner et al. 2011). These political actors framed the right to self-determination as an inapplicable in the case of Catalonia, emphasizing that these referendums are unconstitutional (Brown Swan and Cetrà 2020). The dominant form of contemporary Spanish nationalism is the vindication of the 1978 Spanish Constitution as the legitimate basis for the political order and unity in Spain (Nunez Seixa 2001). The Spanish Constitution has become a catalyst as well as a symbol of the democratic re-articulation of Spanish nationalism. Spanish executive actors have jealously defended the declarations on the unitary Spanish nation in the Constitution, which recognises the right of self-government of regions and includes references to the peoples of Spain in the preamble as well (Brown Swan and Cetrà 2020).

As Brown Swan and Cetrà (2020) illustrate, political parties against the independence process faced demands for a Catalan referendum, which was frequently grounded on democratic reasons, with the dominant argument equating law enforcement with democracy. For example, the former Spanish Vice-President, Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría, argued that there is no democracy beyond the Spanish law, whereas the PSOE's member, Carmen Calvo, stated that there is no dialogue about what was not legal. These arguments were reinforced within a European framework. It was argued that the Catalan independence process undermines the European project, as it contests the Spanish collective project and, moreover, the strength of the EU is grounded on integration, never seeking separation and new borders. Furthermore, Catalonia would pay the costs associated with the secession. It would leave the EU *sine die*, the Euro and the international treaties, impoverishing the territory and the population and becoming isolated internationally.

In Spain and Catalonia, most citizens have frequently held group-nested identities, where Spanish and Catalan identities are comparable with a European identity (Díez Medrano and Gutiérrez 2001). Regarding supports of the independence process, these political actors have traditionally maintained pro-European instances not only for cultural and historical reasons, but also for economic and political grounds (Ichijo 2004; Guibernau 2004). In this sense, Catalan nationalism made several statements encouraging further Europeanization, a process which should make congruent the “territorial subsidiarity and home role with European framework legislation and continental institutions” (Moreno 2015).

Secessionists positions appealed to the EU and its political institutions, arguing that an independent Catalonia would remain within the EU (see Guidi and Casula 2019). For example, the leading umbrella platform *Assamblea Nacional Catalana* (ANC), for example, stated in its *Declaración de la Conferència Nacional per L'Estat Propi* (Declaration of the National Conference for the Independent State” that “once the Catalan state is established and the Constitution is approved following a referendum, Catalonia’s continuity within the European Union will be negotiated as a new member state...”. In line with this approach, this organization set the aim of working for the internalization of the Catalan independence process, fostering relationship with European member states (Portos 2020). As Portos (2020) argues, these efforts to launch international campaigns were mirrored by other actors from the civil society and semi-institutional organizational, such as, for example, *Òmnium Cultural* (OC) and the *Associació de Municipis per la Independència* (Association of Municipalities for Independence, AMI). The civil society organization, OC, is a long-established cultural association which pursued the organization of mass performances and collective actions during the last years. Concerning, the semi-institutional association, it brings together more than 700 towns councils across Catalonia with the aim to promote the Catalan independence internationally. Furthermore, even though the European institutions’ position, Catalan demands for a EU mediation. For example, Ada Colau, the Mayor of Barcelona, stated that European could not adopt a passive position on the Catalan question (Saim and Mischke 2017).

By the 6 September 2017, the Catalan parliament passed the referendum and transition laws by means of the Law on the Referendum on self-determination. Even though Court magistrate held an urgent meeting and ruled a temporary suspension, the referendum was celebrated on 1 October 2017 (see Poblet 2018). Despite the EU’s criticisms of the Spain’s central government due to the use of violence by the police during the 2017 Catalan referendum, European institutions emphasized that this popular consultation was illegal according to the Spanish Constitution and, moreover, the Catalan issue was a Spanish internal affair. More than an opportunity to solve the Spanish territorial disputes and obtain a favourable framework to overcome the costs associated with the independence, the EU has gradually been identified as a political actor supporting the status quo. This resulted into a widespread disappointment and a lack of hope among secessionists positions around the EU not only regarding its lack of critical position

towards the events occurred during the 1 October 2017, but also during prior and subsequent episodes. However, secessionist demands still demanded for a European mediation (Portos 2020).

On 10 October, the Catalan President, Carles Puigdemont, stated that there was a mandate from the 1 October referendum, signing a declaration of independence. He immediately proposed to postpone its application to seek a negotiated solution with the central government and the EU. Puigdemont sought to find a balance between satisfying pro-independence positions, divided on declaring independence unilaterally. After he was unable to seal a deal with the Spanish executive, according to which Puigdemont would call for election in Catalonia in exchange of the central government would not impose direct rule on Catalonia, the Catalan Parliament finally declared independence on 27 October 2017. Puigdemont made a speech postposing the independence and calling again for the mediation and the dialogue between Catalonia, the central government, and the EU. However, there was a considerable confusion. The Spanish executive finally imposed direct rule on Catalonia, calling on early elections on the 21st December (Cetrà et al. 2018).

This political debate contributed to the polarization of the public opinion, political parties, and the media itself over this territorial affair. Regional parties, and concretely secessionist parties, might have obtained increasing media visibility in public debates on European affairs, because of the Euro crisis. The negative economic and social consequences related to this critical juncture may have increased the incentives of these actors to use the EU to obtain growing public support for achieving the independence of the region within the European framework.

Thus, it can be expected that:

H8) Following the outbreak of the Euro crisis, regional parties, especially those who pursue the independence of their region, will increase their visibility on public debates on European affairs

2.2. Data and methodology

Particularly in comparative research, the availability of automatic coding has opened up new perspectives. This is due to the unprecedented amount of data that can be compared, and the ease with which some of the automatic approaches can be adapted to different contexts (Ruedin 2013).

This research relies on a database containing all news stories published in the most read Spanish quality newspapers from January 2005 to December 2015. It has been argued that qualitative newspapers are better sources of political information and analysis than television news or tabloids, which tend to focus on sensational reports (Beyeler and Kriesi 2005). To control the possible presence of media political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont 2015), a left-wing newspaper, *El País*, and a right-wing newspaper, *El Mundo*, have been selected. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the Spanish media belong to the so-called Polarized or Mediterranean media system model, characterized by high political parallelism in the coverage of news stories, a high state intervention, a low degree of journalistic professionalism and low newspaper circulation. The selection of the period under study allows to explore the media attention to different political actors in the Spanish media over time, covering the most important events and developments in the EU during a decade. For instance, it allows to observe the possible differences in these patterns of media coverage between non-crisis periods and the Euro crisis. With the aim to analyse the impact of independence processes within an EU framework, this period also covers the beginning of the Catalan independence process including the celebration of the first popular consultation in Catalonia. Most existing literature on the Euro crisis has focused on the Euro crisis period to obtain their conclusions without considering media coverage dynamics before the outbreak of the crisis (e.g. Kriesi and Grande 2015).

Being most literature centred on the role of Euroscepticism in the politicization of European affairs (e.g. Kriesi et al. 2006; Kriesi 2007), this thesis contributes to explore under what circumstances executive actors, Europhile, soft Eurosceptic and regional parties get access to the media agenda, in a country where European integration is a consensual topic. The Spanish case is interesting, because it allows exploring aspects so far subjected to little empirical research, such, as for example, the motivations of Europhile parties to pay attention to the EU. Party conflict around the EU integration cannot explain the media attention to these domestic political actors in the media arena.

Even during the Euro crisis period, the Spanish party system did not experience the emergence and consolidation of radical Eurosceptic positions. The case of Spain allows also exploring the extent to which regional parties obtain visibility for using the EU to achieve political goals in a multilevel system of government. This question is particularly interesting given the secessionist Catalan process, where both those in favour and against the creation of an independent Catalan state have used a European framework to support their arguments (Palau 2018). Because it was one of the member states more seriously hit by the Euro crisis, it is also an appropriate case for exploring changing patterns of politicization of European affairs in response to critical junctures.

The database has been created through Web Scrapping techniques to download 954.722 public news stories published in the online news archive sites of *El País* and *El Mundo* for all the period under study. The Scrapping applications have allowed to obtain all the information related to news stories of both newspapers in different database tables. In the case of *El País*, news stories have been codified in the following way: 1) Id field: A unique numerical identifier assigned to each news stories. This Id field guarantees the integrity of the subsequent analysis of the hypotheses, as it allows to uniquely identify each specific news story and associated it with the codification of other variables like its policy domain or the political actors' claims inside its contents; 2) the title of the news story; 3) the web link to the content of this news story; 4) the subtitle. Some news stories may be accompanied by a subtitle; 5) the preview content of the news story before accessing to its contents; 6) the cover image associated to this news story; 7) the caption of this cover image; 8) the inner title of the news story. When its contents are visualized in the screen, news stories may show a variation of their original title; 9) the content of the news story 10) the date of publication; and 11) its position within the index of news stories published by the newspaper in a specific day. Regarding *El Mundo*, there are three additional fields: 12) the inner image associated to the news story. In this newspaper, news stories may have a related picture, when the audience access to their contents; 13) the caption of the inner image; and 14) the section of the news story (economic, national, international, etc.). To explore the hypotheses of this research, it has only been used the Id, the title, the inner title, the subtitle, the preview content, and the content of each news story. Nevertheless, this data collection might be interesting, useful, and relevant for possible further research on how the media may contribute to the development and strengthen public debates, going beyond the analysis of EU related affairs.

However, this research focuses on news stories on European affairs. It is considered that a news story is explicitly related to the EU, if it mentions the following keywords: 1) europ; 2) EU; 3) ECB (European Central Bank); or 4) Brussels in its title, subtitle, or inner title. These elements include action, claims or decisions taken by a European institution or actors (such as, for example, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, the Eurogroup or the European Court of Justice), a European policy or news stories related, in general terms, to the EU. By means of these keywords, it has been found more than 40.000 EU related stories.

Dependent variable

This research includes as the dependent variable, the media visibility obtained by domestic political actors' claims in EU related stories. To operationalize the dependent variable, it has been decided to use the analytical approach based on the claim-analysis methodology developed by the *EUROPUB* project (Koopmans and Statham 1999, 2002; see also, for example, Koopmans and Erbe 2004; Beyeler and Kriesi 2005; Koopmans and Pfetsch 2006; della Porta and Caiani 2006; Koopmans 2007; Statham and Koopmans 2009) and the classification proposed in the *Codebook for the analysis of political mobilization and communication in European public spheres*⁸ (Koopmans 2002). This is a quantitative method that takes political actors' claims as the dependent variable, focusing on the analysis of newspapers as the main sources where these claims get visibility in EU related stories.

As Della Porta and Caiani (2006) illustrate, the claim-analysis codification integrates two methodological perspectives of social movement research: 1) quantitative protests event studies (Tarrow 1989; Franzosi 1994); and 2) qualitative frame research (Snow et al. 1986; Gamson and Modigliani 1989). Nevertheless, it is not only restricted to protest events or actors, but rather it can be applied to analyse a wide range of actors and issues that contribute to shape the public discourse. It extends traditional protest-event research, emphasizing the development of news stories and considering all instances of political claims made by political actors. In this sense, a claim is defined as a unit of strategic action in public spheres. Concretely, a claim is any manifestation of demands, criticisms, decisions, calls to action, physical or verbal action, demonstrations,

⁸ <https://europub.wzb.eu/Data/Codebooks%20questionnaires/D2-1-claims-codebook.pdf>

violence, or repression which may directly or potentially affect the interest of the claimant and/or other political actors (Koopmans and Statham 1999; see also Koopmans 2007).

This methodology also differs from traditional media content studies. This latter literature has frequently focused on newspaper articles as the unit of analysis, using article-level variables to explore the extent to which journalists frame new stories. They allow coding the frequency in which certain political actors and issues are mentioned and to what extent they co-occur in news stories contents (Koopmans 2007). However, these analyses are too media centric and tell nothing about the public actors' role in shaping the public debate (Koopmans and Erbe 2004). Media journalists effectively contribute to shape the public debate, but to do so "they have to draw on the raw material of communicative actions and events that are produced and staged by non-media actors such as politicians, interest groups and NGOs" (Koopmans and Erbe 2004).

The claim-analysis approach does not code the news story, but the mobilized political actors in the media. Considering the visibility of each political actors' claims in news stories, it can be identified who speaks publicly to whom, their overall participation in shaping the development of the public discussion, in whose interests, in which issues and argumentative frames (Koopmans and Statham 1999). Despite using newspapers as the main source of information on public discourse has been criticized by existing literature, due to the selection biases resulted from rules of journalistic coverage (see Della Porta and Caiani 2006), this risk is limited in this research, as it analyses the claim that have effectively obtained media visibility and only those who becomes public and contribute to shape the public debate on European affairs (Koopmans 2007).

Claims are collected regardless the nature of political actors (domestic executive actors, European institutions, interest groups, third countries, international institutions, or political parties). For each claim, it is gathered the following information:

- 1) A subject political actor or claimant. This political actor is who makes a demand, action, criticism, or the appeal in the public debate.
- 2) The verb or the action carried out by the claimant.
- 3) An addressee who is targeted as a responsible for implementation the claim or is the target of the claimants' criticism or support.
- 4) An object actor whose interests are or would positively or negatively be affected by the content of the claim.

5) The substantive content of the claim.

From the examples provided by Koopmans (2002), the claim *The churches called on the government not to deport Bosnian refugees* would have the following structure: 1) the churches are the claimant, as they are the subject of the sentence or the actors who makes the action in the public debate; 2) called on is the verb of the claim. Concretely, it is the action conducted by the claimant; 3) the government is the addressee of the claim. In this public discourse, the claimant, the churches, are demanding something to the government; and 4) Bosnian are the object actors, as they are those whose interests are affected by the actions of the claimant and the addressee.

As Koopmans (2002) illustrates, a claim must always contain a claimant in its contents, but the addressee and object actors are not required fields. For example, *Joschka Fischer holds a speech calling for the drawing up of a European Constitution*, there is a claimant, Joschka Fischer, and a verb or action (holds a speech calling for), but there are not any addressee or object actors in its contents. Another example is the following claim *The Bavarian authorities deport a group of Kurdish refugees*. In this claim, it can be found: 1) a claimant (The Bavarian authorities); 2) a verb or action (deport), and 3) there is an object actor (Kurdish refugees) negatively affected by the action carried out by the claimant. Instead, this claim does not have an addressee.

Nevertheless, the claim-analysis of new stories generates highly detailed data. As Beyeler and Kriesi (2005) argues, existing studies have found practical limits on the number of public debates and issues that could be analysed, because it is a complicated and data-consuming approach of data collection. As a result, this previous literature has tended to filtering news stories by selecting specific issues (e.g. Koopmans and Pfetsch 2006; Koopmans 2007). Considering this fact, this research also makes an important contribution to the research field, overcoming these limitations and methodological problems through the creation of several automatic coding applications of news stories, together with other similar existing tools. They have allowed to conduct this research (as well as these programming applications will allow to develop other similar studies in the future), considering all news stories and claims published by the Spanish media, regardless their policy domains, for the whole period under study. The results obtained are quite accurate and show a high degree of success identifying not only the claims within these news stories, but also in coding their elements, such as, for example, the

claimant or the verb. In reaching this conclusion, these results have been tested, taking several samples of news stories collected within the database.

Next, it is explained how these tools have been designed to detect to detect and operationalize the dependent variable of the research as well as other elements of the claim.

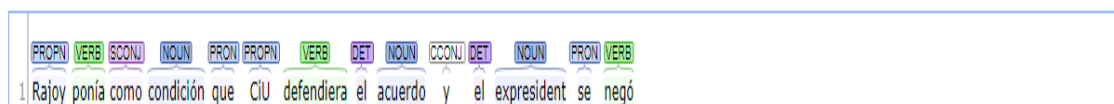
Automatic detection and parsing of political actors' claims

A claim is just a sentence which contains a subject, a verb, a predicate and other grammatical element such as its direct and indirect objects. To code these elements, each claim has been parsed by means of the Stanford CoreNLP library developed by The Stanford Natural Language Processing Group. Concretely, the Spanish version of the Spanish version of the natural language parser⁹. This tool is a natural language parser which works out the grammatical structure of a sentence identifying, for instance, which words are the subject or the object of a verb, which element is an adjective, and adverb, a proper or common noun and even whether an element is a person, organization, or place. Probabilistic parsers employ knowledge of language obtained from hard-parsed sentences, trying to develop the most likely analysis of new sentences (<https://nlp.stanford.edu/software/lex-parser.shtml>).

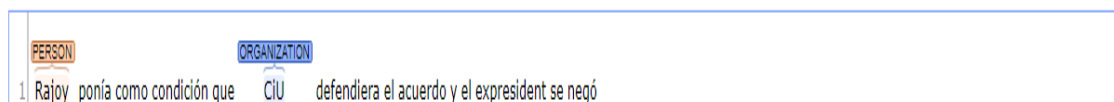
This is an example of the “visual” output obtained from the claim *Rajoy ponía como condición que CiU defendiera el acuerdo y el expresident se negó*, once it has been parsed by means of the *Spanish CoreNLP library*:

⁹ <https://nlp.stanford.edu/software/spanish-faq.html>

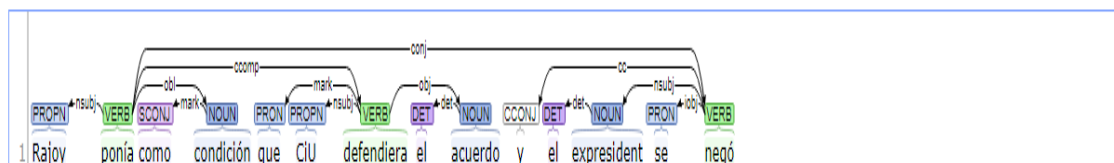
Part-of-Speech:



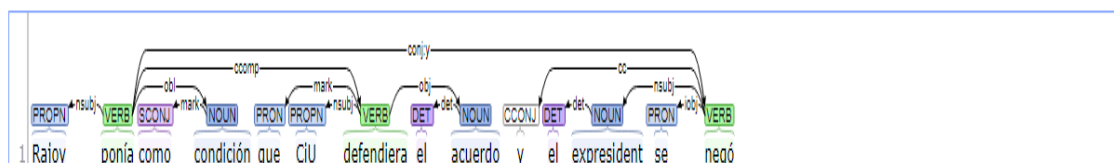
Named Entity Recognition:



Basic Dependencies:



Enhanced++ Dependencies:



Data obtained from the Web application <https://corenlp.run/>

This output has an elegant web design to ease its visual understanding. However, the parsed output is returned by means of a tree model. For example, the parsed output of the claim *Mariano Rajoy y Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba se reunirán este jueves en el Palacio de la Moncloa* looks like that:

- > reunirán/vmif000 (root)
- > Mariano/np00000 (nsubj)
- > Rajoy/np00000 (name)
- > y/cc (cc)
- > Alfredo/np00000 (conj:y)
- > Pérez/np00000 (name)
- > Rubalcaba/np00000 (name)
- > se/p0000000 (iobj)
- > jueves/w (nmod)

-> este/dd0000 (det)

-> Palacio/np00000 (nmod)

-> en/sp000 (case)

-> el/da0000 (det)

-> Moncloa/np00000 (nmod)

-> de/sp000 (case)

-> la/da0000 (det)

This library by itself is not enough to conduct a codification based on the claim-analysis methodology, as it has some limitations. First, the parsed output does not allow obtaining each component of a sentence individually. It is necessary a third application to read and process the diagram or tree structure. Second, it cannot parse all news stories contents automatically. A third application or a person must indicate which are the contents to be parsed individually. Third, it can identify neither which are the actors who must be coded in the database nor which categories these actors fall into. For example, Mariano Rajoy is coded as executive actors. Fourth, the identification of some elements as people, organizations or places does not always operate properly. Finally, it may have problems with some special nouns. This is the case of the political party *Podemos*. In the Spanish language, *podemos* is a verb and, therefore, the library identifies it like that. However, in the public debate it can also be referred to the political party.

To overcome these limitations, it has been developed from scratch a specific computer application which incorporates the Spanish CoreNLP library as an internal “module” or as one of its inner functionalities. This new tool is able to: 1) extract all the claims in the news stories collected in the database; 2) process each of these claims to guarantee a more precise output in the subsequent parsing of its grammatical structure; and 3) identify and code all the elements within the claims automatically. To do so, this computer application has been developed in Java language and its internal structure is composed by more than 40 programs files which at the same time contain more than 5.000 lines of source code and 873 comment lines.

The creation of dictionaries prior to code political actors in EU related stories

The claim-analysis application can identify all the political actors of a claim and associate them with their respective categories, by means of Java Enum data types. These “dictionaries” relate a set of words, in this case organizations or individuals, to a specific constant array. The name of this arrays corresponds to the category of political actors. For example, the Council of Ministers is a value that belongs to a constant array called GOVERNMENT. Hence, when this collective decision-making body of the government obtains visibility in EU related news stories, it can be posteriorly recognized as a part of executive actors, through this example of array:

```
GOVERNMENT(new String[]{"Gobierno central", "Consejo de Ministros"})
```

Instead of only using automatic processes to guarantee more reliable and accurate results, it has been applied a mixed solution between these techniques and manual coding. First, these dictionaries are created with some constant arrays and values inside them. Second, by means of the creation of other programming application, a prototype version, it is detected all organizations, places and individuals in the news stories collected in the database. If these records are not found in any of the dictionaries, then they are saved in a specific database table. Third, these results are manually checked and gradually introduced in their pertinent dictionary. Moreover, it was also designed a Web search engine of the news stories to manually search specific political actors in all the news stories collected in the database. Its results show the paragraph where an actor is found, highlighting its position in the text content. By doing so, 1) it can be searched any specific political actor in case of doubts about the constant array to which belongs; 2) it can be verified whether exist several actors with the same name; and 3) it can be detected whether a political actor might be coded in two arrays at the same time. For example, an individual can be a member of the executive during a particular period and a member of a European institutions posteriorly. Political actors who meet the second and third criteria are coded in a special array of the dictionary called “Double”. Once these dictionaries are finished, they may be particularly useful in the development of future research, as they would only need to be updated if necessary.

In addition, if the name of a specific individual or organization is not mentioned, but there is a common noun accompanied by a demonym, then it is used a dictionary

created for this purpose. Common examples are *el ministro español*, *los sindicatos alemanes* or *el presidente catalán*. This dictionary works together with other two types of dictionaries. On the one hand, there is a dictionary related to the political actors' position in certain organizations. For example, the expression *el jefe del ejecutivo español* is coded within the category "President of the Government" in the database, whereas *ministro español* is associated with the category "Government". On the other hand, there is another dictionary which contains a few sets of special values which are only activated when the name of political actors is accompanied by a demonym. Concretely, this has two main purposes: 1) to code the political actors when the demonym is accompanied by the name of an organization or institution. For example, *escuelas catalanas* or *empresas españolas*; and 2) it also includes an constant array to ignore actors who are just citizens. Some examples are *ciudadanos españoles* or *ciudadanos catalanes*.

An example of a constant array in the demonyms dictionary would look like that:

```
REGIONAL(new String[] {"andaluz", "aragonés", "aragones", "asturian", "canari",  
"cántabr", "cantabr", "castellanoleonés", "castellanoleones", "castellanomancheg",  
"catalán", "catalan", "extremeñ", "galleg", "balear", "riojan", "madrileñ", "murcian",  
"navarr", "vasc", "valencian"}).
```

A sample of the dictionary of the possible positions hold by a political actor:

```
PRESIDENT(new String[] {"presidente gobierno", "presidente ejecutivo"}).
```

And the third dictionary which complements them has the following arrays:

```
IGNORE (new String[] {"ciudadan"}).
```

```
FIRMS (new String[] {"empresa", "banco"}).
```

```
RESEARCH_INSTITUTES(new String[] {"escuela", "instituto", "universidad",  
"colegio"}).
```

```
OTHER_INTEREST_GROUPS(new String[] {"bolsa"}).
```

```
TRADE_UNION(new String[] {"sindicato"}).
```

There is a dictionary designed for special actors as well. This dictionary is not created through *Java Enum types*, but it is an XML file. The former type of dictionaries allows assigning a set of values within an array, as it was already illustrated. However, it

is not able to hold more complex structures. That means that it is not possible to define more characteristics or attributes for the array “President”, as only admits specific values like “*Gobierno central*”. To overcome this limitation, the XML dictionary allows defining different attributes within the arrays, instead of only strings or nouns. These attributes can contain strings or nouns or even arrays of strings to associate certain values with a concrete term. This is an example of how these attributes and their contents are defined in this XML dictionary:

```
{"entidades":[{"name":"zapatero", "styles": [{"dic": "PSOE", "timeIni": "", "timeFin": "2004-04-16"}, {"dic": "PRESIDENT", "timeIni": "2004-04-15", "timeFin": "2011-12-22"}, {"dic": "EXPRESIDENT", "timeIni": "2011-12-21", "timeFin": ""}]}
```

As it can be noted, the Spanish politician José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero may belong to either the “PSOE”, “President”, or the “Expresident” arrays. In the case that the attribute “timeIni” of an array does not have a value, any data prior of the value defined in “timeFin” is considered to code the political actor within this array. For example, the claim-analysis application will code this political actor as “PSOE” in a news story published in May 2003. Similarly, if the attribute “timeFin” is not defined, then it is considered the value of “timeIni” to onwards. In this case, it will code this political actor as “Expresident” in a news story published in 2012. The dictionary is only used with respect to some special political actors like the president of the domestic executive or ex-presidents and under special circumstances. Concretely, the political actors are sometimes introduced without mentioning their status, so this tool allows coding them.

Finally, there is another XML dictionary to detect organizations in news stories. Organizations are mentioned by their full name when they are introduced the first time. However, after that, the media may later refer to them by their acronym. Once the claim-analysis application has detected an organization, then it consults this dictionary to obtain its acronym. Hence, the software is capable of coding these political actors, regardless how they appear in these contents. Because of two or more organizations may share the same acronym, this is a better way for assuring that the abbreviation in the new stories contents belongs to a specific a unique organization. This is an example of category within this XML dictionary:

```
{"entidades":[{"name": "Corte Internacional Justicia", "ACR": "CIJ"}, {"name": "Corte Penal Internacional", "ACR": "CPI"}, {"name": "Credit Agricole", "ACR": "CA"}]}
```

Codifying claims and political actors in EU related stories

News stories sometimes give media visibility to specific individuals, using their full name to introduce them in the public debate for the first time, except for some well-known and relevant political actors such as Spanish presidents, the President of the United States, or the German Chancellor. After that, the media refer to them only by their surname. This is an example of this practice in *El Mundo*:

*Una semana después del polémico vídeo del PP salvando a España en el quirófano, muy similar a uno que grabó el partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD) del ex presidente Leonel Fernández en 2008, circula por las redes sociales una tercera versión de la medicina política pero protagonizado por un joven **Albert Rivera**.*

***Rivera** abogaba entonces por la "oxigenación" de España en un discurso muy centrado en combatir el nacionalismo. Y presentó un vídeo entre el marketing político amateur y el cine gore de serie B en el que un misterioso doctor interviene sobre un paciente "saturado", con manchas de "corrupción" y "demagogia" a derecha e izquierda de su tórax. "Tenemos que abrir, a ver qué nos encontramos", dice el médico.*

With the aim to facilitate the correct identification of political actors in these dictionaries, the claim-analysis application, as a first step, 1) detects the entry with the full name of the political actors in the news story and keeps its value; 2) compares this full name with existing registers within the dictionary to obtain its specific category; and 3) replaces all the surnames with this full name. This also works for compound names and names with prepositions, such as, for example, the Spanish Conservative Party's member Luis de Guindos. To do so, these names are simplified, removing any word that is not a noun. For example, in the case of the latter political actor it would be kept as Luis Guindos. This allows to reduce the number of political actors collected in the dictionaries, as it may be indicated only their full name, instead of also introducing their surnames separately.

As it was stated above, concerning actors who share the same name or even those cases in which a particular individual has hold different occupation during the period under study, they are codified within an array called "Double". Nevertheless, this has an internal used in the claim-analysis application. When a political actor is detected to be a "Double", two filters are applied to determine its specific category during that period.

First, individuals who are part of a political party usually are mentioned in the news story together with the name of its organization. The name of the organization may appear either after (*César Alierta, presidente de Telefónica*) or before (*El presidente de*

Telefónica, César Alierta) of the political actor. To identify whether an organization is associated with a certain individual and are not two different political actors, it has been created a database table containing different professions and positions. In this case, there was no need to use an existing dictionary or even create a new one, as this list of positions and professions can be found in several sources. By means of Web Scrapping techniques, it was downloaded¹⁰, collected in the database and manually improved a list of more than 476 records¹¹ related to professions and positions like president, researcher, teacher, minister, or spokesman. The main difference between this database table and the dictionary of positions is that the former is not used to code political actor in the database, whereas the latter is combined with its demonym if exists. Concretely, these database records act as marks to locate the position of the organization in the news story contents and then related it with the political actor found near of its location. For example, *César Alierta, presidente de Telefónica*, the word *presidente* is the key word obtained from this database table to identify that *César Alierta* and *Telefónica* are the same political actor. This process works regardless whether the order of the key word, the organization, and the individual. The claim analysis application catches the name of the organization and “learns” that the political actor belongs to it for the rest of the news story contents. As a result, it is possible to properly identify the correct array of the political actor within the dictionary.

Moreover, if the same sentence introduces several individuals and organizations, the algorithms of the automatic coding application are able to detect all the individuals and related them to their organizations correctly. For example, considering the following claim *Los secretarios generales de UGT y CCOO, Cándido Méndez e Ignacio Fernández Toxo, han instado hoy al Gobierno a poner los presupuestos generales del Estado "al servicio de la recuperación" y han urgido a resolver la situación de los trabajadores de la Función Pública*, the automatic coding application will correctly associate Méndez with UGT and Toxo with CCOO, learning that these individuals represent these organizations in these media contents.

¹⁰ Data obtained from:

https://igualdad.uniovi.es/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=6427a7d3-1ad9-49b1-8301-4763a62a7597&groupId=336079

¹¹ Indeed, the total amount of records is even bigger, as some of them have two values separated by commas that are posteriorly split by the claim analysis application.

And second, if the actor is not identified yet, then it is used the dictionaries related to demonyms, the position of the political actors, the third dictionary that complements them, and the XML dictionaries associated with acronyms and special actors.

After that, as a second step, news stories contents are split in sentences. Long texts are usually more difficult to be parsed properly, so the process begins simplifying the content of each news story on European affairs in the database. As a first step, the content is split by paragraphs. The objective is to have a variable on the prominence of public actors. Concretely, their position within news stories which is a specific variable used in media prominence studies. Even though this variable is not used in this research, the aim has been building a very complete software to conduct future new research on both claim-analysis and media content studies. Hence, the position of each paragraph in the contents will be introduced within the database. As a second step, the software cleans any HTML tag inside the new story, as these would produce inaccurate outputs. These tags do not exist in any in the Spanish language and could alter the grammatical structure of the contents. As a third step, each paragraph is split in individual sentences. By doing so, the contents of news stories are easier to be parsed by the *Spanish CoreNLP library*. The most basic form to identify individual sentences is by means of dots (.). For example, the following content:

El Gobierno de Mariano Rajoy cree que el Ejecutivo en funciones no debe someterse al control de un Parlamento del que no tiene su confianza. Por eso ha venido rechazando que Rajoy o sus ministros comparezcan ante las Cortes para someterse al control de los grupos, un criterio que no comparte la oposición.

It is divided in two parts:

a) *El Gobierno de Mariano Rajoy cree que el Ejecutivo en funciones no debe someterse al control de un Parlamento del que no tiene su confianza;*

b) *Por eso ha venido rechazando que Rajoy o sus ministros comparezcan ante las Cortes para someterse al control de los grupos, un criterio que no comparte la oposición.*

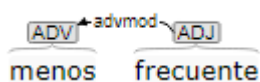
Other characters that have been considered to divide contents into sentences are the semicolon character (;), quotation marks (“”), parentheses (()) and the hyphen (-). Regarding the three latter characters, it only taken the content between the start and the end of these characters as a possible additional sentence. However, this sentence must contain at least valid subject and a verb. For example, the following content *De manera "excepcional", Rajoy terminó accediendo la primavera pasada a dar explicaciones sobre*

el controvertido pacto suscrito entre la UE y Turquía para frenar el flujo de refugiados. This content is not divided into two claims, as the text between the quotation marks, “*excepcional*”, does not have a valid subject or verb. Thus, this text is not considered an independent sentence from the original content, storing the whole content in the database as a unique sentence. The resulting sentences are parsed with the Spanish CoreNLP library with the aim to check their grammatical structure.

If a sentence has several structures composed by the structure “subject + verb + a predicate” this is divided into different sentences for each of these grammatical structures. For example, the following content *Al mismo tiempo que el PSOE celebraba la aprobación del Presupuesto Europeo, Rajoy señaló que Zapatero había dañado los intereses españoles*, it is split in two new sentences:

- a) *Al mismo tiempo que el PSOE celebraba la aprobación del Presupuesto Europeo.*
- b) *Rajoy señaló que Zapatero había dañado los intereses españoles.*

The sentences obtained through this process are filtered by eliminating some words or elements of their contents. When a natural parse or even other similar tools such as sentiment analysis applications are used, the best option to obtain a more accurate and better output is to simplify the text content as much as possible. There are three main actions considered. First, by examining word to word of a sentence, none of these elements are considered until it is founded a proper noun, a common noun, a verb, an article, or an adverbial modifier ¹². For instance, this form of words would not be removed, as it is an adverbial modifier:



According to this approach, the sentence: *Después de que Italia comunicara ayer a la ONU su disposición a liderar las fuerzas internacionales en el Líbano, esta mañana se ha conocido algunos datos sobre el despliegue* would be finally transformed into *Italia comunicara ayer a la ONU su disposición a liderar las fuerzas internacionales en el Líbano, esta mañana se ha conocido algunos datos sobre el despliegue.*

¹² Concerning adverbial modifiers, they are non-clausal adverbs or adverbial sentences that is used to change the meaning of a word (<https://universaldependencies.org/docs/en/dep/advmod.html>)

Similarly, adverb like *ya*, *alrededor*, *después*, or *frente* are also removed of the sentence. These elements may alter the parsed grammatical output obtained Spanish CoreNLP library, whereas its results are more accurate without considering them. The only exceptions are adverbial modifiers as well as the conjunction *pues*. Third, any comma in the content is replaced by a space character. For example, considering the sentence: *Carles Puigdemont, Artur Mas y Oriol Junqueras acuden a Madrid a un acto para arropar a Homs* would read as follows *Carles Puigdemont Artur Mas y Oriol Junqueras acuden a Madrid a un acto para arropar a Homs* is removing all the existing commas in its text content. The sentence is transformed as follows: *Carles Puigdemont Artur Mas y Oriol Junqueras acuden a Madrid a un acto para arropar a Homs*.

Each resulting sentence is coded in the database as individual claims. Then, claims are once again parsed by means of the Spanish CoreNLP library to identify the political actors inside its contents by means of the categories defined in the dictionaries: the claimant, the addressee, and the object actors.

Political actors found by these methods are coded in the database table “claim” which has the following columns or fields: 1) Id field. A unique numerical identifier for each claim. 2) Claimant. The name of the category obtained from the dictionaries; 3) Subject, The original subject of the claim; 4) Verb. The verb or action carried out by the claimant; 5) Direct Object. The original text identified as the direct object of the verb in a claim. This column may contain an empty value; 6) Indirect Object. This column contains, if exists, the indirect object of the verb; 7) Addressee. Array of string values containing the addresses of the claim; 8) Claim text. In this column is kept the content of the claim; 9) Sentence. The original content of the claim without any transformations; 10) Lemmatization. The lemma or simplified content of the sentence; 11) Tone. A numeric value ranging from -10 to 10. It refers the extent to which a claim is expressed in more positive or negative terms; 12) EU news. The id of the news story where the claim was found.

The next claim made by the PSOE in the EU related news story with the id 191359 within the database of *El País* illustrates how it is recorded in the database table:

- 1) Id: 307201
- 2) Claimant: PSOE.
- 3) Subject: PSOE.

- 4) Direct Object: empty value.
- 5) Indirect Object: empty value.
- 6) Addressee: empty value.
- 7) Claim text: *creyendo que beneficia el PSOE ha optado por resaltar las diferencias entre valores de izquierda y de derecha.*
- 8) Sentence: *Así, creyendo que beneficia el PSOE ha optado por resaltar las diferencias entre valores de izquierda y de derecha mientras que, por su parte, el PP ha optado por intentar capitalizar la crisis económica.*
- 9) Tone: 0.1
- 10) Lemma: *Así crear polarización ideológica beneficiar ha optar resaltar diferencias valores izquierda derecha parte ha optar intentar capitalizar crisis económica.*
- 11) EU news: 191359

The claimant

To operationalize the dependent variable, this research only considers the claimant or subject of each individual claim. It might be argued that this perspective seems to be in line with traditional media content analyses, which usually focus on the overall media appearances of political actors in the media. However, there is an important difference regarding this strand of literature. Through the claim-analysis methodology, it can be identified which are the political actors who act as claimants in news stories and therefore actively participate in the public debate. In consonance with the argumentations of the *EUROPUB* project (Koopmans and Statham 1999), traditional media research only considers the presence of political actors in news media stories, without paying attention to their actual role in the public debate. Moreover, the decision to use the claim analysis responds to a utilitarian and methodological perspective. Media content analyses do not allow to posteriorly use their databases to develop other studies based, for example, on the role of political actors within these news stories. By differentiating which actors act as claimants and which are the political actors who are addressed or affected by the action carried out by the former, it can be known which are the active and the passive political actors within news stories. As a result, this research focuses on the active actors in news stories, those whose actions contributes to the existence and development of the public debate (see Koopmans 2007).

This chapter explores the media visibility obtained by Spanish executive actors and political parties in EU related news stories. Regarding political parties, it has been selected those with representation in the Spanish domestic parliament in 2016. Furthermore, this research also relies on the methodology proposed by the *Chapel Hill Index* to code the political parties' ideological orientation:

- 1) *Ciutadans* (liberal),
- 2) *Canarian Coalition* (CC, regional).
- 3) *Convergence and Union* (CiU, regional).
- 4) *Republican Left of Catalonia* (ERC, regional).
- 5) *Coalició Compromís* (non state-wide coalition).
- 6) *United Left* (IU, radical left)¹³
- 7) *Basque Nationalist Party* (PNV, regional)
- 8) *People's Party* (PP, conservative).
- 9) *Spanish Socialist Workers' Party* (PSOE, socialist).
- 10) *Podemos* (radical left).
- 11) *BILDU* (regional)
- 12) *Socialists' Party of Catalonia* (PSC, regional).

The rest of Spanish political parties are included in a category “other”:

- 1) *Chunta Aragonesista* (CHA, regional).
- 2) *Amaiur* (regional).
- 3) *The Galician Nationalist Bloc* (BNG, regional).
- 4) *Eusko Alkartasuna* (EA, regional).
- 5) *The Andalusian Party* (PA, regional).
- 6) *Union, Progress and Democracy* (UPyD, liberal).
- 7) *Popular Unity Candidacy* (CUP, regional).
- 8) *Catalan Agreement of Progress* (*Entesa*, non state-wide coalition left).
- 9) *EQUO* (green left).
- 10) *Falange* (radical right).
- 11) *Castilian Left* (IzCA).
- 12) *Animalist Party Against Mistreatment of Animals* (PACMA).
- 13) *Aragonese Party* (PAR, regional)

¹³ It includes Initiative for Catalonia Greens (ICV, regional).

- 14) Communist Party of the Basque Homelands (PCTV, regional).
- 15) Basque Nationalist Action (EAE-ANV, regional)
- 16) Aralar (regional).
- 17) Bloc for Asturias (BA, regional).
- 18) Batasuna (regional).

The following categories of domestic actors are also used to explore the hypothesis of this research:

- Executive actors: This category contains the president of the government and the members of the executive. Includes also politically appointed members of public administration and references to the political party if referring to governmental actions.
- European institutions: This category includes the EU, the European Parliament (including European committees), the European Commission, the EU Council, the European Council, The Court of Justice, the Committee of Regions, the European Investment Bank or Fund, the European Ombudsman, European agencies and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Other domestic and supranational political actors coded within the database and used in the research:

- International institutions. In this category are included supranational organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Third countries: domestic executives, political parties, interest groups or other actors from other countries, whether they are EU member states or not, are coded within this category.
- Regional authorities: This category refers to regional executives.

Finally, the claim-analysis also have the capacity to code the following actors:

- Local authorities such as city councils.
- Authorities. This category refers to the judiciary and law enforcement bodies.
- Regulatory agencies.
- Retired politicians.
- Expresidents.

If the claim-analysis application detects several political actors in the same subject of a claim, then it extracts these actors individually and codes all of them in different records of the database table “claim”. This can be observed in the following example published by *El País: La reforma constitucional de PP y PSOE sale con el desplante del resto*. This claim has two claimants (the PP and the PSOE). Both are entered into the database as different records. These new entries will have the same content in their respective columns, except for the column “Claimant”. It could be argued that having several records related to the same claim may entail subsequent problems to carry out the further statistical analysis. However, this risk is overcome using SQL queries and the relational model of the database. As Chang et al. (2003) illustrate, this type of databases uses relational techniques for storing and retrieving data. They are organized into physical tables which contains a set of rows and columns. This physical tables are usually stored on random access storage devices (RASED), such, as for example, magnetic or optical disk drives. Furthermore, it can also be generated logical tables or “views” from physical tables, providing a new way to obtain new ways of presenting the data and the outputs.

In line with the claim-analysis methodology (Koopmans and Statham 1999), it is not considered in the research those political actors conducting the same action in the public debate. The claim-analysis only codes the same claimant and the same action (verb) in the same EU related story once. This is justified as the research focuses on different types of political actors obtaining visibility in news stories, contributing to the public debate through different types of claims. For example, the following claim *CCOO y UGT denuncian el ninguneo a los sindicatos en la futura mesa del Transporte* is coded in the database in one single record with the Claimant “TRADE_UNION”. If one of these organizations make more claims in the same news story and through different verbs or actions, then they are coded in the database as different claims. For example, in the same news story, if CCOO obtains again media attention through the following claim: *Comisiones Obreras ha apuntado que el sindicato es el legítimo representante mayoritario de los trabajadores del sector*, then it is coded as a new claim in the database, as the action/verb is different from the previous example.

The addressee

Even though this research does not consider the addressee of claims in any of the hypotheses, the claim-analysis application has been designed to detect and code it. The process of identification and codification of this type of political actors follows the same

steps and the same categories of political actors than in the case of the claimant, except for the fact that is placed in the indirect or direct object of the verb instead of the subject of the claim. The addressee is the political actor who is directly being addressed to do or leave something or who is object of criticism or support from the claimant. It is the answer of the following question “At whom is it addressed the claim?”. For example, in the claim *Rajoy exige a Zapatero "una explicación a los españoles* the addressee is Zapatero, as it is the political actor who is appealed by the claimant (Rajoy) to do something. Indeed, it usually coincided with the indirect object of the verb from a grammatical perspective.

Within the database, the addressee is related to the claimant and the claimant itself by means of the column “Addressee”. This column admits several addressees within an json, a type of array. This allows to posteriorly obtain each addressee separately through programming languages such as Java. For example, the following claim *El PSOE exigió que Ciudadanos y Podemos tratasen de acercar posturas para poder llegar a un pacto* has a claimant (PSOE) and two addressees (*Ciudadanos* and *Podemos*). Both addressees are coded in the column “Addresse” as a json record: [“CIUTADANS”], [“PODEMOS”]].

Tone of the claim

The claim-analysis application is also capable of coding whether the action or demand made by the claimant has a positive (giving support, showing high expectations, show confidence, giving praise, etc.) or a negative meaning (criticism, attacks towards the addressee, the negative impact of the EU integration for domestic interests, etc.). As a first step, the lemmatization of the sentence is used to measure the tone, as this field in the database table “claim” contains the original content taken from the news story news, before using any type of filter or transformation. Lemmatization techniques use a dictionary to replace terms with their morphological root form (Welbers et al. 2017). For example, the lemma of the sentence *Así, creyendo que beneficia el PSOE ha optado por resaltar las diferencias entre valores de izquierda y de derecha mientras que, por su parte, el PP ha optado por intentar capitalizar la crisis económica* is *Así crear polarización ideológica beneficiar ha optar resaltar diferencias valores izquierda derecha parte ha optar intentar capitalizar crisis económica*. The aim is to obtain a more simplified text content which will be processed posteriorly by a natural sentiment analysis script. These tools are more likely to work better and provide more accurate results with

the basic form of some words than using, for example, the complex verbal conjugations of the Spanish language.

To do so, this research relies on the programming language R, a free software environment for statistical computing and graphics (R Core Team 2019). This computer language is nicely integrated with the package “quanteda” and is designed to provide an easier access to the powerful functionality of “spaCy”. Spacy tokenize and tag the texts, returning a datatable of the results which allows to obtain the lemma of its contents (Benoit et al. 2018). The R script transforms nouns, adjectives, adverbs and auxiliar terms in their lemma form. The rest of the elements of the sentence, such as, for example, pronouns or punctuation marks are not transformed, as they do not have other grammatical complex forms. The output is stored in the column “lemma” of the database table “claim”.

As a second step, it has been designed a sentiment analysis script in Java language to predict and calculate the tone of the different lemmas stores in the database. Sentiment analysis is the automatic process of trying to recognize negative, positive, and neutral opinions (Wilson et al. 2005). Sentiment analysis uses a set of texts that are manually coded as positive, neutral or negative, allowing the algorithm to learn which specific features (terms and word combinations) are more likely to occur in positive and negative contents. Scholars usually provide the training data, which has good examples representing the categories that are attempting to predict or measure. Nevertheless, they do not provide explicit rules for how to look for these codes. The inductive part is that these algorithms learn these rules from training data: “if the training data is a list of people that are either mortal or immortal, then the algorithm will learn that all men are extremely likely to be mortal, and thus would estimate that Socrates is mortal as well” (Welbers et al. 2018). The sentiment analysis script of this research relies on library *Google Prediction Api*¹⁴. After several tests with samples of lemmas collected in the database, this tool provides more reliability and accurate tools than other similar applications based on, for example, the use of dictionaries. This Api returns a value from -10 (very negative) to 10 (very positive) that is stored into the column “Tone” of the database table “claim”.

¹⁴ <https://cloud.google.com/natural-language/>

Unfortunately, after several tests, it has been observed that the sentiment analysis conducted by the Google Api returned too imprecise outputs. Therefore, this variable has been discarded from the analysis of the media attention to political actors, as it could not provide reliable data to explore a possible related hypothesis. However, it has provided useful information related to the functioning of the sentimental analysis methodology. In this respect, it is being developed a new application from scratch to consider this variable in the future, overcoming the current limitations.

Independent variables

Policy domain

Hypothesis 1 expects that Europhile parties obtain higher visibility in public debates on European affairs, not to politicize the EU integration, but to emphasize issues on which they have ownership. To operationalize this hypothesis, it has been analysed all the claims made by state-wide opposition parties in EU related news stories related to the following public domains:

- 1) Economic affairs.
- 2) Agriculture and fishing affairs.
- 3) Rights and justice affairs.
- 4) Labour and social affairs.
- 5) Energy and environment affairs.
- 6) Institutional affairs: This category includes issues such as territorial affairs, domestic elections and internal questions affecting political parties.
- 7) International affairs related to foreign policy issues.
- 8) European issues related to the EU integration like elections to the European Parliament.
- 9) Other.

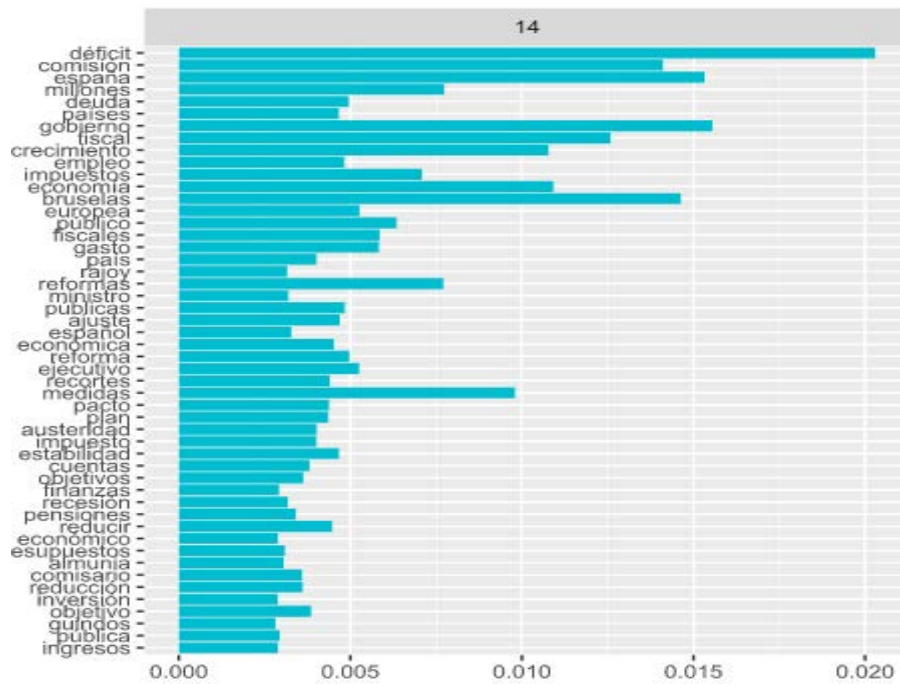
This is a revised version of the original Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) coding system that merges some issues on which the EU have few competences and that fits better with the Topic models results as well as the Eurolex classification used to corroborate other research hypotheses. To control for the effect of the economic crisis on agenda diversity the analysis differentiates between the period before the outbreak of the

Euro crisis and the period afterwards. By doing this, it can be corroborated more precisely whether the visibility of opposition parties' claims is explained by their emphasis on issues that they "own".

