Europa-Kolleg Hamburg
Institute for European Integration

Politicising Europe:
the role of mass media and information and communication policies in establishing active EU citizenship

Sarah Marshall

Europa-Kolleg Hamburg
Institute for European Integration

The *Europa-Kolleg Hamburg* is a private foundation. The foundation has the objective of furthering research and academic teachings in the area of European Integration and international cooperation.

The *Institute for European Integration*, an academic institution at the University of Hamburg, constitutes the organisational framework for the academic activities of the *Europa-Kolleg*.

The series *Study Papers* contains selected master theses for the degree "Master of European and European Legal Studies". The Master Programme is offered by the Europa-Kolleg Hamburg in cooperation with the University of Hamburg.

The views expressed in the *Study Papers* are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect positions shared by the Institute for European Integration. Please address any comments directly to the author.

Politicising Europe: the role of mass media and information and communication policies in establishing active EU citizenship

Sarah Marshall*

Abstract

In spite of the time, planning and funding invested by the EU into pre-election campaigns and communications initiatives, the voter turnout at the European Parliament (EP) elections fell in 2009 for the sixth time in a row. This study aims to approach why active citizenship has failed to develop in the years following the failed Constitutional Treaty, a period which was marked by the promise of a Europe-wide debate on the future of the EU and more citizen involvement. The empowerment opportunities open to the non-elites and those who are not already politically mobilised are focused on throughout the study since this section of the public has the highest abstention rates for EP elections.

In gathering data from a broad range of academic and factual sources, the study analyses the main initiatives and opportunities which were launched by the EU to increase active citizenship before coming to a conclusion on their compatibility with citizens' lives and interests. In order to juxtapose the mass media's successful role in the public spheres with the EU's usual position as an outsider or a mere looker-on, the mass media is analysed particularly regarding how it covers EU news. Before a final assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of political and media communication, some promising opportunities for future active citizenship are considered as means to empower citizens and support a more productive and mutually rewarding relationship between the EU and its citizens.

key words: active citizenship, mass media, democratic deficit, political communication, voter turnout, European public sphere

Address:
Sarah Marshall
sarah.l.marshall@hotmail.com

Politicising Europe: the role of mass media and information and communication policies in establishing active EU citizenship

Sarah Marshall

Table of contents

List of Abbreviations

ECB	European Central Bank
ECI	European Citizens' Initiative
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
TEU	Treaty on the European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

1. Introduction

1.1. The missing link in European democracy

Since the 1990s a string of negative referenda in certain European Union (EU) member states has resulted in a stronger focus being placed on regaining the support of EU citizens and addressing their concerns and opinions on the European project. One could say that the decisive moment in this escalating legitimacy crisis took place in 2005 when the Constitutional Treaty was abandoned due to the negative referenda in France and the Netherlands. Discontent and frustration had spread among citizens, having grown out of an integration process directed by elites with very little input from the observing citizens. For many years, the remoteness of the EU institutions and decision-making procedures with respect to the EU citizenry was not considered to be worrisome and many expected a united European identity along with a greater sense of citizenship and participation to develop over time.

However, the steps taken to deepen and widen the EU during the late 20th century (the completion of the single market, introduction of the Euro, expansion from the EU-12 in 1990 to the EU-27 in 2007, etc.) resulted in the appearance of a political imbalance caused by rapidly advancing progress in the area of political integration but continuing low participation and interest from common citizens. Though clear arguments have been made asserting that output legitimacy from effective policymaking and creating greater community welfare should be sufficient to satisfy citizens (e.g. Moravcsik 2002), the bubbling undercurrent of discontent across the EU citizenry has not been pacified with the creation of new rights and freedoms. The multitude of reasons which have been suggested to ascertain why citizens are not satisfied with the EU and what could be done to change this situation cannot all be dealt with here. The analysis in this thesis centres on the period after the Constitutional Treaty, an era that began with the continuation of more discussion on dialogue than "genuine dialogue" (Mak 2001). At this point, the power of active citizenship was hailed as a means of bringing citizens and political elites closer together to deliberate on the EU project and its future. By trying to entice citizens to make use of the political rights conferred to them, the EU embarked on an ambitious project to increase citizen participation and re-establish a legitimate basis on which the European project could continue. This thesis will explore how successful the EU was in achieving their goal of active citizenship in this period. The effects of the mass media upon the growth of active citizenship during this time will also be evaluated.

