

Reporting (in) Europe

Heuristic remarks on old and new research about “European journalism”

by Holger Sievert

1. Introduction

‘This book appears at a time of increasing concern about the ways politics is communicated to the public. Such concerns have been expressed by media researchers and other academics engaged in the study of politics, as well as by some media professionals and politicians both in the US and in Britain...and elsewhere, in many other liberal-democratic societies. It would be no exaggeration to describe this state of affairs as a *crisis of civic communication*.’ Thus begins the much-discussed book by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995: 1) on ‘The Crisis of Public Communication.’ The authors’ observations about political communication in Western-style nation states in general are even truer of communication in transnational entities like the European Union.

According to many experts, the European Union is moving toward realization of its vision at at least two different speeds. What is truly shocking is that there has been very little progress with respect to either analyses or problems since the 1990s. ‘While the process of economic and political integration has made great strides, the development of a European public is lagging far behind.’ Gerhards (1993b: 96). As Mattelart observed, ‘L’homogénéisation des sociétés est inhérente à l’unification du champ économique.’ (1996: 4). That same year, the German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* (cf. Schmid 1996: 51) put it even more bluntly: ‘Europe has no public opinion. Opinions in and about Europe, yes, but they are always shaped by a national perspective. Only very few politicians voice European arguments, and few citizens think in terms of Europe. No television programs or newspapers provide European information.’

More recent studies show no appreciable difference in this situation. ‘[T]here is, so far, simply no European journalism to be found in Europe,’ as Russ-Mohl (2003: 205) rather

provocatively summarizes research results up to that time, although he ultimately softened that statement somewhat, as we shall show later on. According to Delanty and Rumford (2005: 104), 'The European public sphere differs from conventional public spheres, whether national or transnational, in that it is polyvocal, articulated in different languages and through different cultural models and repertoires of justifications, and occurs in very different institutional contexts.' Finally, Prinzing (2006: 11) arrives at the following conclusion in a secondary analysis of current studies: 'The political culture of a nation state continues to provide the framework for journalistic work, and thus shapes the face of the journalistic culture.'

This lack of a European public means that the field of public relations faces new challenges every day, both in theory and in practice. On the practical level, this mainly involves the narrower arena of political communication, but businesses as well are required to adjust to a wide variety of European sub-publics, not only in their public relations, but at the basic level of product-related communications. 'Each country of Europe has developed a subtly different kind of media,' as Burton and Drake (2004: 15) observed in their practical handbook on media relations in Europe. 'In fact, the idea of a 'European media landscape' is in itself a misnomer: nothing much links the sensationalism of Albania to a British broadsheet or a long French analytical feature.'

With respect to PR theory, van Ruler and Vercic (cf. 2004a) demonstrate in their excellent anthology how differently the science of public relations is approached in different European countries, as well as how helpful this can be for a productive exchange. 'Nevertheless, little is known about typical aspects of public relations in Europe and to date, there has been little exchange of knowledge.' (Ruler and Vercic 2004b: 1) Bentele (2004: 492) sees this topic as 'a starting point to compare different traditions, structures and problems of public relations practice and public relations research in various European countries. At the same time it can be seen as a contribution to an as yet underdeveloped sub-discipline of public relations research: international comparative studies in public relations or communication management.'

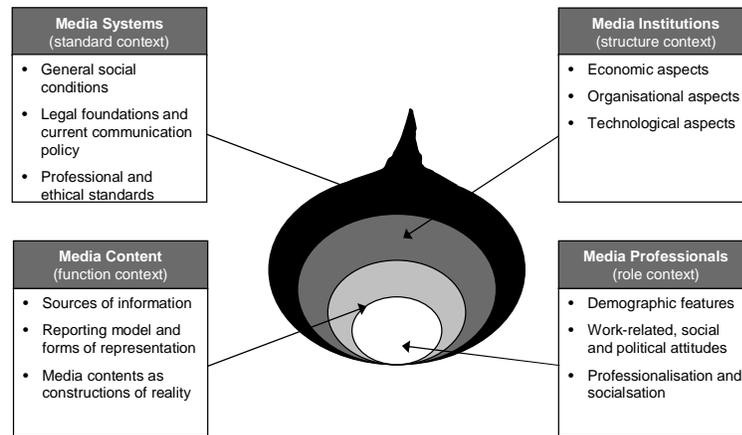
One of the most important aspects of the practice and science of public relations, al-

though it is no longer the central one, continues to be the field of media relations. In order to address the issue of 'Europe as a communication challenge' (cf. Vercic et al. 2006) from the perspective of PR experts, it is essential to have some fundamental knowledge of both the differences and the shared features that exist in the media or, more concretely, in the social system of journalism in the various EU member states. The aim of this article is therefore to offer a brief heuristic introduction, but also a systematic comparison, of 'European journalism.' It is based on an extensive treatment of the subject by the author (cf. Sievert 1998) which has been updated and used for drawing a historical comparison. The phenomenon mentioned at the outset is alarming: the basic problems of European communication have changed only slightly over the past decade. While the real challenges have been clearly identified at least since the early 1990s, we unfortunately cannot report that there have been successful efforts at finding a solution.

2. Methodological framework for the analysis

In order to analyze 'European journalism,' we first need an adequately differentiated heuristic working model. Here the author has chosen a model that reflects system-related theoretical considerations within the German-speaking world (cf. Sievert 1999). It begins with the idea of a territorially differentiated social system called 'journalism' whose function involves the 'self-observation of society' based on the code 'currently worth publishing/currently not worth publishing.' The relevant medium is described by the dual term 'public/publishing sector.' Intra-systemic relationships have been described, following Weischenberg, in the sense of a multi-perspective theoretical approach using four interrelated contexts.