The classification of EU related news stories in these policy domains relies on topic modelling algorithms (see, for example, Blei et al. 2003; Blei 2012). Nguyen et al. (2015) illustrate that these algorithms are usually used to learn a group of latent topics for a corpus and, furthermore, predict the likelihoods of each term from each document (news stories) belonging to a particular topic (see also Teh et al., 2006; Newman et al., 2006; Toutanova and Johnson, 2008; Porteous et al., 2008; Johnson, 2010; Xie and Xing, 2013; Hingmire et al., 2013; Grün and Hornik, 2011). Topic models do not assume that a particular word belongs to a single topic, but these terms may be associated with several of them at the same time. For example, the term "employment" may be related to topics focused on labour and social affairs. However, this term may also be indirectly related to economic topics, where the emphasis of news stories is, for example, the impact of the Euro crisis and the austerity measures, where "employment" are not related to specific measures and have a secondary role in the news story. Additionally, the classification of documents or news stories using topic models avoid the risk of being based on little evidence and precision to identify the set of topics properly, as they are documents that rely on huge amounts of text (see, for example, Nguyen et al. 2015).

Concretely, it has two packages for fitting topic models: *Topicmodels* and *LDA*. The package *LDA* (Chang 2010) offers collapsed Gibbs sampling methods for Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) to determine the posterior probability of latent variables. This is a mathematical method for finding mixture of terms or words associated with each topic that describe each news story in this analysis. Hence, *LDA* deals with documents or news stories as a mixture of topics, where each topic is at the same time a mixture of terms. These public discussions are overlap each other in terms of content, instead of being split into discrete groups, mirroring the typical use of natural language processing¹⁵. This is an example of generated topic model from the public debates collected in the database, showing the key terms of the document:

¹⁵ <https://www.tidytextmining.com/topicmodeling.html>



The twenty-five topics found through this methodology have been grouped and renamed according to the policy domains analysed in this research. In this respect, two topic models may have related to the economic policy domain. For example, the “Topic 1” may be related to terms about the Euro crisis, whereas the “Topic 2” contains words on the financial banking system. As both topic models have an economic nature, both are considered to belong to the economic policy domain. The relationship between topic models and news stories has been checked by means of samples of the results collected in the database, corroborating their reliability, robustness and accuracy.

Furthermore, there was another topic model related to the celebration of elections, including both European and national. News stories associated with this topic model have been reviewed manually, splitting them between the institutional and the EU integration policy domains.

EU events: European events and European elections

According to the hypothesis 2 of this research, opposition parties will obtain more media attention for their claims during the celebration of European elections. Furthermore, the hypothesis 6 also expected that domestic executive actors to obtain more media visibility for their claims during the celebration of European events. To operationalize these hypotheses two variables have been created. One is a dichotomous variable on EU

elections with value 1 the month prior to the elections and one week after the elections (0 otherwise). The other, using the database created by Guineaudau and Palau (2016), is also a dichotomous variable with value 1 if any of the following EU events occur:

- 1) Signature of EU Treaties and referendums.
- 2) Signature of accession treaties.
- 3) Signature of EU related treaties and agreements.
- 4) EMU related events and convergence reports.
- 5) Council Meetings.
- 6) Council Presidencies.
- 7) Changes in the Presidency of the European Commission.

Regional interests

The hypothesis 3 of this research expect that regional parties obtain more media visibility in public debates on European affairs, emphasizing the interest of their regions. To operationalize this hypothesis, it has been considered EU related stories which include at least one regional party as a claimant. In this sense, if these stories mention the interests of the claimant's region in their contents, then it is assigned a value of 1. For instance, a EU related story mentioning the development of the Basque peace process within an European framework and including a PNV's claim, it would be considered that it is explicitly associated with the regional interests of the Basque Country. By contrast, when EU related stories have a regional party as a claimant, but their contents do not mention any regional interest, then the value is 0. For example, a story just mentioning the PNV's support to the executive actors' position at the European political level, without making any reference to the Basque Country. To do so, it has initially been used a search by key words to decide whether a EU related story emphasizes regional interests.

In the case of Catalan regional interests, the keyword list includes: 1) *Cataluña* and other variants such as *Catalunya*, *Catalonia*; 2) *catalanes*; 3) *catalanas*; 4) *idioma Catalán*; 5) *lengua catalana*; 6) *el Catalán*; 7) *elecciones locales*; 8) *lenguas propias*; 9) *Mossos*; 10) *una nación*; 11) *independencia*; 12) *derecho a decidir*; 13) *autodeterminación*; 14) *separatista*; 15) *soberanía*; 16) *corredor*; 17) *dret a decidir*; 18) *comunidades autónomas*; 19) *ejecutivos autonómicos*; 20) *consulta soberanista*; 21) *ayuntamientos*; 22) *consejeros*; 23) *consejero*; 24) *consejeras*; 25) *consejeros*; 26) *consejería*; 27) *consejerías*; 28) *consellería*; and 29) *conselleries*.

Regarding Basque regional interests, it has been considered: 1) *País Vasco*; 2) *Euskalherria*; 3) *vascos*; 4) *vascas*; 5) *Eurskera*; 6) *lengua Vasca*; 7) *idioma Vasco*; 8) *el Vasco*; 9) *elecciones locales*; 10) *lenguas propias*; 11) *Ertzaintza*; 12) *una nación*; 13) *independencia*; 14) *derecho a decidir*; 15) *autodeterminación*; 16) *separatista*; 17) *soberanía*; 18) *fachada atlántica*; 19) *Euskadi*; 20) *Plan Ibarretxe*; 21) *ayuntamientos*; 22) *consejeros*; 23) *consejero*; 24) *consejeras*; 25) *consejeros*; 26) *consejería*; 27) *consejerías*; 28) *Navarra*; 29) *ETA*; and 30) *proceso de paz*.

These EU related news stories, regardless the value of the dichotomous variable, have been manually checked to: 1) guarantee a more precise conclusions and the reliability of the results; and 2) obtain more insights about the contents are discussed within them.

Concerning Canary and Valencian regional interests, EU-relates stories, containing the regional party CC or the non state-wide opposition party *Compromís* as claimants, have been coded manually, as these political parties are marginally covered in the media. For example, in stories on the impact of the immigration over the Canary Islands or the regional corruption cases in Valencia, the respective dichotomous variables will have a value of 1. If they are not related to the interest of their region, the value will be 0. This is the case of stories on the European elections, where Valencian and Canarian parties are only vaguely mentioned, due to the formation of electoral coalitions.

Support for the independence

The hypothesis 4 of this research expects that secessionist regional parties obtain more media visibility as public support for the independence of their region increases. This research has focused on analysing the impact of increasing public support for secessionism in the media attention to Catalan regional parties. This is justified due to the increasing public support for the independence of Catalonia within the EU during the period under study. Moreover, Catalan parties were more active than other regional parties, even putting into practice the celebration of several independence referenda and raising political confrontation with domestic executive actors.

This hypothesis is operationalized by means of the answer “Independent state” to the question "Which kind of political entity should Catalonia be with respect to Spain?" of the opinion polls published by The Centre for Opinion Studies (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió; CEO). The question is asked every few months in the CEO's surveys which is

published between three and four times per year. To overcome this limitation, it has been calculated the annual average of this percentages to measure the hypothesis.

EU decision-making process

According to the hypothesis 5 of this research, domestic executive actors' claims will obtain more media visibility in public debates during the approval of new European normative compared to opposition parties. The EU decision-making process is measured through European normative, including Directives and Regulations, available from the *Eurolex* databases¹⁶. Using a Web Scraper, specially created for this purpose, it has been downloaded all the data related of European Directives and Regulations from 2005 to 2015 and stored in the database. Concretely, it has been considered the European normative related to the following policy domains:

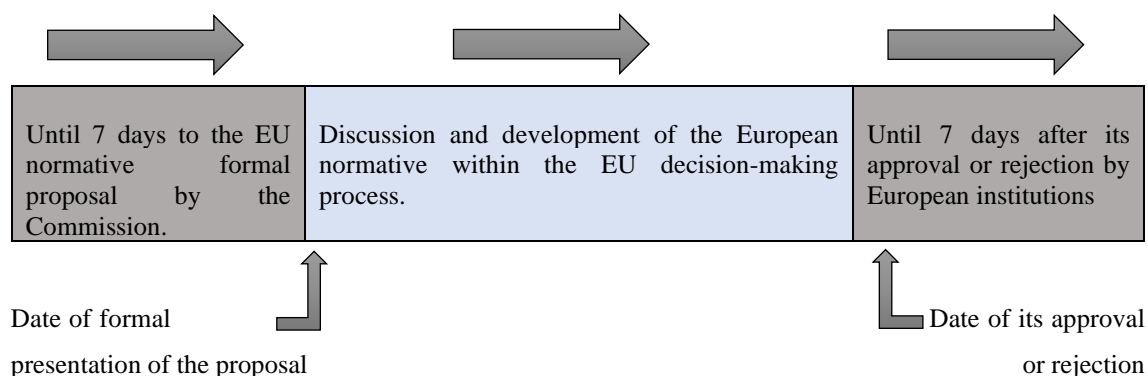
- 1) Economic normative.
- 2) Agriculture and fishing normative.
- 3) Rights and justice normative.
- 4) Labour and social normative.
- 5) Energy and environment normative.
- 6) Other normative.

To corroborate the expectations raised in the hypothesis, it has been analysed all EU related stories mentioning a European Directive or Regulation in their contents. To do a keyword search including the expressions “Directive”, “Regulation” and “normative” has been conducted to find all news stories related to European normative. The results of the keyword search have manually been checked to corroborate that these news stories mention a European Directive or Regulation in their contents.

However, this research is only interested in legislation that is still going to be discussed at the European political level or it has just been passed. Hence, considering the date of publication of public debates on European affairs, it has only been analysed those explicitly mentioning these European normative that 1) are mentioned until seven days before their formal proposal by the European Commission; 2) are in any phase of the EU decision-making process. For example, a Directive put to the vote at the European

¹⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/>

Parliament; and 3) until seven days after their rejection or final approval. Concretely, if one of these public debates is published within the interval of time drawn in the Figure:



Then, by means of a dichotomous variable, it is assigned a value of 1. For example, if the European Commission presents a formal proposal of Directive n 10 March 2010 and its passed-on 23 March 2014, then all public debates explicitly mentioning this normative between 03 March and 2010 and 30 March 2014 are coded with a value of 1.

To measure whether these EU related news stories are dominated by domestic executive actors or their contents reflect a diverse participation of political actors, this research relies on the Shannon's entropy index. This formula is a measure of information entropy created by applying natural laws of physics to analyse communication, concretely language and computer applications. Indeed, it is a variant of the generic entropy formula that was originally used in the field of thermodynamics to calculate the diffusion of heat (Boydston et al. 2014). Shannon (1948) and Shannon and Weaver (1949) argue that human communication can be comprehended in terms of the concentration and diffusion of the categorical information it contains, developing the information variant of the entropy measure. Concerning the political science, Shannon's entropy index has been used to analyse topics like institutional agenda-setting (Baumgartner et al. 2000), comparative policy attention (Jennings et al. 2011), the participation of interest groups (Halpin and Thomas 2012), agenda volatility (Talbert and Potoski 2002), committee jurisdiction (Sheingate 2006) and information complexity (Wolfe 2010). This measure is calculated by multiplying the proportion of claims that executive actors and each opposition party receives by the natural log of that proportion, then taking the negative sum of these products. Next, it is shown the Formula 1, where x_i represents the proportion

of the total visibility that the item receives, whereas $\ln(x_i)$ is the natural log of the proportion of visibility the item receives. In this sense, the Shannon's entropy index increases as the spread of visibility across the items becomes more equal or diffuse (Boydston et al. 2014).

Formula 1. Shannon's entropy index

$$\text{Shannon's } H = -\sum_{i=1}^n (p(x_i)) * \ln p(x_i)$$

This research concretely uses the normalized version of the Shannon's entropy index, ranging its results from 0 to 1, regardless of the number of items. Values close to 0 indicate a concentrated agenda and close to 1 a fragmented one. Its normalized version discounts the effect that more elements may have on raising Shannon's entropy index and, moreover, is useful for comparing across different items coding systems used on the same data. Formula 2 is composed by the item represented as x_i , the proportion of the total visibility the item receives as $p(x_i)$, the natural log of the proportion of visibility that the item receives as $\ln(x_i)$ and N as the total number of items. By restricting the index between 0 and 1, the upper limit is less informative than the non-normalized version, but datasets with varying number of elements can be compared uniformly (Boydston et al. 2014).

Formula 2. Shannon's entropy index (Normalized version)

$$\text{Shannon's } H^* = \frac{-\sum_{i=1}^n (p(x_i)) * \ln p(x_i)}{\ln(N)}$$

Critical junctures

The hypothesis 7 expects that challenger parties with low likelihood of entering office in next elections to increase their media visibility in public debates on European affairs, following the outbreak of the Euro crisis. Similarly, according to the hypothesis 8, regional parties, especially those which pursue the obtain the independence of their region, will also increase their visibility in public debates on European affairs during this

period. Because the hypotheses test the impact of the Euro crisis, it is used as indicator variations in the risk premium (Eurostat data). Additionally, for the period under study, this indicator has a remarkably high correlation with the Eurobarometer question about the benefits perceived from the European integration (0.9***).

Regression analysis

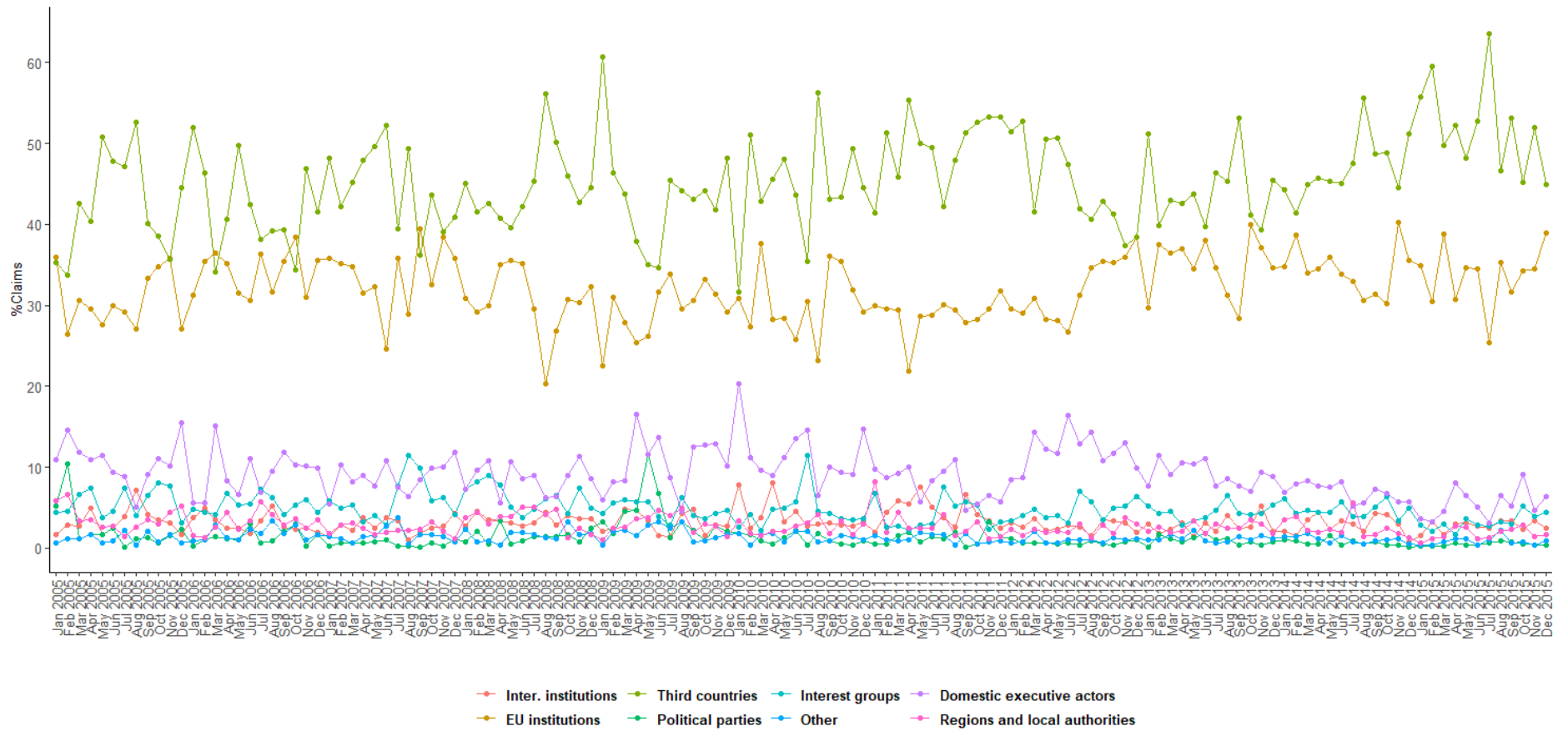
Some of these hypotheses has been analysed through a Poisson regression analysis as the dataset contains count data. The statistical basis of this analytical method has already been well established by existing literature (e.g. Kin 1989; Gardner et al. 1995; Cameron and Trevedi 1998). The dependent variable is the media visibility obtained by domestic executive actors' and political parties' claims in EU related stories. The independent variables are the celebration of European events, European elections, Catalan regionalist interests, Basque regionalist interests, the increasing public support for the Catalan independence and the Euro crisis. In the case of the European elections, some political parties show large standard errors, because of the lower media attention paid by the Spanish media, especially in *El País*. This regression analysis has focused on Catalan and Basque regionalist interests, as these actors are the actors with stronger regional and secessionist demands in Spain. Moreover, due to the low media attention to the Valencian and Canarian political parties, *Compromís* and *CC*, these actors are not considered.

2.3. Results

Such an erosion of the contribution of parliaments and political parties to public debates on Europeanised issues seems problematic from the normative point of view of democratic legitimacy and accountability (Koopmans 2007).

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate a clear trend of vertical Europeanization (media visibility of European institutions) and horizontal Europeanization (media attention to actors from other member states) in public debates on European affairs, whereas domestic actors play a secondary role. This is in line with findings of previous literature (e.g. Kriesi and Grande 2015). In this sense, Kriesi and Grande (2015) demonstrate that supranational and executive actors from other member states, especially German political actors and the Chancellor Angela Merkel, dominate public debates on European affairs in detriment of other domestic actors.

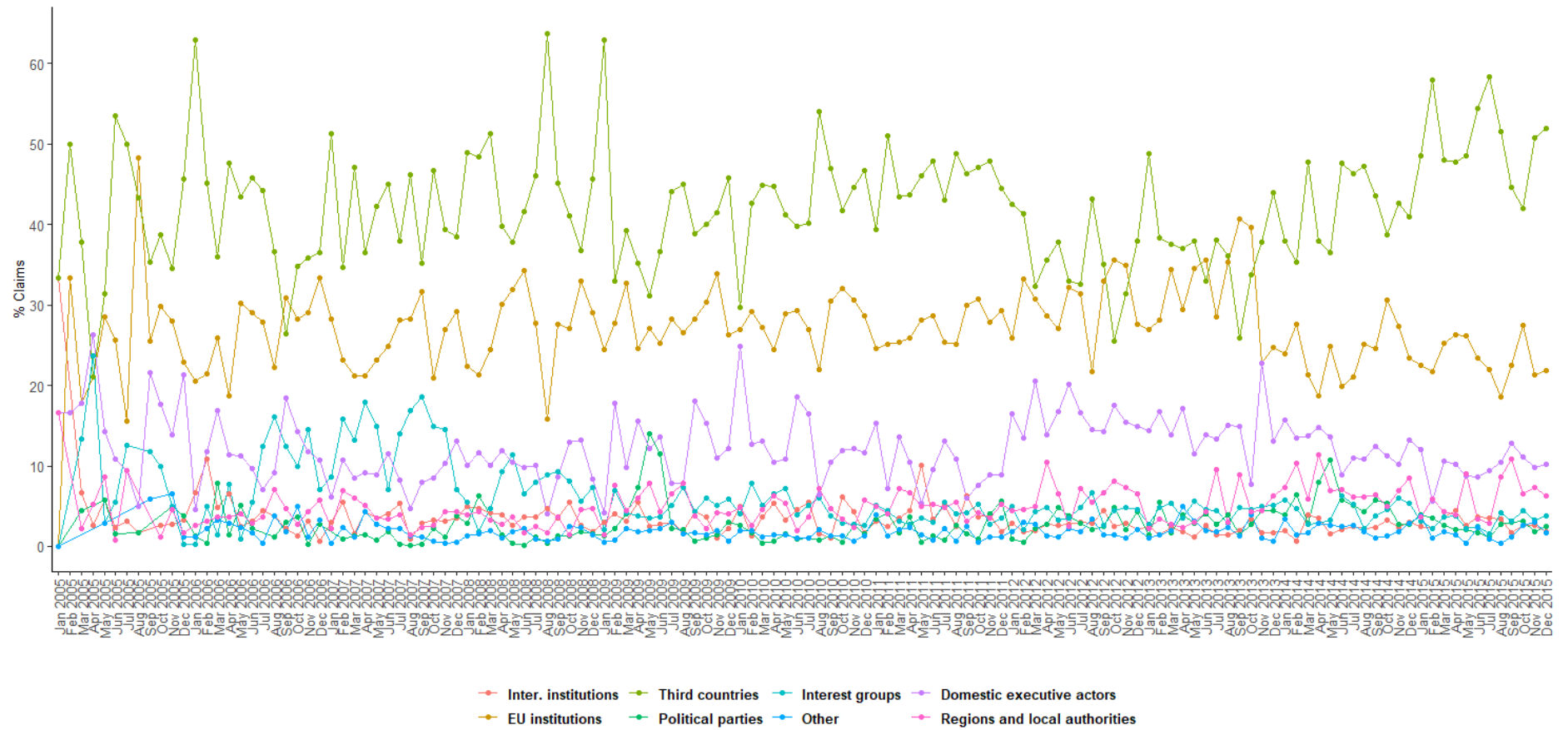
Figure 1. Visibility of political actors' claims in public debates on European affairs in *El País* from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by *El País*

Note: This figure shows the percentage of claims made by any type of political actor in public debates on European affairs during the period under study.

Figure 2. Visibility of political actors' claims in public debates on European affairs in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by *El Mundo*

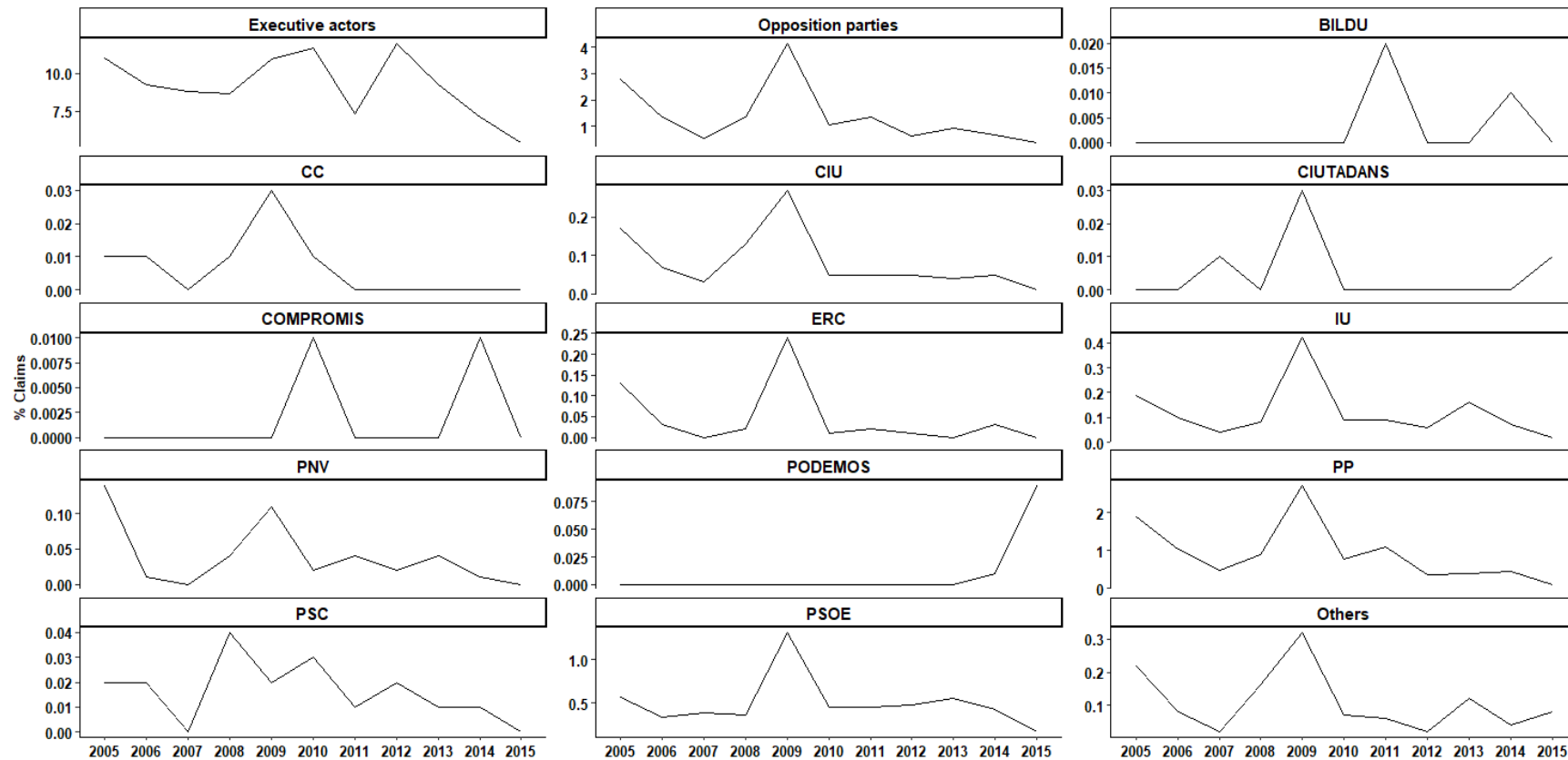
Note: This figure shows the percentage of claims made by any type of political actor in public debates on European affairs during the period under study.

In the case of Spain, executive actors have the highest capacity to obtain visibility in EU related stories in both Spanish newspapers. As the *EUROPUB* project has already illustrated, the media are more likely to reflect the current distribution of power and influence in the EU decision-making process (e.g. Koopmans 2004, 2007; Koopmans and Pfetsch 2006). Like this strand of literature, this research also shows that executive actors are the main beneficiaries of the increasing Europeanization of public spheres. Executive actors' claims represented 9.23% of the claims in *El País* and 12.32% in *El Mundo*. These differences are mainly explained because the higher attention to actors from other member states and European institutions in *El País* (45.42% and 32.01%) than in *El Mundo* (42.09% and 27.14%). Even though the right-wing newspaper also paid a substantial attention to foreign and supranational actors, the media attention reached similar degree of attention than European institutions in several points of time within the period under study.

The results in Figures 3 and 4 illustrate that executive actors obtained a substantial increase in their media attention during the year 2005 in both Spanish newspapers. This media visibility was mainly associated with public debates on the European Constitution referendum in Spain and the EU budget. In addition, the negative economic and social consequences of the Euro crisis and public debates on the Catalan secessionism process also led to a greater increase in the media visibility of these actors' positions in the Spanish media. A more detailed description on these EU related discussions is given in the subsequent sections related to this critical juncture and the territorial conflict.

However, some differences can be found in the media coverage of *El País* and *El Mundo*. The former newspaper paid more attention to the debate about the European constitution than *El Mundo*, highlighting its consequences on the domestic social interests. Spanish executive actors also emphasized in *El País* the importance of being the first member state to approve the constitutional project, seeking to improve and obtain a positive impact in the status of Spain at the supranational arena. The second most prominent public debate in was focused on the negotiations on the EU budget and its impact over economic domestic interests.

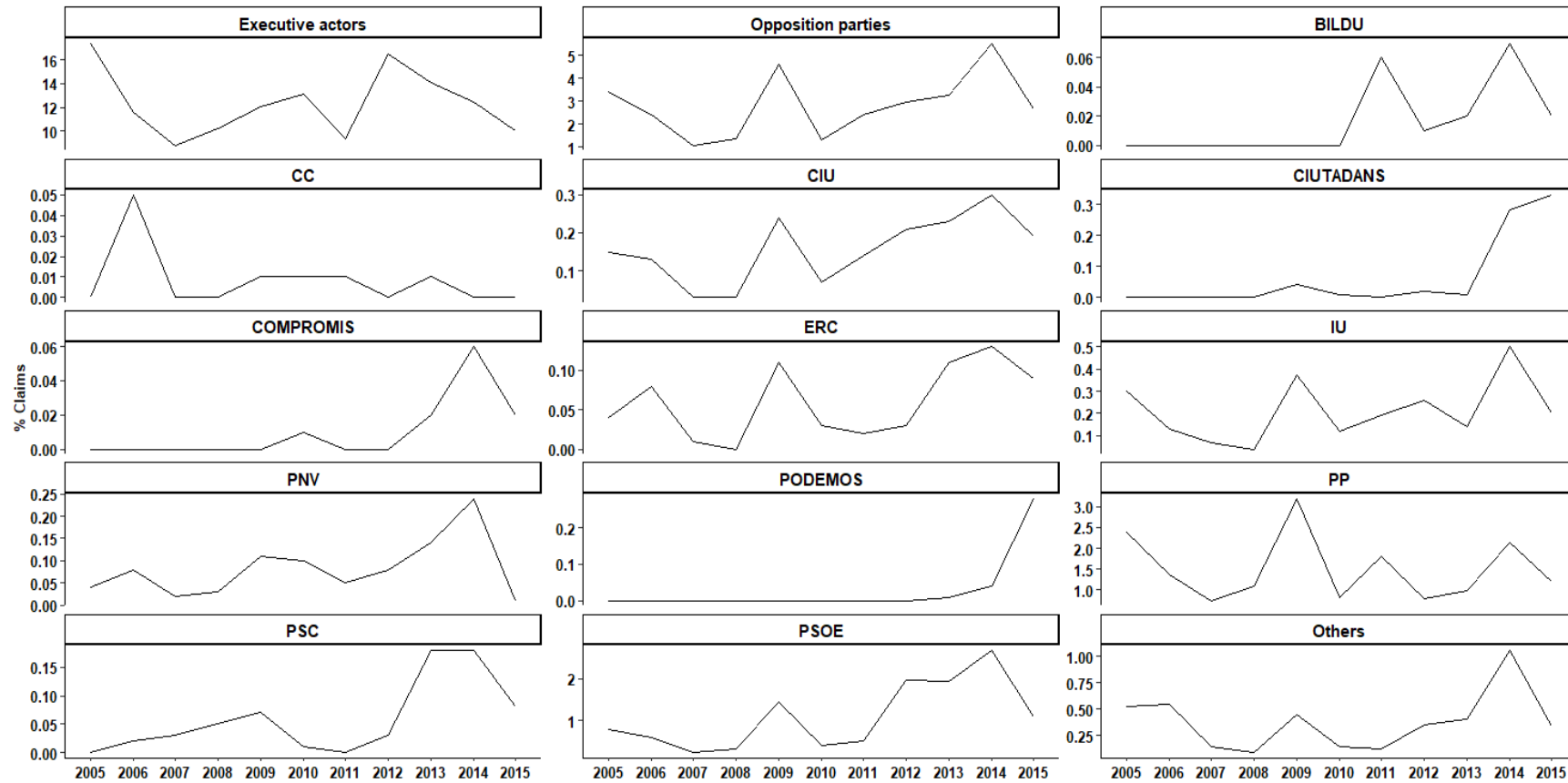
Figure 3. Visibility of executive actors' and political parties' claims in public debates on European affairs in *El País* from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by *El País*

Note: These figures show the percentage of executive actors' and opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs.

Figure 4. Visibility of executive actors' and political parties' claims in public debates on European affairs in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by *El Mundo*

Note: These figures show the percentage of executive actors' and opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs.

In the case of *El Mundo*, the discussions around the approval of the EU budget was by far the most important EU related discussions. Moreover, this media outlet was quite critical of the executive actors' management of the negotiations at the European political level. Furthermore, *El Mundo* also paid a substantial attention to executive actors' positions in public debates on the competitive tender launched by the energetic firm Gas Natural over its equivalent Endesa. It implied a conflicting political debate between the European Commission and the Spanish government. Conflict and dramatism are important sources of news value for the media, increasing the newsworthiness of these public discussions and their participants (e.g. Galtung and Ruge 1965).

These findings seem to corroborate the existence of certain degree of media political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont 2015) in the Spanish newspapers. The left-wing *El País* not only paid attention to the impact of the EU on domestic economic interests, but also highlighted public debates related to social aspects of the integration process. Instead, *El Mundo* mainly focused on following the executive actors' claims within European negotiations with a potential impact for Spanish economic interests. This emphasis on domestic interests was also in consonance with the importance that the Spanish society and the media give to the output obtained from the EU integration (see Díez Medrano 2003). Positive attitudes in Spain towards the integration process are mainly focused on the benefits that the country is believed to have gained from the EU at both the political and economic dimensions, relying on the advantages of the membership in terms of better policies and economic prosperity. As a result, European affairs are more likely to be framed in terms of economic performance, strengthening democracy, or reinforcing the country's position in the international arena (Díez Medrano 1995; 2007). Yet, this research demonstrates that there are important differences on how the Spanish media refer to these public debates on European affairs.

Indeed, public debates on European affairs reflect how executive actors use the EU to reinforce the Spanish status in the international arena. Concretely, this is especially the case of the EU's common position over Cuba. These EU related debates increased the media visibility of executive actors' claims in June 2009 and June and July 2010 in *El País*, whereas *El Mundo* paid more attention to them in January and July 2010. These stories mainly revolved around two aspects: 1) the release of Cuban political prisoners; and 2) the relationship between the EU and Cuba with the intermediation of Spain. These

patterns of media attention may be explained by the special relationship between Cuba and Spain. This country is the member state that consistently single out around these international negotiations. In recent years, the most decisive EU decisions have reflected the initiatives carried out by Spanish executive actors. For instance, the PP's government, led by José María Aznar, prompted the call in the EU to approve a common European position on Cuba in 1996. In turn, when the PSOE recovered power, it prompted new proposals over the topic, rewriting the strategies followed by the PP (Roy 2007).

Elections to the European Parliament in 2009 also contributed to increase the media attention of executive actors' claims. They were the first European elections after the outbreak of the Euro crisis. Spanish newspapers did not only focus on the celebration of the European elections and political debates among domestic parties, but also highlighted the extent their electoral results could be reproduced in next domestic elections. In this respect, *El País* and *El Mundo* associated subsequent discussion on general, regional, and local elections with the PP's success in the previous elections to the European Parliament. These EU related debates were involved in a dramatic context due to the negative impact of the Euro crisis, emphasizing the possibility of a shift in the management of it. These elements may explain the special emphasis on this EU events, beyond just considering electoral incentives.

Finally, it can be observed some differences between the two Spanish newspapers in line with the existence of media political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont 2015). Whereas executive actors obtained substantial visibility for their claims in public debates on the Bologna Process in *El País* during April 2009, *El Mundo* paid more attention to negotiations on fishing agreements with the EU, Morocco, and Spain in January 2012. Again, it can be noted that the left-wing newspaper was more likely to focus on the impact of the EU integration on social domestic interests, while economic ones had a prominent position in the right-wing *El Mundo*.

Opposition parties obtained much less media attention than executive actors in the Spanish media, even though these actors directly represent broad sectors of the society. Concretely, their media visibility was, on average, even lower than those made by interest groups in both Spanish newspapers. Their claims only represented the 1.86% of the total number of claims made by any political actors in *El País*. Their visibility was greater in *El Mundo* with the 3.74% on average. As Koopmans (2007) argues, such erosion of

political parties' contribution in public debates on Europeanised issues may be problematic from a normative viewpoint of democratic legitimacy and accountability. This research also shows that opposition parties obtained more media visibility for their claims in *El Mundo* than in *El País*, because the impact of the EU in domestic processes. This increasing media attention to opposition parties' claims in the right-wing newspaper may be explained by the importance of public debates involving regional parties, especially the Catalan independence process and the intermediation of European institutions in the Basque peace process.

Most of this media coverage is associated with the two main Spanish mainstream parties. On average, the most prominent opposition party in *El País* was the PP (1.26%), whereas the PSOE obtained lower visibility for their claims (0.41%). In the case of *El Mundo*, the media attention obtained by both mainstream parties was higher than the former newspaper. *El Mundo* paid more attention to PSOE's claims (1.92%) than other opposition parties, followed by those made by the PP (1.63%). Mainstream parties do not only dominate the general coverage of stories published in the media (Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont 2015), but also those related to European affairs. As Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont (2015) demonstrate, in their analysis on all the stories published in the front-pages of *El País* and *El Mundo* from 1996 to 2011, these newspapers are more likely to strengthen the PSOE's and PP's dominant position in the political system, relegating a more marginal position to challenger and regional parties. Similarly, Guinaudeau and Palau (2016) also prove that mainstream parties have more opportunities to set the media agenda in public debates on European affairs published by quality newspapers.

Previous research has already proved that the media act as independent actors which follow their own ideological preferences. According to this literature, they are more likely to give media visibility to actors with similar ideological positions, especially in countries with a high degree of political parallelism like Spain (Hallin and Mancini 2004). However, newspapers may also be interested in associating the rival party, in ideological terms, with bad news as a part of the political game played in the media arena (Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont 2015). In this sense, *El Mundo* especially emphasized EU related stories about the internal crisis of political leadership within the PSOE in 2014, as a result of previous electoral defeats in European and domestic elections.

Opposition parties, mainly the PP, obtained increasing visibility in public debates on European affairs related to the European Constitution and the approval of the EU budget in 2005 in both Spanish newspapers. Like the case of executive actors, *El País* paid more attention to the European Constitution referendum and its social and supranational impact for Spain, whereas the second EU related debate was more prominent in *El Mundo*. Additionally, as it could be expected, these actors also obtained more attention during electoral contests, scenarios where opposition parties have enough incentives to get access to the media agenda. These EU related stories were also valuable for the media, as they implied divergent positions, proposals, and debates. As it was stated previously, conflict and dramatism between different positions increase the newsworthiness of these public debates on European affairs. Furthermore, the possible shift on central, regional, and local executives also contributed to increase the media attention to the PP and the PSOE. Some examples were the Basque and Galicia regional elections in 2009.

The media attention to Europhile parties in public debates on European affairs

In line with the theoretical approaches on the “issue-ownership” theory, electoral competition (e.g. Petrocik 1989; 1996) and parliamentary behaviour (Palau 2019), the hypothesis 1 expects that Europhile parties to obtain higher visibility in public debates on European affairs, not to politicize the EU integration, but to emphasize issues that they have ownership over. Consequently, it was expected that right-wing parties were more likely to be associated with issues like the economy, whereas left ones to welfare, labour, or environmental affairs. In order to explore this question, this research differentiates between the period before the outbreak of the Euro crisis and afterwards. By doing this, it can be corroborated more precisely whether the visibility of opposition parties’ claims is explained by their emphasis on issues that they “own”, controlling for the effect of the crisis, which might have concentrated attention to economic issues in all parties. The analysis is based on the state-wide parties that were in opposition before the outbreak of the crisis (the PP and the far-left IU) and after (the PP, PSOE, IU and *Podemos*).

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate that the expectations of this research may be corroborated in the case of the PP and partly for IU before the outbreak of the Euro crisis. The PP obtained its highest media attention in discussions on affairs related to the EU integration

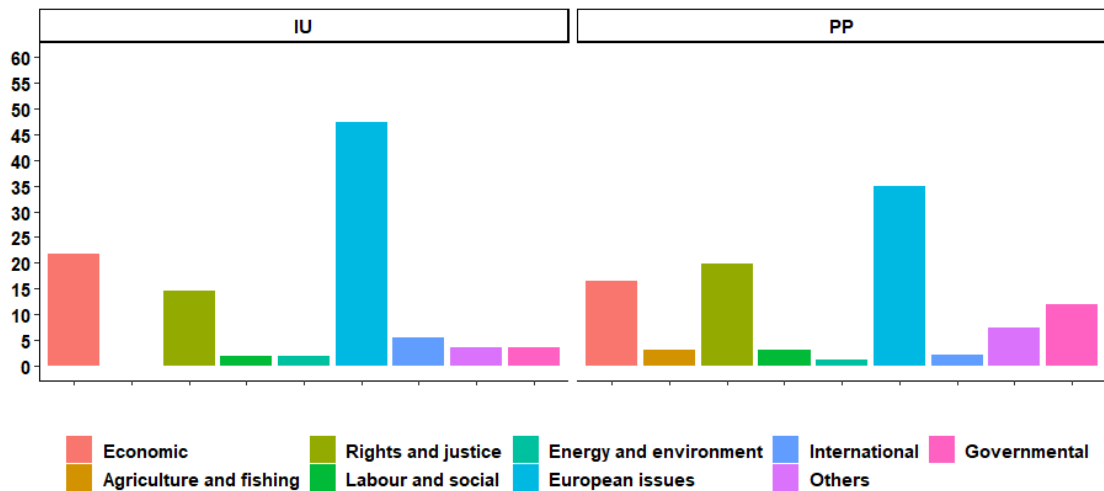
in *El País* (35% of the total number of PP's claims). This is mainly explained by the media coverage of the European Constitution referendum in 2005. This was an unusual and unique EU event which raised a substantial political debate in the media and parliamentary agendas. The media had enough incentives to pay attention to opposition parties' positions, even more in the case of a mainstream party as the PP, to encourage, for example, citizens' participation or emphasize divergent positions in their contents. However, media appearances of opposition parties' claims cannot only be explained by relevant EU events, but also routine coverage may be influenced by other factors such as the "ownership" over the issues (see, for example, Petrocik 1989). Indeed, the PP, as it was expected, was mainly associated with EU related stories on rights and justice (19.8% in *El País* and 46.1% in *El Mundo*) and economic affairs in both Spanish newspapers (16.5% and 24.5%).

Concerning rights and justice affairs, the visibility of PP's claims is mainly explained by EU related debates involving the terrorist organization ETA and its supporting environment in both Spanish newspapers, even though more intensively in *El Mundo*. These public discussions emphasized the PP's criticism against the negotiations with the terrorist organization within the context of the peace process in the Basque Country. These discussions were framed within a EU framework, as several European parliamentarians expressed their viewpoints about these negotiations. Finally, the European Parliament voted to support Spanish executive actors' position, with the PP's and the European People's Party (EPP) rejection. These results can also fit within the "issue ownership" theory. In Spain, political affairs related to ETA are used by the PP to obtain electoral advantage as a part of its domestic political strategy.

Spanish newspapers paid attention to PP's claims in public debates on economic affairs as well, policy domain that conservative parties traditionally "own" (see, for example, Petrocik 1989). Furthermore, this media attention focused on negative and conflicting stories for domestic interests. Individuals' and journalists' responses to information are asymmetric (Soroka 2006). Negative economic news, which have a higher potential impact on public opinion and public behaviour (e.g. Harrington 1989; Aragonés 1997), obtain more media coverage than routine economic debates. In this sense, both Spanish newspapers focused on the approval of the EU budget and the competitive tender over *Endesa*. Concretely, the PP mainly obtained attention for its

criticism against the executive actors' performance and their incapability to protect domestic interests.

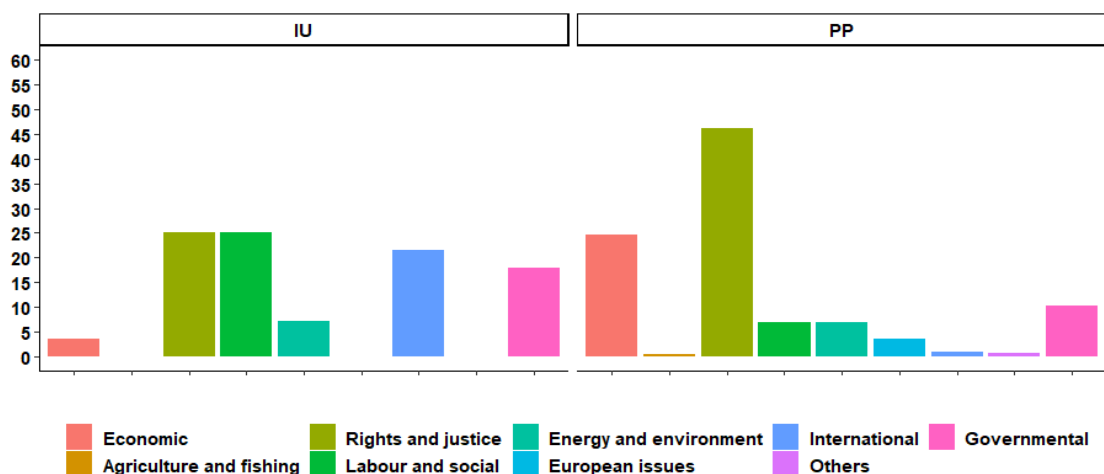
Figure 5. Visibility of state-wide opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs per topic in *El País* before the Euro crisis



Elaborated by the author from EU related news published by *El País*

Note: These figures shows the percentage of state-wide opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs before the Euro crisis.

Figure 6. Visibility of state-wide opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs per topic in *El Mundo* before the Euro crisis



Elaborated by the author from EU related news published by *El Mundo*

Note: These figure show the percentage of state-wide opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs before the Euro crisis.

The results illustrate that the far-left party, *Izquierda Unida* (IU), seems rather unlikely that the media attention to its claims in *El País* can be explained by the emphasis on issues that this party “owns”. In this newspaper, the opposition party obtained the highest visibility for its claims in public debates related to the EU integration (47.3%). This was mainly associated to its critical position against the European Constitution referendum, in part because of its lack of social content. IU neither question the Spanish membership nor the EU integration but is characterized by its critical postures (Rodríguez-Aguilera de Prat 2013). Yet, if this European event is not considered, the second most prominent public discussions for IU’s claims were those associated with economic affairs (21.8%), a policy domain that left parties do not “own” (see, for example, Petrocik 1989). Concretely, this party gained attention in EU related stories related to the approval of the European budget. Finally, rights and justice affairs (14.6%) also increased the visibility of IU’s in *El País*. These Europeanized discussions revolved around Islamic terrorism and immigration affairs. Concretely, IU asked for a common European normative in explosives to fight against terrorism in the former EU related stories, whereas the latter emphasized the European Parliament’s rejection to the PP’s motion against immigrant regulations.

Conversely, the media attention paid by *El Mundo* to IU’s claims partly corroborates the expectations raised in the hypothesis 1. As it was expected, IU was more likely to be associated with public discussions on labour and social affairs (25%) in this newspaper. The far-left party gained media attention, for instance, for its support to workers affected by the closure of factories in the territory. Domestic actors involved the European Parliament to find a solution for this Spanish problem in these EU related stories. However, IU also obtained an equivalent media visibility for its claims in public debates on rights and justice affairs (25%), issues that left parties do not have “ownership” over them, with the exception of those related to moral issues. Concretely, these stories dealt with the peace process in the Basques Country, the terrorist group ETA and the involvement of the EU, issues this newspaper wants to emphasize given the partisanship of readership.

Europeanized debates on international (21.4%) and institutional (17.9%) affairs also contributed to increase the media visibility of IU’s claims in *El Mundo*. On the one hand, results on international affairs are explained by the European institutions’, member states’, political parties’, and IU’s reactions to the Evo Morales’s electoral success in

Bolivia. On the other hand, EU related stories on institutional affairs emphasized IU's claims on the Catalan Autonomy Statue Reform, discussions that also referred to the EU integration process and its development. The results on institutional affairs might be in consonance with the expectations of the "issue-ownership" theory (Petrocik 1989). Issues related to the internal territorial organization in Spain are usually emphasized by state-wide opposition parties, following electoral logics (Elias 2015). This topic is used by these political actors as a part of their domestic political strategy, as they may make a profit of them in terms of attracting voters or facilitate reaching agreements with regional parties to put executive actors in a uncomfortable situation. In this sense, domestic territorial affairs are avoided when these parties gain office, due to their negative electoral repercussions. Domestic territorial logics may be perceived as an issue that state-wide opposition parties, regardless their political orientation, "own", rather than belonging to a specific party's family. Moreover, Initiative for Catalonia Greens (ICV), a Catalan eco-socialist political party, has been coded together with IU, as both actors were usually allies in the electoral system. Thus, the media attention to this opposition party in EU related stories on institutional affairs may be explained by this political relationship.

