City Research Online

City St George's, University of London

Citation: Poullikka, A. (2024). A tale of two levels: A longitudinal and cross-country analysis of how national considerations shape political communication about the EU. (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, City, University of London)

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

Permanent repository link: https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/33235/

Copyright and Reuse: Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to City Research Online policy.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@citystgeorges.ac.uk

A tale of two levels:

A longitudinal and cross-country analysis of how national considerations shape political communication about the EU

Agni Poullikka

City, University of London

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in International Politics

2024

To my father Andreas and my mother Rania,

Acknowledgements

I am forever grateful to all the people I have met, worked with and learned from throughout my PhD journey. The experiences I have had during this time have shaped both my work and me as a person. My outmost appreciation goes to my two supervisors, Dr. Konstantin Vössing and Dr. Stefano Pagliari, for their continuous guidance and selfless support. Our conversations allowed my ideas to mature and drove my research in exciting directions. I would also like to express my gratefulness to Dr. Marina Costa Lobo and Dr. Charlotte Godziewski for dedicating their time and sharing their expertise to act as Examiners as well as to Dr. Alexandria Innes for acting as Chair for the viva.

I would not have been able to complete my research without the generous support from the Hans Böckler Foundation and City, University of London. The investment they made in my education is not something I take for granted. It has allowed me to build life-long skills by attending data science trainings and travelling to present my work around Europe. As part of my studentship, I have the pleasure of working with Konstantin and other research associates on a project he brilliantly leads on political explanations, funded by the Hans Böckler Foundation. Through multiple online meetings and dinners in Florence, we have all become friends.

I was also excited to receive funding from Research England for a month-long research stay at the Berlin Social Sciences Center. I had a blast in Berlin, where I presented my work at the colloquium of the Global Governance Unit. Thank you to everyone at the Berlin Social Sciences Center for making my stay a productive and fun experience!

During my PhD, I was honoured to present at the European Political Science Association 2023 Annual Conference in Glasgow, the Political Studies Association 2023 Annual Conference in Liverpool, the Political

Studies Association Parliaments Conference in Birmingham and the virtual Political Studies Association Early Career Network Conference where I received an award.

I also had the opportunity to present in various workshops, including the hybrid MAPLE ERC Spring School at the University of Lisbon, the yearly November Workshop at the European University Institute in Florence as well as the City International Politics Research Seminar and yearly colloquium. The feedback I received when presenting my work in these settings was invaluable in shaping my research and the people I have met were a great inspiration.

In my personal life, I am first and foremost grateful to my parents for trusting me since I was a little girl to pursue my dreams. Mum, dad, I am in constant awe of everything you do for me and for encouraging me to become the person I am today. During challenging times when I was particularly annoying, my mum's humour lifted me up, whilst my dad's pearls of wisdom from his own academic career reassured me.

My anchor throughout the PhD was my partner, Chris. He is my number one supporter; an amazing listener and an even more amazing distraction. In addition to long hours of work, during the PhD I have also had long hours of fun! I explored London with Andrea, Christina, Irene, Maria and Marina and was kept entertained with adventures from Switzerland by (another) Maria, from Cyprus by Chloe and Katerina and way too many parts of the world by Pavlos. To my wider family in Cyprus and my friends all over the world, thank you for enriching my life during the PhD with your presence and love.

Statement of Originality

I certify that this thesis is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others. I warrant that I have obtained all the permissions required for using any material from other copyrighted publications. The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent. This authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that this thesis consists of 54,753 words (excluding the appendices and bibliography).

Abstract

Over the past decades, a series of treaty changes and a period of crises have led to the politicisation of the European Union (EU) and have raised questions about its democratic accountability. Communication by politicians plays a key role in the process of European integration since it can contribute to the EU's throughput legitimacy, it can affect the public's attitudes towards the EU and it can influence voting decisions in national and European elections.

In this thesis, I explore how political actors in EU Member States (MS) communicate about the EU across a period of more than 10 years (2008-2023). Departing from different theoretical standpoints, the three papers that make up this thesis focus on how national politics influences the way that parliamentarians and heads of government talk about the supranational EU. I provide evidence from a diverse range of new and existing sources, including head of government speeches, parliamentary speeches and social media posts. I analyse this data using a combination of text-as-data methods such as topic models, sentiment analysis and hand-coding.

The papers make several contributions to existing literature. They allow us to empirically trace the communication of politicians across multiple countries and years, they use and validate quantitative text analysis methods and they enrich theoretical frameworks on political communication in the context of the EU. Taken jointly, the findings of the three papers can provide a comprehensive insight into the information that the public receives about the EU and can have implications for debates on the EU's democratic accountability.

Contents

List of Tables **iii**

List of Figures **v**

List of Abbreviations **vi**

1 Introduction **1**

1.1 Overview 1
1.2 The supranational and the national: A tale of two levels 1
1.3 Lessons from previous research 7
1.4 Three papers on communication about the EU and domestic politics . 9
1.5 Contributions 14

2 Multi-issue multi-level system: Exploring how heads of government talk about the EU **17**

2.1 Introduction 18
2.2 Motivation for research: Politicisation, heads of government and responsiveness 21
2.3 Literature review 23
2.4 Theoretical framework 31
2.5 Data collection and methodology 36
2.6 Findings and discussion 51
2.7 Conclusion 58

3 The role of domestic considerations in the political oversight of the ECB: Evidence from MEP communication in parliament and on social media **61**

3.1 Introduction 62

3.2 Motivation for research: Accountability relationship between the ECB and EP . . . 66
3.3 Literature review . . . 71
3.4 Theoretical framework . . . 76
3.5 Data collection and methodology . . . 81
3.6 Findings and discussion . . . 93
3.7 Conclusion . . . 102

4 Blame and credit strategies towards the EU: Evidence from 10 years of parliamentary speeches 105
4.1 Introduction . . . 106
4.2 Motivation for research: Responsibility attribution during crises in parliament . . . 108
4.3 Literature review . . . 109
4.4 Theoretical framework . . . 115
4.5 Data collection and methodology . . . 119
4.6 Findings and discussion . . . 128
4.7 Conclusion . . . 136

5 Conclusion 139
5.1 Summary and key findings . . . 139
5.2 Contributions . . . 141
5.3 Implications . . . 144
5.4 Limitations and future research . . . 145
5.5 Happily ever after? . . . 147

A Appendix for Chapter 2 148

B Appendix for Chapter 3 168

C Appendix for Chapter 4 181

References 198

List of Tables

1.1 Overview of chapters 10

2.1 Overview of data 39
2.2 Topic keywords and categories 44
2.3 Regression results for head of government speeches 55

3.1 Distribution of speeches by party group 83
3.2 Distribution of posts by party group 86
3.3 Topic keywords and categories 88
3.4 Regression analyses for topic focus 98
3.5 Regression analyses for sentiment 100

4.1 Strategies across countries 130
4.2 Regression results for blame and credit strategies 134

A.1 Data collection details 149
A.2 Top 15 words of each topic 158
A.3 Regression robustness tests (country random effects) 165
A.4 Regression robustness tests (OLS) 166
A.5 Regression robustness tests (reverse causality) 167

B.1 Top 15 words of each topic 172
B.2 Regression robustness tests (different operationalisation of unemployment and inflation) 177
B.3 Regression robustness tests (different operationalisation of public opinion) 178
B.4 Regression robustness tests (country random effects) 179
B.5 Regression robustness tests (OLS) 180

C.1 Description of data 181
C.2 Interrater reliability tests 191

C.3 Regression robustness tests (country random effects) 192
C.4 Regression robustness tests (without random effects) 193
C.5 Regression robustness tests (without the UK) 194
C.6 Regression robustness tests (without the Netherlands) 195
C.7 Regression robustness tests (without Austria) 196
C.8 Regression robustness tests (without Spain) 197

List of Figures

1.1 Partisan and public Euroscepticism 4

2.1 Topics across years 51
2.2 Polity vs policy dimension 52
2.3 Economic vs non-economic dimension 53
2.4 Issue attention across actors 54

3.1 Distribution of speeches by country 82
3.2 Distribution of posts by country 85
3.3 Topics across years and communication venues 94
3.4 Sentiment across countries and communication venues 96

4.1 Word clouds 124
4.2 Strategies across years 129
4.3 Strategies across parties 131
4.4 Strategies across EU targets 132

A.1 Model fit 157
A.2 Issue attention in the European Council (2009-2022) 164

B.1 Model fit 171

C.1 Blame and credit across time and countries 191

List of Abbreviations

ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
BoE	Bank of England
CDA	Christen-Democratisch Appèl
CEE	Central and Eastern European
CHES	Chapel Hill Expert Survey
CiU	Convergència i Unió
ECB	European Central Bank
ECON	Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EFA	Greens/European Free Alliance
EFD	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
EFDD	Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ENF	Europe of Nations and Freedom
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
ESCB	European System of Central Banks
EU	European Union
Fed	Federal Reserve
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GUE/NGL	European United Left/Nordic Green Left
ID	Identity and Democracy
IMF	International Monetary Fund
keyATM	key-word Assisted Topic Models
LDA	Latent Dirichlet Allocation
LSD	Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary
MEP	Member of the European Parliament

MLG	Multi-Level Governance
MP	Member of Parliament
MS	Member State
NA	Not Available
NWE	North-West European
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei
PEPP	Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme
PP	Partido Popular
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
Renew	Renew Europe
S&D	Socialist and Democrats
SE	South European
SSM	Single Supervisory Mechanism
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs
STM	Structural Topic Model
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

This thesis explores how political actors in multiple countries communicate about the European Union (EU) across a period of more than 10 years. It also tries to explain what drives this, by focusing on how national politics influences the way that parliamentarians and heads of government talk about the supranational EU. Whilst the classic Charles Dickens (1859) novel tells *A tale of two cities*, I center on a tale of two levels. In this introductory section, I provide background information on the process of European integration, explaining how treaty changes and a period of crises have led to the politicisation of the EU and raised questions about its democratic accountability. I discuss the role of communication in the accountability relationship between Member States (MS) and the EU, before highlighting lessons from relevant research which provide the impetus for the focus on national politics. I then introduce the three papers that are at the core of the thesis and discuss their contributions.

1.2 The supranational and the national: A tale of two levels

1.2.1 The politicisation of European integration

The EU and its 27 MS operate in an environment characterised by Multi-Level Governance (MLG), where policy-making action is divided vertically between different supranational, national, regional, and local governments as well as horizontally between various governmental and non-governmental actors (Bache, 2012). Since the

Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 the role of the supranational level of governance, which encompasses EU institutions, bodies and agencies, has been steadily growing. The treaty has increased the involvement of the EU in citizens' everyday lives, as it has set the scene for the free movement of people and the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) which coordinates the fiscal and monetary policies of MS (Lobo, 2023).

The creation of the EMU has led to the introduction of the common currency, the euro, which a majority of EU MS have adopted. The national central banks of countries that are in the euro area have been stripped off their responsibility for monetary policy, which has been placed instead in the hands of an EU institution, the European Central Bank (ECB). In addition, the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 has enhanced the supranational nature of decision-making by expanding qualified majority voting in the Council of the EU and strengthening the powers of the European Parliament (EP) (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014).

The scope and depth of policy-making at the EU level has further increased as a result of responses to a polycrisis period (Tooze, 2023). In the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis in the 2010s, the EU has strengthened its purview in economic policies. For instance, the intergovernmental treaty on the European Fiscal Compact has laid the groundwork for a fiscal union by imposing stricter rules on budget deficits and debt levels, whilst the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) has marked the beginning of a banking union by handing over responsibility for systematically important banks in the euro area from national authorities to the ECB. The migration crisis, which began in 2015, has encouraged a more coordinated EU approach on policies which are primarily within the domain of individual MS, such as asylum and refugee policies. In 2016, the referendum on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the EU has marked the first episode of disintegration and was met with a unified response by the rest of the MS.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has led to paradigmatic EU action in economic and health matters (Schmidt, 2020b). The European Commission has coordinated procurement efforts for COVID-19 vaccines on behalf of its MS, the EP has approved the solidarity-driven NextGenerationEU package in order to support economic recovery after the pandemic and the ECB has launched the Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme (PEPP) to inject liquidity into the euro area economy. The Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority has been also established in an attempt to monitor and prepare common EU action for future health

emergencies. More recently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has accelerated joint efforts by MS to provide funding support packages for Ukraine and has fired up discussions about a strengthened common EU defence policy (Håkansson, 2022).

Following these treaty changes and this period of polycrisis, the process of European integration has weakened the role of governments and other domestic actors in national policy-making by transferring authority from the MS to the European level (De Wilde and Zürn, 2012). The EU is now exerting varying levels of influence over a wide range of important areas such as the economy, health, agriculture, trade and energy. This increased authority has materialised hand-in-hand with the increased salience of the EU, its institutions and its policies for domestic politics. Prior to the Treaty of Maastricht, discussions about the EU had been characterised by a "permissive consensus", whereby EU citizens and the politicians that represent them allowed European integration to proceed with little resistance (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). The EU was away from the media spotlight for the most part, did not feature prominently in national party competition and EP elections were considered as second-order compared to national ones (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014; Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

However, the EU has become more politicised over the past two decades (Lobo, 2023; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020; Schneider, 2019; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016). This politicisation has taken place against the backdrop of a polarisation of opinions about the EU, leading to rising public Euroscepticism and a greater vote share of Eurosceptic parties in national elections, as Figure 1.1 shows.[1] Parties that are critical of European integration are also expected to achieve big gains in the upcoming 2024 EP elections (Politico, 2024).

Euroscepticism is considered as part of a new structural conflict that is transforming party competition in the EU, going beyond the traditional left-right economic axis of political ideology (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). Academic research also shows that following the Eurozone crisis national politicians discuss more about the EU in their public communication and that the public considers EU issues when forming its voting

[1]Figure 1.1 presents smoothed time trends of EU averages (i.e., averages of values for all EU MS at the time of each survey) for levels of Euroscepticism, based on operationalisations from existing studies (Hunter, 2021; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020). I measure public Euroscepticism by using the Eurobarometer question which asks: "In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative, or very negative image?". The figure on the right plots the total share of those answering "fairly negative" or "very negative" (European Commission, 2023a). For partisan Euroscepticism, I use information from PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019) to categorise a party as Eurosceptic or not and information from ParlGov (Döring, Huber and Manow, 2022) about their vote share in national elections.

decisions (Lobo, 2023). Taken jointly, these developments provide empirical evidence for the argument that EU politics and domestic politics are interlinked.

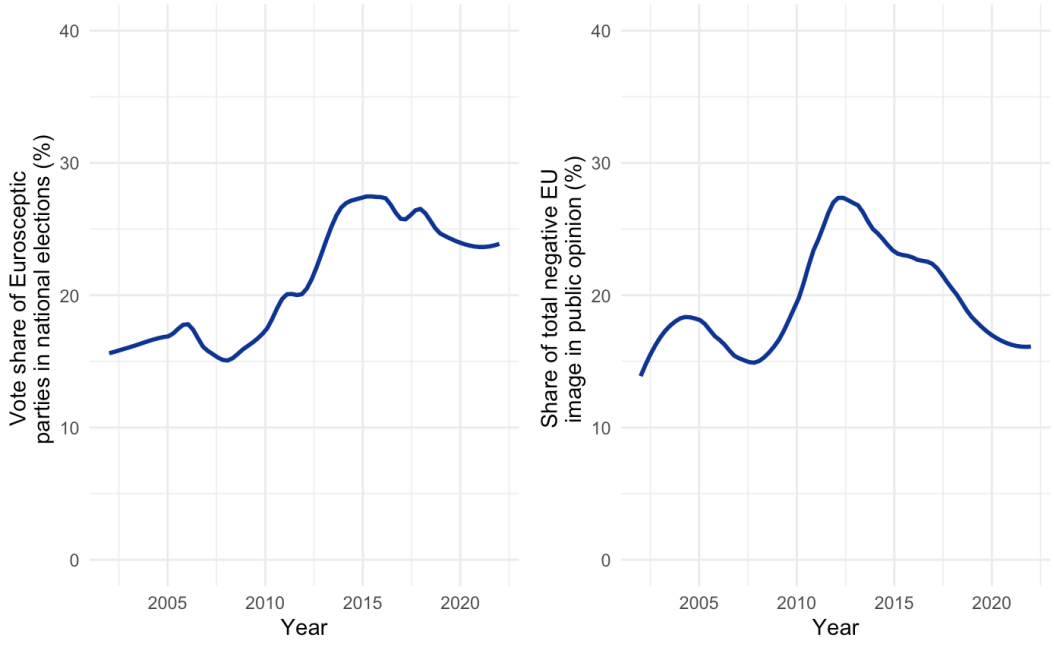

Figure 1.1: Partisan and public Euroscepticism

1.2.2 The role of communication in the EU's democratic accountability

The increase in the salience of and negative attitudes towards the EU along with the electoral appeal of Eurosceptic parties have brought to the forefront questions about the EU's democratic accountability, with concerns about a crisis of legitimacy abounding (Schmidt, 2022; Schmidt, 2020a; Schraff and Schimmelfennig, 2019). The EU used to derive its legitimacy primarily based on the effective performance of its policies, conceptualised as output legitimacy (Schmidt, 2020a). Given that the EU's role used to be mainly regulatory, this explained its limited input legitimacy in the form of electoral participation by citizens.

Nevertheless, its responses to recent crises have been interventionist and have demonstrated that EU actions can have distributional consequences (Börzel, 2016). Output legitimacy is no longer considered as sufficient, with more emphasis being

placed on input as well as throughput legitimacy, with the latter consisting of procedural efficacy and transparency in decision-making processes such as good communication (Schmidt, 2020a). This has fuelled discussions in policy-making and academic circles as to whether the EU is suffering from a democratic deficit.

The EU is founded on the principles of representative democracy, which its MS also enjoy (European Union, 2023). Based on these principles, citizens of MS elect representatives who participate in decision-making at the EU level. There are two electoral representation channels which reflect the EU's MLG structure and contribute to its input legitimacy. The first one is European, where citizens elect Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The EP and the Council of the EU are co-legislators, responsible for delegating executive functions to the European Commission and holding it accountable (De Wilde, 2011). Although the EP is the only directly elected body, all EU institutions are accountable to the citizens they represent through a complex network of relationships. For instance, the ECB participates in parliamentary hearings with the EP, which acts on behalf of EU citizens (Diessner, 2022).

The second channel is national, whereby citizens elect their domestic government and parliament. National governments are then responsible for representing the interests of their constituents in intergovernmental EU decision-making venues. These consist of the Council of the EU, which is populated by government officials and ministers, and the European Council, in which heads of government or state participate. Opposition parties in parliaments also play a key, albeit indirect, role as they can scrutinise the actions of the government at both levels of governance (Helms, 2008). Therefore, in order to fully appreciate the nature of the EU's democratic accountability, we need to consider not only the EP but also national governments and parliaments.

Politicians have various tools at their disposal to represent their constituents. They can push to put items that are important for their voters on the policy agenda of the EP or their national parliament.[2] Once the items are on the agenda, they can vote for or against legislative proposals in line with the interests of their voters. What matters though, is not only how politicians act, but also that the public is aware of

[2]There are various ways to influence the EP's legislative agenda. For instance, interested parties can influence the European Council, which sets the general political priorities of the EU, or they can influence the European Commission, which has the right of initiative to put forward legislative proposals.

their actions. This is because voters might lack the time or willingness to develop deep political knowledge (Hunter, 2021).

Instead, they tend to rely on cues and the communication of politicians to form opinions (Lau and Redlawsk, 2001; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1991). There is a long-standing research stream which highlights the role that communication plays in the chain of democratic representation (Fenno, 1978). Evidently then, politicians have strong incentives to present policy outputs to their constituents by publicly discussing them in a way that would be favourable for them. For example, politicians from governing parties can present an adverse situation, such as a crisis, under a positive light in order to try and shift the perceptions of the public on their competence.

The importance of politicians' communication is especially prevalent in the context of the EU's MLG structure (Lobo, 2023; Hunter, 2021; De Wilde, 2011). Decision-making in the EU is inherently complicated; it is characterised by a complex web of deliberations between European Commission officials, national governments and the EP. In addition, there is a lack of a common language and of a universal European media environment, which means that EU issues tend to compete for visibility with national ones in the news outlets of individual MS (Hunter, 2021). There is evidence that voters are even more ignorant about EU issues compared to national ones (Hobolt, 2007).

This leaves more space for the discourse of politicians, primarily domestic ones, to structure the public's mental map of policy-making about and attitudes towards the EU level (De Wilde, 2011). For instance, heads of government can highlight that a collective European Council decision benefiting the public in their country would not have been possible had it not been for their own negotiation skills. A statement that Mariano Rajoy, a former Spanish Prime Minister, made after a European Council meeting demonstrates this in practice: "The six billion euros dedicated to the Youth Employment Initiative will be disbursed in 2014 and 2015. This initiative, as you know, was agreed in February and was a proposal of the Spanish government" (Hunter, 2021).

In turn, the communication of politicians can feed into the political information that voters have, which has been found to affect how they take EU issues into account when they vote (Lobo, 2023; De Vries et al., 2011). This discussion shows that communication can speak to input legitimacy by exerting an indirect influence on the institutional channels of the EU's representative democracy such as elections.

However, communication also matters directly for the EU's deliberative democracy (Vössing, 2023; Habermas, 1973), which relates to its throughput legitimacy. By spreading disinformation or not revealing the discussions behind closed doors politicians can hinder the EU's deliberative democracy. Conversely, by engaging in an open and respectful debate they can promote it.

Given the potential of politicians' communication to influence the voting decisions of the public in national and European elections as well as its legitimisation dynamics, it could be argued that it is central for the democratic accountability of both the EU and its MS. This is the motivation behind this thesis, which looks at how different political actors communicate about the EU between 2008 and 2023. During this time period the EU was faced with a series of treaty changes and crises that transformed the process of European integration and raised questions about its legitimacy. To draw out the implications of this communication, it is also important to get an insight into the factors shaping it. In this thesis, I focus on national politics as a driver. This approach builds on existing research, which I discuss below, that highlights the key role that communication can play for European integration and points to the relevance of national considerations in shaping it.

1.3 Lessons from previous research

A wealth of theoretical and empirical studies consider the presentation of the EU and its institutions by politicians as well as other actors. Five strands of research are most relevant for this thesis; politicisation, rhetorical responsiveness, political oversight of the ECB, responsibility attribution and public opinion on the EU. I discuss each in turn below and highlight how they provide an impetus for the three papers in the thesis. The starting point for these research streams is theories of European integration, which hint at how communication can affect the process of regional integration.

Neo-functionalists put forward an elite perspective on European integration, arguing that the bureaucratic nature of the EU means that the public is not inclined to become involved in EU affairs because they are either indifferent or powerless to do so (Haas, 1958). This is thought to be a temporary state of affairs which applies to the earlier years of integration; as the EU becomes more involved in decisions which affect its MS, the public will engage more with European issues (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). As post-functionalists contend, this will lead to the politicisation of European

integration, meaning that EU issues will become more salient, polarising and a larger range of actors will engage with them (Kriesi, 2016; Hooghe and Marks, 2009).

There is a burgeoning qualitative and quantitative literature which finds empirical support for the politicisation of the EU in the period after the Treaty of Maastricht and especially following the Eurozone crisis (Lobo, 2023; Hutter and Kriesi, 2019; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016). The consensus in their findings is that the process of politicisation is differentiated across time and countries as well as in the issues that are relevant. These studies look at the communication of different actors, focusing on national media and parliamentarians. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I use conceptual tools from the politicisation literature to put the spotlight on another political actor, by focusing on how and why heads of government highlight different EU-related issues.

In the same chapter, I draw from the rhetorical responsiveness literature to explore whether heads of government emphasise certain issues in order to appear as responsive. There is evidence that heads of government are responsive to domestic public opinion when taking decisions in the European Council or when they speak in public (Hunter, 2021; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020; Alexandrova, Ramsussen and Toshkov, 2016) and that both national parliamentarians and heads of government consider national macroeconomic conditions that can have an impact on their electorate when they talk (Kartalis, 2022; Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher, 2022). Research on EU-level actors also reveals that their communication about the EU takes into account domestic factors that are important to the public (Ferrara et al., 2022; Fraccaroli et al., 2022b; Moschella, Pinto and Martocchia Diodati, 2020). In Chapter 3, I explore how certain factors affect the way that MEPs talk about the ECB, building on studies which examine the political oversight of the central bank.

Another European integration theory, which speaks to the relevance of communication and informs relevant studies, is liberal intergovernmentalism. Liberal intergovernmentalists suggest that the complex decision-making procedures which stem from the cooperation between the EU and MS can create an informational asymmetry, with some domestic actors having more knowledge compared to others as to what is happening at the EU level (Moravcsik, 1994). According to Moravcsik (1994), some politicians can exploit this informational asymmetry in order to tilt public opinion in their favour. For instance, they can adopt communication strategies which are geared towards avoiding blame or claiming credit for policy outcomes.

Building on this, subsequent research explores how politicians attribute responsibility in the context of the EU and develops relevant typologies (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014; Hood, 2011). A number of studies based on hand-coding empirically test expectations as to how national politics drives the way that parliamentarians and heads of government attribute responsibility to the EU during the Eurozone crisis (Hunter, 2021; Ladi and Tsagkroni, 2019; Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou and Exadaktylos, 2014). In Chapter 4, I draw from this literature to consider how national Members of Parliament (MPs) blame and credit the EU.

Another related research stream is that of public opinion towards the EU, as it informs the motivation of all three chapters. It also ties in with their implications, as the communication of politicians can impact how the public thinks about and forms attitudes towards the EU. Some studies use experimental survey data to explore how political rhetoric influences public opinion towards European integration (Vössing, 2021), whereas others use Eurobarometer data (Vössing, 2005) and observational survey data on EU issue voting (Heyne, Lobo and Pannico, 2023; Navarrete and Marc Debus, 2023). The key takeaway from these studies is that public opinion on the EU is consequential for voting decisions and that political rhetoric can shape it.

1.4 Three papers on communication about the EU and domestic politics

As the previous section has shown, studies on communication about the EU span various geographical areas and time periods. They look at numerous political actors, such as heads of government, national parliamentarians and EU politicians, from different theoretical angles and methodological approaches. They also ask a multitude of questions: How do politicians talk about the EU? Why do they talk about it in this way? And what are the consequences of these communication strategies for the legitimacy of the EU?

I broadly address these in this thesis, which consists of three papers that answer more specific research questions and are presented in separate chapters. The common thread in all papers is an attempt to explain the factors behind the communication strategies of different political actors about the EU, focusing on the impact of domestic considerations. This is driven by existing research, which highlights the importance

of the national level and converges in finding that it affects communication about the supranational level.

These domestic considerations are inter-related with the political backdrop in each country, yet manifest themselves in different ways, such as public opinion, macroeconomic conditions, partisan political ideology or the nature of the party system. I discuss the motivation behind the research focus and the theoretical mechanism underpinning the relevance of domestic considerations for each paper in their respective chapter. All papers look at multiple EU MS and a time period of at least 10 years. This allows us to uncover longitudinal, cross-country trends through a combination of text-as-data methods, including topic models, sentiment analysis, hand-coding and machine translation. Table 1.1 presents an overview of the chapters. I expand upon this in the rest of this section, by highlighting the research question(s), research design and main findings of each paper as well as outlining the thesis' concluding remarks.

Chapter	**Research question(s)**	**Countries**	**Time period**	**Text data**
2. Multi-issue multi-level system: Exploring how heads of government talk about the EU	When heads of government discuss the EU, which issues do they talk about? What can explain why heads of government focus on certain EU-related issues?	Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, UK	2009-2022	Head of government or state speeches from EU-Speech V2.0 (Schumacher et al., 2020) and original data collection
3. The role of domestic considerations in the political oversight of the ECB: Evidence from MEP communication in parliament and on social media	How do domestic considerations affect the tone and topic focus of MEPs when they talk about ECB?	All EU MS	2009-2023	Parliamentary hearing and X data from original data collection
4. Blame and credit strategies towards the EU: Evidence from 10 years of parliamentary speeches	How do MPs attribute responsibility to the EU?	Austria, Netherlands, Spain, UK	2008-2018	Parliamentary speeches from EUParlSpeech (Hunter, 2021)

Table 1.1: Overview of chapters

Chapter 2 addresses two research questions, which focus on heads of government and their EU-related communication. The first one is descriptive: When heads of government discuss the EU, which issues do they talk about? Drawing from the politicisation literature, I distinguish between different types of issue dimensions; polity as opposed to policy and economic as opposed to non-economic dimensions (Lobo, 2023; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016). The second question is explanatory: What can explain why heads of government focus on certain EU-related issues? To address this, I build on the rhetorical responsiveness literature, which explores how political actors highlight issues to appear as attentive to the demands of their supporters (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Wagner and Meyer, 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). I put forward the theoretical argument that the MLG nature of the EU creates incentives for heads of government to be responsive at two levels.

On the one hand, they might have incentives to be responsive to public opinion at the domestic level in order to appeal to voters. On the other hand, they might be constrained by decisions taken at the European Council and want to appear as credible vis-à-vis their partners at the EU level. To take this double role into account, I consider the salience of an EU issue in public opinion based on Eurobarometer data as well as the thematic attention of European Council Conclusions, which are official documents setting out the political priorities of the EU.

To answer both questions, I look at the public communication of heads of government in nine countries which were or are EU MS; the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK.[3] The time period of interest is from 2009 until 2022 and I collect original data to extend EU-Speech V2.0, a dataset on speeches by EU leaders (Schumacher et al., 2020).[4] I analyse the speeches using regular expression dictionaries and machine translation to extract all references to the EU (including about its policies and institutions) and semi-supervised topic models to measure issue attention.

The descriptive results show that, with the exception of the UK, heads of government do not highlight only the polity dimension of EU-related issues as the majority of the literature on politicisation finds. Instead, they talk about both policy and

[3]The only exception is France, where I use speeches by the President, who is the head of state, rather than the Prime Minister, who is the head of government. This is because in France the President is the elected official who is responsible for appointing the Prime Minister and for participating in the European Council, with both aspects being relevant for this papers' focus. Therefore, in the rest of the thesis whenever I refer to heads of government I also include the French President.

[4]For the UK, I only use data up to 2020 given the withdrawal of the country from the EU.

polity issues at relatively similar levels, although regional differences are present. The findings also reveal the differentiated nature of EU politicisation as they show variation in the focus that heads of government place on economic and non-economic issues, both across time and across countries. In recent years though, it appears that heads of government in all MS discuss less about economic issues in relation to the EU, whilst they focus more on non-economic ones. Lastly, the regression analyses find a relationship between the EU-related issue attention of heads of government, the priorities of the European Council and the issues that the public considers as important. This could point to rhetorical responsiveness as the relationship reflects the dual role of heads of government.

As with the previous chapter, Chapter 3 argues that domestic political pressures can impact the way that political actors communicate in relation to the EU. However, it shifts the attention from heads of government to MEPs and centers on one EU actor; the ECB. The focus is on the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP, drawing from the growing relevant literature. In the chapter, I ask how two aspects of MEP communication about the ECB (topic focus and tone) are affected by domestic considerations, which are conceptualised along three dimensions. First, I use semi-supervised topic models to consider whether the macroeconomic conditions in their country influence the topics that MEPs discuss. Second, I conduct a sentiment analysis to look at how political ideology affects the tone of their communication, focusing on the predisposition of an MEP's national party on the economic left-right scale as well as towards the EU. Third, I use the results from the sentiment analysis to also examine how domestic public opinion towards the ECB relates to an MEP's tone.

The empirical interest is in the 2009-2023 period, based on an original data collection from parliamentary hearings between the ECB and the EP as well as social media posts by MEPs about the ECB on the X platform (formerly known as Twitter). The country coverage is EU MS-wide. The regression results reveal that some domestic considerations do affect the way that MEPs talk about the ECB. The macroeconomic conditions in the country of an MEP affect their topic focus in both communication venues; they talk more about the ECB's primary mandate of price stability as the inflation rate increases, whilst they talk less about it as the unemployment rate increases. The evidence for tone is mixed. The stance of their national party towards European integration appears to be guiding the tone of MEPs; those from Eurosceptic

parties are less likely to speak positively about the ECB compared to others from pro-EU parties. However, the effect for left-right economic positions and public opinion is smaller and not in the expected direction in either communication venue.

Chapter 4 also looks at parliamentarians, but from the perspective of national parliaments rather than the EP. The research question is: How do MPs attribute responsibility to the EU? Existing literature on blame attribution would lead to the expectation that national politicians prefer to scapegoat the EU for adverse events (Heinkelmann, Kriegmair and Rittberger, 2020; Moravcsik, 1994; Weaver, 1986). I challenge this focus on blame strategies and theorise how party characteristics and the nature of EU actors create incentives for some national politicians to also credit the EU. To empirically substantiate my hypotheses, I use dictionary-based text analysis and hand-coding to analyse parliamentary speeches which discuss economic crises and the EU, drawing from the EUParlSpeech dataset (Hunter, 2021). I focus on a time period of 10 years (2008-2018) and four countries which were EU MS during the period under investigation; Austria, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK.

There are three key findings. First, I find that MPs use blame and credit strategies with a similar frequency. This is consistent across the period studied and suggests that the EU is not always used as a scapegoat. Second, I show how MPs from governing parties are more likely to credit the EU compared to those from opposition parties. Another party characteristic that has a strong and positive relationship with crediting the EU is a favourable stance towards European integration. Third, there is evidence of variation in responsibility attribution across EU targets. Although general references to the EU are the most common way of attributing responsibility, there are differences across EU actors. For instance, the intergovernmental European Council receives more credit rather than blame.

Lastly, Chapter 5 offers concluding remarks. It summarises the argument, findings and contributions from each of the three papers. It also discusses them jointly to flesh out their implications and limitations, paving the way forward for future research. The findings have implications for debates on the EU's democratic accountability. They provide an insight into the information that the public receives about the EU, which can feed into voting decisions in national and European elections. In addition, the results highlight the relevance of domestic considerations in the communication of politicians about the EU. This echoes concerns on how we need to take the national level of the EU's MLG structure into account when we are considering how to improve the quality of democracy in its supranational level (Lobo, 2023).

1.5 Contributions

This thesis makes several contributions to research on EU politics in general, and on the communication of politicians about the EU in particular. It offers an empirical contribution, by providing longitudinal cross-country evidence for how heads of government and parliamentarians communicate about the EU and what can explain this. This enriches our understanding on the consequences of the EU's politicisation for its democratic accountability over the past years and can inform public opinion studies. The thesis also puts forward new machine-readable ready-to-use datasets that future researchers can benefit from. There is a methodological contribution as well, as the thesis uses and validates innovative quantitative text analysis methods. From a theoretical standpoint, the thesis extends frameworks based on the rhetorical responsiveness, ECB accountability and responsibility attribution literature.

1.5.1 Empirical contributions

Taken jointly, the findings of the three papers allow us to trace how national politics affects the communication of heads of government and parliamentarians from numerous MS about the EU across a period of more than 10 years. In so doing, they have implications for the growing literature on the consequences of EU politicisation and democratic accountability (Lobo, 2023). As the discussion in the introduction argues, legitimacy is both an institutional and a discursive process in which communication matters. Furthermore, the findings can speak to research on the political information that voters receive about European integration and can be used to inform experimental studies on the topic such as Vössing (2021).

Whilst various studies look at how national politics affects politicians' communication about the EU, they tend to focus on the years during and before the Eurozone crisis. This is also the case for the paper in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, the other two papers are more timely because they have a time-frame which captures new empirical developments that have shaped the process of European integration, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This allows us to explore whether the trends that existing research has identified have persisted in light of these transformative events. Chapter 2 captures the EU-related issue attention by heads of government, the public in MS and the European Council from 2009 until the end of 2022, which is made possible through original data collection.

Chapter 3 enriches the literature on the political oversight of ECB. Currently, studies on the topic do not include the most recent EP legislative period (2019-2024), whilst they tend to focus on speeches from parliamentary hearings only (Ferrara et al., 2022; Fraccaroli et al., 2022b; Amtenbrink and van Duin, 2009). I extend the period of analysis to include the years from 2019 until the end of 2023, thereby capturing most of the latest legislative period. Moreover, I look at an additional source of communication, MEPs' posts on X. This allows us to develop an understanding of how MEPs talk about the ECB in a more informal setting which can reach the public more directly compared to parliamentary hearings.

To do so, I create two machine-readable datasets; the one includes transcripts of parliamentary hearings between the ECB and the EP from 2009 until 2023, whilst the other is a collection of X posts by MEPs from all EU MS which talk about the ECB during the same time period. Therefore, in addition to an empirical contribution, Chapters 2 and 3 contribute useful resources to the academic community in the form of machine readable datasets which are freely available upon request. All datasets include the original language of a text and its machine translation into English as well as political and economic meta data. Researchers can use them to explore communication trends in relation to the EU by political actors or to answer other exciting questions pertaining more generally to EU politics.

1.5.2 Methodological contributions

All three papers use a combination of quantitative text analysis methods, thereby joining the surge in recent studies which study communication in an EU context through the lens of text-as-data approaches such as Ferrara et al. (2022), Hunter (2021) and Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde (2020) to name a few. The practical application of these methods can serve as a validation of their accuracy and usefulness. Chapters 2 and 3 use semi-supervised topic models based on keyword Assisted Topic Models (keyATM).

keyATM is a recent machine learning method which was created for social science in mind and is used to classify texts according to topics with the help of predetermined keywords (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023). Chapter 3 conducts sentiment analysis, based on dictionary methods, in order to capture the tone of MEPs. Chapter 4 also uses sentiment analysis but in combination with hand-coding in order to identify responsibility attributions in the speeches of MPs.

All analyses take advantage of machine translation, which allows us to translate texts from their native language into a pivot language, English, in a fast and free way. This overcomes language barriers and the need for professional translators. By leveraging these developments in computational social science, the thesis goes beyond earlier studies on the communication of politicians about the EU which were based on qualitative manual coding analyses and used to look at single or two-country case studies spanning only a few years. The focus on a larger number of countries and a longer time period can strengthen the generalisability of the results, as it allows for more variation in the domestic considerations which might affect how politicians talk.

1.5.3 Theoretical contributions

The papers build on insights from existing literature to provide different theoretical accounts of how domestic considerations affect the way in which politicians communicate about the EU. Chapter 2 contributes to rhetorical responsiveness research, by putting forward a framework which considers this in the context of EU-related issues. Current research theorises how political actors are rhetorically responsive to the national issue priorities of their electorate (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008), with a few studies investigating the responsiveness of heads of government to citizens' concerns for EU-related issues as well (Hunter, 2021; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020; Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher, 2019). By arguing that their issue attention also relates to the political priorities of the European Council, I introduce another actor to whom heads of government might be responsive.

Chapter 3 combines the main arguments from research on the ECB's accountability to conceptualise three dimensions of domestic considerations that can affect the communication of MEPs; macroeconomic conditions, the political ideology of national parties and public opinion. Chapter 4 advances the responsibility attribution literature. It diverges from studies which look only at blame strategies towards the EU (Heinkelmann, Kriegmair and Rittberger, 2020; Ladi and Tsagkroni, 2019) to also consider credit strategies. The few contributions on credit strategies towards the EU focus on heads of government (Hunter, 2021; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014), whereas I provide a new theoretical account of how incentives in national parliaments make some MPs more likely than others to credit the EU. In addition, responsibility attribution studies tend to view the EU as a single responsibility target. I go beyond this to theorise how MPs assign responsibility to separate EU actors in different ways.

Chapter 2

Multi-issue multi-level system: Exploring how heads of government talk about the EU

Abstract: *Recent research on the politicisation of European integration unpacks which EU issues national media and parliaments discuss. This paper puts the spotlight on another actor, heads of government, to explore the issues that they talk about when they mention the EU using semi-supervised topic models on more than 7,800 speeches in nine EU MS. The findings suggest that whilst heads of government highlight both polity and policy issues in relation to the EU, these vary across time and countries with a general increase in the salience of non-economic issues in recent years. I also examine whether heads of government are rhetorically responsive in line with their dual role as top officeholders at the national level and as representatives of their country at the supranational EU level. I find a relationship between the issue attention of heads of government and the issue priorities of the public and the European Council.*

2.1 Introduction

As a result of policy responses to a series of crises and treaty changes, the EU has become increasingly visible and polarising among political actors and the public in its MS. European governance has moved from its initial state of permissive consensus in domestic politics where EU-related issues and decision-making were less relevant as a subject of public contestation (Hooghe and Marks, 2009) towards a period of politicisation (Lobo, 2023; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020; Schneider, 2019; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016; De Wilde and Zürn, 2012; De Wilde, 2011). There is evidence that under certain conditions EU issues can enter the national electoral arena, thereby structuring party competition and the political space (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019; Schneider, 2019). Therefore, it has become increasingly relevant to understand how EU-related issues are highlighted at the national level.

In this paper, I explore which issues heads of government talk about when they mention the EU, i.e., their EU-related issue attention, and how this corresponds to issues that domestic public opinion and EU-level decision-makers consider as important. In so doing, I ask two research questions. The first one is descriptive: When heads of government discuss the EU in this politicised environment, which issues do they talk about? Drawing from the politicisation literature, I focus on different types of dimensions; polity as opposed to policy and economic as opposed to non-economic issues (Lobo, 2023; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016).[5]

The second question is explanatory: What can explain why heads of government focus on certain EU-related issues? To address this, I build on the rhetorical responsiveness literature, which explores how political actors highlight issues to appear as attentive to the demands of their supporters (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Wagner and Meyer, 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). I argue that the MLG nature of the EU creates incentives for heads of government to be responsive at two levels. More precisely, I focus on the double role of heads of government as the top officeholders in national politics and as representatives of their country in the EU through their participation in the European Council.[6]

On the one hand, they might have incentives to be responsive to public opinion in their MS in order to appeal to voters. On the other hand, they might be constrained

[5] I use the terms issues, topics and dimensions interchangeably throughout this paper.

[6] According to the Treaty of the EU, the European Council consists of the Heads of State or Government of EU MS, the President of European Council, the President of the European Commission and the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (European Union, 2012).

by decisions taken by the European Council and want to appear as credible vis-à-vis their partners at the EU level. To take this double role into account, I consider the salience of an EU issue in public opinion as well as the thematic attention of European Council policy priorities, as highlighted in their Conclusions. To answer both research questions, I analyse the public communication of heads of government in nine EU MS; the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. I collect data to extend EUSpeech V2.0, a dataset on speeches by EU leaders (Schumacher et al., 2020). I analyse the speeches using regular expression dictionaries and machine translation to extract all references to the EU and semi-supervised topic models to measure issue attention.

The findings, which I discuss below, have several implications. The results on the first research question show that, with the exception of the UK, heads of government do not highlight only the polity dimension of EU-related issues as the majority of the literature on politicisation finds. Instead, they talk about both policy and polity issues at relatively similar levels, although regional differences are present. This can be interpreted in a positive light; discussions about policies are considered as part of normal political competition which can foster a European public sphere (Lobo, 2023; Follesdal and Hix, 2006) and are less threatening to the democratic accountability of the EU compared to polity ones which discuss the legitimacy and foundations of the EU (Mair, 2007).

The results also reveal the differentiated nature of EU politicisation as they show variation in the focus that heads of government place on economic and non-economic issues, both across time and across countries. However, it appears that heads of government in all MS discuss less about economic issues in relation to the EU in recent years, whilst they focus more on non-economic ones. This could be interpreted as a shift away from the presentation of the EU as an economic union towards that of a political union. Lastly, the regression analyses on the second research question show that there is a relationship between the EU-related issue attention of heads of government, the priorities of the European Council and the issues that the public considers as important. This could point to rhetorical responsiveness as the relationship reflects the dual role of heads of government.

This paper makes three contributions to existing literature on EU politicisation and rhetorical responsiveness. First, it provides new empirical evidence for which dimensions of the EU are salient in domestic politics. The existing information we

have on this topic is from the politicisation research. Nevertheless, these studies only provide a snapshot of EU-related issue attention because they tend to use data from national media during election periods and more recently parliamentary speeches (Lobo 2023; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016). I look at the entire period between 2009 and 2022, capturing both election and normal politics periods. I also focus on heads of government. Although this is a less studied actor, I discuss how their public communication matters for domestic and EU-level politics.

Second, it can contribute to research on rhetorical responsiveness, by putting forward and testing a theoretical framework which considers rhetorical responsiveness in the context of EU-related issues. Existing research explores whether or not political actors are rhetorically responsive to the national issue priorities of their electorate (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008), with a few studies investigating the responsiveness of heads of government to citizens' concerns for EU-related issues as well (Hunter, 2021; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020; Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher, 2019). By arguing that their issue attention also relates to the political priorities of the European Council, I introduce another actor to whom heads of government might be responsive.

Third, the paper puts forward two datasets. One of them is a collection of head of government speeches in nine EU MS (the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK). The time period covered is the date of the last speech collected in each country in a similar dataset, EUSpeeech V2.0 (Schumacher et al., 2020), until the 31st of December 2022.[7] This allows us to capture recent empirical developments, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic. The other dataset includes all European Council Conclusions from 2009 until 2022, divided according to thematic attention. Both datasets are machine-readable, will be made available upon request and can be useful for researchers interested broadly in topics pertaining to European politics. Overall, the paper allows us to trace EU-related issue attention by heads of government, the public in MS and the European Council across a period of 13 years.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the motivation behind the research question, Section 3 the literature review and Section 4 the theoretical framework. Section 5 provides an overview of the data collection and

[7]The only exception is the UK, for which I only use data up to 2020 given the withdrawal of the country from the EU.

methodological approach, whilst Section 6 discusses the findings. Lastly, Section 7 offers concluding remarks.

2.2 Motivation for research: Politicisation, heads of government and responsiveness

The motivation behind this research focus rests on the relevance of politicisation for European integration, the role that heads of government play in it and the importance of responsiveness for democracy. I take as a starting point the fact that the EU has become politicised in public debate. One of the earliest conceptualisations of EU politicisation is by Schmitter (1969), who links it to the idea that the progress of European integration will lead to increased interest in and contestation of the EU. Recent studies consider the EU as politicised in the public debate if it fulfills three criteria; its salience has increased, the number of actors who talk about it has expanded and these actors have diverging opinions about different issues, i.e., there is polarisation (De Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke, 2016).

According to these studies, EU politicisation has increased but the process has not been linear. Rather, it has been punctuated, intermittent and differentiated across time and across countries (De Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke, 2016; Kriesi, 2016). Whilst existing scholarly pieces look at the magnitude and nature of politicisation, I concentrate on a specific aspect of it; the EU-related issues that are prominent in public debates. Unpacking these and what might explain the focus on them is crucial as different issues and motivations can have different implications for the future of European integration and its democratic accountability.

The literature identifies different dimensions of EU issues that can be politicised (Lobo, 2023; De Wilde, 2011; Mair, 2007; Bartolini, 2005). First, the EU can be politicised as a polity, meaning that the foundations of the supranational actor are contested, such as its institutions, treaties and the process of integration. Second, its policies can be politicised, with more visibility on the domestic level and the reach of EU legislation into the domestic sphere. We can further distinguish between different areas of policies, such as economic, energy and foreign policy issues. In terms of implications, the politicisation of the polity can bring to the forefront questions about the overall legitimacy of the EU and cast doubt on the process of European integration and the membership of countries in it (Mair, 2007). In contrast, policy

politicisation is considered as being part of normal political competition, with actors expressing alternative views on societal matters (Follesdal and Hix, 2006).

A growing stream of politicisation research explores media and parliamentary communication about the EU. However, in this paper I focus on another actor, heads of government. The volume and nature of communication that they produce places them at a unique position to put their narrative forward and frame policy debates, including about European integration (Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher, 2019). Heads of government deliver speeches frequently at various occasions such as at openings, conferences, in parliament and after summits of the European Council. Their speeches are usually consciously crafted by political strategists and speechwriters.

Heads of government are highly visible political figures and their speeches can reach audiences either directly or indirectly via media reports. In addition, they are relatively free in what they talk about and how they talk about it. This is in contrast to other forms of political speech, such as parliamentary debates and questions, which are constrained in the topics they can address depending on the parliamentary agenda. Therefore, it could be argued that head of government speeches provide an influential communication source to explore EU-related issue attention (Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020).

Whether the EU issues that heads of government discuss are a response to or at least relate to the priorities of other actors is also pertinent. Responsiveness can be defined as the willingness or capacity to listen to and express citizens' preferences in policy-making (Mair, 2009). Together with responsibility, it is considered as one of the two basic functions of politicians in modern representative democracies (Mair, 2009). In light of this, a wealth of literature looks at the link between voter preferences and the communication of politicians on a number of issues, including EU-related ones (Fernandes and Vössing, 2023; Vössing, 2021; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020; Schneider, 2019).

In an EU context, heads of government are faced with at least two actors to whom they can be responsive; their electorate and their EU partners in the European Council. This raises the question as to whom they are responding when they highlight issues, with the answer having implications for democratic theory and beyond. Whilst responsiveness to their electorate is paramount for representative democracy, responsiveness to the priorities of the European Council can be considered as a form

of credibility or signalling vis-à-vis their peers and is important for the image or even reputation of the MS at the EU level.

2.3 Literature review

This paper looks at which EU-related issues heads of government highlight and what can explain this. To set the scene for the first part, I review existing research on EU politicisation, with a focus on the contributions which explore its dimensions. I complement insights from politicisation studies with research on rhetorical responsiveness to address the second part, before highlighting the key takeaways from the literature review.

2.3.1 EU politicisation

Politicisation has become a key concept in European integration research. Relevant studies present various and at times conflicting theoretical expectations and empirical results as to when and to what extent European issues have become politicised in domestic politics. Overall, they tend to agree that "something like politicisation" is going on (Schmitter, 2009), defined as an increase in the salience of the EU, an expansion in the number of actors who engage with it and a polarisation of opinions about it (De Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke, 2016). Early studies such as De Wilde and Zürn (2012) and Hooghe and Marks (2009) argue that politicisation is the result of the EU's increasing authority, suggesting that the phenomenon took off after the Treaty of Maastricht and the conferral of more powers to the EU.

Nevertheless, subsequent studies provide empirical evidence as to how politicisation is not systematically increasing only as a result of transferring more authority to the EU over time. Rather, this increase is conditioned by certain factors, including external events such as elections, treaty changes and crises as well as domestic political structures such as national histories with regards to European integration and party politics. As a result, this creates the expectation that politicisation will be differentiated both across time and across countries (De Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke, 2016; Kriesi, 2016).

The majority of contributions on EU politicisation concentrate on North-West European (NWE) countries and use hand-coding approaches to analyse media coverage of the EU as a data source. An edited volume by Hutter, Grande and Kriesi (2016)

looks at the media coverage of public debates on major European integration steps, national election campaigns and protest events in Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland between 1970 and 2012. The findings show how the EU is politicised to a greater extent during integration steps rather than national elections and protests, for instance when discussions about ratifying a treaty are taking place.

Exploring Austria, Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland from 1970 until 2010, Hutter and Grande (2014) find that although the EU is politicised in the media during national election campaigns over that period, the process is not linear. In addition to country differences, they identify another two driving forces affecting the levels of politicisation; the conflict between opposition and governing parties and the populist discourse of radical right parties. Incorporating a broader geographical reach, Haughton (2014) analyses the impact of the EU on more than 50 national parliamentary elections in NWE, South European (SE) as well as Central and Eastern European (CEE) EU MS from 2004 until 2012. The findings reveal that the EU has a low impact in most of the elections.

Other contributions look at EU politicisation in the context of recent crises. Kriesi and Grande (2016) show that the Eurozone crisis has a positive impact on the salience of European politics in media debates during national elections in NWE countries, yet does not necessarily accentuate the other two dimensions of politicisation; actor expansion and polarisation. Looking at numerous NWE, SE and CEE countries, Hutter and Kriesi (2019) find evidence that the Eurozone and refugee crises contribute to the differentiated politicisation of the EU, with the variation being related to region-specific characteristics. While the Eurozone crisis increases the politicisation of the EU in the media of SE countries, the refugee crisis has a bigger impact in NWE ones. Moreover, it appears that Eurosceptic parties are the driving forces of this politicisation (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019).

Silva, Kartalis and Lobo (2022) also look at national elections, focusing on six NWE and SE Eurozone countries (Belgium, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain) between 2002 and 2017. Their results from an automated text analysis of media data reveal that the politicisation of the EU increases following the Eurozone crisis, yet this is most evident in countries that have been implicated in Eurozone bailouts. They show that the level of emphasis varies across EU institutions, as supranational institutions are mentioned the most. The findings from the studies on politicisation point to a break away from the period of permissive consensus and

show how debates on EU-related issues are not constrained in technocratic discussions anymore. Rather, they are embedded in domestic public spheres, with certain events, contextual differences and party-based factors pushing this politicisation.

2.3.2 Dimensions of EU politicisation

Establishing that EU politicisation is taking place is a useful starting point and contributes to our understanding of why politicians might want to engage in strategic issue attention to highlight certain aspects of European integration over others. Nevertheless, in order to fully grasp the nature and consequently the implications of this issue attention, it is also necessary to look at its different dimensions. There are several studies on EU politicisation which explore its dimensions, including parts of the analyses of aforementioned studies.

On a conceptual level, Mair (2007) identifies two dimensions of conflict about the EU; polity and policy. Whilst opposition to policies is part of the democratic process, opposition to the polity could raise questions about the legitimacy of the entire EU political system. According to Mair (2007), the EU is more prone to the politicisation of its polity dimension as a result of its electoral accountability structure. Unlike in domestic politics where you can vote a government out of office, there is no opportunity to "throw the rascals out" in key decision-making bodies such as the European Commission. Therefore, discontent with policy outcomes is likely to manifest itself as opposition to the polity as a whole (Mair, 2007). Additional studies also discuss this polity as opposed to policy distinction and adjust it according to their research interests (Lobo, 2023; Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner, 2015; De Wilde and Zürn, 2012).

An example is De Wilde (2011) who delineates three aspects of European integration that can be politicised. First, institutions can be politicised in the sense that political competition and parties are increasingly involved in them. Second, there is the politicisation of decision-making processes, with a shift away from technocratic decisions towards more political ones. Third, there is the politicisation of EU issues, meaning an increase in the salience and diversity of opinions on specific topics. The first two aspects can be understood as part of Mair's (2007) polity dimension, whilst the third one as a policy dimension. In a similar vein, Bartolini (2005) presents three different types of European issues. The first one relates to abstract issues and general orientations towards the EU, whether it be for or against the polity. The second

type is about issues which concern the nature of the policy, labelled as constitutive issues. These include questions about membership, competences and decision-making rules. Lastly, the third type concerns issues that correspond to the nature of policies, such as economic interventionism as opposed to neoliberalism and approaches towards immigration policy.

Hutter, Grande and Kriesi (2016) build on this typology in their edited volume and empirically test it using media and protest data from NWE countries. Their results show that constitutive issues dominate media debates on the EU, whilst protests are driven by policy-related EU issues. Their analysis also delves further into the policy dimension, by distinguishing between economic and non-economic policy fields (Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016). They categorise economic issues as corresponding to the first pillar of the Treaty of Maastricht and non-economic issues to the second and third pillar. Their results show how topics such as economic liberalisation are more salient than non-economic topics such as migration and foreign policy. In particular, foreign policy issues appear to become less salient each electoral period.