Figure 1:
Journalism as a 'social system' can be described with the metaphor of an 'onion'



(Weischenberg 1992)

In his article, Weischenberg differentiates according to journalism's normative, structural, functional and role-related contexts, which relate to the media's systems, institutions, messages and actors (cf. Weischenberg 1992: 67-70). He describes these contexts as an "onion" in order to highlight the areas of interdependence and the reciprocal effects they have on one another. The external framework of the journalism system (or the outer 'peel of the onion') is the standard context. This involves the recognized standards of a media system, including general social conditions, historical and legal foundations, influences from communication policy, as well as professional and ethical standards. The structural context develops within this standard context. The structural context encompasses the economic, political, organizational and technological imperatives facing media institutions. The system and institutions in turn affect the media message, which Weischenberg assigns to the functional context. The functional context involves issues of information sources and reference groups, patterns of reporting and presentation, effects and repercussions — in short, the concrete ways in which the media construct reality. Media actors, who are observed in the context of their roles, find themselves confronted with all of these contexts, which affect their

specific and ultimately subject-dependent professional actions. Demographic characteristics of these actors are of interest in studying journalism, as are their social, professional and political attitudes and the course of their conventional training as well as their lives as a whole.

In the following pages, we shall analyze heuristically the respective international synchronicity within the framework described above. The term 'international synchronicity' is used broadly, referring to all four contexts that were examined. Of course, we analyze the presence of simultaneous media content in various aspects of the journalistic system within the nation state and its reciprocal effects, in particular by examining reports on the European Union. In addition, we address the issue of synchronicity of media systems,¹ institutions and actors, i.e. the structures in this area that can be observed at the present time, or 'synchronically,' and hence ultimately the issue of similarity among these contexts during the 1990s. Given a systemic understanding of journalism, in which journalistic messages are not produced in a vacuum, this examination appears to be absolutely essential.

Formally, we can distinguish between two types of international synchronicity, which we shall here term formal synchronicity, and content synchronicity. A given feature is formally synchronous if it is found in all countries analyzed, but is fundamentally different in its substance. One example would be the fact that the media in all countries report primarily on their own countries, but that country is a different one in each case. A feature can be said to exhibit content synchronicity if it is found in the same concrete form in each analyzed country. For example, all EU countries report with particular frequency on the three largest EU countries, Germany, France and Great Britain. Formal and content synchronicity together converge into another feature which we call general synchronicity. This feature reflects the fact that it is often impossible, in practice, to make a clear distinction between the two first types of synchronicity, and it is not necessary to do so for the general comparison at issue here.

¹ The term 'system' is overused in German social science, but we cannot avoid using it in the present article, for reasons of linguistic esthetics and readability as well as in order to conform to existing terminology. However, we should like to point out explicitly that when we refer to 'media systems' or 'press systems,' not to mention 'decoder systems' or 'reception systems,' we are referring to existing general academic discourse and are not using these terms in the sense of a 'system' in system theory. The social systems 'journalism,' 'politics,' 'business,' 'culture' and 'science' should be distinguished from these undifferentiated systems. The former will always be referred to in the singular as 'social systems' or as a 'journalistic' or 'political system.'

Note that a feature with a high degree of formal synchronicity but little content synchronicity by no means guarantees a high likelihood of successful communication, but rather an average likelihood.

In concrete terms, our aim is to determine the degree of international synchronicity for the contexts and features referred to above, as well as — since we are dealing only with EU countries — the resulting degree of Europeanization of individual aspects of the four defined contexts. It is clear that the term ‘Europeanization’ is limited here, since we have had to concentrate for reasons of focus and research constraints on countries within the European Union. It is equally clear that international and European synchronicity are two separate phenomena, if we see ‘European’ as reflecting a certain quality. Initially, however, the term is used primarily in a geographical sense, which nonetheless ultimately has substantive implications. If all EU countries exhibit similar functional structures in a specific aspect of the differentiation of their journalistic systems, this increases the probability of successful communication among them, almost regardless of whether that feature is specifically European or not. Thus the issue of the international synchronicity of the journalistic system in the European Union ultimately also involves the issue of their European synchronicity. Accordingly, we shall not distinguish below between these other forms of synchronicity.

Thus the difficulty of the study described below lies not in the distinction between general international and specifically European synchronicity, but in two other interrelated areas. First, subjects like general social conditions, legal foundations or the professionalization of media actors are specific and individual phenomena that need to be given proper examination and consideration, as we shall do below. Of course, the extensive remarks relating to the empirical part of this article, underscoring that data and features included in a transnational comparison need to be functionally equivalent, apply to this chapter as well. In cases where this equivalence is not necessarily apparent, particularly with respect to empirical studies and statistics (cf. Hofmann 1992: 105f.), further methodological consideration is needed to ensure the desired degree of international comparability. Furthermore, it is difficult to select the countries to be analyzed in connection with a certain feature, particularly since

there is a serious lack of truly comparative literature, hence the countries chosen vary from one of the following subchapters to another.

**Table 1:
Degrees of Europeanisation can be identified for individual ‘skins’ of the onion**

Degree of Europeanisation	Symbol	Definition
5	*****	Feature largely identifies only EU-wide transnational structures
4c	****	High international synchronicity with respect to the feature, several central aspects identify EU-wide transnational structures
4b	****	High international synchronicity with respect to the feature, individual aspects identify EU-wide transnational structures
4a	****	High international synchronicity with respect to the feature, but no or hardly any EU-wide transnational structures can be identified
3c	***	Medium international synchronicity with respect to the feature, several central aspects identify EU-wide transnational structures
3b	***	Medium international synchronicity with respect to the feature, individual aspects identify EU-wide transnational structures
3a	***	Medium international synchronicity with respect to the feature, but no or hardly an EU-wide transnational structures can be identified
2c	**	Low international synchronicity with respect to the feature, several central aspects identify EU-wide transnational structures
2b	**	Low international synchronicity with respect to the feature, individual aspects identify EU-wide transnational structures
2a	**	Low international synchronicity with respect to the feature, but no EU-wide transnational structures can be identified
1	*	No or hardly any international synchronicity with respect to the feature can be identified