To begin with, the first chapter will focus on defining and assessing active citizenship in the EU, dealing with collective and supranational nature of EU citizenship as opposed to national citizenship. On looking at active EU citizenship, the main indicator that will be considered is political participation since it represents citizen involvement on the EU level most clearly. The second chapter looks at the EU information and communication efforts after the Constitutional Treaty in order to establish how the EU has tried to bridge the communication gap between Brussels and the citizens. The methods, effects and success of these projects will be evaluated in view of the active citizenship which has arisen from them. The third chapter considers the effects of the mass media upon active EU citizenship by looking at the role of the media in the EU, assessing the level of development of an "Europeanised" media and public sphere, before going on to evaluate the influence which the mass media has had on the EU publics. Particular emphasis will be placed on the function of the public sphere and its role in the growth of active citizenship. In the final chapter, the future potential of

mass media to increase levels of active citizenship will be investigated, looking particularly at the possibilities for closer coordination between the national governments, media and the EU. In this section, proposals for a turn towards media with a stronger public service mandate to cover EU issues are put forward and examined based on their prospective consequences for active citizenship and for eventually attaining a more citizen participation in EU politics. Some concluding remarks complete the thesis, returning to the hypotheses and presenting a final assessment of the extent to which the media and the EU have made progress in encouraging active EU citizenship.

1.2. Two hypotheses on active citizenship

In order to explore the conditions which support more citizen participation in EU politics and the plans for the future of the EU, two hypotheses will be presented throughout the paper and examined in the conclusion. The first hypothesis (H1) states that *active citizenship in the EU is influenced by the success of EU information and communications policy and the level of mass media coverage of the EU.* Based upon the recent consideration that regular exposure to news media can lead to greater levels of political participation and citizen engagement (Norris, 2000, Newton, 1999), I intend on exploring whether it is possible to extend this theory to the case of the information and communication provided by the EU. As the general source for media content on the EU, the EU information and communication policies[1] will be analysed, followed by an investigation into how they are received by the European media. To be more precise on the theory, it is suggested that the establishment of a comprehensible, well-recognised and interactive communication space for EU topics would facilitate a virtuous circle (Norris 2000) of growing EU citizen engagement and education. Such a space was proposed in a White Paper on European Governance by the Commission in 2001 but 10 years later it has still not yet come into fruition (EC 2001). The results would lead to an increased level of political understanding and foster meaningful communication between the actions and beliefs of the European political elite and non-elites. Through the opening of meaningful communication channels, active citizenship can flourish and benefit from adequate support in order to make steps towards redressing the democratic deficit. Following research (e.g. Clark 2010, Haller 2008) demonstrating the passivity of the less privileged social groups regarding voting and towards EU integration in general, this section of the non-elite citizenry will be at the forefront of the discussion. It is expected that increased dialogue could produce significant benefits concerning legitimacy, stability and integration through any attempt to adjust the imbalanced status quo for these citizens.

It is to be argued in the second hypothesis (H2) that the *low levels of active citizenship in the European Union are a consequence of the Commission following an information and communication policy which failed to mobilise the non-elites.* As part of this hypothesis, the existence of causal relationship between the isolation of the European non-elites and low political participation in the EU shall be considered. In this thesis, the EU elites can be defined as those working for the EU or directly involved in EU decision-making processes. Rather than considering the EU elites to be all of a pro-European leaning (e.g. Fligstein 2008), the European elites are singled out as those who need to be knowledgeable on EU related topics for their working lives and possess considerable influence and power in their positions. The non-elites, by definition, are

---

[1] Mostly notably, the Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate: part of long term plan to "help the emergence of a European public sphere, where citizens are given the information and the tools to actively participate in the decision making process and gain ownership of the European project." (EC 2005a)

normal citizens who have no specific interests in the EU and do not constitute part of the national elite structure.

Analysing the post-Constitutional Treaty initiatives from the EU and their media reception, it is argued that recent efforts to establish more dialogue and engagement were superficial, short-sighted and, for the most part, unsuccessful. Nonetheless, promise appears in the form of the open encouragement of more deliberative and conflictive debate between the citizens and the European Union and through more national media cooperation. Progress cannot be achieved by working alone[2] and there are still many opportunities for the EU actors to increase citizen engagement in the EU by employing an approach which tackles the heart of the issue: encouraging two-way dialogue and mutual understanding.