Another edited volume on EU politicisation by Lobo (2023) includes analyses which evaluate the EU dimensions that are politicised in media and parliamentary debates (Kartalis and Silva, 2023; Santos and Rogeiro Nina, 2023; Silva and Kartalis, 2023). In contrast to Hutter, Grande and Kriesi (2016) this contribution looks at both NWE and SE countries and covers a time period which includes more recent years, as the data collection is from 2002 until 2017. Santos and Rogeiro Nina (2023) develop a hand-coding scheme to distinguish between polity and policy dimensions as well as between different policies such as economy and work, finances and taxes, health and migration. The findings reveal that the EU is politicised to a greater extent in the media and parliaments of all countries following the Eurozone crisis. They show how generally it is policy rather than polity dimensions which dominate debates, with a focus on economic and financial topics, especially in the media. The exception is Greece, where membership discussions become relevant in the context of the 2015 referendum on its EU membership and the prospect of Grexit.

Based on a content analysis of media coverage during national elections in Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK, Höglinger (2016) finds that parties focus on polity as a politicisation object. The discourse centers on general references to European integration as well as big constitutive issues, whereas specific policies are only rarely discussed. According to the author's findings, party

characteristics matter; culturally conservative parties are more likely to place an emphasis on EU issues. Senninger and Wagner (2015) look at Austria and analyse party press releases for the 2008 and 2013 election campaigns. They show how the main Eurosceptic opposition party talks in more general terms about the EU, focusing on whether it supports or opposes the direction of European integration. However, the two government parties discuss specific EU policies to a larger extent. There is evidence therefore that the ideology of a party and its position in the party system can influence its proclivity to discuss polity as opposed to policy issues.

Other studies investigate individual policy areas. Schmidtke (2016) looks at how European tax governance is publicly debated in German, Irish and Swiss media between 1981 and 2011 and demonstrates that it is increasingly politicised in all three countries. Leupold (2015) investigates issues related to economic and monetary affairs in the EU and finds that business media mainly feature controversies over the European polity, whilst under certain country-specific conditions policies are also politicised. Going beyond national elections, some studies look at which dimensions are prevalent in the media coverage of EP elections. Dolezal (2012) finds that the salience of the EU in the 1994, 1999 and 2004 EP election coverage was mainly related to constitutional EU matters. Hobolt and Tilley (2014) examine media coverage during the 2009 EP election campaign and show that whilst there are a lot of discussions about the EU, very few of them relate to policy.

Another set of studies shifts the focus from the supply of information about the EU (i.e., the media and political elites) to the perceptions of the public. Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner (2015) conduct focus groups in Germany, Austria, the UK as well as Ireland. They use a three-dimensional typology onto which topics about the EU can be mapped, distinguishing between membership issues (related to the consolidation and geographical reach of EU institutions), constitutional structure (related to the decision-making and responsibilities of EU institutions) and the penetration of EU legislation and policies in MS. Whilst the first two dimensions can be considered as polity related, the third one is policy oriented. Their findings reveal that the only issues which are politicised amongst their focus group participants are EU membership and constitutional arrangements. Conversely, the EU's policy-making activities are less salient.

With an emphasis on the effects of the Eurozone crisis, Baglioni and Hurrelmann (2015) run focus groups in Germany, Austria, Spain and Ireland. They find that the

crisis does not lead to greater mobilisation of citizens towards the EU; citizens are aware of the EU as a polity, but avoid discussions of EU-level institutions and specific policies. These findings relate to Schmitt (2009), who distinguishes between normal policy issues and constitutional EU issues to argue that the former are the hardest to evaluate for citizens, whilst the latter are the easiest. Overall, the literature on the politicisation of EU dimensions finds mixed evidence as to whether it is polity rather than policy dimensions which are highlighted the most. Earlier studies focusing on NWE countries stress the importance of the polity dimension, whereas a recent edited volume by Lobo (2023) which looks at SE countries as well finds that the policy dimension is increasingly relevant.

2.3.3 Rhetorical responsiveness

To further untangle explanations for how and why politicians emphasise certain EU-related dimensions, I turn to the rhetorical responsiveness research stream. There is a wealth of literature which agrees that selective emphasis of policy issues is a key strategy of party competition (Petrocik, 1996; Budge and Farlie, 1983). According to this saliency approach, political parties compete with each other by highlighting different policy issues rather than by opposing each other on the same ones (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). Existing research identifies two key theories for explaining strategic issue attention; issue ownership and riding the wave.

On the one hand, the issue ownership theory suggests that parties emphasise policy issues on which they have an advantage, such as those they have an expertise on. This allows them to appear as credible to voters who are in turn more prone to consider these issues as important (Ansolabehere and Iygengar, 1994). On the other hand, the riding the wave theory argues that parties respond to voters by highlighting policy issues that are salient in the minds of citizens in order to increase their electoral chances (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016). In other words, they are riding the wave of public opinion to show that they listen to voters. This can be conceptualised as either rhetorical or effective responsiveness.

Rhetorical responsiveness looks at whether selective issue emphasis in public communication reflects public issue preferences, whilst effective responsiveness explores the link between public issue preferences and actual policies (Hobolt and Klemmensen,

2008). There is empirical support for both issue ownership and riding the wave theories. Given the interest of this paper on the communication of heads of government and public opinion, I focus on the riding the wave theory and rhetorical responsiveness. Numerous studies find evidence for forms of rhetorical responsiveness, using data from different countries and stages of the electoral cycle, such as during election or normal times.

Looking at the United States (US), Sides (2006) finds that issue attention in election campaigns is related to the public salience of issues to some extent. In their analysis of election manifestos in 17 countries, Wagner and Meyer (2014) show that certain parties, such as popular ones, use riding the wave strategies. Looking at multiple elections, Klüver and Spoon (2016) find that party characteristics matter, with larger parties being more responsive to the concerns of voters compared to smaller ones. Going beyond a focus on election times, Klüver and Sagarzazu (2016) analyse press releases published by German parties during the entire 2000-2010 period. They put forward empirical support for the riding the wave theory; parties constantly monitor public opinion and respond to citizens' issue priorities throughout the legislative term.

Whilst the majority of studies on rhetorical responsiveness looks at political parties as the unit of analysis, there are also a few contributions which look at heads of government and are more relevant for this paper. Examining head of government speeches, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) find that certain factors, including political contestation and institutions, mediate the extent of responsiveness to public opinion. Elsewhere, Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher (2019) explore how economic conditions, conceptualised as a public pressure that heads of government need to respond to, influence the way in which they talk about the economy during periods of crises. Using topic models on the first version of EUSpeech (Schumacher et al., 2016), the authors find that heads of government talk more about the economy in response to low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and high domestic unemployment.

There are also a few studies which look at responsiveness in the communication of heads of government in the context of EU-related issues. Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde (2020) also use EUSpeech (Schumacher et al., 2016) and focus on how responsive heads of government in several MS are to public opinion on European integration, by measuring the sentiment and complexity of their speeches. Their findings reveal

that national leaders tend to undermine European integration in response to growing domestic public Euroscepticism and talk about the EU in a more negative way. This constitutes evidence that heads of government are to some extent responsive to domestic opinion for EU-related issues, in line with the argument of this paper.

Nevertheless, the analysis does not allow us to disentangle which topics heads of government talk about when they mention the EU, since the authors capture general references to European integration. Unpacking different policy areas, Hunter (2021) demonstrates how the salience of an issue in public opinion affects the way that heads of government attribute responsibility to the EU. They are more likely to share credit with the EU for issues that the public considers as less important and more likely to claim credit for themselves for issues that the public considers as more important.

2.3.4 Key takeaways

Several key takeaways emerge from the review of the literature on EU politicisation and rhetorical responsiveness. The contributions on politicisation and its dimensions show that the EU has become more relevant in the public debate. They also reveal that the levels of politicisation differ across time and countries (De Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke, 2016; Kriesi, 2016). This remains the case when looking more specifically at which issues are salient, with conflicting evidence as to whether it is polity (Höglinger, 2016; Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner, 2015) or policy issues which dominate (Lobo, 2023). With regards to the latter, recent studies show that economic as opposed to non-economic policy topics are more prevalent (Lobo, 2023; Hutter and Kriesi, 2019).

These studies put forward conceptual tools which I incorporate in my theoretical framework, focusing on the polity as opposed to policy and economic as opposed to non-economic dimensions. Furthermore, they contribute insights as to what might be driving the politicisation of certain issues over others, such as country differences, time period differences and party-specific factors. These are important to consider when running my analysis. Nevertheless, existing research tends to focus on evidence from national media during election periods and to a lesser extent from parliamentary speeches, whereas I place an emphasis on heads of government as political actors. In addition, most studies which outline the EU-related issues that political actors highlight use data which go the latest up until 2018. As a result, their analysis does not capture more recent empirical developments which are important for the process

of European integration such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I extend the time-frame of interest up until the end of 2022.

Turning to the literature on rhetorical responsiveness, this can provide insights regarding the motivation of heads of government to focus on specific issues. There is substantial evidence that political actors, including parties and heads of government, are responsive to the issue priorities of their electorate when highlighting certain issues (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). There is also support for responsiveness to public opinion on European integration (Hunter 2021; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020).

Building on this, I further explore the relationship between public opinion in the context of EU issues and rhetorical responsiveness. I also introduce another actor that can influence the responsiveness of heads of government; the European Council and its political priorities. I contribute to the EU politicisation and rhetorical responsiveness research streams by developing and testing expectations regarding the topics that heads of government talk about when they mention the EU and the factors affecting their issue attention.

2.4 Theoretical framework

2.4.1 Question 1: EU dimensions

The theoretical framework consists of two parts. The first part sets out descriptive hypotheses regarding the research question that asks: Which issues do heads of government highlight when they talk about the EU? The takeaway from the literature on the politicisation of European integration is that the process is differentiated; it varies both across time and across countries and it can have multiple dimensions (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019; Kriesi, 2016). I focus on two different dimensions of issues; polity and policy as well as economic and non-economic issues. Existing studies disagree as to whether the EU is more prone to the politicisation of its polity or policy dimension. Thomassen and Schmitt (1997) argue that as the EU develops in the aftermath of the Treaty of Maastricht, policy issues are more likely to become prevalent compared to constitutional issues.

Elsewhere, Mair (2007) suggests that in the context of the EU's democratic accountability structure, which has limited input legitimacy and few opportunities for

citizens to vote EU decision-makers out of office, discontent with policy outcomes can manifest itself as opposition to the polity as a whole. With the exception of a recent study (Lobo, 2023), the majority of empirical evidence shows that there is relatively little talk of policy in public discussions about the EU (Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016; Senninger and Wagner, 2015; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014). Instead, general references to the EU as a polity dominate. I test whether this expectation also holds in head of government speeches:

H1a: Heads of government talk more about polity rather than policy issues in relation to the EU

Turning to the distinction between economic and non-economic topics, the process of European integration can shed light on which of the two is more prevalent in head of government speeches. The EU began as an economic project after World War II, with the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community setting the foundations for a common market and economic integration. The establishment of the EMU in 1992 solidified this, through the creation of the common currency and further coordination of monetary and fiscal policies.

Throughout the years, the EU has acquired further competences, which are now enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon. Its areas of action have expanded well beyond economic ones, including in policies such as agriculture, health, education and the environment. There are varying types of competences, with the EU having either an exclusive, shared, supporting or special role depending on each policy area. If the EU has an exclusive competence in an area it is the only authority which is allowed to legislate on relevant issues. For shared competences both the EU and MS can legislate, whereas in supporting competences only MS can legislate and the EU can help. In the case of special competences, the EU can go beyond what is normally allowed under the treaties if certain conditions are met.

The EU's supporting and shared competences mainly include non-economic areas, whereas the exclusive competences center around economic policy areas such as trade and the customs union. Monetary policy is also an exclusive competence of the EU, but only applies to euro area countries which share the common currency. Thus, although the EU's responsibilities have expanded over the years to include non-economic areas, its main activities are still in the economic field. This has been further strengthened as a result of the Eurozone crisis, which brought to the forefront discussions about the architecture of the EMU.

As a response to the crisis, a number of intergovernmental treaties have deepened the role of the EU in the economic and financial affairs of its MS, such as the creation of the European Stability Mechanism, the Fiscal Compact and the Single Resolution Board. Recent studies find that the Eurozone crisis has highlighted the economic dimension of EU politicisation in national media and parliaments (Santos and Rogeiro Nina, 2023; Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). Given these treaty changes and the impact of the crisis, I expect the EU's economic focus to also be reflected in how heads of government talk about the EU:

H1b: Heads of government talk more about economic rather than non-economic issues in relation to the EU

2.4.2 Question 2: Rhetorical responsiveness

The following set of hypotheses looks at the second research question, which considers explanations for the issue attention of heads of government. More specifically, I theorise how their issue attention is related to their dual political role. On the one hand, as top officeholders in their country they have a motivation to take domestic electoral pressures into account to maximise their chances for re-election. I focus on the salience that citizens attach to different EU-related issues as one such pressure. On the other hand, heads of government are also representatives of their country in the European Council; they cannot completely ignore the issue priorities of its agenda if they want to appear as credible. I develop expectations to understand how the issue attention of heads of governments relates to these multilevel pressures.

There is substantial evidence that political actors are rhetorically responsive to domestic public opinion (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Wagner and Meyer, 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). Rhetorical responsiveness is a way for them to signal to their electorate that they consider their views, who might in turn be more likely to vote for them. They can also improve their image and be seen as concerned (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994). Conversely, if voters consider EU action important in one field, such as climate, but heads of government focus on other issues, such as the economy, they might be perceived as unresponsive. Voters can then punish them in the ballot box. Therefore, it could be argued that heads of government have incentives to take the priorities of domestic public opinion into account when communicating.

Whilst most studies on responsiveness focus on issues that are of national importance, I explore whether rhetorical responsiveness also takes place in relation to topics that the public perceives as important for the EU. Public opinion on European integration used to be characterised by a permissive consensus, whereby the EU, its institutions and its policies were depoliticised and largely outside of the public spotlight (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). This is no longer the case though; EU issues have entered the electoral arena and have led to polarisation, with a rise of public and partisan Euroscepticism in some countries (Hunter, 2021). This means that political actors, including heads of government, cannot ignore public opinion about EU-related issues, as they can shape national party competition and the political space (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019).

The importance of considering public opinion on EU-related issues is reflected in EU initiatives as well, such as the Bratislava Declaration in 2016 which calls for action by EU institutions and MS to be more responsive to citizens' concerns (Drachenberg, Anghel and McGlynn, 2017). As the literature review of this paper shows, there is some initial evidence that heads of government are responsive to public opinion when talking about EU issues. Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde (2020) find that public and partisan levels of Euroscepticism matter for the tone and clarity that heads of government use when talking about European integration. Moreover, Hunter (2021) reveals that the public salience of issues can impact how heads of government blame and credit the EU.

One could argue that the politicisation of certain dimensions of European integration is driven by external events, such as crises. However, as Hutter and Grande (2014) note, critical events alone do not produce politicisation. Instead, political actors need to articulate and mobilise political conflict arising from them. For instance, Hooghe and Marks (2009) suggest that partisan entrepreneurs make Euroscepticism politically and electorally relevant by putting an emphasis on it. Even when controlling for external events and their effect, I expect variation in the degree to which heads of government discuss certain issues.

Therefore, I suggest that a factor that can affect how heads of government highlight different dimensions of European integration is the salience that the public attaches to them. I expect that domestic public opinion on which issues are the most important for the EU is positively related to the attention that heads of government pay to them. For instance, if the domestic public considers inflation to be the most important issue

for the EU at the moment, the head of government in that country is more likely to talk about the EU in relation to inflation. Following the dichotomous distinction in the politicisation literature between economic and non-economic issues, I formulate the following hypothesis:

H2: Heads of government talk more about economic (or non-economic) issues in relation to the EU as the salience of economic (or non-economic) issues in domestic public opinion increases

In addition to domestic pressures, heads of government need to take EU-level commitments into account because they represent their countries in the European Council. In the European Council, they are responsible for setting the political agenda of the EU and after each meeting they publish an official document called the Conclusions. The Conclusions outline the political priorities of the EU in a number of key areas, which are agreed by consensus. Given the consensus requirement, this means that the Conclusions do not reflect the policy priorities of one MS or the public in one MS, but rather of the EU as a whole.[8] Following these meetings, heads of government can strategically communicate by highlighting or downplaying the issues set out in the Conclusions, regardless of whether they agree with the common positions or not. Either way, their public statements or commitments can influence bargaining outcomes and legislative output on European issues (Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020).

One strategy is to selectively highlight an issue that was mentioned in the Conclusions in order to stress how important it is for the European Council. Alternatively, they might concentrate on an issue that was not mentioned in order to signal that they want to put it onto the agenda of the European Council. Based on evidence from existing research, I argue that most often than not the majority of heads of government will want to appear as responsible and credible to their European partners (Hunter, 2021). To achieve this, they should acknowledge at least some issues that are relevant for the EU's priorities in their public communication as it allows them to show responsiveness to their commitments at the European Council. This discussion leads to the following expectation:

H3: Heads of government talk more about economic (or non-economic) issues in relation to the EU as the attention devoted to economic (or non-economic) issues in the European Council increases

[8] I discuss this further in Section 2.6.2 and test for issues with endogeneity.

2.5 Data collection and methodology

2.5.1 Time period and country selection

To explore which issues are prevalent when heads of government talk about the EU and what can explain this, I focus on nine countries and a time period of more than 10 years. The period covered is from 2009 until 2022, capturing empirical developments which have shaped, or even transformed, the scope and depth of European integration. In 2009 we saw the onset of the Eurozone crisis which led to changes in the architecture of the EMU through the Treaty of Lisbon and other intergovernmental treaties. The migration crisis took place from 2015 onwards, with discussions still ongoing as to the EU's role in migration affairs. The Brexit referendum in 2016 signalled the first episode of disintegration in the EU, whilst the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 highlighted discussions about additional solidarity and Eurobonds. More recently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 brought defense policy to the forefront and escalated debates about EU enlargement and the accession of countries such as Ukraine and Moldova.

The country selection (the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the UK) covers three distinct geographical groups of MS (or former MS in the case of the UK) in the EU. This is consistent with studies on politicisation such as Hutter and Kriesi (2019) who explore countries from different European regions. Denmark, France, Germany, the UK and the Netherlands capture NWE countries. Greece, Portugal and Spain are SE countries and the Czech Republic is a CEE country. Whilst these NWE countries were some of the first members of the EU, CEE and SE countries joined at a later stage. As a result of historical legacies, the relationship of each group of countries with the EU is different. This has facilitated the creation of distinct national narratives on European integration (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019).

In addition, the selection includes countries which have adopted the common currency and are part of the euro area (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Portugal and Spain) and countries which have not (Denmark, the Czech Republic, the UK). During the period under investigation, the countries were exposed to asymmetrical challenges such as the Eurozone crisis and more symmetrical ones such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This has led to differences in public opinion towards the EU, with varying levels of public and partisan Euroscepticism in each MS. Therefore, the

country selection is intended to provide a sample of EU MS which represent regional differences.

2.5.2 Head of government speeches

I use evidence from two datasets. The first one is EUSpeech V2.0, which includes all publicly available head of government or state speeches from 14 EU MS, including the ones that I am interested in (Schumacher et al., 2020). For most countries the speeches are available until the beginning of 2020. EUSpeech V2.0 is created by scraping government websites or their historical archives for speeches.[9] For each speech in the dataset, the authors save the original text as well as additional meta-data such as its length, date, speaker and the country of the speaker. Given that all the selected countries (except France) have a parliamentary system, the authors collect prime minister speeches as they are the heads of government. In the case of France's semi-presidential system, they collect presidential speeches.[10]

The time period coverage varies by country. Whilst for some countries such as Denmark it stretches back to 1997, for others like Greece only speeches which were delivered after 2009 are available. Given that October 2009 is the first period for which data is available for most heads of government in the countries of interest, I remove all speeches that were delivered before that to allow for a comparable time-frame across countries. In addition, there are missing dates for speeches in Greece and Portugal. To rectify this, I manually search for the title of the speech on government websites and insert the corresponding date based on the online information. I also remove speeches with incorrect dating formats, where I cannot identify the correct date. For instance, five German speeches had 2099 as the delivery year.

The second dataset is the result of my own data collection, which also covers the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. However, it extends the data collection beyond the date of the last speech collected for each country in EUSpeech V2.0 until the 31st of December 2022.

[9]Please refer to Schumacher et al. (2020) for further details on the web scraping process and the construction of the dataset.

[10]In France, the head of government is the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, the President of the Republic is the elected official who is responsible for appointing the Prime Minister and is the official who participates in European Council meetings. The President also has power over a number of important policy areas, such as foreign policy and defence. In light of this and the focus of this paper, I also choose to use the speeches of the President rather than the Prime Minister in the case of France.

The UK is an exception, where I use the official date of the withdrawal of the country from the EU (1st of February 2020) as the cut-off date. I collect the speeches manually from the official websites of governments.[11] Given that governments sometimes archive these websites, I use both the current and archived versions of the websites whenever necessary, with the help of the Wayback Machine.[12]

In total, I analyse 7,805 speeches. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the combined datasets, which allow us to capture multiple changes in government in most countries. The exception is Germany, where Angela Merkel was the Chancellor for the majority of the time period. It is also important to take into consideration that there is variation in the number of speeches in each country. There are a lot of speeches in some countries (such as France and Spain), whereas in others there are relatively few (such as Portugal and Denmark).[13]

2.5.3 EU references

Given that the research focus of this paper is on EU-related issues, I first need to identify all the references to the EU in head of government speeches. I use a dictionary of regular expressions of terms relating to the EU created by Rauh (2015).[14] The dictionary covers references to the overall supranational polity, EU institutions as well as to various policy instruments. The original dictionary is in German, but was translated into English, Spanish and Dutch by Rauh and De Wilde (2018). Hunter (2021) translates the dictionary in Czech, Danish and Greek. For French and Portuguese, I ask native speakers to translate the dictionary from English into their native language. Appendix A includes the dictionaries of EU terms in each language.

I apply the dictionary at the speech level for each country. This allows me to explore how frequently heads of government talk about the EU in their speeches.

[11] Appendix A includes further details on the data collection.

[12] The Wayback Machine (`https://archive.org/web/`) makes occasional snapshots of websites. In some cases, there are a few months between one snapshot and the next one, thus leading to gaps in the data. In this paper, this was an issue only in the case of the Czech Republic where there are missing data for two months.

[13] The total number of speeches corresponds to the unique speeches which are made publicly available on (archived) government websites and are retrievable. The total number does not include any speeches which are not published in government websites or are not able to be retrieved through archived versions of the websites. Therefore, this collection of speeches should be perceived as a random sample of all speeches that are given by heads of government rather than as a complete collection.

[14] The dictionary was created by reading plenary speeches from the German Bundestag. For more details on the construction of the dictionary please refer to Rauh (2015) and Rauh and De Wilde (2018).

Country	**Number of speeches**	**Heads of government**
Czech Republic	430	Jan Fischer (2009-2010), Petr Nečas (2010-2013), Bohuslav Sobotka (2014-2017), Andrej Babiš (2017-2021), Petr Fiala (2021-ongoing)
Denmark	299	Lars Løkke Rasmussen (2009-2011, 2015-2019), Helle Thorning-Schmidt (2011-2015), Mette Frederiksen (2019-ongoing)
France	2,076	Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-2012), François Hollande (2012-2017), Emmanuel Macron (2017-ongoing)
Germany	1,090	Angela Merkel (2005-2021), Olaf Scholz (2021-ongoing)
Greece	907	George Papandreou (2009-2011), Lucas Papademos (2011-2012), Antonis Samaras (2012-2015), Alexis Tsipras (2015-2019), Kyriakos Mitsotakis (2019-ongoing)
Netherlands	482	Jan Peter Balkenende (2002-2010), Mark Rutte (2010-2023)
Portugal	247	José Sócrates (2005-2011), Pedro Passos Coelho (2011-2015), António Costa (2015-2024)
Spain	1,410	José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-2011), Mariano Rajoy (2011-2018), Pedro Sánchez (2018-ongoing)
UK	864	Gordon Brown (2007-2010), David Cameron (2010-2016), Theresa May (2016-2019), Boris Johnson (2019-2022)

Table 2.1: Overview of data

There is variation in the number of average EU mentions across countries. Whilst heads of governments in some countries such as Germany and Spain talk about the EU a lot, others such as in Greece mention it less. In addition, there are spikes in EU references, such as in the UK during the time of the Brexit referendum and in Denmark during their Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2012. The resulting dataset contains all statements that refer to the EU at a five sentence window, i.e., the two sentences before the reference to the EU, the sentence which contains it and the two sentences after it.

This window allows us to capture contextual information around the references to the EU which is relevant for the topic modelling analysis. If the EU is mentioned more than once in a five sentence statement, this creates multiple identical EU references. For instance, if the EU is mentioned twice in a five sentence window, this creates two identical statements. However, I only keep one of those statements for the topic modelling. Given that all duplicates are removed, only unique statements are used for the topic modelling. In total, the dataset includes 25,701 statements which refer to the EU.

2.5.4 Topic models

The next step in the analysis is to prepare the dataset which includes all EU statements for the topic modelling. First, I translate all statements into English, in order to facilitate the interpretation of the results. In line with existing studies which use text mining approaches in EU politics, I opt for machine translation using Google Translate (Silva and Kartalis, 2023; Ferrara et al., 2022; Hunter, 2021; Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher, 2019).

De Vries et al. (2018) find that professionally translated multi-lingual debates in the EP by humans have considerable overlap in their text features with the machine translation of these debates by Google Translate. They also show how these translations could be robust to topic modelling analyses; they find that topical content and prevalence is highly similar between machine and human translated documents. Other studies which use EUSpeech also use Google Translate translations to analyse the texts in English (Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020; Traber, Schoonvelde, and Schumacher, 2019).

Second, I carry out several pre-processing steps which are used when working with topic models. I tokenise each statement in the corpus, meaning that each word in

a statement is treated individually as a single token. I remove all punctuation as well as lowercase and stem (i.e., reduce inflected words to their root form) all words. To reduce the number of tokens, I remove too frequent and infrequent words. This includes stopwords, i.e., common words that do not convey meaning but primarily serve grammatical functions such as articles and prepositions. I also convert the text corpus of statements into a document-feature matrix, which contains all unique words in the dataset and the number of times they are mentioned in each statement. I use this document-feature matrix as an input for the topic model analysis.

I use semi-supervised topic models to identify the most prevalent topics in head of government speeches which mention the EU. In general, topic models are statistical models used to describe latent topics in a set of documents. Scholars have constructed different types of topic models for social science research and have used them widely, including semi-supervised ones which are assisted by keywords or so-called "seeds" (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023; Watanabe and Baturo, 2023) and unsupervised ones such as Structural Topic Models (STMs) (Roberts, Stewart and Tingley, 2019). Ultimately, the choice of model specification depends on the research question and task at hand of each study. For instance, unsupervised methods are useful for exploring topics in a corpus without prior knowledge, since they do not require researchers to directly incorporate information about topics of interest prior to the analysis (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023).

The few papers which use EUSpeech and topic models each opt for different models and specifications. Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher (2019) as well as Eisele, Tolochko and Boomgaarden (2021) run unsupervised topic models separately for each country. Whilst the former study decides on a different number of topics for each country, the latter one uses the same number for all. Mempel and Corbera (2021) combine the EUSpeech corpora with other sets of data, translate them into English and run a topic model analysis on all of them. Another study which looks at head of government speeches, but not from EUSpeech, uses topic models which are assisted with keywords (Eisele and Hajdinjak, 2022). The authors have a set of a priori defined topics on Brexit that they want to explore in an aggregated corpus of Irish and British head of government speeches and European Commission speeches.

In this paper, I am interested in specific topics, driven by my theoretical expectations which center around the distinction between polity and policy as well as economic and non-economic topics. Taking this into consideration, I opt for topic

models which are assisted with keywords. This is a semi-supervised machine learning approach to topic models which has been developed in the R package keyATM (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023). This type of topic models is suitable for more theoretically grounded as opposed to exploratory research since it allows researchers to provide a small number of keywords which describe each topic of interest. In turn, this can enhance the model's measurement performance. Comparing keyATM with STM, Eshima, Imai and Sasaki (2023) find that keyATM yields more interpretable topics and its results are less sensitive to the total number of topics chosen by researchers than STM.

Given that I am using corpora from different countries which span several years, it is reasonable to assume that the prevalence of topics varies across countries. For instance, the migration topic might be more pertinent in countries which receive a lot of refugees, such as Greece. Existing research argues that when a corpus consists of multiple text courses, researchers should account for this in their models as meta data (Schoonvelde, Schumacher and Bakker, 2019). Therefore, I select the keyATM topic model out of other semi-supervised topic models since it allows for the incorporation of meta data as document-level covariate information (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023). In the analyses that follow, I include covariates for the country of the head of government.

The performance of keyATM depends on the selection of the keywords. The model can result in poor topic interpretability and classification when the selected keywords do not frequently occur in the corpus or do not discriminate their topics from others (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023). There are several ways to select the keywords for keyATM, including based on substantive knowledge of the topics at hand, keyword selection algorithms and unsupervised topic models which can explore the corpus and highlight frequent words that are exclusive to certain topics (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023). For instance, other studies using keyATM rely on dictionaries of predefined topics and adjust them based on the focus of the research question (Eisele and Hajdinjak, 2022).

I use a combination of domain expertise in EU politics and the results from unsupervised topic models to select the keywords. I estimate two different types of unsupervised models, STMs and Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) models, on a sample of the corpus. Appendix A includes more details regarding the selection of the keywords. A feature of keyATM is that the keywords do not have to be exclusive

to each topic, meaning two topics can have the same keywords. Table 2.2 presents the topics, their associated stemmed keywords and the dimension I assign them to. I opt for 14 topics and allow keyATM to also estimate one topic without keywords, i.e., a residual category for any documents which do not correspond to any of the pre-defined labels.

In line with other studies, I select the number of topics by estimating several models with varying numbers of topics, ranging from 12 to 16, and then selecting the final model based on the internal consistency of the topics (Eisele and Hajdinjak, 2022; Ferrara et al., 2022).[15] Finally, I assess the fit of the model, based on the statistical criteria of log-likelihood and perplexity. Appendix A presents the results of the fit tests and shows that the model is working as expected. The topics can be considered in the context of existing typologies of European issues (Silva and Kartalis, 2023; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016; Bartolini, 2005). The first five topics are intended to capture the polity dimension. The topic on European integration corresponds to general references to the EU, including mentions of European values such as peace and democracy. This category has also been used in qualitative studies which explore topics in relation to the EU, such as Hutter, Grande and Kriesi (2016).

The other four polity topics correspond to constitutive issues, i.e., issues which relate to the nature of the polity (Bartolini, 2005). Whilst the Brexit topic relates to disintegration and the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, the Membership topic concerns enlargement, the neighborhood policy and the accession of new MS. The topic Institutions and treaties includes mentions to institutional issues such as elections in the EP and the treaties. Moreover, the EMU topic is economics-related and concerns the architecture of the EMU and the creation of the banking union.

The policy dimension is captured by an additional six topics. On the one hand, the topics Economy, Trade and Single market represent economic dimensions. These include references to the domestic economies of MS, EU funds to support MS economies, the four freedoms of movement and trade policies. On the other hand, the topics Foreign affairs, security and defence, Climate and energy and Migration are intended to capture non-economic topics, with each focusing on a different policy area that is part of the EU's competences. I also include two topics labelled as Eurozone crisis

[15]The range from 12 to 16 was determined based on the results of STMs. An example of an evaluation I had to make regarding internal consistency is as follows. In one of the specifications I had included separate topics for energy and climate policies. However, the results showed that the topics were closely intertwined. Therefore, I decided to join them under a single topic.

Topic	Keywords	Category
European integration	histori, democraci, valu, democrat, project, peac, prosper, war, integr, unif	polity
Membership	turkey, balkan, membership, access, enlarg, armenia, serbia, moldova	polity
Institutions and treaties	elect, parliament, vote, institut, anniversari, roman, sign, treati, lisbon, maastricht, ratif	polity
Brexit	referendum, brexit, leav, remain, exit, stay, backstop, withdraw	polity
EMU	emu, monetari, currenc, euro, zone, financi, converg, fiscal, reform, eurozon, bank, supervis, central	polity
Economy	pension, unemploy, tax, econom, budget, grow, growth, financ, fund, invest, research, employ, innov, horizon	policy, economic
Trade	trade, china, open, japan, partner, india, atlant	policy, economic
Single market	digit, agricultur, industri, regul, strategi, taxat, technolog, data, tax, compani	policy, economic
Foreign affairs	ukrain, russia, sanction, russian, ukrainian, nato, defens, defenc, militari, turkey, iran, terror	policy, non-economic
Climate and energy	emiss, co2, climat, green, carbon, nuclear, energi, electr, gas, interconnect, renew	
Migration	border, schengen, migrat, asylum, refuge, migrant, immigr, resettl	policy, non-economic
Eurozone crisis	crisi, recess, debt, solidar, stimulus, deficit, auster, imf	policy, economic
COVID-19 crisis	pandem, vaccin, health, virus, coronavirus, covid	policy, NA
Meetings	meet, summit, held, council, presid, conclus	NA, NA

Table 2.2: Topic keywords and categories

and COVID-19 crisis to capture the discussion around these two crises that left their mark on the EU in recent years. I consider the Eurozone crisis as an economic topic, given its economic and financial nature.

However, I do not label the COVID-19 crisis as either an economic or a non-economic topic given the multifaceted nature of the crisis. The related references capture discussions about both a health and an economic crisis.[16] Lastly, the topic Meetings includes greetings and general references to EU-level meetings such as in a European Council setting or bilateral meetings between heads of government and other public officials. This is a general topic that is not classified along the polity and policy or economic and non-economic dimensions. Any topic which is not captured by these categories is included in the residual topic category Other, which is also not classified along any of the dimensions.

The distinction between economic and non-economic issues or polity and policy issues is not always clear cut, as some issues can belong to multiple categories. Nevertheless, this approach is a useful heuristic; it is consistent with existing research on politicisation and allows the findings to be interpreted in their context. I manually inspect a sample of texts in a series of tests to confirm that they correspond to their topic and category classification. For instance, the EMU topic includes discussions about institutional issues pertaining to the EU polity, rather than specific policies.

To get a better sense of the results, Appendix A includes a representative speech for each topic and the top 15 keywords that the model assigns to each topic. In interpreting the results of the model, it is also important to keep in mind that keyATM, like other topic models, is probabilistic. Documents are not assigned to topics based on a binary decision. Rather, to interpret the findings we have to look at the document-topic distribution, which represents the proportions of topics for each document. These topics reflect the main themes of the document, whilst their predicted probabilities represent their prevalence.

2.5.5 Dependent variables

For the data analysis of both research questions, I construct two sets of dependent variables based on the polity and policy as well as economic and non-economic dimensions. The values of the dependent variables are derived from the topic modelling

[16] Whenever a topic does not fit in the pre-defined categories, I indicate this in Table 2.2 by writing Not Available (NA).

analysis and represent the topic probabilities, i.e., the probability that a topic is being mentioned. I calculate aggregate measures of polity issue engagement by combining the topic probabilities of all the topics that discuss the polity dimension. This includes the topics of European integration, Membership, Brexit and EMU. The rest of the topics are included in the policy dimension, besides the residual topic Other and the topic on Meetings which are not meaningful for any of the dimensions.

To gauge the economic as opposed to non-economic dimension, I construct a dependent variable on economic issue attention by combining the topic probabilities of all the topics that discuss economic issues (Eurozone crisis, Economy, Trade and Single market). I also include the EMU polity topic given its emphasis on the economy. The rest of the policy dimension topics are included as measures of non-economic policy issue attention. The topic probability for the dependent variables can be measured as a proportion from 0 to 1 or as a percentage from 0 to 100.

2.5.6 Independent variables

To answer the second research question, I include two independent variables; domestic public issue salience (to test H2), and the thematic attention of the European Council Conclusions (to test H3). Similar to the dependent variables, I operationalise these along the lines of polity and policy dimensions as well as economic and non-economic dimensions. For the domestic public issue salience variable, I use the Eurobarometer question which asks "What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?" (European Commission, 2023a).[17]

Respondents select two issues which they perceive to be the most important policy concerns for the EU at the point when the survey question is asked.[18] Versions of this "most-important" question from various surveys have been widely used in studies on issue engagement and rhetorical responsiveness as a measure of public issue salience (Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2016; Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Wagner and Meyer, 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008).

[17]This question is available from the second wave of the 2010 Eurobarometer onwards (Winter 2010 version).

[18]The standard categories of issues which are included in some formulation in all waves of the Eurobarometer survey are as follows: crime, economic situation, rising prices/inflation, taxation, unemployment, terrorism, immigration, pensions, environment, climate issues, energy supply, the influence of the EU in the world and public finances in MS. In recent waves, the issues of health and and the international situation are added.

I use the percentage of respondents indicating an issue as one of the two most important ones as a measure of public opinion issue salience. I use a six-month time lag for this data to reflect the bi-annual nature of the Eurobarometer survey (Hagemann, Hobolt and Wratil, 2017). This is consistent with other studies on rhetorical responsiveness which use a time lag because they are based on the assumption that public preferences come before policy promises. As a result, it may take some time for public preferences to feed into the policy priorities of the government (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008).

The second independent variable measures the issue attention of the European Council using evidence from the European Council Conclusions, which are formal documents outlining the issues that have been discussed at the European Council by heads of government or state and the agreements that have been reached. This approach is in line with existing research on the European Council, which analyses the content of the Conclusions in order to create measures of its thematic attention (Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2016; Alexandrova, 2015; Alexandrova and Timmermans, 2013; Alexandrova, Carammia and Timmermans, 2012).

These studies use data from the EU Policy Agendas project (Alexandrova et al., 2014). Using human coders, the project traces issue attention in the European Council from 1975 until mid-2010. The general finding is that issues about the economy, foreign policy and the governance of the EU are the most prevalent in the Conclusions. It would have been ideal to use the dataset from this project to construct my independent variable on issue attention in the European Council. However, given that the data collection does not cover the entire period of interest for my research question (2009 to 2022), I collect new data. I could have supplemented their existing data with the additional years I am interested in, but I decide to collect new data for the entire period in order to minimise issues with different measurement strategies.[19]

I construct a dataset of all European Council Conclusions from 2009 until 2022, including scheduled and special meetings. In total, the dataset consists of 76 documents of Conclusions. I create a regular expression which captures the headlines of each section of each document in order to automatically split the documents into topics. I use the headline of the section as a proxy for the topic that is being discussed. In general, the headlines represent distinct policy areas. For instance, in the

[19]For instance, the hand-coders who were recruited for the EU Policy Agendas project received extensive training specifically for the project.

June 2009 Conclusions some of the headlines are "Climate change and sustainable development" and "Illegal immigration". The only instances where headlines might not be available are in special meetings. Given that those are usually on a specific topic, such as Brexit, I consider the entire text as one topic and manually identify it. Appendix A provides more details on the data collection process and plots the issue attention of the Conclusions across years.

To capture issue attention in the Conclusions, I create a bi-annual measure where I divide the number of times that a topic is mentioned each half-year out of the total number of topics that are mentioned during that period. I select the half-year period as an aggregation point and include a six-month time lag to mirror the bi-annual nature of the Eurobarometer surveys. This is a less fine-grained measure compared to the one by the EU Policy Agendas project. In that project, they code the topic of each quasi-sentence, rather than section, using hand-coding (Alexandrova et al., 2014). This measure allows them to identify more instances of each topic per Conclusion. For instance, if a section has the headline "Migration" I identify this is as one instance of the topic in a Conclusion, whereas the EU Policy Agendas project considers each quasi-sentence in that section as an individual instance of reference to the topic.

In the EU Policy Agendas project, they detect the extent of attention to each topic as the share of quasi-sentences that refer to it out of the total quasi-sentences in the Conclusions for a particular meeting (Alexandrova, Carammia and Timmermans, 2012). Given limited resources, it was not possible to replicate the method based on the EU Policy Agendas project codebook which requires training hand-coders. Nevertheless, I am confident that the cruder measure I use to categorise the issue attention of the European Council Conclusions is fit for the analysis of this paper which also uses a crude dichotomous distinction of policy as opposed to polity and economic as opposed to non-economic issues.

2.5.7 Control variables

The models include a number of economic and political controls that might have an impact on how heads of government talk about the EU. The list of controls is an attempt to take into account some of the most important ones as they arise from the literature review on politicisation and rhetorical responsiveness. To begin with, it is important to control for any external events, such as economic crises or

migration crises, that might influence communication. These external events can put the spotlight on an issue and make it less possible for heads of government to ignore it. They can also polarise public opinion on the EU if its crisis management is perceived as inadequate, thereby leading to rising levels of Euroscepticism.

Therefore, the intensity of a policy problem might be driving its salience in both public opinion and the communication of political actors (Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2016). This is a challenge for any studies which are studying rhetorical responsiveness since external events are not easy to measure. Nevertheless, given their possibility to impact the communication of heads of government, I try to control for external events. I do not claim that external events are irrelevant, but rather try to establish whether there is a link between the issue attention of heads of government and that of the European Council as well as public opinion, even when controlling for external events.

I control for the state of the national economy in order to capture either positive or adverse economic conditions which might point to the intensity of the issue, such as the Eurozone crisis. I include quarterly measures of GDP change, measured as a percentage change from the previous quarter and lagged to the quarter previous of the speech date (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). Another country-level aspect which can affect communication is the economic link of a country to the EU (Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020). Using budgetary data from the European Commission, I calculate whether a country is a net contributor or recipient in the EU budget each year and include it as a binary variable (European Commission, 2023b).

An additional crisis pressure that was present during the period studied is the migration crisis. To measure the intensity of the situation in each country, I include the number of asylum applications per capita per year using Eurostat data (Toshkov, 2023).[20] To measure how conflicts might impact the salience of foreign affairs topics, I use the absolute number of violent conflicts each year from the Armed Conflict Dataset (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2023). This project records ongoing violent conflicts all over the world since the 1970s and its data have been used in other studies which look at EU-related issue engagement such as Alexandrova (2015). I also include the

[20]The Eurostat website has data for the number of asylum applications per capita available only from 2011 onwards.

total number of coronavirus cases per month per country to capture the intensity of the COVID-19 pandemic using World Health Organisation data (2023).

I add a range of political controls as well. At the speaker-level, I use information from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES). The CHES measures the positions of national parties in European countries on a number of issues, including European integration, ideology and policy issues (Seth et al., 2022). The first survey was conducted in 1999 and the most recent one in 2019. Based on CHES data, I indicate whether the party that a head of government belongs to has a favourable stance towards European integration (with a value of 1) or not (with a value of 0). I also include information on the intra-party dissent of each head of government's party on European integration and the salience of the European integration issue for each party (Seth et al., 2022).[21]

At the country-level, I consider public and partisan Euroscepticism, two variables which have been shown to affect the communication of heads of government (Hunter, 2021). To measure domestic public Euroscepticism, I use the Eurobarometer question which asks: "In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative, or very negative image?" (European Commission, 2023a).[22] The measure of public Euroscepticism is the survey-weighted mean of all valid responses by country, which represent the proportion of respondents with a negative image of the EU. As with the other Eurobarometer data I use, I include a six-month time lag.

To capture levels of partisan Euroscepticism in each country, I use information from PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019) to categorise a party as Eurosceptic or not and information from ParlGov (Döring, Huber and Manow, 2022) about the aggregate vote share of these Eurosceptic parties in national elections. This is similar to approaches in other studies which measure partisan Euroscepticism (Hunter, 2021; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020). Moreover, I create two dummy variables based on

[21]In the case of the President of France (Emmanuel Macron) and his Renaissance party (formerly known as En Marche! and La Republique En Marche!) there were some data gaps given that the party was founded in 2016. No CHES data is available before 2019 since the previous data collection was in 2014 and the party was first elected in 2017. To overcome this issue, I use the values from the 2019 CHES as indicators of the party's positions before that time period as well, i.e., in 2017 and 2018.

[22]Earlier studies operationalise public opinion on the EU using the question which asks whether membership is a good or a bad thing (Hagemann, Hobolt and Wratil, 2017). However, this question has not been asked since 2011 and more recent studies show that the EU image question which I use is closely related to the question on membership (Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020).

information from official government and EU websites to indicate whether national elections took place during a certain year and whether a country held the Presidency of the Council of the EU during a half-year.

2.6 Findings and discussion

Figure 2.1 presents predicted probabilities of topics across countries. The results provide face validity to the model fit, with some expected patterns. We can observe that the Brexit topic is most prevalent in the UK, whilst the Eurozone crisis is relevant in Greece, which was a key debtor player during the crisis. The EMU topic appears to be less relevant in the UK and Czech Republic, countries outside of the euro area.

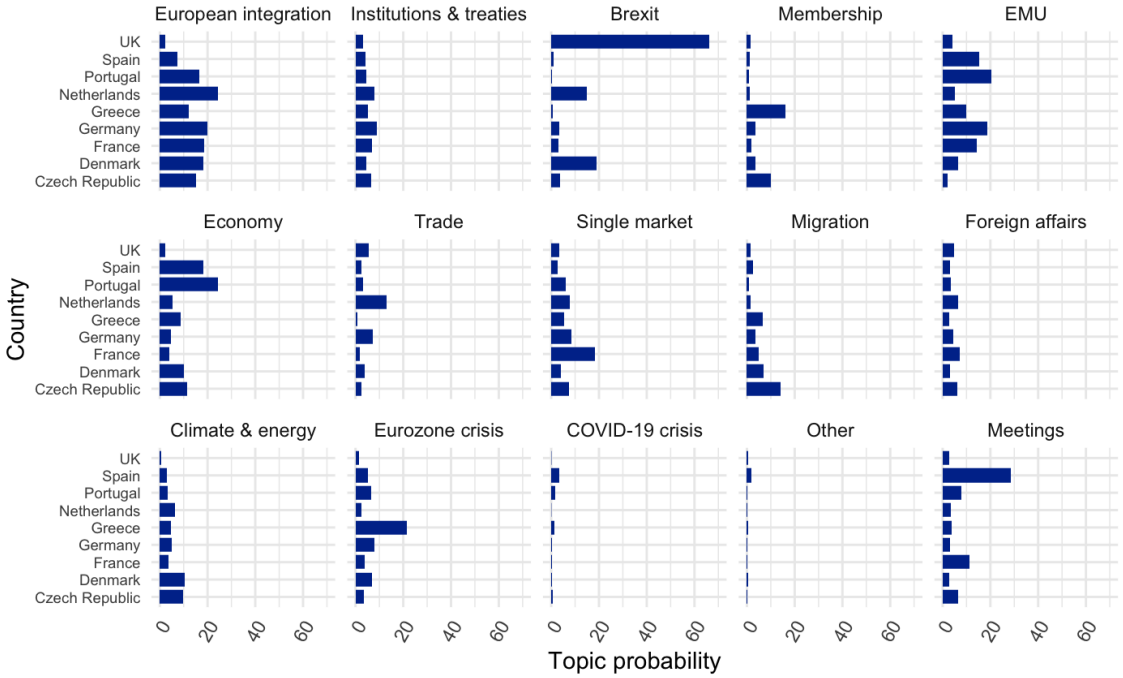

Figure 2.1: Topics across years

2.6.1 Question 1: EU dimensions

I use descriptive statistics to explore the first set of hypotheses that examine which dimensions of the EU are more prevalent when heads of government talk about it. The left panel of Figure 2.2 presents the total probabilities of topics belonging to either the polity or policy dimension. It shows that the former appears to be more prominent, in line with the expectations of most studies on EU politicisation (Hutter,

Grande and Kriesi, 2016; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014.) Nevertheless, as the right panel shows, which breaks down the probability by country, only in some NWE countries (the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark) are polity topics which center on the foundations of the EU and constitutive issues more salient than policy ones.

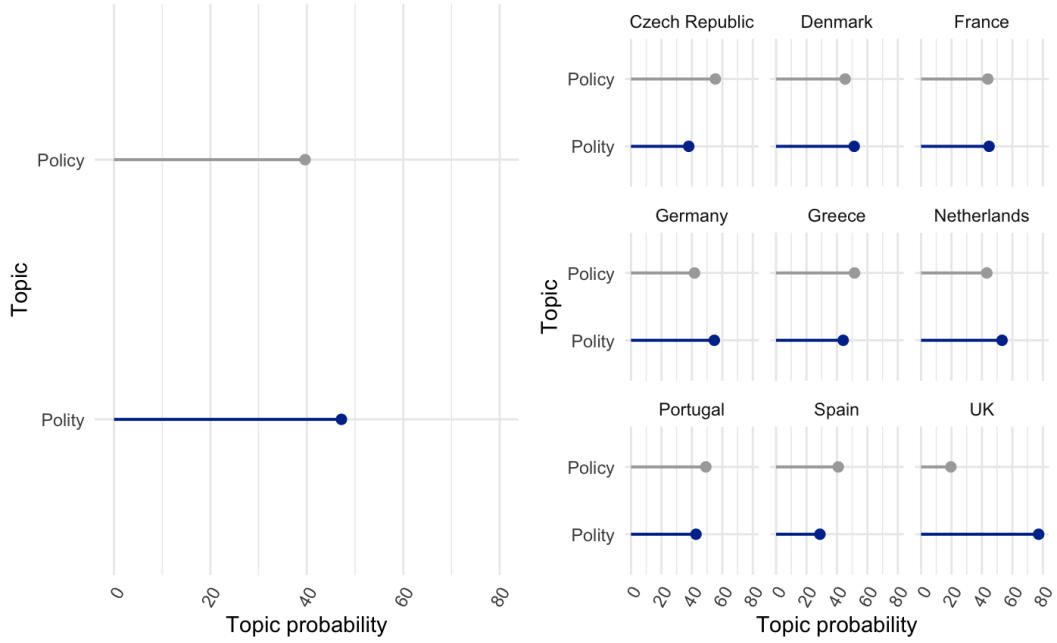

Figure 2.2: Polity vs policy dimension

In fact, the polity effect is largely driven by UK heads of government, with Figure 2.1 revealing that the Brexit topic dominates discussions about the polity. Conversely, heads of government in CEE (the Czech Republic) and SE (Greece, Portugal and Spain) countries talk more about day-to-day policy-making. Although at face value there seems to be support for H1a, which posits that heads of government talk more about polity rather than policy issues, when we disaggregate the results by country it is no longer the case that the polity dimension dominates. Therefore, Figure 2.2 reveals that both polity and policy issues can be salient and at similar levels in most of the countries, with one or the other dominating depending on regional groups.

The left panel of Figure 2.3 shows that the combined topic probabilities of economic topics are higher compared to those of non-economic ones, in line with what H1b expects. However, the picture is more nuanced when looking at the right panel, which shows variation across countries and time. Nevertheless, there is a decreasing trend of talking about EU-related economic issues across all heads of government, accompanied by an increasing interest in non-economic ones, especially after 2020.

This is the case even in countries such as Portugal and Spain which overwhelmingly focus on economic issues. Whilst EU politicisation has been taking place since the Maastricht Treaty, studies find that the Eurozone crisis has highlighted in particular its economic dimension (Santos and Rogeiro Nina, 2023; Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). Figure 2.3 confirms that this effect took place, but reveals that it has been transient. In recent years, it has been replaced by an increasing interest in non-economic topics.

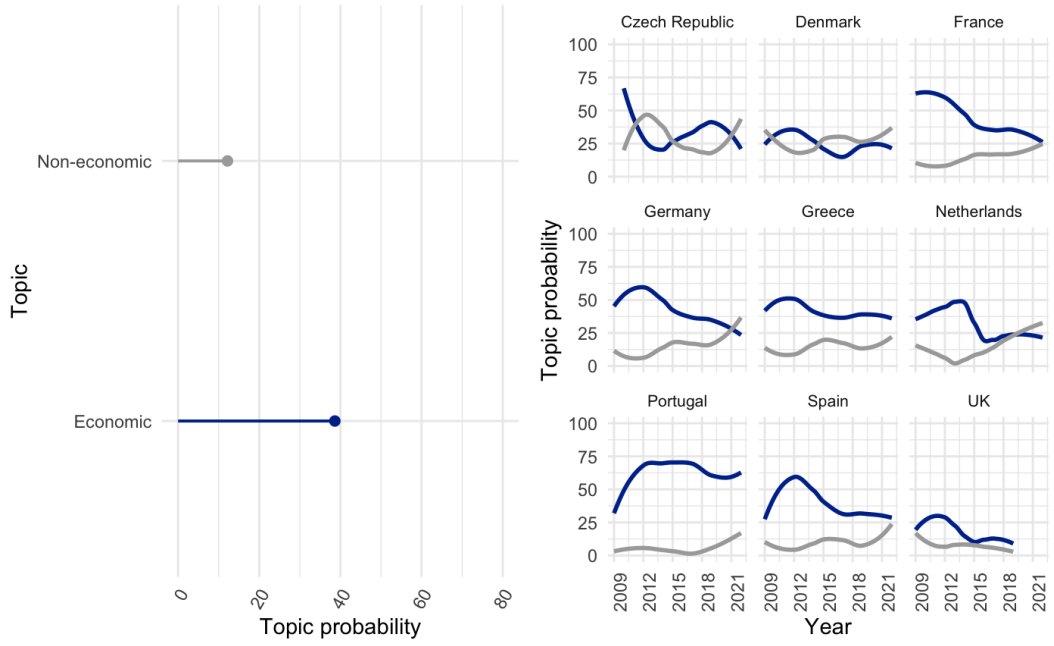

Figure 2.3: Economic vs non-economic dimension

2.6.2 Question 2: Rhetorical responsiveness

To consider what might be driving the differences in EU-related issue attention in the speeches of heads of government, I turn to the second research question. Figure 2.4 situates the EU-related issue attention of heads of government (right panel) in the context of public issue salience and the policy priorities of the European Council. The middle panel plots bi-annual means of thematic attention in the European Council Conclusions, whilst the left panel presents bi-annual survey-weighted means of respondents who consider an issue as one of the two most important issues facing the EU at the time of the survey.[23] The panels in the graph allow us to trace the evolution

[23]Two remarks on the left panel of Figure 2.4. First, the Eurobarometer question for the most important issue facing the EU is available from the second half of 2010 onwards, hence the lack of data before that. Second, the results go above 100% because respondents can choose two items.

of issue attention in all three actors and show that there is a general decrease in the salience of economic issues. Non-economic issues are increasing in European Council Conclusions and in head of government speeches. In the case of public opinion, there was an increasing trend up until late 2010s, which has been declining since then.