(Sievert 1998)

It is crucial in carrying out this sort of overarching theoretical and empirical study to define a comparative measure that can be explained at least heuristically, and one that allows for a comprehensive overview of the study's results. The degrees of Europeanization as defined in Table 1 have been formulated to meet the need for a heuristic comparison. The first step was to identify four comparative levels of general international synchronicity within the journalistic system in Europe: no or hardly any, low, medium and high international synchronicity. Owing to space limitations, we shall describe their use schematically for the purposes of argument and illustration, using existing material, but analyzing it here for the first time in this form. The four comparison measures listed above are identified as degrees of Europeanization 1 (no or hardly any international synchronicity) to 4 (high international synchronicity). At least in the case of the respective summaries, the formal distinction between

functional and content synchronicity converges in the measure of general synchronicity, without any further explicit differentiation.

In addition, we consider the question of whether the feature at issue contains 'genuine,' in particular legally and/or institutionally determined EU-wide transnational structures. This includes, for example, arrangements applying to all member states that are based on EU guidelines. This criterion is taken into account by attaching to the degrees of Europeanization from 2 to 4 the letter 'a' (no or hardly any such structure), 'b' (such structures are present in connection with individual aspects of a feature) or 'c' (such structures are present in several central aspects). If the analyzed feature contains only EU-wide transnational structures, it is assigned the highest degree of Europeanization, '5.' This grid is so complex that we cannot do proper justice to it in the following analysis, given space limitations. However, we present it here in the interest of completeness.

3. Selected results concerning the degree of Europeanization of individual journalism contexts

Let us turn now to a closer examination and analysis of the various 'layers of the onion' based on the degrees of Europeanization outlined above. Obviously this can only be done in outline form within the limited scope of this article. Accordingly, we shall focus on media content and media actors, giving only brief consideration to the degrees of Europeanization of media systems and institutions and focusing on results (for more extensive information, see Sievert 1998: 72-111).

3.1 Standard and structure context

In the case of the general standard context of media systems, based on Balle (2004 :79), we can assume a medium level of international synchronicity (cf. Table 3). This applies particularly to general social conditions, which are those of a Western democracy in all of the

EU member states; however, there are substantial differences in the political and social contexts, particularly since the expansion of the EU to the south and east. This is clearly apparent in the area of media use; for example, in 1991/92 daily newspaper circulation per one thousand inhabitants was only 39 in Portugal and 83 in Greece; Germany and Great Britain occupied a middle position with 324 and 351 respectively; and Sweden and Finland were at the top of the scale, with 490 and 512 respectively (Sievert 1998: 74, based on 1994: 79, Lemoine 1992: 32, Alphon 1994 and the Office for the Official Publications of the European Communities 1996: 4). These differences for the most part remain large, although there have been changes in the absolute numbers since that time. As the World Association of Newspapers noted in its online annual report (2002), 'Over the five years 1997-2001, circulation declined in ten EU countries: -4.9 percent in Belgium; -10.7 percent in Denmark; -1.12 percent in Finland; -0.7 percent in France; -6.4 percent in Germany; -11.4 percent in Greece; -11.5 percent in Luxembourg; -7.9 percent in the Netherlands; -4.9 percent in Sweden; and -8.7 percent in the United Kingdom. Four countries increased circulation over the five-year period: Austria (+2.4 percent); Ireland (+8.1 percent); Italy (+3.7 percent); and Spain (+2.9 percent).' Similarly large national differences can be observed in other media, such as magazines and television viewing habits. According to Hallin and Macini (2004: 64), the difference between newspaper and television use (with the latter lower in Scandinavia and German-speaking countries and higher in southern Europe) reflects the rate of literacy at the end of the 19th century. However, differentiating between the print media on the one hand and audiovisual media on the other, the question of an international synchronization of the standard context can be addressed in terms of legal conditions and ethical norms: while standards governing print media competition are particularly high owing to the EU role in this area, AV media are generally still governed by a variety of national legal arrangements and thus exhibit only a low level of international synchronicity. Conversely, AV media are sometimes subject to higher and more uniform professional standards (medium degree of Europeanization), while there is a great deal of difference among the print media in the various EU countries in this regard.

The highest degree of international synchronicity within the 'onion' is seen in the structure context of media institutions, and it is even higher for print media than for audiovisual media. In both cases this is due not least to the effects of the EU role in regulating economic affairs. In fact, this was the first and only case in our analysis in which something resembling EU-specific structures was identified in the private media industry. As a recent paper issued by the Commission of the European Union (2005: 5) put it, '[T]he future role of public policy is to create favourable conditions for the industry and support a posture of vigilance and innovation into the future. This will help European publishing to realize its full potential in the digital economy, by maintaining and enhancing its competitiveness. Maximizing the potential of publishing will also promote the diversity of opinion and culture that the peoples of Europe need in order to derive the richest benefits from the information society.' While synchronicity in economic, organizational and technical matters is thus equally high in the realm of print media, only a medium level of synchronicity can be observed for the latter two aspects in the audiovisual context. This can be accounted for in part by the widely differing legal conditions governing audiovisual products in the various EU countries, a factor that was mentioned in the context of standards. At the same time, it should be noted that despite efforts and some progress in this regard, basic technical standards continue to lack uniformity within Europe.