1.3. Methodology and data gathering

The raw data analysed and presented in this paper have been collected from two main public sources: the European Election Database (voting figures) and the Eurobarometer produced by the European Commission (survey results on public opinion). Using the Eurobarometer raises a variety of issues which could become problematic if not taken into consideration. Besides the evident institutional influence which could affect question framing and result accuracy[3], there are also clear disadvantages when gathering data from a survey not designed specifically for exploration of one research area. Some questions (regarding tentative perceptions, identity and value judgments) are too vague to arrive at concrete conclusions based on their results and regularly change wording or appearance from year to year, leaving comparison between years often difficult. General disadvantages have often been highlighted (e.g. Scharpf 2007, Hurrelmann 2007) but for this thesis it suffices to bear in mind that a more controlled and focused form of assessment would be required for a highly accurate analysis of public opinion. Such a resource is invaluable for ascertaining a sense of European public opinion; however, the precise exactitude of the results must always be put into question depending on the nature of the question and the scope of the analysis.

2. Exploring active citizenship in the EU

2.1. Defining active EU citizenship

Officially established in the Maastricht Treaty[4], EU citizenship arrived at a time of substantial political integration, marking the dawn of the new European Union and bringing with it new rights and roles for citizens. Unlike citizenship granted by member states, EU citizenship does not automatically incite the growth of community identification and is so far only weakly tied to the identity of citizens. The presence of strong national ties and cultural traditions mean that national citizenship is more relevant in daily life. Indeed, in 2008 only 2.3% of the EU population were living in an

---

[2] The top-down approach mentioned earlier which echoes the Commission's desire to "help the emergence of a public sphere". (EC 2005a)

[3] Result accuracy could be affected as participants are interviewed face-to-face and may feel uncomfortable giving negative answers to an EU representative.

[4] Citizens' rights and the concept of a collective citizenship among the peoples of the Community had started to be a topic of discussion long before the Treaty of Maastricht (*Craig* and *De Búrca* 2008).

EU country which was not their own (Eurostat 2009). For this reason, it may be argued that this type of citizenship is destined to be predominantly passive or "second-order" (Delanty 1997) due to the differentiation in culture, language, politics and history amongst the citizens of Europe. In theory, however, the Lisbon Treaty amendment to the citizenship article has clarified that citizenship of the EU is more than complementary to national citizenship reinforcing the equality between the two: "Citizenship of the union shall be *additional to* and not replace national citizenship"[5] (own italics). The change of wording signals an attempt to free EU citizenship from its subordination to national citizenship and reinforce the EU's independent authority as a rights protector following the expanding spheres of EU influence and European integration over the last few years. Liberated from national citizenship, EU citizenship now has the foundation and constitutional presence to support and incentivise citizens to become more politically active. In the case of the EU acquiring further competences and based on the premise that the public will be informed adequately of this, the relevance and importance of using one's political rights should only grow in strength as the prevalence of EU-wide issues converges in public discussions.

Starting with *T.H. Marshall*'s division of citizenship into three areas (civil, political and social), the focus of attention throughout this thesis will be primarily on the political rights of citizenship. Although EU citizenship incorporates civil freedoms and a limited degree of social benefits, many of the rights and opportunities open to the citizenry (freedom of movement, freedom of establishment, etc.) have limited salience as rights conferred by the EU and it is difficult for citizens to distinguish them from those rights conferred by national governments. In contrast to this, the political rights (the right to vote in the EP elections and the right to stand as a MEP candidate) can be easily discerned by citizens as directly descending from the EU and allowing direct interaction with one of the EU decision-making institutions. *Mouffe* (1992) defines an active citizen as one who "acts as a citizen, who conceives of herself as a participant in a collective undertaking." Carried over to the example of the EU, where there are very few ways to participate collectively, the conscious exercise of political rights by citizens can be described as active citizenship, as opposed to the passive citizenship which would be to accept one's rights as a citizen without carrying out any of the civic duties or becoming in any way politically engaged. *Thompson* (1970) describes both active and passive rights as being part of citizenship. However, active rights allow citizens to have an immediate or future effect upon politics according to the constitutional rules.