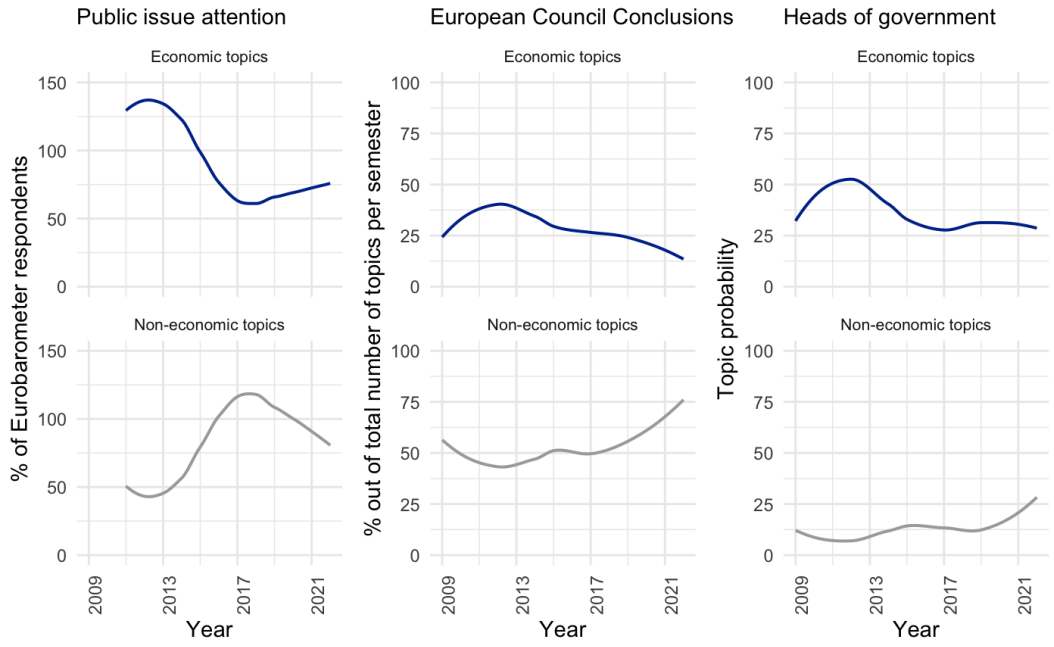

Figure 2.4: Issue attention across actors

I run regressions to unpack the relationship between the issue attention of these three actors. Model 1 has as a dependent variable the aggregate topic probabilities of EU-related economic issue attention by heads of government and Model 2 their non-economic issue attention. Given the nature of the data, where speeches are nested within speakers and then within parties and countries, and the continuous nature of my dependent variables, I use mixed effects multilevel linear regression models. In every model I include speaker and party random effects as well as country fixed effects.[24] Table 2.3 displays the regression results.

For instance, 51% of respondents can say that inflation is one of the two most important issues and 60% of respondents can say that trade is one of the two most important issues. The graph plots the combined mean of all non-economic (bottom panel) and economic issues (top panel).

[24]There are some missing data related to the Eurobarometer question on EU-related issue salience (available from the second half of 2010 onwards), the asylum applications data (available from 2011 onwards) and from the CHES regarding caretaker heads of government. The model specification for the regressions treats missing data with list-wise deletion. Therefore, the regression analyses are run on the data which have no missing values.

	Dependent variable:	
	Economic issue	**Non-economic issue**
	(1)	**(2)**
European Council economic attention	0.395***	
	(0.025)	
European Council non-economic attention		0.103***
		(0.013)
Public economic attention	0.202***	
	(0.013)	
Public non-economic attention		0.021***
		(0.008)
Partisan Euroscepticism	0.057	0.093***
	(0.041)	(0.029)
Public Euroscepticism	−0.163***	−0.072*
	(0.059)	(0.041)
Governing party EU position	−0.010*	0.039***
	(0.006)	(0.004)
Governing party EU dissent	0.003	−0.016***
	(0.004)	(0.003)
Governing party EU salience	0.001	−0.022***
	(0.004)	(0.003)
National election year	−0.012*	0.010**
	(0.006)	(0.004)
Council of the EU presidency	−0.023	−0.030***
	(0.015)	(0.010)
GDP change	−0.006***	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Violent conflicts	−0.003***	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Asylum applications	−0.00002	0.0001***
	(0.00002)	(0.00002)
COVID-19 cases	0.00000	0.00000
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
Constant	0.331***	−0.118**
	(0.051)	(0.049)
Observations	22,929	22,929
Log Likelihood	−8,164.046	1,436.876
Akaike Inf. Crit.	16,374.090	−2,827.752
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	16,559.020	−2,642.829
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 2.3: Regression results for head of government speeches

Overall, the results support the theoretical expectations regarding the distinction between economic and non-economic dimensions (H2 and H3). There is a strong and robust relationship between the focus on EU-related economic issues by heads of government and a similar focus in public opinion and in European Council conclusions, as H2 and H3 respectively expect. This is also the case for EU-related non-economic issues, with heads of government talking more about them as their salience increases in public opinion and in the European Council. Nevertheless, the effect of the European Council's issue attention on the topic focus of heads of government is stronger compared to that of public opinion. These results could lend empirical support to arguments about rhetorical responsiveness in relation to EU issues, as there appears to be a correlation between the way that heads of government communicate and the issue priorities of both the EU, crystallised in the European Council Conclusions, and of the public in their country.

To confirm that the results are also robust to alternative specifications of the models, I run a series of tests. These are included in Appendix A. In one of the specifications, I include country random rather than fixed effects in addition to the speaker and party random effects. Instead of multilevel models, I also run the analysis with Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions. The results are robust to these specifications; the values for the variables of interest are in the expected direction and statistically significant.

I also consider issues with potential endogeneity. As in other studies on rhetorical responsiveness, reverse causation is possible (Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2015). One possibility is that the priorities of the European Council might be a response to the issue attention of heads of government or the issue salience of the public. In other words, they might be in part endogenous to them. Another possibility is that the public might consider an issue as salient if heads of government talk about it a lot or if the European Council views it as a priority. I run alternative specifications of the models that take into account each of these options. The results in Appendix A reveal evidence for reverse relationships, as defined in this paragraph.

Taking this into consideration, I do not make any definitive claims about rhetorical responsiveness. Nevertheless, the effects of the original models based on H2 and H3 in Table 2.3 are larger. Therefore, I conclude that the findings of this paper could point to rhetorical responsiveness in an EU context, as they show that there is a relationship between the EU-related issue attention of heads of government, the priorities of the European Council and the issues that the public considers as important.

2.6.3 Discussion

There are three key findings from the analysis which have several implications. First, the results show that heads of government talk about both policy and polity issues at relatively similar levels and do not highlight only the polity dimension of EU-related issues as the majority of the literature on politicisation finds. This can be interpreted in a positive way for the future of European integration. If heads of government allow discussions about the polity to overshadow policy issues, this can bring to the forefront questions about the overall legitimacy of the EU and future integration (Mair, 2007). The UK is a case in point, where the results show that heads of government focus on polity issues to a large extent. The referendum on the country's membership of the EU dominated discussions about treaties, accountability and Euroscepticism during the period under investigation, which led to the eventual withdrawal of the UK from the EU in 2020.

In contrast, discussions about policies are less threatening to the democratic accountability of the EU, as they concern day-to-day policy-making and are considered as part of normal political competition where heads of government can express similar or alternative views in relation to EU topics (Follesdal and Hix, 2006). The focus on policies is consistent with evidence from recent studies (Santos and Rogeiro Nina, 2023) and could be the result of empirical developments such as the Eurozone crisis, which has led to increased competences for the EU through treaty developments such as the Fiscal Compact. As the EU becomes more involved in national policy-making, discussions about it also become part of normal politics.

Second, the results reveal variation in the focus that heads of government place on economic and non-economic issues. This can be linked to existing research on the differentiated politicisation of European integration, as it shows that the dimensions of the EU which are salient vary across time and countries. Nevertheless, it appears that heads of government in all MS discuss about economic issues with a lower frequency in recent years, whilst there is an increasing trend in mentions to non-economic issues. This could be interpreted as a shift from the presentation of the EU as an economic union towards that of a political union, with an emphasis on topics which are not part of the EU's exclusive competences. This is in line with recent EU policy actions and priorities, such as its response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, developments with migration policy and the European Green Deal.

Third, the paper shows that there is a relationship between the EU-related issue attention of heads of government, the priorities of the European Council and the issues that the public considers as important. Although no definitive claims can be made about rhetorical responsiveness, the correlation between the issue priorities of the three actors highlights the double role of heads of government in domestic and EU-level politics. It shows that one way or another the way that they talk about EU issues is related to their role as top officeholders in their country and as its representatives at the European Council. This speaks to the MLG structure of the EU in practice.

2.7 Conclusion

Over the past years, the role of the EU in domestic politics has been transformed. Previously, it used to be characterised by a state of permissive consensus, where EU-related issues and decision-making were to a large extent away from the public spotlight and less relevant for public contestation (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). However, EU issues have now become politicised, following treaty changes and a series of crises. They can be polarising and they can affect party competition, election results as well as the political space in MS (Lobo, 2023; Hutter and Kriesi, 2019; De Wilde, 2011). Therefore, it has become increasingly relevant to understand which EU-related issues are highlighted in public communication and why. Against the backdrop of this politicisation, this paper has sought to understand the issues that heads of government talk about when they mention the EU (research question 1) and what can explain this (research question 2).

I use evidence from more than 7,800 speeches by heads of government in nine EU MS; the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. I use regular expression dictionaries and machine translation to extract all references to the EU and semi-supervised topic models to measure the issue attention of heads of government. I also use data from Eurobarometer surveys and the Conclusions of the European Council to unpack how this relates to the issue priorities of domestic public opinion and EU-level actors respectively. The empirical analysis of the paper allows us to trace EU-related issue attention by heads of government, the public in MS and the European Council across a period of 13 years.

The findings have several implications. The descriptive results show that heads of government, with the exception of the UK, talk about both policy and polity issues

at relatively similar levels, although regional differences are present. Importantly, they do not highlight only the polity dimension of EU-related issues as the majority of the literature on politicisation finds. This can be interpreted in a positive light; discussions about policies are considered as part of normal political competition which can foster a European public sphere (Lobo, 2023; Follesdal and Hix, 2006) and are less threatening to the democratic accountability of the EU compared to polity ones which discuss the legitimacy and foundations of the EU (Mair, 2007).

The descriptive results also reveal the differentiated nature of EU politicisation as they show variation in the focus that heads of government place on economic and non-economic issues, both across time and countries. Nevertheless, it appears that heads of government in all MS talk less about economic issues in recent years, whilst they talk more about economic issues. This could be interpreted as a shift from the presentation of the EU as an economic union towards that of a political union. As Ursula von der Leyen (2023), the incumbent President of the European Commission, noted in her 2023 State of the Union address: "We have seen the birth of a geopolitical union [...]". Lastly, the regression analyses show that the issue attention of heads of government relates to the priorities of the European Council and the issues that the public considers as important, thereby reflecting their double role in EU-level and domestic politics.

When interpreting the results, it is also important to take into account some limitations. The country selection of nine MS has attempted to capture regional differences between NWE, CEE and SE countries in the EU. However, it cannot capture individual differences between countries within these regional groups. For instance, there are CE countries, such as Hungary, which have a history of going against the grain of decisions at the European Council. In addition, the robustness tests reveal evidence of reverse causality. Therefore, this paper can not provide definitive empirical evidence for any causal claims regarding rhetorical responsiveness. Instead, it can only offer evidence of a relationship between the issue attention of heads of government, the public and the European Council.

Moreover, there are limitations pertaining to the operationalisation and measurement of variables. Throughout the paper, I make the distinction between polity and policy issues as well as between economic and non-economic ones. In practice, this distinction is not always clear cut as some issues can belong to multiple dimensions. Nevertheless, the approach is useful for the analysis of this paper; it is consistent with

existing research on the dimensions of EU politicisation and allows the findings to be discussed in their context. Lastly, I use a different measure of issue attention in the Conclusions of the European Council compared to other studies on the topic and as such the results are not directly comparable with previous studies (Alexandrova et al., 2014; Alexandrova, Caramia and Timmermans, 2012).

Overall, this paper makes three contributions to existing literature on EU politicisation and rhetorical responsiveness. First, it provides new empirical evidence for which dimensions of the EU are salient in domestic politics. Going beyond existing studies, it focuses on heads of government rather than media and parliaments and it covers the entire period from 2009 until 2022 rather than only national election periods. Second, it puts forward and tests a theoretical framework which considers rhetorical responsiveness in the context of EU-related as opposed to national issues.

It suggests that heads of government have incentives to be responsive to the policy priorities of EU-level actors in addition to their national electorate. Third, the paper introduces two datasets; one which extends EUSpeech V2.0 (Schumacher et al., 2020) to collect head of government speeches until 2022 and another one which includes all European Council Conclusions from 2009 until 2022, divided according to thematic attention. Future studies can use the data of this paper to answer a number of exciting research questions.[25]

One avenue for further research is a qualitative analysis of the speeches to delve deeper into their content, such as tone and framing. Other studies can focus on specific policy areas of interest, such as climate and energy, to explore how the discussion on the topic has evolved throughout the years. In addition, researchers can examine the relationship between issue attention and other explanatory variables, such as the policy output of the European Commission or of the parliament in the country of the head of government. Unpacking which dimensions of the EU heads of government and other political actors highlight in their public communication can shed light on the important process of EU politicisation, which is likely here to stay, intensify and further transform domestic politics.

[25]The datasets will be made available upon request.

Chapter 3

The role of domestic considerations in the political oversight of the ECB: Evidence from MEP communication in parliament and on social media

Abstract: *Over the past two decades, the ECB has been at the forefront of policy responses to the Eurozone crisis, COVID-19 pandemic and even climate change. In taking policy decisions, the central bank is independent and has to follow its mandate. Nevertheless, it still has to report to the EP, which is responsible for political oversight of the ECB. This paper explores how MEPs hold the ECB accountable from 2009 to 2023 in parliamentary hearings and on social media by looking at two aspects of their communication; topic focus and tone. The topic model results show that macroeconomic conditions in the country of an MEP affect how they concentrate on the ECB's primary mandate, whilst the sentiment analysis reveals that the position of an MEP's national party towards European integration shapes their tone. The findings highlight the role of domestic considerations in the accountability relationship between the EP and the ECB.*

3.1 Introduction

The role of the ECB has been transformed in recent years as the EU's supranational central bank has been called to respond to a period of polycrisis, which has contributed to its politicisation (Tooze, 2023). This has brought to the forefront discussions about the political oversight of the ECB, which is the focus of this paper. With its onset in 2009, the Eurozone crisis has had long-lasting economic ramifications for the EU and the euro area, as well as for individual EU MS. EU-level actors took a prominent role in managing the crisis, with the ECB being center-stage. Among other things, the ECB was part of the troika together with the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was the triumvirate of lenders responsible for offering bail-outs to crisis-ridden countries. In addition, it used unconventional monetary policy tools such as quantitative easing and increased its purview in banking supervision matters through the establishment of the SSM in 2014 (Diessner, 2022; McPhilemy and Moschella, 2019; European Union, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which swept the world from 2020 onwards, led the ECB to take both conventional and unconventional measures. These included keeping key interest rates at historically low levels and establishing the PEPP, a non-standard asset purchase programme of private and public sector securities (Quaglia and Verdun, 2023). Additional crises, such as climate change, also shape the ECB's actions. In its 2021 strategy review, the first one since 2003, the central bank noted the need to protect and improve the quality of the environment (European Central Bank, 2021a). The transformation of the ECB's role, in institutional and policy action terms, has materialised hand-in-hand with its politicisation; legal challenges and public scrutiny about its policies have shaken the institution (Tortola, 2020). This is in stark contrast to the pre-Eurozone crisis years, when the ECB was away from the public spotlight.

A key reason for this politicisation is whether the ECB is acting in line with its mandate (Högenauer and Howarth, 2016). The ECB's mandate is hierarchically ordered; it consists of a narrow primary mission to safeguard price stability and a broader secondary one to support the economic policies of the EU as long as this does not impact price stability (European Union, 2016). In exercising its mandate and in taking policy decisions, the ECB is independent. As such, there are limited channels to hold the ECB accountable for its actions, with one being the "legal and political obligation of an independent central bank to justify and explain its decisions to the citizens and their elected representatives" (European Central Bank,

2002). The elected representatives responsible for holding the ECB accountable are parliamentarians in the EP. MEPs can ask the central bank to justify and explain its decisions through a series of formal processes, including during parliamentary hearings.

The political oversight of the ECB by MEPs can contribute to its democratic legitimacy, which is especially important in light of the expansion in the scope and depth of ECB policy-making and the institution's politicisation. In theory, MEPs should hold the ECB accountable based on its policy performance. In practice though, there are various domestic considerations which can affect how MEPs exercise this oversight, given that they still have ties to national politics. For instance, they might be more hostile towards the ECB if trust in the institution is negative in their country, they might push the ECB to do more for the secondary objective if domestic unemployment is high or they might seek to scapegoat the ECB for a dire economic situation at home.

In this paper, I focus on the accountability relationship between the EP and the ECB. To do this, I unpack how two aspects of MEPs' communication about the ECB, topic prevalence and tone, are affected by domestic considerations, conceptualised along three dimensions (macroeconomic conditions, political ideology and public opinion) which are prevalent in relevant research. On the one hand, topic focus can be an indication of whether MEPs hold the ECB accountable for the things it has done or can do. In general, MEPs should hold the ECB accountable for the areas it is responsible for, based on its hierarchical mandate (Masciandaro et al., 2023).

This means that they should be primarily concerned with the ECB's performance in relation to price stability and to a lesser extent with its support for other economic policies. Nevertheless, MEPs might have a motivation to discuss issues that are important to them or to their domestic electorate which might not be part of the ECB's (primary) mandate. I use semi-supervised topic models to explore how domestic macroeconomic considerations, centering on unemployment and inflation levels, affect how MEPs focus on issues pertaining to the ECB's primary mandate compared to other issues for which the ECB may have secondary or no purview over but are nonetheless a priority for the MEP and their country.

On the other hand, the tone of an MEP when discussing the ECB could be an indication of how critical or supportive they are of the institution and its actions. I use sentiment analysis to consider whether MEPs speak more negatively or positively

in relation to the ECB. I examine how the political ideology of an MEP's national party, both on the economic left-right scale and towards the EU, as well as public opinion affect the tone of an MEP when discussing the ECB.

I use evidence from two communication venues and look at the 2009-2023 period, during which the polycrisis environment unfolded and led to the transformation of the ECB's role. The first venue is ECB parliamentary hearings on monetary policy, called the Monetary Dialogues, where MEPs ask the President of the ECB questions about the central bank's actions. The second venue is the social media platform X. Whilst the hearings are formal and have institutional constraints on their format and duration, X is an informal setting where MEPs can post about any topic they want as much as they want. Therefore, they can communicate with the EU public, which they represent in the accountability relationship with the ECB, in a more direct way. By looking at both venues, we can get a richer understanding of how MEPs hold the ECB accountable and compare whether this differs across communication venues.

The findings show that some domestic considerations do affect how MEPs talk about the ECB and have several implications about the accountability relationship between the two institutions. The regression results on the topic models show that the thematic focus of the accountability relationship is driven by the macroeconomic conditions in the country of an MEP. References to the primary mandate increase as the inflation rate increases, whilst they decrease as the unemployment rate increases. This is consistent across the two communication venues and can be interpreted as an attempt by MEPs to be responsive to the economic interests of their country and how policies by the ECB affect it. In turn, this responsiveness can be perceived as enhancing the quality of the accountability relationship with the ECB given that MEPs are representatives of their country and its citizens.

The regression analyses based on the sentiment analysis have mixed results. The effect for left-right economic positions and public opinion is smaller and not in the expected direction. Instead, the stance of a national party towards European integration appears to be guiding the tone of MEPs towards the ECB, especially in parliamentary hearings. MEPs from Eurosceptic parties are less likely to speak positively about the ECB compared to those from pro-EU parties. This partisan effect could influence their evaluation of the ECB's performance. Rather than judging the ECB's actions based purely on their economic effects, MEPs could be holding the ECB accountable under the influence of their political ideology.

This paper makes three contributions. First, it enriches the literature on the political oversight of ECB. Existing studies do not include the most recent EP legislative period (2019-2024), whilst they tend to focus on speeches from parliamentary hearings only (Ferrara et al., 2022; Fraccaroli et al., 2022b; Amtenbrink and van Duin, 2009). I extend the period of analysis to include the years from 2019 until the end of 2023, thereby capturing developments which have shaped the actions of the ECB, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ECB's 2021 strategy review. This allows us to explore whether the trends that existing research has identified have persisted in light of these transformative events. Moreover, I provide empirical evidence from another source of communication, MEPs' posts on X. This allows us to develop an understanding of how MEPs talk about the ECB in a more informal setting which can reach the public more directly compared to parliamentary hearings.

Second, the paper speaks to research on accountability beyond the ECB. The findings can be used to complement studies on other central banks, which also explore how political and economic factors affect the accountability relationship between parliamentarians and central banks (Schonhardt-Bailey, Dann and Chapman, 2022; Schonhardt-Bailey, 2013). Third, it contributes more broadly to the literature that applies text-as-data methods to analyse communication in relation to central banks, such as Angino and Robitu (2023) and Moschella, Pinto and Martocchia Diodati (2020). I collect data to create two machine-readable datasets; the one includes transcripts of parliamentary hearings between the ECB and the EP from 2009 until 2023, whilst the other is a collection of X posts by MEPs about the ECB during the same time period. The datasets can be useful for scholars interested in deriving longitudinal trends on research questions pertaining to the ECB or the EP.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the motivation behind the paper and some relevant background information. Section 3 sets out the literature review, whilst Section 4 presents the theoretical framework. Section 5 outlines the data collection and methodological choices. Lastly, Section 6 discusses the findings and Section 7 offers concluding remarks.

3.2 Motivation for research: Accountability relationship between the ECB and EP

In this section, I explain the motivation behind my research question and offer some background information regarding the relationship between the ECB and the EP. Overall, the motivation rests on the need to better understand the dynamics of the political oversight of the ECB by the EP, in light of its increasing politicisation. To unpack this relationship, we first have to trace the roots of the ECB's independence which are a pre-requisite for accountability (Section 3.2.1). We also need to take into account the development of accountability practices over the years (Section 3.2.2), focusing on how MEPs communicate about the ECB not only in formal venues such as the Monetary Dialogue, but also in informal ones such as social media (Section 3.2.3).

3.2.1 Independence

To unpack the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP, we first need to trace where it stems from, which is related to the ECB's independence. Throughout the world, many central banks are independent. This has been seen historically as necessary in order to insulate monetary policy from politicians, who might take sub-optimal decisions in light of electoral pressures (McPhilemy and Moschella, 2019). The ECB is often considered as the most independent central bank in the world (Claeys and Domínguez-Jiménez, 2020). Its independence is enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), which is difficult to amend as it requires the unanimity of all EU MS.

Article 130 of the TFEU stipulates that ECB decision-making bodies shall not "seek or take instructions from Union institutions, bodies, offices or agencies, from any government of a Member State" (European Union, 2016). This facilitates the ECB's operational independence, as ECB decision-makers can take decisions autonomously within their areas of competence (Claeys and Domínguez-Jiménez, 2020). In contrast to national central banks, there is no political counterpart at EU level from which the ECB is independent, such as a unified government (Diessner and Lisi, 2020).

TFEU Article 282 adds that the ECB "shall be independent in the exercise of its powers and in the management of its finances" (European Union, 2016). In other words, the ECB is financially independent. The ECB is also target-independent.

This means that it can set its own quantitative definition of price stability, which constitutes its primary mandate. According to TFEU Article 127, the "primary objective of the European System of Central Banks (hereinafter referred to as "the ESCB") shall be to maintain price stability" (European Union, 2016). This is narrow compared to other central banks, such as the Federal Reserve (Fed) in the US which has a dual mandate encompassing both price stability and unemployment.

The ECB's primary mandate is the first of two hierarchically ordered objectives. The ECB's secondary mandate is included in Article 127 of the TFEU: "Without prejudice to the objective of price stability, the ESCB shall support the general economic policies in the Union with a view to contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the Union as laid down in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union" (European Union, 2016). This has often been considered as vague; there is a lack of a clear definition on what the powers of the ECB are in this respect and how the secondary mandate can be achieved (De Grauwe, 2022; Lastra and Dietz, 2022; Eijffinger and Mujagic, 2004).

3.2.2 Accountability

The independence of any central bank, including of the ECB, can raise questions about a potential democratic deficit since its officials are not elected (Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet, 2020). From a democratic perspective, the corollary to the strong operational, financial and target independence of the ECB is an effective accountability framework (Claeys and Domínguez-Jiménez, 2020). It could be argued then, that the democratic legitimacy of the ECB hinges on its accountability. Independence and accountability are considered as two sides of the same coin which is intended to ensure good central bank governance (Ferrara et al., 2022; Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet, 2018).

Nevertheless, democratic accountability used to play a subordinate role for the ECB during the first years of its creation (Diessner, 2023). The institution was away from public scrutiny and its independence was left uncontested, as long as it acted within its mandate. This was the case for other central banks as well, which used to follow the mantra of "never apologise, never explain" as proclaimed by Montagu Norman, a former Governor of the Bank of England (BoE) (Rohde, 2017). This is no longer possible. In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, the Eurozone crisis and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECB was called to take extraordinary

actions which pushed the limits of its mandate. These actions included the use of unconventional monetary policy instruments and the support of financial stability. The vagueness of the ECB's secondary mandate along with the recent emphasis on climate change topics also raise questions about potential trade-offs (Claeys et al., 2021).

There is a general consensus that the accountability of the ECB has become increasingly relevant in light of these developments, which have led to its politicisation, multiple legal challenges, a temporary loss of public trust in the institution and debates about its democratic legitimacy (Tortola, 2020; De Haan and Eijffinger, 2017; Högenauer and Howarth, 2016). In turn, the ECB has become eager to engage more with institutionalised accountability practices and even go beyond them (Gardt et al., 2021).[26] Speaking at the EP in 2023, the current President of the ECB Christine Lagarde stated that: "[...] the choices we make as central bankers have a significant influence on society. So being accountable for our decisions is the necessary counterweight to our independence. This means that we need to explain our policies [...] it also means that we must be attentive to the concerns of the public" (Lagarde, 2023). Against the backdrop of these developments, I explore the accountability relationship between the EP and the ECB over the 2009-2023 period which was marked by change.

There are various mechanisms through which accountability, the other side of the coin to the ECB's independence, plays out in practice. As defined earlier, accountability entails the obligation of a central bank to justify and explain its decisions to citizens and their elected representatives (European Central Bank, 2002). There are many ways through which the ECB directly communicates with citizens. These include regular press conferences, media interviews and frequent social media posts. Since 2015, the ECB has started making publicly available the accounts of its internal meetings and has recently launched the ECB Listens events which bring together civil society organisations to discuss how the central bank's actions affect them.

Turning to elected representatives, the ECB is formally accountable to the EP, not to national parliamentarians.[27] The legal basis for the accountability relationship between the EP and the ECB is laid down in Article 284 of the TFEU. There are three main ways that the ECB interacts with MEPs; a) by participating in parliamentary

[26]For an overview of the ECB's accountability practices during the Eurozone crisis please refer to Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet (2018).

[27]Although during the Eurozone crisis ECB officials also made visits to national parliaments, this is not part of the institution's formal accountability practices (Tesche, 2019).

hearings[28], b) by presenting an Annual Report[29] and c) by answering written questions that MEPs can send.[30] Out of these three mechanisms, I focus on the parliamentary hearings between the ECB and MEPs, called the Monetary Dialogues.[31]

The Monetary Dialogues constitute the formal pillar of the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP on monetary policy (Diessner, 2022; European Central Bank, 2021b). However, formal venues of communication are not the only channel through which MEPs and the ECB communicate. Increasingly, both ECB officials and MEPs use social media and other informal channels of communication to discuss their views. Therefore, to fully appreciate the accountability relationship between the two institutions, we also have to look at other avenues of communication, which can reach the public in a more direct way. I discuss both formal and informal venues of communication about the ECB below.

3.2.3 MEP communication about the ECB: Hearings and social media

In general, the act of testifying before a national parliament is not unique to the ECB, with many central banks around the world reporting regularly to their respective parliaments (Bank for International Settlements, 2009; Stasavage, 2003). The Monetary Dialogue first took place in 1998 and its participants include the President of the ECB and members of the EP Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON committee). MEPs from all political groups of the EP are represented in ECON as all EP committees are required to reflect as much as possible the political composition of the parliament (Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet, 2020). EP political groups consist of MEPs from different national parties which share a similar ideology. Thus, although MEPs are nominated by their national party for election to the EP, once elected they also belong to EP political groups which include multiple countries.

[28]TFEU Article 284: "The President of the European Central Bank and the other members of the Executive Board may, at the request of the European Parliament or on their own initiative, be heard by the competent committees of the European Parliament" (European Union, 2016).

[29]TFEU Article 284: "The European Central Bank shall address an annual report on the activities of the ESCB and on the monetary policy of both the previous and current year to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, and also to the European Council. The President of the European Central Bank shall present this report to the Council and to the European Parliament, which may hold a general debate on that basis" (European Union, 2016).

[30]This is mentioned in the Rules of Procedure of the EP (European Parliament, 2019).

[31]The supervisory arm of the ECB, the SSM, also participates in parliamentary hearings before the EP. However, given that this paper is interested in how MEPs highlight the primary mandate, it does not look at the banking supervision hearings.

MEPs in the ECON Committee are from various EU MS, including those which are not part of the euro area.

The parliamentary hearings happen four times a year and last around two hours. The official website of the EP live-streams the hearings and publishes the verbatim transcripts afterwards in English, French and German. Therefore, the discussions during hearings can reach citizens as well. Before each meeting, the EP invites a panel of external experts to prepare and present reports on relevant monetary policy topics in order to inform MEPs. During the hearing, the ECB President gives an introductory statement and then responds to questions by MEPs. Depending on time limitations, MEPs are usually allowed to ask one question and for a clarification.

The questions that MEPs ask should relate to the ECB's mandate and to its performance in carrying out the mandate (Masciandaro et al., 2023). This would allow the ECB to provide explanations and justify its decisions, thereby going some way towards fulfilling its accountability practices. Thus, the accountability between the ECB and the EP hinges in part on the quality and type of questions during the Monetary Dialogue. Importantly, the EP does not have any substantive means to sanction the ECB, even if it believes and tries to show that it is not fulfilling its mandate. This lack of power makes the proper functioning of the Monetary Dialogue even more relevant as it is one of the few ways the EP can exert pressure on the ECB to act in accordance with its mandate and to perform well (Claeys and Domínguez-Jiménez, 2020).

Although the hearings between the ECB and the EP are public and live-streamed, they receive little media attention, especially when compared to ECB press conferences (Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet, 2018; Claeys, Hallerberg and Tschekassin, 2014). Given that news media play a fundamental role in the knowledge that the public has about central banks (Angino and Robitu, 2023), it could be argued that little media attention entails little awareness of the hearings by the public. Since MEPs represent the public in their relationship with the ECB, they might have incentives to hold the ECB accountable in a more publicly visible venue as well. A more direct and informal way that MEPs can voice their concerns about or praise the ECB to the public is through their social media channels.

There are a number of important differences between MEP communication in the Monetary Dialogue and on social media. Speaking allocation in the EP is determined by the size of a political group in terms of members (European Parliament, 2019),

whilst the format of the Monetary Dialogue means that the MEPs who do speak usually only get one question per hearing. Conversely, they can post as much as they want on their social media platforms. In addition, on platforms such as X they can freely emphasise issues they deem as important, personalise their message and express their support for issues that other MEPs highlight. As Castanho Silva and Proksch (2021) argue, X can act as a substitute channel to circumvent constraints from other political arenas or as an amplifier that reinforces party messages. Therefore, social media platforms are less restrictive both in terms of the volume and content of communication that MEPs can put forward about the ECB.

I focus on X because it is widely used by politicians and other decision-makers all over the world as a way to reach a larger audience and is at the center of political science research on the EU and beyond (van Vliet et al., 2023; Castanho Silva and Proksch, 2021).[32] Even though it is an informal venue, there is empirical evidence that interactions between politicians and the public on X can make an issue relevant to the public, put it on the agenda and lead to political pressure. The starkest manifestation of this is the 6th of January 2021 attack, whereby posts by former US President Donald Trump contributed to the storming of the Capitol by his supporters (Muhammad and Nirwandy, 2021). Thus, communication about the ECB on X can potentially shape the perceptions of the public about the institution.

The analysis of Monetary Dialogue transcripts and posts on X in this paper can allow us to uncover how domestic considerations guide the topic focus and tone of MEPs across a period of 14 years (2009-2023) and draw comparisons between the two communication venues. In so doing, the findings can further our understanding of the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP. As this section has argued, it is more crucial than ever for the ECB to have an accountability framework that works well, as its independence hinges on it and the post-Eurozone crisis period has raised questions about the central bank's democratic legitimacy.

3.3 Literature review

This paper is informed by research on communication about central banks and the use of X by politicians. I review each strand of literature in turn and offer some key takeaways.

[32]However, following a change of ownership in 2023 subscribers are shifting away from the platform.

3.3.1 Parliamentarians' communication about central banks

A growing stream of research analyses the transcripts of hearings between parliamentarians and central banks. Its aim is to understand how their accountability relationship plays out in practice. Overall, the evidence from studies on the ECB shows that MEPs tend to ask ECB Presidents questions that go beyond assessing the central bank's performance with respect to its primary mandate, price stability. In addition, personal predispositions affect how they hold the ECB accountable, including a parliamentarian's political ideology and their nationality.

Qualitative analyses of Monetary Dialogue transcripts suggest that the parliamenary hearings lack structure; the questions can be unfocused, repetitive and unrelated to monetary policy as they might stem from an MEP's personal interests (Claeys and Domínguez-Jiménez, 2020; Claeys, Hallerberg and Tschekassin, 2014). Looking at the earlier years of the Monetary Dialogues, De Grauwe and Gros (2009) argue that the hearings sometimes represent an exchange of views rather than an accountability exercise. Amtenbrink and van Duin (2009) look at the thematic attention of Monetary Dialogues between 1998 and 2008, revealing that the discussions are not only about price stability, but also touch on general economic policy topics.

Braun (2017) groups questions during Monetary Dialogues according to topics and finds that questions between 2013 and 2016 cover an even broader range of policy areas compared to earlier years. Topics such as financial stability and supervision as well as the institutional reform of the EMU account for around 50% of questions by MEPs over that period (Braun, 2017). In addition, Collignon and Diessner (2016) reveal that the discussions during parliamentary hearings become more technical and less superficial throughout the years. They also find that different topics are being discussed during the Eurozone crisis compared to earlier years, such as austerity and constitutional issues (Collignon and Diessner, 2016).

A quantitative longitudinal analysis by Ferrara et al. (2022) confirms that MEPs' questions during the Monetary Dialogues between 1998 and 2019 have a broader scope compared to the central bank's primary mandate of price stability. According to their topic model results, questions about objectives related to the secondary mandate, such as unemployment, become more frequent during the Eurozone crisis. This is driven by MEPs from countries with higher rates of domestic unemployment, who tend to focus less on topics pertaining to price stability (Ferrara et al., 2022). This reveals

that nationality matters for the type of questions that MEPs ask; the macroeconomic conditions of their country affect their topic focus.

On another note, Fracarroli et al. (2022b) analyse MEP questions over the 1998-2019 time period but look at their sentiment. They find that the ideology of an MEP's party in relation to European integration drives the sentiment of their speeches. MEPs belonging to party groups which are in favour of European integration are more likely to use positive language when questioning the ECB (Fraccaroli et al., 2022b). To better understand what drives attitudes towards the ECB's mandate and policy action, Masciandaro et al. (2023) run an elite survey on MEPs. The results reaffirm the role of ideology and macroeconomic conditions, which can be mediated by the information that the ECB provides. An MEP's political orientation drives their attitude towards the ECB's mandate, whilst macroeconomic conditions affect the weight they attach to unemployment relative to price stability (Masciandaro et al., 2023).

Some contributions go beyond the parliamentary hearings, exploring additional sources of parliamentarians' communication about the ECB. Massoc (2021) looks at the Monetary Dialogue, MEPs' written questions towards the ECB and EP resolutions on the ECB's Annual Reports. Using dictionary methods to gauge the topics that MEPs focus on, her descriptive statistics results show that the salience of most topics has remained relatively stable over the 2014-2021 period. Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the salience of climate-related topics, especially after 2017. This heightened interest is driven by women and the EP political groups of the Greens and the Left.

Akbik (2022) shifts the focus from monetary policy and looks at the banking supervision arm of the ECB, the SSM, which has other channels of accountability with the EP. Analysing qualitatively the transcripts of hearings between MEPs and the SSM Chair, Akbik (2022) finds that, similar to the Monetary Dialogue, there are multiple instances where the questions are about areas which go beyond the ECB's competence. Elsewhere, Maricut-Akbik (2020) suggests that contestation of the ECB's performance in banking supervision areas by MEPs remains limited. Comparing the hearings on monetary policy with those on banking supervision, Diessner (2023) argues that they are perceived similarly by the actors involved, with the contents of parliamentary hearings on both topics becoming increasingly alike.

Another set of studies analyses the transcripts of parliamentary hearings in other countries. Comparing the hearings of the ECB with those of the Fed in the US and the BoE in the UK, Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet (2020) find that the tone of parliamentarians towards their respective central bank becomes more negative in sentiment as macroeconomic conditions worsen. Using dictionary methods, they show that although the objectives of a central bank play the most relevant role in determining the topic of questions, macroeconomic conditions also matter; as unemployment rises the focus on price stability declines.

Analysing transcripts of parliamentary hearings in the US and the UK between 2006 and 2009, Schonhardt-Bailey, Dann and Chapman (2022) reveal that UK MPs use less partisan rhetoric and more targeted questions on monetary policy compared to US Members of Congress. Along similar lines, Schonhardt-Bailey's (2013) analysis of Fed parliamentary hearings from 1976 to 2008 finds that Members of Congress attempt to steer the conversation in favour of their personal legislative agendas. This echoes findings from ECB hearings, where an MEP's nationality and ideology can have an impact on the tone or type of questions they ask (Ferrara et al., 2022; Fraccaroli et al., 2022b). Bisbee, Fraccaroli and Kern (2022) show that societal biases can also affect how the Fed is being held accountable; Members of Congress who interact with a female Fed Chair and at least one other male Fed Chair tend to interrupt the female Chair more and interact with her using a more aggressive tone.

3.3.2 Parliamentarians' communication on X

Existing research on the political oversight that MEPs exercise over the ECB focuses on formal accountability channels, primarily in the format of parliamentary hearings. However, in this paper I also look at an informal communication channel which can potentially reach and influence citizens; social media posts on X. Currently, there are no studies which look at how MEPs talk about the ECB on social media and relatively few contributions focus on how politicians talk about other central banks such as the Fed (Bianchi et al., 2022). Nevertheless, numerous papers acknowledge the relevance of X for politics and produce insights about the communication of parliamentarians on the platform which can be useful for this paper.

Out of the studies that focus on MEPs, some are related to election campaigns (Fazekas et al., 2021; Stier et al., 2020), whilst others look at more general interactions between MEPs. Haußner and Klika (2020) conduct a social network analysis and find

that MEPs connect with each other based on their political groups, with an ideological left-right divide taking place. van Vliet et al. (2023) also study MEP interactions on X, focusing on the 2018-2019 period. They show that MEPs interact more with members of their EP political group compared to members of their national party. Nulty et al. (2016) analyse the X posts of politicians who were running for the 2014 EP elections, revealing that their communication reflects preferences along the EU dimension of political contestation rather than national left-right differences.

There are also relevant studies which compare communication on X with other venues. Castanho Silva and Proksch (2021) look at how parliamentarians from Western European countries talk about European integration during parliamentary debates and on X, focusing on their sentiment. They find that in general MPs tend to amplify the partisan message in their communication on X, yet some also use X to express a broader range of opinions than in parliament. The results show that the communication venue can affect how parliamentarians express themselves on EU-related topics. Maud and Schneider (2022) compare the communication of parliamentarians in parliament and on X as well, using evidence from Switzerland. Their topic model analysis shows that issue ownership by specific parties is more visible on X rather than in parliamentary debates. In a survey experiment, Schwalbach (2023) explores whether the communication venue affects the perception of party messages by the public. The results reveal that the venue does matter; higher trust in the venue is positively related with perceiving a party message as credible.

3.3.3 Key takeaways

In reviewing the literature on central bank accountability and parliamentarians' communication on X, three key insights arise. First, the topics that MEPs hold the ECB accountable for in their questions during the Monetary Dialogue go beyond issues related to the ECB's primary mandate of price stability. This is especially the case in the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis, where issues related to unemployment and financial stability become more relevant. Nevertheless, we do not know how MEPs hold the ECB accountable during the most recent legislative period (2019-2024), given that most studies examine the transcripts of Monetary Dialogues up to 2019.

An exception is Massoc (2021), who uses data up to 2021, yet only presents descriptive statistics. It is important to study the period from 2019 onwards and the factors affecting the communication of MEPs, as it was a legislative period marked

by change. The COVID-19 pandemic had economic ramifications for the euro area from 2020 onwards, with high inflation still being felt today. In addition, in 2021 the ECB announced a new strategy review, which sheds more light on its secondary objective. I explore MEP communication about the ECB over a time period which includes recent years (2009-2023).

Second, there is evidence that various factors, such as political ideology and macroeconomic conditions, influence how MEPs talk about the ECB, with respect to both their tone and their sentiment (Ferrara et al, 2022b; Fraccaroli et al, 2022b; Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet, 2020). This is also the case for the communication of parliamentarians towards the Fed and the BoE (Schonhardt-Bailey, Dann and Chapman, 2022; Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet, 2020). In this paper, I look at how political and economic domestic considerations affect two aspects of communication; the tone of MEPs and the topics they discuss relating to the ECB. This builds on existing research on ECB hearings which places an emphasis on one set of factors or one aspect of communication.

However, existing studies on central bank accountability use evidence mainly from parliamentary hearings, whereas I also consider how MEPs talk about the ECB on X. This brings me to the third point; research on parliamentarian's communication on X reveals that it can differ from other communication venues, such as parliamentary debates (Castanho Silva and Proksch, 2021). It also shows how EU politics and political ideology influence the interactions of MEPs on X. With this in mind, the theoretical framework of this paper examines how MEPs talk about the ECB in parliament and on social media.

3.4 Theoretical framework

I present and test a theoretical framework which explores correlations between two types of factors; domestic considerations and the way that MEPs talk about the ECB in parliament and on social media. I conceptualise domestic considerations along three dimensions and I focus on two aspects of communication which have been used in the literature to assess the relationship between the ECB and the EP; topic prevalence and sentiment. Both tone and sentiment can speak to the nature of the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP.

On the one hand, topic focus can be an indication of how or whether MEPs hold the ECB accountable for the things it has done or can do. If MEPs overwhelmingly discuss issues that are important to them but the ECB is not responsible for (or not primarily responsible for), then this can have an impact on the accountability relationship. I consider whether domestic macroeconomic considerations, focusing on inflation and unemployment rates, affect the topics that parliamentarians hold the ECB accountable for. On the other hand, tone could be an indication of how an MEP views the ECB and issues surrounding its actions; MEPs can express their discontent by speaking more negatively or they can show their support by being more positive. I look at how tone is affected by political ideology, focusing on the predisposition of an MEP's national party on the economic left-right scale and towards the EU, as well as domestic public opinion on the ECB.

3.4.1 The role of domestic considerations

In theory, MEPs should hold the ECB accountable based on its policy performance. Nevertheless, MEPs have a motivation to push for issues or preferences that are relevant for their national legislative agenda at the EU level. Therefore, domestic considerations might affect how they hold the ECB accountable. Although the EP is an EU-level institution, its members have ties to domestic politics. MEPs are nominated by their national party for election to the EP or they run as independents. Then, the citizens of each MS elect their MEPs from national lists. This means that, for instance, a French citizen who does not live in Portugal and has no right to vote there cannot elect a Portuguese MEP. After election, MEPs remain affiliated to their national party, if they have one, but they also become members of a political group in the EP (unless they are Independents).

This mechanism entails that MEPs need to sustain their links to national parties and electorates if they want to be re-elected in the EP or if they want to be considered for positions in domestic politics in the future (van Vliet et al., 2023). The heterogeneity in political and economic conditions among MS can shape views on the ECB and how it should act. This heterogeneity is not just the result of a different nationality, but rather a constellation of political conflict and other conditions (Vössing, 2005). Macroeconomic conditions and public opinion towards the ECB vary across countries, whilst each national party is distinct even though it belongs to an EP party grouping.

There is mixed evidence as to the strength of domestic considerations for MEPs' voting patterns and interactions in general (van Vliet et al., 2023; Nulty et al., 2016). However, as the literature review shows, studies on the ECB find that both domestic macroeconomic conditions and the political ideology of national parties matter respectively for the communication of MEPs, both in terms of their topic prevalence and their tone (Ferrara et al., 2022; Fraccaroli et al., 2022b). In line with this, I explore the role of macroeconomic conditions, political ideology and public opinion on parliamentarians' communication in parliament and on X.

3.4.2 How macroeconomic conditions affect the topic focus

The first domestic consideration I consider is the macroeconomic condition of an MEP's country and how this affects their topic focus. As discussed, MEPs should hold the ECB accountable based on the areas it is responsible for, i.e., its hierarchically structured institutional goals (Masciandaro et al., 2023). These include mainly its primary mandate of price stability and to a lesser extent its secondary mandate of supporting general economic policies in the EU. In practice though, research shows how MEPs' questions in parliamentary hearings are not always driven by this hierarchy. Instead, MEPs might have a motivation to focus less on the primary mandate and highlight issues for which the ECB may have secondary or no purview over but are nonetheless pertinent for the country of the MEP.[33]

The starting point for this argument is literature which shows that macroeconomic conditions affect citizens' views towards the ECB (Ehrmann, Soudan and Stracca, 2013). Since MEPs are representatives of their national electorate, it could be argued that they also take domestic macroeconomic conditions into account in order to be responsive to the priorities of citizens and this can influence how they view the mandate of the ECB (Masciandaro et al., 2023). The importance of domestic macroeconomic conditions for shaping which ECB-related issues become prevalent is also substantiated with evidence from other actors. Looking at ECB press conferences, Angino and Robitu (2023) show that national media outlets are less likely to ask the ECB President questions relating to core monetary policy issues and more likely to ask about country-specific issues.

Following existing studies, I focus on two macroeconomic factors; inflation and unemployment. As Ferrara et al. (2022) argue, the trade-off between inflation and

[33]This means that although an objective might be secondary in the mandate of the ECB, it might be a priority for an MEP.

unemployment, called the Phillips curve, is a key theory in macroeconomics which is at the core of central bank practices. Building on evidence which shows that levels of unemployment are negatively correlated with the focus of MEPs on price stability topics in hearings (Ferrara et al., 2022; Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet, 2020), I put forward the following hypotheses for the communication of MEPs in hearings and X posts:

H1a: MEPs talk less about the primary mandate of the ECB as the level of unemployment rises in their country

H1b: MEPs talk more about the primary mandate of the ECB as the level of inflation rises in their country

3.4.3 How political ideology and public opinion affect the sentiment

Another factor that can affect how MEPs hold the ECB accountable is their political ideology. Existing studies distinguish between two different aspects of ideology which have been associated with the behaviour and communication of parliamentarians (Cheysson and Fraccaroli, 2019; Hix and Noury, 2009). On the one hand, there are the left-right positions of parties on economic policies. On the other hand, there are the positions of parties on European integration, with pro-EU parties as opposed to Eurosceptic ones. By communicating in a way which alludes to the ideology of their national party, MEPs can differentiate themselves from other MEPs of their country and signal to their partisans that they take their views into consideration when holding the ECB accountable. In turn, this can increase their chances for re-election to the EP or in national elections. Given the relevance of domestic politics, I use measures of ideology of an MEP's national party rather than of their EP political group.

One aspect of communication which has been linked to political ideology is sentiment. MEPs can express their discontent with the ECB and issues surrounding its actions by speaking more negatively when they are taking part in the Monetary Dialogue or when they post about the institution on X. Conversely, they can show their support by adopting a more positive sentiment. Therefore, I explore whether there is a correlation between the economic left-right positions and EU positions of the national party of an MEP and the sentiment of their questions during Monetary Dialogues as well as of their posts on X.

The prevailing argument on left-right positions in the literature is that left-wing politicians are more likely to have a negative attitude towards the ECB compared to right-wing politicians. Whilst the ECB acts to keep inflation at bay, left-wing political ideologies are associated with expansionary policies aimed at keeping unemployment low, with the trade-off of higher inflation as the Phillips curve would predict (Masciandaro et al., 2023; Moschella and Martocchia Diodati, 2020). The theoretical expectation is as follows:

H2: MEPs belonging to left-wing national parties talk with a more negative sentiment compared to MEPs belonging to right-wing national parties

Regarding the position of parties on European integration, it could be argued that MEPs belonging to Eurosceptic parties are more likely to have a more negative tone when discussing about the ECB. This could be because of the institution's supranational nature, which impinges on domestic economic sovereignty (Masciandaro et al., 2023). There is evidence that EU positions matter for MEPs' behaviour in relation to the ECB in parliament (Fraccaroli et al., 2022b). This could also be the case for the communication of MEPs on X, as Nulty et al. (2016) show that the emotional tone of MEPs on the social media platform reflects preferences along the EU dimension of political contestation. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: MEPs belonging to Eurosceptic national parties talk with a more negative sentiment compared to MEPs belonging to pro-EU national parties

The third domestic consideration that can affect how MEPs communicate about the ECB is public opinion towards the institution in the country of an MEP. There is evidence that political actors take public opinion on the EU into account when they talk about it (Hunter, 2021; Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020). The rationale for this relates to the need of politicians to be responsive to the demands and preferences of their electorate in order to appeal to them. According to existing research, the public opinion attitude that likely influences communication in relation to the ECB is trust towards the institution (Moschella, Pinto and Martocchia Diodati, 2020). More public trust towards the ECB in domestic public opinion can lead MEPs to be more positive in their communication, whilst less public trust in domestic public opinion can lead to a more negative sentiment. I test for the following correlation:

H4: MEPs talk with a more negative sentiment towards the ECB as the domestic levels of trust in the ECB decrease

3.5 Data collection and methodology

I use evidence from two text data sources to test how domestic considerations matter for the topic focus and tone of MEPs' ECB-related communication. The first one is a collection of all Monetary Dialogue transcripts from 2009 until 2023 divided at the speech level. The second dataset includes all posts on X by MEPs who were or are part of the ECON committee during the same period. Both datasets include texts in their original language and in English as well as meta data, such as the country of an MEP and their EP and national party grouping.

3.5.1 Monetary Dialogue data

To explore how MEPs talk about the ECB in parliament, I look at their speeches during the Monetary Dialogues. I collect all the transcripts of the parliamentary hearings from mid-2009 until the end of 2023 using both current and archived versions of the EP's official website.[34] The Monetary Dialogues take place on a quarterly basis every year. In total, there are transcripts from 57 Monetary Dialogues over three legislative periods; the ninth legislative period (2019-2024), the eighth legislative period (2014-2019) and the seventh legislative period (2009-2014). The time period covers three ECB Presidents; Jean-Claude Trichet (2003–2011), Mario Draghi (2011–2019) and Christine Lagarde (2019-ongoing). I extract the information from the transcripts onto a spreadsheet, where each row is a speech.

There are multiple columns, including one on the date of the speech and another on whether the speaker is the ECB President or an MEP. For MEPs, I also include their EP and national party affiliation and their country based on official EU data.[35] In the majority of cases, the speeches are available in English. However, in instances where the speeches are in the native language of MEPs, I translate them into English. In line with existing studies which use text mining approaches in EU politics, I opt for machine translation using Google Translate (Ferrara et al., 2022; Silva, Kartalis and Lobo, 2022). De Vries, Schoonvelde and Schumacher (2018) find that professionally translated multi-lingual debates in the EP by humans have considerable overlap in their text features with the Google Translate translations of these debates.

[34] Available here: ninth legislative period `https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/econ/econ-policies/monetary-dialogue`, eighth legislative period `https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/archives/8/econ/econ-policies/monetary-dialogue`, seventh legislative period `https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/archives/7/econ/monetary-dialogue`

[35] Available at: `https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/members-of-the-european-parliament`

Given that I am interested in the communication of MEPs, I focus only on the speeches delivered by MEPs and exclude those by the ECB President. I also exclude the speeches by the ECON Chair since they are usually procedural in nature and do not deal with substantive questions towards the ECB. There are 1,262 unique speeches by 175 MEPs. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of speeches per country. German MEPs give the most speeches as a percentage of the total speeches, whilst Danish and Croatian MEPs give the least.

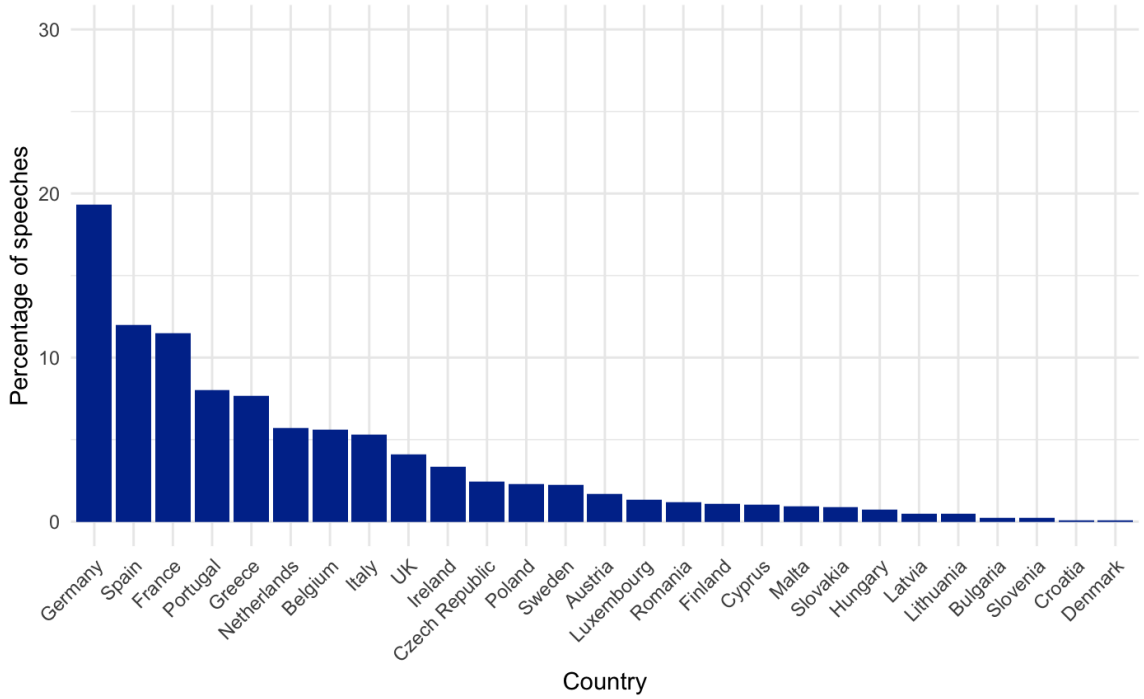

Figure 3.1: Distribution of speeches by country

Table 3.1 breaks down the data based on the left-right positions of EP political groups proposed by McElroy and Benoit (2012). Other studies on the Monetary Dialogue also use these positions to categorise EP political groups, such as Ferrara et al. (2022). Whilst political groups have changed names across legislative periods, their ideological foundations remain similar. There are some parties which are represented during all three legislative periods under investigation (seventh to ninth periods). These include the European People's Party (EPP), the Socialist and Democrats (S&D), The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the Greens/European Free Alliance (EFA) and the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL).