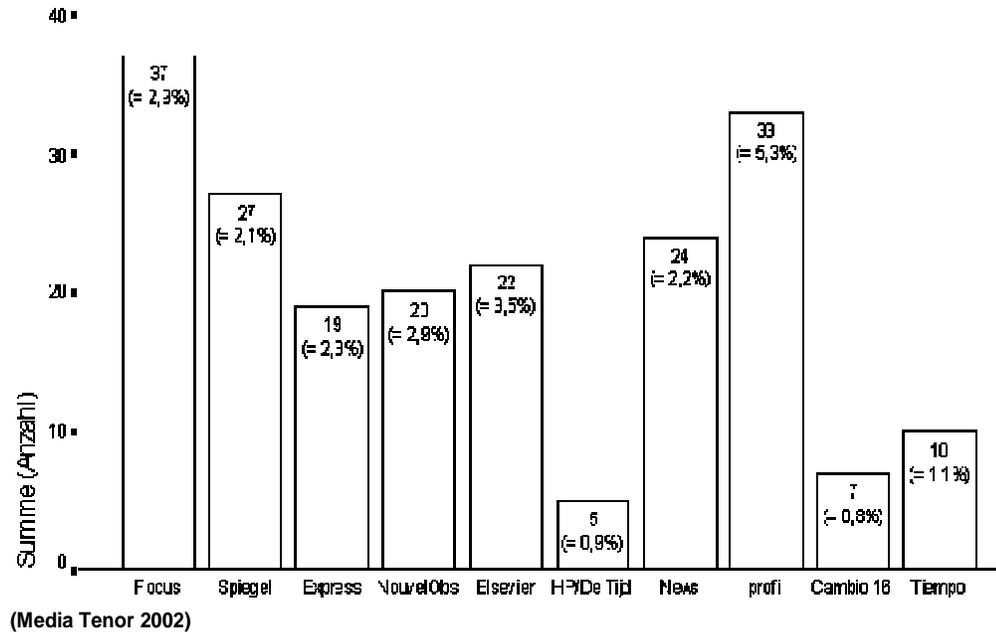
3.2 Function context

We shall look more closely at the next layer of the 'onion': the *function context* of media content. In carrying out the relevant content analysis, the author referred to his own 1996 study of ten print newsmagazines from five countries as well as more recent and longitudinal results from the Media Tenor research institute (regarding methodological design and its limitations, see Sievert 1998: 159-207 and Media Tenor 2005: 87). For reasons of topic and space, we shall deal in our analysis only with materials that explicitly focus on the European Union. Out of a total of 8,704 articles from the above-mentioned newsmagazines, there were

204 articles appearing during the first half of 1996 that were at least one page long and which indicated in their headings, lead texts, graphics, photographs or photo captions that concerned the topic of the European Union or one of its institutions. In the case of Media Tenor, there were 249,876 general reports in seven German television news programs as well as 76,250 reports in four English TV news programs and 49,806 reports in the German media lasting for at least five seconds or taking up five lines of print, all of them occurring between the beginning of 2003 and the autumn of 2005.

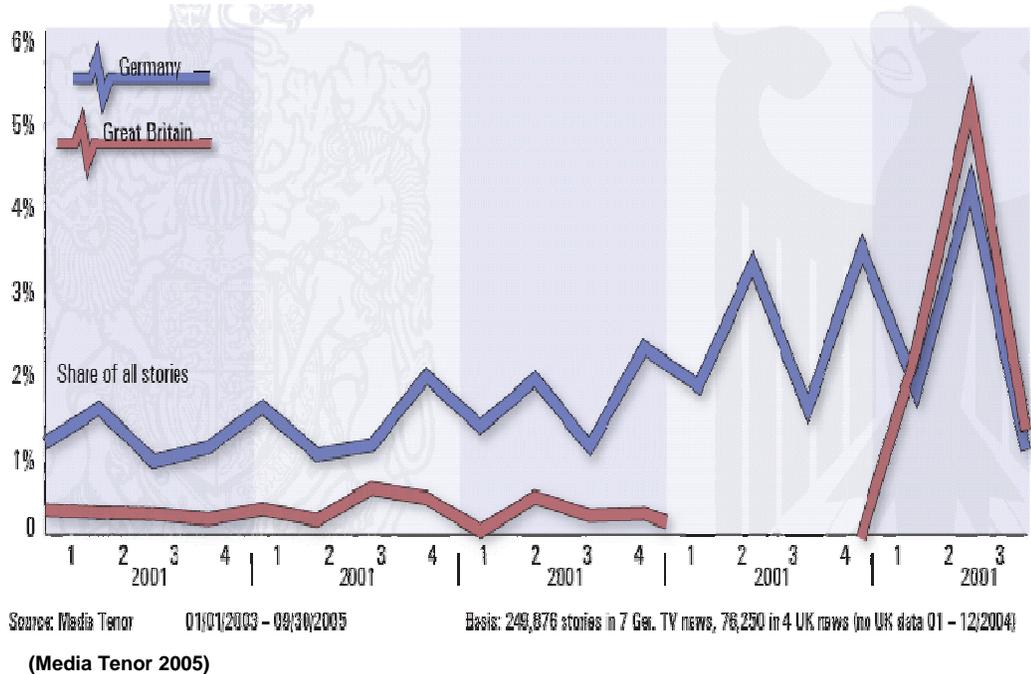
The European Union is a topic to which the print newsmagazines in the various countries attached a differing level of importance. This is clear both from the absolute numbers of EU articles and from the proportion of such articles relative to the total number of articles of at least one page. Figure 2 shows both facts. In absolute terms, *Focus*, with 37 articles on the EU, reported most often on this topic, followed by *Profil* with 33 relevant subjects. The Austrian magazine also provided relatively frequent reporting on the institutions of the European Union, with more than five percent of all articles in second place, although considerable behind the leader, was *Elsevier*, with 3.5 percent. In last place with respect to reporting on Europe, in terms of both absolute numbers and percentages, were *Cambio 16* and *HP/De Tijd*, which published less than one-fifth as many such articles as the respective leader. Overall, however, we conclude that there was a medium level of international synchronicity, owing to the relatively similar results for six of the magazines, which ranged from 2.2 to 3.5 percent.