To sum, from the exposed so far, it can only be partly corroborated the influence of the "issue-ownership" theory (Petrocik 1989, 1996) in the media visibility obtained by state-wide opposition parties before the outbreak of the Euro crisis. However, if IU's claims are looked at more closely, it may be taken different conclusions. As it was noted in Figures 5 and 6, this opposition party was not likely to have its media visibility associated to affairs that it "owns" in *El País*. For instance, in public debates on labour and social affairs. Nevertheless, the "ownership" perspectives may explain the media coverage devoted to this opposition party, if it is considered the specific content of its claims individually. This is the case of EU related discussions on the European Constitution and the European budget in *El País* and the Bolivian electoral results in *El Mundo*. Even though these public debates are related to the EU integration, economic and international affairs, the specific content of IU's claims emphasized the need to strengthen the social model of the EU or the progress of social justice in the international context. Thus, further research considering the specific frame of opposition parties' claims is necessary to obtain broad conclusions on the extent to which these actors emphasize issues on which they have ownership.

Moreover, the high attention to EU related discussions on rights and justice affairs in *El Mundo* may be explained by the right-wing orientation of the newspaper. As Binderkrantz et al. (2016) illustrate, *El Mundo* has always more likely to devote a substantial media attention to stories associated with the terrorist organization ETA and its supporting environment. By contrast, *El País* gave more room in its contents to public debates on European events such as the constitutional project of the EU or the negotiations around the EU Budget which had a potential negative impact for both domestic economic and social interests.

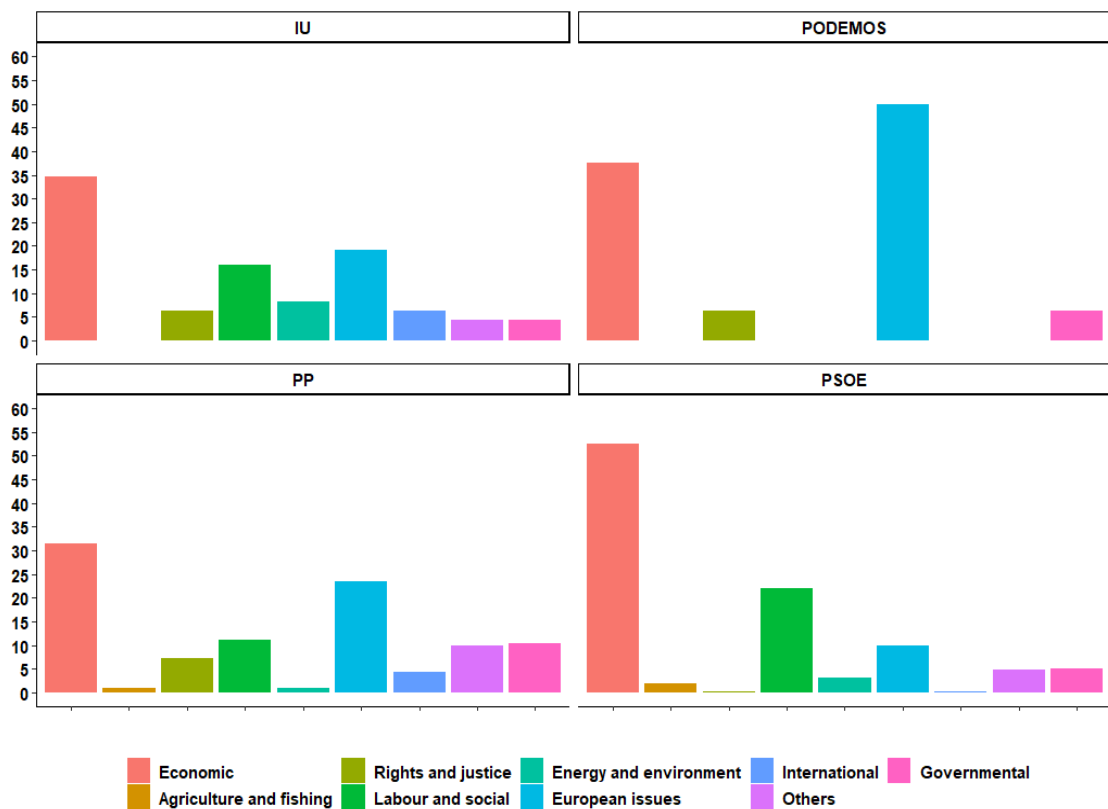
Regarding the media attention obtained by state-wide opposition parties during the Euro crisis, results in Figures 7 and 8 illustrate that this media coverage is not only explained by issues that they prefer to emphasize, but also by contextual factors. In this sense, As Palau (2019) demonstrates, non-conservative MP's introduced more question related to European economic and monetary affairs during this period in the parliamentary arena than conservative ones. This increasing attention to economic affairs is also reflected in the media arena. Regardless their political orientation, media attention to state-wide opposition parties were mainly associated to EU related debates on economic affairs in both Spanish newspapers, except for the left party *Podemos* (37.5% in *El País* and 13.5% in *El Mundo*). They focused on the negative economic perspectives for Spain, the austerity measures, and the crisis of the Spanish financial sector.

The Spanish media were also more likely to pay attention to opposition parties' claims in public debates on the EU integration. Concretely, this media visibility focused on the celebration of elections to the European Parliament in 2009 and 2014, except for the case of *Podemos*. These EU events represented a window of opportunity for opposition parties to obtain visibility in the media arena. Indeed, these were the second most prominent public debates on European affairs for opposition parties' claims in both Spanish newspapers after the outbreak of the Euro crisis. The only exception was the PSOE (9.92% of its claims in *El País* and 16.2% in *El Mundo*), which gained more visibility in other EU related discussions. This may be explained by the fact that this political party was in office until the ending of 2011.

Opposition parties' claims were especially salient in the Spanish media during the European elections of 2009. As it was previously mentioned, these elections were the first electoral contest at the European political level after the outbreak of the Euro crisis. They emphasized the possible citizens' response to the management of the Euro crisis as well

as its impact over the PSOE and the PP. However, as discussions on the European Constitution, these EU events are rather infrequent, so media coverage may also be explained by the concurrence of other factors such as the “issue-ownership” theory (Petrocik 1989).

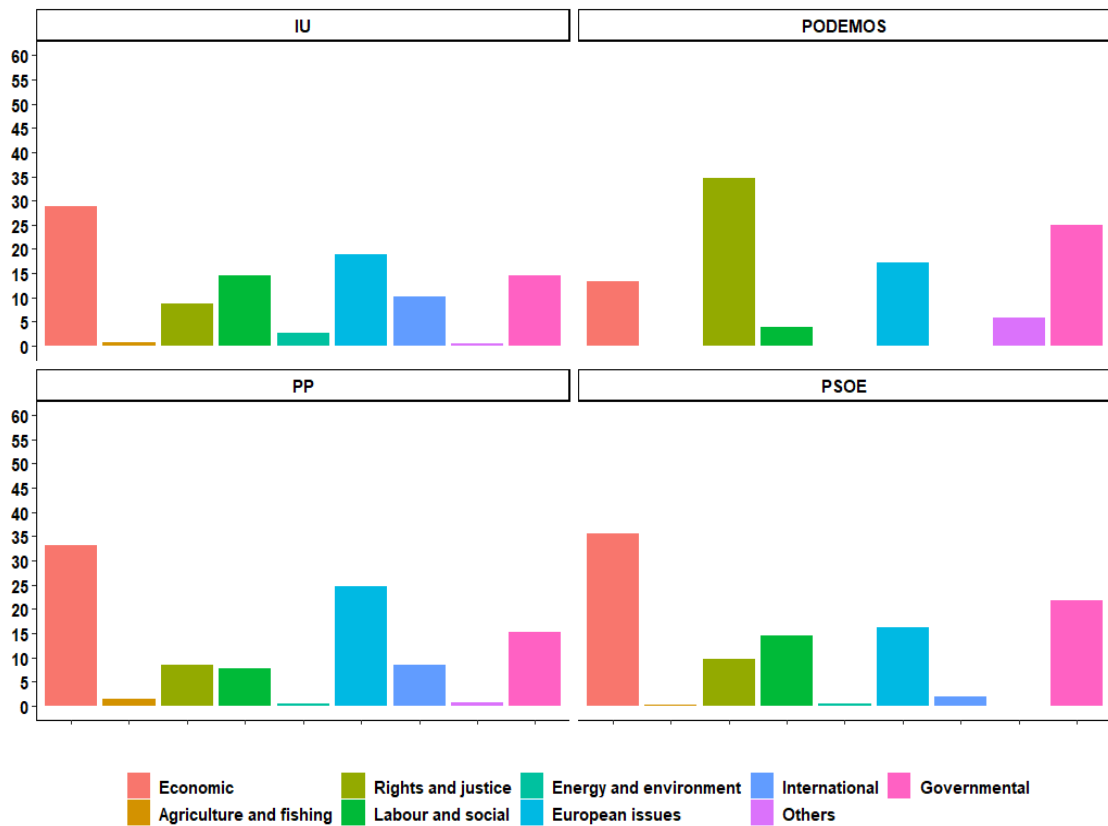
Figure 7. Visibility of state-wide opposition parties’ claims in public debates on European affairs per topic in *El País* after the outbreak of the Euro crisis



Elaborated by the author from EU related news published by *El País*

Note: These figures show the percentage of their claims after the outbreak of the Euro crisis.

Figure 8. Visibility of state-wide opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs per topic in *El Mundo* after the outbreak of the Euro crisis



Elaborated by the author from EU related news published by *El Mundo*

Note: These figures show the percentage of their claims after the outbreak of the Euro crisis.

Public debates on the EU integration at that time also contributed to the media visibility of *Podemos's* claims in *El País* (50%), whereas it was lower in *El Mundo* (17.3%). In the right-wing newspaper, this opposition party gained more media attention for its claims in EU related stories on the false working relationship between the *Podemos's* member Juan Carlos Monedero and the European Central Bank. There are more differences between both Spanish newspapers. While *Podemos'* claims were more associated with Europeanized discussions on economic affairs and the management of the Euro crisis in *El País*, there was a higher proportion of them in both rights and justice (34.6%) and institutional affairs (25%) in *El Mundo*. Again, the right-wing newspaper paid a substantial attention to stories on the *Podemos'* member Monedero in public debates on the former affairs. These public discussions revolved around the investigation

of Monedero's unwarranted payments, emphasizing its false working relationship with the European institution. Concerning institutional affairs, *El Mundo* was especially interested in following the rise of this opposition party within the domestic political system, highlighting its success during the previous EU elections.

The results on *Podemos's* claims run counter the expectations raised in the hypothesis 1, as any of these policy domains are associated to left political parties. It may be argued that the opposition parties' capacity to access to the media agenda is not only dependent on their will to emphasize certain issues, but also to the Spanish media gatekeeping powers. However, these conclusions should be interpreted with caution. This opposition party was founded in 2014 and, therefore, it has only been analysed for two years. Further research including a long-term data from 2014 to onwards is needed to corroborate, in more accurate terms, whether the independent variables of this research may explain the media coverage of this political party in public debates on European affairs.

Figures 7 and 8 show, instead, that EU related discussions on labour and social affairs also substantially increased, as it was expected, the media visibility of the PSOE's and IU's claims in *El País* (22.1% and 16% respectively). The PSOE gained more media attention in stories on the European unemployment measures, the need to increase education spending, for example, in Erasmus grants, and the PP's abortion reform. Discussions on the abortion reform were framed in a EU context, as the PSOE called for the mediation of European institutions and even suggested the celebration of a European summit on the topic. About IU, this opposition party was related to EU related discussions on labour measures like the so-called social pact between firms and trade unions or the wage freeze. Additionally, IU also obtained more visibility for its claims in public debates on energy and environment affairs than other parties in *El País* during the Euro crisis. In line with the expectations of this research, energy and environment affairs are also more likely to be emphasized by left parties. Concretely, these public debates on European affairs focused on the IU's positions around the development of renewable energies in the EU.

Beyond EU related debates on economic affairs, the media attention to PP's claims, even though to a minor extent than those made by the PSOE and IU, was more likely to be associated with labour and social affairs than other policy domains (11.1%) in *El País*. This was mainly explained by the political debate around the abortion

regulation, unemployment measures and, particularly, the PP's labour reform proposal. The abortion issue was indirectly related to the EU dimension, as it was discussed within the context of the European elections. Furthermore, this newspaper also paid a substantial attention to the PP's position regarding debates on the co-official languages. For instance, *El País* highlighted the European Parliament's rejection of the PP's motion against the Catalan linguistic immersion.

The PP also obtained a similar proportion of media visibility in public debates on institutional affairs (10.3%) in *El País*. Some of the most relevant EU related stories on these affairs were focused on different regional elections and the Mariano Rajoy's candidature to lead the PP. The relationship between these public debates and the EU was rather indirectly by means of references to the European elections and the economic situation in Spain. Other salient discussions highlighted the territorial demands in Catalonia to obtain the independence "within the EU".

Regardless economic affairs and European events, *El Mundo* paid more attention to PP's (21.7%), PSOE's (15.3%) and IU's (14.6%) claims in public debates on institutional affairs. Within these discussions, the PSOE gained media attention for its claims in public discussions focused on the independence process in Catalonia. Concretely, *El Mundo* was more prone to emphasize the conflict between the PSOE and the Catalan regional party PSC. This regional party has traditionally been associated to the PSOE, representing its interests in Catalonia, and sharing parliamentary group at the Spanish Parliament. Similarly, these public debates on European affairs increased the media visibility of IU's claims in this policy domain as well.

In addition, the PSOE and IU (14.5% both), as it was expected, were associated with public debates on labour and social affairs in *El Mundo* as well. In the case of the PSOE, its claims gained media attention in EU related stories on the abortion issue in Spain, calling for the mediation of the EU and its institutions in the domestic political debate. IU, instead, was more likely to gain visibility in public debates about the social impact of the Euro crisis and raising unemployment in member states, emphasizing the need to advance towards the social model of EU integration.

To sum, these results only partly show that the media visibility of opposition parties may be explained by their emphasis on issues that they "own" after the outbreak of the Euro crisis. Left parties are more associated with EU related public debates on

labour and social affairs than conservative parties in both Spanish newspapers. Without considering economic affairs and European events, these left actors obtained higher media visibility for their claims in labour and social affairs than other European ones in *El País*. However, in contrast to the expectations of the “ownership” on the issues, this was also the case of the PP. This party obtained attention in EU related debates on institutional and labour and social affairs in *El País*, policy domains that conservative parties do not have the “ownership” on them. The media attention in *El Mundo* to opposition parties’ claims was greater in EU related discussions on institutional affairs. Even though, in principle, these European affairs are not associated with any political party, in the case of the PSOE and IU these results may be in line with the expectations of this research, because these public debates were focused on the Catalan secessionism process and their regional alliances which are issues of interest to their voters. Moreover, these newspapers also paid more attention to left opposition parties’ claims in EU related debates on labour and social affairs in consonance with the “issue-ownership” theory. The only exception was *Podemos*. Its media coverage was not related to left parties. However, this political party was founded in 2014 and further research is needed for obtaining broader conclusions.

Previous “issue ownership” research was originally conducted in Europe by Budge and Farlie (1983) and in the United States by Petrocik (1989, 1996) to explain political parties’ behaviour during domestic elections. This research has provided more insights into how state-wide opposition parties’ claims obtain media visibility in public debates, considering a long-term analysis and European affairs, questions barely explored by existing literature. The results illustrate that this approach only had a limited impact in their media attention in EU related stories. For example, it might explain the media visibility obtained by the conservative party’s claims in both Spanish newspapers before the outbreak of the Euro crisis.

However, the “issue ownership” by itself do not seem to provide enough answers to explain the opposition parties’ strategies in the media arena or why newspapers pay attention to their claims. In line with previous literature (e.g. Green-Pedersen 2007; Damore 2005), there is a considerable issue overlap in this media attention. Even though these actors would prefer to exclusively emphasize issues that are advantageous for them, they also obtain visibility in other European affairs, including those related to their rivals. For example, IU did not only obtain media visibility in public debates emphasizing

favourable issues like labour and social affairs before the outbreak of the Euro crisis in *El Mundo*, but also in rights and justice affairs.

The media attention to opposition parties' claims might be also influenced by the economic character of the EU. The economy is among the most prominent public debates on European affairs (Schuck et al. 2011; Meyer 2005; Gavin 2000). Economic policies go more into the media agenda, as these affairs "deal with clearly identifiable, single quantitative benchmarks against which national performance can be measured" (Meyer 2005). Affairs related to inflation or unemployment are perceived as the key levels of executive power and, therefore, are closely scrutinized by media outlets, due to their electoral importance (Meyer 2005; Soroka 2006). Hence, opposition parties cannot just ignore the economic consequences of the Euro crisis for the country, regardless their political orientation. Moreover, far-left parties are traditionally more prone to focus their criticism towards the EU on the current economic development of the integration process (Kriesi 2007). In this sense, economic affairs might also be a part of the political strategy of these parties, seeking to obtain visibility in these EU related debates as they are of interest to their "voters".

Looking more deeply into the public debates on labour and social and institutional affairs, these patterns of media attention might also be explained by the political orientation of the Spanish newspapers. The abortion issue and the involvement of European institutions on the topic was one of the most prominent EU related debates in both media outlets, whereas this was also the case of the Catalan independence process regarding institutional affairs. Nevertheless, in line with its left-wing ideology, *El País* was more likely to pay attention to opposition parties' claims in the former discussions, whereas *El Mundo* focused more intensively on the independence process. Furthermore, this right-wing newspaper also paid more attention to public debates involving the terrorist group ETA than *El País*, where, for instance, several Euro parliamentarians participate in these discussions. According to previous findings of existing literature, this pattern of media attention may be explained by the prevalence of certain issues on the political agenda, and concretely the importance devoted by *El Mundo* to the victims of the terrorist group (Chaqués-Bonafont and Baumgartner 2013, Binderkrantz et al. 2016).

The impact of European elections

Elections to the European Parliament have also a positive effect on the media attention to opposition parties in the Spanish newspapers. These EU events seem to represent a window of opportunity for opposition parties to obtain visibility for their claims in the media. Media outlets have enough incentives to pay attention to these actors as well, because of the electoral nature of these events and to encourage citizens' participation. This data is in line with the expectations of the hypothesis 2. According to it, opposition parties will obtain more media coverage for their claims during the celebration of European elections. Next, to go further on descriptive results, it has been analysed the impact of these EU events in the media attention to opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs by means of a Poisson regression analysis. The dependent variables are the media visibility of opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs, whereas elections to the European Parliament work as independent variable.

The regression analyses in Table 1 and Table 2 also illustrate a positive significant impact of elections to the European Parliament in the media attention to state-wide opposition parties' claims in public debates on European affairs, except for the case of *Podemos*. In this sense, PP's (1.119*** in *El País* and 1.698*** in *El Mundo*), PSOE's (0.442* and 0.462***) and IU's (1.288*** and 1.518***) claims obtained increasing media visibility during these EU events in both Spanish newspapers. These results reflect the importance of the 2009 European elections as well.

During this year, these electoral events also have a positive impact in the media visibility of PSOE's executive actors (0.108 and 0.024), even though the coefficient are not statistically significant. It may be argued that the media had enough incentives to pay attention not only to opposition parties, but also the executive actors, because of the increasing domestic political debate around the economic and social consequences of the Euro crisis for the country. By contrast, PP's executive actors obtaining decreasing media attention to their claims (-0.347*** and -0.595***) during the elections of 2014, reflecting their minor importance for the domestic landscape.

Table 1. Visibility of executive actors and opposition parties in public debates on European affairs in *El País* from 2005 to 2015

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>													
	PSOE's Executive	PP's Executive	PP	PSOE	IU	ERC	CC	CIU	PNV	PSC	CIUTAD ANS	BILDU	PODE MOS	COMPRO MIS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
EU events	0.025*** (0.009)	0.118*** (0.013)	-0.012 (0.026)	0.223*** (0.058)	0.0003 (0.068)	-0.209* (0.124)	-0.370 (0.369)	-0.263*** (0.092)	-0.007 (0.114)	0.054 (0.179)	-2.098** (1.057)	0.057 (0.503)	0.336 (0.452)	-0.293 (0.630)
EP elections	0.108 (0.077)	-0.347*** (0.086)	1.119*** (0.130)	0.442* (0.265)	1.288*** (0.269)	0.874* (0.520)	-14.094 (1,730.8)	-13.893 (370.1)	-0.449 (1.010)	-13.566 (657.6)	-12.024 (1,749.1)	-16.760 (7,045.2)	-14.843 (1,088.3)	3.971*** (1.334)
Catalan regional interests	-0.087** (0.039)	0.162*** (0.048)	0.143 (0.093)	0.334 (0.206)	1.290*** (0.206)	4.105*** (0.382)	-0.001 (0.973)	2.535*** (0.245)	-0.558* (0.312)	2.762*** (0.564)	0.185 (1.478)	-20.334 (2,643.4)	-0.321 (0.931)	-15.419 (2,261.6)
Basque regional interests	0.089** (0.039)	0.081 (0.049)	0.771*** (0.091)	-0.463** (0.227)	-0.596*** (0.223)	-1.185*** (0.252)	2.051** (1.026)	-0.394* (0.224)	2.736*** (0.345)	-0.341 (0.491)	0.543 (1.480)	5.014*** (1.152)	0.644 (0.932)	-14.876 (2,297.3)
Public support for the Catalan independence	-0.133*** (0.002)	0.108*** (0.001)	-0.150*** (0.008)	0.124*** (0.007)	-0.018*** (0.006)	-0.077*** (0.013)	-0.081* (0.044)	-0.044*** (0.008)	-0.040*** (0.012)	-0.034* (0.018)	-0.042 (0.038)	0.029 (0.039)	0.068 (0.043)	0.014 (0.049)
Risk premium	0.389*** (0.019)	0.208*** (0.010)	0.497*** (0.059)	0.212*** (0.047)	0.029 (0.063)	-0.251* (0.137)	-0.064 (0.427)	-0.044 (0.083)	0.026 (0.125)	0.155 (0.183)	-0.907** (0.443)	0.569 (0.480)	-1.533*** (0.314)	-0.459 (0.555)
Constant	1.475*** (0.061)	-5.026*** (0.084)	-0.924*** (0.175)	-8.833*** (0.424)	-3.537*** (0.326)	-3.463*** (0.694)	-5.085*** (1.813)	-3.421*** (0.407)	-4.798*** (0.601)	-6.610*** (0.897)	-1.832 (2.195)	-12.332*** (2.830)	-4.273** (2.045)	-6.340** (3.027)
Observations	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880	7,880
Log Likelihood	-9,593.125	-7,973.888	-3,855.255	-1,335.575	-1,011.716	-320.045	-61.774	-641.755	-373.925	-178.355	-43.918	-30.362	-91.326	-29.051
Akaike Inf. Crit.	19,200.250	15,961.770	7,724.511	2,685.149	2,037.433	654.091	137.548	1,297.510	761.850	370.709	101.836	74.724	196.653	72.103

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 2. Visibility of executive actors and opposition parties in public debates on European affairs in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>													
	PSOE's Executive (1)	PP's Executive (2)	PP (3)	PSOE (4)	IU (5)	ERC (6)	CC (7)	CIU (8)	PNV (9)	PSC (10)	CIUTAD ANS (11)	BILDU (12)	PODE MOS (13)	COMPRO MIS (14)
EU events	0.085*** (0.012)	0.142*** (0.014)	-0.209*** (0.039)	0.136*** (0.038)	-0.227*** (0.074)	-0.175 (0.148)	-0.068 (0.379)	-0.189** (0.086)	-0.039 (0.114)	-0.140 (0.148)	-0.103 (0.171)	0.002 (0.239)	-0.941*** (0.279)	0.006 (0.376)
EP elections	0.024 (0.085)	-0.595*** (0.072)	1.698*** (0.110)	0.462*** (0.136)	1.518*** (0.236)	0.977* (0.521)	-14.033 (1,618.1)	0.831** (0.339)	0.388 (0.504)	1.202** (0.476)	1.487*** (0.486)	1.441* (0.751)	-11.187 (650.0)	0.865 (1.143)
Catalan regional interests	0.002 (0.044)	0.106** (0.046)	-0.284*** (0.104)	0.141 (0.118)	0.899*** (0.197)	2.372*** (0.346)	1.226 (1.081)	2.140*** (0.210)	-0.838*** (0.233)	5.223*** (0.523)	2.275*** (0.258)	-1.642*** (0.426)	-0.811 (0.576)	0.340 (0.952)
Basque regional interests	-0.038 (0.043)	0.006 (0.047)	0.820*** (0.095)	0.063 (0.121)	0.164 (0.200)	0.009 (0.311)	0.825 (1.079)	-0.004 (0.197)	3.192*** (0.270)	-1.600*** (0.232)	-0.644*** (0.249)	4.198*** (0.584)	0.450 (0.549)	-1.631 (1.298)
Public support for the Catalan independence	-0.140*** (0.002)	0.111*** (0.002)	-0.146*** (0.008)	0.124*** (0.005)	0.011** (0.005)	0.003 (0.011)	-0.102** (0.045)	0.011* (0.006)	0.022** (0.009)	0.042*** (0.012)	0.054*** (0.015)	0.058*** (0.020)	0.030 (0.042)	0.133*** (0.045)
Risk premium	0.352*** (0.019)	0.075*** (0.008)	0.616*** (0.057)	0.070*** (0.023)	-0.049 (0.045)	-0.313*** (0.087)	0.061 (0.399)	-0.086* (0.050)	-0.035 (0.069)	-0.121 (0.080)	-0.826*** (0.101)	0.105 (0.148)	-2.090*** (0.311)	-0.229 (0.198)
Constant	1.785*** (0.067)	-4.485*** (0.081)	-1.137*** (0.180)	-6.995*** (0.231)	-3.576*** (0.292)	-4.376*** (0.584)	-5.060*** (1.795)	-4.297*** (0.340)	-5.887*** (0.489)	-8.077*** (0.775)	-4.247*** (0.733)	-9.714*** (1.181)	-0.083 (1.733)	-10.266*** (2.112)
Observations	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168	7,168
Log Likelihood	-7,814.737	-7,970.747	-3,349.922	-3,127.766	-1,241.941	-388.653	-62.346	-894.515	-516.277	-335.816	-450.932	-141.743	-235.414	-97.751
Akaike Inf. Crit.	15,643.470	15,955.490	6,713.844	6,269.532	2,497.883	791.306	138.692	1,803.029	1,046.554	685.632	915.865	297.487	484.828	209.501

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Nevertheless, there are differences between the two Spanish newspapers regarding the media coverage devoted to regional parties' claims. In the case of *El País*, EU elections only have a substantial statistically positive effect in the media attention obtained by the Catalan regional party ERC (0.874*). This is explained by the consequences of the European elections of 2009 for the members of the Catalan tripartite Government¹⁷. Both ERC and ICV obtained poor results during these EU elections, because the internal financing problems as well as the economic consequences of the Euro crisis for the region. This may also partly explain their positive impact over IU's claims, as methodologically claims made by this opposition party and ICV were coded together. The large standard errors in Table 1 show the low media attention that this newspaper paid to other regional and non state-wide parties.

Conversely, Table 2 illustrates that the celebration of European elections has a positive effect in the media visibility of most regional parties in *El Mundo*. Concretely, they have a substantial statistically impact regarding the regional parties ERC (0.977*), CiU (0.831**), the PSC (1.202**), the Basque Bildu (1.441*) and the political parties *Ciutadans* (1.487***) and *Compromís* (0.865). These results may be explained by the political orientation of this right-wing newspaper. On the one hand, they may reflect the political importance that *El Mundo* gives to internal territorial affairs. On the other hand, due to the negative economic consequences of the Euro crisis, domestic actors had enough incentives to mobilize around European affairs. Hence, *El Mundo* might have been interested in giving attention to a broader set of viewpoints than *El País* in order to attack the PSOE's government, in line with previous research on media political parallelism (see Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont 2015). Next, to go further in these possible media differences, this research explores the media attention to regional parties' claims in both Spanish media outlets.

The strategic use of the EU on the part of regional parties

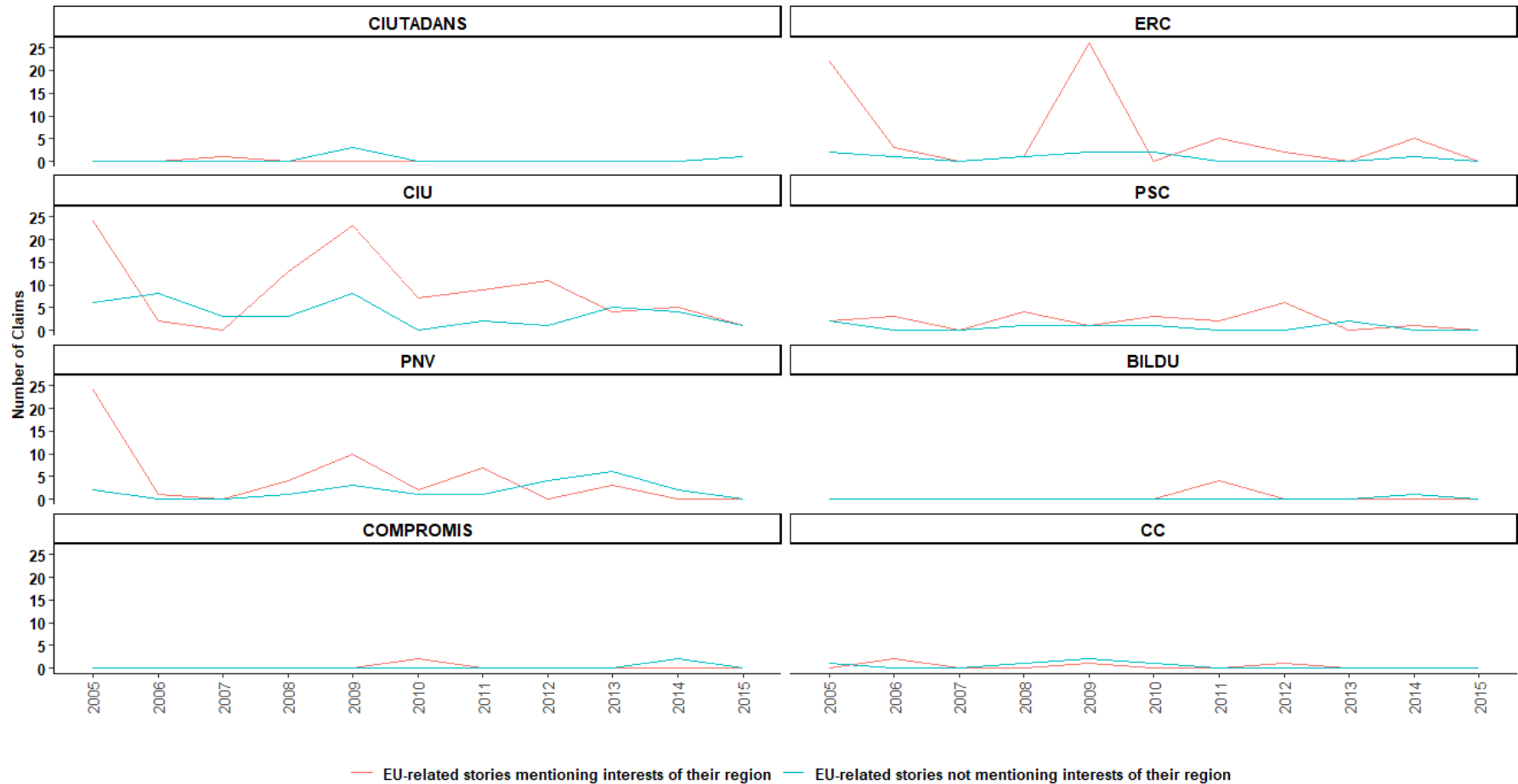
The hypothesis 3 of this research expects that regional parties obtain more media visibility in public debates on European affairs, emphasizing the interest of their regions. Figures 9 and 10 show that, as expected, Catalan regional parties' claims were mainly associated

¹⁷ This Catalan executive was a coalition government between the PSC, ICV and ERC, leading by the former regional party.

with public debates on European affairs mentioning Catalan interests. This is the case of CiU. In *El País*, its claims were related, for example, to important public debates on institutional affairs, concretely, the territorial relationship between Catalonia and Spain. Before 2011, the regional party obtained media attention on self-government concerns in this newspaper. One of the most prominent EU related debates was focused on the Catalan Autonomy Statute reform in 2005, which was indirectly related to the European Constitution referendum. Similarly, EU related stories on the Catalan independence process also increased the media visibility to CiU's claims, especially in 2011, 2012 and 2015. These discussions were more likely to emphasize the position of the EU and its institutions in front of an eventual Catalan independence. *El País* also paid attention to CiU in public debates on European affairs related to other type of regional interests. Some examples are stories about the negative impact of the Euro crisis on the autonomic deficit and the confrontation with the Basque PNV to obtain the European regional freight transport in 2009. Concerning public discussions non-associated with the Catalan interests in *El País*, CiU obtained more media coverage for its claims in public discussions on economic affairs. This finding is also in line with the expectations of the "issue ownership" theory (Petrocik 1989), as conservative parties have the "ownership" on these issues. For instance, *El País* followed CiU's claims in the EU related debates on the competitive tender over *Endesa* in 2006 and regarding the European Pact at the Spanish Parliament in 2013.

In *El Mundo*, the media attention to CiU's claims strongly focused on Catalan institutional affairs. These EU related debates mainly revolved around the Catalan Autonomy Statute reform and the distribution of political competences from 2006 to 2008, together with the independence process from 2012 to 2015. Other discussions were related to the political orientation of the regional party, emphasizing both cultural and economic interests. For example, this party's claims obtained visibility regarding the European Parliament's decision on the right to choose the language of education in 2009. The negative impact of the Euro crisis on Catalonia also contributed to increase its media coverage in this newspaper. Regarding EU related stories not related to Catalan interests, this regional party's claims also obtained some media visibility during the European elections of 2009.

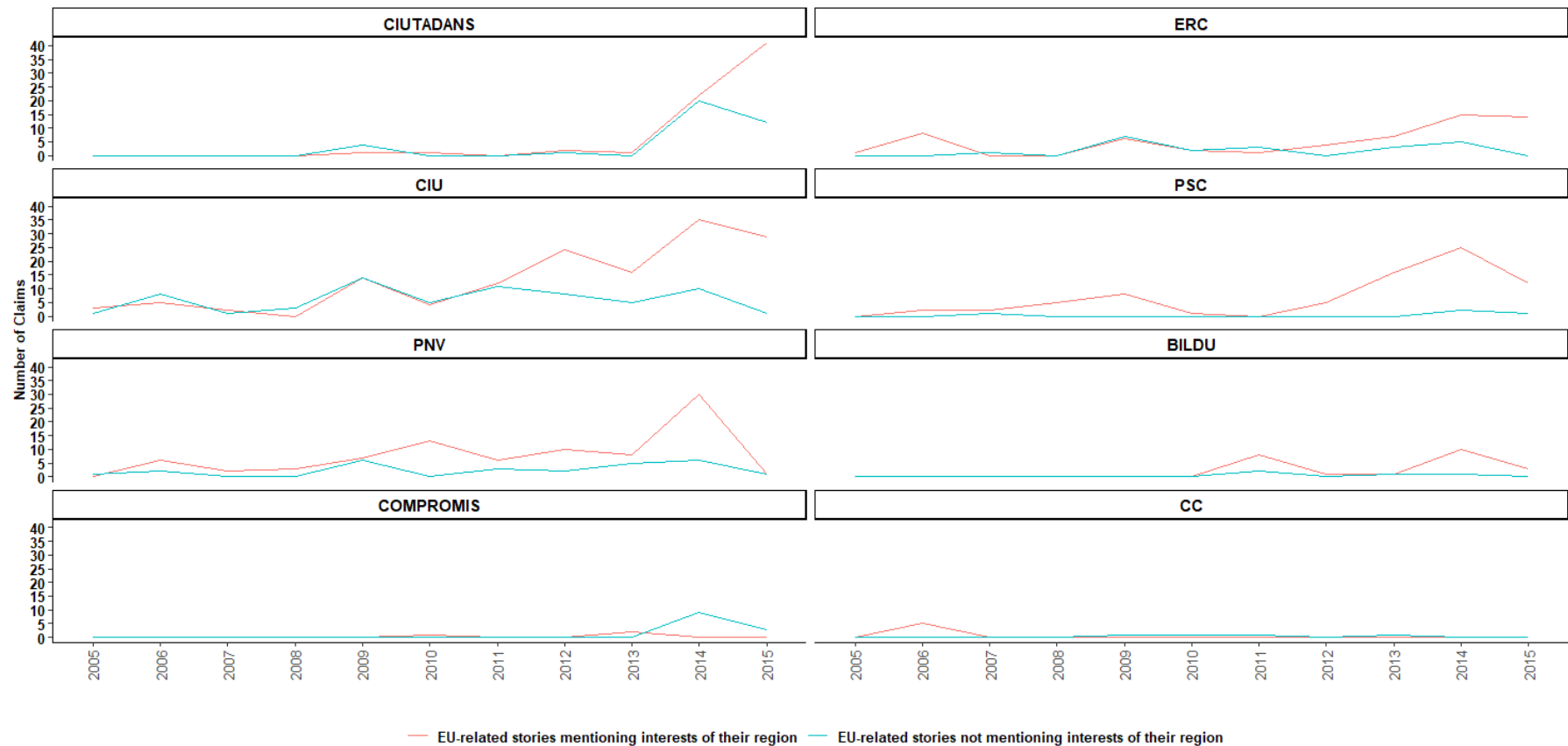
Figure 9. Visibility of non state-wide parties' claims in public debates on European affairs per topic in *El País* from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by El País

Note: These figures show the number of claims made by non state-wide political parties in public debates on European affairs.

Figure 10. Visibility of non state-wide parties' claims in public debates on European affairs per topic in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by El Mundo

Note: These figures show the number of claims made by non state-wide political parties in public debates on European affairs.

The main difference between the two Spanish media outlets in the media attention to CiU's claims was the stronger emphasis of *El Mundo* in public debates on institutional affairs. This is especially the case of those involving demands for increasing Catalan self-government and the independence of the region. Again, these findings suggest the influence of the newspapers' political orientation in these patterns of media attention. The right-wing newspaper was more prone to devote a substantial attention to EU related debates involving consequences for the Spanish territorial structure within a European framework. This can also be observed in the descriptive results. From the year 2011, discussions on the Catalan independence process tended to increase CiU's claims in *El Mundo*, while their media visibility was reduced in *El País*.

The Catalan regional party ERC obtained media visibility for its claims in public debates related to demands for increasing self-government in *El País*. Like the case of CiU, this newspaper paid more attention to ERC's claims in discussions around the Catalan Autonomy Statute reform in 2005 and 2006. Other important EU related debates involving this regional party dealt with the impact of the austerity measures and the impact of the Catalan fiscal deficit in 2009. Furthermore, as it could be expected, regional cultural affairs also played a substantial role in its media coverage. For example, *El País* paid attention to ERC because its demands for the officiality of the Catalan language in the EU during 2011. From 2012 to 2014, this media attention mainly focused on the raising support for secessionist movements and the independence of Catalonia within the EU. Among public debates on European affairs where Catalan interests are not mentioned, *El País* highlighted the ERC's support to the executive actors' measures to manage the Euro crisis in 2008, and the endorsement of the Spanish Parliament to send humanitarian aids to Haiti in 2010.

In *El Mundo*, the most prominent public debate on European affairs for ERC's claims was the Catalan independence process, especially from 2012 to 2015. Indeed, this newspaper paid more attention to ERC's claims in these EU related stories than *El País*. During the period analysed, there were only two years in which EU related stories focused on other regional affairs. First, those focused on the celebration of European elections in 2009. And second, the closure of the television channel TV3 in the Valencian Community in 2011. Finally, regarding European affairs not related to Catalan interests, this regional party got visibility for its claims due to the political debate on the European parliamentarians flew in the tourist class during 2009.

Even though the media attention to CIU and ERC was more likely to obtain greater media visibility in EU related debates mentioning Catalan regional interest in both Spanish newspapers, there is a main difference between them in *El Mundo*. This newspaper tended to associate ERC's claims with discussions on the Catalan independence process, whereas CiU also obtained visibility for its claims in EU related debates on greater self-government. This difference may be explained because of the shift in the political aims pursued by CiU after the outbreak of the Euro crisis. This regional party changed its positions from obtaining improvements in the Catalan self-government and the position of Catalonia within Spain to directly pursue the independence of the region.

Like the other Catalan parties, Spanish newspapers also paid attention to the PSC in public debates on the self-government in Catalonia, stories indirectly related to the European Constitution referendum. In addition, *El Mundo* also emphasized PSC's claims in public discussions on other regional affairs, such as, for example, the position of the European Parliament on the education language model. Public discussions not related to Catalan regional affairs involving this regional party in the Spanish media were especially focused on the worries about the increasing citizens' mistrust in European institutions.

The last political party analysed is *Ciutadans* characterized by their support to the Spanish interests in the region. *El País* paid little attention to this political party's claims in public debates on European affairs during the period under study. When this political party obtained media coverage in this newspaper, its claims were mainly associated with EU related debates not mentioning the Catalan regional affairs. For example, discussions on the raising of new political forces in the EU and Spanish party systems during 2015. Only some EU related debates mentioning the interest of the region involved *Ciutadans*'s claims, such as, for example, the conflict around the creation of Catalan embassies abroad in 2007. By contrast, *El Mundo* devoted higher media visibility to *Ciutadans* than *El País*, mainly due to its critical position against the Catalan independence process from 2012 to 2015. Concerning discussions not related to Catalan interests, *El Mundo* was especially interested in following the negotiations between this regional party and the political party Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD) in the context of the 2014 European elections.

Concerning the Basque Country, Figures 9 and 10 illustrate that PNV's claims gained more media visibility for its claims in public debates mentioning regional interests in both Spanish newspapers. Concretely, these EU related stories revolved around the

Basque peace process and the mediation of European institutions. These discussions emphasized the viewpoints of European institutions during the negotiations with the terrorist group ETA. However, the picture is quite different between both Spanish newspapers from 2012 to 2015. During this period, *El País* gave a higher attention to the PNV's claims in public debates on European affairs not mentioning Basque regional interests than those related to the Basque Country. This included discussions on the 2014 European budget and the political mobilization to reserve the European Commission's decision on the return of naval aids considered as illegal in 2013 and 2014. These patterns of media visibility on non-regional basque interests may reflect the PNV's political strategy. Although this regional party still pursues the independence of the Basque Country, this became in a secondary aim for the regional party after the year 2009.

Conversely, the media visibility of PNV's claims in *El Mundo* was clearly associated with Basque regional affairs for most of the period under study. One of the most important of these public debates on European affairs were directly or indirectly associated with ETA and its supporting environment, such as, for example, the outlawing of the political party *Batasuna* and the European institutions' position on it. The Basque peace process explains the media attention obtained by the PNV in this newspaper during the years 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2015. Indeed, *El Mundo* was also prone to use this regional party to associate the Catalan independence process with ETA. Like the case of Catalan regional parties, this media coverage might be influenced by the political orientation of the newspaper. These results once again illustrate the substantial attention that this right-wing newspaper gives to territorial affairs and the terrorist group ETA, even relating them in the same public debates on European affairs. Regarding discussions not related to the Basque regional interests, the PNV were barely involved in them. An example is the EU related debate on the support of executive actors, the PNV and the EU for a Spanish citizen on the death row in Philippines during 2005.

Regarding the Basque regional party Bildu, both Spanish newspapers mainly focused on its participation in domestic elections, highlighting its possible relationship with ETA. These stories made references to the possible mediation of the EU in the case of the banning of the regional party. Whereas *El País* barely paid attention to Bildu's claims, *El Mundo* devoted greater attention to them. With respect to public debates not related to Basque regional interests, Bildu's claims obtained visibility for instance, for its criticism towards the so-called Juncker Fund in *El País*, an investment plan that hoped to

improve the situation of international markets and the private sector. *El Mundo*, instead, focused on stories related to the European elections of 2014.

Results on the Valencian party *Compromís*, in contrast to the expectations of this research, obtained more media visibility for its claims in public debates where regional interests are not mentioned. Regarding these EU related stories, there were also some differences between the two media outlets. *El País* also paid attention to in public debates on the abortion reform in 2013, discussions indirectly related to the EU through references to the European elections and with no relationship with Valencian regional interests. Conversely, this party got more attention for its claims not only in EU related stories on the 2014 European elections, but also on the refugees' crisis in 2015. These findings strengthen the idea that the type of media outlet may influence the media attention obtained by opposition parties. According with their political orientation, *El País* was more likely to associated *Compromís* with public discussions on labour and social affairs, whereas this is the case of rights and justice affairs in *El Mundo*. The only EU related debates explicitly mentioning Valencian regional affairs involving this regional party's claims were centred on corruption scandals, making references to the degree of political transparency in member states.

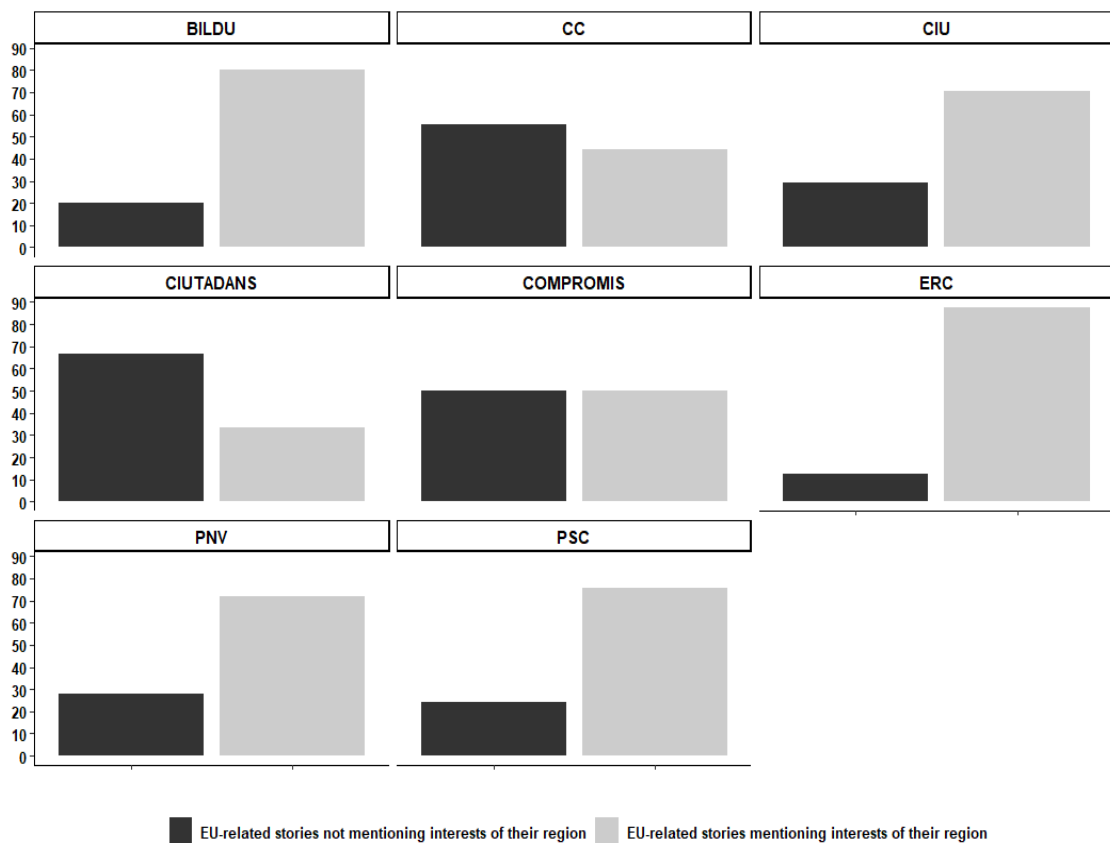
Finally, the media attention to the regional party Canary Coalition (CC) differs from other regional parties analysed in this research in *El País*. It was mostly associated with EU related debates without making any reference to interests of their region. For example, discussions on the 2009 European elections, their support for the integration of the Catalan police into the Europol and the renewables energies in 2009 or their positions on the austerity measures in 2010. Conversely, *El Mundo* paid more attention to this regional party's claims in EU related stories affecting the interests of its region. Regarding these stories, both Spanish newspapers focused on the negative impact of immigration on the Canary Islands, emphasizing the need for European solutions. In this respect, the media reflect the importance of immigration affairs in this region, as Canary Islands is one of the European regions with a greater influx of immigration.