Ideology	Party	% of speeches
Christian Democrats	EPP	29
Social Democrats	S&D	24
Liberals	Renew, ALDE	12
Conservatives	ECR	12
Greens	Greens/EFA	8
Left	GUE/NGL	6
Far right	ID, ENF	5
Eurosceptics	EFD, EFDD	4
Non-attached		2

Table 3.1: Distribution of speeches by party group

Renew Europe (Renew) was created in the ninth legislative period, whilst its predecessor Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) was represented during the seventh and eighth period. The Identity and Democracy (ID) group is present in the ninth legislative period, whilst its predecessor Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) was in parliament during the eighth period. In the eighth legislative period, the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) succeeded the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group which was present in the seventh period. Lastly, a number of MEPs in each legislative period are non-attached, which means that they do not belong to any group. The results in Table 3.1 show that the majority of posts are by the S&D and the EPP, the two biggest political groups in the EP in terms of members during all three legislative periods. This is expected, as the number of members a political group has is relevant for allocating part of the speaking time to MEPs (European Parliament, 2019).[36]

3.5.2 X data

To explore how MEPs talk about the ECB on social media, I collect data from X. I use the official lists of permanent and substitute members of the ECON Committee from the website of the EP for all three legislative periods under investigation.[37] I search X for the names of MEPs in order to collect their usernames.[38] It was not

[36]Please note that the results in Table 3.1 add up to more than 100% due to rounding up.

[37]Only the information for the ninth legislative period is available on the current version of EP's website (`https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/econ/home/members`). For the eighth and seventh legislative periods, I use archived versions of the website (`https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/archives/8/econ/members` and `https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/archives/7/econ/members`).

[38]In some cases, MEPs serve only part of their term and are replaced by other MEPs. To the extent that this is covered by the official list of MEPs on EP's website, I take it into account.

possible to retrieve the usernames of 34 out of 270 MEPs who were members of the ECON Committee. This could be either because the MEPs never had an account on the social media platform, or because they chose to delete it. With the exception of one MEP, all MEPs who have X accounts have public profiles.[39]

To collect the data, I use X's advanced search function and create a search string based on three attributes to collect all original posts by MEPs and their responses to other posts which mention the ECB. The first attribute is the username of the MEP, whilst the second one includes the time period that the MEP was a member of the ECON committee based on information from the official lists of MEPs in the committee. As a starting point for each legislative period I use the month after each election and as an ending point I use the month of the election.[40] It is possible that some MEPs were members of the ECON committee for more than one legislative term and this is reflected in the search string.

The third attribute of the search string includes references to the ECB, using both "European Central Bank" and the acronym "ECB". For each MEP, I search for these English references and add references to the ECB in the official language(s) of the country that each MEP represents in all grammatical cases. Appendix B includes a list of the terms regarding this third attribute and additional information on the data collection. When running the search string with all three attributes, there were no results for 74 MEPs. This could be either because the MEPs did not post about the ECB or because they deleted their posts.

I collect 5,156 posts from 163 different MEPs from 27 countries over the 2009-2023 period. This means that out of the 236 MEPs of the ECON committee who have X accounts, around 30% had no posts about the ECB at the time of my data collection process. All present and former EU MS are represented, with the exception of Estonia. I create a dataset where each row is a post and add extra information on its date and the name and country of the MEP. I merge the dataset with official data on the EP and national party affiliation of MEPs.[41] I add two columns which include

[39] In the case of the MEP with the private account, I requested access to their profile but the request is still pending. Therefore, I was not able to retrieve information from them.

[40] The starting point for the search on the seventh legislative period is July 2009 and the ending point is May 2014. The starting point for the eighth legislative period is June 2014 and the ending point is May 2019. The starting point for the ninth legislative period is June 2019 until May 2024. For the purposes of this paper, which was written in 2023, the ending period for this legislative period is selected as December 2023.

[41] Available at: `https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/members-of-the-european-parliament`

the username of each MEP as well as the text of the post translated from its original language into English using Google Translate. Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of posts per country. The picture is similar to that of the Monetary Dialogues, with the same countries in the top 10. If we look at the date of the posts, the majority are from the current legislative period, whilst 2020 is the year with the most X posts out of all years.

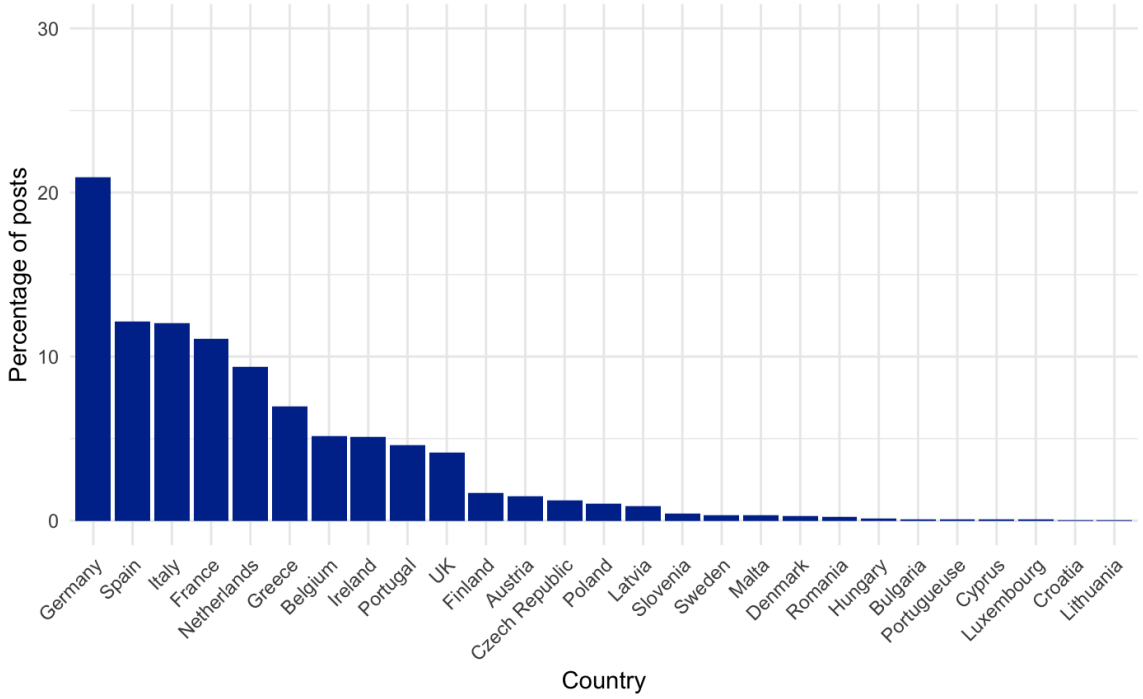

Figure 3.2: Distribution of posts by country

I also disaggregate the data based on the left-right positions of EP political groups proposed by McElroy and Benoit (2012). Table 3.2 shows that the majority of posts are jointly by the Liberal and Far right groupings. This is in contrast with the Monetary Dialogue data, where Christian Democrat and Social Democrat MEPs gave the most speeches. Unconstrained by speaking time limits, it appears that smaller groups are talking more about the ECB on X rather than in the hearings. Thus, although the MEPs that speak the most about the ECB are from countries that are similar across the two communication venues, the political group composition of their MEPs is not.

Ideology	Party	% of posts
Liberals	Renew, ALDE	16
Far right	ID, ENF	16
Christian Democrats	EPP	15
Social Democrats	S&D	14
Conservatives	ECR	12
Greens	Greens/EFA	12
Left	GUE/NGL	11
Eurosceptics	EFD, EFDD	3
Non-attached		1

Table 3.2: Distribution of posts by party group

This observation relates to some features associated with X that should be taken into account when analysing data from the platform. Politicians who are more active on X might possess different personal characteristics compared to those who use it less. Moreover, some politicians might be more prone to delete their posts or have them deleted by X moderators. It is important to consider these factors when comparing who produces the volume of communication in parliamentary hearings and on X.

3.5.3 Dependent variable: Topic models

Based on the theoretical framework, the analysis has two parts; topic modelling and sentiment analysis. Topic modelling allows us to find the topic focus of MEPs in parliamentary speeches and on X, which speaks to H1. Topic models are statistical models used to describe latent topics in a set of documents. Different types of topic models have been used widely for social science research. In this paper, I use keyATM, which are topic models assisted with keywords (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023). For an overview of approaches to topic modelling and more details on keyATM please refer to Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Existing studies on communication in relation to the ECB use different types of methods to detect topic focus. Angino and Robitu (2023), Ferrara et al. (2022) as well as Moschella, Pinto and Martocchia Diodati (2020) use STMs, which are unsupervised topic models. The researcher has to select the number of topics, but otherwise the model is left unsupervised. Elsewhere, Fraccaroli et al. (2022a) as well as Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet (2020) create dictionaries based on relevant central banking topics and classify their texts according to words or phrases in their dictionaries. keyATM allows us to input a number of relevant keywords and guide the topic model

to find a selected number and type of topics. Given that the model is semi-supervised, this can be useful when the researcher has a theoretical interest in certain topics. In this case, the theoretical interest stems from the distinction between topics belonging to the ECB's primary mandate of price stability, its broader secondary objective which encompasses multiple issues and more general ECB-related topics.

Studies have shown that keywords can enhance a model's measurement performance when we compare them to STMs (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023). Therefore, I opt for keyATM, using similar topics and words to the dictionaries by Fraccaroli et al. (2022a) to guide my models and select the number of topics. Another aspect of this type of topic models is that they allow the inclusion of covariates. Existing research argues that when a corpus consists of multiple text courses, researchers should account for this in their models as meta data (Schoonvelde, Schumacher and Bakker, 2019). I include two covariates: one for the country of the speaker and another one for the type of text, distinguishing between speeches in parliamentary hearings and posts on X.

Table 3.3 presents the seven topics and their associated stemmed keywords or phrases. The keywords largely follow the dictionaries by Fraccaroli et al. (2022a), but I adapt them to the texts I am analysing. To do so, I manually review a random sample of parliamentary hearing speeches and X posts, to understand the language that is used and adjust the keywords accordingly. For instance, I include the composite word "digitaleuro" because it is used in X posts as a hashtag. Moreover, there are words which can have multiple meanings. The word "job" can refer to employment-related issues included in the EMU topic but can also be used to say that someone did a good or a bad job.

The word "environment" can allude to topics related to the environment and sustainability, but can also be linked to sustainable public finances, touching upon fiscal policy issues. The words "jobs" and "environmental" can be linked to the EMU and environment topic respectively, but would not be present in the corpus due to stemming. To overcome these issues, I turn the word "jobs" into "jobsx" and "environmental" into "environmentalx" before stemming the corpus, so that they are not picked up by the stemming algorithm. I also allow for one residual topic, which I label as Other, meaning a topic with no keywords in case there are underlying issues that are not captured by the topics.

Topic	Keywords	Category
Price stability	price, inflat, hicp, cpi, deflat, interest rate	Primary mandate
Unconventional monetary policy tools	asset purchas programm, app, pepp, pandem emerg, tltro, quantit eas, qe, lender last resort, omt, outright monetari transact	Primary mandate
Financial stability	ssm, singl supervisori mechan, singl supervisori system, srb, singl resolut board, srm, singl resolut mechan, bank, financi, contagion, leverag , non perform, npls, esm, stabil mechan	Other
International developments	trade, cross border, global, emerg, geopolit, treasuri, dollar, pound, fed, feder reserv, bank england, bank intern settl, bis, war, middl east, ukrain, brexit, yuan, yen	Other
Payment issues	pay, digit euro, digitaleuro, bitcoin, stablecoin, libra, cbdc, cash, banknot, coin, card, digit currenc, crypto, cryptocurr	Other
EMU economy issues	fiscal, emu, econom monetari union, budget, sgp, stabil growth, ngeu, next gener, recoveri resili, rrf, six pack, recoveri fund, fiscal compact, mff, bailout, bail, auster, employ, unemploy, labour, labor, worker, minimum wage, jobsx, layoff	Other
Environment	green, climat chang, sustain financ, emiss, taxonomi, ecolog, carbon, sustain invest, fossil fuel, environmentalx	Other

Table 3.3: Topic keywords and categories

I group the eight topics into two categories, based on whether they belong to the primary mandate or not, as the ECB interprets it. To group the topics, I follow approaches by other studies such as Fraccaroli et al. (2022) and Moschella, Pinto and Martocchia Diodati (2020). The first category relates to the primary mandate and includes the price stability as well as the unconventional monetary policy tools topics. Whilst the former captures references to standard monetary policy tools such as interest rates, the latter focuses on unconventional monetary policies which were used in response to the Eurozone crisis and the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second category captures all other topics. Some of these belong to the broadly defined secondary mandate which is to support other economic policies, and others lie outside of the ECB's mandate. These topics include financial stability, the environment, international developments relating to other central banks and geopolitical events, payment issues regarding banknotes and the digital euro, and broader EMU economy-related topics. The latter include employment, fiscal policy and structural reforms.

To conduct the topic model analysis, I merge the Monetary Dialogue and X data. In the analyses that follow though, I separate the data to compare the results from each communication venue. To account for this in my dataset, I use a binary variable which takes a value of 1 if the text is a speech of an MEP in parliamentary hearings and a value of 0 if the text is an MEP's post on X. Before running the topic models, I complete a series of standard pre-processing steps, including tokenisation, punctuation removal, stemming, lower-casing and removing words or phrases that are too frequent. For instance, I remove references to the "European Central Bank" so that they are not perceived as relevant only for the financial stability topic which includes the word "bank". To evaluate the performance of the topic models, I look at log-likelihood and perplexity (Eshima, Imai and Sasaki, 2023). Appendix B presents the results of the model fit tests and shows that the model is working as expected.

Furthermore, I manually inspect a sample of texts to confirm that the predicted prevalence of topics corresponds to the actual content of the text. This is further reaffirmed by looking at a representative X post and parliamentary speech for each topic and the top 15 keywords that the model assigns to each topic, both in Appendix B. It is important to note that keyATM, like other topic models, is probabilistic. Documents are not assigned to topics based on a binary decision. Rather, to interpret

the findings we have to look at the document-topic distribution, which represents the proportions of topics for each document. These topics reflect the main themes of the document, whilst their predicted probabilities represent their prevalence. To test H1a and H1b, which look at how much MEPs talk about the primary mandate, I construct a continuous dependent variable based on the proportion of texts which are devoted to the primary mandate of the ECB compared to the other category.

3.5.4 Dependent variable: Sentiment analysis

The second step is sentiment analysis. Following existing studies on the political oversight of the ECB, I use dictionary-based sentiment analysis to study parliamentarians' communication towards the institution (Fraccaroli et al., 2022b; Massoc, 2021; Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet, 2020). A dictionary can be defined as a list of keys that stand for specific meanings or concepts that are derived from theoretical considerations. In the case of sentiment analysis, these keys can be divided into positive and negative keys, whilst the concept is the identification of a sentiment. Within these keys, there are values which serve as their empirical indicators. For instance, a positive sentiment key can have as a value the words "brilliant" and "achieved"", whilst a negative sentiment key can have words such as "afraid" and "bad".

I select the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary (LSD) (Young and Soroka, 2012) because it has been created for political language and has been used to study various political communication venues, including in analyses which combine parliamentary speeches and social media posts on X (Castanho Silva and Proksch, 2021). The original dictionary is in English and consists of 2,858 negative sentiment words, 1,709 positive sentiment words, 2,860 negations of negative words and 1,721 negations of positive words (Young and Soroka, 2012).[42] Before implementing it, I follow a set of standard pre-processing steps which are used in quantitative text analyses as well as specific pre-processing steps suggested by the dictionary's authors (Young and Soroka, 2012). The latter include for instance replacing references to the word "well" when they appear at the beginning of a sentence with "xwell" so that it is not counted as a positive word.

I measure sentiment at the text level, where a text is either a speech by an MEP in the Monetary Dialogues or a post on X. To operationalise the net sentiment of each text, I use the log of the odds ratio of positive terms to negative terms. This

[42]The dictionary is available for download here: `https://www.snsoroka.com/data-lexicoder/`

measures the relative positivity or negativity of a text and is consistent with other studies which compare texts with different lengths (Castanho Silva and Proksch, 2021). This approach is different to measuring the absolute values which could be affected by the text's length, where we would subtract the number of negative terms from the value of positive terms.

The resulting value of the log of the odds ratio is the dependent variable that I use to evaluate H2, H3 and H4 which look at how domestic considerations affect the sentiment of MEPs when they communicate in relation to the ECB. The range of the variable is from -3.1 to 3.55, where higher positive values are associated with a more positive sentiment and lower negative values with a more negative sentiment. As examples of the categorisation, Appendix B includes an X post and a parliamentary speech that were highly scored as positive as well as an X post and a parliamentary speech that were highly scored as negative.

3.5.5 Independent variables

To test my hypotheses, I include a number of independent variables. H1a and H1b look at inflation and unemployment. As I am interested in domestic considerations, I use quarterly data from Eurostat (2023a) to measure the rate of change of unemployment in each MS. I operationalise this by subtracting the rate of unemployment in a previous quarter from the rate of unemployment in the next quarter. For instance, if unemployment in the first quarter is 0.6 and in the second quarter it decreases to 0.4, the rate of change of unemployment is -0.2. I use data from Eurostat (2023d) to operationalise the inflation rate in a similar way. I subtract the inflation rate in the previous quarter from the rate of inflation in the next quarter.

H2 and H3 focus on political ideology factors, which I draw from the CHES (Seth et al., 2022). I map the data at the party-level, based on an MEP's national party membership. This is consistent with other studies which look at MEPs (Fraccaroli et al, 2022b; Nulty et al., 2016). To operationalise a national party's economic ideology (H2), I draw from the CHES question which asks experts to rank a party's position on an economic left-right scale from 0 to 10, where lower values indicate left-leaning parties and higher values right-leaning ones. I transform this scale into a binary variable which takes a value of 1 if a party scores less than 5 on the scale (left-wing) and 0 otherwise (right-wing).

The operationalisation of a party's stance towards the EU (H2a-H2b) draws from the CHES question which asks respondents to rank the position of parties on European integration on a scale from 1 (strongly opposed) to 7 (strongly in favour). I consider a party Eurosceptic if it has a lower score than 3.5 and pro-EU if the score is more than 3.5 (Hunter, 2021). In rare instances where a party is not included in the CHES, I use information regarding its Eurosceptic nature from official party websites or PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019).

H4 looks at public opinion towards the ECB in the country of an MEP. I measure this using the Eurobarometer question which asks respondents how much they trust the institution, asking them to choose between three categories: "Tend to trust it", "Tend not to trust it" or "Do not know" (European Commission, 2023a). I measure public net trust as the difference between the percentage of respondents who tend to trust and those who tend to not trust the ECB (Moschella, Pinto and Martocchia Diodati, 2020; Roth, Gros and Nowak-Lehmann, 2014). Positive values suggest that a majority trusts the ECB, whilst negative values suggest that they do not.

I use bi-annual survey-weighted means of net trust in the ECB in each MS, mapping the data to the speech or post of an MEP. Given my interest in domestic considerations I focus on domestic levels of trust in the ECB, rather than EU or euro area levels. I use a six-month time lag for this data to reflect the bi-annual nature of the Eurobarometer survey and the fact that public preferences might take some time to feed into the political sphere (Hagemann, Hobolt and Wratil, 2017; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008).

3.5.6 Control variables

I also include a number of political and economic controls to eliminate the risk of omitted variable bias which can influence the tone or topic focus of how MEPs talk about the ECB. There might be other factors related to the economy, beyond unemployment and inflation levels, which can affect how MEPs emphasise the primary mandate. These can include concerns about financial instability or the health of government debt. I include two variables which have been used as a benchmark to assess the domestic level of financial instability, including in relation to the Eurozone crisis (Ferrara et al., 2022).

The first is quarterly measures of the interest rate on long-term government bonds in the country of each MEP, based on data from Eurostat (2023b). The second one is

the yearly share of nonperforming loans to total loans of the domestic banking sector, which is seen as a proxy for the health of domestic financial institutions and could impact the relevance of banking supervision topics for MEPs (World Bank, 2023). I also include quarterly measures of government debt levels from Eurostat (2023c) to capture the fiscal health of a country which might influence the propensity to focus on the secondary mandate. I lag all economic country controls to the previous quarter (or year for the loans), given that macroeconomic data take time to be published.

In terms of political controls, I take into consideration electoral pressures which might affect the behaviour of politicians towards a central bank, in line with political business theory expectations (Fraccaroli, Giovannini and Jamet, 2020). I use a dummy for national elections which takes a value of 1 if an election is taking place in the year that the MEP is speaking or posting and 0 otherwise. I operationalise a dummy this way for EP elections as well. For both variables, I use data from the official websites of national governments or the EP. An MEP's tone towards the ECB could also differ if their party is in government. I include a dummy that takes a value of 1 if an MEP's party is in government in their home country at the time of the speech or X post and 0 otherwise.

I also include a party-level variable which controls for the size of the party in the EP, given that size can affect the distribution of time for questions during Monetary Dialogues. I measure this as the share of votes that the party obtained in the EP elections for the legislative period during which the speech is delivered or X post is published. Information for both of these variables is available in the CHES. However, given that the CHES data collection stops in 2019, I supplement it with information from official government websites and the EP's website for more recent years. Lastly, I add a dummy variable which takes a value of 1 if the national party of an MEP is considered as populist and 0 otherwise, based on data from the PopuList dataset (Rooduijn et al., 2019). This is because the populist nature of a party might affect its interactions with the ECB (Fraccaroli et al., 2022b).

3.6 Findings and discussion

3.6.1 Topic focus and sentiment across communication venues

Figure 3.3 plots the probability across years that an MEP talks about a topic when they mention the ECB. Three key insights arise. First, there is consistency to a large

extent across communication venues; MEPs discuss about the majority of topics with a similar frequency in parliament and on X. There are a few exceptions though.

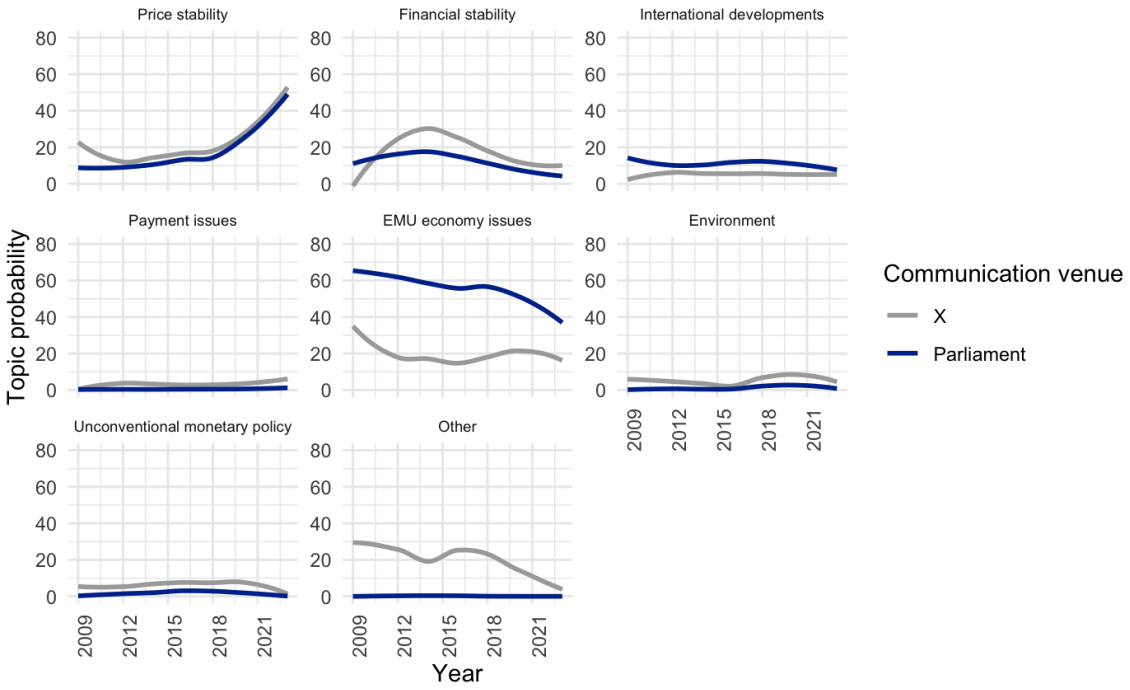

Figure 3.3: Topics across years and communication venues

For instance, MEPs discuss about issues pertaining to the broader EMU economy to a lesser extent on X. Nevertheless, references to these have decreased across both communication venues during the period analysed. In addition, the residual topic which is labelled Other is prominent on X, whilst it is non existent in the parliamentary speeches. By manually inspecting the texts relating to this topic, we can conclude that it captures procedural issues, such as MEPs discussing an upcoming EP committee meeting, plenary vote or report. In addition to discussing policy issues, it appears that MEPs use X to announce their parliamentary activities.

Another exception relates to the environment topic which appears to be more discussed on X rather than in parliament, but the difference is small. This consistency can be perceived as surprising when considering the format of the two communication venues. In the Monetary Dialogue, the speaking time of MEPs is circumvented by institutional constraints; the size of a political group plays a role in deciding which MEPs speak (European Parliament, 2019), whilst MEPs generally cannot ask more than one question in one sitting. This means that they have to select the topics they discuss and they cannot enquire about all issues that might be of relevance to

them. Conversely, MEPs can post as much as they want on X. As a result, the trade-off between which issues to discuss is not that relevant; they can highlight different types of issues that are important for their country. Therefore, it could be expected that MEPs talk about a broader range of topics on X rather than in parliamentary hearings.

The second insight is the mostly downward trend of focus on financial stability and broader EMU economy issues. This reflects empirical developments. The Eurozone crisis and the country-specific associated banking crises (such as in Cyprus and Ireland) as well as government debt crises (such as in Greece) highlighted the importance of banking issues and structural economic reforms in MS. As the crises subsided, so has the relative importance of these issues. During the Eurozone crisis, the ECB was involved in crisis management for the EMU economy through various channels, including the troika and the establishment of the SSM. The EMU economy topic is still prevalent in recent years, albeit to a lesser extent. Other studies also find this; during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECB was calling for the coordination of monetary and fiscal policies in order to respond to its economic ramifications (Fraccaroli et al., 2022a).

In the case of parliamentary hearings, the decreasing relevance of the financial stability topics could be related to the creation of a hearing specifically for banking supervision topics in 2014 where MEPs address the Chair of the SSM. Notwithstanding the effect of this, the downwards trend is also evident in social media posts. This suggests that there is a more general decrease in interest for financial stability topics. Moreover, existing research that analyses the hearings with the SSM finds that there are similarities with the Monetary Dialogue in the issues that are being discussed (Diessner, 2023; Akbik, 2022).

Third, the price stability topic is increasingly relevant in recent years when MEPs discuss about the ECB on X or when addressing the ECB President in parliament. This comes at a time when EU MS have experienced an increase in inflation, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Taken at face value, the results about the price stability, financial stability and EMU economic issue topics lend at least some face validity to the argument that the topic focus of MEPs reflects macroeconomic conditions, which speaks to H1a and H1b.

Turning to sentiment, Figure 3.4 compares how positive or negative is MEP communication across countries and communication venues. In the majority of countries,

MEPs are more positive in parliamentary hearings rather than on X. One explanation for this is the format of the communication venue. When participating in parliamentary hearings, MEPs are directly faced with the ECB President. When they post on X though, the format is more informal and their aim is to reach a wide audience with their posts. Existing evidence shows that negative posts on X garner more engagement rather than positive ones (Bellovary, Young and Goldenberg, 2021). For instance, looking at UK MPs, Mackenzie (2018) finds that their tone is more negative rather than positive. Thus, MEPs might have an incentive to use more negative language on X.

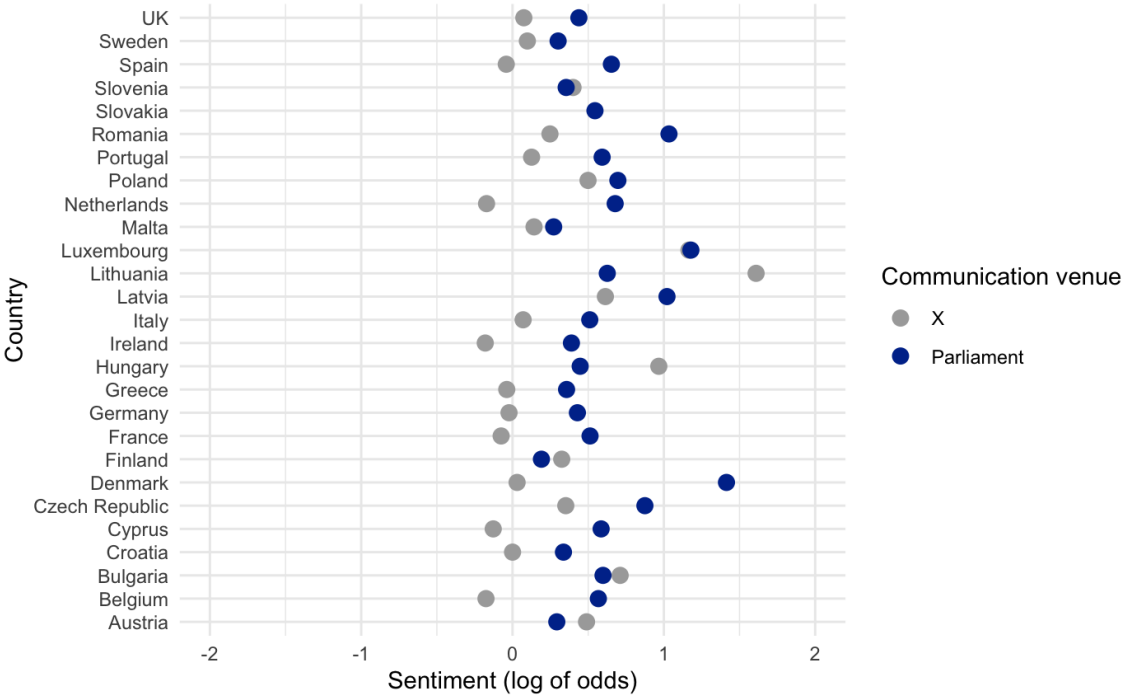

Figure 3.4: Sentiment across countries and communication venues

Another explanation could be that MEPs who speak on X have different characteristics compared to those who speak in parliament. As Table 3.2 shows, the majority of posts on X are jointly by Liberal and the Far right groupings in the EP, whereas in the parliamentary hearings they are by the Christian Democrat and Social Democrat groupings (Table 3.1). Given that politicians from far right parties tend to be more Eurosceptic, this could be tilting the results of X towards a more negative sentiment. This relates to the role of political ideology, which I turn to in the regression analyses.

3.6.2 Regression analyses

Given that I am interested in comparing the parliamentary hearings with posts on X, I evaluate my hypotheses separately for each communication venue and discuss the results together. I run regressions to measure the effect of domestic considerations on topic focus and sentiment. The dependent variable in Models 1 and 2 is topic focus (H1a and H1b), whereas in Models 3 and 4 it is sentiment (H2, H3 and H4). Models 1 and 3 look at parliamentary data, whereas Models 2 and 4 at posts on X.

Due to the nested nature of the data, where speeches or posts are nested within speakers, national parties and countries, and the continuous nature of my dependent variables, I use mixed effects multilevel linear regression models. In all models I include speaker and party random effects as well as country fixed effects, given that an MEP's nationality could affect how they speak about the ECB, regardless of other controls.[43] Table 3.4 presents the results from Models 1 and 2, with a different column for the analyses of each communication venue (parliament and X).

There is statistically significant support for H1a and H1b in the expected direction. In line with what H1a predicts, as the inflation rate rises in a country, so does the focus on the primary mandate. Furthermore, in line with what H1b expects, as the unemployment level in a country increases, there is less focus on the primary mandate. The direction of both effects is consistent across communication venues, but their magnitude varies. It can also be observed that left-wing MEPs are less likely to discuss issues pertaining to the primary mandate on X. This can be an attempt to appeal to their partisans, who are traditionally more interested in expansionary fiscal and monetary policies and are less concerned with keeping inflation at bay. There is also a statistically significant negative effect in both venues for EP election years, during which MEPs might be less likely to discuss core policy issues and more likely to discuss issues which pertain to their election campaigns in relation to the ECB.

Table 3.5 shows the results of regression analyses where the dependent variable is sentiment. Contrary to the expectations of H2, it appears that left-wing parties speak in a more positive tone about the ECB compared to right-wing parties in both communication venues. One potential explanation for this could be that left-wing

[43] I exclude MEPs who identify as Independent from any national party in both sets of models. This is because their lack of party affiliation means that there is no direct information about their political ideology in the CHES. In total, 399 rows are not included, which is around 6% of the combined corpus of parliamentary speeches and X posts.

	Dependent variable:	
	Primary mandate topics	
	Parliament (1)	**X (2)**
Inflation rate change	0.010*	0.025***
	(0.006)	(0.004)
Unemployment rate change	−0.030**	−0.023**
	(0.014)	(0.011)
Left-wing party	0.005	−0.082***
	(0.026)	(0.031)
Eurosceptic party	0.076	0.074
	(0.051)	(0.050)
ECB trust	0.0003	0.002***
	(0.0003)	(0.0005)
Populist party	−0.019	−0.017
	(0.052)	(0.051)
Governing party	0.032**	0.017
	(0.016)	(0.017)
EP election year	−0.043***	−0.058***
	(0.015)	(0.015)
National election year	0.012	−0.008
	(0.013)	(0.011)
EP party size	−0.002	−0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Long-term government bond yields	0.001	0.018***
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Government debt	0.001	0.0003
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Non-performing loans	−0.007***	0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Constant	0.117	0.375***
	(0.086)	(0.098)
Observations	1,215	4,667
Log Likelihood	211.331	−1,468.901
Akaike Inf. Crit.	−336.661	3,021.802
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	−117.254	3,292.629
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 3.4: Regression analyses for topic focus

parties had a positive assessment of some ECB policy responses which are aligned with their support for expansionary fiscal and monetary policies. An example of this could be the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the central bank adopted an expansionary monetary policy. Another explanation relates to a different aspect of political ideology; Euroscepticism. The results support H3 since they show that Eurosceptic parties are less likely to talk positively regarding the ECB and its actions on either communication venue, with the effect for parliamentary hearings being statistically significant and substantive. It could be argued then, that sentiment might be explained by the stance of a party towards European integration rather than its political ideology.

Looking at the parties in the dataset, left-wing ones tend to be pro-EU to a larger extent compared to right-wing ones; 33% of left-wing parties are Eurosceptic, whereas 46% of right-wing parties are Eurosceptic. This finding is consistent with Fraccaroli et al. (2022b), as their analysis of parliamentary hearings shows that what matters for sentiment is stance towards European integration, with the effects of economic ideology being less relevant. There is no support for H4; although the effect for trust towards the ECB is statistically significant it is not in the expected direction and is comparatively small.

To confirm the validity of the results, I run a series of robustness tests, available in Appendix B, with different operationalisations of the independent variables. In one set of tests, I create a variable which is the difference between the levels of inflation or unemployment in the MS of the MEP and the EU as a whole. The rationale behind this operationalisation is that MEPs might be interested in the comparative performance of their country vis-à-vis the EU as a whole, rather than just looking at the macroeconomic conditions of their country in isolation. The results for all independent variables of interest in each model are in the same direction compared to the original tests, with the exception of the inflation rate which is in the opposite direction and not statistically significant.

I also use a different operationalisation of the independent variable which concerns public opinion. I use the question which asks respondents whether they are in favour of the euro or not, as a proxy for positive or negative opinion towards the ECB rather than looking at trust in the institution. The results are in the same direction with either operationalisation of the variable. Finally, I use different model specifications, including country random rather than fixed effects and OLS regression. The results are robust to the different specifications.

	Dependent variable:	
	Sentiment	
	Parliament (3)	**X (4)**
Inflation rate change	−0.038	0.003
	(0.028)	(0.013)
Unemployment rate change	−0.014	0.008
	(0.064)	(0.033)
Left-wing party	0.144*	0.010
	(0.078)	(0.068)
Eurosceptic party	−0.369**	−0.179
	(0.164)	(0.113)
ECB trust	−0.003**	−0.003*
	(0.002)	(0.001)
Populist party	0.024	−0.127
	(0.167)	(0.114)
Governing party	−0.054	0.064
	(0.071)	(0.051)
EP election year	−0.009	−0.071
	(0.074)	(0.048)
National election year	−0.076	0.012
	(0.062)	(0.036)
EP party size	0.006	0.010***
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Long-term government bond yields	−0.046**	−0.033***
	(0.018)	(0.013)
Government debt	−0.002	−0.003***
	(0.002)	(0.001)
Non-performing loans	0.002	−0.013**
	(0.007)	(0.006)
Constant	0.616**	0.682***
	(0.314)	(0.241)
Observations	1,215	4,667
Log Likelihood	−1,620.792	−6,777.513
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,327.584	13,639.030
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	3,546.992	13,909.850
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 3.5: Regression analyses for sentiment

3.6.3 Discussion

The findings shed light on the communication of MEPs about the ECB and highlight the relevance of some domestic considerations for their topic focus and tone. This has several key implications for the accountability relationship between the two institutions. The results show that far from concentrating on the primary mandate, for the majority of the period under investigation MEPs tend to discuss issues for which the ECB has secondary responsibility. These include fiscal policy and structural reforms as well as banking supervision topics. Given that these topics overshadow discussions of the primary mandate during the Eurozone crisis, this raises questions as to whether or not MEPs were placing adequate emphasis on holding the ECB accountable for price stability over that time period.

The topic model regression results echo earlier studies which show that the thematic focus of the accountability relationship is driven by the macroeconomic conditions in the country of an MEP (Ferrara et al., 2022). This is consistent across the two communication venues and can be interpreted as an attempt by MEPs to be responsive to the economic interests of their constituents and how policies by the ECB affect it. In turn, this responsiveness can be perceived as enhancing the quality of the accountability relationship with the ECB given that MEPs are representatives of their country and its citizens.

Turning to sentiment analysis, the results reveal that there are differences between communication venues; MEPs are more negative on X rather than in parliament. Given that X posts can reach the public directly, it could be argued that citizens get a more negative view of the ECB's performance from X rather than following the parliamentary hearings. The regression analysis results show that the tone can be influenced by some aspects of political ideology, focusing on a national party's stance towards European integration.

Therefore, it appears that MEPs hold the ECB accountable for its policy actions under the influence of their personal predispositions. These personal predispositions have a stronger effect compared to public opinion on the ECB, which could indicate that partisan ties are more relevant rather than responsiveness to public opinion for determining sentiment. Thus, the sentiment analysis results can paint a potentially bleaker picture regarding the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP.

3.7 Conclusion

The role of the ECB has been transformed against the backdrop of a polycrisis period, which included the monumental economic ramifications of the Eurozone crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the ECB is currently faced with high levels of inflation, the threat of climate change and significant geopolitical developments which impact the economy of the euro area. The transformation of the ECB's role has materialised hand-in-hand with the politicisation of the supranational institution, which brings questions about its accountability to the public spotlight.

Against this background, this paper looks at how MEPs talk about the ECB, as they are key actors in the political oversight of the central bank. It focuses on two communication venues (parliamentary hearings and social media posts on X) and two aspects of their communication (topic focus and sentiment). The findings have implications for the accountability relationship between the two institutions since they show that it is influenced by some domestic considerations.

The regression results from the topic models show that the thematic focus of the accountability relationship is driven by the macroeconomic conditions in the country of an MEP. References to the primary mandate increase as the inflation rate increases, whilst they decrease as the unemployment rate increases. This is consistent across the two communication venues and can be interpreted as an attempt by MEPs to be responsive to the economic interests of their country and how policies by the ECB affect it. In turn, this responsiveness can be perceived as enhancing the quality of the accountability relationship with the ECB given that MEPs are representatives of their country and its citizens.

The results for the regression analyses based on the sentiment analysis are mixed. The effect for left-right economic positions and public opinion is smaller and not in the expected direction. Instead, the stance of a national party towards European integration appears to be guiding the tone of MEPs towards the ECB, especially in parliamentary hearings. MEPs from Eurosceptic parties are less likely to speak positively about the ECB compared to those from pro-EU parties. This partisan effect could affect their evaluation of the ECB's performance. Rather than judging the ECB's actions based on their economic effects, MEPs could be holding the ECB accountable under the influence of their political ideology.

The paper also advances existing research in three ways. First, it enriches the literature on the political oversight of ECB, by providing a more complete picture of the accountability relationship between the EP and the ECB. Existing studies do not include the most recent EP legislative period (2019-2024), whilst they tend to focus on speeches from parliamentary hearings only. I extend the period of analysis to include the years from 2019 until the end of 2023, thereby capturing developments which have shaped the actions of the ECB, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ECB's 2021 strategy review. Moreover, I provide empirical evidence from another source of communication, MEPs' posts on X, which can reach the public directly. Therefore, the findings can be used to explore whether the effect of domestic considerations found in other studies also travels to different time periods and communication venues.

Second, it speaks to research on accountability beyond the ECB. The ECB can be perceived as one example of a central bank and the insights of this paper can be used to inform research on other geographical areas and central banks. Third, it contributes more broadly to the literature that applies text-as-data methods to analyse communication in relation to central banks. To perform my analyses, I use data from two original machine-readable datasets which might be of interest to other researchers. The one includes transcripts of parliamentary hearings between the ECB and the EP from 2009 until 2023, whilst the other is a collection of X posts by MEPs about the ECB during the same time period. Both datasets will be made freely available upon request. Their format makes them easily machine-readable, whilst the translated posts and speeches eliminate multiple language barriers.

Nonetheless, this paper has limitations which pave the way forward for further investigation. I use topic and sentiment as a proxy for measuring the nature of the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP. Although this method is consistent with current approaches in the literature, future studies can also develop more direct text-based measures of capturing statements about accountability in the communication of MEPs. Furthermore, additional studies can expand on the paper in several ways. This paper limits its theoretical expectations to the ones that are most prevalent in existing research on the topic in order to test them on new data from X and the latest legislative period. Nevertheless, there is scope to develop them, by exploring how different independent variables affect the topic focus and sentiment of MEPs. For instance, other studies can theorise how political ideology might be relevant for the topic focus of MEPs or how other indicators of financial instability might increase the salience of topics beyond price stability.

Additionally, they can look at other data sources on the communication of MEPs regarding the ECB which have been scarcely explored. They can investigate other formal communication venues, such as plenary speeches in the EP or media interviews, as well as informal ones such as other social media channels. By taking into consideration more data sources, we can get a more complete picture of how MEPs hold the ECB accountable as well as further unpack the relevance of the communication venue. We can ask whether MEPs tailor communication to specific audiences based on certain characteristics. This raises questions as to whether it matters if the primary audience is domestic as opposed to international or if it is an expert audience or not (Angino and Robitu, 2023).

Furthermore, this paper only examines one side of the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP. To evaluate the quality and nature of the relationship it is not only relevant to look at MEPs, but also how the ECB communicates. We can measure how responsive ECB Presidents are to the questions of MEPs in parliamentary hearings by considering whether they provide a substantial answer to their questions or whether they try to deflect them and answer vaguely. As an example, we can use frameworks from the political explanations research to evaluate the quality of the arguments that the ECB makes (Vössing, 2023; Vössing, 2020).

In the case of X, we can examine whether ECB official accounts start engaging more with topics after MEPs post about them. We can also explore how the public engages with MEP posts on X; who likes, responds to, reposts and talks about what MEPs have to say about the ECB. There might be individuals with certain characteristics who are more likely to engage with these posts and depending on these characteristics they might have a more positive or negative attitude towards the central bank. Since MEPs are representatives of the public, an insight into public opinion could be instructive.

Lastly, it would also be important to test whether the findings are specific to the ECB or whether they can be generalisable to other central banks as well, by collecting parliamentary hearing and X data from other countries and replicating the analysis. Given the federal structure of the US which has similar characteristics to the supranational nature of the EU, its central bank, the Fed, could be an interesting case study. The findings of future research together with this paper can further strengthen our understanding of the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP, which is more pertinent than ever to work in a proper and fit way in light of increasing politicisation following this period of polycrisis.

Chapter 4

Blame and credit strategies towards the EU: Evidence from 10 years of parliamentary speeches

Abstract: *How do domestic politicians attribute responsibility to the EU? The EU might seem as the perfect scapegoat, with its MLG structure creating incentives for politicians to blame it. The paper addresses this question through the lens of blame and credit strategies, using evidence from parliamentary speeches in four EU MS which discuss economic crises. The focus is on the 2008-2018 period, which represents an apposite case for shifting blame towards the EU as several MS were in an adverse economic situation and the EU was implicated in crisis management. The findings support recent studies which show that blame is not always the preferred strategy. Certain party characteristics, such as being in government and having a pro-EU stance, make crediting the EU a favourable strategy for some MPs. The distribution of responsibility also varies across EU actors, with intergovernmental institutions receiving more credit.*

4.1 Introduction

One of the central tenets of democratic theory is that voters should be able to hold decision-makers accountable at the ballot box for their actions (Anderson, 2000). However, this becomes more challenging for policies where the EU is involved in compared to those for which only national governments are responsible. The EU's MLG structure complicates voters' calculation of who should be held responsible, as decision-making is spread across multiple levels of governance. This is the case both vertically between the EU, national and local levels and horizontally at the EU level between different institutions, agencies and bodies (Kosmidis, 2018; Kosmidis, 2014). Domestic politicians can take advantage of the blurred lines of responsibility by holding the EU responsible in an electorally favourable way, thereby potentially also influencing voter attitudes.

This paper asks: How do MPs attribute responsibility to the EU? Existing literature tends to focus on blame attribution, based on the expectation that politicians prefer to hold the EU responsible by scapegoating it for adverse events (Heinkelmann, Kriegmair and Rittberger, 2020; Moravcsik, 1994; Weaver, 1986). This is also ingrained in the perceptions of EU actors, with the former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, stating in an interview that "National governments have a habit of congratulating themselves for what goes right and blaming Brussels for what goes wrong" (Bild, 2019).

I challenge this focus on blame strategies and suggest that under certain conditions national politicians have incentives to credit the EU as well. I focus on MPs and consider how the characteristics of the parties they belong to can make some more likely to use credit strategies and others more likely to use blame strategies in order to assign responsibility to the EU. I also look at which EU actors are more likely to receive blame or credit. I address these issues by focusing on parliamentary speeches which discuss economic crises and were delivered between 2008 and 2018 in four countries which were EU MS during the period under investigation; the UK, the Netherlands, Austria and Spain.

To answer the research question of how MPs attribute responsibility to the EU, I use a combination of dictionary-based text analysis and hand-coding. There are three key findings. First, I find that MPs use blame and credit strategies with a similar frequency. This is consistent across the period studied and shows that the EU is not always used as a scapegoat. Second, I show that there are certain party

characteristics which make credit strategies an electorally favourable strategy. Being an MP in a governing party makes crediting the EU more likely compared to being in opposition. Another party characteristic that has a strong and positive relationship with crediting the EU is a favourable stance towards European integration. Third, there is evidence of variation in responsibility attribution across EU targets. Although general references to the EU are the most common way of attributing responsibility, there are differences across EU actors. For instance, the intergovernmental European Council receives more credit rather than blame.

Overall, I make four contributions to the growing research stream on responsibility attribution. First, existing literature on the EU centers around blame strategies. Following recent studies which also look at credit strategies (Hunter 2021; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014), I theoretically and empirically show how they might be a preferred strategy for some politicians. Second, I contribute to the few EU-related studies which ask why politicians attribute responsibility in a certain way, by unpacking the party characteristics that influence the incentives of MPs. Third, existing studies tend to view the EU as a single responsibility target, whereas I look at how MPs assign responsibility to separate EU actors in different ways. Fourth, the majority of relevant research provides evidence from single or two country case studies spanning a few years. By analysing the communication of MPs from four countries over 10 years, the research design of this paper allows for more variation in the factors influencing responsibility attribution, thereby strengthening the generalisability of the results.

The findings carry several implications. They provide an insight into the information that voters receive about the EU by domestic politicians, which could in turn help explain patterns of public opinion and support towards the EU. More specifically, they paint a rosy picture about the EU's presentation by politicians, who do not view it only as a scapegoat. In addition, the results can be relevant for the communication strategies of the EU and its institutions, as they can seek to tailor them to specific voters based on knowledge about how domestic politicians speak.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the research motivation behind this paper, whilst Section 3 situates the research question in the context of relevant literature and highlights the key takeaways from it. Section 4 presents the theoretical framework, Section 5 the data collection as well as methodological approach and Section 6 the findings. Lastly, Section 7 concludes.

4.2 Motivation for research: Responsibility attribution during crises in parliament

In this paper, I focus on how MPs attribute responsibility to the EU during the 2008-2018 period, when the EU was called to face numerous economic-related crises (Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan, 2019). These consist of the Eurozone crisis which hit numerous MS as well as country-specific crises, including the government debt crisis in Greece and the banking crisis in Cyprus. Actors such as the IMF and the ECB were becoming increasingly responsible for economic policies and adjustment programmes in MS during that period, thereby leaving limited room for national governments to shape economic outcomes. The policy responses to these crises have had a long-term impact on the deepening of European integration, through initiatives such as the Fiscal Compact which deals with fiscal integration and the SSM which is a pillar of the banking union.

Focusing on crises as an empirical phenomenon can allow us to develop instructive insights for the behaviour of both voters and policy-makers. Crises constitute watershed events; voters recall their perceptions of them to form voting decisions or support certain actors and institutions, whilst politicians use them to frame policy debates (Malhorta and Margalit, 2010; Hart and Tindall, 2009; Jennings, 1999). When crises happen, often someone has to be held responsible. This can be because they caused the crisis, they failed to manage it or they responded well to it (Boin et al., 2010).

Therefore, crises are a most likely case for observing blame and credit attribution. In the case of the EU, the crises during the 2008 and 2018 period led to public scrutiny and political unrest, as record-low trust in the bloc and its institutions tarnished its democratic legitimacy. There is evidence that during this period the EU became more politicised, with an increase in the salience of EU-related matters in the media and in parliamentary speeches (Kartalis and Silva, 2023; Silva and Kartalis, 2023; Rauh, 2015; Closa and Maatsch, 2014). This paper considers the content of this increased communication about the EU, focusing on statements regarding responsibility.

Attribution of responsibility is the act of deciding who or what can be held accountable for certain events (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014). It consists of two main strategies; blame and credit. Drawing from Hood (2011), I define blame as the act of attributing responsibility for something considered to be bad to some person or entity and credit as the act of presenting something negative in a positive light and

attributing responsibility for it to a person or an entity. Responsibility constitutes a key mechanism in the chain of democratic accountability. For voters to hold decision-makers accountable, they need to be able to determine who is responsible for policy outcomes, among other things.

However, politicians have incentives to blur the lines of responsibility and attribute it in a way that maximises their chances for re-election. A common example in politics is the incumbent government blaming the current state of the economy on the previous government. To understand these incentives, I concentrate on one set of political actors, MPs, and the blame and credit statements they make in parliamentary debates towards the EU. As a communication venue, parliaments interact with the wider public sphere, including national media and voters, to provide information about political issues (Lehmann, 2023). Studies suggest that MPs use parliamentary debates, which are some of their most visible political activities, strategically to appeal to voters (Rheault et al., 2016; Spirling, 2016; Proksch and Slapin, 2012; Maltzman and Sigelman, 1996).

In EU politics research, increasing attention is paid to the communicative function of national parliaments as a channel that can influence the EU's democratic accountability (Lobo, 2023; Rauh and De Wilde, 2018; Rauh, 2015; Auel and Raunio, 2014; De Wilde, 2014). For instance, if MPs overwhelmingly blame the EU for the Eurozone crisis in plenary debates, then this could lead to more public Euroscepticism and an increase in voter support for national parties which are critical towards European integration. It could be argued then, that attributions of responsibility towards the EU in parliaments, especially during crises, can have important implications. They can potentially influence public opinion on European integration, trust towards its institutions and inform the responsibility attributions of citizens which can then feed into voting decisions at both national and European elections.

4.3 Literature review

I situate my research question in the context of responsibility attribution literature. In this section, I begin by introducing the theoretical foundations of responsibility attribution and discussing insights from early studies. I then move on to research which focuses on EU policy-making, before looking at studies which examine crises. Lastly, I summarise the key takeaways and outline how the paper builds on existing research.

4.3.1 Theoretical foundations and early studies

The literature on responsibility attribution is well-established. Some contributions look at the attitudes of voters through experimental surveys like McGraw (1995, 1991, 1990) and Vössing (2021). Others like Weaver (1986) and Hood (2011) focus on the responsibility attributions of politicians, as this paper does. Weaver (1986) puts forward a negativity bias approach, arguing that politicians prefer to avoid blame for unpopular actions rather than claim credit for popular ones. This means that politicians tend to adopt blame strategies such as scapegoating and defection which are engineered towards preventing a blame-generating situation from arising as well as deflecting and diffusing blame once adverse outcomes occur (Weaver, 1986).

The negativity bias approach has influenced subsequent responsibility attribution research, which focuses mainly on blame strategies and to a lesser extent on credit strategies (Grimmer, Messing and Westwood, 2012). A common approach is to look at the government-opposition dynamic in domestic politics, whereby the opposition blames the government and the government the opposition (Hansson, 2018; Weaver, 2018). Hood (2011) provides a theory of blame avoidance consisting of three strategies that public officeholders have at their disposal. First, agency strategies attempt to limit blame by altering formal responsibility allocation through actions such as delegation. An example of this is the outsourcing of certain governmental services to the private sector (Greasley, 2019). Second, policy strategies attempt to construct policies with the ex-ante aim of minimising criticism. Third, presentational strategies attempt to affect public perceptions of responsibility through blame and credit strategies (Hood, 2011).

4.3.2 Responsibility attribution in the EU

This paper focuses on presentational and agency strategies of blame attribution, as defined in the above sectiom. Whilst agency strategies are captured by the delegation of responsibility to the EU level, presentational strategies constitute the only likely blame avoidance strategy during crises. In a crisis context, new agency strategies are unlikely since changing institutional procedures takes time, whilst policy strategies are constrained because governments are forced to implement unfavourable policies (Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher, 2019). Numerous studies look at agency strategies in the EU. Hood (2011) points out that in deciding whether to join the EU, MS make a choice between direct control versus delegation of policy-making. He highlights

that the EU's MLG structure facilitates agency blame avoidance strategies through shared responsibility and organisational complexity among different governance levels (Hood, 2011). These can include the national governments of MS, intergovernmental and supranational institutions as well as atypical bodies such as the Eurogroup.

Dehousse (2007) argues, in line with an agency blame avoidance strategy, that MS can distance themselves from decisions by blaming the EU, whilst core EU institutions can distance themselves by blaming EU agencies and atypical bodies (Dehousse, 2007). Considering the Eurozone, Vis and van Kersbergen (2007) note that the ECB is an easy scapegoat for domestic politicians who present themselves as constrained by the loss of monetary policy control to the European level. Daugbjerg and Swinbank (2007) consider the Common Agricultural Policy and suggest that the choice of institutional setting for reform decisions is influenced by the desire of farmers and heads of state to avoid blame for unpopular decisions.

There is also empirical evidence on the intersection between agency and presentational strategies, i.e., how national politicians present, through their communication strategies, the agency shift to the EU level. Looking at debates on Brexit, Hansson (2019) finds that UK politicians minimise the perceived agency of the government and present the EU in a negative light. Heinkelmann-Wild, Rittberger and Zangl (2018) investigate attributions of responsibility that national and EU-level policy-makers make in the news in the context of two case studies; the EU's failure to impose sanctions against France and Germany for violating the budget deficit guidelines in the Stability and Growth Pact and the EU's failure to prevent harmful tax practices in its MS. Their content analysis reveals that the actor who oversees the implementation of a policy is more likely to be blamed for it.