Figure 2:
In the initial study, the media coverage of EU differed according country and title



It is interesting to note that a heuristic comparison some ten years later shows practically no difference. Figure 3 is limited to Great Britain and Germany, and addresses a different medium, but here too it is immediately clear that there are pronounced national differences in the coverage of EU topics. Media Tenor (2005: 84) offered the following comments on these and other results: ‘The spectacular rejection of the draft constitution for the EU by the people in the Netherlands and in France could have triggered a debate about the direction Europe should head for in the future. But just to the contrary, the visibility of European politics has decreased notably in the summer of 2005 – and not only in pre-election Germany. ...Soon after the Eastern enlargement of the European Union, things started to come apart visibly. ...a broad public debate about the draft constitution for Europe prepared by the European Convention might have been a good chance to revive the discussion about the common ground in European politics. At least in German TV news European affairs loomed larger since the second quarter of 2004.’

Figure 3:
Similar results can be found in current analyses, e. g. within television news

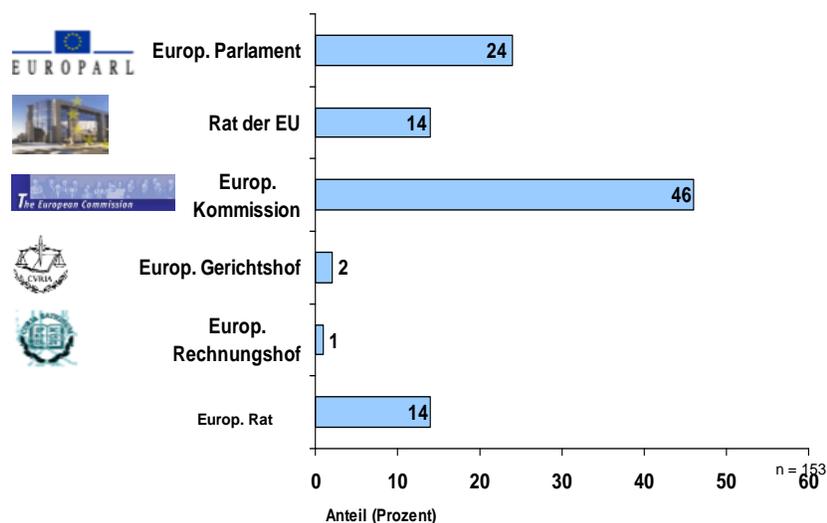


Also of interest are clear national differences in the question of which EU institutions or other bodies are the specific subject of reporting.² Our coding was based on the most prominent instance in which the EU was mentioned, i.e. on which EU institution was first mentioned in the article. Overall, references to such institutions were identified in 75 percent of the cases we analyzed. Figure 4 shows the distribution of references to the various institutions in all of the relevant articles. As expected, the European Commission was the most frequent subject, accounting for nearly half of all articles. It is striking, however, that the second-highest number of reports, nearly one-fourth of the total, dealt not with the Council of Ministers (officially the Council of the European Union) or the European Council, but with the European Parliament. Thus the most immediately democratic body of the EU accounts for a higher proportion of reports than the high-level decision-making bodies at the intergovern-

² The European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Auditors are institutions of the EU in a legal sense; a similar status is assigned in the literature to the European Council, i.e. the Council of the Heads of State and Government, although it is not defined as an institution in the legal sense.

mental level, each of which accounts for 14 percent of EU-related articles. The European Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors do not play a prominent role in such reporting.

Figure 4:
The Commission is on the whole the EU institution that is most reported on in the press

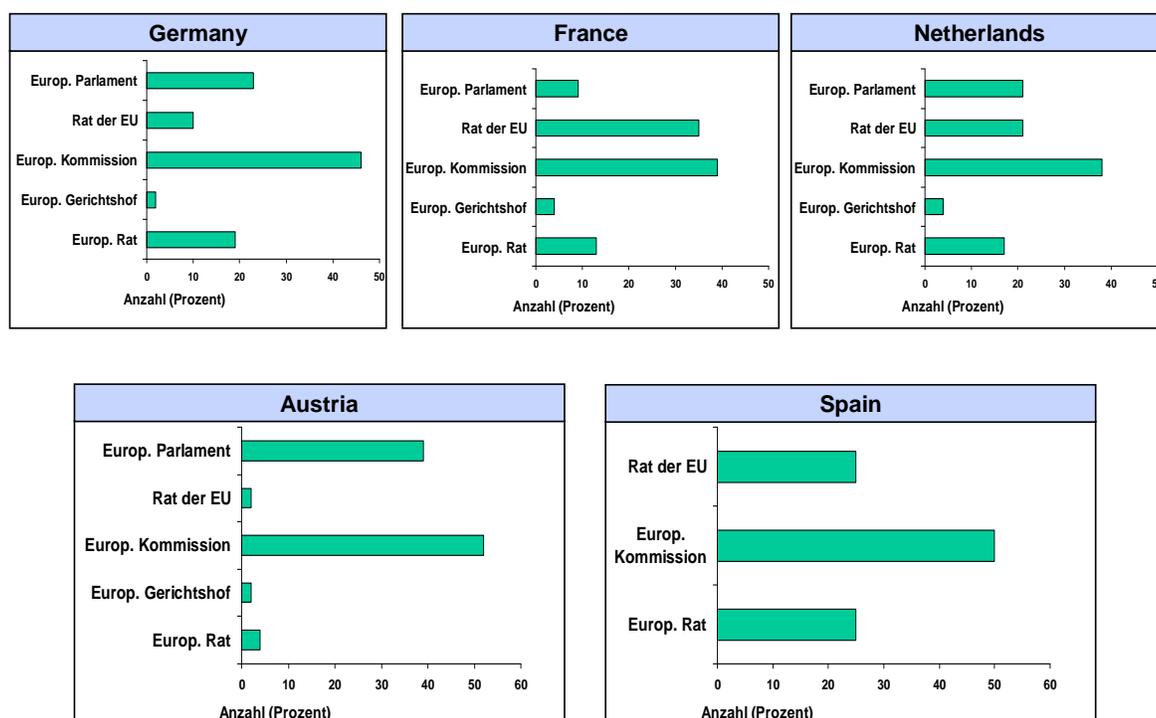


(Press and Information Office of the German Federal Government 1993)