To sum, these results corroborate the expectations raised in the hypothesis 3. Most regional parties obtained higher visibility in public debates on European affairs explicitly mentioning the interest of their regions. This included, for instance, increasing self-government demands, regional independence processes or the impact of immigrations flows in the region. As Figures 11 and 12 illustrate, the only exceptions were the Catalan

Ciutadans, the Canarian CC and the Valencian party *Compromís* in *El País*. In *El Mundo*, instead, all regional parties, except for *Compromís*, were more associated to EU related stories mentioning their regional interests.

To go further on the descriptive results, it has obtained more accurate conclusions on the hypothesis 3 by means of a Poisson regression analysis. The dependent variables are the media visibility to executive actors¹⁸, opposition and regional parties. The independent variables are dichotomous variables, indicating whether an EU related story mentions Catalan and Basque or regional interests. As it was already mentioned, the hypothesis 3 expects that regional parties to obtain more visibility in public debates on European affairs, emphasizing the interests of their region.

Figure 11. Visibility of non state-wide parties’ claims in public debates on European affairs in *El País* from 2005 to 2015

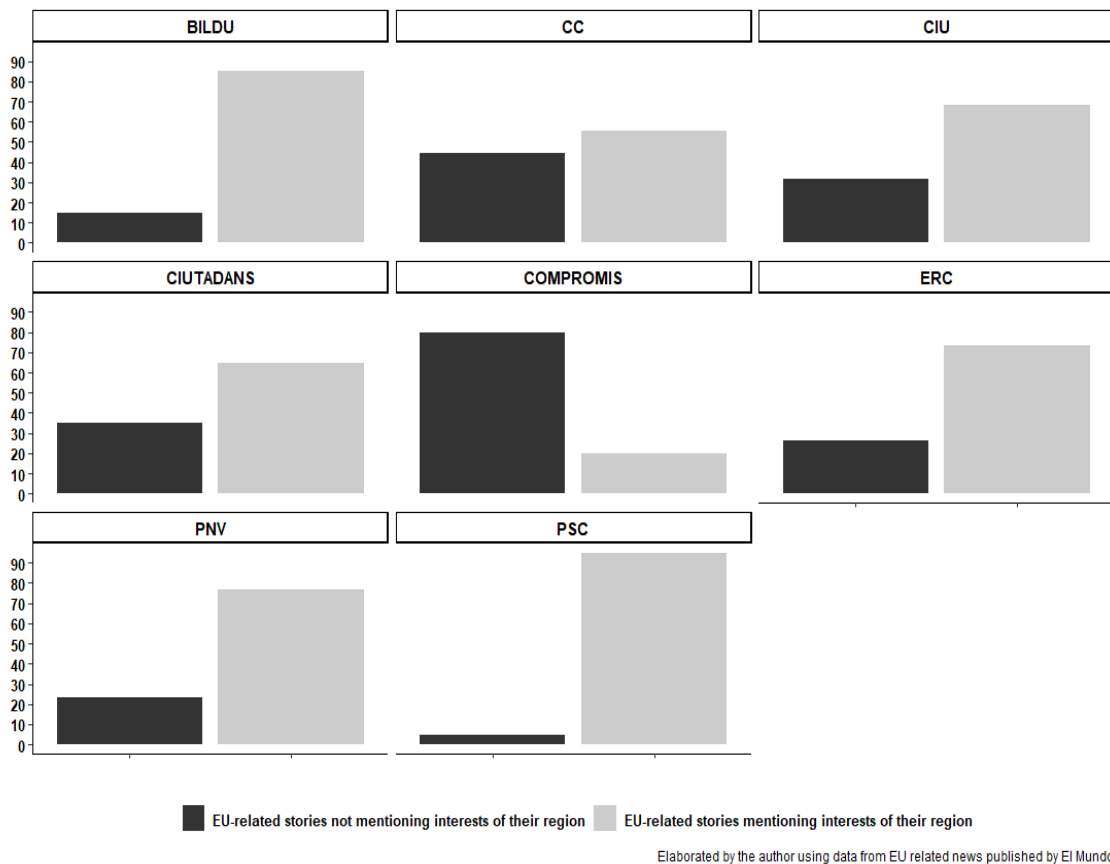


Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by *El País*

Note: These figures show the percentage of non state-wide parties’ claims in EU related debates.

¹⁸ To obtain more accurate and appropriate conclusions, it has been differentiated between the PSOE’s and PP’s governments periods.

Figure 12. Visibility of non state-wide parties' claims in public debates on European affairs in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015



Note: These figures show the percentage of non state-wide parties' claims in EU related debates.

As it was expected, results in Tables 1 and 2 corroborate the expectations raised by the hypothesis 3 in a similar way than the descriptive analysis. All Basque and Catalan regional parties obtained increasing media attention for their claims in EU related debates mentioning their regional interests in both Spanish newspapers. In this respect, it may be argued that the media reflect how these political actors use the EU as a part of their political strategy to obtain credibility, legitimacy, and public support for greater self-government, defend their political and cultural rights or just give visibility to other regional affairs.

EU related debates mentioning regional interests of Catalonia explain increasing media attention to the Catalan regional parties CiU (2.535*** in *El País* and 2.140*** in *El Mundo*), ERC (4.105*** and 2.372***), the PSC (2.762*** and 5.223***) and the political party *Ciutadans* (0.185 and 2.275***). It might be argued that the media had

enough incentives to cover regional parties' claims, as a result of political discussion on self-government affairs and especially the Catalan independence process. The positive impact in the media visibility obtained by CiU and ERC seems to reflect their role as the main and more active regional parties calling for increasing self-government or the independence of the region. Similarly, other regional parties were also benefited from these public debates. This was the case of the Catalan regional party PSC. Discussions involving Catalan regional interests also had a positive effect in the media visibility of *Ciutadans*'s claims in public debates on European affairs. Their role as a counterweight of secessionist demands during the Catalan independence process seems to be reflected in the media arena, particularly in *El Mundo*. Unlike descriptive results, this regional party also obtained increasing media attention for its claims in *El País*. However, this coefficient is not statistically significant.

It is interesting the results obtained by executive actors and some state-wide opposition parties in public debates on European affairs mentioning Catalan interests. The conflict around the independence aspirations had a significant positive impact in the media attention to PP's executive actors (0.162*** and 0.106**), highlighting the conflict between these actors and Catalan regional parties. Similarly, IU also obtained increasing media visibility in both Spanish newspapers (1.290*** and 0.899***) in consonance with its internal association with the regional party ICV. Finally, there is also a positive relationship between these public debates and the media visibility of the PSOE (0.334 and 0.141). However, any of these coefficients are statistically significant.

Public debates on European affairs mentioning Basque regional interests also had a statistically positive impact in the media visibility of the PNV (2.736*** and 3.192***) and Bildu (5.014*** and 4.198***). These results are in line with the descriptive analysis. Results on PP as an opposition party also allow to obtain interesting conclusions. This party also resulted benefited from EU related stories mentioning Basque regional interests in both Spanish media outlets (0.771*** and 0.820***). Like the right-wing *El Mundo*, the PP was more likely to obtain increasing media attention for its claims in public debates on the Basque peace process and the position of several Euro parliamentarians in these negotiations. The newsworthiness of these negotiations also had a positive impact in the media visibility to PSOE's executive actors (0.089**) in *El País*. Concerning the PSOE and IU, as opposition parties, they obtained increasing media attention for their claims in *El Mundo* (0.063 and 0.164 respectively), whereas the opposite situation happened in *El*

País (-0.463** and -0.596***). Nevertheless, the coefficients in *El Mundo* are not statistically significant. Thereby, it may be argued that territorial interests as a topic that the opposition “owns” do not allow to explain the media coverage of left parties in these EU related stories. By contrast, it might be dependent on factors such as the type of the media outlet and their connections and alliances with regional parties.

The strategic use of the EU to promote the independence of the region

According to the hypothesis 4, it is expected that secessionist regional parties to obtain more media visibility on EU related affairs as public support for the independence of their region increases. Next, this research analyses the impact of increasing public support for secessionism in the visibility of Catalan regional parties. This is justified due to the increasing public support for the independence of Catalonia within the EU during the period under study. Finally, Catalan parties were more active than other regional parties, even putting into practice the celebration of several independence referenda and increasing the political confrontation with executive actors.

Tables 1 and 2 shown that there are important differences between both Spanish media outlets. Contrary to the expectations of this research, increasing public support for the secessionism had a negative effect in the media visibility of all Catalan parties in *El País*, regardless their political position on the independence of Catalonia. This negative impact is even statistically significant in the case of CiU (-0.044***), ERC (-0.077***) and the PSC (-0.034*). Similarly, *Ciutadans* (-0.042) also obtained decreasing media attention for its claims in public debates on European affairs as the public support for the independence increased. As a result, the hypothesis 4 must be rejected in the case of *El País*.

The opposite situation can be noted in *El Mundo*. In line with the expectations of this research, all Catalan parties obtained increasing attention for their claims as the public support for the independence of Catalonia increased. Concretely, it had a significant statistically positive impact in the media visibility of CiU's (0.011*), PSC's (0.042***) and *Ciutadans*'s (0.054***) claims. It also had a positive effect in the case of ERC (0.003), even though this coefficient is not statistically significant. Higher PSC's and *Ciutadans*'s coefficient may indicate the importance that this newspaper gives to regional parties more associated with non-secessionism positions.

The results on other political actors allow to obtain broader conclusions on the topic. On the one hand, there are opposite trends between the PSOE's and the PP's executives. As Catalan public support for the secessionism increased, the visibility to PSOE's executive actors' claims (-0.133*** and -0.140***) decreased in both Spanish newspapers. Conversely, it had a positive impact regarding PP's executive actors (0.108*** and 0.111***). These differences are mainly explained because of the Catalan independence process is developed from 2012 to onwards, when the PP was already governing. On the other hand, regarding their positions as the main Spanish opposition parties, the PP obtained decreasing media attention for its claims in these EU related stories (-0.150*** and -0.146***), whereas the public support for the independence had a positive impact in the attention to the PSOE (0.124*** in both media outlets). The PSOE was the main opposition party during the debate around the Catalan independence, explaining these differences in the media coverage between both political parties.

Concerning the extreme left, IU, increasing public support for the Catalan independence had the same effect as the media visibility to regional parties' claims in both Spanish newspapers. Concretely, it increased the media visibility of IU's claims in *El Mundo* (0.011**), whereas the opposite effect is noted in *El País* (-0.018***). This might be explained by the media attention to ICV's claims which have been codified together with those made by IU. In line with the descriptive analysis on the media coverage of regional parties' claims, these results suggest that *El Mundo* was more likely to paid greater attention to these actors in EU related stories on the Catalan independence process, whereas *El País* reinforced the position of state-wide political parties and executive actors.

Regression results are also in line with the descriptive analysis on the media coverage of Basque regional parties' claims. Increasing public support for the Catalan secessionism increased the media attention to Bildu's claims in both Spanish newspapers (0.029 and 0.058***), even though the coefficient is not statistically significant in the case of *El País*. There was also a positive impact in the media coverage of PNV's claims in *El Mundo* (0.022**), whereas this political party obtained decreasing attention in *El País* (-0.040***). In line with the importance that *El Mundo* gives to political debates around the Basque peace process, *El Mundo* tended to associate the independence of Catalonia within the EU with these discussions on ETA and its supporting environment.

In short, the hypothesis 4 must be rejected in the case of *El País*. Catalan regional parties did not obtain increasing media attention for their claims in public debates on European affairs as public support for the independence of Catalonia increased. By contrast, the expectations of this research are corroborated regarding *El Mundo*. Not only Catalan secessionist parties obtained increasing media visibility for their claims in these EU related stories, but also other parties from Catalonia gained more access to the media agenda. As it was mentioned previously, these patterns of media attention may be explained by ideological factors. *El Mundo* paid a substantial attention to EU related affairs with a potential impact for the internal territorial organization of Spain, affairs which include the Catalan independence process and the Basque peace process.

The impact of the EU decision making process

According to the hypothesis 5, domestic executive actors' claims will obtain media more visibility in public debates on the approval of new European normative than opposition parties, because of the existence of information asymmetries and their privileged position in the EU decision-making process.

As it can be noted in the Table 3, public debates on Economic normative do not show any degree of diversity in their contents (with a Shannon's entropy index of 0.13 in *El País* and 0.17 in *El Mundo*). Concretely, executive actors made the 94.96% of the total number of claims that obtained visibility in these public debates in *El País* and the 93.44% in *El Mundo*. During the PSOE's government, from 2005 until the end of 2012 in the period analysed, *El País* paid a substantial attention to the approval of the "Services Internal Market" Directive. This high attention may be related to the left-wing orientation of the media outlet. These public debates expressed concerns on the negative effects that workers' rights could suffer from the application of the normative, because of the so-called "social dumping"¹⁹. The executive held a supportive attitude towards the Directive, although calling for the introduction of exceptions to protect the social model of the EU integration. By contrast, *El Mundo* put more emphasis on domestic economic interests. The media attention to executive actors' claims in the right-wing media outlet was more associated with public debates focused on the reduction of roaming charges in the EU. In

¹⁹ The relocation of firms mainly to Eastern member states, where there are fewer social burdens.

this case, these actors obtained visibility for their doubts about the EU regulation, due to its negative economic impact for the firms' interests.

The Spanish media intensively followed the development of Economic normative during the PP's government as well. Indeed, both newspapers were more likely to focus on the Directive establishing a framework for the recovery and resolution of credit institutions and investment firms. No wonder there was a special interest in following the executive actors' claims in this type of European legislation during this period. In this respect, the Spanish financial system was specially hit by the negative economic consequences of the Euro crisis. Finally, the situation required a European rescue of the domestic banking sector. This Directive was a tool to prevent insolvency or when it occurs to minimize negative effects by preserving the systemically substantial function of the organization concerned (Directive 2014/59/EU).

Regarding public debates on agriculture and fishing normative, both newspapers devoted more attention to executive actors' positions during the negotiations on the reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and fishing agreements with Morocco (98.04% in *El País* and 95.83% of claims in *El Mundo*). Indeed, executive actors were practically the only political actors which participated in these EU related discussions (0.05 and 0.09). This policy domain is of special interest for Spanish actors. Spanish feelings of dissatisfaction towards the EU are usually related to these affairs, because of their impact on Spanish products (Díez Medrano 2003). This can also be observed in the media attention to the executive actors' criticisms of the European Regulation to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

Table 3. Visibility of executive actors' and political parties' claims in public debates on the approval of EU normative in *El País* from 2005 to 2015

	Executive actors	PP	PSOE	IU	BILDU	CC	CIU	CIUTADANS	COMPROMIS	ERC	PNV	PODEMOS	PSC	Others	Shannon's index
Economic normative	94.96	1.44	2.16	1.44	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.13
Agriculture and Fishing normative	98.04	0.00	1.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05
Rights and Justice normative	89.61	5.19	0.00	1.30	0.00	0.00	2.6	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.3	0.00	0.24
Social and Labour normative	88.57	1.90	3.81	2.86	0.00	0.00	1.9	0.00	0.00	0.95	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.27
Energy and environment normative	89.74	5.13	2.56	2.56	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.22
Other normative	75.00	25.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.29

Table 4. Visibility of executive actors' and political parties' claims in public debates on the approval of EU normative in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015

	Executive actors	PP	PSOE	IU	BILDU	CC	CIU	CIUTADANS	COMPROMIS	ERC	PNV	PODEMOS	PSC	Others	Shannon's index
Economic normative	93.44	0.00	1.64	0.0	0.00	0.00	1.64	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.64	0.00	0.00	1.64	0.17
Agriculture and Fishing normative	95.83	0.00	4.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.09
Rights and Justice normative	85.87	9.78	1.09	3.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.27
Social and Labour normative	95.71	2.86	0.00	1.43	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.11
Energy and environment normative	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other normative	66.67	16.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	16.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.45

Similarly, executive actors also obtained more media visibility for their claims in public debates on rights and justice normative in both Spanish newspapers (89.61% and 85.87%) in detriment of opposition parties (0.24 and 0.27). These discussions mainly revolved around the Directive on common standards and procedures in member states for returning illegally staying third-country nationals. This media attention may be explained by the importance of immigration for Spain, where domestic actors usually call for a common response of the EU. In Spain, immigration represents one of the most important social changes since the transition period. Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been an increasing rate of immigration population (Basilien-Gainche 2015). Spanish executive actors were favourable to the development of a common European framework in the topic, seeking to bring the Directive to the existing precepts in the Spanish legislation.

Media attention in *El País* and *El Mundo* to public debates on labour and social affairs is mainly explained by the discussions on the Working time Directive at the European Parliament. These EU related stories were monopolized by executive actors' claims as well (88.57% and a Shannon's index of 0.27 in *El País* and 95.71% and 0.11 in *El Mundo*). One of the most controversial precepts of this European normative was the possibility to extend the working time from a maximum of 48 hours to 65 hours. The prominence of these stories in Spanish media contents might be related to their conflicting nature and their impact for domestic interests. Both Spanish executive actors and other member states were critical of the European normative, due to its potential negative impact in the domestic workers' rights and the social agenda of the EU. Additionally, these public debates highlighted the divergent positions between Spain and the United Kingdom.

The impact of European decisions over domestic interest and conflicting issues may also explain the media coverage of EU related debates on energy and environment affairs. Like other policy domains, the Spanish media paid a disproportionately attention to executive actors' claims (89.74% and 100%), whereas opposition parties obtained a marginal or any visibility (the Shannon's indexes are 0.22 and 0 respectively). These discussions focused on the European measures against the Climate Change in *El País*, which were characterize by 1) conflicts among member states; 2) the divergent effects of

these decisions over different policy domains²⁰; 3) the emphasis on the consequences of increasing prices for Spanish airlines, citizens and firms; and 4) the critical attitude of Spain towards the position against biofuels of the EU. Similarly, *El Mundo* emphasized EU related stories on the necessary efforts to fulfil the European normative against the Climate Change.

Regarding opposition parties, only the PP obtained a visibility of near 10% in one of the policy domains analysed: rights and justice normative in *el Mundo*. The visibility of its claims was mainly associated with public debates on immigration normative, such as, for example, the Return Directive. Moreover, this party also obtained a substantial visibility for its claims in EU related discussions about other European normative (25% in *El País*, while this percentage was lower in *El Mundo* with 16.67%). This media visibility was associated with stories on the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation in *El País*, while *El Mundo* emphasized regulations related to the transparency in the public sector. Nevertheless, results in other normative are not very representative of a higher opposition party's capacity to obtain access to the media agenda (see Annex 2).

In summary, the expectations raised in the hypothesis 5 are fulfilled. Executive actors obtained more media attention for their claims in public debates on the approval of European normative than opposition parties. Their role as the main domestic negotiators allows them to access to information about the development of the European normative (see Moravcsik 1994). These information asymmetries increase the cost of effective opposition. In addition, collective actions problems make effective daily monitoring of these negotiations relatively costly (Bulmer 1986). Thereby, EU related discussions reflect this privileged position in the EU decision-making process in their contents. Conversely, opposition parties are more in need to obtain orientation on the topic (see, for example, McCombs and Weaver 1973) to define their positions. In line with the Bennet indexing theory (1990), the media give priority to the routine reporting of those participating directly in the decision-making process.

Moreover, the media gives more importance to the coverage of European normative with a potential impact for domestic interests. Other factors related to the media logics, such as their political orientation and the existence of conflict, seem to play

²⁰ For instance, the positive impact over health, but a potential negative effect on industry.

a role in the selection of public debates on European normative and executive actors' claims.

The impact of EU events

The hypothesis 6 expects that executive actors to obtain more media visibility for their claims during the celebration of EU events. In line with these expectations, Tables 1 and 2 show that executive actors' claims benefited from the celebration of these events at the European political level. EU related stories coinciding with EU events improved the media attention to both PSOE's (0.025*** in *El País* and 0.085*** in *El Mundo*) and PP's (0.118*** and 0.142***) executive actors. Regarding opposition parties, they only had a statistically positive impact in the media attention obtained by the PSOE (0.223*** and 0.136***).

Even though other opposition parties also improved their visibility in these EU related discussions, the Spanish media did not pay an unprecedented attention to their claims. This is the case of IU (0.0003), *Podemos* (0.336), PSC (0.054) and Bildu (0.057) in *El País*. This media attention was more limited in *El Mundo*. Only the parties Bildu (0.002) and *Compromís* (0.006) obtained more access to the media agenda, even though any of these coefficients are statistically significant.

The higher coefficient of PP's executive actors as well as the positive impact on the PSOE as an opposition party may be related to the consequences of the Euro crisis. The financial and social difficulties in member states reinforced the intergovernmental approach of the EU integration. The European Council became in the most predominant and active political institution to respond the challengers related to the Euro crisis (Puetter 2012, Fabbrini 2013), significantly increasing the celebration of summits at the European political level. Because of this key role, executive actors remained in the spotlight (Puetter 2012). This is corroborated by the increasing influence of third countries and the European Council in EU related debates following the outbreak of the Euro crisis (Palau and Ansemil 2020). The Spanish media may be also interested in covering the viewpoints of the main opposition party, the PSOE, during the celebration of these events, because the potential impact of decisions on austerity measures on the country. Next, it is explored how the Euro crisis may have affected these patterns of media attention to domestic actors.

The impact of the Euro crisis

The Euro crisis may have changed political parties' visibility in public debates on European affairs. In this regard, the hypothesis 7 expects that challenger parties with low likelihood of entering office in next elections to increase their media visibility following the outbreak of the Euro crisis. Similarly, according to the hypothesis 8, regional parties, especially those which pursue the independence of their region, will also obtain more access to the media agenda during this period.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate that there was increasing media attention to executive actors in public debates on European affairs from 2008 to 2010. This period was characterized by the worsening of the Spanish economic situation. Another event that substantially increased the media coverage of these actors' claims was the Spanish bank bailout in 2012. After that, the descriptive data shows that executive actors' claims decreased in both Spanish newspapers over time, in consonance with the gradual Spanish economic recovery.

Executive actors' claims obtained increasing visibility in EU related debates in *El País* during 2009, 2010 and 2012, whereas *El Mundo* paid more attention to their positions between 2010 and 2012. In 2009, prominent discussions involved the worsening of the Spanish economic situation and raising unemployment in *El País*. This resulted in the application of austerity measures to reduce the structural deficit in Spain and actions to guarantee the solvency of the financial system in 2010. These discussions were covered by both Spanish media outlets, paying attention to the negotiations between executive actors and European institutions. Finally, in 2012, the Spanish media emphasized executive actors' claims in EU related debates on the Eurobonds and the purchase of public debt by the European central bank and, especially, the European bank bailout to solve the problems of the Spanish banking system.

The patterns of media visibility to opposition parties' claims in *El País* show that these actors obtained a substantial increase of media coverage in 2009. From this year, *El País* paid decreasing attention to their claims in detriment of other actors, such as, for example, third member states. Instead, opposition parties' claims obtained increasing access to the media agenda in *El Mundo* from 2010 to onwards. In general terms, these EU related debates were focused on the negative economic and social consequences of the Euro crisis, the implementation of austerity measures, raising unemployment, the lack

of solvency in the Spanish financial system. Moreover, The Spanish bank bailout and the Catalan independence process contributed to increase the media attention to opposition parties' claims in *El Mundo*. It may be argued that these differences between the two media outlets are in consonance with its political orientation. Whereas *El País* focused on the impact of the Euro crisis for domestic interests, *El Mundo* not only gave more media visibility to opposition parties' claims in these EU related debates, but also this media outlet emphasized territorial affairs.

To corroborate the hypotheses 7 and 8 have been analysed through a Poisson regression analysis in Tables 1 and 2. The dependent variable is the media attention given to executive actors and opposition parties in public debates on European affairs. In line with the descriptive analysis, Tables 1 and 2 show that executive actors and mainstream opposition parties were the main beneficiaries of increasing media coverage of EU related debates after the outbreak of the Euro crisis. The critical juncture had a positive effect in the media attention to claims made by PSOE's executive actors (0.389*** in *El País* 0.352*** in *El Mundo*). Similarly, PP's executive actors (0.208*** and 0.075***) as well as the PP (0.497*** and 0.616***) and the PSOE (0.212*** and 0.070***) as opposition parties obtained increasing coverage for their claims during this period.

Regarding the far-left IU, there are differences between the two media outlets. As it was expected, this party obtained increasing attention for its claims in EU related debates in *El País* (0.029) during this period, even though this coefficient does not have statistical significance. Conversely, the Euro crisis had a negative effect in *El Mundo* (-0.049). In the case of the challenger party *Podemos*, results illustrate that the Euro crisis was more likely to reduce the media attention for its claims in both Spanish newspapers (-1.533*** and -2.090***).

Thus, the hypothesis 7 must be rejected in the case of *El Mundo* and only partly corroborated regarding *El País*. However, this newspaper did not pay an unprecedented media attention to IU's claims. This finding is interesting. Even though this political party was one of the main critical voices against the application of austerity measures, the Spanish media did not reflect the party's mobilization and positions in their contents. Concerning *Podemos*, this political party was founded in 2014. As a result, its patterns of media visibility may be explained because the Spanish economic situation was already improving and the risk premium decreasing.

With regard to the Basque regional parties, the PNV obtained more attention for its claims during the Euro crisis in *El País* (0.026), whereas this effect was negative in *El Mundo* (-0.035). Nevertheless, these coefficients do not have statistical significance. By contrast, Bildu obtained increasing visibility for its claims in both media outlets (0.569 and 0.105), but any of them paid an unprecedented attention to this new regional party. Contrary to the expectations raised in the hypothesis 8, the main Catalan regional parties pursuing the independence of Catalonia, CiU (-0.044 and -0.086*) and ERC (-0.251* and -0.313***), obtained decreasing media visibility in public debates on European affairs in both Spanish newspapers during the Euro crisis. The Euro crisis only benefited PSC' claims in *El País* (0.155), whereas this effect was negative in *El Mundo* (-0.121). However, any of these coefficients are statistically significant. Finally, this critical juncture neither represented an opportunity to the political party *Ciutadans* to obtain more media coverage for its claims in the Spanish media (-0.907** and -0.826***). Finally, The Canarian party CC, characterized by the lack of secessionist demands, obtained more access to the media agenda (0.081 and 0.253), whereas the opposite situation occurred with the Valencian non state-wide party *Compromís* (-0.459 and -0.229).

This research shows that the Euro crisis did not imply a redistribution of the media attention obtained by political parties in public discussions on European affairs. Far from providing unprecedented opportunities to challenger parties to access to the media agenda, it has further reinforced the presence of executive actors' claims. In this sense, mainstream parties were, instead, the only opposition parties who really benefited, in terms of media visibility, from the negative consequences of the Euro crisis in a statistically significant way. In the case of *El País*, these results differ from the descriptive analysis, where all political actors, except for challenger parties, received lower attention for its claims during this period. Regarding challenger parties, the hypothesis 5 has only been corroborated partly in *El País*, in line with the descriptive results. The Euro crisis had a somewhat significant impact in the media coverage of the challenger party IU's claims, whereas *Podemos* experienced the opposite situation. Yet, this newspaper did not pay an unprecedented attention to IU, even though this party was especially critical against European decisions and the application of austerity measures. Moreover, *Podemos* was founded in 2014, when the Spanish risk premium was already decreasing. By contrast, both challenger parties received a decreasing attention for their claims in *El Mundo* and,

therefore, rejecting the expectations raised in the hypothesis 7, in contrast to the positive impact noted in the descriptive analysis.

Regarding the hypothesis 8, the Euro crisis only increased the media attention to regional parties in the Basque Country, actors that were not involved in any independence process for their region during this period. By contrast, contrary to the expectations of this research, the Euro crisis did not benefit the appearance of Catalan secessionist parties' claims in the media. Thus, the hypothesis 8 must be rejected. Other factors such as increasing public support for the independence of the region, seem to be more accurate to explain increasing media visibility to secessionist regional parties' claims.

3. The visibility of interest groups in public debates on European affairs

3.1. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Domestic actors not only address EU issues in the national press, they also try to influence them in the national decision-making arenas (Kriesi et al. 2007)

This chapter explores the visibility of interest groups in public debates on European affairs. Most existing literature has analysed this question, considering factors like their organizational resources (e.g. Thrall 2006), the type of interest group (e.g. Binderkrantz 2012), their preferences between insider and outsider resources (e.g. Beyers 2004), the impact of conflict in the development of new European normative (De Bruycker and Beyers 2015) or the presence of media political parallelism (Binderkrantz et al. 2015).

The *EUROPUB* project has also made important contributions to the research field (e.g. Koopmans 2007). Following top-down approaches, this literature illustrates that public debates on European affairs tend to reflect the current distribution of power, position, and influence of political actors in the EU decision-making process. In this respect, the Europeanization of domestic public spheres has weakened the position of interest groups regarding other political actors, especially in front of executive actors and central banks (e.g. Koopmans 2004, 2007). However, these conclusions are based on the degree of EU competences in several European affairs, such as for example, the economic and agriculture policy domains.

Few analyses have explored the extent to which the approval of new European normative coincides with increasing media attention for the positions of interest groups in the media. An exception is the study conducted by De Bruycker and Beyers (2015). They analyse how the presence of conflict during the approval of European Directives increased the media coverage of interest groups. Nevertheless, these conclusions are based on a sample of European Directives. This research provides new insights into to extent to which the approval of new European normative increase the media attention to interest groups' positions, considering a long-term analysis and all Directives and Regulations that obtained visibility in public debates on European affairs. Because of the increasing impact of the EU decision-making process on key policy domains and domestic legislation (see, for example, Palau and Chaqués-Bonafont, 2012, Palau 2019), the media may reflect the higher incentives of interest groups to influence European policymakers. Moreover, existing research has also focused on obtaining conclusions on the degree of vertical Europeanization in the media agenda (e.g. Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2007; Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2012). Nevertheless, these studies have not explored the extent to which the media reflect the diversity and accessibility of interest groups to EU institutions, suchas as the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Yet, Europeanization cannot be reduced to a top-down process (see Bache and Jordan 2006). As the case of executive actors and political parties, interest groups may try to obtain media visibility in order to fulfil their objectives and protect their interest in domestic processes related to the EU. To go further in this question, this research has also considered the implementation process of European normative at the domestic arena, as an alternative venue to influence these political decisions and policy outcomes, and the impact of the Euro crisis.

3.1.1. Interest groups and the European integration

Whether the increasing participation of interest groups can, however, truly enhance the democratic quality of the European Union or, on the contrary, undermines its democratic legitimacy, depends to a considerable extent on how lobbying success is distributed (Klüver 2012b).

Bentley (1908) inaugurated the modern literature on the importance of interest groups, emphasizing that the competition among social groups defines the core of the political process. Interest groups have been defined as independent organizations which maintain a close relationship with the government, seeking to influence decisions and outputs of the political process (Wilson 1990). They act as intermediaries between policymakers and the civil society. Berry (1984) argue that these political actors have four basic functions: 1) they represent their member in front of the executive; 2) they are an alternative participatory venue; 3) they provide resources like knowledge or expertise to the political process; 4) interest groups try to influence the public agenda; and 5) these organizations follow the governmental programs to ensure that their interest are considered. In this respect, interest groups tend to follow four basis strategies (Berry 1977): 1) litigation strategies in front of courts when they oppose legislative or governmental decisions; 2) raising political confrontation through protests events, demonstrations and obtaining media attention for their positions; 3) information strategies based on exchanges of resources in the institutional arena; and 4) strategies to influence public opinion to obtain public support for their positions with the aim to influence governmental decisions (see Medina and Muñoz Márquez 2016, for a review of the importance of interest groups in the political science from a conceptual and theoretical perspective).

Scholars have frequently tended to use a great number of neologisms to define groups or associations that try to influence political decisions and policy outcomes: interest groups, political interest groups, interest organizations, special interest groups, pressure interest groups, civil society organizations, citizens groups, organized interests, or public interest groups (see, for example, Beyers et al. 2008). Nevertheless, there is not a clear agreement among existing literature about the scope of the definition of interest

groups yet²¹. This research relies on a classification of interest groups based on the categories proposed by Baumgartner et al. (2009).

It has been argued that the analysis on the mobilization of these organizations is a crucial factor to understand the functioning of current democracies, especially when these political systems are “becoming increasingly embedded in supranational policy networks” (Beyers et al. 2008). From a democratic perspective, a political system works better if a diversity of interest groups has similar chances of access to political institutions (Lowery et al. 2015). The privileged position of large economic groups may distort public policy, as other political actors cannot counterbalance their power (see Dahl 1982). However, the importance of party politics has been declining over time (Bartolini 2005, Mair 2006) and, moreover, authoritative perspectives have turned into policy networks (Van Waarden 1992; Falkner 2000) and negotiation processes. This has contributed to increasing mobilization of interest groups in political systems over time (Mair 2006). Additionally, policy-making processes are currently dispersed in different political levels, where different types of political actors must share increasing responsibility in issues such as environmental quality (see van de Hove 2000).

In the case of the integration process, the gradual transference of power to the EU in policy domains, such as, for example, environment or product quality has contributed

²¹ In this regard, for example, Schattschneider (1960, 1975) considers that the “pressure system” is only composed by the so-called “special” interest groups such as business associations and trade unions, as these organizations have traditionally had a privileged position within corporativism agreements. By contrast, other scholars use designations that “runs from organizations hierarchically, bureaucratically and professionally structured with large economic resources to informal bodies in nascent stage of development that may be resource poor and activist based, to private companies, to public organizations, etc.” (Jordan and Maloney 2007). Thus, interest groups may include business associations, firms, professional associations, non-governmental interest groups or even public institutions (such as schools, hospitals or universities) and individuals (e.g. Cammisa 1995; Gray and Lowery 1996; for an extended discussions of the definition of interest groups see, for example, Jordan et al. 2004). Despite some interest groups are not strictly aggregating the interests of a particular constituency, they are considered as interest group as well. Therefore, many interest groups may not have any members (see, for example, Berry 1984 and Skocpol 1995). The crucial element for considering a actor as an interest group is their will to obtain political influence, frame policy issues and, especially, achieve policy outcomes in line with their own political preferences. Following this broad definition of the concept, existing research has argued that interest groups could be differentiated according to the nature of their interests (e.g. Olson 1965; Lohmann 1998; Dür and Bièvre 2007). Steward (1958) proposes the distinction between “sectional” interest groups and “cause” interest groups or public interest groups, distinction that has been relatively consistent in existing literature (Dunleavy 1988; Halpin 2006). The former classification represents specific constituencies whose main concerns are related to economic and labour policies such as business associations, workers, farmers, or firms (Dunleavy 1991). Instead, the latter aggragation pursues the consecution of principles such as environmental or consumer protection, health and social policies and collective goods that do not benefit a specific constituency materially (Binderkrantz 2012). These interest groups are not featured by a specific constituency and only generate diffuse costs and benefits for their members. Berry (1999) proposes the use of the label “citizen groups” to refer to all these interest groups not related with professions.

to an increasing Europeanization of domestic policy-making processes. This process has motivated that interest groups have more incentives to attach resources and develop lobbying strategies to influence the decision-making process at the European political level (Mazey and Richardson 2006). An increasing diversity of interest groups participating within the EU decision-making process may improve the legitimacy and quality of its decisions, as different viewpoints are heard and resources, such as expertise and information, are transmitted to policymakers (Greenwood 2007). The analysis of the diversity of interest groups at the European political level is an important question for the research field, as in the case that only few resourceful actors have access to the EU decision-making process, then the information that policymakers receives might be incomplete or even misleading (Dür and Mateo 2012). In this sense, multilevel governance contributed to the development of more open networks (issue networks) (Heclo 1978) in certain policy domains, in contrast to those dominated by few actors and closed communities (policy communities) (Atkinson and Coleman 1989).

Some interest groups have progressively perceived benefits from the EU membership. This is the case of those organizations concerned with transnational issues such as environmental organizations, firms and business associations bearing heavy costs, because the existence of different domestic regulations. For example, for larger internationally firms, the EU's legal and political framework its crucial for the development of their interests in international operations (Mazey and Richardson 2001). The number of groups actively participating at the EU political level have substantially increased since the mid-1980s (Greenwood 2007), due to the growing impact of the EU decision-making process in key policy domains and domestic legislation. For example, Bouza García (2016) shows that there were more than 8.000 organizations registered in the European transparency register in April 2015, where 5.000 also had an European interests. However, only 1.300 of these interest groups had an office in Brussels. Five years later, this figures have improved substantially. The European register in December 2020 shows that there are more than 12.000 organizations registered, where more than 7.000 pursue an European interest. Regarding those with headquarters located in Brussels, the figure only reach the 3.000 of these groups. Furthermore, the European Commission estimated that the 75% of the firms and the 60% of ONGs which operate in Brussels are listed in the register (see Bouza García 2016).

Beyond the data provided by the register, existing literature has tried to determine the number of interest groups at the European political level (e.g. Berkhout and Lowery 2008; Greenwood 2011). In this respect, Wonka et al. (2010) estimated that there were more than 3.700 organizations, whereas Greenwood (2011) reduced this figure to 2.200. Moreover, existing research has also illustrated that more than the 60% of the groups settled in Brussels are economic groups and individual firms, even though public organizations have also a substantial representation (e.g. Greenwood 2011).

In this respect, in order to get more insights into the impact of the EU on interest groups, several analyses have sought to understand the Europeanization of these organizations (Butt-Phillip 1985; Mazey and Richardson 1993; Andersen and Eliassen 1995; Greenwood 1997, 2003; Van Schendelen 2002; Woll 2006), their role in the multilevel governance (Kohler-Koch and Eising 1999; Kohler Koch 1994; Grande 1996) and their capacity to influence outcomes in their favor (Grossman 2004). As Princen (2007) argues, the aim of this literature was to obtain conclusions about to extent to which the EU integration has facilitated or impeded the political access and influence of interest groups to policymakers. Nevertheless, there is still no agreement on how the vertical and horizontal divisions of the EU's power have affected the access of interest groups to the EU policy-making process.

One of the main approaches is that the intergovernmental cooperation at the European political level has weakened the position of interest groups, mainly through four mechanisms: 1) the executive actors' control on domestic political agendas; 2) the type of procedures to take political decisions; 3) the asymmetric access to the information in favour to executive actors; and 4) facilitating the ideological justification of European policies by executive actors (Moravcsik 1994). In this respect, member states may use the European political level to reduce the constraints imposed over them by interest groups at the domestic arena (Grande 1996).

In addition, the capacity of interest groups to influence decisions of the European Commission is limited, as this political institution lacks from a direct electoral legitimation and does not need their resources to assure their re-election (McLaughlin et al. 1993). According to these scholars, even in areas where it is argued that interest groups are powerful such as agricultural policy, these organizations are not especially influential (Rieger 1994). Similarly, the lack of transparency and the complex structure of the EU decision-making process also decrease the control of certain interest groups, such as, for

example, non-governmental associations, on policymakers, decisions and outputs (Schneider and Baltz 2003).

Their capacity to influence the European Parliament is also limited by two main reasons. First, once European parliamentarians have taken a position on an issue, it may be difficult for them to change their positions following the demands of interest groups, as these politicians must be ideologically consistent with the preferences of their voters (Downs 1957). And second, in the case that the demands of interest groups go in detriment of economic efficiency, paying attention to them may turn into negative electoral results during next elections (Dür 2008b).

Conversely, other scholars have argued that the multilevel governance has provided new political venues to influence policy outcomes, strengthening the position of interest groups, even those representing diffuse interests (Pollack 1997). The EU is a unique political structure organized as a complex system of multilevel governance that has decisively contributed to the diversification of decision-making processes through different levels (Eising 2009) and political venues. There is not a central body of the decision-making process, but there are several of them distributed among a broad number of political institutions which are both autonomous and independent (Grande 1996).

Thus, interest groups are no longer only active in domestic arenas, but they have also extended their lobbying activities beyond the domestic borders of member states (Princen and Kerremans 2008). Through these multiple political venues, interest groups can lobby policymakers at both the European and domestic arenas (Pollack 1997; Baumgartner and Jones 1991). More concretely, the “target structure” (Almond 1958) of political decisions now includes member states, the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and domestic parliaments. These multiple venues have strengthened the position of interest groups regarding political actors, as the former may exploit the needs of the latter for compromise to fulfil their own preferences (Grande 2007).

These organizations may also use the media as an additional political venue to put pressure on policymakers, share their viewpoints in front of public opinion, and obtain more chances to influence the decision-making process. Hence, this research focuses on exploring how specific interest groups, such as, for example, firms and citizens’ groups, may increase their media attention in EU related stories during the approval of new

European normative. The next section explores this possible impact of the EU decision-making process in the media coverage of several types of interest groups in public debates on European affairs.

3.1.2. The participation of interest groups in the EU decision-making process

No democratic political system in existence nowadays operates on the basis of an abstract discovery of the general interest by isolated representatives. Therefore, when it comes to understanding the influences that are exerted on the agenda of the European institutions, it is essential to discuss the effects of the interest representation practices (Bouza García 2016; translated by the author).

Participation of interest groups in the EU decision-making process is related to the input and output legitimacies of the EU integration (Scharpf 1999), through three different ways. First, interest groups contribute to the improvement of the EU's input legitimacy by means of supplying information associated with representative and encompassing interests. Second, they can similarly provide innovative ideas to shape political decisions and find solutions that are shared from one sector to another. They hear solutions of other sectors of the society, stimulating, thus, the coordination and the dialogue among all actors involved (van de Hove, 2000). Finally, it is argued that participation of interest groups shapes the EU's output legitimacy, as they are engaged in solving public problems. Their participation is important for political institutions, as it can improve their effectiveness and efficiency to solve public problems, providing specific and substantial data related to them (Bouwen 2014).

These political actors may directly or indirectly participate in the EU decision-making process. First, interest groups can try to set their influence on European institutions through Euro-associations established at the European political level (Mazey and Richardson 2001). Mazey (1995) illustrates that the European Commission has actively promoted the creation of European experts' networks to monitor and obtain information on the development of European policies. For example, it promoted the creation of supranational women's networks in equality policies (Mazey 1995) or the setting of the European Round Table representing the interests of larger firms in the EU (Green Cowles 1995). Nevertheless, it has been argued that relying on Euro-associations may be too risky, as many of them do not have enough resources, in terms of expertise,

for effective lobbying (Mazey and Richardson 2001, 2006). Second, interest groups can defend their interests at the European political level directly, appointing several representatives in Brussels (Butt Philips 1985), engaging direct relationships with both European and domestic politicians. And third, they can also set these relationships and defend their interests indirectly, through domestic political actors in front of the European Commission, the European Parliament, or the Council of Ministers (Dür and González 2012).

Some research has concluded that not all interest groups are equally successful in drawing the attention of policymakers. These analyses have emphasized that there are important differences in lobbying success among interest groups, considering different factors such as the type of interest group, their size, their structure and their composition (e.g. Olson 1965; Schneider and Baltz 2003; Dür and de Bièvre 2003). According to these scholars, the EU decision-making process favours sectorial, economic, and concentrated interests in detriment of citizens' groups (Smismans 2004; Gerber 1999; Hall and Deardorff 2006). Even, it is argued that citizen groups are practically unable to influence decisions and policy outcomes in the EU decision-making process (Schneider and Baltz 2003; Dür and Bièvre 2007). In this respect, citizens groups are underrepresented in the European Commission in comparison to business associations and firms, so the participatory democratic principle seems an unreachable myth (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013). According to Dür and Mateo (2012), interest groups must decide whether they invest their resources in strengthening their membership or defend their interest in front of policymakers. In the case that they engage in political activities, they need to decide which share of resources allocate to lobbying at the European and national arenas. Thus, non-economic interest groups may have a lower probability of being successful at the European political level.

Bouwen (2002, 2004) illustrates that firms and business associations are more successful at the European political level than EU-associations and citizens' groups. This interest groups have enough resources to act individually in both political arenas, since their position in the market provides them with several resources, such as, for example, information, expertise, and technical knowledge. They may also have specific information than other interest organizations lack, because of they control investment and production decisions. In addition, these economic groups hierarchically structured and, therefore, may provide better information than groups with internal conflicting interests.

More decentralised and democratic interest groups have also more complicated internal decision-making processes, which is usually translated into less flexibility in the provision of access goods (Salisbury 1984). Finally, it is easier for concentrated economic interest to overcome collective action problems and provide resources and public goods than citizens' groups with a diffuse constituency (Dür and De Bièvre 2007; Olson 1965).

Conversely, other scholars have emphasized that citizens groups are actually surprisingly influential in the EU decision-making process (Pollack 1997; Warleigh 2000; Ruzza 2002). It is argued that there has been an increasing successful mobilization of citizens' groups at the European political level over time (Smismans 2004). Similarly, Klüver (2012b) states that there is not any evidence for a bias within the EU decision-making process across the type of interest group, regardless the nature of their interests or their organizational structure. Citizens' groups such as environmental organizations are equally able to influence EU policy outcomes. Despite economic groups have found new secondary channels to influence the EU decision-making process, citizens groups have increased their influence as well. As Mazey and Richardson (2001) illustrate, the need for a more balanced interest group intermediation in decision processes is perceived by the encouragement of the European Commission for increasing participation of these organization in them. The uncertainty related to insufficient information requires a plurality of interest groups participating in the EU decision-making process, as neither political actors nor economic groups have all the relevant information and available knowledge needed to shape policy decisions and outcomes (Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993).

Existing research has traditionally distinguished between inside and outside lobbying strategies to obtain more insights into how interest groups try to influence the policy-making process (Wilson 1995; Kollman 1998; Grant 2001; Gais and Walker, 1991). Insider lobbying is associated with establishing explicit relationships with policymakers via, for instance, direct contacts, phone calls, writing letters or face-to-face meetings. Instead, outsider strategies are focused on using the media, launching public campaigns, organizing public events (such as conferences or cocktail parties), writing press releases, holding internet debates, attending workshops or organizing public demonstrations to indirectly influence the policy-making process (Kollman 1998).

Regarding outsider strategies, diversity in the representation of interest groups in the media has been a key question for existing literature over time (e.g. Schattschneider 1960, 1975; Thrall 2006; Danielian and Page 1994; Binderkrantz et al. 2015). These

strategies have usually been perceived as a “weapon of the weak”, mainly used by interest groups excluded from the insider access to the EU decision-making process like citizen groups (Kriesi et al. 2007; Wolfsfeld 1984b). The media is a crucial arena for these interest groups (Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2005; Kriesi et al. 2007), allowing them to seek and inform their supporters on their political positions, compete with each other, try to alter the status quo, draw policymakers’ attention and put pressure over them, reframe a political issue, foster new policy proposals, shape political actors’ beliefs and preferences, promote political change and obtain support among a broader public (Kollman 1998; Mahoney 2007; Beyers 2004; Collignon and Schwarzer 2003). Most citizens use the media to learn on political issues and the political and public debates, whereas political parties also paid attention to the news coverage to try to reach voters (Binderkrantz and Green-Pedersen 2009; Kepplinger 2002; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). So, obtaining media attention for their positions, it may be a useful tool for interest groups to influence policymakers and obtaining public support.

From a membership perspective, gaining media coverage allows interest groups to reassure current and potential members and supporters, as they can show themselves as active participants in the decision-making process and the public debate (Ainsworth and Sened 1993; Berkhout 2013). This is especially important for interest groups pursuing idealistic goals, like the environment protection, as they need to seek a supportive constituency from different sectors of the society (Binderkrantz et al. 2015). Even though these organization do not receive specific and direct benefits, they use the media to continually reinforce the loyalty of their constituency (Maloney et al. 1994). As the same time, these groups are dependent on public activities to obtain economic resources from their membership. Binderkrantz (2005) illustrates, in her study of the strategies employed by 1772 Danish interest groups, that citizens groups with a more diffuse constituency are more likely to conduct outsider strategies such as contacting journalists, seeking media attention or protests activities. By contrast, economic groups are more likely to rely on and reinforce insider strategies (Jordan and Maloney 1997). This is known as the “compensation hypothesis” (Beyers 2004). The lack of direct insider access of some interest organizations, like citizens groups, to the EU decision-making process is compensated by indirect influence through public activities (see Beyers 2004).

However, other studies have concluded that the patterns of media attention to interest groups are more in line with the “persistent hypothesis” (Beyers 2004). Instead

of compensation the lack of access of less-resourced organizations to the EU decision-making process, the media is more likely to pay more attention to powerful interest groups which participates actively in it. Indeed, resourceful interest groups combine insider with outsider strategies, mainly targeting the media to obtain visibility for their viewpoints in the public debate (Beyers 2004). In addition, institutional access of interest groups in closed corporatist decision-making processes has declined over in many member states. Even powerful economic groups are not currently involved when major political decisions are discussed (Christiansen and Rommetvedt 1999; Christiansen et al. 2010; Crepaz 1994; Grant 2001). Due to this gradual declining insider access of interest groups, these organizations may seek to obtain visibility via other arenas, including the media. Although they can also use other political arenas, like domestic parliaments and the European Parliament, obtaining media attention for their positions allows them to access to the public debate and public opinion (Binderkrantz et al. 2015).