Heinkelmann-Wild and Zangl (2019) consider migration policies. They find evidence for their theoretical model which postulates that MS and EU policy-makers prefer to attribute blame onto actors on a different level from themselves, depending on institutional responsibility for policy-making and policy implementation. This lends support to the argument that the EU can act as an attractive blame target for MS under certain conditions. Nevertheless, the authors contend that their model has not demonstrated its explanatory power in policy fields beyond migration. Rittberger, Schwarzenbeck and Zangl (2017) also concentrate on EU migration policies and find that attributions of responsibility reflect the structure of policy implementation. These three contributions which focus on blame strategies illustrate the importance of considering factors that might affect the attribution of responsibility.

4.3.3 Responsibility attribution during crises

Empirically, several of the contributions which look at the EU are preoccupied with the Eurozone crisis period. The crisis nature of policy-making brought to the forefront the EU's institutional complexity and increased the salience of EU issues in the political sphere. The study of crisis communication through the lens of blame and credit strategies has a long-established foundation in the literature. Pierson (1995) argues that blame-shifting is especially prevalent in MLG systems in times of austerity; as retrenchment is widely accepted to be unpopular, the government will try hard "to pass the buck" to other authority levels.

There are several analyses on blame strategies during the Eurozone crisis, with most of them using hand-coding techniques. Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou and Exadaktylos (2014) find through their framing analysis that both mainstream and challenger party leaders in Greece engage in blame strategies regarding the crisis, yet a party's position in the party system determines its blame target choice. Ladi and Tsagkroni (2019) look at parliamentary speeches in Greece during the Eurozone crisis and conclude that blame strategies can be complex. Rather than opting to always blame external targets such as the EU, MPs may prefer to use historical blame-shifting, i.e., throw the blame onto the previous government (Ladi and Tsagkroni, 2019). The authors show how opposition parties have a different set of blame strategies compared to governing parties, as the latter are more likely than the former to exogenise blame and hold the EU responsible.

Focusing on Greece and Spain, Sommer (2020) conducts a content analysis of responsibility attributions in newspapers. He finds that during austerity periods, blame avoidance behaviour is conditioned by party ideology and that incumbents are more likely to shift blame to non-domestic actors. Also looking at newspapers, Rogeiro Nina (2021) shows how the Irish media supra-nationalise responsibility for European economic issues, while in Portugal and Spain they nationalise it. König (2016) examines the communication of the Monti government in Italy and finds features of blame strategies, such as risk framing and the use of the crisis context to justify unpopular reforms to the public.

Examining the tone of language rather than strictly blame attribution, other studies use automated sentiment analysis to show that politicians' communication about the EU becomes more negative during the Eurozone crisis (Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde, 2020; Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher, 2019). There is evidence

that EU-level actors also use blame strategies during the Eurozone crisis. Papadimitriou, Pegasiou and Zartaloudis (2019) show how European leaders adopt various strategies, including blame attribution, in their discourse about the Greek sovereign debt crisis. Fletcher's (2009) qualitative content analysis of the communication of the European Commission and the ECB finds that they present the Eurozone crisis in a way as to avoid blame, whilst they frame the European response as a policy success and claim credit for it.

Hobolt and Tilley (2014) present and test one of the few theoretical frameworks which look at both blame and credit strategies in an EU context. Analysing head of government speeches in Britain, Germany and Ireland, they find that credit-sharing with the EU is more common than blame strategies. They postulate that politicians may opt to manipulate EU involvement in an attempt to diffuse responsibility and frame the bad economic situation in a way that makes their efforts appear as positive (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014). However, they do not test hypotheses regarding the factors explaining this type of communication. Their findings offer limited support to the literature which is driven by the negativity bias approach of Weaver (1986), highlighting instead the importance of considering credit strategies.

Along the same lines, Hunter (2021) finds evidence based on extensive hand-coding that heads of governments in various MS are more likely to employ credit strategies compared to blame strategies when discussing outcomes of EU summits, even during the Eurozone crisis. This strategy choice is conditioned by political context, such as the levels of Euroscepticism in a MS (Hunter, 2021). The findings reveal that governments rarely blame or criticise the EU directly. This also goes against the grain of research which suggests that political actors are risk averse and would prefer to deflect blame for policy outcomes rather than claim credit for them (Weaver, 1986).

4.3.4 Key takeaways

Four key insights arise from the literature on responsibility attribution. First, existing research on the EU focuses on blame rather than credit strategies, following Weaver's (1986) negativity bias. Nevertheless, the few studies that do consider credit strategies reveal that they can also constitute a favourable tool for policy-makers (Hunter 2021; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014). I build on these contributions by considering both blame and credit strategies. Second, there are some EU-related studies which ask why politicians attribute responsibility in a certain way.

They offer explanations which include the locus of decision-making or policy implementation (Heinkelmann-Wild and Zangl, 2019; Heinkelmann-Wild, Rittberger and Zangl, 2018; Rittberger, Schwarzenbeck and Zangl, 2017) as well as the preferences of politicians such as their position in the party system (Ladi and Tsagkroni, 2019; Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou and Exadaktylos, 2014). I provide further empirical evidence of the incentives that shape the responsibility attributions of politicians, by unpacking how party characteristics, such as a party's position in the system or its stance towards European integration, affect the communication of MPs.

Third, I also look at how the nature of EU actors affects the attribution of responsibility. Existing studies tend to view the EU as a single responsibility target by examining whether politicians blame and credit it as one entity. In so doing, they do not distinguish between EU actors, such as different institutions. I provide a more fine-grained analysis by separating general references to the EU from those where MPs assign responsibility to specific EU actors. This allows us to explore whether some EU actors are more prone to be held responsible, and if so whether they receive more blame rather than credit and vice versa.

Fourth, the majority of relevant research provides evidence from single or two country case studies spanning a brief investigation period, thereby limiting the type of inferences that can be made. This allows for little variation in the factors that might influence responsibility attribution, such as different parties being in government. This restrain is driven to some extent by the shortfalls of manual hand-coding, such as language barriers and time considerations. Language barriers are a hindrance especially in the case of studies which look at the EU, which has 24 different official languages.

This paper considers four countries (UK, Austria, Spain, Netherlands) over a period of 10 years. The research design allows for cross-temporal and cross-national comparisons and can strengthen the generalisability of the results. This is made possible through the combination of machine translation, dictionaries and hand-coding. The aforementioned four insights from the responsibility attribution literature provide fertile ground for the development of the paper's theoretical framework and empirical analysis, which I turn to next.

4.4 Theoretical framework

4.4.1 MPs' motivation for responsibility attribution

In this section, I develop testable hypotheses for how MPs assign responsibility to the EU. First, I argue that party characteristics make some MPs more likely than others to use credit rather than blame strategies towards the EU. MPs who belong to parties which are in government as well as parties which have a favourable stance towards European integration tend to credit the EU, whereas those in opposition and from Eurosceptic parties tend to blame it. Second, I look at differences between EU actors. I suggest that MPs are more likely to credit rather than blame intergovernmental EU actors, which are more tightly connected to domestic politics. Conversely, they are more likely to blame rather than credit supranational institutions, which are more distant and technocratic in nature.

The theoretical framework rests on the assumption that politicians are rational actors; they value their reputation, they are vote-seeking and they are interested in re-election. Adverse situations, such as economic crises, can hamper their electoral prospects. This has been crystallised into the economic voting thesis, which posits that voters hold politicians responsible for their performance on the economy at the ballot box following a reward-punishment logic (Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Anderson, 2007; Anderson, 2000). If voters believe that the incumbent government is responsible for the state of the economy during a crisis, then they might not elect it again. Conversely, if they blame another actor, such as the IMF, they might refrain from kicking the government out of office.

Assuming that vote-seeking politicians are aware that voters care about who is responsible, they can present an economic crisis in a way that would influence the responsibility attributions of voters in their favour. There is empirical support for the notion that politicians can shape public opinion; when voters lack the time or willingness to develop deep political knowledge, they can rely on cues from politicians to form their opinions about politics (Lau and Redlawsk, 2001; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1991). There is also evidence that voters' responsibility evaluations can act as a moderator for their voting decisions (Alcañiz and Hellwig, 2011; Hellwig and Coffey, 2011; Cutler, 2004, 2008). Therefore, politicians can use strategic communication to mitigate negative political repercussions from a crisis. According to Hart and Tindall (2009), crises are framing contests and persuasion is the key currency of crisis management.

Existing literature suggests that blame is the most common communication strategy that politicians adopt to avoid being punished for unpopular policies (Hood 2011; Weaver 1986). This negativity bias is based on evidence that constituents are more likely to punish politicians for losses rather than reward them for gains (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984). Nevertheless, as Hood (2007) suggests, this negativity may depend on contextual factors. Developing hypotheses about different contextual factors, I argue that blame is not always the preferred strategy for domestic politicians who speak about the EU, even during crises (Hunter, 2021; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014). Rather, politicians can minimise electoral costs during crises through two strategies; they can shift blame onto other actors or they can present aspects of the situation in a positive light and assign credit.

Responsibility attributions by politicians are particularly relevant for influencing public opinion in the context of the EU, in light of evidence that voters might have information deficits about the EU's structure and related developments (Hobolt, 2007). In general, the literature finds that attempts by politicians to influence perceptions of responsibility are more likely with the delegation to supranational or local levels of government, since the number of responsibility targets increases and the attribution process becomes more complex (Pierson, 1995; Fiorina, 1981). It could be argued then, that politicians in EU MS do not have incentives to make the EU's role in crises clearer in the eyes of the electorate (Wilson and Hobolt, 2015).

They can take advantage of the complexity of MLG and the blurring of responsibility by overstating the role of the EU and using it as a scapegoat whenever a situation turns sour at home (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014). Alternatively, they can downplay its involvement and claim credit for themselves or argue that they share credit with the EU for the policy response to the crisis. In the hypotheses below, I identify three factors that create incentives which make a blame or credit strategy more likely; the position of an MP's party in the system (whether they are in government or not), its stance towards European integration as well as the type of EU actor that is being held responsible.

4.4.2 Party characteristics

I focus on two party characteristics which can influence how MPs attribute responsibility. The first one is the position of an MP's party in the system. When a negative event takes place in a country, the government tends to be the primary blame culprit

given their prominent role in domestic policy-making. This leads governing parties to be blame-avoiders, in the sense that they will attempt to absolve themselves of responsibility for the negative event (Weaver, 2018). This is in contrast to opposition parties which are blame-generators (Weaver, 2018). Although recent studies find that the government-opposition cleavage matters for EU politics (Rauh and De Wilde, 2018), there is no consensus in the literature as to how it affects the attribution of responsibility towards the EU.

On the one hand, Sommer (2020) suggests that the EU is an attractive blame attribution target for governing parties, given their need to diffuse responsibility for a negative situation. In addition, Heinkelmann, Kriegmair and Rittberger (2020) highlight that governing parties are less likely to use blame strategies compared to opposition parties, yet are more likely to blame EU targets when they do use blame strategies. On the other hand, Hunter (2021) argues that governing parties prefer credit strategies, as blame-shifting towards the EU is an electorally costly strategy.

Siding with Hunter (2021), I also place an emphasis on credit strategies and suggest that blame can damage the relationship of the government with its EU partners and signal its impotence in EU decision-making. This is because the governing party is at the heart of the EU policy-making process, with the head of government representing the country in the European Council and other government officials participating in the Council of the EU. Looking at the Eurozone crisis, the EU's policy response has been dominated by intergovernmental decision-making in the European Council, with frequent summits of European leaders. Therefore, I argue that it can be costly for MPs from the governing party to scapegoat the EU.

By blaming the EU, they might tarnish the reputation of the government as well, since it takes part in EU decision-making. If the domestic electorate perceives the government's actions as intertwined with decisions at the EU level, then they might punish it at the next elections. In addition, blame strategies might create tensions between the government and the EU, thereby hampering the ability of the government to achieve its goals in future negotiations (Hunter, 2021). A more favourable strategy for governing party MPs would be to present EU-related policy decisions in a positive way and use credit strategies. Contrariwise, opposition parties might be more likely to blame the EU as an attempt to also critique the actions of the government in light of its involvement in EU decision-making.

This argument is consistent with studies which look at other aspects of party communication in parliament. Both Schwalbach (2022) and Proksch et al. (2019) find that governing parties adopt a more positive tone compared to opposition parties. This is also the case for parliamentary debates which discuss the Eurozone crisis, during which governing parties are more likely than opposition parties to support EU-related policy outcomes aimed at tackling the crisis (Ladi and Tsagkroni, 2019; Closa and Maatsch, 2014). This discussion does not entail that parties in government will never blame the EU or that opposition parties will never credit the EU. Rather, the former type of parties has more incentives to credit the EU, whereas the latter to blame it. This leads to the first two hypotheses:

H1a: Governing party MPs are more likely to use credit strategies than opposition party MPs

H1b: Opposition party MPs are more likely to use blame strategies than governing party MPs

The second characteristic of a party which can affect how MPs attribute responsibility is its stance towards European integration. Mobilisation for and against European integration is considered as part of a new structural conflict that is transforming party systems in the EU, going beyond the traditional left-right economic axis of political ideology (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). An emerging literature explores how the predisposition of parties towards the EU acts as a perceptual screen which can affect how they talk about and support EU policies (Blumenau and Lauderdale, 2018; Closa and Maatsch, 2014; De Vries and Edwards, 2009).

Pro-EU parties are more likely to be predisposed to view the EU positively and try to credit it, by presenting a negative situation under a better light. Conversely, Eurosceptic parties will jump at the opportunity to criticise the EU and blame it. These incentives stem from the policy stance of parties, whether they be pro-EU or Eurosceptic, but also from the need to appeal to their partisans. This feeds back into the argument that MPs attribute responsibility in a vote-seeking way. I form the following hypotheses:

H2a: Pro-EU party MPs are more likely to use credit strategies than Eurosceptic party MPs

H2b: Eurosceptic party MPs are more likely to use blame strategies than pro-EU party MPs

4.4.3 EU actors

Similar to other responsibility attribution studies, H1a-H2b treat the EU as a homogeneous unit. However, it is reasonable to assume that MPs do not view the EU as a single entity. Rather, responsibility attribution can vary between EU actors; MPs might be more prone to credit some institutions, whilst they might be more likely to blame others. Taking this as a starting point, I suggest that when MPs attribute responsibility to the EU, they do so with variation across EU targets. Unpacking this further, I distinguish between intergovernmental EU targets, such as the European Council, and supranational ones such as the ECB and the European Commission.

Given the hypothesis that credit strategies are driven by governing parties, I expect that the EU actor that is more likely to receive credit rather than blame is the European Council. This is because it is composed of heads of government from EU MS, who belong to governing parties. Conversely, supranational institutions might be perceived as more distant from the national policy-making sphere and can even be seen as technocratic. The involvement of national politicians in these institutions is less prominent, especially in the eyes of voters. This creates few incentives for national MPs to credit supranational institutions, whilst making blame an attractive strategy (Moravcsik, 1994). This leads to the following two expectations:

H3a: MPs are more likely to credit than blame intergovernmental institutions

H3b: MPs are more likely to blame than credit supranational institutions

Overall, this theoretical framework supports the argument that the EU is not just a simple scapegoat for domestic politicians. Parties which are in government as well as those that are favourable towards European integration have incentives to credit the EU. Moreover, MPs apportion responsibility differently across EU targets, with some being more likely to receive credit and others to receive blame.

4.5 Data collection and methodology

To test my theoretical expectations, I analyse how MPs attribute responsibility to the EU by using evidence from parliamentary communication about the economic crises that affected the EU between 2008 and 2018. In the section below, I introduce EUParlSpeech, the dataset that I use which includes parliamentary speeches mentioning the EU (Hunter, 2021). I also discuss the dictionary I create to identify the

parliamentary speeches that refer to economic crises. Lastly, I outline how I construct my dependent variables using sentiment analysis and hand-coding and operationalise my independent variables and controls.

4.5.1 The dataset: EUParlSpeech

The dataset I use for the analysis is called EUParlSpeech (Hunter, 2021), which is a subset of ParlSpeech V2 (Rauh and Schwalbach, 2020). ParlSpeech V2 is a version of ParlSpeech (Rauh, De Wilde and Schwalbach, 2017) and includes parliamentary speeches in the native language of multiple EU MS covering a large period from the 1990s until 2019. To collect the data, the authors scrape the text of speeches from the websites of each parliament as well as meta data such as the name of the speaker, the party they belong to and in some cases also the legislative agenda of a debate. The fact that the speeches are in the native language of each country creates a language barrier for this paper which uses hand-coding. The reason I use EUParlSpeech is because Hunter (2021) translates all the statements that refer to the EU in ParlSpeech V2 from the native language of the MP into English. This facilitates the hand-coding, as it reduces the level of reliance on language expertise.

To identify the references to the EU, Hunter uses regular expression dictionaries by Rauh and De Wilde (2018). Rauh (2015) develops an original dictionary of EU-related regular expressions in German by reading relevant parliamentary speeches, which Rauh and De Wilde (2018) translate into English, Spanish and Dutch. The list of terms is available in Appendix A. These include references to different EU institutions, bodies, policies and other related words. Hunter (2021) applies the different language dictionaries on ParlSpeech V2 to create EUParlSpeech. The resulting dataset contains all the original speeches and the corresponding statements from them that refer to the EU at a three sentence window, i.e., the sentence before the reference to the EU, the sentence with the reference to the EU and the sentence after the reference to the EU.[44] This allows us to isolate the responsibility target of interest, namely the EU. Given the granularity of the dictionary of EU terms, individual EU institutions or actors can also be identified.

As discussed, EUParlSpeech translates the statements about the EU from the native language of each country into English using Google Translate. Recent studies

[44]For an explanation as to why a three sentence window is selected and more details on the construction of the dataset, please refer to Hunter (2021).

which analyse multilingual corpora provide evidence that machine translation provides robust results, allowing for comparisons across countries without necessarily requiring language expertise. Proksch et al. (2019) find that using a translated dictionary on an original language speech corpus yields the same results as using an original language dictionary on a translated speech corpus, which is relevant for both the crisis-terms dictionary and the EU-terms dictionary used in this paper. In addition, the results by De Vries, Schoonvelde and Schumacher (2018) show that Google Translate is a useful tool for researchers using bag-of-words text models for comparative questions, which is the methodological approach that this paper adopts.

Given that the focus is on economic crises that affected the EU between 2008 and 2018, I subset the data to only include this period. I select September 2008 as the start of the time period of interest which is when Lehman Brothers collapsed in the US and triggered the Great Recession (Financial Times, 2008) and August 2018 as the end. Greece exited its last bail-out programme during that time, heralding the end of the Eurozone crisis (Financial Times, 2018). I focus on the UK, Austria, Spain and the Netherlands. The country selection is driven by contextual differences between these countries, which allows the findings to paint a broad picture of blame and credit dynamics in the EU.

The countries have different levels of EU integration; whilst Austria, Spain and the Netherlands are members of the euro area, the UK was never a part of it. They also represent structural divisions during the Eurozone crisis; Spain was a debtor country which was hardly hit by the crisis whereas Austria and the Netherlands were creditor countries. In addition, there is variation in the levels of public Euroscepticism in each country, with the UK voting in a referendum to exit the EU in 2016. Their political systems and parliaments also have differences, with the Netherlands and Austria being more prone to multiparty systems and coalition governments. The country selection is similar to other studies which look at communication about the EU in parliaments (Rauh and De Wilde, 2018) as well as more specifically on the Eurozone crisis (Hurrelmann et al., 2020). This allows the findings to inform current research as well.

There are also differences in the parliaments of each country, which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. Whilst some countries have working parliaments, others have talking parliaments (Rauh and De Wilde, 2018). This difference is reflected in the amount of speeches for each country's MPs. For

instance, the UK's House of Commons has the largest number of speeches out of all countries in the sample, as it is a talking parliament. By contrast, the Spanish Congreso de los Diputados is a working parliament, resulting in a lower number of speeches. Meanwhile, the Dutch Tweede Kamer has a high number of short speeches, as a result of the larger number of parties competing for parliamentary time (Rauh and De Wilde, 2018). It is also relevant to highlight that between 2008 and 2018 the countries of interest have had multiple changes of governments; there were four elections in Spain and the UK and three in the Netherlands and Austria. This allows for variation in the parties that were in parliament as well as between those that were in government and opposition.

4.5.2 Crisis dictionaries

To identify references to the multiple economic crises that unravelled in the EU during the 2008-2018 period, I create a dictionary of crisis-related terms and apply it at the speech level. I decide to construct a new dictionary upon reviewing the relevant dictionaries that have been used in existing research. There are various dictionaries which identify economic and finance topics in text (Hopkins, Kim and Kim, 2017; Picault and Renault, 2017; Loughran and Mcdonald, 2011). However, they are not specifically focused on economic crises.

Given that the dictionary has to be context-specific and appropriate for use in parliamentary language, I create a new one by reading more than 1,200 parliamentary speeches in the UK that were delivered during the 2008-2018 period and had the topic of the economy in their agenda. This approach is informed by other studies which create dictionaries for parliamentary speeches such as Rauh (2015). I then translate the dictionary from English to German, Dutch and Spanish with the help of native speakers. Appendix C provides more details about the construction and translation of the dictionary as well as a list of its terms in all languages. These dictionaries can be translated in additional languages and can be useful for researchers interested in examining topics related to economic crises in the EU.

Before applying the dictionary, I carry out two types of pre-processing steps on the country datasets. First, I remove speeches with less than 10 words, in line with existing studies which use parliamentary data (Schwalbach, 2022; Hunter, 2021). Second, I take pre-processing decisions at the word level, such as restricting features (removing punctuation and numbers), removing uninformative features (stop words and

(in-)frequent words) as well as uniting features (lowercasing, stemming and creating unigrams). More specifically, I create unigrams and bi-grams based on the dictionary of crisis terms. For instance, the phrase "Eurozone crisis" becomes a bi-gram.

I define a speech as crisis-related if it refers to at least one of the words that are included in the dictionary.[45] The large scope of the dictionary and its application at the speech rather than at the statement level aims at maximising recall, whilst the hand-coding can improve the precision. Through manual examination at the hand-coding stage later on, I eliminate false positives. The texts that I use to identify responsibility attributions are comprised of only the statements which refer to the EU and have a corresponding speech that has crisis-relevant terms. To get a sense of the data, Figure 4.1 presents word clouds which depict the 100 most frequent words in crisis-related EU statements from the speeches in each country.

4.5.3 Dependent variables: Blame and credit

The next step in the data collection process is to delineate statements that include responsibility attributions, which is the dependent variable of the analysis. To operationalise the dependent variable, I draw from Tilly (2010) who describes the logic of credit (blame) attributions as judging positively (negatively) an agent's competence and responsibility for an action that produced a positive (negative) outcome. Focusing on blame, Heinkelmann-Wild, Kriegmair and Rittberg (2020) note that in order to consider a statement as a blame attribution, it needs to fulfil the following criteria. First, it needs to have a blame object, defined as a policy (failure) for which blame is attributed. Second, it needs to have a blame sender, i.e., the actor who attributes the blame. Third, it has to have a blame target, i.e., the actor(s) to whom blame is attributed.

Adapting these criteria to the theoretical interest of this paper, the following conditions arise: a) the blame or credit object has to be a crisis-related outcome, b)

[45]For a statement (defined as consisting of three sentences where one of them has an EU-related term) to be defined as a crisis-related EU reference, it does not need to include crisis-related terms from the dictionary. It is necessary only that the speech it belongs to makes at least one reference to a crisis-related term. This is based on the relaxed assumption that if a speech is classified as talking about the crisis, it is likely that each individual sentence within that speech will be about the crisis. This allows us to capture sentences which might not include one of the words in the crisis dictionary, yet might still refer to the crisis. In turn, this can improve recall. During the hand-coding step of the analysis we can also improve precision, by manually excluding statements which have been misclassified as referring to a crisis as a result of the relaxed assumption. This method allows us to ensure both precision and recall.

Figure 4.1: Word clouds

the blame or credit sender is the MP who is speaking, and c) the blame or credit target is related to the EU. To find blame and credit strategies in text, I decide to use a combination of hand-coding and automated text analysis. This is different from the majority of scholarly pieces on responsibility attribution in the literature review that tend to use hand-coding only. For instance, Ladi and Tsagkroni (2019) conduct a qualitative content analysis to identify the blame strategies of parliamentarians in Greece during the Eurozone crisis. Hobolt and Tilley (2014) as well as Hunter (2021) also use hand-coding to identify both blame and credit attributions.

Studies based on hand-coding may suffer from disadvantages though; they can be time-consuming, resource-intensive and affected by language limitations. In an attempt to overcome this issue, Heinkelmann-Wild, Kriegmair and Rittberger (2020) analyse parliamentary debates in Austria and Germany using a combination of manual coding and an automated dictionary of German blame terms, arguing that their method strengthens the validity of their results. Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher (2019) adopt a fully automated approach, looking at the communication of heads of government in nine EU MS in the context of the Eurozone crisis. They use dictionary-based sentiment analysis around a specific target. If the sentiment around that word is negative, then they consider this as an instance of blame.

However, it is not necessarily the case that negative sentiment entails a stance towards a certain actor and thereby an instance of blame attribution (Bestvater and Monroe, 2022; Hunter, 2021). For a responsibility attribution to take place, the sentiment needs to be directed towards the actor who is targeted (Tilly, 2010). Consider the following fictional example: "Due to the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the EU is in a bad, difficult and scary situation." This sentence has a negative tone associated with it as a result of the words "difficult" and "scary" yet the blame is directed towards Lehman Brothers and not the EU. Therefore, the methodological approach of Traber, Schoonvelde and Schumacher (2019) does not allow us to make definitive conclusions about blame attribution. I attempt to overcome this issue by supplementing sentiment analysis with hand-coding.

To identify an instance of responsibility attribution, I automatically measure whether the tone of a statement is negative or positive using dictionary-based sentiment analysis. I also manually examine whether the sentiment is directed towards the EU or not through hand-coding. This link is crucial in order to find an instance of blame or credit, as its defining feature is this link between the sentiment and the

target. In both steps, the unit of analysis is an EU-related crisis statement, defined as consisting of three sentences (i.e., a sentence which includes a reference to the EU as well as the one sentence before and after it) and belonging to a speech which refers to a crisis.

Starting with sentiment analysis in the first step, I use the LSD (Young and Soroka, 2012). This dictionary has been created for use in political texts and has been extensively validated against human coders. It has been used widely in political science studies and contains various pre-processing tools that, among other things, cover negation (Young and Soroka, 2012). Using the dictionary, we can find the log of the ratio of positive to negative sentiment terms to identify the sentiment of an EU reference (Castanho Silva and Proksch, 2021).[46]

The second step involves hand-coding. This allows us to find to whom the sentiment is being directed towards. A statement is categorised as a responsibility attribution if it has three qualities: it refers to a crisis-related topic, it refers to an EU-related target and it has either a negative or positive sentiment which is directed towards this target. This facilitates the construction of two dependent variables to test the hypotheses. The first dependent variable captures credit strategies. It is a binary variable taking a value of 1 if there is credit towards at least one EU-related actor, and 0 otherwise. The second dependent variable captures blame strategies. It is also binary and takes a value of 1 if there is blame towards at least one EU-related actor, and 0 otherwise.

If the sentiment is directed towards an actor which is not EU-related or if the sentiment is either negative or positive and is not directed towards any other actor, then this is coded as neither a blame nor a credit strategy towards the EU. This is also the case if the sentiment is neutral. Through the hand-coding, I also distinguish which EU actor is being held responsible. This allows us to draw granular insights which speak to H3a and H3b. Below are examples of statements and how they are classified. Appendix C includes the codebook instructions for the hand-coding and further examples of coded statements. It also presents the results of inter-coder reliability tests, which show a substantial level of agreement amongst different coders.

[46]For more details regarding the LSD and the use of log ratios please refer to Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Blame strategy:
"These are questions that we must ask ourselves in order not [to] repeat experiences like those that have brought us to this crisis. The main problem suffered by the Spanish economy and the European economy is the political and economic design of this European Union." (2012-03-14, Josu Iñaki Erkoreka Gervasio, Spain, Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea Partido Nacionalista Vasco)

Credit strategy:
"This is also an Austrian success, and I think we can rightly be proud of it. With the new path taken by the EU, we have made good progress in overcoming the crisis, and I can only say that we must continue here in the interests of a peaceful and socially just Europe." (2012-07-05, Christine Muttonen, Austria, Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs)

Negative sentiment (no EU target):
"Your honour, you have been in government for five years and have led Spain to the highest public deficit in history and the highest unemployment rate in the European Union." (2009-09-30, Vicente Martínez-Pujalte, Spain, Partido Popular)

Positive sentiment (no EU target):
"We in Austria did a lot of things right. We are already saving, of course we will see that we can come back down with the deficit after the crisis - where we are very successful; more successful than most other countries - but at the same time we also see that there is more employment, that there is more growth than in the other countries. And Austria is one of the few countries in the European Union where there is more unemployment today than before the crisis. In almost all countries there is less unemployment, but much more unemployment than before the crisis." (2013-12-17, Kai Jan Krainer, Austria, Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs)

4.5.4 Independent variables and controls

To measure the variables in H1a and H1b which look at the government and opposition dynamics of parties, I draw from the CHES variable which determines whether a party was in government or in opposition during an election cycle. I construct a dummy variable taking a value of 1 if a party was in government (including in a coalition) and 0 otherwise. The operationalisation of a party's stance towards the EU (H2a-H2b) draws from the CHES question which asks to rank the position of parties on European integration on a scale from 1 (strongly opposed) to 7 (strongly in favour).

I consider a party as Eurosceptic and give it a value of 0 if it has a lower score than 3.5. Conversely, I categorise a party as pro-EU and give it a value of 1 if it has

a score higher than 3.5. Regarding H3a and H3b, I use a list of EU targets from the codebook in Appendix C and construct variables that take a value of 1 if that EU target is being mentioned and 0 otherwise.

I add political and economic controls that could impact the communication of MPs. I account for macroeconomic conditions by including quarterly measures of GDP growth change (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). I lag these to the previous quarter, given the time that it takes for macroeconomic data to be published. I capture the election cycle by using a binary variable for election years based on information from the CHES and include dummies if a country holds the presidency of the Council of the EU at the time of the MP's speech using information from official EU websites.

I also include a variable capturing the economic ideology of a party. This is drawn from the CHES question which asks respondents to rank the economic ideology of a party on a left-right scale from 0 to 10. I transform this scale into a binary variable which takes a value of 1 if a party scores more than 5 on the scale (right-wing) and 0 otherwise (left-wing). I add a binary variable taking a value of 1 if a party is considered as populist and 0 otherwise, using information from the PopuList dataset (Rooduijn et al., 2019). Lastly, I include responses from a Eurobarometer question which has been used as a proxy for the level of public Euroscepticism in each MS (European Commission, 2023a).[47] I construct this variable with a six-month lag, based on the time it takes to publish the bi-annual surveys (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008).

4.6 Findings and discussion

4.6.1 Blame and credit strategies across years, countries, parties and EU targets

The data collection, based on sentiment analysis and hand-coding, leads to a dataset consisting of more than 19,300 statements from UK, Austrian, Spanish and Dutch parliamentary speeches which refer to the topic of an economic crisis as well as to the EU and were delivered by 32 parties during the 2008-2018 period. Out of these

[47]The question is as follows: "In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?" The variable I use in the analysis is constructed by focusing on the percentage of respondents who have a fairly negative or very negative image of the EU in each country of interest. Existing studies suggest that as the percentage of people conjuring a negative image of the EU increases, so does the level of Euroscepticism (Hunter, 2021).

statements, 3,447 are responsibility attribution statements concerning the EU, where MPs either blame or credit EU actors. Appendix C includes more details about the dataset. Figure 4.2 presents yearly averages for changes in responsibility attribution during the crisis years. It appears that the majority of MPs' communication about the EU is not about attributing responsibility.

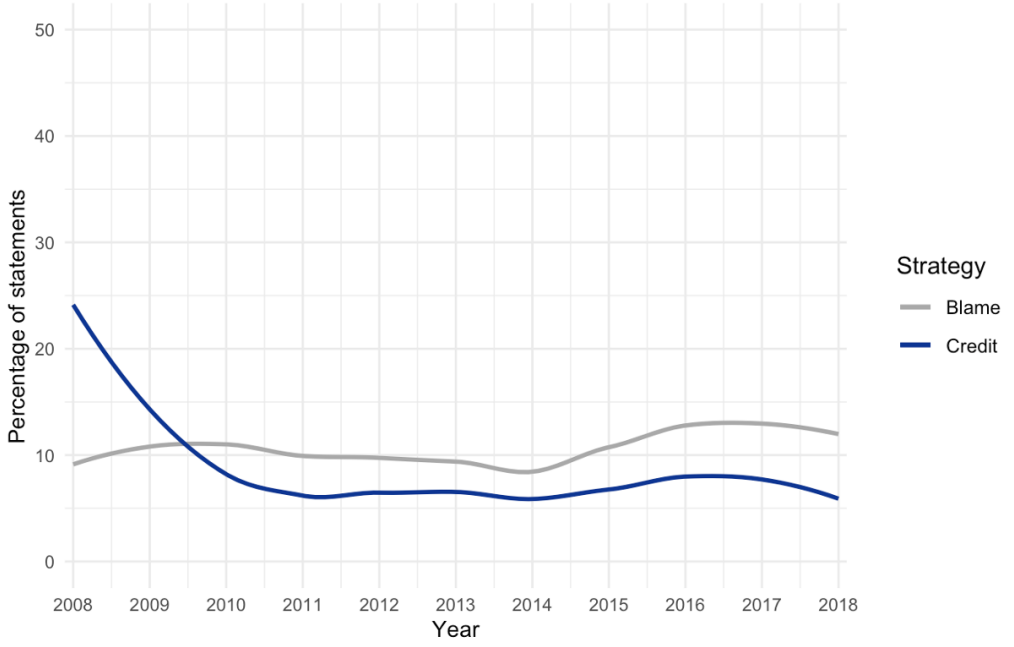

Figure 4.2: Strategies across years

The figure above also shows that at the beginning of the crisis period there was more credit rather than blame towards EU-related targets.[48] From 2010 onwards though, the levels of blame and credit appear to be at relatively similarly low levels and consistent. Blame attributions are between 9% and 13% of the total statements, whilst credit attributions are between 6% and 8% of total statements. This finding speaks to recent studies on the Eurozone crisis such as Hunter (2021) and Hobolt and Tilley (2014) which show that even when faced with a negative situation national politicians might opt for credit strategies. This lends support to the argument that the EU is not always perceived as a scapegoat.

To consider how the results in Figure 4.2 relate to each country, Table 4.1 depicts the proportion of statements in each country that include a blame or a credit strategy

[48]The onset of the Eurozone crisis can be pinpointed in late 2009, when the Greek government disclosed that the budget deficit of the country was larger than what had been reported previously (Frieden and Walter, 2017).

towards the EU out of all crisis-related statements that mention the EU.[49] The results for Austria, Spain and the Netherlands show that not only is the overall prevalence of responsibility attribution strategies similar across countries, but also that MPs from different countries are equally likely to adopt either a blame or credit strategy. The picture in the UK is different; there is more than double the level of blame strategies and a higher level of credit strategies compared to each of the other countries.

Country	**% Blame strategy**	**% Credit strategy**
UK	18	10
Austria	8	7
Netherlands	8	6
Spain	6	7

Table 4.1: Strategies across countries

There are a number of possible explanations for the different results in the UK. Figure 4.3 presents the percentage of statements including a blame or credit strategy for the top three parties in each parliament which speak the most about an economic crisis and the EU.[50] The figure shows that MPs from the Liberal Democrats, a traditionally pro-EU party, adopt the most credit strategies in the UK. The relatively high levels of blame are driven primarily by the Conservative party, which is associated with Eurosceptic tendencies.

During the hand-coding process, I observed that Conservative MPs tended to adopt a narrative where they blamed the economic crisis in the UK on two targets: the policies of the Labour government that was in power before 2010 and the euro as a common currency. Regarding the euro, they argued that it was responsible for the adverse economic situation in the Eurozone which also affected the UK. Therefore, this can be perceived as an attempt to exogenise the crisis.

Figure 4.3 also shows that blame and credit strategies are not uniform across parties, with some being more likely to adopt one form of strategy compared to another. Parties with a more sceptical stance towards the EU such as the Conservatives in

[49]To provide further detail, Appendix C disaggregates these results over time.

[50]The abbreviations of the parties in Figure 4.3 are as follows: Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA), Convergència i Unió (CiU), Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), Partido Popular (PP), Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP), Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA), Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ) and Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD).

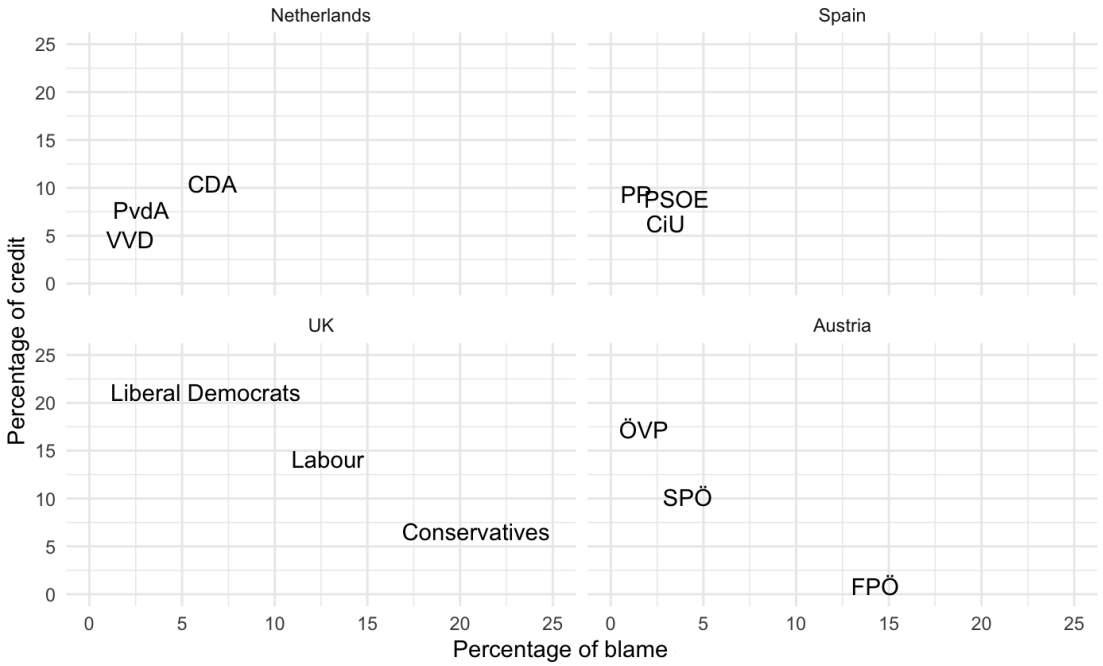

Figure 4.3: Strategies across parties

the UK and the FPÖ in Austria are more prone to blame rather than credit the EU, whilst others such as the CiU in Spain and the VVD in the Netherlands have similarly low levels of blame and credit statements. These descriptive results point to the relevance of party characteristics as potential explanations for the differences in strategies between MPs, in line with H1a-H2b.

Turning to H3a-H3b, Figure 4.4 shows that the attribution of responsibility varies across EU targets.[51] The figure presents results from the MP statements which include a responsibility attribution towards EU-related actors only and looks at the top five that receive the most responsibility. The findings show that MPs prefer to attribute responsibility by making general references to the EU.[52] The second most likely target is the common currency, the euro, as well as the euro area. This is followed by the ECB and the European Council, with MPs holding the European Commission responsible the least.

Figure 4.4 shows that MPs are equally likely to blame and credit the EU in general, whereas they blame the euro and the euro area more than they credit it. In the case

[51]In Figure 4.4, Com refers to the European Commission, Council to the European Council and Euro to the common currency.

[52]A general reference to the EU can include mentions of "European", "the EU" or any other broad terms that point to the EU.

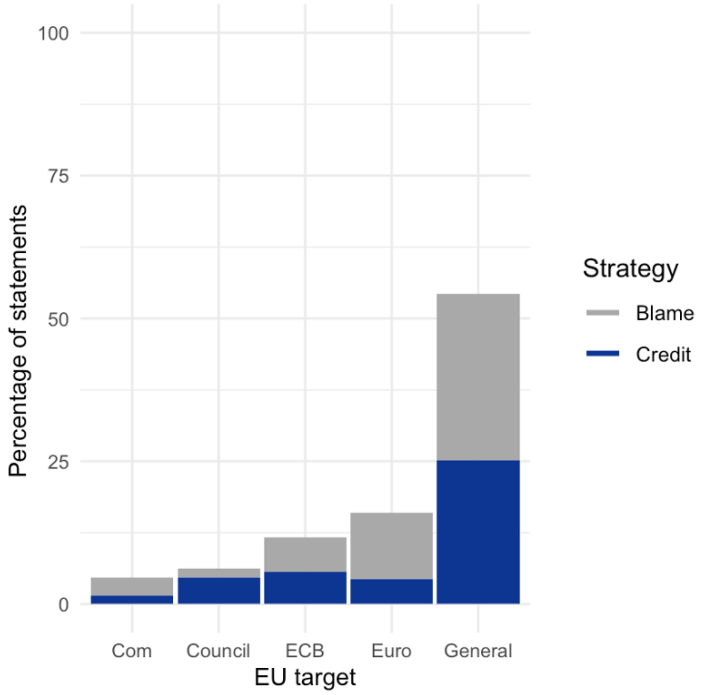

Figure 4.4: Strategies across EU targets

of supranational actors, there are equal levels of blame and credit towards the ECB and more blame towards the European Commission. Thus, these descriptive findings lend only partial face validity to H3b. Moreover, it appears that MPs are more likely to credit rather than blame the intergovernmental European Council, in line with H3a. This speaks to evidence by Kartalis, Silva and Lobo (2022) who show that the intergovernmental dimension of the EU receives more positive media coverage in newspaper articles, even during the Eurozone crisis. Conversely, they find that the media present supranational institutions in a more negative tone.

4.6.2 Regression results

I run a series of multilevel logistic models to statistically test my hypotheses. The models are multilevel in order to take into account the hierarchical structure of the data, where statements are nested within speeches by MPs, which are then nested within parties, which are nested within countries. The models are logistic given the binary dependent variables and include party and speaker random effects, country fixed effects as well as political and economic controls. The dependent variable for Models 1 and 3 is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the statement is a

credit attribution and 0 otherwise. The dependent variable for Models 2 and 4 is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the statement is a blame attribution and 0 otherwise.

I run Models 1 and 2 on the entire sample of 19,343 statements which includes statements with and without responsibility attributions. I use these to test H1a-H2b which look separately at blame and credit strategies. Given that H3a and H3b focus on the likelihood that MPs use one strategy over the other, I restrict the sample and run Models 3 and 4 only on statements which include either strategy, i.e., the 3,447 statements which have a responsibility attribution. Table 4.2 presents the regression results.

The findings from the multilevel mixed effect regression analyses provide evidence in support of hypotheses H1a-H2b. There is a strong relationship between incumbency and crediting the EU, as parties which are in government are more likely to credit the EU, as H1a expects (Model 1). Conversely, governing parties are less likely to blame the EU compared to opposition parties which are more likely to do so, as H1b suggests (Model 2). In line with H2a, being an MP in a party with a favourable predisposition towards the EU also increases the likelihood of crediting the EU (Model 1). The reverse is the case for blame strategies; there is a strong relationship between being a pro-EU party and not blaming the EU, as H2b expects (Model 2).

Turning to the differences between EU actors, there is support for H3a. As the hypothesis suggests, MPs are more likely to credit rather than blame intergovernmental institutions, in this case the European Council (Model 3). However, there is no support for H3b which looks at supranational actors. The effect for the European Commission is in the expected direction, but is relatively small and not statistically significant (Models 3 and 4). The results for the ECB are different to the descriptive analyses in Figure 4.4, which shows that MPs are equally likely to credit and blame the ECB. When controlling for different factors, it appears that MPs are more likely to credit rather than blame the ECB, contrary to the expectations of H3b.

To ensure the validity of the results, I run numerous robustness tests which are available in Appendix C. First, I run the models with country random effects, rather than country fixed effects, in addition to the speaker and party random effects. Second, I calculate the multilevel regressions as simple logit regression models, without any random effects. Third, I re-run the models and exclude one country at a time to

	Dependent variable:			
	Credit EU	**Blame EU**	**Credit EU**	**Blame EU**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
Governing party	0.459***	−0.393***	1.334***	−1.394***
	(0.120)	(0.101)	(0.243)	(0.252)
Pro-EU party	1.363***	−0.833**	1.801**	−1.860**
	(0.254)	(0.372)	(0.737)	(0.757)
Right-wing party	0.011	−0.296	0.404	−0.433
	(0.161)	(0.226)	(0.439)	(0.451)
Populist party	−0.790**	0.506	−2.160***	2.141***
	(0.362)	(0.395)	(0.804)	(0.828)
National election year	0.175**	0.010	−0.010	0.017
	(0.074)	(0.066)	(0.152)	(0.154)
Council of the EU presidency	−0.333	−0.161	−0.621	0.617
	(0.207)	(0.218)	(0.514)	(0.521)
GDP change	−0.293***	−0.197***	−0.267***	0.282***
	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.089)	(0.091)
Public Euroscepticism	3.421***	−1.078**	7.963***	−8.272***
	(0.508)	(0.478)	(1.079)	(1.101)
ECB target			1.035***	−1.115***
			(0.202)	(0.206)
European Commission target			−0.029	0.008
			(0.276)	(0.280)
European Council target			0.886***	−1.190***
			(0.258)	(0.274)
Constant	−5.237***	−2.078***	−4.115***	4.255***
	(0.401)	(0.512)	(1.011)	(1.040)
Observations	19,343	19,343	3,474	3,474
Log Likelihood	−4,729.244	−5,227.894	−1,394.113	−1,375.727
Akaike Inf. Crit.	9,486.487	10,483.790	2,822.227	2,785.453
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	9,596.669	10,593.970	2,926.829	2,890.056
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4.2: Regression results for blame and credit strategies

test whether the results are driven by specific countries. The results for the variables of interest remain significant and are in the expected direction in all the tests.

4.6.3 Discussion

The findings carry several implications which speak to existing literature on responsibility attribution as well as to policy-relevant questions such as support and public opinion towards the EU. They provide an insight into the information that the public receives about the EU by domestic politicians. Understanding the content and incentives underpinning this information is important. Given that parliamentary debates might be followed by the public or the media might report on them, it could be argued that the way in which MPs attribute responsibility towards the EU in parliament can shape voter support towards its institutions and policies as well as affect voting decisions in national and European elections.

Furthermore, the findings paint a more positive picture about the EU's presentation by politicians, contrary to what the existing literature on blame strategies would expect. Even during a period of acute crises, the EU is not always the perfect scapegoat. Rather, MPs attribute credit to the EU on similarly low levels as they attribute blame. The results show that this is driven by party characteristics, which suggests that responsibility attribution might be carefully calculated and strategic in order for MPs to improve their electoral chances.

Evidence of this strategic communication could be relevant for other actors, such as EU officials, as they can seek to target their communication strategies accordingly. For instance, they might want to appeal specifically to supporters of opposition parties in order to offer a different narrative to that of their national MPs which blame the EU. They might also seek to reiterate the credit statements by governing or pro-EU parties, to reinforce the positive perspective. The analysis of the distribution of responsibility across EU targets is also informative. It shows that far from treating the EU as a single entity, MPs apportion blame and credit to separate EU actors in different ways. This entails that EU institutions cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all communication strategy in some cases. Rather, each institution should take into account how politicians talk about it and what the public thinks of it.

4.7 Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored how MPs in four countries (the UK, Spain, Austria and the Netherlands) attribute responsibility to the EU. I have focused on the 2008-2018 period, during which numerous EU MS were suffering from a dire economic situation as a result of multiple economic crises and the EU was implicated in crisis management to a large extent. Based on existing literature, one would expect that these developments would create an apposite case for domestic politicians to scapegoat the EU; they could seek to exogenise the nature of the crisis and blame it on the EU (Heinkelmann, Kriegmair and Rittberger, 2020; Hood, 2011; Weaver, 1986).

Nevertheless, the findings suggest that the picture of blame and credit strategies towards the EU is more complicated. I put forward three main results which contribute to research in the field in various ways. First, I find that MPs use blame and credit strategies with a similar frequency across the period studied. This builds on studies such as Hunter (2021) and Hobolt and Tilley (2014) who go beyond a focus on blame to show that credit strategies might even be a preferred strategy for some politicians.

Second, I look at the party characteristics that make credit strategies appealing. I find that MPs in a governing or in a pro-EU party are more likely to credit the EU compared to being in an opposition or a Eurosceptic party. Therefore, I contribute to the related studies which provide explanations as to why politicians attribute responsibility in a certain way (Rittberger, Schwarzenbeck and Zangl, 2017; Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou and Exadaktylos, 2014).

Third, I find evidence of variation in responsibility attribution across EU targets, as the intergovernmental European Council receives more credit rather than blame. By unpacking different EU actors, I go beyond research which tends to view the EU as a single responsibility target. Moreover, the research design of the paper strengthens the generalisability of the results, as it allows for variation in the factors influencing responsibility attribution. In contrast to most responsibility attribution studies, which focus on single or two country case studies spanning a few years and use manual content analysis, I look at how MPs from four countries and 32 parties communicate over 10 years. This is made possible through a combination of dictionary-based automated text analysis and hand-coding.

The findings carry several implications. They provide an insight into the information that voters receive about the EU by domestic politicians, which could in turn help explain patterns of public opinion and support towards the EU. More specifically, they paint a rosy picture about the EU's presentation by politicians, who do not view it only as a scapegoat. In addition, the results can be relevant for the communication strategies of the EU and its institutions, as they can seek to tailor them to specific voters based on the information that they receive from politicians.

The paper has limitations that additional research can address. I focus on four countries, yet future studies can expand the geographical and time period focus, to provide more empirical evidence about the way that MPs attribute responsibility to the EU. More recent crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, present a compelling case to investigate blame and credit theories. By focusing on other EU MS, we can explore whether the trends that this paper finds also hold in countries with different characteristics.

This wider research focus can be made possible through methodological innovations. The combination of hand-coding with automated sentiment analysis that I adopt in this paper has attempted to address some of the shortfalls of manual hand-coding. Nevertheless, it is still relatively time-consuming and resource intensive. Future studies can implement methods from other fields, such as computer science, where scholars have developed fully-automated approaches for detecting responsibility attribution in texts (Liang, Nicol and Zhang; 2019; Orizu and He, 2016).

More research is needed to understand how voters perceive and respond to the communication of MPs. It would be interesting to explore whether certain individual predispositions make some voters more likely to support a specific responsibility attribution statement compared to others and how the blame and credit strategies by MPs actually impact their own responsibility attributions. Moreover, further studies can embed the communication strategies of MPs in a broader context of blame and credit strategies by other political actors and towards other responsibility targets beyond the EU.

For instance, they can compare the strategies of MPs, heads of government and EU officials. They can also look at different communication venues, such as media statements, social media posts and electoral campaign speeches. These comparisons can highlight additional contextual variables that might be driving the attribution of responsibility of political actors, besides party characteristics.

As this paper has argued, the way that politicians attribute responsibility in the context of the EU is complex; the MLG structure of the EU increases the number of possible responsibility targets, whilst party characteristics shape the incentives of politicians to use credit or blame strategies. It is also consequential, as it can feed into the information that the public has about the EU. In turn, this can affect support towards the EU, its institutions and its policies as well as inform voting decisions at national and European elections, thereby having implications for democracy. Therefore, a better understanding of how politicians attribute responsibility towards the EU from different perspectives is not only the focus of this paper but also an important research avenue for future studies.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary and key findings

This thesis has explored how political actors in multiple countries communicate about the EU across a period of more than 10 years (2008-2023). The motivation behind this research focus relates to treaty changes and a period of crises that have contributed to the politicisation of the EU. These developments in the process of European integration have raised questions about the EU's democratic legitimacy, in which communication, especially by politicians plays a key role. The three papers in this thesis have sought to better understand this communication, by focusing on how national politics influences the way that heads of government and parliamentarians talk about the supranational EU. Nevertheless, each paper has done so through a different theoretical and empirical lens. In the rest of this chapter, I discuss the thesis' key findings, contributions and implications. I also highlight its limitations which pave the way for further research and I offer some final concluding remarks.

Chapter 2 has put forward two research questions. The first question was as follows: When heads of government discuss the EU, which issues do they talk about? Drawing from the politicisation literature, I have distinguished between different types of issue dimensions; polity as opposed to policy and economic as opposed to non-economic dimensions (Lobo, 2023; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi, 2016). The second question has asked: What can explain why heads of government focus on certain EU-related issues? To address this, I have built on the rhetorical responsiveness literature to argue that the MLG nature of the EU creates incentives for heads of government to be responsive to two levels. On the one hand, they might want to appear as

responsive to the issue priorities of their national electorate and on the other hand to the political priorities of the European Council (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Wagner and Meyer, 2014; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008).

To answer both questions, I have explored the communication of heads of government in nine countries over 13 years (2009-2022) which were or are EU MS; the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. I have collected original data to extend a dataset on head of government speeches (Schumacher et al., 2020), which I analysed using regular expression dictionaries, machine translation and semi-supervised topic models. The descriptive results on the first question have shown that, with the exception of the UK, heads of government do not highlight only the polity dimension of EU-related issues as the majority of the literature on politicisation finds. Instead, they talk about both policy and polity issues at relatively similar levels, although regional differences are present.

The findings have also revealed the differentiated nature of EU politicisation as they have shown variation in the focus that heads of government place on economic and non-economic issues, both across time and across countries. In recent years though, heads of government in all MS discuss less about economic issues in relation to the EU, whilst they focus more on non-economic ones. Lastly, the regression analyses on the second question have found a relationship between the EU-related issue attention of heads of government, the priorities of the European Council and the issues that the public considers as important. This could point to rhetorical responsiveness as the relationship reflects the dual role of heads of government.

Chapter 3 has shifted the attention from heads of government to MEPs and has centered on one EU actor; the ECB. Drawing from the literature on the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP, the paper has asked how two aspects of MEP communication are affected by domestic considerations. I have used semi-supervised topic models to consider whether macroeconomic conditions influence the topics that MEPs discuss. I have also conducted a sentiment analysis to look at how the tone of their communication is affected by public opinion and political ideology, with the latter being conceptualised as the predisposition of an MEP's national party on the economic left-right scale as well as towards the EU.

The empirical interest has been in the 2009-2023 period, based on original data collection from parliamentary hearings between the ECB and the EP and social media

posts by MEPs about the ECB on X. The results have revealed how the macroeconomic conditions in the country of an MEP affect their topic focus in both communication venues; they talk more about the ECB's primary mandate of price stability as the inflation rate increases, whilst they talk less about it as the unemployment rate increases. I have found mixed evidence for tone. The stance of their national party towards European integration is guiding the tone of MEPs; those from Eurosceptic parties are less likely to speak positively about the ECB compared to others from pro-EU parties. However, the effect for left-right economic positions and public opinion is smaller and not in the expected direction in either communication venue.