These results hold true for the relevant articles as a whole, but the picture is more complicated for the individual countries in which those articles appeared (cf. Figure 5). Here, too, there is unanimity among the five countries studied with respect to a preference for certain topics, with the European Commission at the top of the list. Thus we can conclude that there is a high degree of international synchronicity, although the results differ somewhat, ranging from 38 to 52 percent. However, when it comes to the second most frequent subject of journalistic reporting among the EU institutions, there are two different camps. While Austria and Germany frequently report on the European Parliament (39 and 23 percent respectively), in France and Spain it is the Council of Ministers that takes second place (in Spain, tied with the European Council). In the Netherlands, both institutions are approximately equal in terms of their coverage. Again, the Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors play no significant role, or even none at all, when the results are examined individually by country. A positive aspect of these results is that overall, as well as in three of the five countries indi-

vidually, as much or more attention is given to the European Parliament, which the media are said to scorn, than to the European Council. Still, the Commission’s position as the focus of reporting remains unrivaled. If we set aside the unusually high results in Austria, which can be explained in terms of current events,³ the number of articles on the European Parliament is at best half the number dealing with the Commission.

Figure 5:
With respect to consideration for the EU institutions, there were country-specific differences



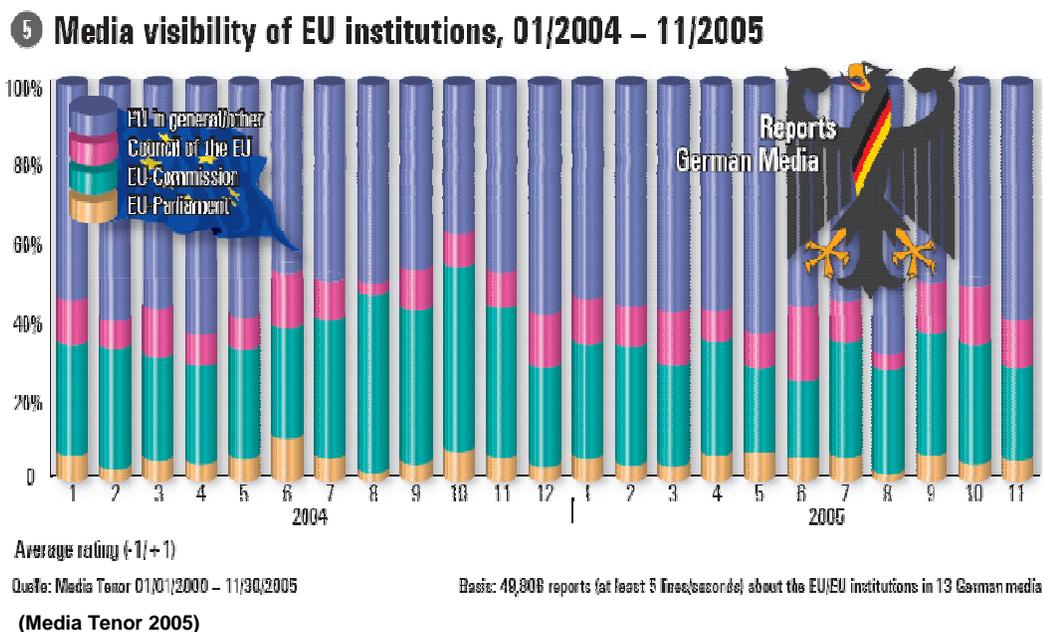
(Press and Information Office of the German Federal Government 1993)

The Media Tenor data we examined for purposes of comparison, which unfortunately deal only with Germany, confirm our results for Germany. However, certain changes were apparent over time with respect to the question of which EU institution was the subject of particularly comprehensive coverage. ‘The biggest deficit in EU coverage stems from the lack of truly European parties and the ensuing deficit of communicative power for the Euro-

³ In Austria, the first direct elections to the European Parliament were held in October of 1996, more than three months after our analysis was concluded. However, the run-up to the elections was during the period of analysis.

pean legislative’, concluded Media Tenor (2005: 86) in interpreting its own data. ‘Only 5.3% of all descriptions dealt with the EU Parliament and solely in the context of the European Elections in 2004 did the share of media awareness of the legislative body exceed the mark of 10%. On the other hand about 30% of the EU coverage in German media focused on the European Commission and another 10.7% on the European Council including its Presidency. The European Council loomed larger in the media than the Parliament in every single month since January 2004.’

Figure 6:
At least in German media, the situation hasn’t changed a lot – compared to new data



Based on these and other studies, we can conclude that reports on the European Union in the print media manifest only a low degree of international synchronicity. They differ among the various print newsmagazines as well as the countries in which they appear, with respect to their frequency, presentation and content. For the simple reason that audiovisual

media often use the same sources of visual materials and similar international program formats, there is a higher degree of synchronicity in the audiovisual sphere.

3.4 Role context

At the time that the first paper —mentioned several times above —was written, there was a real dearth of research involving internationally comparable journalism surveys. It took a great deal of work to compile and analyze data on only three countries (cf. Sievert 1998: 132-150). Later on, the author himself, together with Weischenberg, made a modest contribution to this effort (cf. Weischenberg/Sievert 1998). Truly groundbreaking, however, was the anthology *The Global Journalist* by Weaver (1998a), which brought together studies from 21 countries and territories. Weaver's own concluding chapter in particular (Weaver 1998b: 457-458 and 466-467) made it possible to compare and contrast journalism in the European countries, as shown in Table 2.