Beyers (2004) argues that insider lobbying strategies are better for providing technical expertise and complex information, are less costly and do not have the same reputational costs than outsider strategies. As a result, insider strategies are usually perceived as more effective to influence policymakers' positions. Nevertheless, a substantial number of interest groups relies on media strategies to influence European normative (Chalmers 2013; Beyers 2004). Koopmans and Erbe (2004) illustrate that the media are important channels of communication between European institutions, interest groups and citizens. In this respect, Beyers (2004) and Binderkrantz (2005) show that involving multiple lobbying strategies is rather common and always better than focusing on only one type of them (see also: Baumgartner and Leech 1998). Multiple lobbying strategies, both insider and outsider, are the most effective form to seek political influence and there is no reason to resign the opportunity to influence the public debate through the media (Kriesi et al. 2007).

Many outsider strategies are not "outside" tactics in the sense of those activities reserved for interest groups placed at the periphery and in a disadvantaged position in the political system (Beyers 2004). Interest groups would avoid engaging in "irresponsible" media strategies which could harm their relationships with political institutions, as control damage and reputation management are important elements for them within the political process (Beyers et al. 2009). High-profile campaigns and public demonstrations may be contra-productive to influence political decisions, as these activities could be perceived

by policymakers as irresponsible or sensationalizing political issues (Wilson 1995). The use of “disruptive tactics” (Binderkrantz 2005) or “protest politics” (Beyers 2004) are used infrequently by interest groups, whereas they are more likely to combine insider strategies with more “responsible” outside tactics (Grant 2000). According to Chalmers (2013), outsider strategies, such as media campaigns or public events, despite being more costly than insider ones, are key determinants of access to European institutions. Thereby, interest groups can directly talk to journalists, make press releases or public activities and events to catch the journalists’ attention (Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2008; Kriesi et al. 2007), while they are targeting policymakers.

Existing research has already illustrated that the more active is an interest group targeting policymakers directly, the more active is in targeting the media arena also (Binderkrantz 2005; Kriesi et al. 2007). It is argued that there is a relationship between organizational resources and media prominence. For example, Thrall (2006) shows that only well-resourced interest groups can play a key role in public debates consistently (see also Danielian and Page 1994). Similarly, Beyers (2015) argues that obtaining media attention is a labour-intensive process for interest groups, “demanding time and commitment from trained professionals”. Employing spin-doctors or experts in media are a luxury that not all interest groups can afford. They must combine their efforts to influence the media agenda with other types of activities such as raising funds or engaging meetings with policymakers. As a result, economic groups have more chances to influence these public debates.

This situation is also reflected in EU related stories. Previous research has already demonstrated that public debates on European affairs reflect the current distribution of power and position of political actors in the EU decision-making process (e.g. Koopmans 2007). According to these studies, executive actors, both European and domestic, together with central banks are the most beneficiaries of the increasing Europeanization of the national public sphere, weakening the position of political parties and actors from the civil society (e.g. Koopmans, 2004, 2007; Kriesi and Tresch, 2007). However, interest groups might improve their media coverage during the approval of new European normative, because the potential impact for key policy domains and domestic interests.

However, this media attention may be dependent on the characteristic of the policy domain, such as the competences that the EU holds over it. Interest groups tend to concentrate their efforts, resources, and lobbying activities on a small amount of policy

domains. They tend to be more active in those policy domains, where their key interests are affected and, in addition, political actors have an influential role in the definition of political decisions (Halpin and Binderkrantz 2011; Halpin and Thomas 2012). In this respect, the highest concentration of lobbying activities where the EU has strong competences and regulatory and market responsibilities, such as, for example, enterprise and environmental policy domains (Coen 2007). Instead, this mobilization is rather limited in policy domains that are almost exclusively dominated by member states, like security and foreign relations, as the negotiations tend to have an intergovernmental character at the European political level.

Regarding these mobilization at the European political level, economic groups are more likely to concentrate their lobbying efforts in influencing policymakers who have a key role in policy domains related to concentrated costs and benefits. This is the case of the economy and monetary policies, agriculture, fishing, and biotechnology policy domains (Dür and Bièvre 2007; Dür 2008a; Bandelow et al. 2000). For example, Dür and Bièvre (2007) illustrate that citizens groups are unable to influence the negotiations concerning the Economic Partnership Agreements with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries together with the establishment of cheaper medicines for poorer countries, even though they organized several major campaigns around the issue. Conversely, citizens groups are more capable of being successful in policy domains related to environment, consumers', and women's equality (Pollack 1997). Policy outcomes in these domains, based on general principles and ideas, are unpredictable in terms of interest involvement, as these are defined in relatively accessible issue networks (Bomberg and Peterson 1993).

Grossman (2012) states that obtaining media visibility may be a substantial indicator of the degree of access and success of interest groups within decision-making processes, especially when it is associated with policy domains that they want to politicize. Thereby, it could be expected that the approval of European normative, especially where the EU has stronger competences, may be increased the media attention to interest groups. European decisions have a direct impact on key policy domains and domestic interest, so the media may have more incentives to pay attention to the positions of interest groups. Conversely, interest groups will obtain lower media attention in those policy domains where the EU has a secondary role in comparison to domestic authorities, like social and labour normative. Furthermore, economic groups may be more visible in public debates on the approval of new European normative related to policy domains with

an economic nature, such as economic, agriculture and fishing affairs. It is instead expected a higher diversity of interest groups in EU related debates on energy and environment normative.

Thus, it is expected that:

H1) Interest groups will have higher visibility in public debates on European affairs in those policy domains where the EU has strong competences and coinciding with the approval of European normative

H2) Economic interest groups will monopolize public debates on European affairs related to economic policy domains, whereas more pluralistic patterns, with more diversity of actors, will predominate in other policy areas.

3.1.3. The relationship between interest groups and European institutions

The practical reality of the EU interest group intermediation system is that more and more groups participate in more and more institutions of intermediation (Mazey and Richardson 2006).

According to existing literature, the European Commission and the European Parliament seem to be exceptionally accessible for interest groups. These organizations can also use the supranational judiciary channel to achieve their desired political outcomes (Bouwen and McCown 2007). It has been argued that European institutions and domestic political actors need to interact with interest groups to improve the definition of political objectives and the achievement of successful political outcomes. Policymakers are dependent on authoritative and expert information provided by these organizations.

Regarding the European Commission, this political institution has used their relationships with interest groups with the aim to go further in the integration process, followed by the improvement of the its legitimacy (Bouza García 2015). Thereby, the European Commission actively seeks the participation of interest groups with similar preferences within the EU decision-making process to improve its political legitimacy, transparency and, thus, reduce the democratic deficit of the EU (Kohler-Koch and Finke 2007). These elements may guarantee a higher degree of political legitimacy since actors from the civil society have the chance to influence the decision-making process, limiting

the perception that these decisions are imposed from “above” (van de Hove 2000). These policy networks may increase the policy makers’ available information, legitimize policy outcomes, and avert possible excesses of public powers (see Lindblom 1979). There is a resource dependency between European institutions and interest groups (Broscheid and Coen 2007; Bouwen and McCown 2007; Mahoney 2007; Pfeffer 1997). European institutions also need certain resources from interest groups that are crucial to effective policy decisions, whereas interest groups seek to obtain access to the EU decision-making process. These resources can consist in information, expert knowledge, expertise, technical aspects, legitimacy, and political support. For example, the literature on “epistemic communities” illustrates that there are professionals who are recognized by their expertise and competence in a particular policy domain (Haas 1992b). These communities are formed by experts that define problems, identify agreements and supply expert information to justify the choice among different political solutions (Goldstein 1989; Haas 1990, 1992a).

The European Commission plays a key role in the EU decision-making process. It not only holds the initiative in proposing and initiating new European legislation, but it also has a relevant role in the coordination of member states during the negotiation process (van de Hove 2000). Because of this role as agenda-setter, the European Commission is the primary focus of most interest groups, as they try to influence the direction and the definition of European policies (Cram 2001; Pollack 2003). Mazey and Richardson (2001) also illustrate that interest groups have a major preference for bureaucracies as a political venue for influencing political decisions and political outcomes. The European Commission has an apolitical and technocratic function, requiring a large amount of expert information and technical aspects to reduce possible uncertainties that characterize the legislative process (Bouwen 2009). However, EU decision-makers in the European Commission are usually understaffed, pressed for time and with limited resources (McLaughlin et al. 1993; van Schendelen 2002). Interest groups are experts in their policy domains, having a substantial information that can provide to policymakers in exchange for political access to the EU decision-making process (Chalmers 2013).

Thereby, The European institution actively encourages long-running relationships with interest groups to obtain the required amount of information, expertise, technical knowledge and engage in consultation and negotiation processes to shape its proposals

(e.g. Broscheid and Coen 2003; Mahoney and Beckstrand 2011; Radaelli 1995; Van Schendelen 1993; Mazey and Richardson 2006). To do so, it is interested in making contacts and meetings with all the major actors affected by its policies through, for example, conferences or informal meetings (Grande 2007). These interactions serve mainly for three purposes: 1) ensuring that political proposals are technically robust through information and expertise provided by interest groups (Mazey 1998); 2) mobilizing public support to ensure their acceptability (Grande 1996); and 3) bureaucrats can also reduce the resistance for their political proposals and avoid responsibility for possible failures (Henderson 1977). Hence, it has been argued that there is a “symbiotic” relationship between the European Commission and interest groups, better understood in terms of information exchange (Chalmers 2011). Symbiotic relationships between interest groups and bureaucracies is a traditional feature of many Western European states from the postwar decade, as they have a mutual interest in creating stable policy communities and policy networks (Richardson 1982; Jordan and Richardson 1982). Thus, have a mutual interest in trying to create stable policy communities and policy networks over time (Jordan and Richardson 1982).

The European Parliament may also be perceived as an important alternative political arena for citizens groups to influence the EU decision-making process. Mazey and Richardson (2001) illustrate that the European Parliament has usually been perceived as a weak political institution and, therefore, an unattractive arena for interest groups. Nevertheless, this political institution has attracted a lot of lobbying activity for a long time from certain citizen groups, who traditionally have lower access to executive institutions such as the European Commission and domestic governments. The European Parliament’s power within the EU policy-making process varies across political issues, because of both European Treaties and internal dynamics of these policy domains. In affairs where the European Parliament and its committees are more effective and there is co-decision and shared power between this political institution and the Council of Ministers, lobbying activity is more intensive.

In addition, the logic of lobbying influence of interest groups has changed as the legislative role of the European Parliament has increased over time. As Kohler-Koch (1997) argues, as this political institution has increased its importance within the EU policy-making process, European parliamentarians have gradually become in decisive targets for interest groups (see also Wessels 1999). Interest groups would “dare risk

leaving the parliamentary arena to their opponents and, hence, parliamentary hearing attract the full *mélange* of stakeholders” (Mazey and Richardson 2001). As exchange, interest groups can provide “political capital” to members of the European Parliament. They pay a considerable attention to the demands of broad sectors of the civil society, emphasizing direct contact with associations, such as, for example, consumers’ organizations, to assure positive electoral results (Coen and Richardson 2009). Additionally, the democratic deficit that characterize the EU integration also reinforces the strength of interest groups at the European political level (Dür 2008b).

Interest groups may not only try to influence the European Commission and the European Parliament, but also the decisions finally “set” in the European Council (see Ward and Edwards 1990; Sandholtz 1992; Bueno and Stokman 1994). As Hayes-Renshaw (2009) illustrates, the European Council is composed of domestic executive elites and usually reach their political decisions by unanimity. This European institution provides strategic directions and, moreover, plays a key role as a final arbiter of political disputes that were impossible to resolve during the previous phases of the political process. It is perceived as the European supreme decision maker, where different objectives and powers of member states are reconciled (Bouwen 2014). Its political importance in the EU decision-making process together with the seniority of its members have turned its infrequent submits into objects of intense media attention (Norris 2000; Hayes-Renshaw 2009).

The European Council, however, is not likely to be perceived by interest groups in a similar way than the European Commission and the European Parliament (Hayes-Renshaw 2009). Unlike these political institutions, the European Council is the most intergovernmental institution within the EU decision-making process. As a result, the legitimacy of the European Council and their political decisions is frequently under debate (see, for example, Héritier 2003; Follesdal and Hix 2006). It has usually hold a long-standing and oft-repeated reputation to be the opaquest (Desmond 1994), the least accessible (Meynaud and Sidjanski 1971; Nicoll and Salmon 1990, Sherrington 2000), the most secretive (Bainbridge 2003), intractable (Eising 2007), elusive and inscrutable (Christiansen 2001) European institution. It has usually been argued that this privacy and opaqueness features in its procedures are necessary preconditions to reach “compromises inevitable in negotiating agreements based on consensus” (Hayes-Renshaw 2009). The European Council seems to embrace this image, as it refuses to release the documents

related to its deliberations, proceedings are usually undocumented and it is hard for external actors gain access, as its meetings are behind closed doors (Tallberg 2006).

Thus, interest groups usually perceive the European Council as an institution almost impossible to influence directly and collectively (Hayes-Renshaw 2009). As Hayes-Renshaw (2009) argues, that there were some tentative forms of the European Council to make itself more available to interest groups. For example, since 2003, some European summits had been preceded by a session of the so-called Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Employment, where representatives of social partners, workers, and employees, actively participate at the highest level. However, these forms of access have barely any effect on the subsequent deliberations, given the advanced stage of the EU decision-making process. Other interest groups may organize some outside activities such as demonstrations during the European Council summit to try to obtain visibility in the media. However, these outside strategies are just available to a small number of well-resourced interest groups such as farmers, anti-globalization, or environmentalists' social movements. For example, the demonstration organized by Friends of the Earth in Brussels on 9 March 2007 pursued the aim to put pressure over the members of the European Council in their decisions about energy policy. However, the media paid little attention to these demonstrations. Therefore, the European Council is an institution almost impossible to be influenced directly and collectively.

The time spent by members of the European Council in Brussels is also usually too short, leaving little or even no time to speak to other political actors except those directly involved with the meeting (Hayes-Renshaw 2009). As Hayes-Renshaw (2009) argues, the temporary nature of the European Council constitutes a difficulty for direct inside and outside lobbying strategies, whether these interest groups are resourceful or not. Similarly, interest groups have more difficulties to influence these decisions, as, once these meetings begin, executives have already established their positions at the domestic arena (e.g. McLaughlin et al. 1993; Hayes-Renshaw 2009). Some member states, like Spain, have institutionalized the access of interest groups, once the domestic interest has been determined and the domestic positions were already defined. In this respect, when interest groups have been successfully lobbied their domestic executive actors, they also delegate them the task to defend their interests in the European Council (Hayes-Renshaw 2009).

Regarding European institutions, existing literature has mainly focused on analysis the vertical Europeanization of domestic public spheres²² (e.g. Koopmans 2007). However, another interesting question is to what extent EU related stories reflect the supranational and intergovernmental dynamics that are developed at the European political level. How the media reflect the diversity, openness, and accessibility of different interest groups to each European institution remains unexplored. This research seeks to provide insights into the existing relationships between European institutions and interest groups in EU related stories, focusing on the degree of diversity of these contents. According to previous approaches, there may be higher diversity of interest groups in EU related stories mentioning the European Commission and the European Parliament than the European Council. The former political institutions seek a transparent development of their decisions and functioning, being more accessible to the participation of interest groups. By contrast, EU-related debates mentioning the European Council are more likely to be characterized by a low diversity in the participation of interest groups, due to its intergovernmental character.

Thus, it is expected that:

H3) Higher diversity of interest groups will be more associated with public debates related to the European Commission and the European Parliament than the ones associated with the European Council.

3.1.4. The participation of interest groups in the implementation of EU related normative

The access of interest groups to the policy-making process should not be understood just as a rational response to policy-makers' needs for information, conflict resolution or political support, but is also likely to reflect part preferences and institutional factors such as the type of government and agenda capacity (Chaqués-Bonafont and Muñoz 2016).

Interest groups do not only play a role during the definition of political decisions and policy outcomes in the EU decision-making process, but they may be also involved in the implementation of European normative at the domestic political level. Next, it is analysed

²² The media attention to European institutions.

under what circumstances these groups may reach media visibility during the implementation process. The implementation process has been depicted as “the continuation of politics by other means” (Bardach 1977), the phase “of translating policy into action” (Barret 2004) and “what happens after a bill becomes a law” (Bardach 1977), where “post-decisional decisions” (Puchala 1975) are its key characteristic. In this respect, the implementation of European Directives has increasingly become a relevant topic for current research, as it represents the most powerful and used legal binding of the EU (Köning and Luetgert 2009). Unlike European Decisions and Regulations²³, this normative is not directly applicable at the domestic political level, but they must become national laws first (Falkner et al. 2007).

The implementation of European normative in member states is also in line with the notions of the multilevel, multisector and multiactor EU governance. Several interactions among diverse networks of political actors which bargains at the European and domestic levels are engaged during this phase (Moss 2004; Kastens and Newig 2007; Weale et al. 2000; Lenschow 2006). However, Dimitrakopoulos (2001) argues that there are domestic provisions that provide the delegation of legislative power from parliaments to their executives and, moreover, most of these norms are passed as “secondary” legislation. They argue that there is a pattern of “depoliticization” at the domestic arena, reflecting the reluctance and inability of parliaments to play any practical role during the transposition and implementation of European normative. Hence, this phase of the EU policy-making process would also contribute to increase and strengthen the EU democratic deficit.

Conversely, Treib (2006) highlights that the implementation of European normative is indeed one of the most important instruments of Europeanization in member states. He argues that this phase of the policy-making process enhances the interactions between executive actors, parliaments, and other actors, because of the required institutional policy changes and political demands derived from it. This is the case of interest groups. These organization would not only have enough incentives to mobilize and influence the implementation process to protect their key interests, but also their positions are strengthened in front of the European Commission and domestic

²³ European Decisions are mere administrative acts aimed at individuals, interest groups or national executives with limited effects, whereas Regulations legal acts effective from a specific date without being necessary to become in a domestic law.

policymakers (e.g. Ciavarini Azzi 1985; Krislov et al. 1986; Siedentopf and Ziller 1988; Schwarze et al. 1990, 1991, 1993; Treib 2006).

The European Commission is also dependent on the information provided by domestic political actors to check whether the European normative is being implemented properly, as it neither possesses political resources, nor the legal competences to involve itself into domestic political affairs (Van der Vleuten 2005). This information may be provided by interest groups, allowing the European Commission to access and influence the implementation process at the domestic political level indirectly (Börzel 2000, 2003, 2006). In addition, to guarantee an effective implementation, the European institution also maintains relations with interest groups to stimulate pressure over domestic policymakers (Van der Vleuten 2005, Börzel 2000, 2003, 2006). Even though the possible existence of a certain reluctance to the Europeanization of the domestic normative, policymakers may be forced to implement it, because of the combined pressure of the European Commission and interest groups (Börzel 2000, 2003, 2006).

Negotiations and conflicts surrounding the implementation process are key elements of the political game played by domestic politicians and interest groups (Zito 1999). Interest groups will try to influence the transposition and implementation processes, when these organizations perceive far-reaching positive or negative effects from the European normative (van der Vleuten 2005). If this process is consistent or may even strength current institutional arrangements, then the implementation is more likely to be successful. Conversely, when these organizations are opposed to the policy changes derived from the European political level, because of their key interests are affected and it implies major transformations, the implementation process may suffer or even fail (Duina 1997; Dimitrakopoulos 2001; Laffan and O'mahony 2008). In this case, these organizations frequently use their institutional capacity of raising political debates and reiterating their viewpoints (see Dimitrakopoulos 2001; Laffan and O'mahony 2008).

Consequently, there is the need of involving all relevant domestic political actors to guarantee the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy-making process, especially during the coordination, negotiation and implementation phases (e.g. Ciavarini Azzi 1985; Krislov et al. 1986). Involving interest groups whose cooperation is required to turn policy statements into actions is a possible way to reach an agreement over possible implementing costs, process also known as “complexity of joint action” (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973). However, their participation is required as long as they have relevant

information to guarantee the effective implementation of EU Decisions or a clear interest affected by the European normative (Arentsen et al. 2000; Pellizzoni 2003). That means that not all interest groups and experts should be involved, although they may have a viewpoint or a particular interest in a policy domain (Newig et al. 2005).

To get more insights into the extent to which this relationship between domestic politicians and interest groups in the implementation process may be reflected in EU related debates, this research focuses on parliamentary hearings. Recent research has revealed the importance of domestic parliaments as political venues for interest groups (Kriesi et al. 2007; Binderkrantz 2005) and interest mediation (Liebert 1995; Rommetvedt et al. 2012). These political arenas are perceived as a more ambiguous and open forums for participation, where interest groups may share their viewpoints, raise political debate, and try to move bills according to their interests (Eising and Spohr 2017, von Winter 2014).

Interest groups usually perceive parliamentary committees as short-term and long-term investments to achieve their main objectives and influence policy outcomes eventually (Bouwen 2004, Hall and Deardoff 2006; Hansen 1991; Jordan and Maloney 1997; Öberg et al. 2011; Woll 2007; Broscheid and Coen 2003; Beyers et al. 2008; see Baumgartner et al. 2009 for a review). Newig et al. (2005) illustrate that interest groups may stress the complexities involving the implementation process, by framing the situation as uncertain “to feign asymmetrical information in favour to itself”. In this regard, some interest groups such as research institutes and consultancies are more likely to stress uncertainties, as they directly benefit from data-gathering and modelling activities. Similarly, economic groups are perfectly aware that European normative should finally be implemented. However, these economic organizations will try to influence the way that legislation is implemented, when it has an impact on their interests (Laffan and O'mahony 2008). An example is provided by Laffan and O'mahony (2008) in their analysis on the implementation of the 1992 Habitats Directive in Ireland. Even though Irish farmers accepted that Ireland would have to comply with the domestic implementation of the EU Directive, these political actors were determined to influence the terms on which this process would proceed, due to the pressures of their constituencies. They may politicize the implementation process to obtain financial compensation and drive the direction of the policy outcome, for example, limiting the impact of the Directive (Falkner et al. 2007). As a result, interest groups act as legislative

change agents rather than veto players, even in countries with strong corporativist settings (Tsebelis 2002; Eising and Spohr 2017).

Parliamentary committees may not only provide them with access and the capacity to influence the policy-making process, but also interest groups are likely to take advantage of these invitations as a resource to build a reputation by means of providing reliable and high-quality information and support (Berry 1984). Indeed, invitations to participate in parliamentary hearings are usually perceived as a significant indicator of interest groups' relevance in the political arena (e.g. Von Beyme 1997, 1998) and the extent to which legislation is taken seriously (Edwards et al. 1997).

However, participation in these hearings does not depend on the interest group's will, but this is a decision taken by political parties with parliamentary representation. In this regard, there are two main reasons for committees to invite interest groups to participate in these parliamentary hearings: 1) as a means of capitalising their recourses to assure and improve the implementation process, mitigating possible failures and generate political support and reach political consensus (Bouwen 2004; Hall and Deardorff 2006; Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Lowery et al. 2005, Eising and Spohr 2017; Adler and Wilkerson 2013); and 2) raise political debate and generating political conflict to weaken the position of the executive.

According to the first justification, parliamentary committees benefit from granting access to interest groups as a way of improving the efficiency of the implementation process, as these actors may supply them with relevant resources such as political intelligence, expertise, information and technical knowledge (e.g. Bouwen 2004, Jordan and Maloney 1997; Öberg et al. 2011; Woll 2007; Beyers et al. 2008; see Baumgartner et al. 2009 for a review). For example, they may give political access to economic groups and professional associations to obtain knowledge on high technical issues such as European normative related to the reform of the banking system (Chaqués-Bonafont and Muñoz 2016). Hence, parliamentary committees can reduce their dependence on the information only provided by executive actors (Liebert 1995). Moreover, by keeping interest groups informed about the specific details of the legislation and the implementation process may also help to reduce possible uncertainties and policy risks, especially when these are high (Newig et al. 2005). The cooperative relationship between political parties and interest groups in parliamentary committees can be translated into neo-corporatist arrangements, where interest groups become in co-

responsible for implementing normative and reducing possible related implementation costs (Streek and Schmitter 1985).

The interdependent relationship between committees and interest groups based on interorganizational exchanges may also avoid political conflict, reaching consensus among diverse preferences before and after the policy-making process (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Beyers 2002; Norton 1999). According to existing literature, one of the main functions of parliamentary committees is to engage a relationship with individual citizens or interest groups which indeed represent the citizens' positions on economic, social, and public problems (Austen-Smith and Wright 1994; Broscheid and Coen 2003; Beyers et al. 2008; see Baumgartner et al. 2009). Parliamentary committees might function as problem-solving institutions which increase the correspondence between policy outcomes and citizens' preferences. Therefore, involving interest groups in the implementation phase improves the political legitimation of the policy-making process, facilitating the local acceptance of European normative (e.g. van Asselt and Rotmans 2002) and the results of the economic analysis (Wateco 2002). Giving access to trade unions and citizens groups, such as, for example, environmental associations, to discuss the implementation of European normative may avoid future mass demonstrations, protests, strikes or boycotts (Chaqués-Bonafont and Muñoz 2016). Thus, the relationship between these political actors is not only beneficial for the legislation, but also for democracy itself (see Eising and Spohr 2017).

Nevertheless, as a part of the criticism of pluralistic approaches, which presuppose equal opportunities and open competition for diverse interests, corporatist and the neo-pluralistic theories have highlighted that there is a structural asymmetry among diverse types of interest groups. They put into question the idea that diverse interest groups have the same capacity to organize, mobilize and act collectively (Olson 1965; Lindblom 1977). Parliamentary committees consider the ability of interest groups to control their membership and, therefore, contribute to the implementation process by moderating public opinion (Öberg et al. 2011; Rhodes and Marsh 1992). Not all interest groups have the same or even do not have a string hierarchically organizational structure and internal decision-making processes to guarantee a high control over their membership (Greenwood and Webster 2000).

Existing research has indeed demonstrated that policymakers are more likely to anticipate possible problems associated with the implementation of European normative,

during the earlier phases of the EU decision-making process (Schmitter 1979, 1982, Jordan 1999, Dimitrakopoulos 2001). Involving political actors who have participated in the definition of objectives at the European political level allows the definition of criteria to monitor and control the subsequent implementation of normative, facilitating their consecution (Newig et al. 2005). Furthermore, these organizations tend to support the status quo, whereas citizens' groups are more likely to mobilize, generally unsuccessfully, against the implementation of European normative (Schmitter 1979). These elements may benefit economic groups to influence the implementation process at the parliamentary arena in detriment of other type of organizations.

Similarly, Marsh (1986) argues that parliamentary committees, in practice, only encourage interest groups to re-stet their sectional viewpoints on current agenda issues. Because of the available time is rather limited, it is argued that the selection process of interest groups is more likely to reinforce those organizations that are already enough important, with established reputations, with similar preferences, with resources like information and technical knowledge, such as, for example, economic groups, to participate in them (Berry 1984). For example, Berry (1999) concludes, in his study of US congressional committee hearings, that invitations to give oral evidence only serve as a proxy for privileged access to the parliamentarian arena and strong interest group's reputation. This fact favours the overrepresentation of economic groups throughout all the policy-making process, from the decision until the implementation phases (Schattschneider 1960, 1975). They are well-equipped organizations with crucial economic resources, especially staff, information, expertise, and technical knowledge which are important elements to seek access within the parliamentarian arena (e.g. Lindblom 1977; Schattschneider 1960, 1975). As a result, Schattschneider (1960, 1975) states that "the heavily chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent".

The diversity of interest groups in parliamentary hearings, however, may be dependent on the policy domain. The access of interest groups is more likely to be greater and diverse in those policy domains where there is an intense and controversial debate between political parties (Broscheid and Coen 2003; Beyers et al. 2008; Laffan and O'mahony 2008, see Baumgartner et al. 2009 for a review). This is the case of highly conflicting issues such as abortion, water policy or labour market reforms, where committees may invite several and diverse interest groups to hear their viewpoints with

the aim to reach political consensus (see Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Lowery et al. 2005).

Parliamentary hearings, instead, may also become in political arenas of confrontation that are not necessarily oriented to solve problem and promote consensus among diverse preferences (Damgaard and Mattson 2004). In this second scenario, Chaqués-Bonafont and Muñoz (2016) argue that parliamentary groups may use conflicting issues to invite interest groups to hearings with the aim to raise political debate and erode the position of the current executive, drawing attention to policy failures and governmental shortcomings. This also contributes to improve the policy-making process, as these hearings contribute to increase the transparency of the implementation phase, providing information on the positions of interest groups (Liebert 1995). These debates mirror the preferences, the positions, the arguments, the networks and constellations of political actors and existing conflicts within a policy domain (von Winter 2014).

Moreover, an extensive literature on the news value theory (Galtung and Ruge 1965) has shown that negativism, dramatism, and conflict are essential criteria for the media to select an event as a publicly story. Not only due to it sells, but also to meet professional standards of journalistic reporting (Galtung and Ruge 1965, Newman et al 1992). The media are more likely to emphasize stories associated with conflict, where two parts are pitted against one another (Neuman et al. 1992). Analyses on the media coverage of the EU have also considered this dimension to explain media attention to the topic. These studies have illustrated that EU related debates are strongly related to party conflict associated with the EU integration (Peter et al. 2004, de Vresse et al. 2007, Boomgaarden et al. 2013, Shuck et al. 2011). In this regard, the more sceptical the public and the political parties are about the EU integration, the more media coverage is given to the contested issue of European politics, mainly because these stories are associated with conflict and bad news (Galtung and Ruge 1965, De Vresse et al 2007; Peter et al. 2004; Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2009).

De Bruycker and Beyers (2015) also demonstrate that journalists are more inclined to cover the interest groups opposed to the legislative outcomes of the EU decision-making process, as these stories are more newsworthiness by the existence of negativity and conflict. These groups perceive the media coverage as a means of expanding political conflict, raising political debate, and seeking public support for their positions. By contrast, these scholars illustrate that obtaining media attention may be

counterproductive for those who support the status quo. It might mobilize potential opponents and raise public debate on the topic. Therefore, these interest groups are more likely to avoid media coverage and act out of the spotlights (Baumgartner et al. 2009).

Existing research so far has paid little attention to the extent to which interest groups are associated with public debates on European affairs during the implementation process, focusing more intensively on their mobilization at the European political level. Moreover, it has not been analysed the extent to which interest groups invited to participate in parliamentary hearings on EU related legislation also obtain media attention for their positions in EU related debates. If the media reflect the interactions between interest groups and parliamentary committees in this phase of the EU policy-making process, especially in highly politicized issues, then these organization should also visibility in public debates on European affairs.

Thus, it is expected that:

H4) Interest groups invited to participate in parliamentary hearings on EU related legislation will also have visibility in public debates on European affairs, especially if EU issues get politicized.

3.1.5. The impact of the Euro crisis: do new interest groups enter EU related debates

A wide variety of groups of citizens affected by the economic crisis, as well as those who wished to express their solidarity or question the political system for its responsibility in the crisis, expressed their dissent and took action outside the electoral arena throughout Spain (Cristancho et al. 2020).

The economic recession of 2008 may have changed the patterns of visibility, capacity, and incentives of interest groups to influence public debates of European affairs. Next, this analysis focuses on the possible differences in the visibility of interest groups in EU related debates between non-crisis periods and the Euro crisis.

To manage the Euro crisis, the EU established several mechanisms such as the European Stability Mechanism or the European Financial Stability Mechanism to

alleviate the situation of member states, under the supervision of the *Troika*²⁴. In this respect, supranational institutions have taken a main role in the development of social and economic policies, imposing stronger constraints than those derived from the globalization process or ordinary economic crises (Bellucci et al. 2012; Glencross 2013). Domestic executives must implement several policies and instruments to face the critical situation of their country, so there is an increasing perception that they are no longer able to satisfy citizens' preferences and demands (Mair 2011). These policies resulted in shifting authority from member states to markets and supranational institutions and from domestic to globalization processes, weakening the power of member states to control their economic activities and social outcomes. This has weakened the mechanisms of democracy and political legitimacy in Western states (Pianta 2013).

These austerity measures had a significant impact in the citizens' every daily life in an unprecedented way (Hobolt and Tilley 2014; Hobolt and Wratil 2015; Kriesi and Grande 2015; Cramme and Hobolt 2014). The EU perceived these measures as a remedy against growing public deficits and a fair consequence (or even a punishment) for peripheral countries living "beyond their means" (Korbiel and Sarikakis 2018). This member states raised public taxes and budget cuts to meet the objectives imposed at the European political level, depressing more the situation of their domestic economy (Hopkin 2012). This so-called "death spiral" (Krugman 2012) finally led to the creation of bail-out programmes in certain member states such as Greece, Ireland or Portugal (Glencross 2013) together with a wide reform of the financial system in Spain (Cordero and Simón 2016). This austerity rhetoric was finally too detrimental for social equality, unemployment rates rose dramatically, tax revenues fell, there were substantial cuts in national health and education systems and international markets concluded that their public deficits and external debt were too high to place their investments in these countries (Hopkin 2012). Thereby, the Euro crisis highlighted the weakness of the output-direct legitimacy that characterizes the EU (Jones 2009).

Pianta (2013) argues that the democratic deficit of the EU became more dramatic, due to the Euro crisis. In this regard, Balibar (2012) has argued that the current design of the European political level has long excluded and neutralized democracy, with a technocratic approach of the Euro crisis that prevented citizens from playing any role in

²⁴ The *Troika* is composed by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

the definition of political decisions. European institutions and other type of supranational organizations, such as, for example, the International Bank Fund, actively participated in the solution of public problems, without being responsible and publicly accountable in front of citizens through elections. The development of measures such as the Fiscal Compact Policy required the inclusion of the balanced budget principle in domestic constitutions of all member states, without following the established democratic process and, thus, reducing the opportunities for democratic public debates on policy priorities related to the EU integration (Economistes atterrés, 2012). For example, the Prime Minister George Papandreou proposed to hold a popular referendum on the agreement reached with the *Troika*, but he was forced to relinquish this idea (Pianta 2013). As Pianta (2013) illustrates, the pressure of the EU shaped the context of domestic elections in Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece to force their executive actors to follow European measures and policies. Even in Italy, the Euro crisis resulted in technocrats exercising, without public accountability, executive functions, while in most European countries domestic parliaments still lacked an adequate role in European affairs.

The negative consequences of the Euro crisis also contributed to a widespread discontent among European citizens (e.g. Ceka and Magalhães 2015). For example, in the case of Spain, the Euro crisis negatively affected the economic prosperity and the reduction of existing differences in living standards between Spain and the rest of member states, characteristics that are one of the main dimensions that traditionally sustained support for EU integration in the country (Díez Medrano, 2007). As a result, the Euro crisis seriously undermined the popularity and the trust towards both European and domestic institutions, especially in member states severely hit by the Euro crisis (Armingeon et al. 2013). European citizens, especially in these member states more affected by the negative consequences of the Euro crisis, were more likely to identify supranational institutions as those being responsible for the poor performance of their domestic economies (Armingeon et al. 2013; Hellwig and Coffey 2011; Gillespie 2012). This translated into citizens' protest movements in countries, claiming that the sovereignty principle is being eroded (Cordero and Simón 2016). Consequently, there is an increasing public contestation over the EU integration together with a de-legitimation of the political decisions taken by political actors (Glencross 2013).

Since the outbreak of the economic recession, large mobilizations took in the form of demonstrations, protests and strikes against policies that were perceived as detrimental

to earned social rights in most European countries, from the *Indignados* movement in Madrid to the “Occupy” protest in several European capitals (Pianta 2013; Cordero et al. 2015). These public mobilizations were aimed to resist austerity policies in their respective countries and, furthermore, reclaim more democratic control over decisions taken by European institutions and intergovernmental agreements (Pianta 2013). Pianta (2013) illustrates that public mobilizations included several struggles driven by trade unions against unemployment and precarious working conditions, social resistance to welfare cuts, students’ mobilizations against increasing tuition fees and, in general terms, there were also protests contrary to governmental policies developing austerity measures aimed to deal with the Euro crisis. Trade unions, on the one hand, called to mobilizations to put pressure over political actors at the domestic political level to introduce certain “adjustments” in the definition of European policies, whereas more radical movements, on the other hand, pursued a drastic political change in the “socially, environmentally, and politically unsustainable model of governance” (Pianta, 2013).

For example, in Spain the membership has never been questioned. This support for the EU integration is generally pragmatic, with political parties, executive actors, interest groups and citizens caring about the benefits obtained from the European integration (Díez Medrano 2003). The Euro crisis was the worst economic recession in Spain since transition to democracy (Palau and Ansemil 2020). Unemployment rates rose more than 15% since the beginning of the Euro crisis, from 9% in 2007 to 22% in 2011 and 27% in 2013. Once the domestic economy entered recession in 2008, with a 4% negative growth rate, rising public and private debt levels translated into a severe sovereign debt crisis. In 2012, the socialist president Zapatero lost office, after several reforms than included the labour market, the pensions system and unpopular fiscal adjustment policies, following recommendations from the EU (Leon et al. 2015). As a result, the two main trade unions in Spain called for a general strike in 2010. Austerity measures and cuts in social spending also resulted in the creation of an anti-austerity movement, the 15-M, that took the Spanish squares in May 2011. It became the most important social mobilization since the end of the transition.

Similarly, Salgado (2017) argues that the Euro crisis provided a new scenario, where citizens groups were more likely to intensify the Europeanization of their lobbying strategies, because the alteration of political opportunities offered by the multilevel governance. These political actors also had incentives to get involved more intensively at

the European political level, due to the cut downs of public funds in the domestic arena. European and domestic funding opportunities were not drastically altered just after the start of the Euro crisis in 2008 in most member states. However, drastic budget cuts over time, especially in countries most affected by the Euro crisis, such as Spain and Ireland, reduced the economic opportunities for development cooperation. For example, Spain experienced important budget cuts in several policy domains since 2010. Additionally, drastic budget cuts in development and humanitarian aids only occurred in Spain, both at the central and regional political levels, following the arrival of the conservatives in power. Instead, in other countries, reductions of public funding on these programmes were not so significant. She demonstrates that Spanish larger citizens' groups, with more degree of internalization and organizational capacity, were more likely to compensate the loss of national public funding with European funds. These organizations became increasingly concerned on the opportunities offered by the multilevel governance of the EU (vertical Europeanization) and stable relationships with citizen groups from other member states (horizontal Europeanization).

However, the economic recession not only negatively affected the interests of citizens groups and trade unions, but also it impacted in those related to firms, mainly banks. These organizations are more likely to influence public debates on European affairs, as they have enough resources to overcome the difficulties of collective action (Binderkrantz et al. 2015). In this respect, economic groups were likely to favour the development of European solutions to improve the domestic economic performance of their respective member states (Niemann and Ioannou 2015). Niemann and Ioannou (2015) illustrate that three major changes were advocated by economic interest groups before the European summit of December 2012: 1) to strength voting rules to make it tougher for the European Council to overrule the recommendations of the European Commission regarding public deficits; 2) to assure higher commitment from member states to implement reform programmes; and 3) the commitment that the EU Stability Mechanism should be conditional on member states accepting the fiscal compact first.

Consequently, the Euro crisis might have modified the patterns of mobilization of interest groups in EU related debates, especially increasing the participation of those who were previously excluded or had lower mobilization on EU affairs. In the respect, the media was likely to reflect the higher incentives of these political actors, such as citizens'

groups, trade unions, professional associations and research and public organizations to obtain media attention in EU related debates.

Thus, it is expected that:

H5) While economic interest groups will predominate in EU related debates during the Euro crisis, interest groups previously excluded or with low mobilization on European affairs such citizen groups, trade unions, professional associations or research and public organizations will increase their media visibility.

In addition, the financial difficulties around the EU, particularly in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, reinforced the intergovernmental approach of the EU decision-making process in detriment of both the European Commission and the European Parliament. The European Council became in the most predominant and active political actor to face the challenges associated with the Euro crisis and address the economic governance of the EU (Puetter 2012; Fabbrini 2013). It emerged at the centre of the EU decision-making process in defining objectives and measures to guarantee the survival of the Euro, as it also meant the survival of the EU (Jones et al. 2016). In contrast to the period before the Maastricht Treaty, the European Council participated on a regular basis “with matters of day-to-day politics” (Puetter 2012), leading many of the unpopular reforms in member states, decisions that domestic executives perceived as a necessary burden to stabilize the EU (Jones et al. 2016).

Because of this key role played by the European Council during the Euro crisis, domestic executive elites remained in the spotlight (Puetter 2012). The media is more likely to give visibility to actors that hold key positions within decision-making processes. This fact is corroborated not only by the salience of executive actors before the Euro crisis (e.g. Koopmans 2007), but also by the increasing influence of third countries and the European Council in public debates on European affairs following the outbreak of the crisis (e.g. Palau and Ansemil 2020). During this critical junctures, domestic executives from other member states obtained most of the public attention among public opinion and debates published in the media (e.g. Palau and Ansemil, 2020; Puetter 2012). It was broadly perceived that these executive elites were the only political actors capable to guarantee financial support, exercise enough political leverage to bring, coordinate and implement European decisions, joint positions for global coordination and take a common strategy for domestic responses and reach further integration (Puetter 2012; Fabbrini

2013). Concretely, Kriesi and Grande (2015) concluded that “by far the most important individual actor in this debate was the German Chancellor Angela Merkel... followed by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy”.

Hence, interest groups will be more likely to obtain more visibility in EU related stories during the celebration of European Council summits during the Euro crisis. This European institution acquired a more active participation within the European decision-making process, significantly increasing their meetings to deal with the challenges associated with the economic recession. It was the main architect of the definition of austerity measures with a direct impact for member states, citizens, and interest groups. Hence, interest groups, such as citizens’ groups, or trade union, were more likely to protest or put pressure against the European Council and its members rather than focusing on the European Commission and the European Parliament (Fabbrini 2013). They will try to influence the European Council summits because its management of the Euro crisis. As the European Council was the focus of attention in the political and public debates covered by the media, increasing demands, claims, points of view and protests of interest groups will also be reflected in their contents.

Thus, it is expected that:

H6) Interest groups will have higher visibility in public debates on European affairs related to the European Council during the Euro crisis.

3.2. Data and methodology

The study of interest groups needs to continue to progress and broaden its empirical base. It remains as an area of the political science highly dependent on theoretical production and, insofar it connects with the state, democracy, public policy, and power, it runs the risk of being trapped in metapolitical discussions on the distribution of political power or the future of the democratic representation (Medina and Muñoz 2016, translated by the author).

The dependent variable

This chapter follows the same methodological approaches on claim-analysis and automatic coding described in the chapter devoted to executive actors and political parties. The dependent variable is the media visibility obtained by interest groups’ claims

in EU related stories. To operationalize it, this research also considers the media attention obtained by the claimant or subject of each individual claim. Furthermore, it is only analysed those interest groups that have their headquarters located in Spain. To code these political actors, this analysis relies in a codification based on the *Advocacy and Public Policy Making Project* (Baumgartner et al. 2009). As certain organizations are marginally covered in EU related stories, resulting in large standard errors in the regression analyses, some of the proposed categories have been grouped into aggregate ones. This is the case of consulting organizations which have been grouped within the category “Firms”. :

- 1) Citizens’ groups. In this category are included: a) citizen, ideological or cause oriented groups (NGOs). They are non-profit organizations that include associations, cooperatives and other institutions that seek to promote general interests, and b) specific citizens’ coalitions in an issue or area. These associations are temporal platforms, networks, and hoc coalitions as well as other types of collective action to influence the policy-making process.
- 2) Business associations. Associations of firms that have the aim to defend their interests in the policy-making process.
- 3) Firms. This category includes: a) Individual firms, including law firms, banks and companies aimed to defend and protect their interests within the policy-making process, and b) consulting organizations. These organizations are consulting firms.
- 4) Trade unions. Associations of workers that defend workers’ interests.
- 5) Professional associations. These organizations seek to further a profession, retaining the oversight of the legitimate practice of the occupation, representing their members’ professional interests, and acting with the aim to maintain their privileged and powerful position as a controlling body.
- 6) Research institutes and public organizations. This category includes a) research institutes. Organizations focused on research, expertise, and knowledge production regarding public policy. This category includes private research centres as well as thinks tanks, and b) public organizations. Organizations of public authorities and public institutions. This category includes institutions that are formally within the public sector such as universities or schools.
- 7) Other. Other interest groups, such as foundations or religious groups.

The independent variables

EU decision-making process

The hypothesis 1 of this research expects that interest groups obtain higher media visibility in public debates on the approval of European normative, especially in those policy domains where the EU has strong competences. Similarly, the hypothesis 2 expects that economic groups monopolize public debates on economic and agriculture and fishing affairs, whereas a more pluralistic pattern, with more diversity of actors, will predominate in other areas. To operationalize these hypotheses, this research follows the same methodology to measure the impact of the decision-making process at the European level on the media attention to executive actors and political parties in EU related debates.

Interest groups and European institutions

According to the hypothesis 3, if the media reflect the supranational and intergovernmental dynamics within the EU decision-making process, then a higher diversity of interest groups will obtain visibility for their claims in public debates related to the European Parliament and the European Commission than the ones associated with the European Council. To measure the hypothesis, it has not been considered news stories which merely mention the European Commission, the European Parliament or the European Council in their contents. These discussions must fulfill two requirements: 1) there is at least one of the three European institutions as a claimant within their contents; 2) they must have an interest groups as a claimant as well. The rationale for such methodology is that this research considers that there is a valid and active relationship between these political institutions and interest organizations, when both of them take part in the public debate actively.

Implementation process

The hypothesis 4 expects that interest groups invited to participate in parliamentary hearings on EU related normative have visibility in public debates on European affairs as well, especially if EU issues get politicized. To operationalize this hypothesis, it has been used the information provided by the *Q-Dem* databases²⁵, focusing on the implementation of European legislative projects. Like the EU decision-making process, it has been created a dichotomous variable. If a new story in the media coincides with the time interval

²⁵ www.q-dem.com

between seven days prior and seven days after the celebration of a parliamentary hearing and, moreover, they mention the legislative project or related reforms to it, then it is coded with a value of 1. To corroborate whether a EU related news story was associated with a legislative project or domestic reforms to implement it, they have been checked manually to guarantee the accuracy of the results. Moreover, to operationalize whether the parliamentary hearing is on a politicized issue, there is a dichotomous variable indicating whether a rejecting amendment (*enmienda a la totalidad*) has been presented on the legislative proposal that implements the EU normative.

Critical junctures

Following the expectations of the hypothesis 5, while economic groups will predominate in EU related discussions during the Euro crisis, interest groups previously excluded or with low mobilization on European affairs will increase their media coverage. Concretely, it is expected that groups such as citizens' groups, trade unions, professional associations and research and public organizations to obtain more media attention for their claims, because of the negative consequences of the Euro crisis for the country. As the chapter on the media coverage of executive actors and political parties in public debates on European affairs, it is used as indicator variations in the risk premium (Eurostat data).

EU events: European Council summits

According to the hypothesis 6, the celebration of European Council summits will increase the visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs during the Euro crisis. The celebration of European Council summits is used as a variable that interacts with the risk premium in the regression analysis. To test this hypothesis, it has been considered EU related stories which have been published until seven days before and seven days after the celebration date of European Council summits.

Regression analysis

Some of the hypotheses has been analysed through a Poisson regression analysis as the dependent variable includes count data. The dependent variable is the media visibility obtained by interest groups' claims in EU related stories. The independent variables are the Euro crisis, the celebration of European Council summits and the interaction between these two factors. Other variables, such as the EU decision-making or the implementation

processes, are not considered, as the lower number of EU related debates related to European normative cause large standards errors.