Chapter 4 has also looked at parliamentarians, but from the perspective of national parliaments rather than the EP. The research question has asked: How do MPs attribute responsibility to the EU? I have challenged the expectation that the EU is the perfect scapegoat (Heinkelmann, Kriegmair and Rittberger, 2020; Moravcsik, 1994; Weaver, 1986) and have theorised how party characteristics and the nature of EU actors can create incentives for national parliamentarians to also credit the EU. To empirically substantiate my hypotheses, I have used dictionary-based automated text analysis and hand-coding to analyse parliamentary speeches which discuss economic crises and the EU, drawing from the EUParlSpeech dataset (Hunter, 2021).

I have focused on a time period of 10 years (2008-2018) and four countries which were EU MS during the period under investigation; Austria, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. The results show that that MPs use blame and credit strategies with a similar frequency. This is consistent across the period studied and suggests that the EU is not always used as a scapegoat. Moreover, I have shown how MPs from governing or pro-EU parties are more likely to credit the EU compared to those from opposition or Eurosceptic parties. Lastly, I have found evidence of variation in responsibility attribution across EU targets. For instance, MPs attribute more credit rather than blame to the intergovernmental European Council.

5.2 Contributions

5.2.1 Empirical contributions

Each paper in this thesis has made multiple contributions which I discuss in their respective chapter. Below, I focus on the overarching contributions of the thesis as a whole to research on EU politics in general and on the communication of politicians

about the EU in particular. The thesis has made an empirical contribution. Taken jointly, the results from all three papers provide longitudinal cross-country evidence for how national politics affects the way that heads of government and parliamentarians communicate about various aspects of the EU. As I elaborate in Section 5.3, which looks at implications, these findings are important because they can speak to the growing literature on the consequences of the EU's politicisation for democratic accountability and to research on the political information that voters receive about European integration.

There are various studies which look at how national politics influences the communication of politicians about the EU. Nevertheless, they tend to focus on the years around the Eurozone crisis, as is the case for Chapter 4. The other two chapters of the thesis are more timely because they look at more recent years, thereby capturing developments which have shaped European integration, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This has allowed us to explore whether the trends that existing research has identified have persisted in light of these transformative events.

This is made possible through original data collection. In Chapter 2, I extend a dataset on head of government speeches (Schumacher et al., 2020) and I create another one on the thematic attention of European Council Conclusions, covering the years 2009 until 2022. In Chapter 3, I collect text data from parliamentary hearings and posts on X to explore how MEPs talk about the ECB between 2009 and 2023. Therefore, in addition to an empirical contribution these two chapters have contributed useful resources to the academic community in the form of machine-readable datasets which are freely available upon request. All datasets include the original language of a text and its machine translation into English as well as political and economic meta data. Researchers can use them to explore communication trends in relation to the EU by political actors or to answer other exciting questions pertaining more generally to EU politics.

5.2.2 Methodological contributions

All three papers have used a combination of quantitative text analysis methods, thereby contributing to recent studies which study communication in an EU context through the lens of text-as-data approaches such as Ferrara et al. (2022), Hunter (2021) and Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde (2020) to name a few. Chapters 2 and 3 have

used semi-supervised topic models to classify the topics that heads of government and MEPs respectively highlight. Chapter 3 has conducted sentiment analysis, based on dictionary methods, in order to capture the tone of MEPs. Chapter 4 has also used sentiment analysis but in combination with hand-coding to identify responsibility attributions by MPs.

In addition, all chapters have taken advantage of machine translation. This has facilitated the analysis by allowing us to translate texts from their native language into English in a fast and free way. By leveraging these recent developments in computational social science, the thesis has gone beyond earlier studies on the communication of politicians about the EU which were based on qualitative manual coding analyses and used to examine single or two-country case studies spanning only a few years. The focus on a larger number of countries and a longer time period has allowed for more variation in the domestic considerations which might affect how politicians talk, thereby potentially strengthening the generalisability of the results.

5.2.3 Theoretical contributions

The papers in the thesis have built on theoretical frameworks from various research streams to provide different accounts of how domestic considerations affect the way that political actors communicate about the EU. Chapter 2 has contributed to research on rhetorical responsiveness, which tends to focus on how political actors are responsive to the national issue priorities of their electorate (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008). I have put forward a theoretical framework which considers rhetorical responsiveness in the context of EU-related issues and I have introduced another actor to whom heads of government might be responsive, the European Council.

Chapter 3 has combined the main arguments from research on the ECB's accountability to conceptualise three different dimensions of domestic considerations that can affect the communication of MEPs; macroeconomic conditions, the political ideology of national parties and public opinion. Moreover, Chapter 4 has advanced the responsibility attribution literature. It has diverged from studies which look only at the blame strategies of politicians towards the EU (Heinkelmann, Kriegmair and Rittberger, 2020; Ladi and Tsagkroni, 2019) to also consider credit strategies in the context of MPs' communication and to theorise how the EU is not perceived as a single responsibility target.

5.3 Implications

The findings of this thesis have several implications. As the introductory chapter has argued, the communication of politicians is relevant for democratic accountability at the EU level for two reasons. On the one hand, the way they talk about the EU can contribute to or hinder deliberative democracy and throughput legitimacy at the EU level. On the other hand, the communication of politicians is also relevant for representative democracy as it can influence voter attitudes towards the EU's institutions and policies. In turn, this can affect their voting choices in national and European elections.

The results can be interpreted as optimistic for both the deliberative and representative democracy of the EU. Heads of government discuss both polity and policy issues at relatively similar levels, as Chapter 2 has found, which can be considered as positive for throughput legitimacy. Discussions about policies are thought to be part of normal political competition which can help foster a European public sphere (Lobo, 2023; Follesdal and Hix, 2006) and are less threatening to the democratic accountability of the EU compared to polity ones which discuss the legitimacy and foundations of the EU (Mair, 2007). Moreover, the regression analyses in the chapter have revealed that the issue attention of heads of government relates to that of the public, which could point to rhetorical responsiveness and be an indication of politicians representing the interests of their electorate.

The regression analyses in Chapter 3 have also shown evidence of responsiveness. The topic focus of MEPs in their communication about the ECB is driven by the macroeconomic conditions in their country, which could be interpreted as an attempt by MEPs to be responsive to the economic interests of their country and how policies by the ECB affect it. In turn, this responsiveness can be perceived as enhancing the quality of the accountability relationship between the EP and the ECB given that MEPs are representatives of their country and its citizens.

Chapter 4 has painted a rosy picture about the way that national parliamentarians perceive the EU, as they do not always seek to scapegoat it but apportion credit to it as well under certain conditions. Taken together, the findings from these papers allow us to develop a rich, multi-faceted understanding of the information that voters receive about the EU. This could help explain patterns of public opinion and support towards the EU, which could in turn be relevant for voting decisions and thereby have implications for the EU's representative democracy.

The findings from all three papers, which highlight the importance of domestic considerations in shaping the communication of politicians, can also offer some practical insights. They can be relevant for the communication strategies of the EU and its institutions, which might have incentives to highlight how their actions can also serve national interests in addition to European ones. Furthermore, they reveal how crucial it is to look at national politics in order to fully appreciate the democratic accountability of the EU. This echoes concerns by recent studies such as Lobo (2023), who acknowledge that most efforts for democratising Europe involve reforms at the supranational or citizen-level, and call for more emphasis to be placed on domestic institutions and the national channel of EU accountability.

5.4 Limitations and future research

Each paper has presented a different set of limitations, as outlined in their respective chapter. I summarise these below and discuss how they can provide an impetus for future research. The first point relates to the generalisability of the findings. Whilst I have taken extensive efforts to validate the results in the context of the data and theoretical frameworks that I have put forward, there still remains the question as to how they travel to different settings. In all three papers, the theoretical framework and methodological approach can be adjusted to account for additional data sources, countries, time periods and actors.

By looking at other sources of communication such as media interviews, posts on different social media channels such as Facebook and press releases, future studies can complement this one in order to provide a richer, more comprehensive picture of how politicians across EU countries communicate about the EU. This will also allow us to unpack the significance of the communication venue and whether politicians tailor the way they talk about the EU according to their audience. In addition, a longer time-frame that covers the years before the Eurozone crisis would allow us to assess how the trends that we explore from 2008 onwards compare to the pre-crisis period. Alternatively, future research can use the conceptual frameworks in this thesis but incorporate data from the next few years, for instance following the 2024 EP elections, to examine how the presentation of the EU is evolving.

Relatedly, to confirm the findings from Chapters 2 and 4 we need to validate them based on a larger sample of countries. The country selection in both chapters has

been aimed at capturing important differences between groups of countries, yet cannot account for individual differences between countries of those groups. Therefore, depending on data availability, future studies can expand upon the analysis in this paper to include more countries. They can also include more actors. In the case of Chapter 3 which focuses on the communication of MEPs about the ECB, it is important to look at the communication of the ECB to fully understand the accountability relationship between the two institutions. Additional studies can consider whether the results are generalisable to other central banks, with the Fed being an interesting case study given its federal structure. Further studies can embed the communication strategies of MPs, which have been discussed in Chapter 4, in a broader context of blame and credit strategies by EU officials and heads of government and towards other responsibility targets beyond the EU.

There is also scope to explore the relationship between the communication of politicians and other national considerations, in addition to the ones I focused on in this thesis. As an example, with reference to Chapter 2, we can consider the legislative output of the parliament in the country of a head of government. Looking at Chapter 3, other studies can theorise how political ideology might be relevant for the topic focus of MEPs or how other indicators of financial instability might increase the salience of topics beyond price stability.

Another limitation concerns the methodological approach of this thesis, which relies on quantitative text-as-data methods for the most part. This is useful because it leads to longitudinal cross-country results on how political actors communicate about the EU. Nevertheless, it only scrapes the surface of what politicians talk about when they mention the EU. More scholarly attention should be placed on a qualitative analysis of political communication to delve deeper into its content, such as framing and the narrative that underpins it. These analyses can also be complemented by interviews with political communication strategists or other relevant actors that can provide an insight into the motivation behind the way that politicians talk.

Conversely, future studies can test the theoretical frameworks of the papers in this thesis using more advanced quantitative text analysis techniques. For instance, in Chapter 3 I have used topic and sentiment as a proxy for measuring the nature of the accountability relationship between the ECB and the EP. Although this method is consistent with current approaches in the literature, other researchers can also develop more direct text-based measures of capturing statements about accountability

in the communication of MEPs to improve the link between the operationalisation and measurement of the variables of interest. Moreover, future studies interested in blame and credit strategies can develop fully-automated approaches for detecting responsibility attribution in texts in line with developments in the computer science field.

Lastly, it would also be interesting to use the insights from these papers to inform survey experiments. This can allow us to understand how the communication of politicians about the EU shapes voters' attitudes and opinion towards it. There might be individuals with certain personal predispositions who are more likely to resonate with the way that politicians talk about the EU and actually change their opinions based on the communication that they receive by them. Given that parliamentarians and heads of government are representatives of the public, more research on the link between their communication and public opinion could be instructive.

5.5 Happily ever after?

The process of European integration is likely here to stay, intensify and further transform domestic politics. The jury is still out on whether or not the tale of these two levels will enjoy a happily ever after, in which the national and supranational levels are symbiotically thriving. Nevertheless, this thesis has sought to enrich our understanding of how domestic considerations have shaped the communication of politicians about the EU over the past years. The findings have implications which can be considered as positive for both the deliberative and representative democratic accountability of the EU, yet leave room for more action as well. They also pave the way for further research. I am genuinely excited to see how the field of political communication in the context of the EU will evolve in the next years but also how empirical developments will shape the relationship between the national and the EU level.

Appendix A

This Appendix provides supporting information for Chapter 2: "Multi-issue multi-level system: Exploring how heads of government talk about the EU".

A.1 Details on data collection: Head of government speeches

The purpose of the data collection is to extend the time period coverage of the EUSpeech dataset on the following countries; Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain (Schumacher et al., 2020). To gather the speeches, I manually download them from the (archived) official websites of governments.[53] Wherever possible, I use the same websites as EUSpeech V2.0. In some cases, the speeches were included in website sections with the speeches of other officials. To identify the speeches only of heads of government I use keyword filters.

I also use time period filters. The time period for the data collection is the date of the last available speech in EUSpeech V2.0 until the 31st of December 2022. The end date is selected based on the timeline of this paper, due to be completed within 2023. The aim is to have the most recent possible full year as the end date, which is 2022. Table A.1 presents the links of the websites, the keywords used to select the speeches, the time period covered in the new dataset for each country, and the number of speeches. I include all the downloaded speeches in a spreadsheet which includes the same meta-data as EUSpeech V2.0; a unique number, the date of the speech, its entire text, its title, its language, its length and the name of the speaker. I merge the dataset I created with EUSpeech V2.0. The end result is a dataset of speeches by heads of government which were delivered between October 2009 and December 2022.

[53]To find the archived versions of websites, I use the Wayback Machine.

Country	Source	Keywords	Time period	Number of speeches
Czech Republic	https://www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?pgid=1016	Not needed	06/2020-12/2022	73
Denmark	https://www.stm.dk/statsministeren/taler/	Not needed	06/2020-12/2022	54
France	https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours	Président de la République	04/2020-12/2022	138
Germany	https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/archiv, https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/reden	Bundeskanzlerin, Bundeskanzler	05/2020-12/2022	153
Greece	https://www.primeminister.gr/category/activity/speeches	Not needed	09/2019-12/2022	242
Netherlands	https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten	Minister-President	04/2020-12/2022	52
Portugal	https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/intervencoes, https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc23/comunicacao/intervencoes	Primeiro-Ministro	07/19-12/2022	55
Spain	https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/intervenciones	Not needed	01/2016-12/2022	716

Table A.1: Data collection details

A.2 Dictionaries of EU-related terms

Below, I present the words I used in regular expression dictionaries of EU-related terms. The English, German, Dutch and Spanish words are from Rauh and De Wilde (2018). Hunter (2021) translates their English words into Greek, Danish and Czech with the help of native speakers. Following a similar strategy, I am grateful for the help of native speakers who translated the English EU-related words into French and Portuguese. The dictionaries are extensive, including general references to the EU as well as specific mentions to institutions and policies.

As expected, general references to the EU, with terms such as "EU" and "European Union" were by far the most frequent. I also tried the analysis with a simpler keyword search that has been used in other studies such as in Rauh, Bes and Schoonvelde (2020). The simple dictionary includes regular expressions of the following words: "European integration", "European unification", "European Union", "EU" and "unification/uniting/integration of Europe". However, the more extended dictionary yields more hits. For instance, in the UK case the extensive dictionary returns 5,281 hits, whereas the simple one 3,803. Therefore, in order to maximise recall I opt for the extended dictionary.

List of EU terms in English

european constitutional treaty, rome treat(y/ies), maastricht treat(y/ies), amsterdam treat(y/ies, nice treat(y/ies), lisbon treat(y/ies), ec, economic and monetary union, eec, emu, eu, euratom, european integration, european unification, european cooperation, european communit(y/ies), european economic communit(y/ies), european atomic energy communit(y/ies), european institution(s), european project(s), european treat(y/ies), european union, single european act, treat(y/ies) of rome, treat(y/ies) of maastricht, treat(y/ies) of amsterdam, treat(y/ies) of nice, treat(y/ies) of lisbon, treaty establishing a constitution for europe, ecb, ecj, ep, european official(s), european civil servant(s), european politics, european policy, european central bank, european commission, european commissioner(s), european competence(s), european competencies, european council, european court of justice, european election(s), european executive, european level(s), european member state(s), european parliament, european procedure(s), european summit(s), mep, meps, policy on europe, csdp, esdp, common foreign and security polic(y/ies), common security and defence polic(y/ies), european security and defence polic(y/ies), eurozone, euro zone, euro area, cfsp, european polic(y/ies), european act(s), european bill(s), european law(s), european legislation(s), european statute(s), european aim(s), european goal(s), european target(s), european decision(s), european directive(s), european engagement(s), european guideline(s), european measure(s), european action(s), european provision(s), european prescription(s), european requirement(s), european allowance(s), european standard(s), european norm(s), european agenda(s), european budget(s), european fund(s), european fond(s), european programme(s), european regulation(s), european strategy, european strategies, european case-law, european jurisprudence, european legal, european single

market, european internal market, european market, european currenc(y/ies), european mandate(s), police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, single currency, stability and growth pact, europe's constitutional treaty, ec's, eec's, eu's, euratom's, european union's

List of EU terms in German

europäische(n/r) union, europäische(n/r) (atom/wirtschafts) gemeinschaft(en), eu, eg, ewg, euratom, (eu/eg)-vertr(ag/ages/ags/äge), vertrag(s/es) von (maastricht/amsterdam/nizza/lissabon), (maastricht/amsterdam/nizza/lissabon)-vertrag(s/es), (lissabonner/amsterdamer) vertrag(es/s), einheitliche(n/r) europäische(n/r) akte, römische(n) verträge, aeu-vertrag(es/s), eu-verfassung(svertrag/ svertrages), europäische(n/r) verfassung(svertrag/svertrags/svertrages), (eu/eg)-erweiterung(en), europäische(n/r) währungsunion, europa der (eu/eg), europäische(n) projekt(es/s), europäische(n/r) einigung, europäische(n/r) integration(sproze(ss/ß)/sproze(ss/ß)e/sproze(ss/ß)es), (eu/eg)-institution (en), europäische(n/r) institution(en), wirtschafts- und währungsunion, ewu, wwu, ewwu, (eu/eg)-kommission, europäische(n/r) kommission, (eu/eg)-kommissar(e), (eu/eg)-kommissarin(nen), europäische(n/r) kommissare(n), (eu/eg)-beamte(n/r), europäische(n/r) beamte(n/r), europäische(n) exekutive, europäische(n/s) parlament(es/s), europaparlament(es/s), (eu/eg)-parlament(es/s), ep, europawahl(en), europaabgeordnete(n/r), (eu/eg)-abgeordnete(n/r), (eu/eg)-ministerrat(s/es), (eu/eg)-minister, ratspräsidentschaft, eu/eg-ratspräsidentschaft, europäische(r/n) rat(s/es), eu/eg-gipfel(n), europagipfel(n), europäische(n/r) gipfel(n), eu/eg-mitgliedstaat(en), europäische(n/r) mitgliedstaat(en), eu/eg- mitgliedsland(er/änder), europäische(n/r/s) mitgliedsland(er/änder), eu/eg-staat(en), eu/eg-land(er), europäische(r/n) gerichtshof(s/es), eugh, eu/eg-gerichtshof(es/s), eu/eg-gericht(s/e), europäische(n/r) zentralbank, ezb, ezb-direktorium, ezb-rat, hohe(r/n) vertreter(in/s) für außen- und sicherheitspolitik, europapolitik, europäische(r/n) ebene, eu/eg-ebene, europäische(n/r) verfahren, europabühne, eu/eg-kompetenz(en), europäische(n/r) kompetenz(en), eu/eg-politik(en), europäische(n/r) politik(en), europäische(n/r) union, europäische(n/r) mandat(e/s), europäische(n/r) binnenmarkt(s/es), einheitliche(n/r) binnenmarkt(s/es), europäische(n/r) integration, gemeinsame(n/r) außen- und sicherheitspolitik, europäische(n/r) außen- und sicherheitspolitik, polizeiliche(n/r) und justizielle(n/r) zusammenarbeit, europäische(n/r) m(a/ä)rkt(e/s/es), eu/eg-agenda, eu/eg-haushalt (s/es), eu/eg-programm(s/es/e), eu/eg-regulierung(en), europäische(r/n) regulierung(en), eu/eg-vorschrift(en), europäische(r/n) vorschrift(en), eu/eg-vorgabe(n), europäische(r/n) vorgabe(n), eu/eg-ziel(e), europäische(n/r) ziel(e), (eu/eg)-maßnahmen, europäische(r/n) maßnahmen, (eu/eg)-instrume nte(n), europäische(n/r) instrumente(n), (eu/eg) standard(s), europäische(n/r) standard(s), (eu/eg) norm(en), europäische(n/r) norm(en), (eu/eg)-zusammenarbeit, europäische(n/r) zusammenarbeit, (eu/eg)-gesetzgebung, europäische(r/n) gesetzgebung, (eu/eg)-gesetz(e), europäische(s/n/r) gesetz(e), (eu/eg)recht(es/s), europarecht(es/s), (eu/eg)-rechtsetzung, (eu/eg)-richtlinie(n), europäische(n/r) richtlinie(n), (eu/eg)-verordnung(en), europäische(n/r) verordnung(en), (eu/eg)-entscheidung (en), europäische(n/r) entscheidung(en), (eu/eg)-leitlinie(n), europäische(n/r) leitlinie(n), (eu/eg)-reform(en), (eu/eg)-engagement(s), (eu/eg)-strategie(n), europäische(n/r) strategie(n), europäische(n/r) sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitik, esvp, europäische(n/r) sicherheits- und verteidigungsunion, esvu, gemeinsame(n/r) sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitik, europäische(n/s) recht(es/s), vertragsverletzungsverfahren, vorabentscheidungsverfahren, aeuv, europäische(n/r) währung(en), (eu/eg)-währung(en), gemeinschaftswährung, eurozone, euro-zone, euroraum(s),

euro-raum(s), europäische(n/r) fonds, (eu/eg)-fonds, stabilitäts- und wachstumspakt(s/es)

List of EU terms in Dutch

europese unie, europese (economische/atoom)gemeenschap(pen), eu, eg, eeg, euratom, (eu/eg)-verdrag(en), europese verdrag(en), verdrag(en)van (rome/maastricht/amsterdam/nice/lissabon), (rome/maastricht/amsterdam/nice/lissabon)-verdrag(en), europese eenheidsakte, europese grondwet, europees grondwettelijk verdrag, grondwet voor europa, (eu/eg)-uitbreiding, europese monetaire unie, europa van de, (eu/eg), europese project(en), europese (integratie/eenwording/samenwerking), (eu/eg)-institutie(s), europe(es/se) institutie(s), economische en monetaire unie, emu, (eu/eg)-com missie, europese commissie, (eu/eg)-commissaris(sen), europese commissaris(sen), (eu-eg)-ambtena (ar/ren), europese ambtena (ar/ren), europese executive, europe(es/se) parlement(s), (eu/eg)-parlement, ep, europese verkiezingen, (eu/eg)-verkiezingen, europarlementar(ier/iers/iër/iërs),(eu/eg)-parlementar (ier/iersiër/iërs), raad van ministers, europese president, (eu/eg)-voorzitter(schap), europese raad, (eu/eg)-top, eurotop, europese top, (eu-eg)-lidsta(at/ten), europese lidsta(at/ten), europe(es/se) hof van justitie, europe(es/se) gerechtshof, europese centrale bank, ecb, hoge vertegenwoordiger van de unie voor buitenlandse, europe(es/se) beleid, europe(es/se) niv(o/eau), (eu/eg)-niv(o/eau), europe(es/se) proces(sen), europe(es/se) besluit(vorming), (eu/eg)-bevoegdhe(id/den), europese bevoegdhe(id/den), (eu/eg)-beleid, europe(es/se) beleid, europe(es/se) unie, europe(es/se) manda (at/ten), gemeenschappelijke markt, europe(se/es) buitenlands- en veiligheidsbeleid, politiële en justiële samenwerking in strafzaken, europese markt(en), (eu/eg)-agenda(s), (eu/eg)-(budget(ten)/ begroting(en)), (eu/eg)-programma(s), (eu/eg)-regeling(en), europese regeling(en), (eu/eg)-voorschrift (en), europe(se/es) voorschrift(en), (eu/eg)-eis(en), europese eis(en), (eu/eg)-(doel(en)/doelstelling(en)), europe(se/es) (doel(en)/doelstelling(en)), (eu/eg)-(maatregel(s)/ aktie(s)), europese (maatregel(s)/ aktie(s)), (eu/eg)-instrument(en), europe(se / es) instrument(en), (eu/eg)-standaard(en), europese standaard(en), (eu/eg)-norm(en), europese norm(en), (eu/eg)-samenwerking, europese samenwerking, (eu/eg)-wet(ten), europese wet(ten), (eu/eg)-wetgeving, europese wetgeving, (eu/eg)-recht, (eu/eg)-recht(spraak/sorde), (eu/eg)-richtlijnen(en), europese richtlijnen(en), (eu/eg)-verordening(en), europese verordening(en), (eu/eg)-beslissing(en), europese beslissing(en), (eu/eg)-besluit(en), europese besluit(en), (eu/eg)-besluitvorming(sprocess/sprocessen), europese besluitvorming(sprocess/ sprocessen), (eu/eg)-strateg(ie/ien/ïen), europese strateg(ie/ien/ïen), gemeen-schappelijk(e)veiligheids- en defensiebeleid, gvdb, europese veiligheids- en defensiebeleid, evdb, gemeen schappelijk(e)buitenlands- en veiligheidsbeleid, europese recht(spraak/sorde), europe(se/es) recht, vweu, europese munteenheid, gemeenschappelijke munt, eurozone, europe(es/se) fonds(en), (eu/eg)-fonds(en), stabiliteits- en groeipact

List of EU terms in Spanish

unión europea, comisión europea, mandato europeo, comunidad europea de la energía atómica, parlamento europeo, política exterior y de seguridad común, comunidad económica europea, consejo europeo, cooperación policial y judicial, comunidad(es) europea(s), banco central europeo, mercado(s) europeo(s), ue, comisario(s) europeo(s), agenda europea, cee, funcionario(s) europeo(s), presupuesto europeo, euratom, ejecutivo europeo, programa(s) europea(s), tratado(s) constitutivo(s) de la (unión europea/ue/ce), elecciones europeas, regulación(es) europea(s), tratado de la unión europea, eurodiputado(s), reglamento(s) europeo(s), tratado de (maastricht/ámsterdam/niza/lisaboa/

roma/fusión/funcionamiento, diputado(s) al parlamento europeo, norma(s) europea(s), acta única europea, miembro(s) del parlamento europeo, objetivo(s) europeo(s), tfue, consejo de ministros, medida(s) europea(s), tue, consilium, instrumento(s) europeo(s), aue, tjue, estándar(es) europeo(s), tratado por el que se establece una constitución para europa, bce, cooperación(es) europea(s), constitución europea, alto representante de la unión para asuntos exteriores, legislación(es) europea(s), política europea, ley(es) europea(s), ampliación(es) de la (unión europea/comunidad europea/ue/ce), competencias de la (unión europea/comunidad europea/ue/ce), derecho(s) europeo(s), unión económica y monetaria de la (unión europea/ue/ce), elecciones al parlamento europeo, derecho europeo, uem, procedimiento(s) legislativo(s) europeo(s), (ce/cee/ue), directiva(s) europea(s), proyecto (común) europeo, reglamento(s) europeo(s), unificación europea, normativa europea, integración europea, (decisión/decisiones) europea(s), marco institucional de la (unión europea/comunidad europea/ue/ce), directiva(s) europea(s), instituciones europeas, reforma(s) europea(s), constitución europea, normativa(s) europea(s), compromiso(s) europeo(s), estrategia(s) europea(s), política europea de seguridad y de defensa, esdp, pcsd, ordenamiento jurídico/jurisdicción/procedimiento legislativo europe(a/o), procedimiento de infracción, cuestión prejudicial, moneda(s) europea(s), moneda única, moneda común europea, zona euro, eurozona, zona del euro, fondo europeo, pacto de la estabilidad y de crecimiento

List of EU terms in Danish

europæiske union, europæisk(e) fællesskab(er), eu(s), ef(s), europæisk forfatningstraktat, europas forfatningsmæssige traktat, romtraktaterne, maastrichttraktaterne, amsterdamtraktaterne, nicetraktat(en/erne), lissabontraktat(en/er), økonomiske og monetære union, europæiske økonomiske fællesskab, eøf('s), euratom, euratom, europæisk integration, europæisk forening, europæisk samarbejde, europæisk atomenergifællesskab, europæiske atomenergifællesskab, europæisk(e) institution(er), europæisk(e) projekt(er), europæisk(e) traktat(er), europæiske unions, europæiske fælles akt, traktat om en forfatning for europa, europæisk centralbank, ecb, eu-domstolen, europæiske union domstol, europa-parlamentet, europa-kommissionen, ep, (europæisk(e)/eu) embedsmand, europa politik, europæisk(e) kommiss(ion/aer(er), europæisk(e) kompetence(r), europæiske rad, eu-domstolen, europæisk niveau, europæiske niveauer, europæiske medlemslande, europæisk procedur(er), europæisk(e) topmøde(r), europaparlamentsmedlem, mep, fælles udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitik, fusp, europæisk(e) udenrigs- og sikkehedspolitik, fælles sikkerheds- og forsvarspolitik, europæisk(e) sikker-heds- og forsvarspolitik, europæiske love, europæisk(e) lovgivning(er), europæisk lov, europæiske vedtægter, europæisk(e) mål, europæisk(e) beslutninger, europæisk(e) direktiver, europæisk(e) engagementer, europæisk(e) retningslinjer, europæisk(e) foranstaltninger, europæisk(e) handlinger, europæisk(e) bestemmelser, europæiske angivelser, europæiske krav, europæisk(e) standarder, europæisk(e) normer, europæisk(e) dagsordener, europæisk(e) budgetter, europæisk(e) fonde, europæisk (e) programmer, europæisk regulering, europæisk(e) strategier, europæisk retspraksis, europæisk juridisk, europæiske indre marked, det europæiske indre marked, europæisk(e) valutaer, europæisk(e) mandater, politisamarbejde og retligt samarbejde i kriminalsager, fælles valuta, stabilitets- og vækstpagt(en)

List of EU terms in Greek

ες, ευρωπαϊκή ένωση, ευρωπαϊκή συνταγματική συνθήκη, συνθήκη της ρώμης, συνθήκη του μάαστριχτ, συνθήκη του άμστερνταμ, συνθήκη της νίκαιας, συνθήκη της λισαβόνας, συνθήκες της ρώμης, συνθήκες του μάαστριχτ, συνθήκες του άμστερνταμ, συνθήκες της νίκαιας, συνθήκες της λισαβόνας, οικονομική και νομισματική ένωση, ευρωπαϊκή οικονομική κοινότητα, εοκ, οικονομική και νομισματική ένωση, ευρατόμ, ευρωπαϊκή κοινότητα ατομικής ενέργειας, ευρωπαϊκή ολοκλήρωση, ευρωπαϊκή ενοποίηση, ευρωπαϊκή συνεργασία, ευρωπαϊκή κοινότητα, ευρωπαϊκές κοινότητες, ευρωπαϊκά θεσμικά όργανα, ευρωπαϊκοί θεσμοί, ευρωπαϊκό εγχείρημα, ευρωπαϊκή συνθήκη, ευρωπαϊκές συνθήκες, ενιαία ευρωπαϊκή πράξη, εεπ, συνθήκη για τη θέσπιση συντάγματος της ευρώπης, ευρωπαϊκής ένωσης, ευρωπαϊκό στέλεχος, ευρωπαϊκή κεντρική τράπεζα, εκτ, ευρωπαϊκή επιτροπή, κομισιόν, δικαστήριο της ευρωπαϊκής ένωσης, δεε, ευρωπαϊκό κοινοβούλιο, ευρωπαίοι αξιωματούχοι, ευρωπαϊκές πολιτικές, ευρωπαίος επίτροπος, ευρωπαίοι επίτροποι, ευρωπαϊκή αρμοδιότητα, ευρωπαϊκές αρμοδιότητες, ευρωπαϊκές εκλογές, ευρωπαϊκό επίπεδο, ευρωπαϊκή διαδικασία, ευρωπαϊκές διαδικασίες, ευρωπαϊκή σύνοδος, μέλη του ευρωπαϊκού κοινοβουλίου, μέλος του ευρωπαϊκού κοινοβουλίου, πολιτική για την ευρώπη, κεππα, ευρωπαϊκή εξωτερική πολιτική και πολιτική ασφάλειας, κοινή εξωτερική πολιτική και πολιτική ασφάλειας, ζώνη του ευρώ, ευρωζώνη, ευρωπαϊκή πράξη, ευρωπαϊκές πράξεις, ευρωπαϊκό νομοσχέδιο, ευρωπαϊκά νομοσχέδια, ευρωπαϊκός νόμισμα, ευρωπαϊκοί νόμοι, ευρωπαϊκό δίκαιο, ευρωπαϊκή νομοθεσία, ευρωπαϊκό καταστατικό, ευρωπαϊκός στόχος, ευρωπαϊκοί στόχοι, ευρωπαϊκή απόφαση, ευρωπαϊκή οδηγία, ευρωπαϊκές δεσμεύσεις, ευρωπαϊκό μέτρο, ευρωπαϊκά μέτρα, ευρωπαϊκή δράση, ευρωπαϊκές δράσεις, ευρωπαϊκή παροχή, ευρωπαϊκές παροχές, ευρωπαϊκή απαίτηση, ευρωπαϊκές απαιτήσεις, ευρωπαϊκές δικαιώματα, ευρωπαϊκά πρότυπα, ευρωπαϊκή ατζέντα, ευρωπαϊκός προϋπολογισμός, ευρωπαϊκό ταμείο, ευρωπαϊκά ταμεία, ευρωπαϊκό πρόγραμμα, ευρωπαϊκά προγράμματα, ευρωπαϊκός κανονισμός, ευρωπαϊκοί κανονισμοί, ευρωπαϊκή στρατηγική, ευρωπαϊκές στρατηγικές, ευρωπαϊκή νομολογία, ευρωπαϊκή νομική, ευρωπαϊκή ενιαία εσωτερική αγορά, ευρωπαϊκό νόμισμα, ευρωπαϊκή εντολή, ευρωπαϊκές εντολές, αστυνομική και δικαστική συνεργασία σε ποινικές υποθέσεις, ενιαίο νόμισμα, σύμφωνο σταθερότητας και ανάπτυξης

List of EU terms in Czech

evropsk(á/é) uni(e/i), evropsk(á/é) společenství, evropsk(á/é) komunit(a/y), eu, es, římsk(á/é) smlouv(a/y), maastrichtsk(á/é) smlouv(a/y), smlouv(a/y) z nice, nicejsk(á/é) smlouv(a/y), lisabonsk(á/é) smlouv(a/y), hospodářská a měnová unie, hmu, evropsk(á/é) hospodářsk(á/é) společenství, euratom, evropsk(á/é) společenství pro atomovou energii, evropsk(á/é) integrace, evropsk(é/á) sjednocení, evropsk(á/é) spolupráce, evropsk(é/á) instituce, evropsk projekt(y), evropsk(á/é) smlouv(a/y), jediný evropský zákon, římská smlouva, smlouvy říma, maastrichtská smlouva, smlouvy z amsterdamu, smlouva zakládající ústavu pro evropu, smlouva o ústavě pro evropu, evropsk(á/é) centrální banka, ecb, evropský soudní dvůr, esd, evropský parlament, ep, evropsk(ý/á) úředn(ík/ice), evropští úředníci, evropský státní úředník, evropští státní úředníci, evropsk(á/é) politik(a/y), evropsk(á/é/ý) komis(e/ař), evropští komisaři, evropsk(á/é) kompetence, evropsk(á/é) rada, evropsk(á/é) volby, evropsk(á/é) exekutiva, evropsk(á/é) úroveň, evropsk(ý/á/é) č lensk(ý/é) stát(y), evropsk(ý/á/é) postup(y), europoslan(ci/ec), europoslankyně, společná zahraniční a bezpečnostní politika, společná bezpečnostní a obranná politika, evropská bezpečnostní a obranná politik(a/y), euroz ona, szbp, evropsk(ý/á/é) zákon(y), evropsk(a /é) účty, evropsk(á/é) právo, evropsk(á/é) legislativ(a/y), evropsk(á/é) stanovy, evropsk(ý/é) cíl(e),

evropsk(á/é) rozhodnutí, evropsk(á/é) směrnice, evropsk(á/é) závazky, evropsk(ý/á/é) pokyn(y), evropsk(á/é) opatření, evropsk(á/é) akce, evropsk(é/ý) předpis(y), evropsk(é/ý) požadav(ek/ky), evropsk(é/ý) příspěv(ek/ky), evropsk(á/é) norm(a/y), evropsk(á/é) agend(a/y), evropsk(é/ý) rozpoč(et/ty), evropsk(é/ý) fond(y), evropsk(á/é) ústavní smlouva, ehs, evropsk(ý/á/é) summit(y), evropsk(á/é) právní předpisy, evropsk(á/é) angažovanost, evropská zahraniční a bezpečnostní politik(a/y), evropsk(á/é) ustanovení, evropsk(é/ý) standard(y), evropsk(é/ý), evropsk(á/é) nařízení, evropsk(é/á) strategie, evropsk(á/é) judikatura, evropsk(á/é) jurisprudence, evropsk(á/é) právní, evropský jednotný trh, evropský vnitřní trh, evropsk(á/é) měn(a/y), evropsk(ý/á/é) mandát(y), policejní a soudní spolupráce v trestních věcech, jednotn(á/é) měna, pakt o stabilitě a růstu, jednotný evropský akt, eurokomisařk(a/y), eurokomisařk(y/i), řádný legislativní postup,evropsk(é/ý) akt(y), evropsk(é/ý) návrh(y) zákon(a/ů), evropsk(é/ý) záměr(y), evropsk(é/ý) závaz(ky/ek), evropská činnost, evropský požadav(ek/ky), evropsk(é/ý) příspěv(ek/ky), evropsk(á/é) regulace, evropskzákon(a/ů/y)

List of EU terms in Portuguese

tratado constitucional europeu, tratado(s) de roma, tratado(s) de maastricht, tratado(s) de amsterdão, tratado(s) de nice, tratado(s) de lisboa, união económica e monetária, cee, uem, ue, euratom, integração europeia, unificação europeia, cooperação europeia comunidade(s) europeia(s), comunidade(s) económica(s) europeia(s), comunidade(s) europeia(s) da energia atómica, instituições europeias, proje(c)to(s) europeu(s), tratado(s) europeu(s), união europeia, a(c)to único europeu, tratado que estabelece uma constituição para a europa, bce, tjue, funcionário(s) europeu(s), funcionário(s) público(s) europeu(s), política(s) europeia(s), banco central europeu, comissão europeia, comissário(s) europeu(s), competência(s) europeia(s), tribunal de justiça da união europeia, eleição europeia, eleições europeias, executivo europeu, nível europeu, níveis europeus, estado-membro(s) europeu(s), parlamento europeu, procedimento (s) europeu(s), cimeira(s) europeia(s), política da europa, pcsd, pesc, política externa e de segurança comum, política comum de segurança e defesa, política europeia de segurança e defesa, zona euro, política(s) europeia(s), a(c)to(s) europeu(s), conta(s) europeia(s), lei(s) europeia(s), legislaçõe(s) europeia(s), estatuto(s) europeu(s), obje(c)tivo(s) europeu(s), decisão europeia, decisões europeias, dire(c)tiva(s) europeia(s), compromisso(s) europeu(s), regulamento(s) europeu(s), medida(s) europeia(s), acção(es) europeia(s), ação europeia, ações europeias, disposição(es) europeia(s), disposições europeias, prescrição europeia, prescrições europeias, requisite(s) europeu(s), subsídio(s) europeu(s), standard europeu(s), norma(s) europeia(s) agenda(s) europeia(s), orçamento(s) europeu(s), fundos europeus, programa(s) europeu(s), regulamento(s) europeu(s), estratégia europe(ua/ia), jurisprudência europeia, mercado único europeu, mercado europeu, moeda(s) europeia(s), mandato(s) europeu(s), cooperação policial e judiciária em matéria penal, moeda única, acto de estabilidade e crescimento, proje(c)to(s) de lei europeu(s), proje(c)to-lei europeu, metas europeias, engajamento(s) europeu(s), compromisso(s) europeu(s)

List of EU terms in French

traité constitutionnel européen, traité(s) de rome, traité(s) de maastricht, traité(s) d'amsterdam, traité(s) de nice, traité(s) de lisbonne, union économique et monétaire, cee, uem, ue, euratom, intégration européenne, unification européenne, coopération européenne, communauté(s) européenne(s), communauté(s) économiques européennes, communauté(s) européenne(s) de l'énergie

atomique, institutions européennes, projet(s) européen(s), traité(s) européen(s), union européenne, acte unique européen, traité établissant une constitution pour l'europe, bce, cjue, fonctionnaire(s) européen(s), politique(s) européenne(s), banque centrale européenne, commission européenne, commissaire(s) européen(s), competence(s) européenne(s), cour de justice européenne, cour de justice de l'union européenne, election(s) européenne(s), exécutif européen, niveau(x) européen(s), état(s) membre(s) européen(s), états membres de l'union européenne, parlement européen, procédure(s) européenn(es), sommet(s) européen(s), eurodéputés, député européen, MPE, membre du parlement européen, représentant au parlement européen, psdc, pesc, politique étrangère et de sécurité commune, politique de sécurité et de défense commune, politiques communes de sécurité et de défense, politique(s) européenne(s) de sécurité et de défense, zone euro, acte(s) européen(s), facture(s) européenne(s), droit européen, lois européennes, legislation(s) européenne(s), statut(s) européens, objectif(s) européen(s), cible(s) européenne(s), decision(s) européenne(s), directive(s) européenne(s), engagement(s) européen(s), directive(s) européenne(s), mesure(s) européenne(s), action(s) européenne(s), disposition(s) européenne(s), ordonnance(s) européenne(s), exigence(s) européenne(s), allocation européenne, indemnités européennes, norme(s) européenne(s), agenda(s) européen(s), budget(s) européen(s), programme(s) européen(s), réglementation européenne, stratégie(s) européenne(s), jurisprudence européenne, juridique européen, marché unique européen, marché intérieur européen, marché européen, monnaie(s) européenne(s), mandate(s) européen(s), coopération policière et judiciaire en matière pénale, monnaie unique, pacte de stabilité et de croissance

A.3 Topic model keyword selection

To select keywords for the topic models, I use domain expertise and the results from unsupervised topic models. For the former part, I rely on knowledge about the EU's responsibilities as I expect that the topics that heads of government talk about when they mention the EU relate to its formal areas of action, as enshrined in the treaties.[54] I use these areas of action to interpret the results from STM and LDA models which I run on a subset of the data. Upon reviewing the keywords output of the topic models and representative speeches for each topic, I select a number of keywords which I think best represent each topic I am interested in. I try to select words which are unique to a single topic and to avoid overlaps. Table 2.2 in Chapter 2 presents the list of keywords.

[54]For example, as outlined here: `https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/what-european-commission-does/law/areas-eu-action`

A.4 Topic model fit

Figure A.1 evaluates the model's fit. Based on the criteria of Eshima, Imai and Sasaki (2023), who created keyATM, the model is working as expected. There is an increasing trend for the log-likelihood and a decreasing trend for the perplexity. The fluctuation of these values gets smaller as the iterations increase.

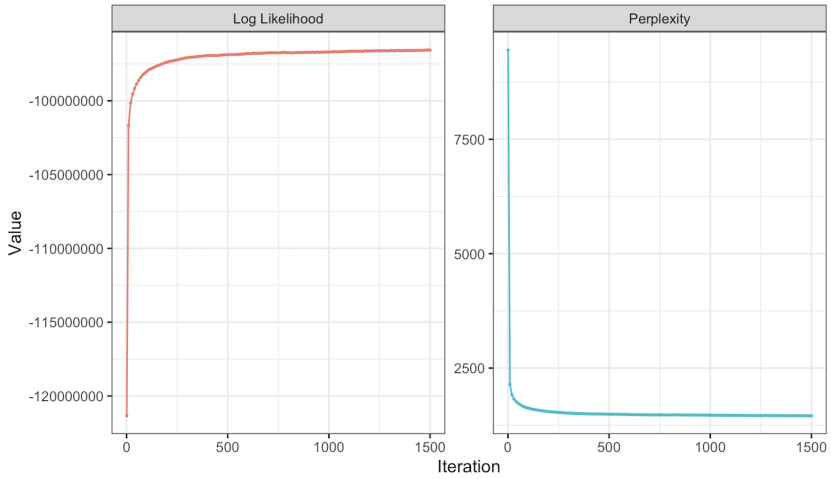

Figure A.1: Model fit

A.5 Top 15 words of each topic

Table A.2 presents the top 15 words that have the highest probability of being associated with each topic. This is a measure of the topic-word distribution, which represents the relative frequency of words for each topic and can characterize the topic content. The words can help us understand whether the model captures the topics that it is intended to capture. The words with a check-mark are those that I use as keywords to guide the model, whereas the words with an asterisk are keywords that I assign to another keyword topic.

A number of pre-selected keywords feature as top words in their respective topics. In addition, other top words lend confidence that the topics are representative of their label. For instance, the Brexit topic has the words "Britain" and "British" as two of its top ones, whilst "Greece" is the third word with the highest probability in the Eurozone crisis topic. In the European integration topic, words such as "common" and "together" appear prominently, reflecting aspects of integration.

Topic	Top words
European integration	us, world, year, today, project [✓], becaus, peac [✓], common, state, valu [✓], togeth, peopl, time, integr [✓], freedom
Membership	eu, turkey [✓], access [✓], balkan [✓], cyprus, state, region, greec, member, support, cooper, relat, eastern, western, issu
Institutions and treaties	parliament [✓], treati [✓], elect [✓], presid [*], state, commiss, council [*], govern, member, becaus, nation, lisbon [✓], polit, new, institut [✓]
Brexit	eu, britain, uk, think, peopl, need, work, british, leav [✓], deal, member, singl, right, clear, negoti
EMU	euro [✓], bank [✓], econom [*], zone [✓], financi [✓], stabil, monetari [✓], central [✓], polici, state, crisi [*], market, council [*], fiscal [✓], growth [*]
Economy	year, growth [✓], spain, econom [✓], economi, euro [*], fund [✓], govern, employ [✓], job, reform [*], invest [✓], percent, public, unemploy [✓]
Trade	trade [✓], agreement, world, free, america, market, import, eu, invest [*], china [✓], state, open [✓], econom [*], global, negoti
Single market	market, digit [✓], compani [✓], new, work, industri [✓], level, franc, regul [✓], invest [*], protect, develop, tax [✓], technolog [✓], commiss
Foreign affairs	ukrain [✓], secur, russia [✓], nato [✓], support, intern, sanction [✓], defens [✓], council [*], state, eu, militari [✓], nation, togeth, cooper
Climate	energi [✓], climat [✓], eu, gas [✓], renew [✓], price, emiss [✓], chang, develop, green [✓], market, electr [✓], goal, commiss, import
Migration	border [✓], migrat [✓], refuge [✓], peopl, asylum [✓], immigr [✓], state, polic, protect, eu, cooper, extern, turkey [*], need, schengen [✓]
Eurozone crisis	crisi [✓], debt [✓], greec, euro [*], becaus, us, year, econom [*], time, situat, problem, deficit [✓], govern, growth [*], today
Covid-19 crisis	health [✓], spain, vaccin [✓], pandem [✓], govern, recoveri, plan, million, spanish, transform, social, respons, commiss, befor, state
Meetings	presid [✓], council [✓], spain, govern, meet [✓], import, issu, minist, know, summit [✓], commiss, today, work, spanish, econom [*]
Other	law, becaus, court, govern, thing, therefor, spain, import, right, rule, case, doe, issu, constitut, said

Table A.2: Top 15 words of each topic

A.6 Representative speeches

Topic: *European integration*

"Furthermore, the European Union is the only way for us today to pool common interests and values that have something to do with human dignity, something with our understanding of freedom, something with our understanding of justice. And we succeeded in anchoring the topic of the social market economy as our common European order in the Lisbon Treaty and introducing it into the general discussion internationally. Even the largest economy in the European Union, Germany, would have few chances if we did not act internationally with others with bundled interests. That's why I'm firmly convinced that the European Union, in addition to the power to keep peace, has achieved a second important justification in the course of globalization, that's why European cooperation is of vital importance to us. Now, in the history of the European Union, the degree of integration has been increased again and again, because this project, if it stands still, is always in danger of rolling back again, getting into a renationalization, so to speak, and collapsing." (2011-02-23, Angela Merkel, Germany)

Topic: *Membership*

"Greece, like Cyprus, supports the full integration of Turkey into the European Union. A necessary condition, of course, is its complete and without exceptions compliance with all its obligations towards the European Union. Under this condition, Turkey's full integration into the European Union would be mutually beneficial and would establish stability and good neighborly relations in the region. In a few months, the Republic of Cyprus will assume the Presidency of the European Union for the first time, and indeed at a particularly critical period. I know that Cyprus is intensively preparing for its Presidency and I am absolutely sure of its success." (2012-04-05, Lucas Papademos, Greece)

Topic: *Institutions and treaties*

"On May 25, more than four hundred million Europeans have been summoned to the polls to elect 751 MEPs, of which 54 will be Spanish. These will be the seventh elections held in our country since those long ago that took place in 1987. At that time, the European Parliament, which had achieved such status since its election by universal suffrage in 1979, was not much more than a consultative assembly. Following the successive reforms of the single act and the treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon, the European Parliament is not only the representative body of European citizens, but also the co-legislator, on an equal footing with the Council of Ministers, in vast majority of the legislative powers attributed to the Union. If we take into account that between 70 and 80 percent of the legislative provisions that regulate our lives come directly or indirectly from Europe, it is not difficult to argue in favor of the importance of these elections." (2014-04-09, Mariano Rajoy, Spain)

Topic: *Brexit*

"[...] those who believe we should stay in the EU at all costs need to explain why Britain should accept the status quo. I am clear that there are real problems for Britain with the status quo. There are some economic risks, if we allow a situation where eurozone countries could potentially spend our money, or where European regulations hold back our ability to trade and create jobs. And there are also significant risks if we allow our sovereignty to be eroded by ever closer union, or sit by

and do nothing about the unsustainable rate of migration into our country. But just as those who are advocating staying in the EU at all costs have to answer serious questions, so those who think Britain should just leave now also need to think hard about the implications of their arguments - and the possible risks of the course they advocate." (2015-11-13, David Cameron, Great Britain)

Topic: *EMU*

"Everything we propose is proposed in a way that anyone who wants to contribute to additional measures of integration can participate. We documented that with the fiscal pact, for example, when not only the 17 euro states joined this fiscal pact, but 25 of the EU member states. There's one thing we shouldn't forget: the goal when introducing the euro wasn't that we should stay with 17 member states, but the goal was that as many member states as possible of the European Union one day accept the euro as their currency. Deeper integration cannot just stop at questions of budget monitoring - we have made some progress with the fiscal contract, which is now also being ratified step by step - but must go further within the framework of stronger economic policy coordination in order to harmonize or at least bring the competitiveness of the reach euro member states. With completely different levels of competitiveness, you cannot make a common currency resistant to external shocks in the long term." (2012-10-16, Angela Merkel, Germany)

Topic: *Economy*

"We therefore avoided worst-case scenarios. However, thanks to our workers and entrepreneurs, and to the first effects of structural reforms, the economy reversed its recessive path and began to grow. From the second quarter of 2013 until the end of that year, the Portuguese economy registered a very appreciable growth, at least when compared with our partners in the euro zone. In the 2^{nd} quarter, growth in quarterly variation was the highest in the entire European Union. In the 4^{th} quarter, once again in quarterly variation, we had the third highest rate of all those recorded in the euro area, and in year-on-year terms the second highest." (2011-01-28, José Socrates, Portugal)

Topic: *Trade*

"And one thing's certain: these opportunities exist. Because the economic ties between Vietnam and the Netherlands are booming. Of all the EU member states, the Netherlands is the biggest investor in Vietnam and its third-biggest trading partner. A hundred and twenty Dutch firms already operate in your country and many others are ready to follow their example. In the last decade, trade between the Netherlands and Vietnam has increased nearly tenfold, to 3.6 billion dollars." (2014-06-17, Mark Rutte, Netherlands)

Topic: *Single market*

"If we want to prevent a certain number of platforms present in our territories from earning income, capturing added value and not paying taxes in our geographical area, we must have a tax system that can be corrected and harmonised. France has already initiated a certain number of tax adjustments for these large multinationals on its own initiative and we must ensure that this policy can be implemented on a European scale. I also want to insist on the harmonization also of the methods of intervention of the competition authorities or the regulatory authorities, because we must have regulation at European level and avoid this fragmentation of regulation or controls. This is what we want to do, create a large digital market on a European scale; support companies in this change; ensure that workers can themselves be accompanied and helped in this process which will

considerably change production methods; assure consumers that they will be able to have the best services anywhere in the country; further distribute broadband and very high speed everywhere in our geographical areas; and finally have regulation on a European scale. I want to end with the fact that we must have a strategy, a medium and long-term strategy which, moreover, justifies our European commitment." (2016-12-13, François Hollande, France)

Topic: *Foreign affairs*

"The EU and its Member States remain the leading donor when it comes to development aid and humanitarian assistance. And while NATO is and remains our first line of defence and our guarantee of security, we do have the means to deploy civilian and military missions abroad. The initiative to improve military mobility in the EU will bolster NATO and the security of the European continent. So economically, strategically and in terms of defence, the EU is far from toothless. But we must be willing to use the instruments we have, and we must deploy them much more strategically and coherently." (2019-02-13, Mark Rutte, Netherlands)

Topic: *Climate and energy*

"The Czech Republic has a strongly export-oriented economy with a high share of industry, including energy-intensive industries, even compared to the countries of the European Union. Furthermore, the Czech Republic has limited conditions for the development of renewable sources of electricity. In this context, I welcome the thesis of the European Commission that nuclear energy represents a reliable, low-emission source of base load, which plays an important role in ensuring energy security. I consider the possession of production and technological know-how in this area to be one of the competitive advantages of the European Union compared to other regions that are still striving for it. Nuclear energy is not only a source of stable and safe electricity supplies, but it also contributes to the increase of our energy security by the possibility of storing long-term stocks of primary fuel, the share of which in the total production costs is relatively low compared to other conventional sources." (2014-06-16, Bohuslav Sobotka, Czech Republic)

Topic: *Migration*

"At the same time, all Member States must comply with the applicable rules - be it legislation, especially regarding the Dublin Regulation, asylum rules and form, as well as respect political agreements from the European Councils. Unfortunately, a number of member countries, starting with Greece, do not follow these rules. On a concrete level, we agreed at the summit that it is necessary to ensure effective control and protection of the external borders of the European Union by urgently building a functional system of registration and effective return policies, creating a common list of safe third countries. We supported the Commission's proposal for the rapid establishment of so-called hotspots. We appeal to the EU not to reduce the issue of migration only to the Mediterranean region." (2015-09-15, Bohuslav Sobotka, Czech Republic)

Topic: *Eurozone crisis*

"We also have a cacophony and confusion within the European Union itself. A difficulty, but also mistakes, yes, mistakes by the European Union, in the way it handled this crisis, in the face of an unprecedented situation, a situation it had never faced before. And I had the opportunity today too, because this situation now concerns all the peoples, not only of Europe, but certainly of Europe, to talk again with Mrs. Merkel, about the tough negotiation we are doing for the next

few days, the difficult, the complex negotiation within the European Union. For a new lending program, a mammoth program that has never existed before in the history of our planet. For the management, yes, the collective management of this debt of our country, in a way that can actually remove burdens and difficulties from the Greek people, which exist today." (2011-06-16, George Papandreou, Greece)

Topic: *Covid-19 crisis*

"Four observations. I think the first is, well 2020 was a terrible year because of the pandemic, but it is also a year where we have witnessed an acceleration of the EU integration process. Joint purchase of vaccines, joint health policies, ECB actions, the sure instrument, our commitment to reduce 55% of our emissions by 2030, NextGenerationEU which is a positive response not only to the crisis but also to the huge and disruptive transformations ahead. The second observation is that this Next Generation fund provides us with the instruments to give a positive response to the great challenges that lie ahead: the ecological transition and the digital transformation. And for this reason, I agree with Prime Minister Costa and also with President Draghi that it is very important to incorporate this inclusive perspective in these two great transformations." (2021-05-07, Pedro Sánchez, Spain)

Topic: *Meetings*

"If the image goes around the world, it must also go around the responsibilities. That is why we discussed it with the Irish Prime Minister. But I had discussions with several heads of state and government, several officials, including the president of the European Council Donald Tusk and the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker. I also called Turkish president Erdogan since that is where the drama happened. This tragedy is also the one that can occur, still as I speak, each time families try to cross." (2015-09-03, François Hollande, France)

Topic: *Other*

"I believe that the will of the Spaniards must be respected and the will of the Spaniards was, first, the Popular Party; second, the Socialist Party. listen, there is no other possible form of government. Let's agree as they have done in Germany, as they have done in Austria, as the European Commission does or as the European Parliament does, where the PP, the Socialist Party and the Liberal Party are in a coalition, and let's build, because, if not, it seems that we are going to create a problem and the Spanish do not have to put up with all the effort that has been made over the years disappearing at the stroke of a pen." (2016-01-19, Mariano Rajoy, Spain)

A.7 Details on data collection: European Council conclusions

To measure issue attention in the European Council during the period under investigation, I create a new dataset which includes the text of the Conclusions divided according to its topic. I download all Conclusions from the official website of the European Council where they are freely available in Portable Document Format.[55] I manually observe a sample of documents in order to understand their structure. The first page of each document is usually a covernote. The rest of the pages include the main body which is split into sections according to headlines using roman numerals. These headlines represent distinct topics or policy areas and I use them as a proxy for the topic of the text in each section.