It is striking to note that there is a relatively high level of congruence among the eight countries selected by the author in terms of journalists' basic demographic characteristics, but only a limited amount of agreement with respect to their role. The average age of journalists in all of the countries for which data were available is between 30 and 40, and the majority are male, although in one case the gender difference is only slight. The only sizeable demographic differences relate to their academic training. The proportion of journalists who have completed university studies ranges from a surprising low of 26 percent in Austria to 84 percent in Spain.

Table 2:
Journalist are quite similar in basis figures, but different concerning the 'role model'

	Austria	Britain	Finland	France	Germany	Hungary	Poland	Spain
Average Age	-	38	40	-	35	-	-	36
Female (%)	26	25	49	33	41	33	-	25
Holding College Degree (%)	32	49	40	69	85	88	-	84
Majoring in Journalism	-	4	25	-	-	35	-	87
Perceived Autonomy on the job (% very satisfied)	-	10	81	-	-	45	-	-
Professional Role: „Report News Quickly“ (% very important)	-	88	-	88	73	-	-	-
Professional Role: „Provide analysis“ (% very important)	-	83	86	40	74	-	78	-
Professional Role: „Be a watchdog on government“ (% very important)	-	88	87	40	33	-	58	-
Professional Role: „Provide entertainment“ (% very important)	-	47	-	8	47	-	-	-
Professional Role: „Report accurately or objectively“ (% very important)	-	30	77	-	74	-	-	-

Source: Compilation within Weaver 1998, for data in italics cf. compilation at Sievert 1998

(Sievert and Weaver 1998)

It gets even more interesting when we look at journalists' professional self-concept and perceived autonomy. There is agreement that journalists should report quickly on events (from approximately 70 to just less than 90 percent). But while half of the German and English journalists feel that they should 'provide entertainment,' only eight percent of French journalists agreed. Only 40 percent of British journalists regard it as their professional role to report precisely, as opposed to three-quarters of the French and Germans.

These few examples, to which we might add others from the table in this article as well as from Weaver's book, make it clear that the Europeanization of the function context of media actors, in our 'onion model,' is high only for demographic characteristics, while it is no more than medium for all other features. Weaver (1998b: 455) put it well: 'Comparing journalists across national boundaries and cultures is a game of guesswork at best.'

4. Grouping journalism models in Europe

Table 3: Three different "models" within European journalism have been proposed

	Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model	North European or Democratic Corporatist Model	North Atlantic or Liberal Model
Countries concerned (examples)	France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland	Britain, United States, Canada, Ireland
Newspaper Industry	Low newspaper circulation	High newspaper circulation	Middle newspaper circulation
Political Parallelism	High political parallelism; commentary-oriented journalism	External pluralism especially in national press; shift towards neutral commercial press	Neutral commercial press; information-oriented journalism; internal pluralism (in the UK more external)
Professionalization	Weaker	Strong	Strong
Role of the State in the Media System	Strong state intervention (including press subsidies)	Strong state intervention, but with protection for the press freedom	Market dominated (except strong public broadcasting in UK and Ireland)

(Hallin and Mancini 2004)

In the preceding section we described how different, as well as how similar, the journalistic system is in the various countries of the European Union. But is it feasible to group these differences in the form of different models? We shall describe two attempts to do so, both of which are interesting in their own ways and at least one of which has found international resonance.

In their book entitled 'Comparing Media Systems,' Hallin and Mancini developed three models of media and politics. They examined the influences of the market, the political parties and the state on the media, along with newspaper and television use and the professionalization of journalism in 18 Western countries. Within those countries assigned by the researchers to a specific media-system model, the respective national professional culture is similar as well. Analogously, these journalistic cultures differ substantially from countries classified as belonging to a different media-system model. This holds true despite the fact that some of these countries have long been associated with one other within the political context of the European Union; the country-specific journalism culture remains evident.

Table 3 provides an overview. For countries like France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal, the authors developed a polarized, pluralistic model. In these rather controlled political contexts, newspaper circulation figures are low, and the media are closely linked to a very polarized political setting; journalism is opinion-oriented, less professionalized and easy to instrumentalize; the state actively intervenes in the media and subsidizes the press. The liberal model is followed in Europe by Great Britain and Ireland and internationally by the United States and Canada. The market plays an important role, circulation figures are fairly high, and there has long been a commercial, relatively neutral mass press. Journalism is strongly professionalized, self-regulation is at least institutionalized, if not particularly strong, and the media distance themselves from politics and are strongly involved in investigative journalism. The researchers classify the media systems in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland as part of the democratic-corporate model. Newspapers have a high circulation, the mass press developed early on, the party press has historically been very important, but a neutral, commercial press has come to be predominant. Journalism is very much professionalized and its self-regulation has been institutionalized in these countries.

A second approach we should like to touch on here is that of Blum (2005). Based on his observations, he differentiated according to six models; the 'Eastern European shock model' and two non-Western models are of particular interest. Prinzing (2006: 11) offered extensive comments on his work, particularly with respect to three new models: 'The Berne researcher has introduced three additional models. In the Eastern European shock model (Russia, Turkey, Iran), the state is strong and repeatedly and suddenly interferes with media freedom, which in some cases amounts to censorship. Journalists show partisanship in their reporting, write in a narrative style, and, with the exception of some few individuals, are rather subservient in their attitudes toward the political elite; professionalism tends to be weak. In the Arab-Asian patriot model (Egypt, Yemen) the governmental system is authoritarian, as is the political culture. In the Asian-Caribbean model (China, Vietnam, Burma, Zimbabwe, Cuba) journalists work within the confines of totalitarian systems. Basically, their only

task is to disseminate the ruling ideology, while anything else is subject to censorship. The media belong to the state or are in the service of social organizations — even in China, where they are financed to some extent through the market.’