3.3. Results

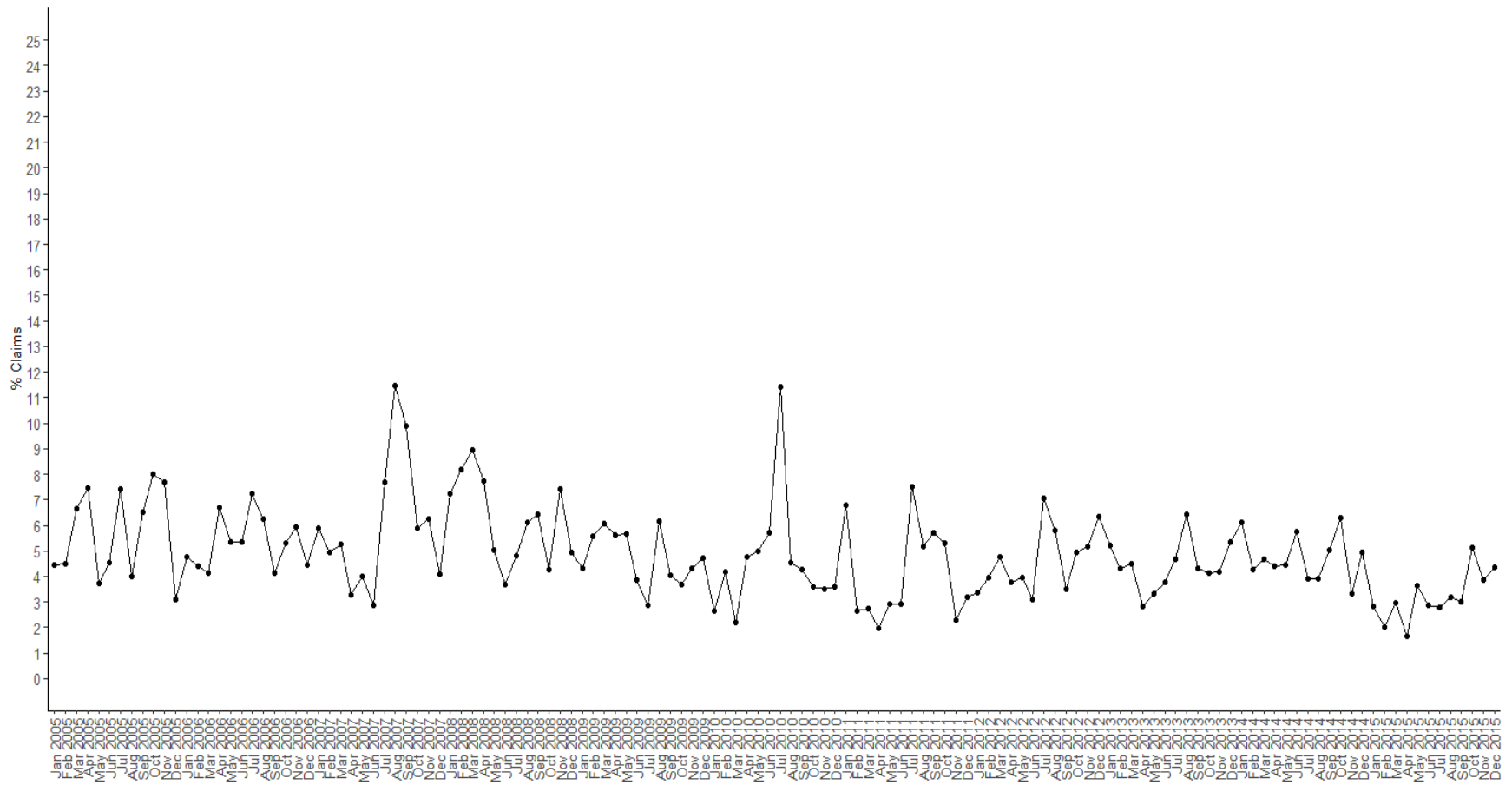
Groups can increase access to the various EU decision-making bodies by sending the same information using multiple tactics and increasing the salience and urgency of information by frequently using specific tactics (Chalmers 2013).

The overall visibility of interest groups' claims in EU related debates is rather marginal during the period under study. On average, as Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, there was no significant differences between *El País* (4.78% of the total number of claims made by political actors in public debates on European affairs) and *El Mundo* (5.71%)²⁶. Additionally, it can be noted two remarkable elements: 1) there was an increasing attention to interest groups' claims in *El Mundo* between the years 2006 and 2007. This was partly explained by the negotiations on the public tender over *Endesa* and the worsening of the Spanish economic situation; and 2) both Spanish media outlets shown a decreasing trend in these political actors' media coverage since 2008, after the outbreak of the Euro crisis.

Figure 3 shows that economic groups were the most visible organizations in EU-related stories in both Spanish newspapers. Concretely, firms, which include individual companies and banks, had a clear dominant position in these discussions. Their claims represented, on average, the 61.77% of the total number of interest groups' claims in *El País* and the 60.47% in *El Mundo*. Business associations, remotely, were the second most visible interest groups' category, reaching a visibility of 15.44% and 17.41% respectively. Finally, the last type of economic groups, Spanish trade unions, only obtained a modest visibility in EU-related debates, 5.41% and 5.96%, in line with the coverage obtained by other interest groups.

²⁶ See Figures 1 and 2 of the chapter devoted to the media visibility of executive actors' and political parties' claims.

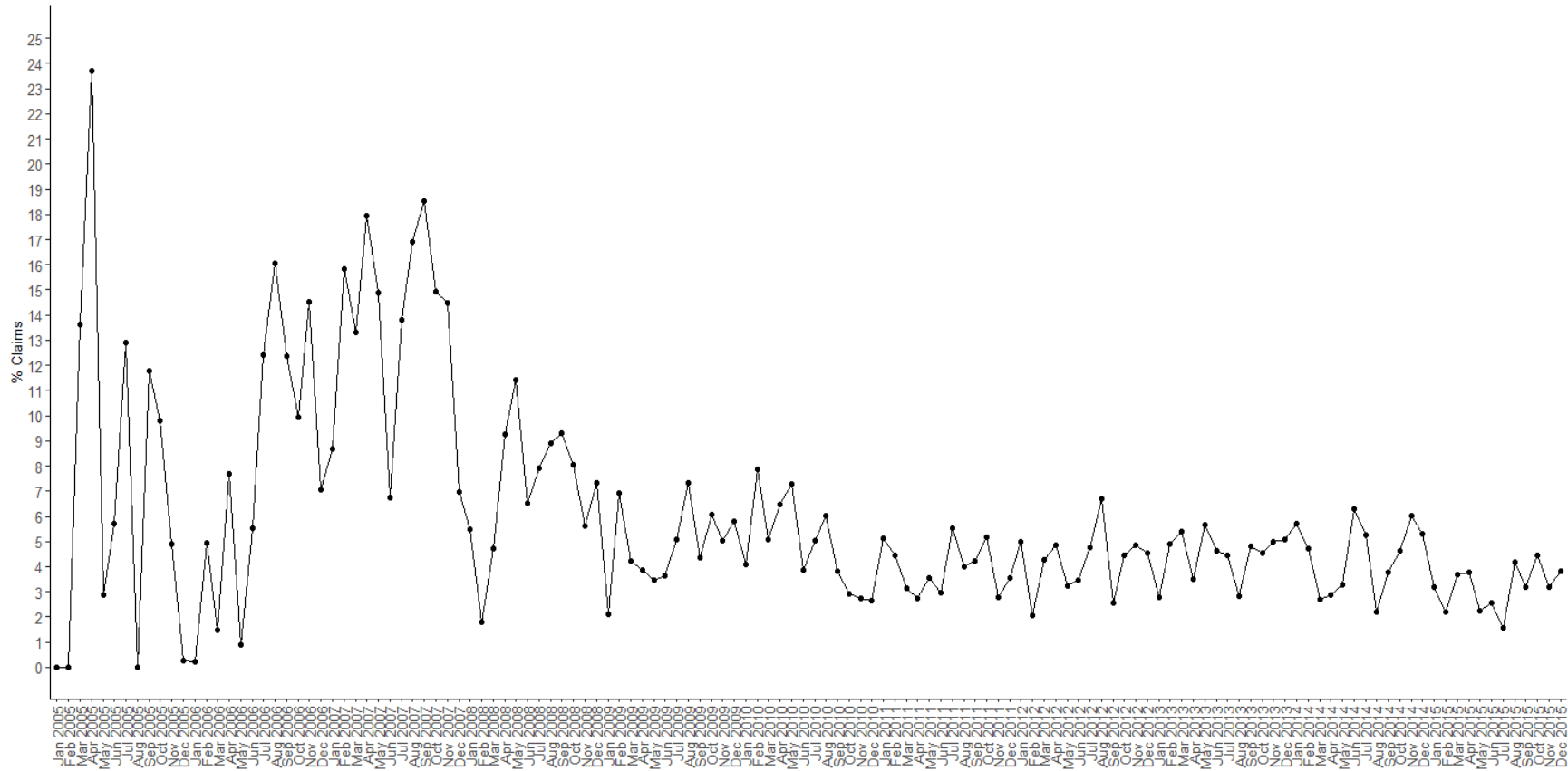
Figure 1. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs published by *El País* from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by *El País*

Note: This figure shows the percentage of claims made by interest groups over the total number of claims made by political actor in EU related debates.

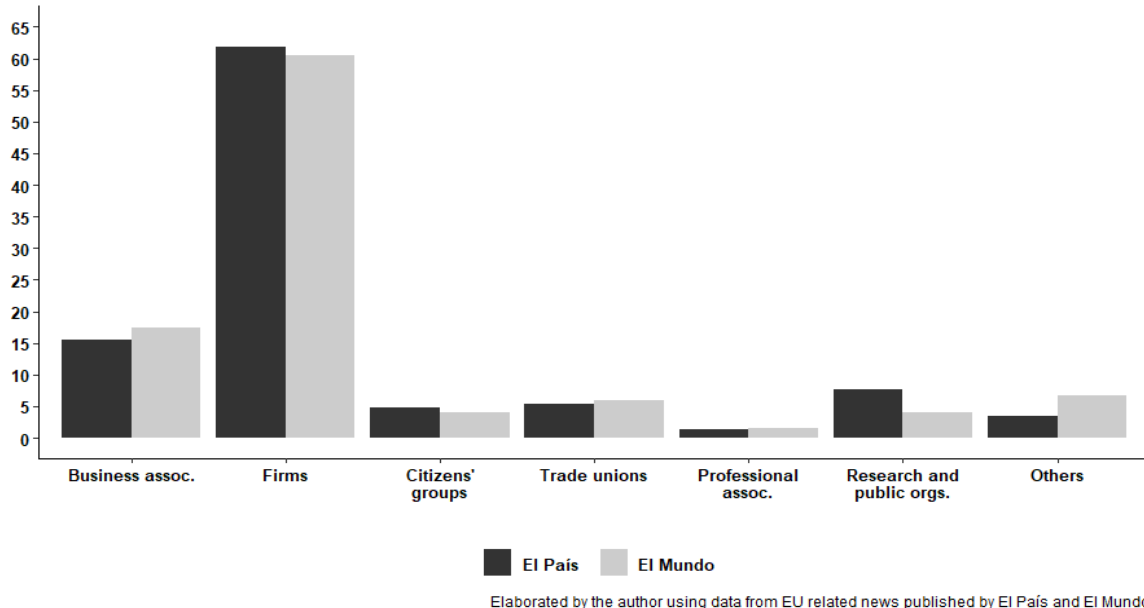
Figure 2. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs published by El Mundo from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by El Mundo

Note: This figure shows the percentage of claims made by interest groups over the total number of claims made by political actors in EU related debates.

Figure 3. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs from 2005 to 2015



Note: This figure shows the percentage of claims made by each interest group over the total number of claims made by these political actors in public debates on European affairs

These results are in consonance with previous findings on the “persistent hypothesis” (Beyers 2004) of interest groups’ visibility in the media. Rather than acting as a “weapon of the weak”, compensating the lower insider access of less-resourced groups to policymakers, the media pays a disproportionate attention to economic organizations, especially firms (e.g. Wolfsfeld 1984; Thrall 2006; Kriesi et al. 2007). Beyers (2005) argues, in this respect, that obtaining media attention for their claims is a labor-intensive process, demanding time, human and economic resources. As a result, in principle, economic groups may have more available resources to invest in media strategies than other interest groups. Furthermore, these organizations are also more likely to use both insider and outsider strategies to increase their chances to influence political decisions and policy outcomes (Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2005).

The most important public debate on European affairs, including firms' participation, in both Spanish newspapers was the competitive tender launched by *Gas Natural* over *Endesa* between 2005 and 2008. This public discussion mainly revolved around which were the competent institutions in charge of examining the economic operation: the domestic authorities or the European Commission. Other important EU related debates in *El País* and *El Mundo* were associated with the evolution of firms' shares in the domestic stock exchange and their positions on the evolution of the Spanish economy. Some of the most visible firms in these stories were the Spanish telecommunications company *Telefónica*, the energetic firm *Endesa* and the banks BBVA and *El Santander*.

El Mundo paid a stronger attention to the development of the competitive tender on *Endesa* and other similar economic operations than *El País*. In this respect, some prominent public debates on this newspaper were also focused on the tenders launched by the firms *Telefónica*, *Arbetis* or *Iberdrola*. This was the case of the competitive tender of *Telefónica* over the Czech telecommunications company *Cesky*, in April 2005, the conflict between *Abertis*, the Italian executive and the European Commission due to the Spanish firm's intention to acquire *Europistas Concesionaria Española*, in November 2006, or the public tender launched by *Iberdrola* over the British Scottish Power, in January 2007. Conversely, *El País* was more likely to emphasize other type of EU related debates involving firms' claims. For example, the discussions around the fine imposed by the European Commission to *Telefónica* for abusing dominant position, in July 2007, or the high drop suffered by the airline company *Iberia* in the European air traffic market, in November 2013. Finally, this newspaper also highlighted Spanish banks' claims during the political discussions on the Catalan secessionist process within an EU framework, in November and December 2013, to explain the negative consequences for the Catalan banks' future viability in case of independence.

These differences in the patterns of media attention may reflect the existence of media political parallelism (see Hallin and Mancini 2004). The main difference between the public tender on *Endesa* and other similar economic operations was the existence of a strong conflict between the European and the domestic executive, threatening the Spanish interests, because it was started a sanctioning procedure against Spain. As a result, a substantial political debate

was raised between the Spanish executive, the European Commission, domestic political parties and several private actors, such as, for example, *Gas Natural*, *Endesa*, the firm *Repsol* and the bank *La Caixa*. The conflict and dramatism around these discussions are important sources of news value for the media (see Galtung and Ruge 1965). The right-wing newspaper *El Mundo* might have emphasized more intensively these stories to associate the rival party in office, the PSOE, with bad economic news for domestic interests as a part of the political game played in the media arena. This increasing media visibility obtained by firms in *El Mundo* between 2007 and 2008 together with the worsening of the national economy seem to be in line with this approach.

The media visibility of business associations' claims was disproportionately explained by the economic evolution of the Spanish stock exchange and the importance of the EU as an economic actor. This is consistent with the importance that the Spanish society gives to the economic output obtained from the EU membership (Díez Medrano 2003). The Spanish society, including the media, has always been more supportive and enthusiastic regarding the EU integration than other member states (Szmolka 1999; Díez Medrano 2003, 2007). Nevertheless, these positive attitudes are mainly focused on the benefits that the country is believed to have gained from the EU at both the political and economic dimensions, relying on the advantages that the membership offers, in terms of better public policies and economic prosperity (Díez Medrano 1995; 2007). Thus, the media seem to reflect these attitudes in their contents. Both newspapers paid attention to the ups and downs of both the domestic and member states' stock exchanges, highlighting the impact that the EU has for the domestic and interest groups' interests.

Concerning trade unions' claims, their media visibility was mainly associated with the actions conducted by the two main Spanish organizations the *Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO) and the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT). These organizations have a progressive orientation. However, these results might also be associated with the existence of political parallelism in the Spanish media. Whereas *El País* gave visibility to both trade unions' claims, *El Mundo* paid a stronger attention to CCOO as the most representative workers' organization in Spain. In addition, trade unions were more related to EU related debates emphasizing the protection of workers' rights and labour

conditions in *El País*, in line with its left-wing orientation. By contrast, *El Mundo* was more interested in the economic impact of European decisions on domestic interests, associating trade unions with discussions like the negative consequences of the European agricultural reforms for Spanish products.

Other interest groups, instead, only obtained a testimonial media coverage for their claims in Spanish media outlets. It is especially interesting the case of research institutions and public organizations in *El País*. Beyond firms and business associations, these organizations' claims were the most visible in EU related debates during the period under study (7.64%). Some examples were the *Instituto Empresa*, *Neumomadrid*, the *Hospital de Vall d'Hebrón*, the *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* (CSIC) or the *Fundación para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales* (FAES). These interest groups mainly obtained media attention for their evaluations, opinions, and their capacity to provide objective data from an expert perspective on, for example, economic aspects of the EU integration, public problems related to the labour market or the negative impact of increasing pollution on European societies. *El Mundo*, instead, paid low attention to claims made by research and public organizations (3.98%). Concerning these groups, this newspaper was more likely to emphasize two types of EU related discussions: 1) the impact of the EU on the Spanish interests, such as, for example, the *Instituto Cervantes*'s claims on the cut of Spanish translators in the European Commission; and 2) the scientific developments carried out by research institutes like the *Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias* (IAC). The existence of political parallelism seems to again play an important role in the media visibility of these interest groups' claims. Whereas the left-wing *El País* related research and public organizations on public problems, the media coverage in *el Mundo* was associated with the successes obtained by Spain in the supranational framework.

In relation to the media visibility of citizens' groups' claims, there were not significant differences between *El País* and *El Mundo* (4.81% and 4.04% respectively). Concretely, consumers' organizations obtained higher attention in EU related debates than other interest groups in both Spanish newspapers. *FACUA-Consumidores en Acción* (FACUA) was the most visible citizens' group in *El País*, whereas this was the case of the *Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios* (OCU) in *El Mundo*. These patterns of media

attention reflect the existence of political parallelism as well. FACUA defines itself as a progressive and plural organization, whereas the OCU has a more conservative nature. Moreover, the media coverage of the former organization in *El País* was more likely to be associated with EU related debates on the protection of consumers' rights, while *El Mundo* focused on the involvement of the OCU in economic affairs.

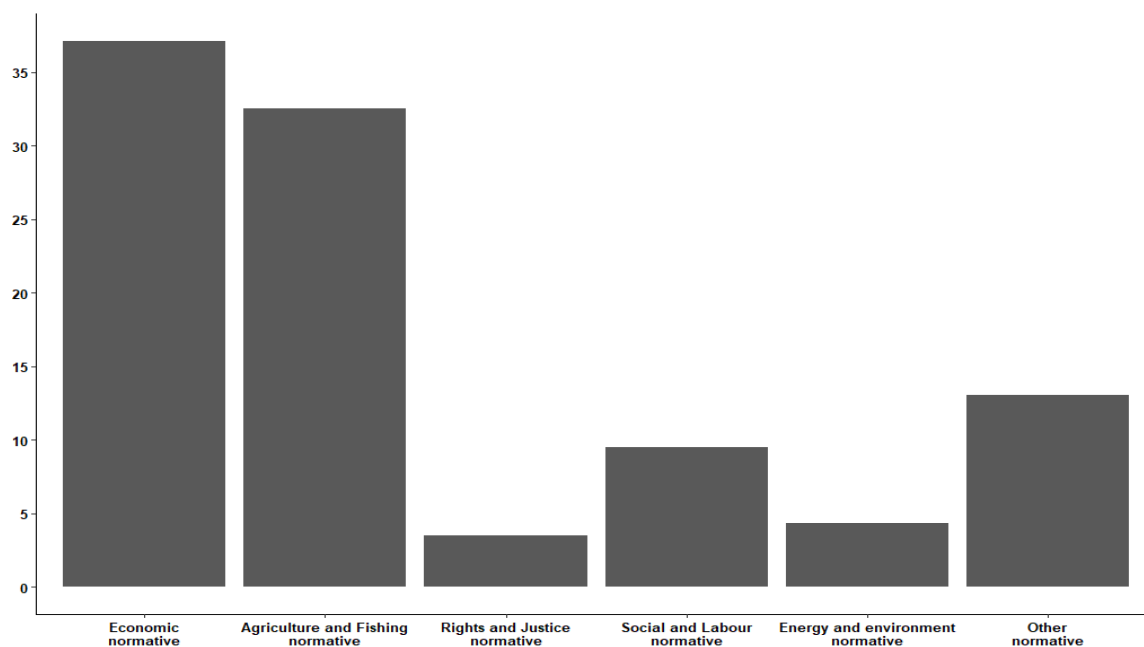
Finally, professional associations were the lowest visible interest groups in both Spanish media outlets (1.42% in *El País* and 1.44% in *El Mundo*). In both newspapers, the *Asociación Agraria Jóvenes Agricultores (Asaja)* was the most visible professional association in EU related debates. Its claims were usually associated with demands and protests towards European reforms or regulations in the agricultural policy domain, such as, for example, the cotton reform and its price regulation in the European market. This media coverage is in line with the arguments raised by Díez Medrano (2003). According to him, feelings of dissatisfaction towards the EU integration in Spain are frequently related to the Common Agricultural Policy, due to the existence of quotes and regulations on agricultural products that may have a negative impact for Spanish interests.

Next, it is explored the extent to which the media visibility of interest groups' claims is associated with the approval of European normative in the EU decision-making process.

The participation of interest groups in the European decision-making process

As expected, Figure 4 illustrates that most of the European normative passed between 2005 and 2015 was related to policy domains with a genuine intrinsic economic nature. Concretely, the economic normative and the agriculture and fishing normative represented the 37.09% and the 32.52% of the total number of European Directives and Regulations passed during this period. These data highlight the importance of the economic dimension of the EU integration and the substantial supranational competences in both policy domains. Conversely, the EU decision-making process had a more modest activity in the approval of normative associated with social and labour (9.49%), energy and environment (4.35%), rights and justice (3.49%) and other (13.06%) normative.

Figure 4. European normative passed at the European political level between 2005 and 2015



Source: Eurolex Databases

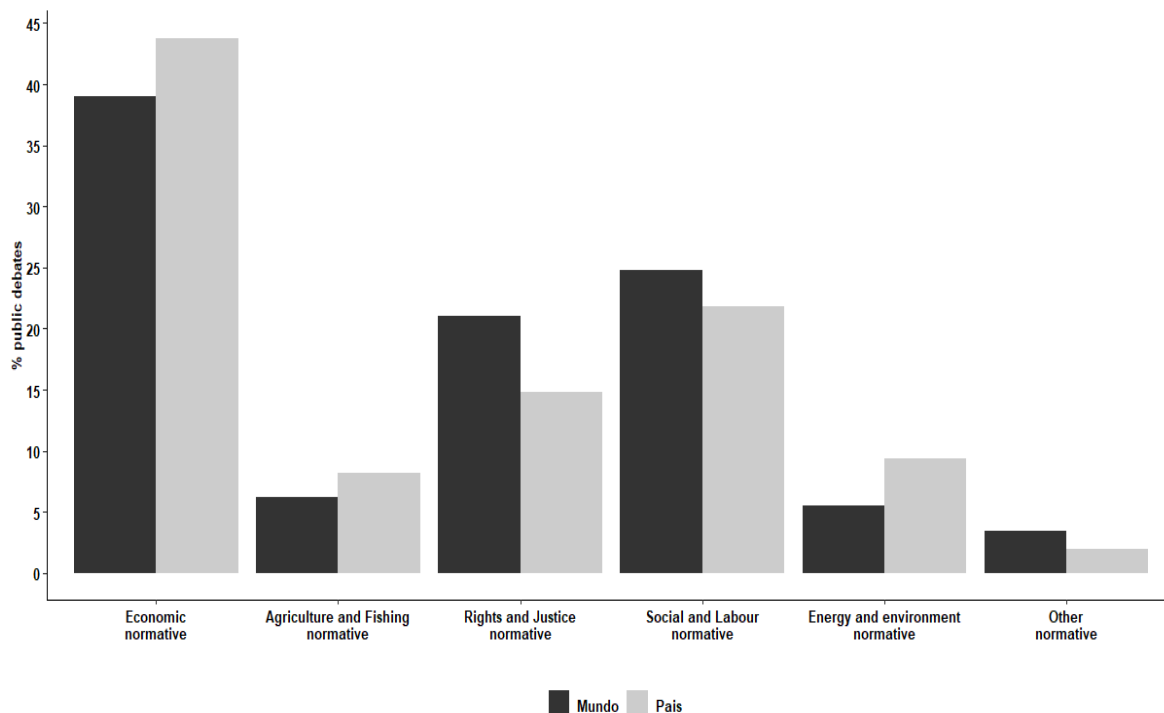
Note: This figure shows the percentage of European Directives and Regulations passed from 2005 to 2015.

In this regard, the hypothesis 1 of this research expects that interest groups obtain higher media visibility in public debates during the approval of European normative, especially in those policy domains where the EU has strong competences. Following these expectations, interest groups should be more visible in public discussions on economic affairs as well as agriculture and fishing affairs, as the EU decision-making process was more active and has substantial competences in both policy domains. To operationalize the impact of the EU decision-making process over the interest groups' media visibility, it has been analysed public debates on European affairs explicitly mentioning an EU Directive or Regulation in their content. Additionally, and considering the date of these public debates, it has only been considered public debates mentioning European normative that: 1) is in any development stage of the EU decision-making process. For example, a European Directive put to the vote

in the European Parliament; 2) until seven days prior to the presentation of the legislative proposal of the European Commission; or 3) until seven days after their rejection or final approval at the European political level. To begin with, the contents and characteristic of these public debates are described. After that, the results of the visibility of interest groups within these public discussions are presented to corroborate the expectations raised by the hypothesis 1. In this respect, Figure 5 illustrates some differences between the approval of normative at the European political level (Figure 4) and the media attention obtained by interest groups. Even though the economic normative was also the most prominent policy domain in these public debates (43.8% in *El País* and the 38.97% in *El Mundo*), agriculture and fishing Directives and Regulations were marginally covered (8.2% and 6.21%). By contrast, the Spanish media paid a substantial attention to EU related debates on both social and labour (21.8% and 24.83%) and rights and justice normative (14.8% and 21.03%).

On the one hand, these results are in line with the conclusions obtained by Palau and Ansemil (2020). They illustrate, in their study considering all public debates on European affairs published in *El País*, that the Spanish newspaper has tended to pay more attention to economic and social and labour affairs over time, in detriment to other public discussions. As Figure 5 shows, this trend also occurred in EU related debates mentioning the approval of new normative in the EU decision-making process. Moreover, these patterns of media attention reflected the importance that the Spanish newspaper gave to the impact of the EU integration on domestic economic interests (see Díez Medrano 2003). Even one of the most prominent debates on social normative had an economic impact as well. This is the case of the approval of the Tobacco products for citizens' health reasons, limiting the tobacco consumption. These discussions not only emphasize its impact for the tobacco companies, but also for official tobacco shops and those in charge of its cultivation, such as farms works in the Spanish region of Extremadura.

Figure 5. Public debates on European affairs explicitly mentioning European normative from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by El Pais and El Mundo

Note: This figure shows the percentage of EU related debates explicitly mentioning European Directives and Regulations.

On the other hand, the approval of the “Directive of common standards and procedures in member states for returning illegally staying third-country nationals”, also known as the Return Directive, was the most prominent public debate on rights and justice normative in both Spanish newspapers. Like other peripheral member states, such as, for example, Italy or Greece, Spain is one of the most important entry points for immigration in the EU, due to its geographical position. Hence, the discussions on immigration affairs at the European political level (for example to obtain subsidies or take measures to stem these intermittent flows) are of special interest for these countries. This can be observed in the political positions taken by the two main Spanish political parties during the negotiations of the Return Directive. Both the PP and the PSOE were in favour to the development and approval of this common policy framework to fight illegal immigration.

The Return Directive was involved in an important political debate and conflicting positions between different political actors across member states, because of its most controversial aspects: 1) the increasing time that individuals must hold in a detention centre; 2) the reduction of immigrants' guarantees; and 3) its application on unaccompanied minors. As a result, European left-wing positions, like the Party of European Socialists (PES) and different interest groups, were against the approval of the European Directive. An important exception was the PSOE. Even though this political party worked to bring the Directive to the existing Spanish legislation, they were in favour of its approval as an instrument to combat the irregular work in the country. Yet, there were internal divisions within the party. This resulted in the breaking of party discipline at the European Parliament by some Spanish Euro parliamentarians. These elements of dramatism and conflict are important news value for the media (see, for example, Galtung and Ruge 1965). Media outlets are more likely to give visibility to European normative involving controversial political debates and events, instead of just inform about "the long drawn-out and boring decision-making processes" (Trenz 2004).

In addition, there were some differences and similarities between EU related debates on economic, labour and social and energy and environment normative in both Spanish newspapers. Regarding public discussions on economic normative, *El País* paid a disproportionately attention to the approval of the "Services in the Internal Market Directive" of 2006. This might be explained by its left-wing orientation. This newspaper was likely to emphasize public concerns on the negative effects of the Directive over workers' rights and the social model of EU integration. These EU related debates focused on the so-called "social dumping"²⁷ and, consequently, the destruction of employment in member states. *El Mundo*, instead, paid more attention to the economic impact of the EU integration on domestic economic interests. The most prominent EU related debates in this media outlet were focused on the Regulation about the reduction in roaming charges in the EU and its consequences for the Spanish firms' interests, because the large number of tourists that the country receives.

Other salient EU related stories emphasized the approval of Directives and Regulation taken to tackle the Euro crisis. The Spanish economy was especially hit by the

²⁷ The relocation of national firms to Eastern member states, where there are fewer social burdens.

negative consequences of this critical juncture, resulting in the rescue of the banking system in 2012. These public concerns were reflected in the media. EU related debates mainly focused on the recapitalization of the banking sector, the deposit guarantee schemes, the so-called “hedge-funds” or the sharing of fiscal information among member states. These results are in line with previous findings on the media coverage of the European integration. As Díez Medrano (2003) argues, the media are more likely to increase their attention to European affairs during economic and institutional crises, due to the importance of the economic output that the country obtains from the EU membership (see also Jones 2009). Moreover, discussions related to bad economic trends have a potential impact on public opinion, increasing their newsworthiness for the media (Soroka 1996; Harrington 1989).

Traces of political parallelism can also be found in the media visibility of labour and social normative. As previously mentioned, the Tobacco Directive and its economic impact was one of the most prominent European affairs in both Spanish newspapers. However, *El País*, unlike *El Mundo*, also devoted a similar attention to the political debate about the modification of the Working Time Directive at the European Parliament. This normative intended to extend the working time from a maximum of 48 hours to 65 hours, being rejected by several member states, including Spain, and interest groups. Thus, the focus on the protection of workers’ rights might explain these patterns of media attention in *El País* in accordance with its left-wing orientation, while *El Mundo* tended to emphasize more intensively EU related debates involving domestic economic interests.

Finally, EU related debates on both agriculture and fishing and energy and environment normative dealt with reforms, state aids and European funds in both media outlets. Concerning the agriculture and fishing policy domain, these discussions revolved around the reform of regulations of the Common Agriculture Policy and the fisheries agreements with Morocco. In the case of energy and environment normative, the Spanish media emphasized the approval of measures to combat the climate change, such as, for example, the reduction of CO₂ emissions. These measures had a significant negative impact in some areas like the automobile, the commercial aviation, and the coal mines sectors. In this sense, the media paid attention to these negative consequences and the distribution of compensatory aids, funds, and emission rights. Hence, the protection of the domestic interests

played a relevant role in the media coverage of interest groups in these EU related discussions.

To summarize, the media are more likely to emphasize public debates involving European normative with a direct impact for the domestic interests rather than just informing about the development of the EU decision-making process. This can be observed across all the policy domains analysed. Moreover, it seems that there is a certain degree of political parallelism in these contents. Even within the labour and social policy domains, the right-wing newspaper *El Mundo* paid higher attention to the processing of European Directives and Regulations and how this normative may affect the domestic economic interests. By contrast, the left-wing newspaper *El País* also devotes attention to EU related debates involving a negative impact on workers' rights and the social model of the EU integration.

Following the expectations raised in the hypothesis 1, it was expected that interest groups to obtain higher visibility for their claims in public debates on economic and agriculture and fishing normative, due to the strong EU competences and political activity in these policy domains at the European political level. Nevertheless, the results drawn in Table 1 suggest that media contents do not reflect these supranational dynamics. Interest groups' claims obtained higher visibility in EU related debates on energy and environment normative (9,95% of the total number of claims made by any public actor). The EU holds strong competences to define decisions and outcomes within this policy domain, but at the same time the EU decision-making process had a lower activity of related European normative. The picture was quite different in *El Mundo*. Whereas this media outlet paid low attention to interest groups' claims in EU related debates on energy and environment normative (2%), these organizations obtained more media visibility in those related to labour and social normative (3.46%). Neither EU policymakers have more competences than domestic political actors nor the European political level was highly active in developing normative associated with this policy domain.

The approval of economic normative, instead, were the second most salient EU related debates for interest groups' claims in both Spanish newspapers (3,05% in *El País* and 2,8% in *El Mundo*). However, this was not the case of agriculture and fishing normative. Even though the EU has substantial competences on this policy domain, the media tend to

ignore related political debates on the topic. Spanish newspapers not only paid little attention to these discussions, but also interest groups obtained low visibility for their claims when these EU related debates became public (1.19% in *El País* and the 0.81% in *El Mundo*).

Table 1. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs explicitly mentioning European normative from 2005 to 2015

	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>
Economic normative	3.05	2.80
Agriculture and Fishing normative	1.19	0.81
Rights and Justice normative	3.00	0.43
Social and Labour normative	2.94	3.46
Energy and Environment normative	9.70	2.00
Other normative	2.70	1.47

Note: This table shows the percentage of interest groups' claims of the total number of claims made by any political actor in EU related debates on the approval of Directives and Regulations.

If other policy domains are observed in *El País*, it can be taken more broaden conclusions. Except for energy and environment and agriculture and fishing normative, this newspaper devoted a similar attention to interest groups' claims in the rest of EU related discussions, regardless the degree of EU competences on these domains. Concretely, these organizations made the 2.94% of the claims within discussions on the approval of labour and social, 3% on rights and justice and 2.7% on other normative, together with 3.05% on economic normative. The category "others" includes Directives and Regulations mainly related to transportation or transparency normative. Similarly, this EU competences neither explains their visibility in *El Mundo*, as interest groups obtained higher visibility in discussion on labour and social normative, where the EU plays a minor role than domestic political actors.

As a result, the hypothesis 1 must be partly rejected. The media barely paid attention to interest groups when new normative is discussed at the European political level, even regarding policy domains where the EU has strong competences. These findings are in line with previous findings of existing research, highlighting that these political actors are only marginally covered by media outlets (e.g. Koopmans 2007). Moreover, their media visibility was more related to energy, environment, labour and social normative rather than economic and agriculture and fishing normative. Hence, these patterns of media attention seem to be explained by other factors rather than the degree of EU competences: 1) the existence of political parallelism in the media contents; 2) a strong domestic focus, with the media covering the consequences of EU decisions on domestic interests rather than discussions related to the EU decision making process as such; and 3) the diversity in the participation of interest groups in the EU decision-making process. A common characteristic between energy, environment, labour, and social affairs is that they are more pluralistic in terms of interest groups' involvement at the EU political level (Pollack 1997). Thus, these patterns of media coverage may be more likely to reflect these internal dynamics and diversity of the EU decision-making process. Another explanation may be associated with the political strategies followed by interest groups (see De Bruycker and Beyers 2015). In some circumstances, these organizations, more favourable to defend the status quo, may avoid obtaining media attention to avoid the mobilization of their opponents (Baumgartner et al. 2009). Thus, seeking obtaining media coverage for their positions is a strategy more related to interest groups opposed to the approval of European normative than those which support them.

Moreover, interest groups only clearly stand out in EU related debates on energy and environment normative in *El País*. This policy domain is characterized by the presence of environmental groups which seek obtaining public support for their principles and ideas. These groups may have more room to share their political positions in this newspaper, due its left-wing orientation. Conversely, higher attention to discussions on labour and social normative, followed by economic normative, in *El Mundo* might be related by the potential economic impact for the country and the type of organizations involved. This newspaper was more likely to focus on the impact on European normative on economic groups' interests, such as, for example, in the case of the Tobacco Directive.

To get more insights into these questions, this research explores the media visibility obtained by specific interest groups in these EU related discussions on the approval of European normative. Economic groups are more likely to exert a substantial influence in policy domains associated with their key interests and concentrated costs and benefits. This is the case of the economic and the agriculture and fishing policy domains. Conversely, citizens' groups usually have little influence on these policy domains, such, as for example, during trade negotiations (Dür and Bièvre 2007; Dür 2008a). However, as it was stated, the environment and labour and social policy domains are characterized by a greater diversity in the participation of interest groups at the European political level (Pollack 1997). Thus, the hypothesis 2 expects that economic groups will monopolize public debates on economic and agriculture and fishing affairs, whereas more pluralistic patterns, with more diversity of actors, will predominate in other areas.

The hypothesis 2 is partly corroborated considering the descriptive analysis in Tables 2 and 3. In *El País*, public debates on labour and social and energy and environment normative were more diverse in terms of interest groups' visibility, whereas discussions on economic normative tended to concentrate the media coverage around economic actors. In *El Mundo*, instead, the hypothesis is also fulfilled in the case of public debates on economic and agriculture and fishing normative, as their media coverage was concentrated around economic groups. Similarly, as it was expected, the labour and social normative in *El Mundo* was also characterized by a high degree of diversity in the media attention to these organizations' claims. Citizens' groups and research institutes and public organizations played a substantial role in these public discussions in consonance with the diversity of this policy domain within the decision-making process.

Public debates on economic normative were disproportionately dominated by economic groups in both Spanish newspapers. Even, there was not any diversity in the type of economic groups in these public discussions. Concretely, firms were the organizations which obtained the highest visibility within them, whereas there was a lower proportion of business associations' and trade unions' claims. In *El País*, firms' claims represented the 65.52% of the total number of interest groups' claims in public debates on economic normative, whereas this visibility is even higher in *El Mundo* with the 80.95%.

Table 2. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates explicitly mentioning European normative in *El País* from 2005 to 2015

	Business associations	Firms	Citizens' groups	Trade unions	Research and public orgs.	Professional associations	Others	Shannon's index
Economic normative	5.17	65.52	13.79	12.07	1.72	0	1.72	0.56
Agriculture and Fishing normative	0.00	0.00	33.00	33.00	0.00	33.00	0.00	0.56
Rights and Justice normative	11.11	38.89	16.67	33.33	0.00	0	0.00	0.66
Social and Labour normative	8.33	8.33	29.17	29.17	8.33	8.33	8.33	0.90
Energy and environment normative	36.11	30.56	19.44	5.56	8.33	0	0.00	0.73
Other normative	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Note: This table shows the percentage of interest groups' claims in public debates, explicitly mentioning European Directives and Regulations which were being passed at the EU level during the period under study.

Table 3. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates explicitly mentioning European normative in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015

	Business associations	Firms	Citizens' groups	Trade unions	Research and public orgs.	Professional associations	Others	Shannon's index
Economic normative	9.52	80.95	9.52	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.32
Agriculture and Fishing normative	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rights and Justice normative	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
Social and Labour normative	6.67	13.33	20.00	20.00	26.67	6.67	6.67	0.93
Energy and environment normative	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other normative	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Note: This table shows the percentage of interest groups' claims in public debates, explicitly mentioning European Directives and Regulations which were being passed at the EU level during the period under study.

In both Spanish newspapers, the companies *Telefónica* and *Movistar*, which belong to the former firm, were among the most visible economic groups in public discussions on economic normative. Concretely, they obtained visibility for the claims about the processing of the Regulation on the reduction in roaming charges in the EU and their impact for national operators. In the case of *El País*, these companies obtained visibility for their intentions to adjust their charges to the European regulation, highlighting the negative impact for their gains. Similarly, *El Mundo* gave visibility to these firms to inform about their purpose to exhaust the deadlines given by the European Commission to adopt the roaming changes. These insights are in line with the findings previously mentioned about public discussions on economic normative. The visibility of interest groups in this policy domain is more likely to be associated with the importance of the economic dimension of the EU integration for Spain. Concretely, the Spanish newspapers focused on the viewpoints and the economic impact of the EU decision-making process on domestic firms' interests.

Different conclusions are reached in the case of agriculture and fishing normative. Concerning *El País*, the expectations of the hypothesis 2 are not corroborated. Not only there is a higher diversity in the interest groups' visibility, but also all of them, concretely, citizens groups, trade unions and professional organizations receive the same attention (33%). By contrast, the hypothesis 2 may still be corroborated in the case of *El Mundo*. In this media outlet, only trade unions obtain visibility for their claims in public debates on agriculture and fishing normative.

Regarding the specific coverage in public debates on agriculture and fishing affairs in *El País*, the citizens' group *Amigos de la Tierra*, an environmentalist organization, obtained media coverage for their critical position against the European Commission's normative on the cultivation of transgenic plantations. Professional associations, instead, were associated with fishing affairs. Concretely, this Spanish newspaper gave media visibility to the criticism made by the *Organización de Productores Pesqueros de Almadrabas* against the future European restrictions on the tuna-fishing. Finally, trade unions, mainly *UGT* and *CCOO*, obtained media visibility for their claims in both Spanish newspapers, because of the dockers' strike for the Ports Directive.

Moreover, the Spanish media were more likely to associate these latter public debates with the critical positions of interest groups towards related European normative. As it was noted previously, this media visibility seems to confirm that critical positions in Spain towards the EU integration process are mainly associated with the agriculture and fishing policy domain (see Díez Medrano 2003). Similarly, these features might indicate the existence of certain political parallelism again. Whereas actions taken by powerful economic groups monopolized these EU related debates in *El Mundo*, their media attention was shared with citizens groups' in *El País*.

As it was expected, there was a higher diversity in the media visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on labour and social normative. Both Spanish newspapers paid substantial attention to citizens' groups (29,17% in *El País* and 20% in *El Mundo*) and trade unions (29,17% and 20%). Furthermore, the most visible interest groups in this type of public debates were research institutes and public organizations (26.67%) in *El Mundo*. Another common characteristic between the two media outlet is that they were more likely to follow the delevopment of the Tobacco and the Working Time Directives. However, *El Mundo* paid more attention to the approval of the Tobacco Directive and its implications for domestic economic interests, whereas interest groups in *El País* were more related to the labour market and workers.

In this policy domain, trade unions obtained visibility in both Spanish newspapers for their claims against the approval at the European Parliament of the Working Time Directive. Regarding trade unions, the Spanish newspaper were once again more likely to pay attention to the mobilization of the most representative workers organizations, CCOO and UGT. Because their position and power in the domestic arena, these organization have a higher news value than other trade unions, monopolizing EU related debates in detriment of other trade unions. Citizens' groups, instead, obtained access to the media agenda in EU related debates on the Tobacco Directive in *El País* and *El Mundo*. These patterns of media attention were mainly explained by the attention given to the *Comité Nacional para la Prevención del Tabaquismo* (CNPT), organization supportive of the European Commission's initiative. Finally, regarding research institutes and public organizations, the *Sociedad Española de Neumología y Cirugía Torácica* (SEPAR) obtained more prominence for its claims in

discussions related to the Tobacco Directive, due to its ability to provide knowledge and an expert opinion on the topic.

This high diversity of interest groups in EU related debates on labour and social affairs might also be related to their chances to become politicized at domestic level. Related affairs, for example, labour market reforms, are highly conflicting issues by public and political actors (Chaqués-Bonafont and Muñoz 2016). The dramatism and conflict involving political debates around these European affairs may favour the diversification of interest groups' claims in public debates, because of their important news value for the media (see Galtung and Ruge 1965). Negative events and claims are unambiguous factors that make them more suitable for journalists to incorporate them into their news stories (Andrews and Caren 2010; Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Soroka 2006).

Contrary to the expectations of the hypothesis 2, the diversity in public debates on energy and environment normative may be questioned. Economic groups, concretely business associations (36.11%) and firms (30.56%), obtained more media visibility than other interest groups in *El País*. However, a certain degree of diversity can be found in this media outlet, as citizens' groups obtained a substantial access to the media agenda (19.49%). Public debates on energy and environment normative in *El Mundo* were only involved with the positions of trade unions. In this case, there was not only any degree of diversity in its contents, but also most interest groups did not obtain any visibility in them.

On the one hand, these categories of interest groups participate in different types of public debate on energy and environment affairs in *El País*. Business associations, concretely the *Asociación de Empresas de Valorización Energética de Residuos* (AEVERSU), obtained higher visibility in the discussions on the landfill normative. Like research institutes and public organizations in other policy domains, this newspaper paid attention to this organization's claims, due to its expert opinion about the negative impact of the garbage accumulation in Spain. As a result of the climate change normative, the Spanish airline *Iberia* and the firms *Iberdrola* and *Acciona* gained visibility in *El País*, highlighting the negative economic impact for firms' interests. Finally, EU related discussion on the biofuel normative and the closure of coal mines highlighted the claims were mainly related to the environmental organization *Ecologistas en acción* supporting these European initiatives. On the other hand,

CCOO is the only interest group that took part in public debates covered by *El Mundo*. Concretely, EU related debates involving CCOO revolved around the negotiation of subsidies to close domestic coal mines. Whereas both newspapers devoted an special emphasis on the negative impact on domestic interests, *El País* also paid attention to the EU commitment to reduce environmental pollution. Similarly, these results also reflect that the left-wing newspapers *El País* is more likely to give room to a broad set of interest groups' positions in their contents than *El Mundo*. In the left-wing newspaper both citizens' groups and business associations obtained access to the media agenda.

Concerning public debates on rights and justice normative shows a lower degree of diversity in their contents. Economic groups, firms (38.89%) and trade unions (33.33%), were more likely to get involved in EU related debates in *El País*, whereas only the category of "other" interest groups obtained some visibility in *El Mundo*. These public debates mainly revolved around the so-called Return Directive focused on the illegal immigration flows. The most prominent firms in these EU related stories were other media outlets like *La Vanguardia* and *El ABC*. Existing research has already illustrated that the media are active actors which also take part in the development of the public debate (Pfetsch 2008). They gained attention in EU related debates, because they are sources of extended information on certain events. CCOO and UGT were the most representative trade unions that obtained media attention for their claims in *El País*. Regarding *El Mundo*, this newspaper focused on EU related debates on international meetings involving Spain, EU countries and Latin American countries. The international status of Spain is another of the most important dimensions of the EU integration for the Spanish society. In this respect, the EU membership is perceived in this country as an opportunity to regain its status in the international framework (Díez Medrano 2003).

Furthermore, to obtain more precise conclusions on the media visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European normative, it has been tested the hypothesis 2 through the Shannon's entropy index. These analyses also emphasized the impact of the media political parallelism in the Spanish media (see Hallin and Mancini 2004). Not only the diversity was greater in *El País* for all the policy domains analysed, but also their value is over the 0.5, except for agriculture and fishing policy domain. A greater diversity of interest

groups had more chances to obtain visibility in the media agenda of this newspaper, including both economic organization and other type of actors from the civil society. By contrast, in *El Mundo*, most public debates, except for economic and labour and social normative, have an entropy index of 0, highlighting the lack of interest groups' diversity in their contents.

Consistent with the hypothesis 2, there was a higher diversity of interest groups participating in public debates on labour and social (0.9) and energy and environment normative (0.73), whereas it was lower in EU related discussions on economic Directives and Regulations (0.56). Even though economic groups do not monopolize the media coverage on agriculture and fishing normative in *El País*, this policy domain is also characterized by a moderate degree of diversity (0.56). Similarly, discussions on economic (0.32) and agriculture and fishing normative (0) shown a lower diversity in the participation of interest groups. Similarly, there was a higher diversity in EU related stories on labour and social normative (0.93). However, this is not the case of energy and environment normative (0). Contrary to the expectation of the hypothesis, interest groups were not involved in any of these discussions published by *El Mundo*.

The relationship between interest groups and European institutions in the media

According to the hypothesis 3, if the media reflect the supranational and intergovernmental dynamics of the EU decision-making process, then a higher diversity of interest groups will be more associated with public discussions related to the European Commission and the European Parliament than those associated with the European Council. Economic groups were the organizations with the highest capacity to obtain visibility for their claims in public debates mentioning the European Commission (59.01% of the total interest groups' claims in *El País* and 61.42% in *El Mundo*). *Endesa* and *Telefónica* were the most visible firms in these EU related discussions. They were mainly associated with public debates around the competitive tender over *Endesa* and the fine imposed by the European Commission on *Telefónica* for a dominant position in the market. Similarly, other economic groups, business associations, were the second more salient interest groups in discussions mentioning the European Commission (12.56% and 14.16%). These claims revolved around the economic evolution of the *Ibex* within the national stock exchange.

These patterns of media attention may once again be explained by the importance attached by the Spanish media to the impact of the EU integration on domestic and economic groups' interests. Similarly, the media might reflect the highest capacity of economic groups to access and influence the European Commission as well. Both firms and business associations are more successful at the supranational level than other interest groups, because they usually possess information, expertise and technical knowledge and enough economic and human resources to act in several political levels (Bouwen 2002, 2004).

Nevertheless, even though the strong emphasis on firms' positions, the Shannon's entropy index illustrates that EU-related debates mentioning the European institution were characterized by a higher degree of diversity in the media coverage of interest groups in both Spanish newspapers (0.7 in *El País* and 0.67 in *El Mundo*).

Table 4. Visibility of interest groups in public debates related to the European institutions in *El País* from 2005 to 2015

	European Commission	European Parliament	European Council
Business associations	12.56	13.01	15.07
Firms	59.01	34.93	57.53
Citizens' groups	6.41	15.75	0.00
Trade unions	6.07	9.59	8.22
Professional associations	2.60	4.79	1.37
Research and public orgs.	8.49	17.12	13.70
Others	4.85	4.79	4.11
Shannon's index	0.70	0.90	0.65

Note: This table shows the percentatge of interest groups' claims in public debates mentioning each European institution.