I write a script in R which reads all the documents, excludes the first page and uses a regular expression to extract the date of the Conclusion and the unique name of the document. I also use regular expressions based on the structure of the headlines in order to split the document into topics.[56] The only instances where headlines might not be available are in special meetings. Given that those are usually on a specific topic, such as Brexit, I consider the entire text as one topic and manually identify it. I use this information to create a Comma-Separated Values file which has four columns.

The first column includes the name of the document of each Conclusion, which is the original name of the file as stored on the European Council website. The second includes the date of the Conclusion (month and year). The third column is the text which corresponds to each section or topic, whilst the fourth column is the name of the topic. I streamline the names of topics to be consistent. For instance, if in one conclusion the topic was "Illegal immigration" and in another it was "Migration", I label both as "Migration" topics. Wherever possible, I label topics in line with the labels of the topic modelling analysis of this paper.

Figure A.2 plots the yearly number of times each topic appears in the Conclusions, based on the section headlines. The topic "Other" includes references which do not align with any category. There is variation over the years, with the decreasing

[55]The link to the website is: `https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/public-register/euco-conclusions/`

[56]Some Conclusions also include Appendices. I exclude Appendices since they are about topics that are already mentioned in the text.

importance of the "Economy" topic for instance. The descriptive results are consistent with those of the EU Policy Agendas project (Alexandrova et al., 2014) as the topics on the "Economy", "Foreign affairs" and Governance (which include "Brexit" and the "Institutions" topics) are the most salient.

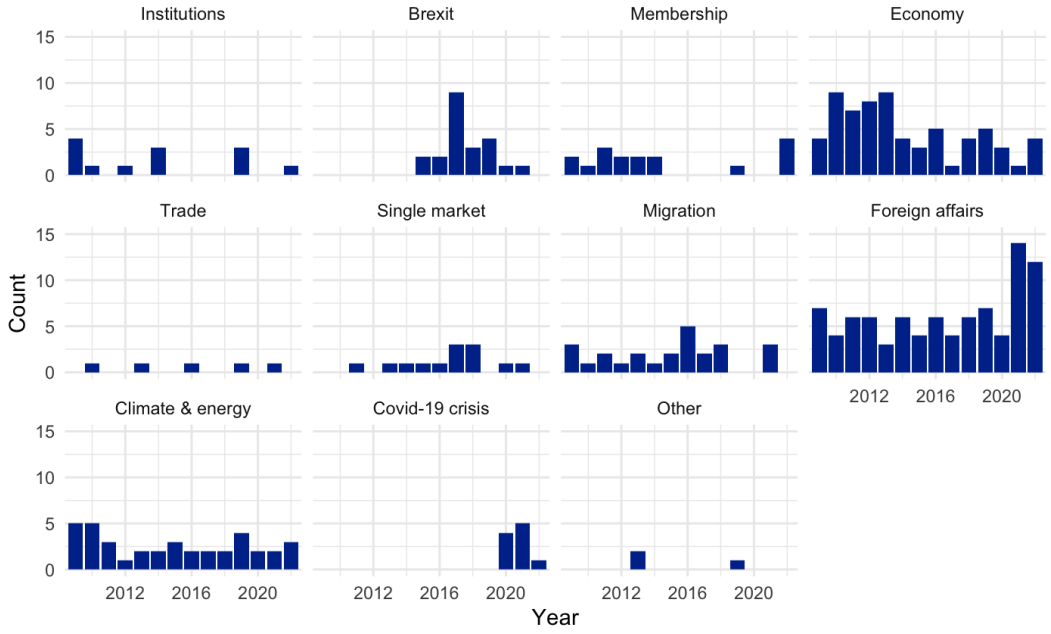

Figure A.2: Issue attention in the European Council (2009-2022)

The dataset will be made freely available and can be helpful for anyone wishing to access the Conclusions in a machine-readable user-friendly way, rather than downloading each document individually. The information on each topic can be used to further examine issue attention in the European Council or any other relevant research questions.

A.8 Robustness tests

The tables below present the results of robustness tests. Table A.3 is a different specification of the same models. Rather than country fixed effects, it includes country random effects in addition to the speaker and party random effects. Table A.4 shows the results of OLS regressions. Table A.5 provides the results of models with the independent variables as the dependent ones in order to investigate reverse causality.[57]

[57]The decision to use this robustness test draws from previous studies on rhetorical responsiveness, which show that reverse causation is possible (Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2015).

	Dependent variable:	
	Economic issue	**Non-economic issue**
	(1)	**(2)**
European Council economic attention	0.396***	
	(0.025)	
Public economic attention	0.204***	
	(0.013)	
European Council non-economic attention		0.104***
		(0.013)
Public non-economic attention		0.022***
		(0.008)
Partisan Euroscepticism	0.067	0.087***
	(0.041)	(0.029)
Public Euroscepticism	−0.163***	−0.073*
	(0.059)	(0.040)
Governing party EU position	−0.008	0.039***
	(0.006)	(0.004)
Governing party EU dissent	0.001	−0.016***
	(0.004)	(0.003)
Governing party EU salience	0.0005	−0.021***
	(0.004)	(0.003)
National election year	−0.012*	0.010**
	(0.006)	(0.004)
Council of the EU presidency	−0.024	−0.030***
	(0.015)	(0.010)
GDP change	−0.006***	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Violent conflicts	−0.003***	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Asylum applications	−0.00001	0.0001***
	(0.00002)	(0.00002)
COVID-19 cases	0.00000	0.00000
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
Constant	0.241***	−0.042
	(0.055)	(0.044)
Observations	22,929	22,929
Log Likelihood	−8,158.461	1,440.760
Akaike Inf. Crit.	16,352.920	−2,845.520
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	16,497.640	−2,700.797
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.3: Regression robustness tests (country random effects)

	Dependent variable:	
	Economic issue	**Non-economic issue**
	(1)	**(2)**
European Council economic attention	0.377***	
	(0.025)	
Public economic attention	0.242***	
	(0.011)	
European Council non-economic attention		0.174***
		(0.012)
Public non-economic attention		0.101***
		(0.006)
Partisan Euroscepticism	−0.134***	−0.014
	(0.018)	(0.012)
Public Euroscepticism	−0.163***	0.180***
	(0.038)	(0.026)
Governing party EU position	0.018***	0.022***
	(0.002)	(0.001)
Governing party EU dissent	−0.009***	0.001
	(0.002)	(0.001)
Governing party EU salience	−0.009***	−0.018***
	(0.002)	(0.001)
National election year	0.025***	0.009**
	(0.006)	(0.004)
Council of the EU presidency	−0.057***	0.014
	(0.013)	(0.009)
GDP change	−0.007***	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Violent conflicts	−0.00004	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.0004)
Asylum applications	0.0002***	0.00004***
	(0.00002)	(0.00001)
COVID-19 cases	−0.00000	0.00000***
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
Constant	0.070**	−0.184***
	(0.031)	(0.018)
Observations	22,929	22,929
R^2	0.143	0.072
Adjusted R^2	0.142	0.071
Residual Std. Error (df = 22915)	0.351	0.231
F Statistic	293.217***	136.775***
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.4: Regression robustness tests (OLS)

	Dependent variable:			
	European Council economic attention (1)	**Public economic attention (2)**	**European Council non-economic attention (3)**	**Public non-economic attention (4)**
European Council economic attention		0.254^{***}		
		(0.012)		
Heads of government economic attention	0.027^{***}	0.048^{***}		
	(0.002)	(0.003)		
Public economic attention	0.074^{***}			
	(0.004)			
Heads of government non-economic attention			0.026^{***}	0.014^{**}
			(0.003)	(0.006)
Public non-economic attention			-0.103^{***}	
			(0.004)	
European Council non-economic attention				-0.282^{***}
				(0.011)
Partisan Euroscepticism	-0.066^{***}	-0.422^{***}	0.050^{***}	0.203^{***}
	(0.012)	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.025)
Public Euroscepticism	0.635^{***}	1.902^{***}	-1.308^{***}	-2.437^{***}
	(0.015)	(0.027)	(0.019)	(0.030)
Governing party EU position	-0.025^{***}	-0.063^{***}	0.020^{***}	0.059^{***}
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Governing party EU dissent	0.005^{***}	0.003	0.027^{***}	0.006^{**}
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.003)
Governing party EU salience	0.007^{***}	0.048^{***}	-0.018^{***}	-0.051^{***}
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
National election year	-0.027^{***}	0.032^{***}	-0.021^{***}	-0.047^{***}
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Council of the EU presidency	-0.007^{*}	0.072^{***}	0.037^{***}	-0.068^{***}
	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.009)
GDP change	-0.003^{***}	-0.005^{***}	0.002^{***}	0.008^{***}
	(0.0003)	(0.001)	(0.0004)	(0.001)
Violent conflicts	-0.0003	-0.016^{***}	0.0002	0.012^{***}
	(0.0002)	(0.0004)	(0.0003)	(0.0004)
Asylum applications	-0.0001^{***}	-0.001^{***}	0.0002^{***}	0.001^{***}
	(0.00001)	(0.00001)	(0.00001)	(0.00001)
COVID-19 cases	0.00000^{*}	0.00000^{***}	0.00000	-0.00000^{***}
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
Constant	0.155^{***}	1.342^{***}	0.839^{***}	0.796^{***}
	(0.030)	(0.062)	(0.040)	(0.099)
Observations	22,929	22,929	22,929	22,929
Log Likelihood	22,586.590	8,352.525	17,167.340	5,600.945
Akaike Inf. Crit.	$-45,127.180$	$-16,659.050$	$-34,288.690$	$-11,155.890$
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	$-44,942.250$	$-16,474.130$	$-34,103.760$	$-10,970.970$
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.5: Regression robustness tests (reverse causality)

Appendix B

This Appendix provides supporting information for Chapter 3: "The role of domestic considerations in the political oversight of the ECB: Evidence from MEP communication in parliament and on social media".

B.1 Further details: X data collection

To collect data from X, I use the advanced search function of the social media platform.[58] I create a search string based on three attributes; the username of the MEP, the time period that they were a member of the ECON Committee (for more on this see Chapter 3), and references to the ECB. Regarding the latter, for each MEP, I search for references to the "European Central Bank" as well as the acronym "ECB". I also search for references to the ECB (either the acronym or the full name) in the official language(s) of the country that each MEP represents in all grammatical cases. To find the strings for the translated references I use machine translation and enhance it with the use of native speakers of each language, whenever necessary.

I also take into account the language particularities of each country. In the case of Spain, I add Catalan if the MEP is from a Catalan party. For Belgian MEPs, I use the French and the Dutch search strings in addition to the English ones. For Luxembourgish MEPs, I use French, German and Luxembourgish search strings. It should be noted that the advanced search function of X captures both upper and lower-case instances of the strings as well as those included inside hashtags and usernames. For example, it captures references to "@ecb" which is the official account of the ECB. The search results include any posts that the MEP has made or has responded to which make reference to the ECB. Below, I present the search strings in each language.

[58] Available here: `https://twitter.com/search-advanced`

- **Bulgarian:** “Evropeyska Tsentralna Banka”, “Evropeyskata Tsentralna Banka”, “ECB” (and in Cyrillic alphabet characters)
- **Catalan:** “Banc Central Europeu”, “BCE”
- **Croatian:** “Europska Središnja Banka”, “Europske Središnje Banke”, “Europskoj Središnjoj Banci”, “Europsku Središnju Banku”, “Europska Središnja Banko”, “Europskoj Središnjoj Banci”, “Europskom Središnjom Bankom”, “ESB”
- **Czech:** “Evropská Centrální Banka”, “Evropské Centrální Banky”, “Evropské Centrální Bance”, “Evropskou Centrální Banku”, “Evropská Centrální Banko”, “Evropskou Centrální Bankou”
- **Danish:** “Europæiske Centralbank”, “ECB”
- **Dutch:** “Europese Centrale Bank”, “ECB”
- **English:** “European Central Bank”, “ECB”
- **Estonian:** “Euroopa Keskpank”, “Euroopa Keskpangana”, “Euroopa Keskpangale”, “Euroopa Keskpangalt”, “Euroopa Keskpangana”, “EKP”
- **Finnish:** “Euroopan Keskuspankki”, “Euroopan Keskuspankin”, “Euroopan Keskuspankkia”, “Euroopan eskuspankkina”, “Euroopan Keskuspankiksi”,“Euroopan Keskuspankissa”, “Euroopan Keskuspankista”, “Euroopan Keskuspankkiin”, “Euroopan Keskuspankill(a)”, “Euroopan Keskuspankilt(a)”, “Euroopan Keskuspankille”, “Euroopan Keskuspankitt(a)”, “Euroopan Keskuspankkine”, “Euroopan Keskuspankkin”, “Euroopan Keskuspankkina”, “EKP”
- **French:** “Banque Centrale Européenne”, “BCE”
- **German:** “Europäischen Zentralbank”, “Europäische Zentralbank”, “EZB”
- **Greek:** “Europaiki Kentriki Trapeza”, “Europaikis Kentrikis Trapezas, “EKT” (in Greek alphabet characters)
- **Hungarian:** “Európai Központi”, “EKB”
- **Irish:** “Banc Ceannais Eorpach”, “Banc Ceannais Eorpaigh”, “BCE”
- **Italian:** “Banca Centrale Europea”, “BCE”

- **Latvian:** “Eiropas Centrālā Banka”, “Eiropas Centrālās Bankas”, “Eiropas Centrālajai Bankai”, “Eiropas Centrālo Banku”, “Eiropas Centrālajā Bankā”
- **Lithuanian:** “Europos Centrinio Banko”, “Europos Centriniam Bankui”, “Europos Centrini Banka”, “Europos Centrinis Banke”, “Europos Centriniu Banku”, “ECB”
- **Luxembourgish:** “Europäescher Zentralbank”, “Europäesch Zentralbank”, “EZB”
- **Maltese:** “Bank Ċentrali Ewropew”, “BĊE”
- **Polish:** “Europejski Bank Centralny”, “Europejskiego Banku Centralnego”, “Europejskiemu Bankowi Centralnemu”, “Europejski Bank Centralny”, “Europejskim Bankiem Centralnym”,“Europejskim Banku Centralnym”, “Europejski Bank Centralny”
- **Portugueuse:** “Banco Central Europeu”, “BCE”
- **Romanian:** “Banca Centrală Europeană”, “Băncii Centrale Europene”, “BCE”
- **Slovakian:** “Európska Centrálna Banka”, “Európskej Centrálnej Banky”, “Európskej Centrálnej Banke”, “Európsku Centrálnu Banku”, “Európskou Centrálnou Bankou”, “Európskej Centrálnej Banke”, “ECB”
- **Slovenian:** “Evropski Centralni Banki”, “Evropska Centralna Banka”, “Evropske Centralne Banke”, “ECB”
- **Spanish:** “Banco Central Europeo”, “BCE”
- **Swedish:** “Europeiska Centralbanken”, “Europeiska Centralbankens”, “ECB”

B.2 Topic model fit

Figure B.1 evaluates the model's fit. Based on the criteria of Eshima, Imai and Sasaki (2023), who created keyATM, the model is working as expected. There is an increasing trend for the log-likelihood and a decreasing trend for the perplexity. The fluctuation of these values gets smaller as the iterations increase.

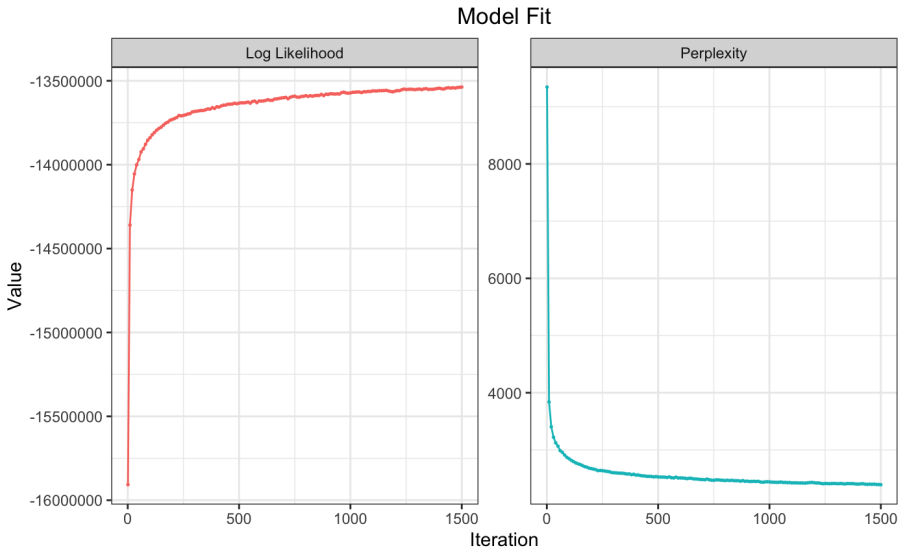

Figure B.1: Model fit

B.3 Top 15 words of each topic

Table B.1 presents the top 15 words that have the highest probability of being associated with each topic. This is a measure of the topic-word distribution, which represents the relative frequency of words for each topic and can characterize the topic content. The words can help us understand whether the model captures the topics that it is intended to capture. The words with a checkmark are those that I use as keywords to guide the model, whereas the words with an asterisk are keywords that I assign to another keyword topic. Several pre-selected keywords feature as top words in their respective topics. In addition, other top words lend confidence that the topics are representative of their label. For instance, references to former ECB President Draghi are prevalent in the financial stability topic, whilst the current ECB President Lagarde is associated with the price stability topic, which is in line with the increasing relevance of inflation in more recent years.

Topic	**Top words**
Price stability	inflat [✓], interest rate [✓], increas, price [✓], rate, lagard, monetari, euro, economi, eurozon, rise, govern, energi, debt, high
Unconventional monetary policy tools	bond, quantit eas [✓], purchas, court, program, draghi, greec, bverfg, govern, german, constitut, buy, greek, qe [✓], rule
Financial stability	bank [✓], financi [✓], draghi, european, supervis, greek, greec, loan, irish, govern, deposit, supervisori, system, capit, crisi
International developments	euro, european, financi [*], bank [*], risk, system, emerg [✓], draghi, global [✓], crisi, report, fed [✓], europ, market, polit
Payment issues	pay [✓], digit euro [✓], cash [✓], digitaleuro [✓], money, payment, digit, digit currenc [✓], panetta, lagard, fabio, crypto [✓], project, amp
EMU economy issues	monetari, european, state, countri, debt, euro, econom, union, market, govern, fiscal [✓], concern, measur, regard, reform
Environment	lagard, climat, green [✓], climat chang [✓], monetari, debt, european, fight, cancel, christin, financ, parliament, link, transit, debat
Other	draghi, committe, lagard, mario, econ, report, econom, european, parliament, monetari, ep econom, vote, plenari, meet, annual

Table B.1: Top 15 words of each topic

B.4 Representative texts from topic models

Topic: *Price stability*

"Inflation is the cause of recession. And unemployment. Ronald Reagan already warned about this in 1980. Governments live in too big a way. Central banks encourage this with low interest rates and a rolling money press. That causes inflation. I told Lagarde from @ecb. " (Post on X, 2022-02-08, Michiel Hoogeveen, Netherlands, Juiste Antwoord 2021 and ECR)

"Madame Lagarde! I have been listening to you attentively. You said that, in view of the persistent high inflation, you would have announced further interest rate increases last Thursday and that it was only the risks of instability on the financial markets that kept you from making such an announcement. Is it correct to conclude from this that these risks of instability are far from trivial? After all, you would not otherwise have changed your forecast for the next meetings." (Parliamentary speech, 2023-03-20, Gunnar Beck, Germany, Alternative für Deutschland and ID)

Topic: *Unconventional monetary policy tools*

"The ECB is under scrutiny. According to the EU treaties, monetary government financing is prohibited. Tuesday's ruling will show whether the ECB's bond purchases since 2015 are just that." (Post on X, 2020-05-03, Stefan Berger, Germany, Christlich Demokratische Union and EPP)

"Mr President, there is also a possibility of extending quantitative easing arrangements to company shares under a different programme of measures. In view of this: I should, first of all, like to know under what conditions it would be possible to extend QE to Greek company shares and, secondly, whether it could be fully extended to Greece by August 2019 when the buy-back programme is due to end." (Parliamentary speech, 2018-07-09, Notis Marias, Greece, The Alternative Road and ECR)

Topic: *Financial stability*

"The arrogance and incompetence of the ECB during the Banco Popular crisis has a reward: the re-election of König as head of the SRB (Single Resolution Board). Shameful." (Post on X, 2017-12-12, Paloma López, Spain, Izquierda Unida and GUE/NGL)

"President Draghi, I have two questions. The first concerns [the] banking union. The ECB is going to supervise some European banks, and for me, as a Catalan MEP, it is good news that all Spanish banks will be under European supervision. But the question is: who should pay for the mistakes in supervision of the ECB? The second question concerns ECB supervision. I believe that there is no supervision credibility without failures. Credibility requires that some banks fail. The ECB should have the red button to force the failure of a bank, because now we see that in some Member States there are banks that are declared too big to fail, which means huge losses for taxpayers and social cuts, and in other Member States there are quite large banks, for instance in Germany the Westdeutsche Landesbank, that are forced to fail. So who should have the red button to force the failure of a bank?" (Parliamentary speech, 2013-09-23, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, Spain, Coalición por Europa and Renew/ALDE)

Topic: *International developments*

"Post Brexit Europe and ECB forced their hand to bring the euro derivatives business from London to the EU. Today the evidence shows us that rather than choosing the EU, operators are moving business to the USA." (Post on X, 2023-05-19, Marco Zanni, Italy, Lega and ID)

"That is the answer I expected, so I prepared another question – on China! We have all read the BIS Annual Report which states some concerns about China's 'unprecedented debt - financed investment rates and signs of excess capacity and unprofitable businesses'. We are all talking a lot about China these days, but how do you see the economic situation there? What would the impact of a sharp slowdown in the Chinese economy be on our European economies? Is there a risk of a global crisis, and if there is a risk, how likely do you consider that scenario to be?" (Parliamentary speech, 2017-09-25, Sander Loones, Belgium, Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie and ECR)

Topic: *Payment issues*

"ECB study confirms: 79% of payments are made in the form of cash transactions. Preserving cash is important!" (Post on X, 2017-11-24, Barbara Kappel, Austria, FPÖ and ID)

"Thank you, Chair. I'm going to articulate some particularly German concerns about the digital euro, so let me do that in German. Just over two weeks ago, we had a very interesting meeting with Fabio Panetta . Many critical questions were raised – including by my Christian Democrat and Social Democratic colleagues – which remained unanswered. What did become apparent in the course of the debate was that the ECB, as the host of the digital euro wallets, could not guarantee the anonymity of digital payments, even if it wanted to do so, as Mr Panetta asserted. Regarding the first question, you distinguished between 'anonymity and privacy'. I would like to know what exactly you meant. You thought you could safeguard the privacy of the payment, but not anonymity. Now for my second point: The advantages of the digital euro vis-à-vis many private digital currencies remained equally unclear, except that in a vague, romantic sense it is European. There is no reason to give a green light to the project and hardly [any] interest in doing so. Why is the ECB now so determined to introduce the digital euro? What specific benefits are there for users or for the majority of the EU population?"(Parliamentary speech, 2023-09-25, Gunnar Beck, Germany, Alternative für Deutschland and ID)

Topic: *EMU economy issues*

"Some say that the corona crisis shows that Europe is not working together. Partly so, but what is the solution? We can not without cooperation, it must be developed. Now Germany is helping Italy a lot, the ECB is reviving, the Commission made a support package. Solidarity solutions must be sought, also in Finland." (Post on X, 2020-03-31, Ville Niinistö, Finland, Vihreä liitto and Greens/EFA)

"Mr Trichet, as the discussion has turned to Greece, I too should like to ask a question that relates to my country. I should like to ask, firstly, what you think about the lag in revenue, after the harsh austerity measures introduced. There is no point in saying how worried we are about this lag in revenue in terms of the economic and social consequences and in terms of achieving the objectives of financial restructuring. The second question which I should like to ask you has to do with articles in the Greek and international press about whether or not [the] memorandum will be extended after 2013. While the European Commission is opposed to this, the International Monetary Fund appears to be willing to do so. I should like to know what the European Central Bank, as third lender, thinks

about this and whether you believe that there should be a common position between the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, because this lack of clarity is not helping national efforts or the objectives that we all need to achieve together." (Parliamentary speech, 2010-09-27, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Greece, Nea Dimokratia and EPP)

Topic: *Environment*

"Making the ecological transition also means stopping supporting polluting sectors: 63% of private debt purchases by the ECB benefited polluting companie . We can no longer let the market decide, we need ecological criteria in the ECB's choices!" (Post on X, 2019-09-04, Manon Aubry, France, La France Insoumise and GUE/NGL)

"Ms Lagarde, I welcome your words on how the ECB can incorporate the policy of climate change, given the mandate of price stability. I think it's encouraging but I'm sometimes looking for a bit more specific answers. First of all, your predecessor, Mr Mario Draghi, told Parliament already on the Corporate Sector Purchase Programme (CSPP) that we will look into this and see what the effect is – the carbon footprint. Has an evaluation been conducted? If not, why not? If so, could the ECB share the results of this assessment? Secondly on this, will you consider the implementation of a mandatory disclosure of the carbon footprints as the eligibility criteria for issue of bonds in the framework of CSPP? Then the second question is on taxonomy. The Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) has given a recommendation that we need a clear taxonomy around green, not green, brown and not brown products as a prerequisite for deepening work. Do you agree with this recommendation of the NGFS for a full-scale taxonomy, not green but different shades of green, different shades of brown? Finally, President von der Leyen said that she was not planning to allow green investments to be subtracted from budgetary deficits, since it would open a door to greenwashing. Do you think that the framework provided by the taxonomy regulation could provide a solution to the threat of greenwashing and if so, do you think it would be justified to allow room within the EU legal framework for increased government spending on making their economy more sustainable?" (Parliamentary speech, 2019-12-02, Paul Tang, Netherlands, PvdA and S&D)

Topic: *Other*

"Now in EP_Economics, exchange of views with Luis de Guindos, candidate for the position as the vice president of the ECB." (Post on X, 2018-02-26, Roberto Gualtieri, Italy, Partito Democratico and S&D)

"Mr Draghi, just for your information, Mr Yves Mersch informed me about these legal studies. I do not know whether that was confidential information, but I still would like to see them." (Parliamentary speech, 2015-09-23, Fabio de Masi, Germany, Die Linke and GUE/NGL)

B.5 Representative texts from sentiment analysis

Sentiment: *Positive*

"The ECB is ready for an agreement with the EU Parliament to strengthen transparency and accountability mechanisms. I thank President Lagarde for her collaboration and the kind words she had for me. Respect and institutional dialogue are the only way to a better Europe." (Post on X, 2023-02-16, Irene Tinagli, Italy, Partito Democratico and S&D)

"Mr Draghi, as others have done, I would like to thank you for everything you have done in compliance with your mandate to save the euro, which was very important. Not only because you were wise enough to do it, but because you had the determination and courage to face all the resistances inside and outside the Governing Council. Once again, I welcome the new expansionary measures that you have announced, but once again we are seeing some resistance. I would like to have your comment on the fact that some members of the Governing Council have made public statements against the decisions taken by the Governing Council, and I would like to ask you if you agree that it would be better to have more solidarity inside the European Central Bank regarding the development of monetary policy? The second issue, on fiscal policy: your message in favour of a more expansionary fiscal policy is indeed very important. You're asking for a more expansionary fiscal policy from the countries who have fiscal space, but it look[s] like the message is no longer delivered to Germany and the Netherlands as before. Would you agree that the list of countries that have more fiscal space for a more expansionary fiscal policy is now longer, and so we now have conditions for a more expansionary fiscal policy at the level of the eurozone?" (Parliamentary speech, 2019-09-23, Pedro Silva Pereira, Portugal, Partido Socialista and S&D)

Sentiment: *Negative*

"Rating agency Moody's expects the economic climate to deteriorate further. ECB policy has failed and only hides the risks of a new financial crisis." (Post on X, 2020-01-14, Gunnar Beck, Germany, Alternative für Deutschland and ID)

"Madam President, it was very nice to hear the quote of Charles Dickens in your introduction. Charles Dickens has written a lot, also about debt! In David Copperfield, he wrote: 'debt results in misery'. His main person actually accumulated so much debt through overspending that he ended up in a debt prison. Now Madam President, you're piling up a lot of debt on debt and it's historically as if there's no tomorrow. Had Charles Dickens lived today, probably, he would describe you as the 'Marie Antoinette de la dette'! The ECB policy is in fact bound to keep interest rates permanently low to avoid bankruptcies in southern Europe. This hurts the savers and pension funds in northern Member States. It also hurts the banks themselves. How long is the ECB willing to go on, on this political route? Is there an end to it? Is there a ceiling? Is it 100% of the GDP of the eurozone, in which case we are nearly half-way. Thank you, and I've stayed within my time!" (Parliamentary speech, 2020-06-08, Derk Jan Eppink, Netherlands, VVD and ECR)

B.6 Robustness tests

The tables below present the results of robustness tests. In Table B.2, I use a different operationalisation of the unemployment and inflation variables which is the difference between the levels of inflation or unemployment in the MS of the MEP and the EU as a whole. Table B.3 presents the results using a different operationalisation of the public opinion variable. Lastly, Table B.4 uses country random effects rather than fixed effects in addition to the party and speaker and random effects. Table B.5 shows the results of OLS regressions.

	Dependent variable:			
	Primary mandate		**Sentiment**	
	Parliament (1)	**X (2)**	**Parliament (3)**	**X (4)**
Inflation difference	−0.001	0.010**	0.016	0.023
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.027)	(0.016)
Unemployment difference	−0.010**	−0.014***	−0.040**	0.001
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.018)	(0.016)
Left-wing party	0.003	−0.076**	0.149*	0.011
	(0.026)	(0.031)	(0.078)	(0.068)
Eurosceptic party	0.070	0.080	−0.406**	−0.167
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.164)	(0.113)
ECB trust	0.001	0.002***	−0.003*	−0.003*
	(0.0003)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Populist party	−0.012	−0.023	0.039	−0.134
	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.166)	(0.114)
Governing party	0.035**	0.025	−0.049	0.070
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.071)	(0.051)
EP election year	−0.047***	−0.063***	0.008	−0.073
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.073)	(0.048)
National election year	0.011	−0.017	−0.077	−0.003
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.063)	(0.037)
EP party size	−0.002*	−0.002	0.007*	0.010***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Long-term government bond yields	−0.006	0.009**	−0.058***	−0.033***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.018)	(0.013)
Government debt	0.001	0.0004	−0.003	−0.004***
	(0.0005)	(0.0004)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Non-performing loans	−0.008***	−0.001	−0.003	−0.014**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Constant	0.170*	0.419***	0.815**	0.722***
	(0.088)	(0.098)	(0.327)	(0.242)
Observations	1,215	4,667	1,215	4,667
Log Likelihood	208.697	−1,484.912	−1,620.306	−6,777.076
Akaike Inf. Crit.	−331.394	3,053.825	3,326.612	13,638.150
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	−111.986	3,324.652	3,546.020	13,908.980
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.2: Regression robustness tests (different operationalisation of unemployment and inflation)

	Dependent variable:			
	Primary mandate		**Sentiment**	
	Parliament (1)	**X (2)**	**Parliament (3)**	**X (4)**
Inflation rate change	0.009	0.023***	−0.042	0.006
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.028)	(0.013)
Unemployment rate change	−0.040***	−0.022**	−0.016	0.007
	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.065)	(0.033)
Left-wing party	0.0002	−0.081***	0.147*	0.007
	(0.023)	(0.030)	(0.079)	(0.068)
Eurosceptic party	0.048	0.063	−0.348**	−0.178
	(0.047)	(0.049)	(0.167)	(0.113)
Euro public opinion	0.003***	0.002***	−0.003	−0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Populist party	−0.005	−0.012	0.026	−0.122
	(0.047)	(0.049)	(0.168)	(0.114)
Governing party	0.009	0.010	−0.008	0.071
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.073)	(0.051)
EP election year	−0.049***	−0.058***	0.001	−0.069
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.075)	(0.048)
National election year	0.008	−0.004	−0.079	0.005
	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.062)	(0.036)
EP party size	−0.002	−0.002	0.005	0.009***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Long-term government bond yields	0.007*	0.021***	−0.046**	−0.034***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.018)	(0.013)
Government debt	0.0005	0.0004	−0.001	−0.003***
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Non-performing loans	−0.004***	0.002	0.004	−0.012*
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Constant	0.014	0.278***	0.628*	0.740***
	(0.082)	(0.099)	(0.323)	(0.252)
Observations	1,215	4,667	1,215	4,667
Log Likelihood	228.024	−1,467.397	−1,621.758	−6,778.430
Akaike Inf. Crit.	−370.047	3,018.794	3,329.515	13,640.860
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	−150.640	3,289.621	3,548.923	13,911.690
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.3: Regression robustness tests (different operationalisation of public opinion)

	Dependent variable:			
	Primary mandate		**Sentiment**	
	Parliament (1)	**X (2)**	**Parliament (3)**	**X (4)**
Inflation rate change	0.011**	0.024***	−0.028	0.007
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.027)	(0.013)
Unemployment rate change	−0.028**	−0.022**	−0.022	0.006
	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.063)	(0.033)
Left-wing party	−0.010	−0.088***	0.146**	0.068
	(0.024)	(0.029)	(0.073)	(0.062)
Eurosceptic party	0.074	0.074	−0.349**	−0.214**
	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.150)	(0.101)
ECB trust	0.0005	0.002***	−0.002	−0.002
	(0.0003)	(0.0005)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Populist party	−0.014	−0.002	−0.004	−0.015
	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.149)	(0.100)
Governing party	0.041***	0.019	−0.007	0.085*
	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.066)	(0.049)
EP election year	−0.043***	−0.058***	−0.015	−0.069
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.074)	(0.048)
National election year	0.012	−0.009	−0.069	0.010
	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.061)	(0.036)
EP party size	−0.002***	−0.002*	0.004	0.013***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Long-term government bond yields	0.002	0.016***	−0.024*	−0.020*
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.014)	(0.011)
Government debt	0.001*	0.0001	−0.002	−0.002**
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Non-performing loans	−0.005***	−0.001	0.005	−0.006
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Constant	0.181***	0.275***	0.721***	0.150
	(0.045)	(0.053)	(0.167)	(0.105)
Observations	1,215	4,667	1,215	4,667
Log Likelihood	236.156	−1,454.405	−1,626.037	−6,780.463
Akaike Inf. Crit.	−436.312	2,944.811	3,288.074	13,596.920
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	−344.467	3,060.880	3,379.919	13,712.990
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.4: Regression robustness tests (country random effects)

	Dependent variable:			
	Primary mandate		**Sentiment**	
	Parliament (1)	**X (2)**	**Parliament (3)**	**X (4)**
Inflation rate change	0.020^{***}	0.032^{***}	-0.021	0.002
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.027)	(0.013)
Unemployment rate change	-0.028^{**}	-0.010	-0.053	0.033
	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.062)	(0.032)
Left-wing party	-0.027^{**}	-0.105^{***}	0.171^{***}	0.048
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.054)	(0.034)
Eurosceptic party	0.104^{***}	0.096^{***}	-0.343^{***}	-0.162^{***}
	(0.027)	(0.018)	(0.118)	(0.054)
ECB trust	0.001^{***}	0.002^{***}	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Populist party	-0.003	0.055^{***}	0.038	-0.043
	(0.026)	(0.018)	(0.118)	(0.053)
Governing party	0.072^{***}	0.002	0.021	0.175^{***}
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.058)	(0.039)
EP election year	-0.049^{***}	-0.090^{***}	-0.019	-0.052
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.075)	(0.047)
National election year	0.010	-0.008	-0.065	0.012
	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.061)	(0.035)
EP party size	-0.003^{***}	-0.001	0.004	0.011^{***}
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Long-term government bond yields	-0.003	-0.008^{**}	-0.019	-0.018^{**}
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.012)	(0.009)
Government debt	0.001^{**}	-0.002^{***}	-0.002	-0.002^{***}
	(0.0003)	(0.0002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Non-performing loans	-0.003^{***}	-0.002^{**}	0.005	-0.0004
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Constant	0.181^{***}	0.503^{***}	0.620^{***}	0.033
	(0.031)	(0.020)	(0.140)	(0.060)
Observations	1,215	4,667	1,215	4,667
R^2	0.148	0.152	0.040	0.045
Adjusted R^2	0.139	0.150	0.030	0.043
Residual Std. Error	0.204 (df = 1201)	0.342 (df = 4653)	0.907 (df = 1201)	1.034 (df = 4653)
F Statistic	16.014^{***} (df = 13; 1201)	64.256^{***} (df = 13; 4653)	3.866^{***} (df = 13; 1201)	17.058^{***} (df = 13; 4653)
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.5: Regression robustness tests (OLS)

Appendix C

This Appendix provides supporting information for Chapter 4: "Blame and credit strategies towards the EU: Evidence from 10 years of parliamentary speeches".

C.1 Description of data

Table C.1 provides an overview of the data.

Country (Parliament)	**Parties**	**Statements with EU responsibility/total statements**
UK (House of Commons)	Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, Scottish National Party, UK Independence Party	1,547/5,703
Austria (Nationalrat)	Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, FPÖ, Die Grünen, Liberales Forum, Das Neue Österreich und Liberales Forum, ÖVP, SPÖ	583/3,717
Spain (Congreso de los Diputados)	Ciudadanos, CiU, Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea Partido Nacionalista Vasco, PP, PSOE, Unión, Progreso y Democracia	912/6,717
Netherlands (Tweede Kamer)	50PLUS, CDA, ChristenUnie, Democrats 66, DENK, Forum voor Democratie, GroenLinks, PvdA, Partij voor de Dieren, Partij voor de Vrijheid, Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij, Socialistische Partij, VVD	432/3,206
Total	32	3,447/19,343

Table C.1: Description of data

C.2 Crisis dictionaries

This section provides a list of words that were used to create dictionaries in order to identify the speeches that refer to an economic crisis. I created a dictionary in English and then asked native speakers in either Dutch, German or Spain to translate it into each language of interest. To find terms for the dictionaries, I used a method which resembles the one in Rauh (2015). I focused on the UK speeches and I read one plenary debate with an explicit reference to the economy on the agenda item for each of the years in the investigation period (2008-2018). I selected the UK speeches as the baseline given that English is arguably one of the most common languages. Therefore, it would be easier for the human translators to have the words in a language that they understand prior to translating them in their native language.

In total, I read 10 debates and more than 1,200 speeches. Out of all these speeches, I selected all the single words or phrases that were indicative of an economic crisis during the period under investigation (2008-2018) and added them to a table. Then, I asked natives from Spain, Austria and the Netherlands to translate each of the words in their native language. The translators had at least a Masters level education in political science. Prior to using the dictionary for the analyses, I automatically stemmed the words in each language. This is a common pre-processing step in quantitative text analysis which allows us to simplify words to their common origin. For instance, stemming will transform both the word inflation and the word inflationary, into "inflatio" which is their stem.

I also combined tokens which were indicative of a single concept to create bi-grams and uni-grams. For example, the tokens "econom" and "crisi" were combined in order to form a bigram indicating "econom crisi", i.e., an economic crisis. Although the word "crisis" was also present in the texts on its own, I did not include it. Given that it is a generic word that can indicate a crisis of any sort (such as a water management crisis fro instance), I eliminated it to avoid false positives. Please note that the dictionary lengths vary due to language specifics. The subsections that follow include the instructions for the translators and the list of the dictionary terms.

C.2.1 Instructions for translators

"In this document, you will find a table. In the first column, you will see a list of English terms that refer to an economic crisis. You are asked to use your language

expertise in order to translate the terms into your native language. Please insert your responses in the second column. Thank you very much for your time and help!"

C.2.2 English dictionary of crisis references

eurozon crisi; econom crisi; financi crisi; bank crisi; hous crisi; wage crisi; great depress; recess; boom; bust; debt; qe; quantit eas; econom stagnat; econom shock; financi mismanag; econom mismanag; lehman brother; bail-out; bail out; hous asset bubbl; deficit; unemploy; econom downturn; econom stabil; financi assist; devalu; financ oper; sovereign default; econom measur; financi stabil; govern bond; econom failur; financi implic; econom implic; econom recoveri; inflat; crash; auster.

C.2.3 German dictionary of crisis references

kris der eurozon; eurozonenkris; finanzkris; immobilienkris; weltwirtschaftskris; schuld; wirtschaft stabilitat; wirtschaft missmanagement; finanziell missmanagement; wirtschaft schock; ökonom stagnation; qe; gesamtwirtschaft stabilitat; wirtschaft abschwung; arbeitslos; haushaltsdefizit; immobilienblas; rettungsaktion; lehman broth; kris der weltwirtschaft; abschwung; krisenlosungsmechanismus; boom; flaut; boom und bust; auf und ab; inflation; preissteiger; crash; absturz; wirtschaft erholung; erholung; wirtschaft auswirk; wirtschaft konsequenz; auswirk fur die wirtschaft; konsequenz fur die wirtschaft; ökonom implikation; auswirk auf die ökonomi; implikation fur die ökonomi; makrookonom auswirk; makrookonom implikation; gesamtwirtschaft konsequenz; finanziell auswirk; finanziell konsequenz; wirtschaft versag; finanzstabilitat; ökonom massnahm; staatspleit; zahlungsausfall ein staat; massnahm zur kapitalbeschaff; finanzierungsvorgang; geldabwert; finanziell unterstutz; wahrungsabwert; abwertung; kapitalbeschaff; zahlungsausfall des staat; staatsbankrott; wirtschaft massnahm; kris in der eurozon; finanziell stabilitat; wirtschaft scheit; finanziell implikation; abschwung; gesamtwirtschaft implikation; gesamtwirtschaft auswirk; makrookonom konsequenz; konsequenz fur die ökonomi; auswirk fur die ökonomi; wirtschaftskris; ökonom konsequenz; ökonom auswirk; implikation fur die wirtschaft; auswirk auf die wirtschaft; bankenkris; wirtschaft implikation; aufschwung; wirtschaft aufschwung; knall; große depression; zusammenbruch; geldentwert; teuer; verschuld; aufschwung und abschwung; ökonom stabilitat; aufschwung; lohnkris; mechanismus zur krisenbewalt; ökonom missmanagement; wirtschaftschock; wirtschaft stagnation; quantitativ locker; makrookonom stabilitat; wirtschaft abschwung; abschwung; hilfsaktion; blas; defizit; bail-out; weltwirtschaftskris; sparmaßnahmen

C.2.4 Spanish dictionary of crisis references

crisis de la eurozon; crisis econom; crisis financ; crisis bancari; crisis de la viviend; gran depresion; deud; estabil econom; mal gestion econom; mal gestion financ; shock econom; choqu econom; estanc econom; quantitativ easing; qe; expansion cuantit; estabil macroeconom; caid econom; desemple; burbuj; deficit; burbuj de activ inmobiliari; rescat; lehm brothers; la gran recesion; recesion; crisis salarial; crisis de los sueld; mecan de resolu de crisis; boom; el boom econom; fracas; aug y caid; boom and bust; inflacion; crash econom; crash; recuper econom; implic econom; implic macroeconom; implic financ; fracas; fall econom; estabil financ; med econom; suspension de pag; default; oper de financi; devalu; asistent financ; auster

C.2.5 Dutch dictionary of crisis references

eurozon crisis; financiel crisis; bankencrisis; Grot Depressie; economisch stabiliteit; financieel wanbeleid; economishc stagnatie; qe; economisch neergang; bubbel; zeepbelvorm op de woningmarkt; bail-out; lehman brother; recessie; crisisoplossingsmechanism; bust; inflatie; economisch herstel; macro-economisch implicaties; economisch fal; economisch maatregel; financieringsoperaties; financiel steun; bezuin; economisch crisis; sober; devaluatie; kredietcrisis; staatsbankroet; financiel stabiliteit; financiel implicaties; economisch implicaties; instort; bom and bust; bom; loonrcisis; grot recessie; borgtocht; uit de nod help; tekort; werklos; macro-economisch stabiliteit; kwantitatiev versoepel; economisch schok; economisch wanbeleid; schuld; crisisjar; woningcrisis

C.3 The codebook

The section that follows includes the instructions for the hand-coding. I used this codebook in the original data collection process and additional hand-coders used it in the inter-coder reliability tests.

C.3.1 General information

Thank you for helping to code this dataset! This codebook consists of three sections. In this first section, you are introduced to the dataset that you will be coding. The following sections discuss your role as a coder, highlight things to keep in mind when coding and show some examples of statements and how they are classified. You are advised to have this codebook next to you at all at times when coding the statements. In case you have any questions, you can refer to the codebook or you can email me.

The dataset that you will be coding includes statements by MPs in parliamentary plenary sessions in country X, during the 2008-2018 period, which refer to an economic crisis.[59] Out of all the statements that refer to a crisis, we have selected the ones that refer to the EU in one form or another. For instance, these can be statements that refer to the EU as a whole (such as European elites and the EU) or to its institutions (such as the ECB). You will be asked to code these statements, i.e., the ones that refer to an economic crisis and to the EU. The statements of the MPs from country X have been translated from their native language into English. You are being asked to focus on the statements that are in English.

You will be given the dataset in an EXCEL format which contains multiple columns, including the statement, the name of the speaker, their party and country affiliation. The coding unit is at the statement level. The statements that you will be asked to code can be found in the column which is titled "STATEMENT". The statements will be comprised of three sentences: a sentence before the reference to the EU, a sentence with the reference to the EU and a sentence after the reference to the EU. In order to make your judgment about the coding of the statements, you need to take into consideration all three sentences, not only the sentence that has a reference to the EU.

Occasionally, due to the way in which speeches were collected, you may encounter formatting errors, for example a statement that is only comprised of one sentence. In these rare cases, please do not code the statement. Instead, mention the formatting error that you encountered in the column which is titled "NOTES". This column is dedicated to notes. Generally speaking, you are advised to please leave the statements in their original format.

C.3.2 Your role as a coder

Your role is to read the statements and then decide whether they are an instance of responsibility attribution towards the EU in the context of an economic crisis. Responsibility can be attributed for both positive outcomes (credit) and negative ones (blame). Therefore, you will be deciding whether the statement constitutes an instance of blame or credit towards the EU. There are further details on each of these options, with examples in Section 3 of this codebook. To reach this decision, you need to follow these steps:

[59] Insert the name of the relevant country instead of X. Available options are: Austria, Netherlands, Spain or the UK.

Step 1: Read the statement which can be found in the column titled "STATEMENT"

Step 2: Decide whether the statement refers to an economic crisis

To help you make this decision, you can refer to this list of stemmed keywords and phrases: eurozon crisi; econom crisi; financi crisi; bank crisi; hous crisi; wage crisi; great depress; recess; boom; bust; debt; qe; quantit eas; econom stagnat; econom shock; financi mismanag; econom mismanag; lehman brother; bail-out; bail out; hous asset bubbl; deficit; unemploy; econom downturn; econom stabil; financi assist; devalu; financ oper; sovereign default; econom measur; financi stabil; govern bond; econom failur; financi implic; econom implic; econom recoveri; inflat; crash; auster.

Please note that it is not necessary for a statement to include these words in order for it to be referring to a crisis and you might come across synonyms of these words or other words, which put forward the same concept. In these instances, the statement should still be coded as referring to a crisis. You need to take the following action:

(i) If the statement refers to an economic crisis, insert the value 1 in the column titled "ECONOMIC CRISIS" and proceed to Step 3

(ii) If the statement does not refer to an economic crisis, insert the value 0 in the column titled "ECONOMIC CRISIS"

Step 2: Confirm that the statement is either positive or negative in tone

Look at whether the statement is positive, negative or neutral in tone. To do this, look at the column titled "SENTIMENT 1". If the value of sentiment is less than 0, it means that the statement is negative. Read the statement to confirm that the statement is negative. If the value of the sentiment is 0, it means that the statement is neutral. Read the statement to confirm that the statement is neutral. If the value of sentiment is more than 0, it means that the statement is positive. Read the statement to confirm that the statement is positive. If the actual tone of the statement does not correspond to the value of the sentiment, note in the column "SENTIMENT 2" the option you think is correct. Then, follow these instructions:

(i) If the statement is negative, proceed to Step 3 and skip Step 4

(ii) If the statement is positive, proceed to Step 4 and skip Step 3

(iii) If the statement is neutral, stop here

Step 3: Identify blame attribution

You have observed that this statement is negative in tone. Now, you need to decide whether the statement is an instance of blame attribution towards the EU. Following Hobolt and Tilley (2014), a responsibility attribution is coded as meaningful when something is attributed to an actor in an evaluative manner. In our case, you need to decide whether the negative sentiment is directed towards the EU (including towards the EU and other actors). Please look at Step 5 to understand what we mean by "EU". In order to help you decide, you can refer to Section 3 which provides examples as to what constitutes an instance of blame attribution as opposed to just an instance of negative tone.

(i) If the statement is negative in tone and this negativity is directed towards the EU, insert the value 1 into the column "BLAME". Proceed to Step 5.

(ii) If the statement is negative in tone and this negativity is not directed towards the EU, insert the value 0 into the column "BLAME". Stop here.

Step 4: Identify credit attribution

You have observed that this statement is positive in tone. Now, you need to decide whether the statement is an instance of credit attribution towards the EU. Following Hobolt and Tilley (2014), a responsibility attribution is coded as meaningful when something is attributed to an actor in an evaluative manner. In our case, you need to decide whether the positive sentiment is directed towards the EU (including towards the EU and other actors). Please look at Step 5 to understand what we mean by "EU". In order to help you decide, you can refer to the section which provides examples as to what constitutes an instance of credit attribution as opposed to just an instance of positive tone.

(i) If the statement is positive in tone and this positivity is directed towards the EU, insert the value 1 into the column "CREDIT". Proceed to Step 5.

(ii) If the statement is positive in tone and this positivity is not directed towards the EU, insert the value 0 into the column "CREDIT". Stop here.

Step 5: Identify the target(s) of the attribution

Decide who the target of the blame/credit attribution is. To help you decide on the EU targets, you can have a look at this list "European Commission", "Eurozone", "Euro area", "European Parliament", "ECB", "European elites", "EU technocrats", "European Council", "Eurocrats", "EU", "Council of the EU", "European treaties", "Troika", "European Stability Mechanism". Please bear in mind that this list is not exhaustive and there might be other words that might refer to an EU target. Please use your knowledge of EU politics to identify the name of the EU actor.

(i) If you have selected option (i) in either Step 3 or 4, write down the name of the target that is being blamed or credited in the column titled "EU TARGET". If you think that there is more than one EU actor being blamed/credited, note all of them down.

This is the last step, you can stop here! Thank you for your help! :)

C.3.3 Things to keep in mind

(i) When coding statements, please base your evaluation on what MPs are communicating at face value, rather than on any subtext based on your knowledge of the speaker or their party or their country. For example, you may think that a statement has Eurosceptic undertones, but if the speaker is not explicitly criticising the EU then it should not be coded as an instance of blame attribution.

(ii) Classification categories have been designed in order to be mutually exclusive. In the rare instance that a statement does not fit into either of the categories, do not code it and enter the value "NA" into the column called "NOTES". Please find below a statement that includes both a credit and a blame attribution. Whilst the statement "the hard work of the British people" is a credit attribution, the statement "depths of Labour's recession" is a blame attribution.

"It is an economy with employment at a record high and unemployment at an 11-year low; and an economy that, through the hard work of the British people, has bounced back from the depths of Labour's recession. It is an economy that has confounded commentators at home and abroad with its strength and resilience since the British people decided, exactly five months ago today, to leave the European Union and chart a new future for our country. That decision will change the course of Britain's history." (2016-02-25, Philip Hammond, UK, Conservatives)

(iii) When coding, please consider both retrospective and prospective attributions of responsibility. For example, the following phrase is an instance of prospective attribution: "We will overcome the economic crisis thanks to the EU". It should be coded as an instance of credit. Meanwhile, the phrase "We did our best to overcome the economic crisis thanks to the EU" is an instance of retrospective attribution. It should also be coded as an instance of credit.

(iv) When defining codes, let your decisions be guided by parsimony and reliability.