5. Conclusions

The aim of this article was to present a general, theoretical and empirically based conceptualization and analysis of journalism in the countries of the European Union, motivated by the observation of a crisis of political communication within the EU. Particular attention was directed toward media communication regarding the EU and its institutions. The expectation expressed at the outset was confirmed: there is no single type of journalism in Europe or in the European Union in terms of formal or structural uniformity; it is important to differentiate in a number of ways. Two types of differentiation appear to be of critical importance in the context discussed here, and we shall address them once more in this conclusion. These are differentiations of a very different quality, with the second attributable to some degree to the first.⁴

The *first differentiation* is a territorial one, and concerns journalism as a social system. The function of this system involves society’s self-observation based on the code ‘currently worth publishing/currently not worth publishing’ within a heuristically formulated, symbolically generalized medium of communication described by the dual term ‘public/publishing sector.’ In the sense of a multi-perspective approach rooted in the dualism of the structure concept, we can distinguish within the system among various contexts that affect standards, structures, functions and roles. Journalism is a functional system in world society that can be uniformly divided into categories according to this code, although it does not yet exist throughout the world in a completely differentiated form. However, such differentiation as an independent system does exist at least for all of the Western democracies, and hence also for all

⁴ These two differentiations do not entirely follow the tenets of classical system theory, nor are they intended to. Hence ‘differentiated’ is placed in quotes as a ‘description of characteristics’ of the system.

EU member countries. At the same time, there are internal and territorial differences within this system of journalism, which is predicated on the idea of a global society. The different European journalism models put forth by Hallin and Mancini can help not only to identify differences, but also to group them in an analytical way.

The *second differentiation* is related to the EU itself, and primarily concerns the function context of media messages as part of the territorially determined internal differentiation of the journalistic system, insofar as the latter deals with the EU and its institutions, quasi as 'EU journalism.' The analysis presented here in excerpt form has shown that the assertion of a crisis of political communication cited in the introduction has merit in its analysis of a lack of a European public/publishing sector or a general public. Yet it is inaccurate to maintain that there is too little, inadequately differentiated and inadequately personalized reporting on the European Union, at least in the media examined in this study. While articles on the EU are usually written from a national perspective, no other international organization and few individual countries are as frequent a subject of the print newsmagazines we examined as the European Union. All of these results, as well as others, at least point to a considerable degree of differentiation and a high journalistic quality of EU reporting.

Based on these inevitably heuristic analyses, EU journalism can be concluded to be a doubly differentiated system, first in terms of territorial and system-immanent factors, second in terms of EU content and function. The question remains open as to how to view this dual differentiation with respect to the crisis of political communication within the European Union, described above.

Table 4:
Media content only has a low degree of Europeanisation, other contexts are different

	Print media	Audiovisual media
Standard context: media systems	***	
• General social conditions	***	
• Legal foundations and current communications policy	****	***
• Professional and ethical standards	**	***
Structure context: media institutions	****	
• Economic aspects	****	****
• Organisational aspects	****	***
• Technological aspects	****	***
Function context: media statements	**	
• Sources of information	**	***
• Reporting models and forms of representation	**	***
• Media contents as constructions of reality	**	**
Role context: media players	***	
• Demographic features	****	
• Work-related, social and political attitudes	***	
• Professionalisation	***	

(Hallin and Mancini 2004)

How this analysis is viewed depends on one's position with respect to the general process of integration within the EU, and in particular the process of communicative integration. In formal terms, two concepts can be distinguished in this context:

- If we base our conclusions on the perspective taken by those who support the *concept of a uniform process of communicative integration* as outlined in this article, we are forced to take a critical view. From this perspective, the territorial differentiation of the functional system of journalism analyzed here stands in the way of a (somewhat) uniform, truly European public; moreover, a fundamental change in this situation is not in sight. Following this line of argumentation, the development of the journalistic system is generally seen in the context of economic as well as political developments.
- Alternatively, the author would like to suggest the *concept of a differentiated communicative process of integration* as a standard for evaluating the differentiation described above.

The point of departure here is the question of whether communicative integration really should compete directly with economic and political integration, or whether it should instead be seen as part of a cultural convergence with its own separate standards. In the view of the author, the journalistic system does not require a uniform European “public/publishing sector” of some kind, but the competent Europeanization of a nationally differentiated ‘public/publishing sector’ while maintaining fundamental national differences.

Based on the arguments presented here, of necessity in shortened form, the proposed concept of differentiated communicative integration appears to be far more sensible, feasible and sustainable than trying to insist on the often schematic idea of unity too quickly and too forcefully. ‘The discussion of various models of a European public demonstrates that the Europeanization of national publics is more in keeping with comprehensive inclusion and deliberation than the models of a pan-European public and topic-specific transnational publics,’ as Eilders and Vollmer (2003: 250) put it. Europe needs to become increasingly part of a process of territorially differentiated self-observation, but it cannot replace such observation. A uniform communicative region of Europe is not desirable, in the view of the author, but Europeanized national and regional areas of communications would be beneficial. In concrete terms, this might mean offering more European areas of competence to journalists within the territorially defined differentiations of the journalistic system. Ruß-Mohl (2003: 214) is quite right in observing that ‘(o)n the other hand, there is some reason to be confident: the network of European initiatives and institutions serving the improvement of journalism can still become denser; we can improve the communication between researchers and practitioners; and thus we can contribute our share towards creating a more European journalism culture.’

This awareness of European diversity in the context of journalism is, in turn, very important for public relations theory and practice. Only if the sphere of public relations is aware of specific cultural factors involved in European communication, or— even better —in national communication within the European countries, will it be able to analyze appropriately and enter into a helpful dialogue with its various stakeholders with a view to strategy-oriented

practice. European communication management implies managing diversity within a framework of diversity.

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