Table 5. Visibility of interest groups in public debates related to the European institutions in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015

	European Commission	European Parliament	European Council
Business associations	14.16	13.43	9.52
Firms	61.42	41.79	61.90
Citizens' groups	5.84	16.42	0.00
Trade unions	7.61	5.97	23.81
Professional associations	1.95	1.49	0.00
Research and public org.	4.42	13.43	0.00
Others	4.60	7.46	4.76
Shannon's index	0.67	0.83	0.52

Note: This table shows the percentatge of interest groups' claims in public debates mentioning each European institution.

Discussions on the EU involving the European Parliament were also characterized by a higher visibily of firms' claims (34.93% and 41.79% respectively) than those made by other interest groups. Within these stories, the news agency EFE was one of the most mentioned firms in both media outlets. They used the information provided by this firm to reinforce and deepen their media contents (see also Gelado-Marcos 2009). A closer analysis of these EU-related discussions illustrates some differences between the two newspapers. *El País* was more interested in using EFE's claims in public debates on rights and immigration and labour social affairs, such as, for example, the Return Directive, the distribution of refugees across member states, the Spanish abortion law and unemployment benefits. Conversely, EFE was more associatd with the Euro crisis or the position of the EU in the internationalk arena in *El Mundo*. These differences were in line with their political orientation.

Claims made by business associations also obtained a media visibility over the 10% in EU related debates mentioning the European Parliament (10.23% in *El País* and 13.43% in *El Mundo*). *Cepesca* and the *Ibex* are among the most visible business associations in *El*

País. The former organization obtained visibility in this newspaper to defend their interests in the fishing policy domain against the decisions taken by the European Parliament. Concerning the *Ibex*, their claims were mainly related to the evolution of the domestic stock exchange. Regarding *El Mundo* gave visibility to the positions taken by the Spanish Bank Association's (AEB) against the new European plan for a coordinate bank recapitalization. Hence, business associations were directly associated with the protection of the domestic interests and the impact of the EU in two sensitive policy domains in Spain, the economic and the agricultural and fishing affairs.

Compared to the other European institutions, EU related debates mentioning the European Parliament were characterized by possessing the highest diversity in the participation of interest groups (0.9 in *El País* and 0.83 in *El Mundo*). In this respect, it can be noted that both Spanish newspapers not only paid a similar attention to citizens' groups (15.75% and 16.42%), but these actors from the civil society obtained more visibility for this claims in relation to the European Parliament than the other two political institutions. In addition, research institutes and public organizations also obtained more media visibility for their claims in these EU related debates (17.12% and 13.43%).

Regarding research institutes and public organizations, these interest groups obtained media attention for their claims, due to their position and role as expert actors which provide information on European affairs related to the European Parliament. For example, the *Hospital Clínic* gained access to the media agenda of *El País*, because their insights into the impact of the European Parliament's decision to stop considering transexuality as a clinical pathology. *El Mundo*, instead, paid more attention to the CSIC's public opinion polls on the European elections and the electoral chances of the PP. These patterns of media coverage in the Spanish media may respond to ideological factors. The left-wing newspaper tended to emphasize social affairs, whereas *El Mundo* gave more media attention to the electoral chances of their ideological ally (see Hallin and Mancini 2004).

The presence of citizens' groups in these EU related debates was especially explained by the media coverage given by *El País* to immigrant advocate organizations, such as, for example, the *Servicio Jesuita a migrantes*, and environmental groups, like *Ecologistas en Acción*. Concretely, these discussions emphasized the domestic negative perceptions on the

immigration flows in Spain and the need to obtain greater transparency in the industrial sector to reduce pollution. In *El Mundo*, the most salient citizens' group was the Association of Victims of Terrorism (AVT). This organization obtained media attention for its claims, during the debate at the European Parliament on the Basque peace process. In line with existing research (Binderkrantz et al. 2015), the right-wing newspaper is more likely to pay a substantial attention to events involving ETA and its supporting environment, whereas *El País* tend to emphasize the positions of citizens' groups defending general causes and ideas.

Finally, the results suggest that the media tend to reflect the low access and influence of interest groups regarding the European Council, the most intergovernmental institution in the EU decision-making process (e.g. Hayes-Renshaw 2009). As it was expected, EU related debates involving this European institutions show a lower diversity of interest groups' claims than the European Commission and the European Parliament. The Shannon's entropy analysis confirms these expectations (0.65 in *El País* and 0.52 in *El Mundo*).

In these EU related debates, most interest groups were associated with the negative consequences of the Euro crisis for Spain and the impact of the European Council's decisions. Hence, these patterns of media attention may reflect the key role assumed by the European institution to manage the critical juncture. Furthermore, Spanish firms obtained a high media visibility in these discussions (57.53% in *El País* and 61.9% in *El Mundo*). Concretely, Spanish banks, like the *BBVA* and *El Santander*, gained access to the media agenda of the Spanish newspaper by their positions regarding the European Council's negotiations on the recapitalization needs and the economic solvency of the Spanish banking system.

Trade unions were also among the most visible interest groups in EU related debates on the European Council in *El Mundo* (23.81%), whereas their participation was more moderate in *El País* (8.22%). Both Spanish media outlets focused their attention on the *CCOO*'s criticism against the negative consequences of the Euro crisis and the application of austerity measures for the country. Nevertheless, *El País* was more interested in the impact of the European Council on business associations than *El Mundo* (15.07% in *El País* and 9.52% in *El Mundo*). As previous findings of this research have illustrated, the Spanish media tended to emphasize the economic evolution of the *Íbex* within the domestic stock exchange in detriment of other business associations.

Conversely, citizens' groups did not obtain any media attention for their claims in these EU related debates, regardless the media outlet. These results are not only in line with the greater difficulties for interest groups to influence the European Council, but also it is argued that outside strategies have barely any effect on decisions taken by this political institution (Hayes-Renshaw 2009). Similarly, regarding other types of interest groups, except for the other category, these organizations only obtained media visibility for their positions in *El País*. However, only research institutes and public organizations obtained more than the 10% of visibility for their claims in this newspaper (13.7%). The think tank Instituto de Estudios Económicos obtained higher visibility than other similar organizations for their expert opinion on the financial cuts imposed by the European institution during the Euro crisis.

These results corroborate the expectations raised in the hypothesis 3. As expected, there is a greater diversity of interest groups in EU related debates mentioning the European Commission and the European Parliament than the European Council. The two former political institutions seek to improve the transparent development of the EU decision-making process, being more accessible to the participation of interest groups. Conversely, the European Council has a more intergovernmental character, prioritising to achieve consensus among member states. As a result, interest groups have more difficulties to influence this European institution, as decisions are usually set at the domestic arena (McLaughlin et al. 1993).

EU related stories on the European Parliament are the most diverse in terms of media attention to interest groups. This political institution is usually perceived as an open forum where direct contact with organizations, like environmental groups, are established to assure positive electoral results (Coen and Richardson 2009). The media seem to reflect this internal dynamics and interactions between the European Parliament and interest groups in discussions related to the political orientation of the newspapers. In this respect, *El País* paid more attention to labour and social affairs, whereas *El Mundo* was more interested in the impact of EU decisions over domestic interests.

Even though there is a higher proportion of economic groups in EU related debates mentioning the European Commission, these discussions also show a high degree of diversity

in their contents. In consonance with previous literature (Beyers 2004), these patterns of media attention may be explained by the combination of insider and outsider strategies to influence the EU decision-making process by economic groups. Like the case of the European Parliament, most of interest groups' claims were associated with the impact of the EU integration on domestic economic interests.

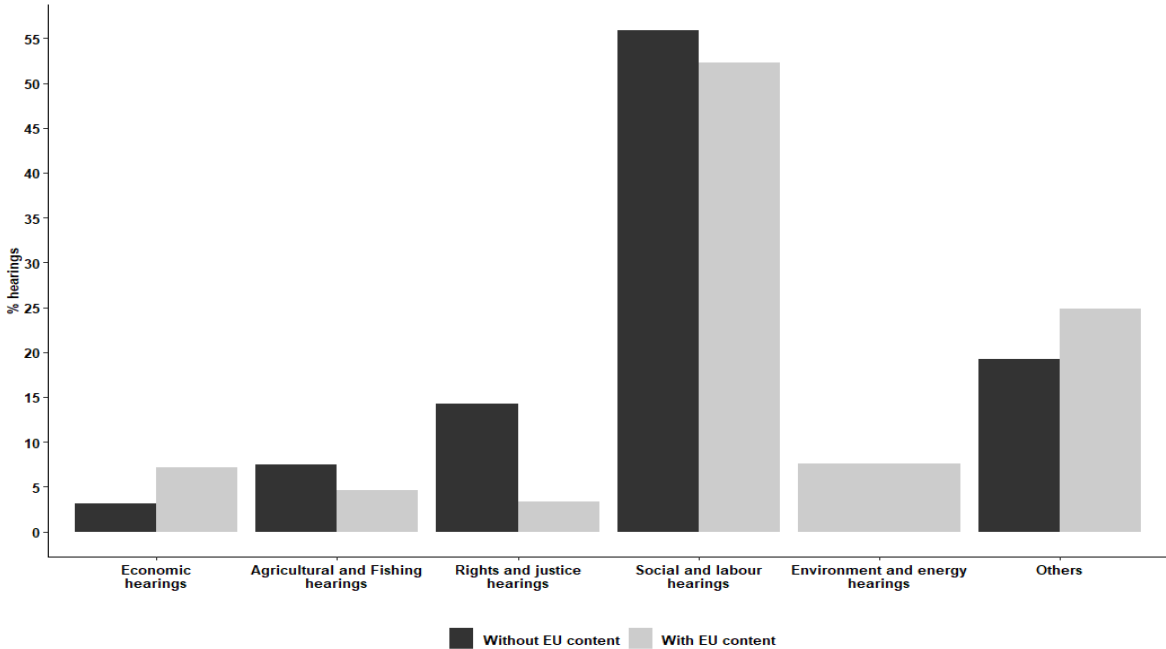
Regarding the European Council, these public debates on European affairs not only show a lower degree of diversity of groups in their contents than the other two political institutions, but also it is illustrated that this media coverage was especially related to the Euro crisis. This might be reflecting the relevant role of the European Council during the Euro crisis. However, a substantial amount of this media coverage did not coincide with the celebration of European Council, but only mentioned decisions taken or will be taken by this political institute in the past or future. In this sense, this media coverage would not be translated into an increasing influence of interest groups on the European institution's decision, as these decisions were already set by member states. Only in the case of future negotiations, interest groups might have a chance to influence its decisions. However, more research on the topic is needed to obtain insights into the extent with which this media coverage may have an influence on the European Council or decisions were still decided between member states and previously in the domestic arena.

The participation of interest groups in the implementation of EU normative

The media visibility of interest groups' claims in EU related debates may also be associated with the implementation process of European normative at the domestic arena. Interest groups do not only try to influence the EU decision-making process but might be actively involved in their implementation at domestic level. Moreover, existing literature has illustrated that this access is likely to be greater in highly politicized policy domains (Broscheid and Coen 2003; see Baumgartner et al. 2009 for a review). Hence, according to the hypothesis 4, interest groups invited to participate in parliamentary hearings on EU related legislation will also obtain visibility in public debates on European affairs, especially if EU issues get politicized.

Figure 6 shows that Spanish parliamentary hearings follow an opposed trend to the EU decision-making process. They were disproportionately focused on the implementation of social and labour normative (52.32% of the total number of parliamentary hearings between 2005 and 2015). Consequently, they are not running in parallel with the EU decision-making process, because if it was the case, then the highest proportion of public hearings should be focused on the implementation of economic normative. This may indicate that public hearings are celebrated for different reasons more related to domestic dynamics than European ones. In this respect, the number of public hearings on EU related legislation is similar than those celebrated on non EU related legislation. Moreover, the emphasis on discussions on labour and social normative may indeed reflect the major opportunities of these affairs to be politicized. Issues like labour market reforms are highly conflicting among political actors. In this respect, parliamentary groups would invite interest groups to erode the position of the governing party, drawing attention to policy failures and governmental shortcomings (Chaqués-Bonafont and Muñoz 2016).

Figure 6. Spanish parliamentary hearings on EU and non EU related legislation from 2005 to 2015



Source: Q-Dem Databases (www.q-dem.com)

Moreover, Table 6 illustrates that parliamentary hearings on EU related legislation tended to be diverse in the participation of interest groups, except for agriculture and fishing and rights and justice normative. Regarding agriculture and fishing normative, parliamentary groups were more likely to disproportionately invite business associations in detriment of other interest groups (81.82%). Beyond these political actors, the consumers' organization OCU as well as the professional association *Asaja* was the only interest group which was invited to participate on agriculture and fishing normative (9.09% both of them). Concretely, these organizations and business associations, such as, for example, the *Asociación de Cadenas Españolas de Supermercados*, were invited to take part in the discussion of the legislative project on the measures to improve the functioning of the food chain.

The rights and justice policy domain was also characterized by a lack of diversity in the participation of interest groups. However, unlike agriculture and fishing normative, this policy domain was not monopolized by economic groups, but by citizens' groups (62.5%), research and public organizations (12.5%) and other interest groups (25%). Parliamentary committees were more likely to invite immigrant advocacy groups, such as the citizens' group *Comisión Católica Española de Migración* and the foundation *Fundación Asociación Catalana de Solidaridad y Ayuda a los Refugiados*, to participate in the implementation of the legislative project which regulated the right for asylum and subsidiary protection status.

Despite the highest proportion of business associations' appearances (47.06%), the Shannon's entropy analysis shows that public hearings on economic normative were among the most diverse in terms of interest groups' participation. Research institutes and public organizations (17.65%) also played an important role in hearings related to EU legislation. For example, some of these organizations, like the business association *Federación Española de Transporte Discrecional de Mercancías* and the university *Universidad Carlos III*, were invited to take part in public hearings on the legislative project on contract inland transport of goods.

Table 6. Participation of interest groups in parliamentary hearings on EU related legislation from 2005 to 2015

	Business associations	Firms	Citizens' groups	Trade unions	Research and public org.	Professional associations	Others	Shannon's index
Economic hearings	47.06	5.88	11.76	0.00	17.65	11.76	5.88	0.77
Agricultural and Fishing hearings	81.82	0.00	9.09	0.00	0.00	9.09	0.00	0.31
Rights and justice hearings	0.00	0.00	62.50	0.00	12.50	0.00	25.00	0.46
Social and labour hearings	19.35	2.42	20.16	11.29	20.97	20.97	4.84	0.87
Environment and energy hearings	50.00	11.11	22.22	0.00	11.11	0.00	5.56	0.68
Other hearings	13.56	10.17	28.81	13.56	22.03	5.08	6.78	0.93

Note: This table shows the percentage of interest groups invited to participate in parliamentary hearings on EU related legislation in different policy domains.

However, the second higher degree of diversity in the participation of interest groups at the Spanish Parliament can be found in public hearings on labour and social normative. Their participation was indeed distributed between professional associations (20.97%), research institutes and public organizations (20.97%), citizens' groups (20.16%) and business associations (19.35%). Relevant public hearings on labour and social normative involving research and public organizations as well as citizens' groups were related to the organic law project on education and the legislative project on medicines (Guarantees and Rational Use). In these public hearings participated some universities like the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* and the *Universidad de Barcelona*, together with citizens' groups such as the *Federación de Asociaciones de Estudiantes* or the OCU. Instead, business associations, like *Asociación Española de la electrónica, las tecnologías de la información, las telecomunicaciones y los contenidos digitales*, were invited to take part in the implementation, for example, of the legislative project that modifies the Text of the Law on Intellectual Property.

Similarly, there was also a certain degree of diversity in the participation of these organizations in public hearings on energy and environment normative. Concretely, business associations (50%) and citizens' groups (22.22%) were invited to participate in the implementation of the legislative project on treating wastes and contaminated soils. Some examples of business associations were the *Agrupación de Fabricantes de Cementos de España* and the *Asociación para el reciclaje de lámparas*, whereas the *Asociación Retorna* or the *Asociación Española de Recuperadores de Economía Social y Solidaria* are some examples of citizens' groups invited by parliamentary groups to participate in the implementation of this project.

Finally, public hearings associated with other European normative were the most diverse, especially regarding the participation of citizens' groups (28.81%) and research institutes and public organizations (22.03%). Interest groups, such as, for example, the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* and the citizens' group *Foro por la Transparencia*, were invited to participate in public hearings on the legislative project on Transparency and Access to Information and Good Governance.

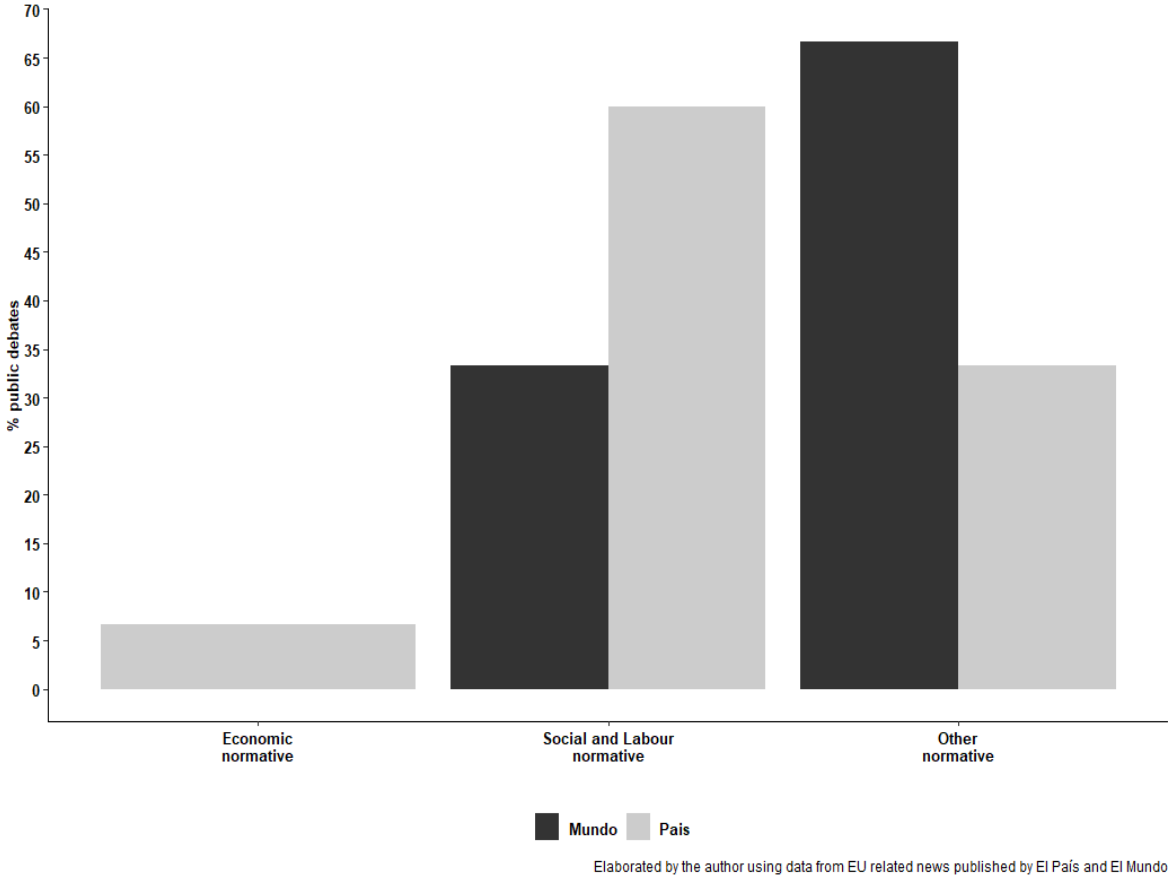
Public hearings on agriculture and fishing normative as well as rights and justice normative were not only characterized by a low diversity of interest groups participating in them, but also by a lower degree of politicization (without reject amendments). It may be argued that parliamentary groups and committees invited a specific set of interest groups, not to politicize these topics, but to conduct a proper implementation of European normative. Interest groups would be invited to re-state the viewpoints of these political actors, capitalise their resources, and reach political consensus and public support (see, for example, Marsh 1986; Adler and Wilkerson 2013).

Conversely, the rest of policy domains are characterized by higher politicization patterns and a higher diversity in the participation of interest groups. Some examples where the organic law project on education, the legislative projects on medicines and the European normative on treating wastes and contaminated soils. In this case, a possible explanation for these patterns of media attention might be related to increasing political debate around these issues and the aim to erode the current position of the governing party, where it would be emphasized political failures or/and governmental shortcoming (see Chaqués-Bonafont and Muñoz 2016). However, further research including the general tone or frame of interest groups' claims is needed to obtain more insights into why these political actors obtain visibility in these public debates. These factors might provide further details on this media coverage, for example, whether these actors use the EU to attack the governing party or, instead, they are more likely to emphasize the impact of the implementation process on their constituencies, their key interests or even regarding broad sectors of the society.

If the media reflect the development of the implementation process of European normative at the domestic arena, then interest groups that participate in hearings on EU related legislation should obtain visibility for their claims in related public debates, especially if EU affairs get politicized. Figure 7 illustrates that the Spanish media seem to follow their own logics, instead of reflecting the internal dynamics of the political process at the domestic political level. Moreover, both Spanish newspapers devoted higher attention to public hearings related to labour and social affairs and other normative. By contrast, the few public hearings on economic normative obtained media attention in *El País*, whereas *El Mundo* overlooked the implementation process in this policy domain. Yet, *El País* was more prone

to cover the implementation of social and labour normative discussed at the domestic arena than *El Mundo*. The right-wing newspaper focused more intensively on EU related debates on other type of normative.

Figure 7. Visibility of parliamentary hearings on EU related legislation in public debates on European affairs from 2005 to 2015



Note: This figure shows the percentage of public debates associated with the celebration of parliamentary hearings on EU related legislation in the Spanish Parliament.

Additionally, the political orientation of the newspaper seems to play a role in the selection process of these public debates. *El País* paid more attention to the celebration of public hearings related to labour and social normative than other legislations, whereas the opposite trend is observed in *El Mundo*. Some prominent discussions on EU related social

and labour normative in *El País* were 1) the draft organic law on education; 2) urgent measures for the maintenance and the encouragement of employment and the protection of the unemployed; and 3) the draft bill on resale rights for the benefit of the authors of original works. In the case of other normative, the left-wing newspaper focused on the law of Transparency and Access to Information and Good Governance in EU related discussions. Regarding *El Mundo*, this right-wing newspaper only paid attention to the development of the transparency law and the draft organic law on education.

Interest groups, however, only obtained a limited access to these public debates on the implementation of EU related normative. These organizations only obtained attention for their claims in *El País* (Table 7) and, moreover, this media coverage was limited to public discussions on social and labour normative. Like the media coverage of the EU decision-making process, these patterns of media attention might also be explained by the left-wing orientation of the newspaper. This media outlet was more likely to emphasize public debates and pay attention to the interest groups' positions in the development of labour and social affairs, for example, to increase public support for these positions or to influence the policy-making indirectly.

Interestingly, when the media and the parliamentary arena are compared, it can be concluded, however, that the Spanish newspaper did not pay any attention to the development of this process within parliamentary hearings and the interactions between interest groups and parliamentary committees. There is not any correspondence between groups which obtained media attention for their claims and those participating in parliamentary hearings on EU related legislation. Thus, the hypothesis 4 must be rejected.

Table 7. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs in *El País*, coinciding with the celebration of parliamentary hearings from 2005 to 2015.

	Business associations	Firms	Citizens' groups	Trade unions	Research and public org.	Professional associations	Others	Shannon's index
Economic normative	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Agriculture and Fishing normative	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rights and Justice normative	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Social and Labour normative	37.5	31.25	0.00	18.75	6.25	0.00	6.25	0.72
Energy and environment normative	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other normative	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Note: This table shows the percentage of claims made by each interest groups over the total number of public claims made by these organizations in public debates on European affairs, coinciding with parliamentary hearings celebrated in the Spanish parliament

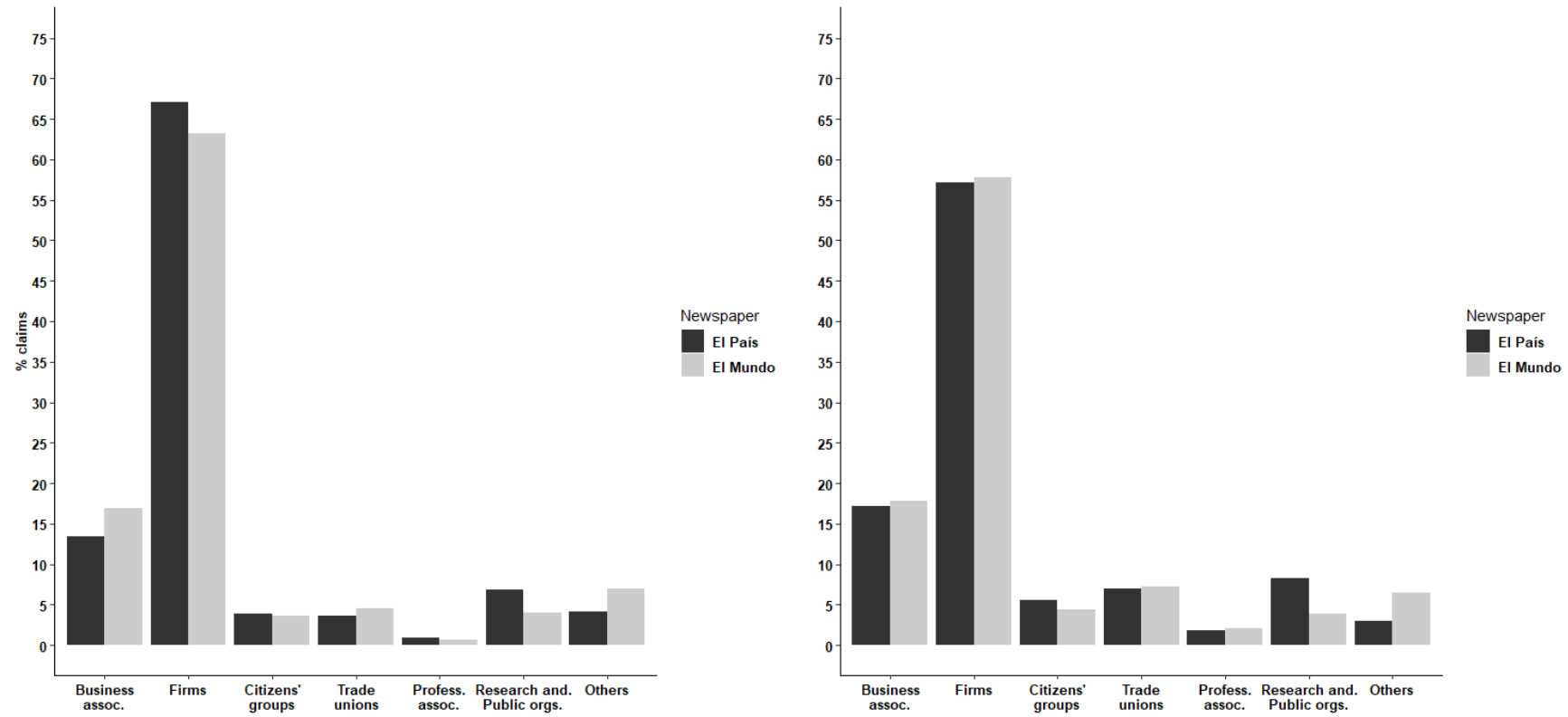
The impact of the Euro crisis: do new groups enter EU related debates?

The Euro crisis may have transformed these patterns of interest groups' visibility in EU related debates. According to the hypothesis 5, while economic groups will predominate in EU related debates during the Euro crisis, interest groups previously excluded or with low mobilization on European affairs will increase their media visibility. Concretely, it is expected that groups such as, for example, citizens' groups, trade unions, professional associations and research institutes and public organizations to be the main beneficiaries in terms of media visibility, because of the negative consequences of the Euro crisis for the country.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate that the overall visibility of interest groups' claims has slightly declined during the Euro crisis in both Spanish newspapers. In *El País* from 2005 to April 2008 and from 2014 to onwards, on average, their visibility represented the 5.44% over the total of claims made by any political actor in public debates on European affairs. This percentage dropped until the 4.56% during this critical juncture. The situation was quite similar in *El Mundo*. The visibility of interest groups' claims was the 6.83% in the non-crisis periods, while it dropped until the 4.88% during the Euro crisis.

Figure 8 shows that declining visibility of interest groups' claims in *El País* is mainly explained, in general terms, by the decreasing attention to firms (from 67.07% of the total claims made by interest groups during non-crisis periods to 57.09% during the critical juncture) in EU related debates during the Euro crisis. Similarly, only firms (from 63.19% to 57.85%) and research institutes and public organizations (from 4.03% to 3.92%) obtained lower visibility for their claims in EU related debates in comparison to non-crisis periods in *El Mundo*. Indeed, the rest of interest groups increased their media visibility for their claims during this period. This is the case of business associations (from 13.44% to 17.21% in *El País* and from 16.94% to 17.86% in *El Mundo*). In this regard, business associations' and firms' claims in both Spanish newspapers were more likely to be associated with the negative consequences of the Euro crisis for the domestic stock exchange and Spanish banks. These contents once again emphasize the importance of the economic output obtained from the EU integration for the Spanish media. As it could be expected both media outlets devoted a special attention to the evolution of the stock exchange, as the main indicator of the economy situation, the fragility of the Spanish banking sector and the EU management of the Euro crisis.

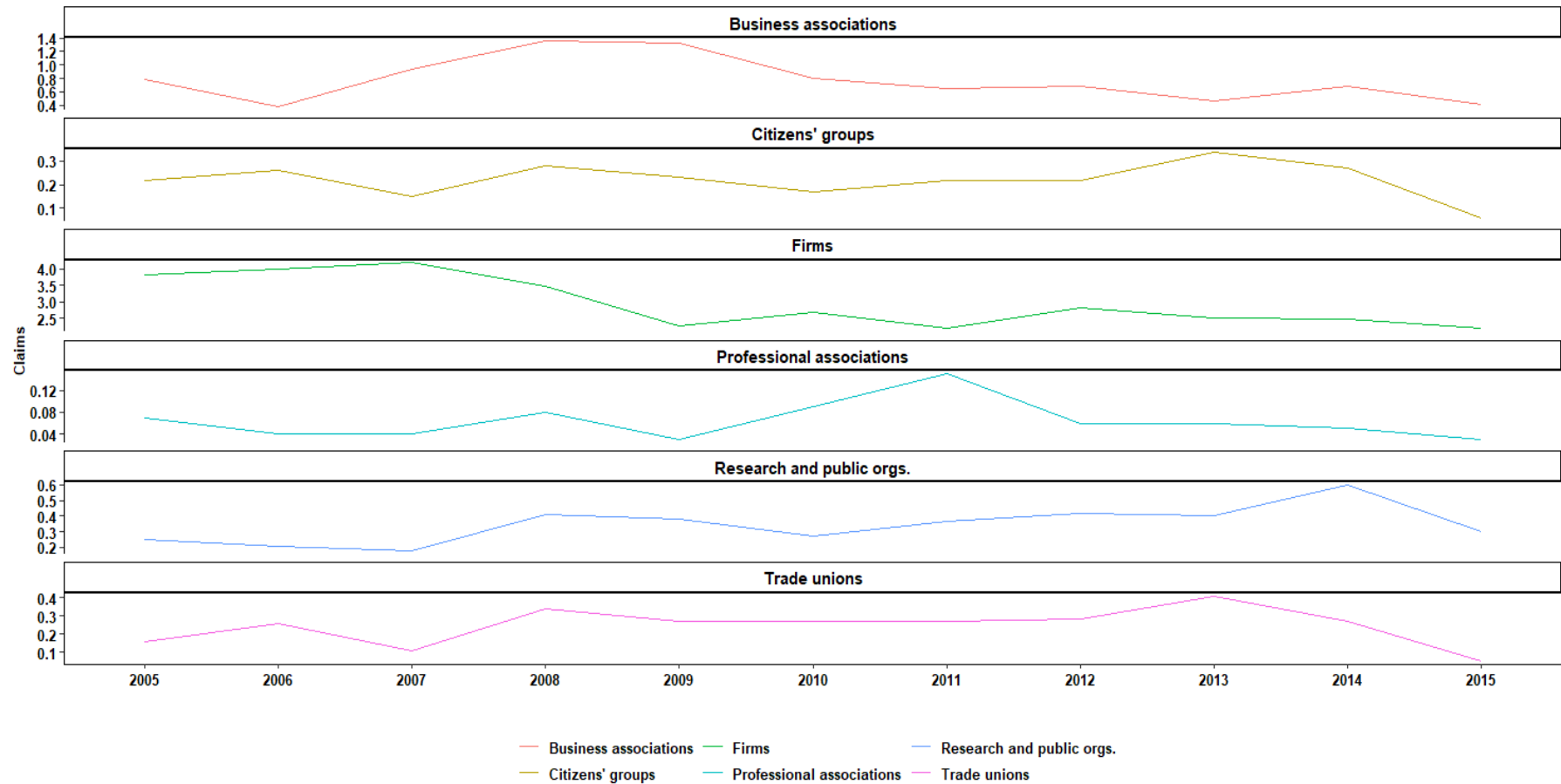
Figure 8. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs before and during the Euro crisis



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by El País and El Mundo

Note: These figures show the percentage of claims made by each interest groups over the total number of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs published by the Spanish media. The figure on the left refers to media attention during the non-crisis period (from 2005 to April 2008 and from 2014 to onwards, with the recovery of the Spanish economy), whereas the one on the right reflects the access of interest groups to the media agenda during the Euro crisis.

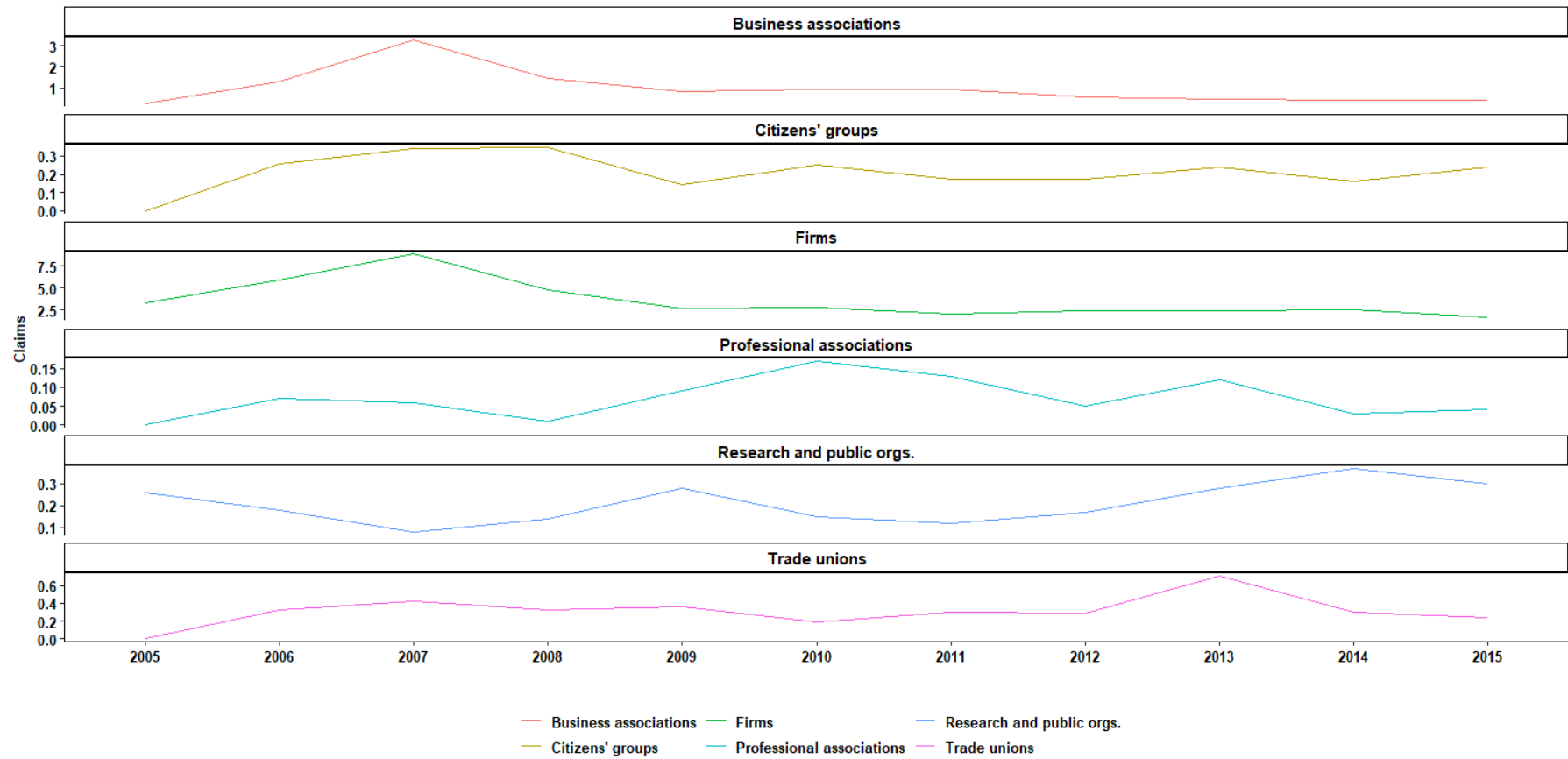
Figure 9. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs published by *El País* from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by *El País*

Note: These figures show the percentage of claims made by each interest group in public debates on European affairs.

Figure 10. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs published by El Mundo from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by El Mundo

Note: These figures show the percentage of claims made by each interest group in public debates on European affairs.

Regarding citizens' groups, these organizations obtained increasing attention for their claims (from 3.89% to 5.62% in *El País* and from 3.59% to 4.47% in *El Mundo*). The consumers' organizations FACUA and OCU were among the most visible citizens' groups in these EU related debates after the outbreak of the Euro crisis. Both Spanish newspapers were interested in discussions involving these organizations and their management of consumers' rights protection in front of Spanish airlines. However, there are also differences in their media coverage. For example, in the case of *El País*, FACUA obtained attention in EU related discussions on the Spanish banks' obligation to compensate Spanish citizens for the "floor clauses". Moreover, this organization also gained access to the media agenda of this newspaper, due to the lack of compliance of the Electricity Directive in the setting of electricity rates and healthy sanitary alerts in Spain. *El Mundo* emphasized OCU's claims in discussions with an economic nature, such as, for example, the possible impact of the collapse of the Spanish banking system. These patterns of media attention may partly be explained by the existence of media political parallelism, where media outlets tend to increase the media coverage of those actors with similar ideological preferences (Hallin and Mancini 2004). In this respect, *El País* was more likely to emphasize claims made by the progressive and plural organization FACUA, where *El Mundo* focused on the OCU, a more conservative organization.

Other prominent citizens' groups were ADICAE and the 15-M social movement. The former organization obtained visibility in *El País* for its claims in public debates on the negative impact of the Euro crisis over the Spanish mortgages. In *El Mundo*, ADICAE obtained media coverage for their claims on the "floor clauses", the increase of bad debts and the possible banking compensation for unfair mortgages and the scandal around the preferred shares. Finally, both Spanish newspapers were also likely to emphasize protests carried out by the 15-M social movement, because of the application of austerity measures and the negative consequences related to the Euro crisis for Spanish citizens (see Anduiza et al. 2014 for a broad explanation about the characteristics, the main mobilization channels and the characteristics of the participants within this social movement).

Like business associations and firms, the Spanish media were more interested in emphasizing the negative impact of the malpractice in banking products and EU austerity measures on Spanish citizens' well-being. Most of these products offered by banks to individuals had their origin in the insights generated during the Spanish period of economic prosperity within the EU. The deterioration of the citizens' economic and job

stability turned these loans and banking products into dramatic consequences for Spanish citizens. Together with the negative impact of European decisions and austerity measures and previous findings in this research, it may be argued that the economic dimension of the EU integration is a key factor to predict and understand the interest groups' media visibility in public debates on European affairs. Moreover, media political parallelism also seems to have an impact in this media coverage. Regarding consumers' organizations, not only the newspapers focus on organizations with a similar political orientation, but also *El País* pay attention a more diverse set of public debates on European affairs.

Similarly, trade unions also gained higher visibility for their claims during the Euro crisis than in the previous routine period (from 3.59% to 7.01% in *El País* and from 4.57% to 7.3% in *El Mundo*). CCCO and UGT were the most visible trade unions in these public debates. However, some differences can be found between both Spanish newspapers. Their ideological preferences again seem to act as a suitable predictor of interest groups' media coverage. *El País* followed more intensively the development of reforms with a direct impact for worker's and citizens' rights and well-being. This is the case of EU related debates on wage flexibility, the pension reform, and the proposal for increasing working hours. By contrast, the right-wing *El Mundo* highlighted the criticism of these organizations towards the EU management of the Euro crisis, the Spanish economic situation, the ECB's proposal about a new labour reform or the impact of austerity measures over domestic interests. Even though with a more secondary role, this newspaper also devoted attention to EU related debates on education reforms with a conservative nature. In line with the political orientation of the newspaper, these reforms were conducted by the conservative party PP. Moreover, these discussions dealt with aspects such as the gender-separation education, raising political debate among political parties and interest groups in Spain.

El País also improved the visibility of research institutes and public organizations' claims during this period as well (from 6.89% to 8.3%). These organizations mainly gained access to the media agenda, because of their expert opinions on affairs like the economic situation in the EU, the need for creating a European Bank Union and the differences between Northern and Southern member states. In this respect, these political actors did not appear in these discussions on European affairs to defend their positions or interests, but rather to provide additional information on them.

Regarding specific differences between both newspapers, *El País* was more interested in paying attention to education reforms, concretely the implementation of the Bologna Process. By contrast, one of the most representative research institutes in *El Mundo* was the CSIC. Whereas these organizations participated as active actors in the discussions on how Spain must adapt the European framework in *El País*, the CSIC only was used by *El Mundo* as a source to inform on the European elections and the electoral chances of the political party *Podemos*. The media coverage might be reflecting the political concerns of *El Mundo* regarding the raising of this new left-wing political party within the national party system and among public opinion, whereas *El País* focused on those EU related debates with a labour and social background.

Finally, the visibility of professional associations' claims was modestly benefited from the impact of the Euro crisis in the country as well (from 0.98% to 1.81% in *El País* and from 0.72% to 2.14% in *El Mundo*). The Association of Spanish Pharmacists obtained higher attention in *El País* for their critical claims against the liberalization of their sector. *El Mundo* instead highlighted the participation of ASAJA in discussions on agriculture and fishing affairs and their impact over domestic interests. Some of the most salient EU related discussions involving this organizations focused on its demands for greater European subsidies and their criticism for the management of the EU and other member states of the Spanish cucumber crisis. Hence, this organization obtained media attention in this newspaper to emphasize the negative impact of the EU integration in this policy domain. Together with the political parallelism in the media, this is another key factor to predict the interest groups' coverage. In line with Díez Medrano (2003), Spanish feelings of dissatisfaction towards the EU are associated with the agriculture and fishing policy domain. Indeed, the access of professional associations to the media agenda in these EU related debates was also dependent on the political orientation of the Spanish media. They obtained higher attention for their claims in labour and social discussions in *El País*, while agriculture and fishing affairs, a policy domain with a strong economic nature, were more prominent in *El Mundo*.

This descriptive analysis has illustrated that the Euro crisis, as it was expected in the hypothesis 5, especially benefited the overall media attention to interest groups' positions, especially of those previously excluded or with low mobilization in public debates on European affairs. This was the case of citizens' groups, trade unions and professional associations in both Spanish newspapers. In line with previous findings of

this research and existing literature (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Díez Medrano 2003), their media coverage seems to be associated with the political orientation of the Spanish media and the importance that journalists give to the output obtained from the EU integration. Additionally, the Spanish media outlets may also emphasize the negative impact of European decisions on domestic economic interests, due to the newsworthiness of bad news and their impact over their audiences (see, for example, Harrington 1989).

To go further on the descriptive analysis, the hypothesis 5 has been also tested by means of a Poisson regression analysis. Together with these expectations, the hypothesis 6 also expects that the celebration of European Council summits improves the media attention to interest groups' claims in EU related debates during the Euro crisis, due to the key role played by the intergovernmental institution to manage the critical juncture.

The results of the regression analysis in *El País* are consistent with the previous descriptions. All interest groups, except for firms, benefited from the Euro crisis to obtain increasing access to the media agenda. Nevertheless, the celebration of European Councils summits during this critical juncture had a more limited impact on their media coverage. The first model of the regression illustrates that business associations obtained increasing media attention for their claims during both the Euro crisis (0.026) and the celebration of European Council summits (0.032). Nevertheless, any of these coefficients are statistically significant. The second model, including interactions between the risk premium and these European events, provides more precise information about the media coverage of these organizations. The Euro crisis had a statistically significant effect in the media visibility to business associations' claims (0.051*), when European Councils did not take place. By contrast, whereas in non-crisis periods these organizations substantially increased their access to the media agenda during these intergovernmental summits (0.048**), they obtained decreasing media attention when these events occurred during the critical juncture (-0.109*).

Table 8. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs in *El País* from 2005 to 2015

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>											
	Business assoc.		Firms		Citizens		Trade unions		Professional assoc.		Research and public orgs	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Risk premium	0.026 (0.024)	0.051* (0.027)	-0.041*** (0.012)	-0.034*** (0.013)	0.048 (0.042)	0.017 (0.049)	0.144*** (0.040)	0.112** (0.045)	0.194** (0.080)	0.213*** (0.083)	-0.032 (0.033)	0.011 (0.038)
Council	0.032 (0.070)	0.489** (0.242)	-0.070* (0.036)	0.055 (0.124)	0.204* (0.119)	-0.353 (0.454)	-0.070 (0.122)	-0.842* (0.501)	-1.186*** (0.366)	-0.090 (1.265)	0.123 (0.096)	0.825** (0.321)
Risk premium:Council		-0.109* (0.056)		-0.030 (0.029)		0.129 (0.100)		0.172 (0.107)		-0.253 (0.291)		-0.172** (0.076)
Constant	-1.162*** (0.105)	-1.267*** (0.119)	0.525*** (0.051)	0.499*** (0.057)	-2.459*** (0.190)	-2.325*** (0.215)	-2.703*** (0.186)	-2.563*** (0.203)	-4.138*** (0.369)	-4.225*** (0.385)	-1.639*** (0.146)	-1.819*** (0.168)
Observations	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798
Log Likelihood	-3,169.127	-3,167.251	-6,839.949	-6,839.396	-1,486.065	-1,485.225	-1,639.342	-1,638.005	-573.630	-573.266	-2,023.598	-2,021.082
Akaike Inf. Crit.	6,344.255	6,342.502	13,685.900	13,686.790	2,978.131	2,978.451	3,284.684	3,284.011	1,153.260	1,154.532	4,053.196	4,050.164

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 9. Visibility of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>											
	Business assoc.		Firms		Citizens		Trade unions		Professional assoc.		Research and public orgs	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Risk premium	0.081*** (0.024)	0.073*** (0.026)	-0.006 (0.013)	0.002 (0.014)	-0.041 (0.049)	-0.092 (0.057)	0.007 (0.041)	0.008 (0.044)	0.143* (0.086)	0.093 (0.096)	-0.243*** (0.047)	-0.270*** (0.052)
Council	-0.187** (0.080)	-0.409 (0.303)	-0.167*** (0.042)	0.047 (0.145)	0.574*** (0.133)	-0.202 (0.485)	-0.223 (0.137)	-0.215 (0.486)	0.310 (0.239)	-0.777 (1.011)	-0.022 (0.156)	-0.595 (0.504)
Risk premium:Council		0.053 (0.069)		-0.053 (0.035)		0.191* (0.113)		-0.002 (0.115)		0.250 (0.222)		0.153 (0.125)
Constant	-1.197*** (0.108)	-1.165*** (0.116)	0.411*** (0.055)	0.377*** (0.060)	-2.317*** (0.213)	-2.110*** (0.240)	-1.953*** (0.178)	-1.954*** (0.191)	-4.056*** (0.392)	-3.838*** (0.428)	-1.400*** (0.191)	-1.298*** (0.205)
Observations	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885
Log Likelihood	-2,520.771	-2,520.477	-5,022.073	-5,020.909	-989.257	-987.793	-1,386.164	-1,386.164	-448.366	-447.701	-959.489	-958.732
Akaike Inf. Crit.	5,047.541	5,048.954	10,050.150	10,049.820	1,984.514	1,983.587	2,778.329	2,780.329	902.731	903.402	1,924.977	1,925.464

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The Euro crisis and the European Council summits had a statistically significant negative impact in the media coverage of firms' claims (-0.041*** and -0.070* respectively). The interactions between these variables, instead, shows that these economic organizations were more likely to obtain increasing access to the media agenda during the European events in non-crisis periods (0.055). *El País*, however, paid lower attention to these economic groups during the Euro crisis, regardless whether European Council summits occurred (-0.034*** and -0.030). Nevertheless, the coefficient of the interactions between the intergovernmental meeting and the critical juncture does not have statistical significance.