C.3.4 Examples of statements

Blame strategy (EU target):
"The word effective means making things work. On any reasonable standard, the EU has failed on the two fundamental tests that I would apply. First, it has failed on democracy and, secondly it has failed on the economy, especially during the economic crisis that we are experiencing. The EU appears - people have thought this in the past but it has not happened - to be breaking up under the tensions." (2009-03-04, Bill Cash, UK, Conservatives)

Credit strategy (EU target):
"The fact that the euro zone exists, that there is this strong currency - which would of course have been even worse if it had not there - is a positive factor, and I think that needs to be emphasized in particular. But this also shows that the European Union has ultimately come together to take these steps which - I assume - will improve these supervisory structures and supervisory duties, as will certainly be the case in individual national countries. It's just a shame that all of this has happened now, because economically things have also improved in Europe and jobs have been created!" (2008-10-20, Josef Cap, Austria, SPÖ)

Blame strategy (EU and other actors):
"Mr. President, please tell Mr. Van Rompuy to change so that the population - as Mr. Van Rompuy says - does not suffer any more, at least unnecessarily because of a European political and economic policy error - thank Mr Van Rompuy or Mrs Merkel, who, I insist, are the ones who seem to be in charge. Mr Rajoy, apart from blaming European institutions, part of the Spanish crisis is attributable to your government, your party and other internal circumstances." (2013-04-10, Pedro María Azpiazu Uriarte, Spain, Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea Partido Nacionalista Vasco)

Credit strategy (EU and other actors):
"So it is primarily the optimism and perseverance of the Dutch himself that can help us out of this recession. And it is the efforts of our cabinet and the other European government leaders to regain confidence and peace in the eurozone. That is a necessary condition, it is the most important thing the government must do now." (2012-02-29, Mark Harbers, Netherlands, VVD)

Negative sentiment (no EU target):
"Your honour, you have been in government for five years and have led Spain to the highest public

deficit in history and the highest unemployment rate in the European Union." (2009-09-30, Vicente Martínez-Pujalte, Spain, PP)

Positive sentiment (no EU target):
"We in Austria did a lot of things right. We are already saving, of course we will see that we can come back down with the deficit after the crisis - where we are very successful; more successful than most other countries - but at the same time we also see that there is more employment, that there is more growth than in the other countries. And Austria is one of the few countries in the European Union where there is more unemployment today than before the crisis. In almost all countries there is less unemployment, but much more unemployment than before the crisis." (2013-12-17, Kai Jan Krainer, Austria, SPÖ)

Negative sentiment (no target):
"Thus, while the unemployment rate in Germany is at 6.9%, in the United Kingdom at 7.8% and in France at 10%, Spain continues to double the European average with 20.3% unemployment, an embarrassing figure. Since the crisis began, ladies and gentlemen, 72% of the unemployed in the euro zone are Spanish." (2010-09-21, María Fátima Báñez García, Spain, PP)

Positive sentiment (no target):
"Unemployment has been rising in this country, as it has been around the world. Last week's figures, however, showed that UK unemployment had fallen, and is lower than unemployment in the euro area and unemployment in the United States. Even after the severity of this recession, the claimant count stands today at 1.6 million people." (2010-03-24, Alistair Darling, UK, Labour)

C.4 Interrater reliability tests

To validate the hand-coding, I run interrater reliability tests on a sample of translated statements which mention the EU and crisis-related terms. 2,903 statements were coded out of 19,343 which is 15% of the total statements. The number of statements that were hand-coded for each country represent 15% of the total statements in that country. The tests were conducted over three rounds with different hand-coders. The hand-coders had at least a Masters level education in political science. Table C.2 presents the results for Krippendorf's Alpha and Cohen's Kappa. These are standard measures used to capture agreement between hand-coders in qualitative studies.[60] According to Landis and Koch (1977), these values indicate substantial agreement amongst coders.

[60]For more details on these metrics and how they are calculated please see Krippendorff (1980, 1970) and Cohen (1960).

Country	Number of statements	Krippendorf's Alpha	Cohen's Kappa
UK	856	0.82	0.76
Austria	558	0.75	0.65
Spain	1,008	0.73	0.65
Netherlands	481	0.79	0.68
Total	2,903	0.78	0.69

Table C.2: Interrater reliability tests

C.5 Blame and credit strategies across time and countries

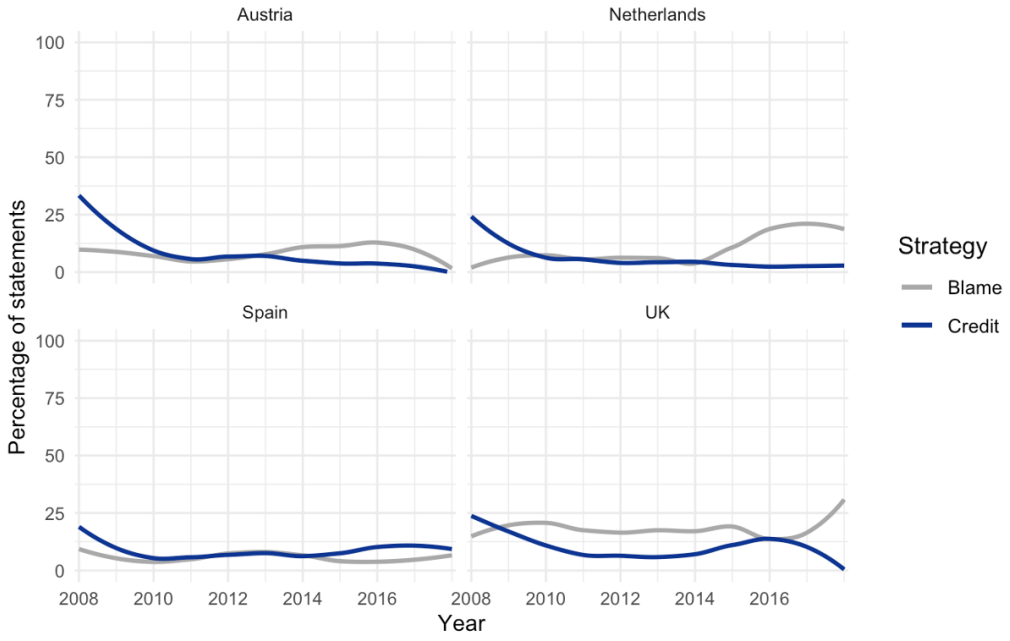

Figure C.1: Blame and credit across time and countries

C.6 Robustness tests

To ensure the validity of the results, I run numerous robustness tests. First, I run the models with country random effects, rather than country fixed effects, in addition to the speaker and party random effects (Table C.3). Second, I calculate the multilevel regressions as simple logit regression models, without any random effects (Table C.4). Third, I re-run the models and exclude one country at a time to test whether the

results are driven by specific countries. Table C.5 excludes the UK, Table C.6 the Netherlands, Table C.7 Austria and Table C.8 Spain. The results for the variables of interest remain significant and in the expected direction in all the tests.

	Dependent variable:			
	Credit EU	**Blame EU**	**Credit EU**	**Blame EU**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
Governing party	0.557***	−0.393***	1.381***	−1.447***
	(0.127)	(0.101)	(0.246)	(0.255)
Pro-EU party	0.375	−0.915**	1.378*	−1.386*
	(0.398)	(0.366)	(0.712)	(0.736)
Right-wing party	−0.143	−0.370	0.422	−0.448
	(0.243)	(0.226)	(0.449)	(0.465)
Populist party	−1.391***	0.338	−2.321***	2.338***
	(0.465)	(0.394)	(0.793)	(0.821)
National election year	0.174**	0.010	0.004	0.003
	(0.074)	(0.066)	(0.152)	(0.154)
Council of the EU presidency	−0.353*	−0.161	−0.641	0.638
	(0.207)	(0.218)	(0.515)	(0.523)
Public Euroscepticism	3.015***	−1.123**	7.676***	−7.970***
	(0.501)	(0.472)	(1.059)	(1.082)
GDP change	−0.290***	−0.197***	−0.273***	0.287***
	(0.041)	(0.040)	(0.089)	(0.091)
ECB target			1.013***	−1.092***
			(0.202)	(0.206)
European Commission target			−0.030	0.008
			(0.276)	(0.281)
European Council target			0.866***	−1.168***
			(0.258)	(0.274)
Constant	−4.548***	−1.614***	−4.407***	4.532***
	(0.462)	(0.419)	(0.840)	(0.870)
Observations	19,343	19,343	3,474	3,474
Log Likelihood	−4,738.115	−5,229.120	−1,396.429	−1,378.285
Akaike Inf. Crit.	9,500.229	10,482.240	2,822.858	2,786.570
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	9,594.670	10,576.680	2,915.154	2,878.866
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.3: Regression robustness tests (country random effects)

	Dependent variable:			
	Credit EU	**Blame EU**	**Credit EU**	**Blame EU**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
Governing party	0.044***	−0.047***	0.268***	−0.265***
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Pro-EU party	0.082***	−0.082***	0.365***	−0.377***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Right-wing party	0.004	−0.009	0.033	−0.034*
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.021)	(0.021)
Populist party	0.006	0.034***	−0.185***	0.180***
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.033)	(0.033)
National election year	0.006	0.010**	−0.013	0.014
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Council of the EU presidency	−0.043***	0.009	−0.151***	0.149***
	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.055)	(0.055)
Public Euroscepticism	0.196***	−0.039	0.668***	−0.656***
	(0.027)	(0.030)	(0.106)	(0.106)
GDP change	−0.031***	−0.012***	−0.033***	0.033***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.009)	(0.009)
ECB target			0.095***	−0.098***
			(0.023)	(0.023)
European Commission target			−0.021	0.020
			(0.034)	(0.034)
European Council target			0.217***	−0.239***
			(0.030)	(0.030)
Constant	−0.051***	0.155***	−0.041	1.045***
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.054)	(0.054)
Observations	19,343	19,343	3,474	3,474
Log Likelihood	−1,842.445	−3,710.224	−1,897.717	−1,898.125
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,708.889	7,444.447	3,825.435	3,826.251
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.4: Regression robustness tests (without random effects)

	Dependent variable:			
	Credit EU	**Blame EU**	**Credit EU**	**Blame EU**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
Governing party	0.307*	−0.727***	1.325***	−1.403***
	(0.170)	(0.184)	(0.367)	(0.376)
Pro-EU party	0.518	−0.331	0.523	−0.538
	(0.470)	(0.407)	(0.777)	(0.791)
Right-wing party	0.120	−0.383*	0.585	−0.607
	(0.207)	(0.229)	(0.401)	(0.407)
Populist party	−1.403***	0.718*	−2.816***	2.804***
	(0.479)	(0.408)	(0.796)	(0.811)
National election year	0.119	−0.049	−0.055	0.112
	(0.086)	(0.085)	(0.184)	(0.187)
Council of the EU presidency	−0.347*	−0.224	−0.507	0.539
	(0.207)	(0.222)	(0.501)	(0.508)
Public Euroscepticism	3.000***	−0.998*	6.192***	−6.458***
	(0.566)	(0.599)	(1.228)	(1.251)
GDP change	−0.293***	−0.200***	−0.272**	0.272**
	(0.047)	(0.053)	(0.110)	(0.111)
ECB target			0.890***	−0.938***
			(0.228)	(0.231)
European Commission target			0.270	−0.410
			(0.451)	(0.468)
European Council target			0.688**	−0.862***
			(0.313)	(0.323)
Constant	−4.251***	−2.191***	−2.648***	2.732***
	(0.563)	(0.531)	(1.002)	(1.019)
Observations	13,640	13,640	1,927	1,927
Log Likelihood	−3,199.421	−2,951.254	−786.490	−780.130
Akaike Inf. Crit.	6,424.843	5,928.508	1,604.981	1,592.259
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	6,522.613	6,026.278	1,694.000	1,681.279
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.5: Regression robustness tests (without the UK)

	Dependent variable:			
	Credit EU	**Blame EU**	**Credit EU**	**Blame EU**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
Governing party	0.554***	−0.358***	1.430***	−1.458***
	(0.135)	(0.111)	(0.271)	(0.279)
Pro-EU party	1.662***	−1.333**	2.866**	−2.847**
	(0.323)	(0.618)	(1.158)	(1.188)
Right-wing party	0.147	−0.529	0.851	−0.853
	(0.217)	(0.373)	(0.686)	(0.707)
Populist party	−0.700	−0.002	−1.456	1.433
	(0.445)	(0.578)	(1.091)	(1.127)
National election year	0.230***	0.014	0.086	−0.129
	(0.083)	(0.075)	(0.172)	(0.174)
Council of the EU presidency	−0.197	−0.319	−0.334	0.286
	(0.212)	(0.255)	(0.551)	(0.556)
Public Euroscepticism	2.582***	−1.031*	7.574***	−7.700***
	(0.555)	(0.528)	(1.199)	(1.216)
GDP change	−0.297***	−0.225***	−0.220**	0.251**
	(0.045)	(0.043)	(0.096)	(0.098)
ECB target			1.194***	−1.292***
			(0.231)	(0.235)
European Commission target			−0.064	0.095
			(0.303)	(0.306)
European Council target			1.154***	−1.382***
			(0.284)	(0.299)
Constant	−5.495***	−1.447*	−5.309***	5.337***
	(0.498)	(0.793)	(1.480)	(1.523)
Observations	16,137	16,137	3,042	3,042
Log Likelihood	−4,053.345	−4,466.013	−1,197.096	−1,185.050
Akaike Inf. Crit.	8,132.691	8,958.027	2,426.192	2,402.100
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	8,232.646	9,057.982	2,522.516	2,498.425
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.6: Regression robustness tests (without the Netherlands)

	Dependent variable:			
	Credit EU	**Blame EU**	**Credit EU**	**Blame EU**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
Governing party	0.456***	−0.385***	1.313***	−1.376***
	(0.127)	(0.104)	(0.252)	(0.260)
Pro-EU party	1.123***	−0.824**	1.653**	−1.731**
	(0.264)	(0.396)	(0.776)	(0.796)
Right-wing party	−0.278	−0.188	0.178	−0.182
	(0.189)	(0.257)	(0.541)	(0.556)
Populist party	−0.840*	0.602	−2.214**	2.256**
	(0.443)	(0.447)	(0.943)	(0.971)
National election year	0.142*	0.041	−0.085	0.097
	(0.086)	(0.076)	(0.176)	(0.180)
Council of the EU presidency	−0.404*	−0.131	−0.695	0.697
	(0.209)	(0.220)	(0.521)	(0.528)
Public Euroscepticism	3.502***	−1.406***	8.352***	−8.647***
	(0.523)	(0.499)	(1.125)	(1.149)
GDP change	−0.196***	−0.186***	−0.172	0.174
	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.106)	(0.109)
ECB target			1.082***	−1.150***
			(0.218)	(0.222)
European Commission target			−0.040	0.019
			(0.292)	(0.297)
European Council target			0.856***	−1.166***
			(0.262)	(0.278)
Constant	−5.994***	−1.742***	−5.236***	5.462***
	(0.433)	(0.546)	(1.105)	(1.133)
Observations	15,626	15,626	2,891	2,891
Log Likelihood	−3,860.046	−4,315.314	−1,176.287	−1,157.728
Akaike Inf. Crit.	7,746.092	8,656.627	2,384.574	2,347.457
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	7,845.629	8,756.164	2,480.083	2,442.966
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.7: Regression robustness tests (without Austria)

	Dependent variable:			
	Credit EU	**Blame EU**	**Credit EU**	**Blame EU**
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
Governing party	0.525***	−0.294***	1.320***	−1.416***
	(0.142)	(0.106)	(0.267)	(0.270)
Pro-EU party	1.578***	−1.416***	3.470***	−3.646***
	(0.291)	(0.238)	(0.543)	(0.539)
Right-wing party	0.178	−0.278	0.370	−0.402
	(0.204)	(0.191)	(0.391)	(0.408)
Populist party	−0.577	0.115	−1.004	0.904
	(0.451)	(0.293)	(0.714)	(0.760)
National election year	0.161*	0.027	−0.036	0.049
	(0.089)	(0.074)	(0.174)	(0.176)
Council of the EU presidency	−12.157	0.627	−14.834	14.839
	(359.894)	(0.436)	(55.864)	(909.371)
Public Euroscepticism	5.011***	−0.534	9.825***	−10.359***
	(0.799)	(0.643)	(1.528)	(1.529)
GDP change	−0.388***	−0.182***	−0.406***	0.431***
	(0.048)	(0.047)	(0.103)	(0.106)
ECB target			0.900***	−1.013***
			(0.262)	(0.263)
European Commission target			−0.091	0.051
			(0.299)	(0.298)
European Council target			0.698**	−1.283***
			(0.354)	(0.394)
Constant	−6.059***	−1.903***	−5.921***	6.267***
	(0.481)	(0.408)	(0.910)	(0.925)
Observations	12,626	12,626	2,562	2,562
Log Likelihood	−3,055.605	−3,939.488	−1,008.799	−989.654
Akaike Inf. Crit.	6,137.209	7,904.976	2,049.597	2,011.309
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	6,233.975	8,001.741	2,143.174	2,104.886
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.8: Regression robustness tests (without Spain)

References

Akbik, A. (2022). *The European Parliament as an Accountability Forum: Overseeing the Economic and Monetary Union.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alcañiz, I. and Hellwig, T. (2011). Who's to Blame? The Distribution of Responsibility in Developing Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, 41(02), 389-411.

Alexandrova, P., Rasmussen, A. and Toshkov, D. (2016). Agenda Responsiveness in the European Council: Public Priorities, Policy Problems and Political Attention. *West European Politics*, 39(04), 605–627.

Alexandrova, P. (2015). Upsetting the Agenda: The Clout of External Focusing Events in the European Council. *Journal of Public Policy*, 35(03), 505–530.

Alexandrova, P. Carammia, M., Princen, S. and Timmermans, A. (2014). The European Council Agenda: Introducing a New Approach and Dataset. *European Union Politics*, 15(01), 152-167.

Alexandrova, P. and Timmermans, A. (2013). National Interest versus the Common Good: The Presidency in European Council Agenda Setting. *European Journal of Political Research*, 52(03), 316–338.

Alexandrova, P., Carammia, M. and Timmermans, A. (2012). Policy Punctuations and Issue Diversity on the European Council Agenda. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(01), 69-88.

Amtenbrink, F. and van Duin, K. (2009). The European Central Bank Before the European Parliament: Theory and Practice After Ten Years of Monetary Dialogue. *European Law Review*, 34, 561-583.

Anderson, C. J. (2007). The End of Economic Voting? Contingency Dilemmas and the Limits of Democratic Accountability. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10, 271-296.

Anderson, C. J. (2000). Economic Voting and Political Context: A Comparative Perspective. *Electoral Studies*, 19(02), 151-170.

Angino, S. and Robitu, R. (2023). One Question at a Time! A Text Mining Analysis of the ECB Q&A Session. *ECB Working Paper Series*, No. 2852.

Ansolabehere, S. and Iyengar, S. (1994). Riding the Wave and Claiming Ownership over Issues: The Joint Effects of Advertising and News Coverage in Campaigns. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 58(03), 335–357.

Auel, K. and Raunio, T. (2014). Debating the State of the Union? Comparing Parliamentary Debates on EU Issues in Finland, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 20(01), 13-28.

Bache, I. (2012). Multi-Level Governance in the European Union. In D. Levi-Faur (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baglioni, S. and Hurrelmann, A. (2016). The Eurozone Crisis and Citizen Engagement in EU Affairs. *West European Politics*, 39(01), 104–124.

Bank for International Settlements. (2009). *Issues in the Governance of Central Banks: A Report from the Central Bank Governance Group*. [Online]. Available at: `https://www.bis.org/publ/othp04.pdf`

Bartolini, S. (2005). *Restructuring Europe: Centre Formation, System Building, and Political Structuring between the Nation State and the European Union*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press.

Bellovary, A. K., Young, N. A. and Goldenberg, A. (2021). Left-and Right-Leaning News Organizations use Negative Emotional Content and Elicit User Engagement Similarly. *Affective Science*, 2(04), 391-396.

Bestvater, S., and Monroe, B. (2022). Sentiment is not Stance: Target-Aware Opinion Classification for Political Text Analysis. *Political Analysis*, 31(02), 235-256.

Bianchi, F., Kind, T. and Kung, H. (2019). Threats to Central Bank Independence: High-Frequency Identification with Twitter. *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series*, No. 26308.

Bild. (2019). *EU-Chief Juncker urges: More Women in Top Position, Fewer Commissioners*. [Online]. Available at:

https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/eu-chief-juncker-more-women-in-top-position-fewer-commissioners-62339074.bild.html

Bisbee, J., Fraccaroli, N. and Kern, A. (2022). Yellin' at Yellen: Gender Bias in the Federal Reserve Congressional Hearings. *SSRN Working Paper*.

Blumenau, J. and Lauderdale, B. E. (2018). Never let a Good Crisis go to Waste: Agenda Setting and Legislative Voting in Response to the EU Crisis. *Journal of Politics*, 80(02), 462-478.

Boin, A., Hart, P., Mcconell, A. and Preston, T. (2010). Leadership Style, Crisis Response and Blame Management: The Case of Hurricane Katrina. *Public Administration*, 88(03), 706-723.

Börzel, T. A. (2016). From EU Governance of Crisis to Crisis of EU Governance: Regulatory Failure, Redistributive Conflict and Eurosceptic Publics. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(S1), 8–31.

Braun, B. (2017). *Two Sides of the Same Coin? Independence and Accountability of the European Central Bank*. [Online]. Available at: https://transparency.eu/ecb/

Budge, I. and Farlie, D. (1981). Party Competition: Selective Emphasis or Direct Confrontation? An Alternative View with Data. In H. Daalder and P. Mair (eds.), *Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change*. London: Sage.

Castanho Silva, B. and Proksch, S. (2021). Politicians Unleashed? Political Communication on Twitter and in Parliament in Western Europe. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 10(04), 776-792.

Cheysson, A. and Fraccaroli, N. (2019). Ideology in Times of Crisis: A Principal Component Analysis of Votes in the European Parliament, 2004–2019. *CEIS Working Paper*, No. 461.

Claeys, G., Berès, P., Jourdan, S., de Boer, N., Demetriades, P., Diessner, S., Schmidt, V. and van 't Klooster, J. (2021). *The ECB needs Political Guidance on Secondary Objectives*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.bruegel.org

Claeys, G. and Domínguez-Jiménez, M. (2020). How Can the European Parliament Better Oversee the European Central Bank? *Study for the Committee on Economic*

and Monetary Affairs, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies. European Parliament, Luxembourg.

Claeys, G., Hallerberg, M. and Tschekassin, O. (2014). European Central Bank Accountability: How the Monetary Dialogue Could Evolve. *Bruegel Policy Contribution*, 2014(04).

Closa, C. and Maatsch, A. (2014). In a Spirit of Solidarity? Justifying the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) in National Parliamentary Debates. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 52(04), 826-842.

Cohen, J. (1960). A Coefficient of Agreement for Nominal Scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement.* 20(01), 37-46.

Collignon, S. and Diessner, S. (2016). The ECB's Monetary Dialogue with the European Parliament: Efficiency and Accountability during the Euro Crisis? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(06), 1296–1312.

Cutler, F. (2008). Whodunnit? Voters and Responsibility in Canadian Federalism. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 41(03), 627-654.

Cutler, F. (2004). Government Responsibility and Electoral Accountability in Federations. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 34(02), 19-38.

Daugbjerg, C. and Swinbank, A. (2007). The Politics of CAP Reform: Trade Negotiations, Institutional Settings and Blame Avoidance. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 45(01), 1-22.

De Grauwe, P. (2022). *Economics of Monetary Union.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

De Grauwe, P. and Gros, D. (2009). Accountability and Transparency in Central Banking. *Study for the Policy Department (Economic and Scientific Policy).* European Parliament, Luxembourg.

De Haan, J. and Eijffinger, S. (2017). Central Bank Independence Under Threat? *CEPR Policy Insight*, No. 87.

Dehousse, R. (2007). *Delegation of Powers in the European Union: The Need for a Multi-Principals Model.* [Online]. Available at: `www.sciencespo.fr`.

De Wilde, P., Leupold, A. and Schmidtke, H. (2016). Introduction: The Differentiated Politicisation of European Governance. *West European Politics*, 39(01), 3–22.

De Wilde, P. (2014). The Operating Logics of National Parliaments and Mass Media in the Politicisation of Europe. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 20(01), 46–61.

De Wilde, P. and Zürn, M. (2012). Can the Politicization of European Integration be Reversed? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 50(01), 137–153.

De Wilde, P. (2011). No Polity for Old Politics? A Framework for Analyzing the Politicization of European Integration. *Journal of European Integration*, 33(05), 559–575.

De Vries, E., Schoonvelde, M. and Schumacher, G. (2018). No Longer Lost in Translation: Evidence that Google Translate Works for Comparative Bag-of-Words Text Applications. *Political Analysis*, 26(04), 417–430.

De Vries, C. E., van der Brug, W., van Egmond, M. H. and van der Eijk, C. (2011). Individual and Contextual Variation in EU Issue Voting: The Role of Political Information. *Electoral Studies*, 30(01), 16-28.

De Vries, C. E. and Edwards, E. E. (2009). Taking Europe To Its Extremes: Extremist Parties and Public Euroscepticism. *Party Politics*, 15(01), 5-28.

Dickens, C. (1859). *A Tale of Two Cities*. London: Penguin Classics.

Diessner, S. (2023). On the Monetary Dialogue between the European Central Bank and the European Parliament: From Monetary Monologue to Dialogue – and Beyond? In A. Bongardt and F. Torres (eds.), *The Political Economy of Europe's Future and Identity: Integration in Crisis Mode.* Florence: EUI Press, and Lisbon: UCP Press.

Diessner, S. (2022). The Promises and Pitfalls of the ECB's "Legitimacy-as-accountability" towards the European Parliament Post-crisis. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 28(03), 402–420.

Diessner, S. and Lisi, G. (2020). Masters of the "Masters of the Universe"? Monetary, Fiscal and Financial Dominance in the Eurozone. *Socio-Economic Review*, 18(02), 315–335.

Dolezal, M. (2012). Restructuring the European Political Space: The Supply Side of European Electoral Politics. In H., Kriesi, E. Grande, M. Dolezal, M. Helbling,

D. Höglinger, S. Hutter and B. Wüest (eds.), *Political Conflict in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Döring, H., Huber, C. and Manow, P. (2022). *Parliaments and Governments Database (ParlGov): Information on Parties, Elections and Cabinets in Established Democracies. Development Version*. [Online]. Available at: `https://www.parlgov.org/about/`

Drachenberg, R., Anghel, S. and McGlynn, C. (2017). *The European Council's Role in Shaping a Common Future for EU-27.* European Parliamentary Research Service, Brussels.

Duch, R. M. and Stevenson, R. (2008). *The Economic Vote: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition Election Results.* New York, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ehrmann, M., Soudan, M. and Stracca, L. (2013). Explaining European Union Citizens' Trust in the European Central Bank in Normal and Crisis Times. *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 115(03), 781-807.

Eijffinger, S. C. W. and Mujagic, E. (2004). An Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Monetary Dialogue on the ECB's Accountability and Transparency: A Qualitative Approach. *Intereconomics*, 39(04), 190-203.

Eisele, O. and Hajdinjak, S. (2022). Entrenching Positions? The Dynamics of Brexit Negotiations Mirrored in British, Irish, and EU Executives' Speeches. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 31(03), 1027-1040.

Eisele, O., Tolochko, P. and Boomgaarden, H. G. (2022). How do Executives Communicate about Crises? A Framework for Comparative Analysis. *European Journal of Political Research*, 61(04), 952–972.

Eshima, S., Imai, K. and Sasaki, T. (2023). Keyword-Assisted Topic Models. *American Journal of Political Science*, Early view.

European Central Bank. (2021a). An Overview of the ECB's Monetary Policy Strategy. *Economic Bulletin*, 2021(05), 75-89.

European Central Bank. (2021b). Clear, Consistent and Engaging: ECB Monetary Policy Communication in a Changing World. *Occasional Paper Series*, No. 274.

European Central Bank. (2002). The Accountability of the ECB. *Monthly Bulletin*, 2002(11), 45-57.

European Commission. (2023a). *Eurobarometer: Latest Surveys & Publications*. [Online]. Available at: https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/screen/home

European Commission. (2023b). *EU Spending and Revenue 2021-2027*. [Online]. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget

European Parliament. (2019). *Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament*. [Online]. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document

European Union. (2023). *Aims and Values*. [Online]. Available at: https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/aims-and-values_en

European Union. (2016). Consolidated Version of The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. *Official Journal of the European Union*. [Online]. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex3A12016ME2FTXT

European Union. (2012). Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union. *Official Journal of the European Union*. [Online]. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

Eurostat. (2023a). *Employment and Unemployment (LFS): Database*. [Online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/database

Eurostat. (2023b). *EMU Convergence Criterion Series - Quarterly Data*. [Online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/irtltmcbyq/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat (2023c). *Government Finance Statistics - Quarterly Data*. [Online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Governmentfinancestatistics-quarterlydata

Eurostat. (2023d). *HICP - Monthly Data (Annual Rate of Change)*. [Online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/prchicpmanr/default/table?lang=en

Fazekas, Z., Popa, S. A., Schmitt, H., Barbera, P. and Theocharis, Y. (2021). Elite-public Interaction on Twitter: EU Issue Expansion in the Campaign. *European Journal of Political Research*, 60(02), 376–396.

Fenno, R. F. (1978). *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*. New York, New York: Longman Classics.

Fernandes, D. and Vössing, K. (2023). How do Politicians Justify European Integration? The Link between Party Positions and their Political Discourses. *European Political Science Association 13th Annual Conference*.

Ferrara, F. M., Masciandaro, D., Moschella, M. and Romelli, D. (2022). Political Voice on Monetary Policy: Evidence from the Parliamentary Hearings of the European Central Bank. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 74.

Financial Times. (2018). *Eurozone Hails Greece's Exit from Bailout as End of Crisis*. Available at: `https://www.ft.com`

Financial Times. (2008). *It's Over: Lehman to File for Bankruptcy.* Available at: `https://www.ft.com`

Fiorina, M. P. (1981). *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Fletcher, T. (2009). The European Union: From Impotence to Opportunity? In P. Hart and K. Tindall (eds.), *Framing the Global Economic Downturn: Crisis Rhetoric and the Politics of Recessions*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.

Follesdal, A. and Hix, S. (2006). Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44(03), 533-562.

Fraccaroli, N., Giovannini, A., Jamet, J. and Persson, E. (2022a). Does the European Central Bank Speak Differently when in Parliament? *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 28(03), 421–447.

Fraccaroli, N., Giovannini, A., Jamet, J. and Persson, E. (2022b). Ideology and Monetary Policy. The Role of Political Parties' Stances in the European Central Bank's Parliamentary Hearings. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 74, 102-207.

Fraccaroli, N., Giovannini, A. and Jamet, J. (2020). Central Banks in Parliaments: A Text Analysis of the Parliamentary Hearings of the Bank of England, the European Central Bank and the Federal Reserve. *ECB Working Paper Series*, No. 2442.

Fraccaroli, N., Giovannini, A. and Jamet, J. (2018). The evolution of the ECB's Accountability Practices During the Crisis. *ECB Economic Bulletin*, 2018(05), 47-71.

Frieden, J. and Walter, S. (2017). Understanding the Political Economy of the Eurozone Crisis. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20, 371-390.

Gardt, M., Angino, S., Mee, S. and Glöckler, G. (2021). ECB Communication with the Wider Public. *ECB Economic Bulletin*, 2021(08), 122-142.

Greasley, S. (2019). Privatizing the Blame Game: Corporate Reputation in the Outsourced State. *Public Money and Management*, 40(02), 1-11.

Grimmer, J., Messing, S. and Westwood. S. J. (2012). How Words and Money Cultivate a Personal Vote: The Effect of Legislator Credit Claiming on Constituent Credit Allocation. *The American Political Science Review*, 106(04), 703–19.

Haas, E. B. (1958). *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Habermas, J. (1973). *Legitimation Crisis*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press.

Hagemann, S., Hobolt, S. B. and Wratil, C. (2017). Government Responsiveness in the European Union: Evidence From Council Voting. *Comparative Political Studies*, 50(06), 850–876.

Håkansson, C. The Strengthened Role of the European Union in Defence: The Case of the Military Mobility Project. *Defence Studies*, 23(03), 436-456.

Hart, P. and Tindall, K. (2009). From 'Market Correction' to 'Global Catastrophe': Framing the Economic Downturn. In P. Hart and K. Tindall (eds.), *Framing the Global Economic Downturn: Crisis Rhetoric and the Politics of Recessions*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.

Haughton, T. (2014). Money, Margins and the Motors of Politics: The EU and the Development of Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 52(01), 71-87.

Haußner, S. and Klika, C. (2020). Who Is Connected to Whom? A Twitter-Based Network Analysis of Members of the European Parliament Elected in 2019. In M. Kaeding, M. Müller and J. Schmälter (eds.), *Die Europawahl 2019: Ringen um die Zukunft Europas*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Hansson, S. (2019). Brexit and Blame Avoidance: Officeholders? Discursive Strategies of Self-preservation. In V. Koller, S. Kopf and M. Miglbauer (eds.), *Discourses of Brexit*. London: Routledge.

Hansson, S. (2018). Analysing Opposition-government Blame Games: Argument Models and Strategic Maneuvering. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 15(03), 228-246.

Heinkelmann-Wild, T., Kriegmair, L. and Rittberger, B. (2020). The EU Multi-Level System and the Europeanization of Domestic Blame Games. *Politics and Governance*, 8(01), 85-94.

Heinkelmann-Wild, T. and Zangl, B. (2019). Multilevel Blame Games: Blame-shifting in the European Union. *Governance*, 33(04), 953-969.

Heinkelmann-Wild, T., Rittberger, B. and Zangl, B. (2018). The European Blame Game: Explaining Public Responsibility Attributions in the European Union. In A. Kruck, K. Oppermann and A. Spencer (eds.), *Political Mistakes and Policy Failures in International Relations.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hellwig, T. T. and Coffey, E. (2011). Public Opinion, Party Messages, and Responsibility for the Financial Crisis in Britain. *Electoral Studies*, 30(03), 417-426.

Helms, L. (2008). Studying Parliamentary Opposition in Old and New Democracies: Issues and Perspectives. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 14(1–2), 6–19.

Heyne, L., Lobo, M. C. and Pannico, R. (2023). The Left–Right Dimension, Europe and Voting in Bailout Europe. In M. C. Lobo (ed.), *The Impact of EU Politicisation on Voting Behaviour in Europe*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.

Hix, S. and Noury, A. (2009). After Enlargement: Voting Patterns in the Sixth European Parliament. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 34(02), 159–174.

Hobolt, S. B. and Tilley, J. (2014). *Blaming Europe? Responsibility Without Accountability in the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hobolt, S. B. and Klemmensen, R. (2008). Government Responsiveness and Political Competition in Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(03), 309–337.

Hobolt, S. B. (2007). Taking Cues on Europe? Voter Competence and Party Endorsements in Referendums on European Integration. *European Journal of Political Research*, 46(02), 151-182.

Högenauer, A. and Howarth, D. (2016). Unconventional Monetary Policies and the European Central Bank's Problematic Democratic Legitimacy. *Zeitschrift Für Öffentliches Recht (Journal of Public Law)*, 71(03), 425–448.

Höglinger, D. (2016). The Politicisation of European Integration in Domestic Election Campaigns. *West European Politics*, 39(01), 44–63.

Hood, C. (2011). *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy and Self-preservation in Government*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Hood, C. (2007). What Happens When Transparency Meets Blame-Avoidance? *Public Management Review*, 9(02), 191-210.

Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2009). A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(01), 1-23.

Hopkins, D. J., Kim, E. and Kim, S. (2017). Does Newspaper Coverage influence or reflect Public Perceptions of the Economy? *Research and Politics*, 4(04), 1-7.

Hunter, T. (2021). *Home Style: Governments, Parties, and the Domestic Presentation of European Integration*. PhD Dissertation for the London School of Economics European Institute.

Hurrelmann, A., Kerr, S., Gora, A. and Eibl, P. (2020). Framing the Eurozone crisis in National Parliaments: Is the Economic Cleavage Really Declining? *Journal of European Integration*, 42(04), 489-507.

Hurrelmann, A., Gora, A. and Wagner, A. (2015). The Politicization of European Integration: More than an Elite Affair? *Political Studies*, 63(01), 43–59.

Hutter, S. and Kriesi, H. (2019). Politicizing Europe in Times of Crisis. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(07), 996–1017.

Hutter, S., Grande, E. and Kriesi, H. (2016). *Politicizing Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hutter, S. and Grande, E. (2014). Politicizing Europe in the National Electoral Arena: A Comparative Analysis of Five West European Countries, 1970-2010. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 52(05), 1002-1018.

Jennings, K. M. (1999). Political Responses to Pain and Loss: Presidential Address, American Political Science Association. *American Political Science Review*, 93(01), 1-13.

Kahneman, D., and Tversky, A. (1984). Choices, Values, and Frames. *American Psychologist*, 39(04), 341-350.

Kartalis, Y. and Silva, T. (2023). Parties Acting Strategically: National Parliaments' Role in Holding the EU Accountable. In M. C. Lobo (ed.), *The Impact of EU Politicisation on Voting Behaviour in Europe*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.

Kartalis, Y. (2022). *Parliamentary Representative Behaviour in Times of Crisis: A Comparative Perspective with a Focus on Greece and the Eurozone Crisis.* PhD Dissertation for the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon.

Klüver, H. and Sagarzazu, I. (2016). Setting the Agenda or Responding to Voters? Political Parties, Voters and Issue Attention. *West European Politics*, 39(02), 380–398.

Klüver, H. and Spoon, J. J. (2016). Who Responds? Voters, Parties and Issue Attention. *British Journal of Political Science*, 46(03), 633–654.

König, P. (2016). Unpopular Policies and the Imperative of Justification: Putting the Monti Government's Reform Communication in a Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 18(02), 176-194.

Kosmidis, S. (2018). International Constraints and Electoral Decisions: Does the Room to Maneuver Attenuate Economic Voting? *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(03), 519-534.

Kosmidis, S. (2014). Government Constraints and Accountability: Economic Voting in Greece Before and During the IMF Intervention. *West European Politics*, 37(05), 1136-1155.

Kriesi, H. (2016). The Politicization of European Integration. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(S1), 32-47.

Kriesi, H. and Grande, E. (2016). The Euro Crisis: A Boost to the Politicization of European Integration?. In S. Hutter, E. Grande and H. Kriesi (eds.), *Politicizing Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology.* Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.

Krippendorff, K. (1970). Estimating the Reliability, Systematic Error and Random Error of Interval Data. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(01), 61-70.

Ladi, S. and Tsagkroni, V. (2019). Analysing Crisis Parliamentary Discourse in Greece: Whom Should We Blame? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 57(04), 729-748.

Lagarde, C. (2023). *Speech by Christine Lagarde, President of the ECB, at the Plenary Session of the European Parliament.* [Online]. Available at: `https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2023/html/ecb.sp230215~a512d68d9f.en.html`

Landis, J. R. and Koch, G. G. (1977). The Measurement of Observer Agreement for Categorical Data. *Biometrics*, 33(01), 159-174.

Lastra, R. M. and Dietz, R. (2022). Communication in Monetary Policy. *Study for the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies.* European Parliament, Luxembourg.

Lau, R. R. and Redlawsk, D. P. (2001). Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(04), 951–971.

Lehmann, F. (2023). Talking about Europe? Explaining the Salience of the European Union in the Plenaries of 17 National Parliaments during 2006–2019. *European Union Politics*, 24(02), 370-389.

Leupold, A. (2015). A Structural Approach to Politicisation in the Euro Crisis. *West European Politics*, 39(01), 84–103.

Liang, S. and Nicol, O. and Zhang. (2019). Who Blames Whom in a Crisis? Detecting Blame Ties from News Articles Using Neural Networks. *Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence*, 655-662.

Lobo, M. C. (2023). *The Impact of EU Politicisation on Voting Behaviour in Europe.* Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.

Loughran, T. and Mcdonald, B. (2011). When Is a Liability Not a Liability? Textual Analysis, Dictionaries, and 10-Ks. *The Journal of Finance*, 66(01), 35-65.

Mackenzie, R. (2018). *The use of Twitter by MPs in Parliamentary Debate.*[Online]. Available at: `https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/`

Mair, P. (2009). Representative versus Responsible Government. *MPIfG Working Paper*, 09(08), 1-19.

Mair, P. (2007). Political Opposition and the European Union. *Government and Opposition*, 42(01), 1–17.

Malhorta, N. and Margalit, Y. (2010). Short-term Communication Effects or Long-standing Dispositions? The Public's Response to the Financial Crisis of 2008. *The Journal of Politics*, 72(03), 852-867.

Maltzman, F. and Sigelman, L. (1996). The Politics of Talk: Unconstrained Floor Time in the U.S. House of Representatives. *The Journal of Politics*, 58(03), 819-830.

Maricut-Akbik, A. (2020). Contesting the European Central Bank in Banking Supervision: Accountability in Practice at the European Parliament. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 58(05), 1199–1214.

Masciandaro, D. Ferrara, F. M., Moschella, M., Romelli, D. (2023). What do Politicians think of Technocratic Institutions? Experimental Evidence on the European Central Bank. *Bocconi University, Working Paper Series*, No. 201.

Massoc, E. (2021). How do Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) hold the European Central Bank (ECB) Accountable? A Descriptive Quantitative Analysis of Three Accountability Forums (2014-2021). *Goethe University, LawFin Working Paper*, No. 40.

Maud, R. and Schneider, G. (2022). Complementing Kernel Density Estimation and Topic Modelling to Visualise Political Discourse. *Digital Research Data and Human Sciences DRDHum Conference 2022.*

McElroy, G. and Benoit, K. (2012). Policy Positioning in the European Parliament. *European Union Politics*, 13(01), 150–167.

McGraw, K. M., Best, S. and Timpone, R. (1995). What They Say or What They Do? The Impact of Elite Explanation and Policy Outcomes on Public Opinion. *American Journal of Political Science*, 39(01), 53-74.

McGraw, K. M. (1991). Managing Blame: An Experimental Test of the Effects of Political Accounts. *The American Political Science Review*, 85(04), 1133-1157.

McGraw, K. M. (1990). Avoiding Blame: An Experimental Investigation of Political Excuses and Justifications. *British Journal of Political Science*, 20(01), 119-131.

McPhilemy, S. and Moschella, M. (2019). Central Banks Under Stress: Reputation, Accountability and Regulatory Coherence. *Public Administration*, 97(03), 489–498.

Mempel, F. and Corbera, E. (2021). Framing the Frontier: Tracing Issues related to Soybean Expansion in Transnational Public Spheres. *Global Environmental Change*, 69, 1-16.

Moravcsik, A. (1994). Why the European Union Strengthens the State: Domestic Politics and International Cooperation. *Center for European Studies, Working Paper Series*, No. 52.

Moschella, M. and Martocchia Diodati, N. (2020). Does Politics Drive Conflict in Central Banks' Committees? Lifting the Veil on the European Central Bank Consensus. *European Union Politics*, 21(02), 183-203.

Moschella, M., Pinto, L. and Martocchia Diodati, N. (2020). Let's Speak More? How the ECB responds to Public Contestation. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(03), 400–418.

Muhammad, M. R. A. and Nirwandy, N. (2021). A Study on Donald Trump Twitter Remark: A Case Study on the Attack of Capitol Hill. *Journal of Media and Information Warfare*, 14(02), 75-104.

Navarrete, R. M. and Debus, M. (2023). The Importance of EU Issues in German Elections. In M. C. Lobo (ed.), *The Impact of EU Politicisation on Voting Behaviour in Europe*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.

Nulty, P., Theocharis, Y., Popa S. A., Parnet, O., Benoit, K. (2016). Social Media and Political Communication in the 2014 Elections to the European Parliament. *Electoral Studies*, 44, 429–444.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *Quarterly GDP (Indicator).* [Online.] Available at: `https://data.oecd.org/gdp/quarterly-gdp.htm`

Orizu, U. and He, Y. (2016). Detecting Expressions of Blame or Praise in Text. *Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'16)*, 4124-4129.

Papadimitriou, D., Pegasiou, A. and Zartaloudis, S. (2019). European Elites and the Narrative of the Greek Crisis: A Discursive Institutionalist Analysis. *European Journal of Political Research*, 58(02), 435-464.

Petrocik, J. R. (1996). Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(03), 825–850.

Picault, M. and Renault, T. (2017). Words are not all Created Equal: A New Measure of ECB Communication. *Journal of International Money and Finance*, 79(C), 136-156.

Pierson, P. (1995). Fragmented Welfare States: Federal Institutions and the Development of Social Policy. *Governance*, 8(04), 449-478.

Politico. (2024). *EU Election 2024: New Poll shows Right-wing Populist Surge.* [Online]. Available at: `https://www.politico.eu/article/right-wing-populist-surge-eu-election-policy/`

Proksch, S. O., Lowe, W., Wäckerle, J. and Soroka, S. (2019). Multilingual Sentiment Analysis: A New Approach to Measuring Conflict in Legislative Speeches. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 44(01), 97-131.

Proksch, S. O. and Slapin, J. B. (2012). Institutional Foundations of Legislative Speech. *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(03), 520-537.

Quaglia, L. and Verdun, A. (2023). Explaining the Response of the ECB to the COVID-19 related Economic Crisis: Inter-crisis and Intra-crisis Learning. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 30(04), 635-654.

Rauh, C., Bes, B. J. and Schoonvelde, M. (2020). Undermining, Defusing or Defending European Integration? Assessing Public Communication of European Executives in times of EU Politicisation. *European Journal of Political Research*, 59(02), 397-423.

Rauh, C. and Schwalbach, J. (2020). *The ParlSpeech V2 Data set: Full-text Corpora of 6.3 Million Parliamentary Speeches in the Key Legislative Chambers of Nine Representative Democracies*. [Online]. Available at: `https://dataverse.harvard.edu`

Rauh, C. and De Wilde, P. (2018). The Opposition Deficit in EU Accountability: Evidence from over 20 Years of Plenary Debate in Four Member States. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(01), 194-216.

Rauh, C., De Wilde, P., and Schwalbach, J. (2017). *The ParlSpeech Data set: Annotated Full-text Vectors of 3.9 Million Plenary Speeches in the Key Legislative Chambers of Seven European States*. [Online]. Available at: `https://dataverse.harvard.edu`

Rauh, C. (2015). Communicating Supranational Governance? The Salience of EU Affairs in the German Bundestag, 1991-2013. *European Union Politics*, 16(01), 116-138.

Reif, K., and Schmitt, H. (1980). Nine Second-Order National Elections: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results. *European Journal of Political Research*, 8(01), 3-44.

Rheault, L. and Cochrane, C. (2020). Word Embeddings for the Analysis of Ideological Placement in Parliamentary Corpora. *Political Analysis*, 28(01), 112-133.

Rittberger, B., Schwarzenbeck, H. and Zangl, B. (2017). Where Does the Buck Stop? Explaining Public Responsibility Attributions in Complex International Institutions. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55(04), 909-924.

Roberts, M. E., Stewart, B. M. and Tingley, D. (2019). stm: An R Package for Structural Topic Models. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 91(02), 1–40.

Rogeiro Nina, S. P. (2021). *Attribution of Responsibility for Economic Policy Issues in the Mainstream Media, Before (2002–2009) and After (2011–2016) the Great Recession.* [Online]. Available at: `http://www.maple.ics.ulisboa.pt/`

Rohde, L. (2017). *Speech By Governor Lars Rohde At The ECB Central Bank Communications Conference.* [Online]. Available at: `https://www.bis.org/review/r171117g.pdf`

Rooduijn, M., Van Kessel, S., Froio, C., Pirro, A., De Lange, S., Halikiopoulou, D., Lewis, P., Mudde, C. and Taggart, P. (2019). *The PopuList: An Overview of Populist, Far Right, Far Left and Eurosceptic Parties in Europe.* [Online]. Available at: `www.popu-list.org`

Roth, F., Gros, D., and Nowak-Lehmann, D. F. (2014). Crisis and Citizens' Trust in the European Central Bank - Panel Data Evidence for the euro area, 1999–2012. *Journal of European Integration*, 36(03), 303–320.

Santos, N. and Rogeiro Nina, S. (2023). Polity or Policies? The European Union in Parliamentary Debates and the Media. In M. C. Lobo (ed.), *The Impact of EU Politicisation on Voting Behaviour in Europe.* Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.

Schmidt, V. A. (2022). European Emergency Politics and the Question of Legitimacy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 29(06), 979-993.

Schmidt, V. A. (2020a). *Europe's Crisis of Legitimacy: Governing by Rules and Ruling by Numbers in the Eurozone.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schmidt, V. A. (2020b). Theorizing Institutional Change and Governance in European Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal of European Integration*, 42(08), 1177-1193.

Schmidtke, H. (2016). The Differentiated Politicisation of European Tax Governance. *West European Politics*, 39(01), 64–83.

Schmitt, H. (2009). The Nature of European Issues: Conceptual Clarifications and Some Empirical Evidence. In S. Ganghof, C. Hönnige, and C. Stecker (eds.), *Parlamente, Agendasetzung und Vetospieler.*

Schmitter, P. C. (2009). On the Way to a Post-Functionalist Theory of European Integration. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(01), 211–215.

Schmitter, P. C. (1969). Three Neo-Functional Hypotheses About International Integration. *International Organization*, 23(01), 161-166.

Schneider, C. J. (2019). *The Responsive Union: National Elections and European Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schonhardt-Bailey, C., Dann, C. and Chapman, J. (2022). The Accountability Gap: Deliberation on Monetary Policy in Britain and America During the Financial Crisis. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 74, 102-209.

Schonhardt-Bailey, C. (2013). *Deliberating American Monetary Policy: A Textual Analysis*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Schoonvelde, M., Schumacher, G., and Bakker, B. N. (2019). Friends with Text as Data Benefits: Assessing and Extending the use of Automated Text Analysis in Political Science and Political Psychology. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 7(01), 124-143.

Schraff, D. and Schimmelfennig, F. (2019). Eurozone Bailouts and National Democracy: Detachment or Resilience? *European Union Politics*, 20(3), 361-383.

Schumacher, G. Berk, N., Pipal, C., Kantorowicz, J., Schoonvelde, M., Traber, D. and De Vries, E. (2020). *EUSpeech V2.0: A dataset of 11,466 Speeches by European Leaders*. [Online]. Available at: `https://osf.io/4yjpm`

Schumacher, J., Schoonvelde, M., Tanushree, D. and De Vries, E. (2016). *EUSpeech* [Online]. Available at: `https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/XPCVEI`

Schwalbach, J. (2023). Whom to Trust and When? Party Message Perception in Multiparty Systems. *Electoral Studies*, 86.

Schwalbach, J. (2022). Going in Circles? The Influence of the Electoral Cycle on the Party Behaviour in Parliament. *European Political Science Review*, 14(01), 36-55.

Senninger, R. and Wagner, M. (2015). Political Parties and the EU in National Election Campaigns: Who talks about Europe, and how? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53(06), 1336–1351.

Seth, J., Bakker, R., Hooghe, L., Marks, G. Polk, J., Rovny, J., Steenbergen, M. and Vachudova, M. A. (2022). *Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File, 1999-2019. Electoral Studies*, 75(February).

Sides, J. (2006). The Origins of Campaign Agendas. *British Journal of Political Science*, 36(03), 407–436.

Silva, T. and Kartalis, Y. (2023). News vs. Opinion Articles on the European Union: The Politicisation of the EU in the Mainstream Press. In M. C. Lobo (ed.), *The Impact of EU Politicisation on Voting Behaviour in Europe.* Cham: Palgrave McMillan.

Silva, T., Kartalis, Y. and Lobo, M. C. (2022). Highlighting Supranational Institutions? An Automated Analysis of EU Politicisation (2002-2017). *West European Politics*, 45(04), 816-840.

Sniderman, P. M., Brody, R. A. and Tetlock, P. (1991). *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sommer, M. (2020). Blame-shifting in Times of Permanent Austerity: Evidence from Spain and Greece in the Eurozone Crisis. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 58(03), 562-579.

Spirling, A. (2016). Democratization and Linguistic Complexity: The Effect of Franchise Extension on Parliamentary Discourse, 1832-1915. *The Journal of Politics*, 78(01), 120-136.

Stasavage, D. (2003). Transparency, Democratic Accountability and the Economic Consequences of Monetary Institutions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 47(03), 389–402.

Stier, S., Froio, C., Schünemann, W. J. (2020). Going Transnational? Candidates' Transnational Linkages on Twitter during the 2019 European Parliament Elections. *West European Politics*, 44(07), 1455-1481.

Tesche, T. (2019). Instrumentalizing EMU's Democratic Deficit: The ECB's Unconventional Accountability Measures During the Eurozone Crisis. *Journal of European Integration*, 41(04), 447–463.

Thomassen, J. and Schmitt, H. (1997). Policy Representation. *European Journal of Political Research*, 32(02), 165–184.

Tilly, C. (2010). *Blame and Credit.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Tooze, A. (2023). *Chartbook 192 On Deglobalisation And Polycrisis.* [Online]. Available at: `https://adamtooze.com/2023/02/01`

Tortola, P. D. (2020). The Politicization of the European Central Bank: What Is It, and How to Study It? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 58(03), 501–513.

Toshkov, D. (2023). *Asylum Applicants and Positive Decisions in the Common European Asylum System (EU+), 2011-2022, with Data from Eurostat.* [Online]. Available at: `https://anonyms.shinyapps.io/asylum/`

Traber, D., Schoonvelde, M. and Schumacher, G. (2019). Errors have been made, Others will be blamed: Issue Engagement and Blame Shifting in Prime Minister Speeches during the Economic Crisis in Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 59(01), 45-67.

Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2023). *UCDP One-sided Violence Dataset version 23.1.* [Online]. Available at: `https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads`

van Vliet, L., Chueri, J., Törnberg, P., and Uitermark, J. (2023). Political Groups over National Parties: Measuring the Europeanization of the Political Arena through MEPs Twitter Interactions. *Party Politics*, Online First.

Vasilopoulou, S., Halikiopoulou, D. and Exadaktylos, T. (2014). Greece in Crisis: Austerity, Populism and the Politics of Blame. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 52(02), 388-402.

Vis, B., and van Kersbergen, K. (2007). Why and how do Political Actors Pursue Risky Reforms? *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 19(02), 153-172.

von der Leyen, U. (2023). *State of the Union 2023.* [Online]. Available at: `https://state-of-the-union.ec.europa.eu/publications`

Vössing, K. (2023). Argument-stretching: (Slightly) Invalid Political Arguments and their Effects on Public Opinion. *European Political Science Review*, 2023, 35-55.

Vössing, K. (2021). Shaping Public Opinion about Regional Integration: The Rhetoric of Justification and Party Cues. *Political Studies*, 69(03), 492-513.

Vössing, K. (2020). The Quality of Political Information. *Political Studies Review*, 19(04), 574-590.

Vossing, K. (2005). Nationality and the Preferences of the European Public toward EU Policy-Making. *European Union Politics*, 6(04), 445-467.

Wagner, M. and Meyer, T. M. (2014). Which Issues do Parties Emphasise? Salience Strategies and Party Organisation in Multiparty Systems. *West European Politics*, 37(05), 1019–1045.

Watanabe, K. and Baturo, A. (2023). Seeded Sequential LDA: A Semi-Supervised Algorithm for Topic-Specific Analysis of Sentences. *Social Science Computer Review*, 42(01), 224-248.

Weaver, R. K. (2018). The Nays Have It: How Rampant Blame Generating Distorts American Policy and Politics. *Political Science Quarterly*, 133(02), 259-289.

Weaver, R. K. (1986). The Politics of Blame Avoidance. *Journal of Public Policy*, 6(04), 371-398.

Wilson, T. L. and Hobolt, S. B. (2015). Allocating Responsibility in Multilevel Government Systems: Voter and Expert Attributions in the European Union. *The Journal of Politics*, 77(01), 102-113.

World Bank. (2023). *Bank Nonperforming Loans to Total Gross Loans.* [Online]. Available at: `https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FB.AST.NPER.ZS?view=chart&locations=AT`

World Health Organisation. (2023). *Daily Cases and Deaths by Date reported to WHO.* [Online]. Available at: `https://covid19.who.int`

Young, L. and Soroka, S. (2012). Affective News: The Automated Coding of Sentiment in Political Texts. *Political Communication*, 29(02), 205-231.

Zeitlin, J., Nicoli, F. and Laffan, B. (2019). Introduction: The European Union beyond the Polycrisis? Integration and Politicization in an Age of Shifting Cleavages. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(07), 963-976.