Regarding citizens groups', these actors also obtained more media attention for their claims during both the Euro crisis (0.048) and the European Council summits (0.204*). Furthermore, the regression model including interactions between both independent variables illustrates that not only citizens' groups benefited from the Euro crisis (0.017), but also the positive results of the European intergovernmental meetings were also associated with the critical juncture (0.129 and -0.353 in non-crisis periods). Nevertheless, the coefficients of the model including interaction are not statistically significant.

Results also show that the media coverage of trade unions substantially benefited from the Euro crisis (0.144***), but not from the celebration of European Council summits (-0.070). However, this negative coefficient is not statistically significant. However, like the case of citizens' groups, this positive impact in the attention for their claims was associated with the Euro crisis. Trade unions obtained more access to the media agenda of *El País* during both the Euro crisis (0.112**) and when this critical juncture coincided with the celebration of the European institution's meetings (0.172). However, this impact was only statistically significant when the development of the Euro crisis did not coincide with these European summits. By contrast, European Councils summits reduced their media attention during non-crisis periods (-0.842*). Results on citizens' groups and trade unions might be reflecting the impact of the negative economic and social consequences of the financial recessions and the role played by European decisions and austerity measures.

The Euro crisis also had a statistically significant positive impact in the media attention to professional associations' claims (0.194*** in the first model and 0.213*** in the second model including the interaction), but not during European Council summits,

regardless whether these were celebrated in non-crisis periods or during the Euro crisis (-0.090 and -0.053 respectively). However, only the coefficients of the Euro crisis are statistically significant. Moreover, in general terms intergovernmental meetings at the European events, without considering whether these happened during the Euro crisis or not, had a statistically significant impact over their media coverage in *El País* (-1.186***).

Finally, research institutes and public organizations in *El País* obtained increasing media attention during the celebration of European Council summits (0.123), but not in the Euro crisis (-0.032). However, any of these coefficients are statistically significant. If interactions are considered, it can be noted that these organizations gained more access to the media agenda when European Council summits did not coincide with the Euro crisis (0.825** and -0.172** when these European events were celebrated during the Euro crisis). The development of the Euro crisis, without considering the European institutions' meetings, also benefited the media coverage of research and public organizations (0.011), even though the coefficient is not statistically significant.

Regression results show that the both the Euro crisis and the celebration of European Council summits had a more limited effect in *El Mundo* than in *El País*. In the right-wing media outlet, business associations obtained increasing media attention for their claims during the Euro crisis (0.081***), whereas the opposite situations can be noted regarding European Council summits (-0.187**). The model with the interaction between the two factors illustrates, instead, that *El Mundo* paid more attention to these organizations' positions during the Euro crisis, regardless whether the critical juncture coincided (0.053) or not (0.073***) with the celebration of these European meetings. However, only there is a statically significant impact when the Euro crisis did not coincide with European Council summits. By contrast, these intergovernmental meeting had a negative relationship with the presence of business associations in public debates on European affairs in non-crisis periods (-0.409).

El Mundo paid lower attention to firms' claims during the Euro crisis (-0.006) and European Council summits (-0.167***). However, it can be noted that the opposite situation occurred when both variables did not interact. On the one hand, during the periods of the Euro crisis where these meetings were not celebrated (0.002) and, on the other hand, when they occurred in non-crisis periods (0.047), these economic groups obtained more access to the media agenda of *El Mundo*. By contrast, the interaction

between both factors had a negative impact in the media coverage of firms' claims (-0.053). However, the coefficients of the interaction model are not statistically significant.

El Mundo, like the case of firms, also paid more attention to citizens' groups claims during the celebration of European Council summits (0.574***) than in the Euro crisis (-0.041). Nevertheless, the negative coefficient of the critical juncture is not statistically significant. When both variables interact, it can be observed that it is the only case where these organizations obtain more media attention for their claims in *El Mundo* (0.191*). Hence, these actors from the civil society only obtained increasing access to the media agenda when European Council summits occurred during the Euro crisis. The other two situations, the celebration of these European meetings during non-crisis periods (-0.202) and when they were not held during the Euro crisis (-0.092), reduced their media coverage, even though not in a statistically significant way.

Results on trade unions, instead, show that these organizations improved their media coverage during the Euro crisis (0.007), concretely when it did not coincide with the celebration of European Council summits (0.008). However, intergovernmental meetings in the European institution (-0.223), regardless whether they occurred in non-crisis periods (-0.215) or during the Euro crisis (-0.002), had a negative impact in the media coverage of trade unions in *El Mundo*. However, any of these coefficients are statistically significant.

The Euro crisis (0.143*) and the European Council summits (0.310) in general terms substantially increased the media attention to professional associations' claims in *El Mundo*, as the first model of the regression illustrates. However, the statistically significant effect disappears in the second model of the regressions, considering the interactions between the risk premium and the European Council. This newspaper paid more attention to these organizations' positions during the Euro crisis, regardless the celebration of European Councils (0.093 when these events did not take place and 0.250 when occurred). Moreover, this second model also shows that the positive impact between the European meetings and the presence of professional associations in public debates on European affairs is dependent on the Euro crisis. However, they did not obtain increasing media coverage for their claims in an unprecedented way. By contrast, these organizations obtained lower access to the media agenda when these European events occurred during non-crisis periods (-0.777).

Finally, research institutes and public organizations obtained decreasing attention for their claims during both the Euro crisis (-0.243***) and European Council summits (-0.022). However, only the coefficient related to the critical juncture is statistically significant. Indeed, these political actors only gained access to the media agenda during the celebration of European Council meetings in the Euro crisis (0.153), whereas the impact of the rest of the period associated with the critical juncture was substantially negative (-0.270***). By contrast, these European events reduced the capacity of research institutes and public organizations to access to the media agenda in non-crisis periods (-0.595), even though not in an unprecedented way. This results reflect an important difference from those obtained in *El País*. The left-wing newspaper paid more attention to these organizations during European council summits during non-crisis periods, reducing their media coverage during the Euro crisis. The opposite situation has been observed in *El Mundo*. These trends might reflect the role of these organizations as a experts opinions in *El País* during non-crisis periods, providing information on the implications of the European decisions or discussions during intergovernmental meetings at the European political level. *El Mundo*, instead, was more likely to associate research and public organizations with the impact of the EU integration on domestic economic interests. This may explain because the right-wing newspaper was more prone to increase the media attention to these political actors during the Euro crisis, as a result of their negative implications of the country.

Hence, these regression analyses corroborate the expectations raised by the hypothesis 5 in the case of *El País*. The Euro crisis implied a redistribution in the media visibility of interest groups' claims in this newspaper. This is especially the case of those previously excluded or with low mobilization in public debates on European affairs, such as, for example, trade unions and professional associations. Instead, interest groups which have a privileged position in these EU related discussions obtained lower media visibility for their claims. By contrast, there was not a redistribution of the interest groups' capacity to access to the media agenda in *El Mundo*. Some organizations, like professional associations and trade unions, improved their media coverage, but not in an unprecedented way. Regarding the hypothesis 6, European Council summits during the Euro crisis had a limited effect in both Spanish media outlets. Only citizens' groups in *El Mundo* substantially improved their access to the media agenda during these European events in the Euro crisis. Even though citizens' groups and trade unions in *El País* and business

associations, professional associations and research institutes and public organizations in *El Mundo* also obtained more media visibility for their claims in these EU related debates, these coefficients are not statistically significant. So, the hypothesis 6 can only be partly corroborated.

4. Conclusions: Implications and future research goals

The process of European integration opens up a large realm of possibilities for many actors, but political work implies conflict and power relations and not all actors are able to use the resources provided by the EU equally (Woll and Jacquot 2010).

This thesis has explored under which circumstances political actors get access to the media agenda in Spain, a country without hard Eurosceptic positions in the party system. Based on the analysis of more than 40.000 EU related stories and 354.000 claims in *El País* and *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015 and an automatic coding methodological approach that builds on the claim-analysis developed by the *EUROPUB* project (e.g. Koopmans and Statham 1999, 2000), this research has analysed under which circumstances executive actors, political parties and interest groups reach the media agenda in EU related debates. This section summarizes what can we learn from the analysis, identifies the limitations of the thesis and signals directions for future research on the topic.

The visibility of executive actors and political parties in public debates on European affairs

One of the goals of this doctoral thesis has been to explore the media attention to executive actors and political parties in public debates on European affairs in Spain, a quasi-federal system of government, where the EU is rather a consensual topic and one of the member states most seriously affected by the Euro crisis. Being most existing literature centred on the role of Euroscepticism in the politicization of European affairs, this research has contributed to explore under what circumstances executive actors, Europhile, soft Eurosceptic and regional parties get access to the media agenda in a country where European integration is a consensual topic. To do so, following top-down approaches to the study of Europeanization (e.g. Koopmans and Erbe 2004; Koopmans 2007; Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2009; Schmidt 2009) the thesis has

considered as explanatory variables institutional factors, such as the EU decision-making process or the occurrence of European events, like European elections or council summits. Yet, Europeanization cannot be reduced to a top-down process (see Bache and Jordan 2006). Domestic actors do not simply react to European processes and events but make a strategic use of the EU to achieve their political goals in the domestic arena, shaping the way European affairs are perceived and, therefore, reported in the media (Woll and Jacquot 2010; Palau and Guineaudeau 2016). To explore this question, the thesis has considered the impact of the Euro crisis, given its potential for politicization, and the extent to which political actors use Europe in their competition with each other, not to politicize the EU integration, but to emphasize issues they “own”.

First, results corroborate that structural and institutional factors play a key role to explain the privileged access and dominance of executive actors in public debates on European affairs. European institutions and domestic executive actors are by large the most visible actors in EU related debates in the Spanish media. Their high agenda-setting capacity was already highlighted by previous literature (e.g. Koopmans 2004, 2007). However, these studies have mainly based their conclusions on the media coverage of specific issues, such as economic or labour affairs. On the contrary, this thesis has provided new insights on how newspapers inform on executive actors’ positions in public discussions on European affairs, considering the approval of European Directives and Regulations all over the period under analysis, a question not explored by previous research. Moreover, it has also been expected that these political actors obtain more media visibility for their claims during the celebration of European events. Previous literature has already analysed the impact of European events in the media coverage of political actors (e.g. Boomgaarden et al. 2010, Guinaudeau and Palau 2016). Nevertheless, these analyses have focused on political parties, remaining the impact of European events on executive actors’ media attention unexplored. Results show that, as expected, the media reflect the authoritative position of executive actors within the EU decision-making process. Their claims in the media increase when European Directives and Regulations are discussed at the European political level and during the celebration of European events, such as EU Council meetings or Treaty ratifications.

These findings are consistent with the indexing theory of news contents proposed by Bennet (1990). According to this approach, the media are more likely to emphasize official sources and political actors which participate directly in the decision-making

process. Because of their privileged position at the European political level, executive actors possess direct information on the development of the EU decision-making process and, therefore, they are valuable sources for the media. Conversely, opposition political parties are more in need of obtaining orientation on the topic (McCombs and Weaver 1973). Yet, opposition parties are also affected by European processes and events. This research illustrates that European elections also have a positive impact on the visibility of political parties in the Spanish newspapers. These actors have enough incentives to obtain media attention for their positions during the celebration of elections to the European Parliament. On the one hand, opposition parties try to set the EU, even if approached from a domestic perspective, in the media agenda to maximize positive electoral results (Reif et al. 1997, Schmitt 2005). On the other hand, they must be responsive to the salience of European elections, as most citizens learn about the functioning of the EU, political proposals and the campaign itself from traditional media outlets (e.g. Shuck et al. 2011; Bennet and Entman 2011). These European events represent a window of opportunity for opposition parties to obtain media visibility for their positions in the media. Similarly, the media also have incentives to pay attention to these actors' claims during these European events, because of their electoral nature and to encourage citizens' participation.

Second, results provide partial support to the idea that parties use the EU to emphasize issue that they own. It is worth to remember that the "issue ownership" theory was originally conducted in Europe by Budge and Farlie (1983) and in the United States by Petrocik (1989, 1996) to explain political parties' behaviour during electoral campaigns. On studies related to the EU, it has been argued that radical Eurosceptic parties pay attention to European affairs, because they have "ownership" on the topic (De Vries 2007; Green-Pedersen 2012; Navarro and Brouard 2014). Departing from this, and in line with party strategies already observed in the Spanish parliamentary arena (Palau 2019), the aim of this research has been to explore to what extent in a country where the EU integration is a consensual topic, parties reach the media arena using the EU to emphasize issues on which they have ownership. It is expected that this political strategy is followed by Europhile and soft Eurosceptic political parties. Right-wing parties are expected to use the EU to emphasize issues like the economy or the reform of public administration, while left parties to refer to moral issues, welfare, labour, or environment affairs.

The empirical analysis conducted in this research has provided some evidence of these strategies. For example, when the PP tried to reform the abortion law passed by the socialists in the previous legislatures, the PSOE launched a political campaign in EU institutions to stop the reform. Yet, results show that important differences exist among parties, for example, the PP and IU are more likely to be reported in the media using the EU to emphasize issues they own compared to other parties. In addition, differences also existed between the media coverage of *El País* and *El Mundo*—being these strategies more visible in the case of the second newspaper—. These differences can be explained by patterns of media political parallelism, a question to which we will return later, but also issue overlapping dynamics and the impact of critical junctures.

On the one hand, the analysis of media coverage of European affairs corroborates in line with previous agenda setting research (see Green-Pedersen 2007; Damore 2005) that actors cannot only pay attention exclusively to the issues they own, but are forced to focus also on unpleasant issues brought up on the party-system agenda (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). For instance, the PP gained media attention for its claims in EU related debates on labour and social affairs, which are more beneficial for left parties in electoral terms, because new conflicting regulation on these topics was being discussed at the EU level. On the other hand, critical junctures like the outbreak of an economic crisis have strong agenda setting effects so that all parties, including those from the left, are forced to pay attention to the issue, even if economic issues belong to right wing parties according to the issue ownership approach. Economic affairs are especially important in EU related debates given the strong economic character of the European project (Schuck et al. 2011; Meyer 2005; Gavin 2000). Economic policies go more into the media agenda, as these affairs “deal with clearly identifiable, single quantitative benchmarks against which national performance can be measured” (Meyer 2005). Affairs related to inflation or unemployment are perceived as the key levels of executive power and, therefore, are closely scrutinized by media outlets, due to their electoral importance (Meyer 2005; Soroka 2006). Hence, opposition parties cannot just ignore the economic consequences of the Euro crisis for the country, regardless their political orientation. Moreover, far-left parties are traditionally more prone to focus their criticism towards the current economic development of the integration process (Kriesi 2007). In this respect, economic affairs might also be a part of the political strategy of these parties, seeking to obtain visibility in these EU related debates to obtain electoral benefits.

Third, even though the issue ownership theory provides a partial explanation on the circumstances under which parties reach the media agenda on EU related debates, the thesis results provide support for the idea that parties use the EU in their competition to each other. Their goals are not to question the European integration project but to use the EU as part of the domestic political game, and this is especially the case of regional parties. It has been expected that regional parties obtain media visibility in public debates on European affairs, emphasizing political affairs related to the interests of their regions. The results illustrate that, as expected, these political parties are more likely to obtain media coverage for their claims in public debates on European affairs, when regional interests are mentioned. While previous literature has mainly based their conclusions on the impact of the EU integration over regions at the macro-level (e.g. Hooghe 1996), this thesis has provided conclusions on how the EU might be used on the part of regional parties as part of domestic political strategies. Some studies have already illustrated that regional parties tend to make a heresthetic use of the EU to pursue the consecution of their political objectives (e.g. Dardanelli 2009). In Spain, it is already known that these strategies are used by regional parties in the parliamentary arena (Palau 2019). In this vein, this thesis has provided new insights into how these strategies are played in the media agenda. Yet, it provides only partial support to the hypothesis that regional secessionist parties increased their visibility in the media as public support for the independence of the region increases. This question has been explored looking at Catalan secessionist parties, as the independence process was more active in Catalonia during the period of analysis. It has been expected that as far as both supporters and opponents of an independent Catalan state used the EU to support their arguments, attention to secessionist parties will increase parallel to raising support for independence. Yet, the hypothesis is corroborated only in the case of *El Mundo*. Indeed, all Catalan parties obtained increasing attention to their positions in this newspaper, regardless their political position on the independence of the region. Interestingly, increasing support for the independence of Catalonia also raised attention to Basque regional parties in this newspaper. This is explained by the emphasis of *El Mundo* to relate the Catalan independence process within the EU with the political aspirations of the terrorist group ETA.

The analysis of EU related debates when regional interests are mentioned reflects that state-wide parties might take part in them and use the EU to their advantage as well.

The participation of IU in discussions on the independence of Catalonia within the EU is mainly explained by the political alliance with its regional counterpart ICV. As other Catalan regional parties, the media paid attention to the ICV's incentives to use the EU in this political debate to support its political arguments. Similarly, the conservative PP usually raised debate on the Basque peace process as a part of its political strategy, as these affairs benefited the party electorally. These public debates emphasized the involvement of European institutions in the negotiations with the terrorist group ETA. Overall, these dynamics point again to strong patterns of media political parallelism.

Fourth, this thesis has demonstrated that the euro crisis had a modest effect on the media visibility of political parties. Contrary to what it was expected, the euro crisis did not significantly increase the visibility of challenger parties with low likelihood of entering office in the next elections nor of secessionist parties. Executive actors keep on dominating the media agenda. There were only few exceptions. Regarding challenger parties, only IU increased the media attention to their claims in *El País*, but not in an unprecedented way. Similarly, Basque regional parties (the PNV and Bildu in *El País* and Bildu in *El Mundo*) also increased their media coverage during the Euro crisis. However, any of these coefficients are statistically significant. Unlike Catalan secessionist parties, their Basque counterparts were not involved in any independence process for their region during this period. Some Catalan regional parties, instead, sought to create a new state within the EU to overcome the obstruction of the central government (Tremlett 2012) in fiscal and financial issues. These factors became more dramatic due the lost access to financial markets to alleviate the problem of raising debt, increasing the public support for the independence of the region (Rico and Liñera 2014). However, the Euro crisis had a negative effect in the media visibility to Catalan regional parties. The only exception was the PSC in *El País*, even though its media coverage did not increase in an unprecedented way. Neither CiU nor ERC, the main Catalan secessionist parties analysed, obtained increasing attention to their claims as a result of the Euro crisis. Other factors like the increasing public support for the independence of the region seem to be more accurate to explain increasing media visibility to secessionist regional parties, especially in *El Mundo*.

Finally, as already noted, this research has shown that as far as the EU is associated with domestic political debates, patterns of media political parallelism emerge in the coverage of EU related affairs. This is illustrated by many examples. The abortion issue

and the transfer of this debate on the part of the PSOE to European institutions was one of the most prominent EU related debates in both media outlets, but especially in *El País* to support its political ally. Yet, political parallelism is particularly clear regarding the Catalan independence process, which is disproportionately more covered by *El Mundo*. The right-wing newspaper was also more prone to increase the attention to Catalan parties more supportive of Spanish interests. This is the case of *Ciutadans* which may have acted as a counterweight to secessionist aspirations. Similarly, discussions on the negotiations between executive actors, ETA and European institutions were more prominent in *El Mundo* than in *El País*. Even though PP's criticism against these negotiations were covered by both media outlets, *El País* also highlighted the involvement and positions of its political ally, the PSOE.

The visibility of interest groups in public debates on European affairs

The goal of this second part has been to analyse the visibility of interest groups in public debates on European affairs. The growing impact of the EU decision-making process has incentivized interest groups to allocate increasing resources to obtain information and develop lobbying strategies to influence European decisions according to their interests (e.g. Mazey and Richardson 2006). Moreover, Spain was among the member states most seriously hit by the Euro crisis and object of budgetary austerity measures, resulting in an unprecedented mistrust of public opinion towards European institutions. The EU played a key role in the management of the Euro crisis which might have contributed to increase the mobilization of interest groups around European affairs. Most literature has explored the media attention to these organizations considering factors, such as their organizational resources (e.g. Thrall 2006), the type of interest groups (e.g. Binderkrantz 2012), their preferences between insider and outsider strategies (e.g. Beyers 2004), the impact of conflict in the development of European normative (De Bruycker and Beyers 2015), the presence of media political parallelism (Binderkrantz et al. 2015) and the degree of European competences in different policy domains (e.g. Koopmans 2004). This research has contributed to the research field by exploring under what circumstances different types of interest groups get access to the media agenda. Following top-down approaches to the study of Europeanization (e.g. Koopmans and Erbe 2004; Koopmans 2007; Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2009; Schmidt 2009), the thesis has considered as explanatory variables institutional factors, such as the approval of European normative

in the EU decision-making process, and the accessibility and openness of European institutions to interest groups. Yet, Europeanization cannot be reduced to a top-down process (see Bache and Jordan 2006). As Medina and Muñoz (2016) argue, most analyses have focused on the United States and the EU, paying little attention to the mobilization of interest groups in Southern member states like Spain. To go further in these questions, this research has also considered the implementation process of European normative at the domestic arena, as an alternative venue to influence policy outcomes, and the impact of the Euro crisis to obtain more insights into the visibility of Spanish interest groups in public debates on European affairs related to domestic processes.

First, contrary to the expectations of this research, the results show that interest groups did not obtain more media coverage when new normative is discussed in the EU decision-making process, even on those policy domains where the EU has strong competences. Previous research has already demonstrated that these actors are marginally covered in EU related debates (e.g. Koopmans 2004, 2007). These conclusions are based on the degree of EU competences in European affairs, without considering whether these debates are explicitly related to the approval of EU normative. The only exception is the study conducted by De Bruycker and Beyers (2015). These scholars explore how the presence of conflict during the approval of new normative at the EU political level increases the media attention to interest groups. However, these conclusions are based on a sample of European Directives. Instead, This research has provided new insights into the media coverage of interest group when new normative is discussed in the EU decision-making process, considering a long-term study and all Directives and Regulations that obtained visibility in EU related debates under the period of analysis.

It has been expected that interest groups obtain visibility in EU related debates on EU normative, especially in those policy domains where the EU has more competences due to the potential impact on their key interests. Yet, this hypothesis has not been corroborated. Similarly, this research also expected that economic interest groups would monopolize EU related debates on the approval of economic normative, whereas more pluralistic patterns, with a more diversity participation of interest groups, would predominate in other policy domains. The results illustrate that stories where new European regulation in the fields of energy, environment, labour, and social issues is discussed, show higher diversity of interest groups than policy domains of economic nature, which are monopolized by few groups. Even though economic groups have a

privileged position within the EU decision-making process, there are some policy domains that avoid being captured by these interests showing more pluralistic patterns (Bouza García 2016). In this respect, a common characteristic between energy, environment, labour, and social affairs is that they are more pluralistic in terms of interest groups' involvement at the EU political level. In this policy domains, there is a greater diversity of organizations with the capacity to take part in the EU decision-making process than in those with an economic nature (Pollack 1997). They are unpredictable in terms of interests' involvement, as their outcomes are usually discussed in open and accessible issue networks (Bomberg and Peterson 1993). Thus, these patterns of media attention may reflect the internal dynamics of the EU decision-making process. Another explanation may be associated with the political strategies followed by interest groups (see De Bruycker and Beyers 2015). Economic groups have a substantial influence in the development of EU normative related to economic, agriculture and fishing affairs (Dür and Bièvre 2007; Dür 2008a). In some circumstances, these actors may avoid obtaining media coverage and act out of the spotlight (Baumgartner et al. 2009) to avoid the mobilization of their opponents. As De Bruycker and Beyers (2015) argue, seeking media coverage is a strategy for change seekers rather than for those that support specific policies.

Second, this research has demonstrated that, as expected, there is a higher diversity of interest groups involved in EU related debates mentioning the European Commission and the European Parliament than the European Council. Being previous literature focused on analysing the degree of vertical Europeanization of national public spheres (e.g. Brüggemann and Kleinen-Von Königslöw 2007; Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2012), this research has provided new insights into the extent to which EU related debates reflect the diversity and accessibility of interest groups to these European institutions. Both the European Commission and Parliament seek to improve the transparent development of the EU-decision making process, being more accessible to the interest groups' participation. Conversely, the European Council has a more intergovernmental character, seeking to achieve consensus in EU decisions among member states. Interest groups have more difficulties to influence this European institution, as European Council members' positions are frequently set at the domestic arena once these meetings begin (McLaughlin et al. 1993). Thus, it has been expected to be a higher diversity of interest groups in EU related debates mentioning the European Commission and the European

Parliament than the European Council. The results illustrate that the media seem to reflect the supranational and intergovernmental dynamics of the EU decision-making process. EU related discussions mentioning the European Parliament were the most accessible for the media visibility of a greater diversity of interest groups in the Spanish media. The openness and accessibility of this European institution was reflected in the media agenda through the greater attention paid to citizens groups. The access of citizens' groups to EU related debates was lower in the case of the European Commission, whereas these actors were virtually absent in those involving the European Council. These results may be explained by the increasing importance of the European Parliament in the EU decision-making process over time, becoming in a decisive target for interest groups (Kohler-Koch 1997). It is perceived a more plural political venue to influence EU decisions, as Euro parliamentarians must promote direct contacts with several actors, like citizens' groups, to try to assure future positive electoral results (Coen and Richardson 2007).

Third, contrary to the expectations of this research, interest groups which participated in the implementation of EU normative through parliamentary hearings, did not obtain media attention in EU related debates. Previous literature has focused on analysing the relationship between the media and interest groups considering the EU decision-making process (e.g. Koopmans 2007). However, scholars have largely neglected the impact of the implementation of EU normative in the access of interest groups to the media agenda. Interest groups do not only play a role in the definition of policy outcomes in the EU decision-making process but participate also in the implementation process at the domestic arena. Thus, it has been expected that interest groups with a role in the implementation process obtain visibility in EU related debates as well, especially on highly politicized issues. The results illustrate that these actors only obtained access to the media agenda on the implementation of labour and social normative in *El País*, while they were absolutely overlooked in *El Mundo*. However, when the media and the parliamentary arenas are compared, it can be noted that Spanish newspapers did not pay any attention to interest groups participating in these hearings. There is no correspondence between the groups which obtained visibility in EU related debates and those that took part in the implementation of normative at the domestic arena. As Chaqués-Bonafont and Muñoz (2016) argue, that parliamentary committees grant access to interest groups as a means of capitalising their resources and to minimise political conflict. In this respect, they play a role as problem-solving institutions where political

actors exchange resources and information to guarantee the effectiveness of the implementation process. Conversely, in the case of oversight activities, opposition parliamentary groups may invite interest groups to try to erode the current position of the governing party, emphasising policy failures and governmental shortcomings. According to these scholars, this is dependent on whether the governing party has the majority of seats. Executive actors with an absolute majority impose their power of veto avoiding the celebration of hearings which might negatively affect their chances of re-election.

Fourth, this research demonstrates that the Euro crisis had a positive impact on the media visibility of interest groups, especially in relation to those previously excluded or not interested in participating in EU related debates. Previous literature has already explored the impact of the Euro crisis on the visibility of interest groups in public spheres (e.g. Kriesi and Grande 2015; Monza 2019). However, this strand of research has mainly based their conclusions only considering the Euro crisis as the period under study, without comparing the non-crisis periods and this critical juncture (see Palau and Ansemil 2020 for an exception). The negative impact of the Euro crisis on society might have modified the distribution, capacity, and incentives of interest groups to obtain visibility in EU related debates, acting as a catalyst for increasing media attention to these actors' positions. Thus, it has been expected that interest groups previously excluded or with low mobilization in EU related debates, such as citizens' groups, trade unions, professional associations or research and public organizations, increase their access to the media agenda during this period. Moreover, previous literature has not approached the question on how the celebration of European Councils during the Euro crisis may have increased their incentives to get access to the media agenda as well. The financial difficulties reinforced the intergovernmental approach in the EU decision-making process in detriment of the European Commission and Parliament. The European Council became in the most active political institution to respond to the challenges associated with the Euro crisis and address the economic governance within the EU decision-making process (Puetter 2012; Fabbrini 2013). They emerged at the centre of responses, objectives, and measures to guarantee the survival of the Euro (Jones et al. 2016). As a result, interest groups might have more incentives to seek to influence the decisions taken by this intergovernmental institution, due to its key role played in the management of the Euro crisis. Thus, this research has also expected that interest groups obtain higher media attention during the celebration of European Council summits during the Euro crisis.

Results show that the Euro crisis only implied a redistribution of the capacity of interest groups to access to the media agenda in *El País*. Concretely, this newspaper paid more attention to those groups previously excluded or with low mobilization in EU related debates. Together with business associations, the media coverage of public debates involving trade unions and professional associations increased, because of the impact of the Euro crisis in key economic and social policy domains. Citizens groups, research institutes and public organizations also improved their visibility in EU related debated published by *El País*, even though not in an unprecedented way. Conversely, the results show that the Euro crisis did not imply a redistribution of their capacity to obtain media attention in EU related debates in *El Mundo*. Business associations were the main beneficiaries from the negative consequences of the Euro crisis in terms of media coverage in this newspaper. Firms, trade unions and professional associations also obtained more attention for their positions than in the non-crisis period. However, this newspaper did not pay an unprecedented attention to these latter organizations. The patterns of media visibility to business associations in both Spanish newspapers were explained by the evolution of the domestic stock exchange which reflects the economic situation of the country. This is in line with previous findings on the importance given to the benefits that the country is believed to obtain from the EU at both the political and economic dimensions, relying on the advantages that the membership offers in terms of economic prosperity (Díez Medrano 1995; 2007). The evolution of the Spanish economic situation through the domestic stock exchange is an important indicator for the Spanish media to analyse how the EU impacts on domestic interests.

European Council summits in the Euro crisis had a limited effect in the redistribution of the media attention to interest groups in EU related debates. This impact was more limited in *El País* than in *El Mundo*. When these events took place, the capacity of citizens' groups and trade unions to access to the media agenda in *El País* increased in detriment of economic groups, even though not in an unprecedented way. Conversely, *El Mundo* paid a substantial attention, as expected, to citizens' groups. Business associations, professional organizations and research and public organization also obtained more media coverage in this newspaper, coinciding with the celebration of European Council summits. Nevertheless, unlike citizens' groups, this increasing media attention was rather scarce.

Finally, like in the analysis of executive actors and political parties, results show that the media are not impartial observers but might be actively involved in the process of giving some actors more attention in public debates to support their political allies. They introduce their own ideological preferences in the public debate. In line with the media political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Baumgartner and Chaqués-Bonafont 2015), the results reflect that there was a higher diversity of interest groups in EU related debates published by *El País* than *El Mundo*. These ideological preferences also influenced the selection of actors which obtained visibility in EU related debates. For instance, the consumers' organization FACUA, with a progressive orientation, obtained more media attention in *El País*, whereas *El Mundo* followed more intensively EU related debates involving the conservative OCU. Moreover, in line with previous literature (Binderkrantz et al. 2015), institutional groups, such as research and public organizations, were more associated with the media coverage in *El País*, whereas identity groups representing the victims of ETA terrorism obtained higher access to the media agenda in *El Mundo*. This might be explained by the prominence of certain affairs on the political agenda and, concretely, the importance that the right-wing media outlet places on the victims of ETA terrorism (Chaqués and Baumgartner 2013). Finally, the political preferences of the Spanish media also influenced which EU related debates obtained visibility in their contents. Discussion on the impact of the EU on both national economic interest for the country and economic groups obtained more prominence in *El Mundo*. *El País* not only gave importance to these EU related discussions, but also it paid attention to concerns related to the impact of the EU integration on domestic social interests, giving more visibility to the position of actors such as trade unions.

Implications and future research goals

The findings of this thesis are relevant for evaluations on the quality of democratic media systems. The Spanish media do not seem to act as civic forum (Norris 2000) for a diversity of viewpoints, but mainly promote official and resourceful sources in EU related debates. This could be explained because generally EU affairs and European integration in Spain do not meet the dimensions required for the politicization of issues: saliency, polarization of the debate and actor expansion (De Wilde 2016, Grande and Hutter 2016). Yet, public debates on EU institutions and policies are necessary as they have many implications on domestic policy making and citizens daily life. The underrepresentation in these debates

of opposition parties and some interest groups, like citizens' groups, may be problematic from a normative viewpoint as it might affect the legitimacy and accountability of domestic and EU institutions (Koopmans 2007). These excluded actors are important representatives of citizens' interests in the political system and, moreover, obtaining visibility might grant higher control on executive actions, a question of great importance in terms of guaranteeing accountability mechanisms. The thesis demonstrates that these actors are virtually absent in discussions on the development of EU normative at both the European and domestic arenas, processes with increasing implications for the domestic legislation. This can be related to difficulties to get access to the media arena, to overcome the gatekeeping power of the media, but also to the fact that most of these actors might not have a public pre-set position on most EU related issues, with the exception of highly politicized affairs, for example immigration issues. Yet, the point is that not even the Euro crisis, one of the most important critical junctures in the integration process and where domestic actors raised critical voices against EU policies, did not increase the plurality of the debate and critical voice were hardly heard in public debates. The limited diversity of the debate, with a low visibility of opposition parties and actors from civil society, plus the lack of debate and visibility of EU actual decisions may aggravate the citizens' lack of knowledge about the impact of the EU in domestic politics and the increasing mistrust in European institutions, contributing to reinforce the democratic deficit. It does not favour either the consolidation of an European public sphere and the development of a common European identity among citizens (Bergbauer 2018). Yet, in order to properly evaluate these implications it would be necessary to explore the dynamics of media coverage in other EU countries and also of other issues to see whether this predominance of executive actors and economic interest groups is exclusive of EU affairs or characteristics of a more general media coverage dynamic. Theories of media-state relations have already emphasized that the media look to public officials as the source of most of the daily news they report, which constrains the range of voices heard in public debates, but important differences exist among type of issues (e.g. Bennett 1990, 2012, 2016, Soroka 2002). More research is required also regarding the net effect of the media on public opinion and the political outcome. This is especially worth of study given the avalanche of media visibility to radical right parties critical with the EU project in the last decade, and the positive impact of media attention on sympathies for these parties (Ellinas 2018, Berning et al. 2019). In the case of Spain, it would be of interest to look at the visibility and policy position of VOX in recent EU related debates.

An obvious limitation of this research is its case study nature which raises problems for the generalization of results. One of the main objectives of this doctoral thesis has been to develop the first stage of an automatic coding application to detect and codify all elements belonging to claims in the media. This tool has been designed in such a way that it may be used by the research field in the near future. Hence, because the complexity of the empirical study, based on a long-term analysis and a great number of claims, it was decided to conduct a single case study to improve the automatic coding application and guarantee the reliability of the results. However, exploring the similarities and differences among media outlets in different member states would have provided more broaden and precise conclusions on the variables that influence the visibility of political actors in EU related debates and their consequences.

Moreover, this research does not address the implications of discursive exchanges in EU related debates. The analysis has only focused on the claimants, those political actors who take part actively in these public discussions. Complementary data on, for instance, the addressee or the object actors would contribute to obtain more insights into how the relationships between political actors are developed in public debates on European affairs. This would also provide more accurate information on the extent to which domestic political actors either have incorporated the EU as a part of their domestic competition or it only plays an indirect role within them. Similarly, by including the analysis of the tone or the frame it would contribute to take accurate conclusions on the motivations of these political actors to use the EU, for example, to attack the incumbent. The automatic coding application already detects and code these variables in the database. However, more tests and techniques, such as machine learning, will be implemented to improve their proper detection. Additionally, the database created will allow to conduct further research considering both claim-analysis and media studies approaches. With this aim in mind, the Web Scraping applications have also considered variables like the political actors' position within the news contents which is used to obtain conclusions about their prominence in public debates. The results obtained by the automatic coding application are consistent with previous findings on the media visibility of political actors in public debates on European affairs within the research field. However, these results are mainly based on sentences or claims including an explicit subject or claimant. Currently, it is working on diverse algorithms to improve the detection of implicit claimants within the claims in public debates on European affairs. Including these type of claims in the

analysis would allow to obtain more precise insights into the media coverage of domestic actors in EU related debates.

Even though a long-term study is included in this thesis, bringing the analysis up to date would allow exploring interesting aspects such as the impact of the events occurred around the Catalan referendum in 2017 and successive political debates, where an EU frame was used by both supporters and opponents of Catalan's bid for secession. It would also allow exploring better the media coverage of parties like *Podemos*, that was founded close to the end of the period under analysis in this thesis. Additionally, this research has focused on the media attention to executive actors from the central government and opposition parties. Including regional executive actors would bring further knowledge about the development of independence processes as well as how these domestic actor obtain media coverage for their use of the EU to obtain their political objectives. Finally, this research has been based on the analysis of online traditional media. Further research should consider how political actors and public opinion mobilizes in European affairs through social media sources. The democratization of web publishing has allowed to increase the number of opinions and viewpoints expressed on the internet (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Social media sources may be useful communication venues that allows citizens and political actors to become more active expressing their positions and demands in different policy domains. At the same time, they might intensify direct interactions between them. For example, political actors may send signals to society and their members, without being constrained by the limited space and capacity to influence traditional media agenda. Moreover, the study of public expressions through social media provides a great opportunity to analyse large amounts of data and "identify multiples dimensions of support and influence dynamics" (Cristancho et al. 2020).

5. References

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Annexes

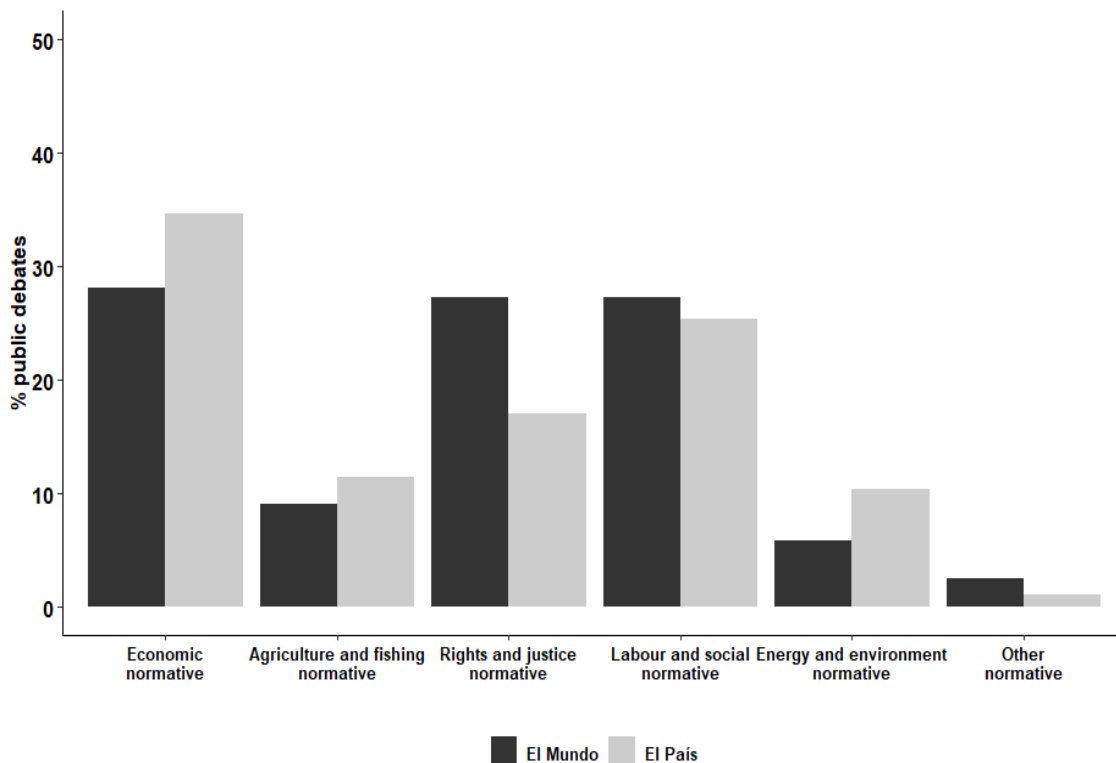
Annex 1. Attitudes towards the EU integration and European policies

The scheme proposed by Kopecky and Mudde (2002), instead, is more practical. These authors frame the attitudes towards the EU integration and specific European policies in four variants within two main dimensions:

		Support for the EU integration	
		Europhiles	Europhobes
Support for the procedure	Eurooptimistics	Euroenthusiatics	Europragmatics
	Europeessimists	Eurosceptics	Eurorejectors

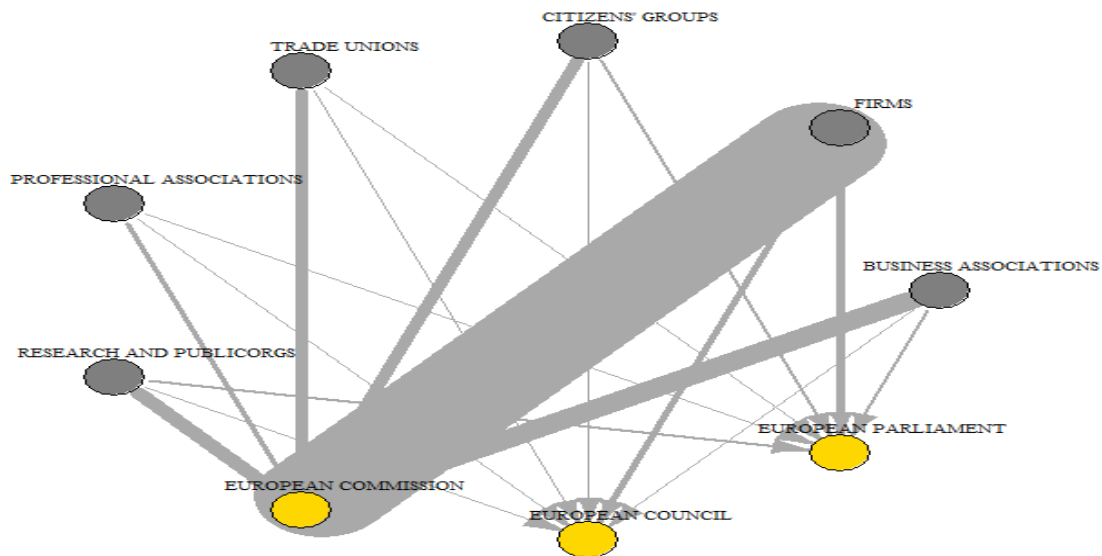
Source: Kopecky and Mudde 2002

Annex 2. Percentage of EU related debates on European normative involving executive actors and political parties from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU-related news published by El País and El Mundo

Annex 3. Percentage of interest groups' claims in EU related stories mentioning a European institution in *El País* from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by El País and El Mundo

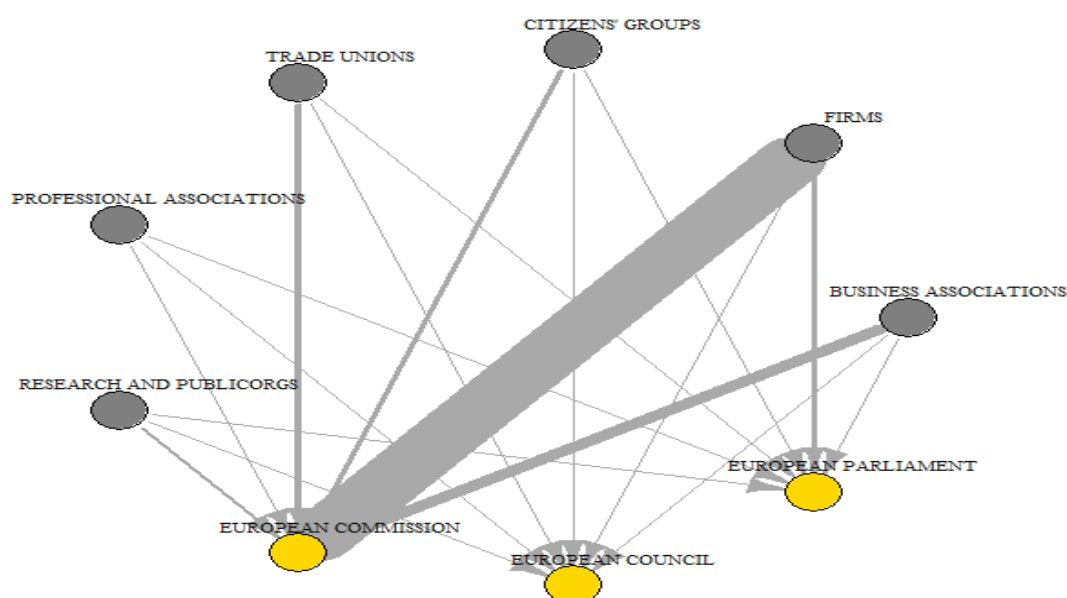
Note: In the analysis has been analysed the distribution of interest groups' claims in EU related stories mentioning each European institution individually. From the media perspective, the analysis gives an answer, for example, to the question "What is the percentage of interest groups' claims in EU related stories mentioning the European Commission?" Hence, this question provides insights into the percentage of interest groups' claims made by any of these organizations. For example, it has been found that among the total number of interest groups' claims in EU related debates mentioning the European commission in *El País*, 59.01% were made by firms and 6.41% by citizens' groups. However, from an interest groups' perspective, another interesting question is related to which is the main target of interest groups' claims in public debates on European affairs. In this respect, it refers to the question "Considering the total number of claims made by firms, what did proportion of their claims obtain visibility in EU related debates mentioning the European Commission?". For example, about 88% of firms' claims obtained visibility in discussions related to this political institution in *El País*. Similarly, more than 76% of citizens' groups' claims gained access to the media agenda in these discussions, whereas more than 23% were associated to the European Parliament in this newspaper²⁸.

²⁸ See Annex 4.

Annex 4. Percentage of interest groups' claims in EU related stories mentioning a European institution in *El País* from 2005 to 2015

	European Commission	European Parliament	European Council
Business associations	82.86	10.86	6.29
Firms	87.98	6.59	5.43
Citizens' groups	76.29	23.71	0.00
Trade unions	77.78	15.56	6.67
Professional associations	78.95	18.42	2.63
Research and public orgs.	73.68	18.80	7.52
Others	84.85	10.61	4.55

Annex 5. Percentage of interest groups' claims in EU related stories mentioning a European institution in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015

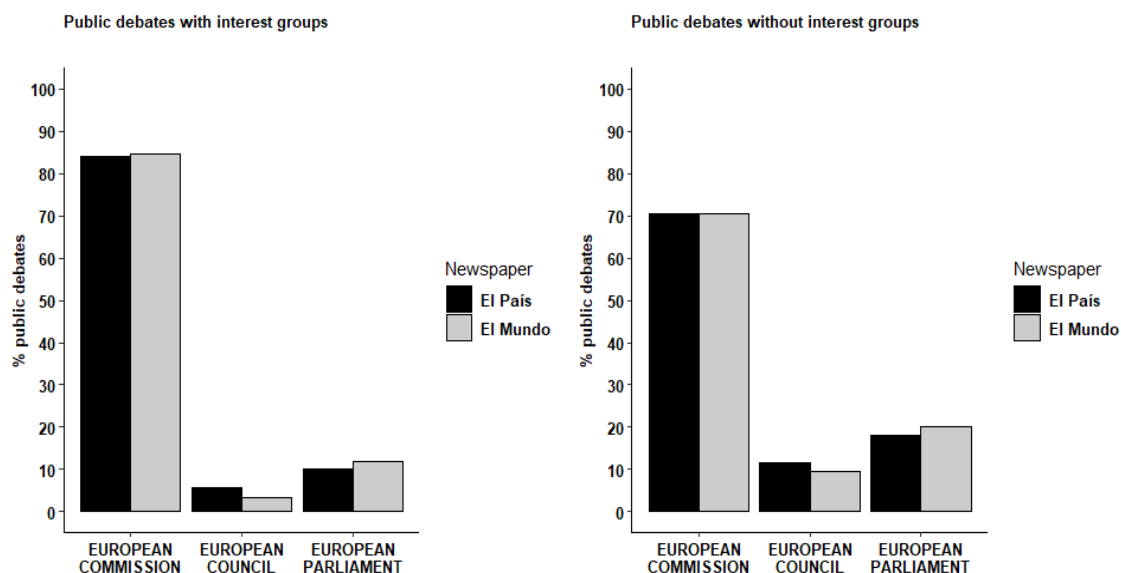


Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by El País and El Mundo

Annex 6. Percentage of interest groups' claims in EU related stories mentioning a European institution in *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2015

	European Commission	European Parliament	European Council
Business associations	87.91	9.89	2.20
Firms	89.43	7.22	3.35
Citizens' groups	75.00	25.00	0.00
Trade unions	82.69	7.69	9.62
Professional associations	91.67	8.33	0.00
Research and public org.	73.53	26.47	0.00
Others	81.25	15.62	3.12

Annex 7. Percentage of EU related debates mentioning European institutions from 2005 to 2015



Elaborated by the author using data from EU related news published by EL Pais and El Mundo