Participating in official political procedures, such as elections, is not the only opportunity for active citizenship, there are many different shades of active political engagement ranging from the more passive side (remaining informed on political developments) to extremely active (running for a political position) (Lister 2003). Political deliberation can be found lying somewhere in the middle of the continuum and is a necessary part of the democratic process (Kymlicka 2002). As opposed to passively accepting one's constitutional rights as a citizen, active citizenship results in greater awareness of the political community and the political debate and discussion in the public sphere. Adopting a talk-centric approach rather than the vote-centric approach in democratic theory provides minority or marginalised groups with the opportunity to influence the "common will" whilst it is forming (Kymlicka and Norman, 2000). On the surface, this may seem like a more intensive form of active citizenship but in reality for normal citizens it can simply mean receiving information on key political issues in the

---

[5] Article 15 TEU

community and forming an opinion on them. In a successful representative democracy, one would expect that those citizens who take part regularly in political discussion and debate would be more likely to participate in the less active forms too, namely, elections.

2.2. Obstructions affecting the mobilisation of citizens

In order to explore how active citizenship can be established, it is useful to take the most evident manner of exercising citizenship (voting) and to consider why some citizens refuse to use their right or fulfil their civic duty. Based on rational choice theory and the "voting paradox" (Downs, 1957), voters endure costs as a result of investing their time and energy into the election process. For an average voter, it is suggested that these costs will be in excess of the benefits that the voter's individual vote will return (ibid.). The advantages of partaking in the EP elections appear even remoter and the chances of influencing the result even slimmer for the EU citizens due to the complex system of multilevel governance and the sweeping size of the region and its population. These facts suggest that any attempt in the current status quo to encourage citizens to vote for an MEP must concentrate on keeping the costs as low as possible in order to encourage participation. This can be done by maximising the information available on the candidates, parties and manifestos so that it is must be easily accessible for the whole electorate. General information about the EU offers additional support by enabling citizens to accurately assess what their benefits from engaging in EU politics would be. Additional measures to limit the costs of voting for citizens include holding more than one set of elections on the same day (e.g. national and local elections, or, more to the point, EP and national or local elections) and at the same locations. Investing in less labour intensive voting methods such as postal, internet or mobile voting also marks a way with which voting costs can be kept to a minimum[6].

Civic duty is a traditional reason to vote which becomes less influential over time as access to rights are taken for granted. Even if one feels as though their vote is redundant, the process of voting is a collective activity of historical and emotional relevance and a means of expressing identity and group membership (e.g. Horowitz 1985). There are two ways in which one can look at how civic duty plays a role in EU elections. Firstly, voting for a MEP is a process of supporting the member state which the MEP represents in order to make certain that diligent and efficient politician is chosen representing what a voter understands to be in the best interests of the country. Secondly, with the development of EU citizenship we can start to talk about civic duties that may stem directly from this status. Considering the geographical and political fragmentation of publics in the EU and the communication deficit between the political elites and the citizens, the level of civic duty and political identity are generally low (see chapter 3.3.). However, change may be possible. *Castiglione* (2009) counters the supposition that the traditional, national bonds usually associated with civic duty are needed for a citizen to "relate to a community". Instead, he returns to the logic of *Hegel* and stresses the importance of the citizens' trust and political awareness. Given the right conditions, it is understood that citizens participate in political life due to "rational self-interest, habituation, and cultivation of the collective interest" (ibid.). However, for this to become reality in the EU, citizens need to start perceiving the EU polity as "a fundamental,…, institutional and legal order within which they can exercise their liberty" (ibid.). In this sense, not only is it important for citizens to trust the political system, but they also need to be regularly informed on how it works, the decisions that

---

[6] Filer and Kenny (1980) discussed the importance of keeping costs low for turnout.

are being made, and how they, as citizens, are represented legitimately. In summary, political mobilisation can be hindered by high costs and the voter's perception that the elections are of low political relevance to him. In the next sub-chapter, the means to help citizens judge the costs and benefits and encourage them to become politically active will be discussed.

2.3. Active citizenship through information and communication

2.3.1. Fostering an informed and educated public

In light of the need to maintain low voting costs, the question in the Post-Electoral Survey (Eurobarometer 2009), which enquired whether citizens felt as if they had received enough information to vote, identifies the percentage of the population for whom the costs of voting were seemingly the lowest. If citizens do not have enough information, the elections are considered to be less important and the electorate suffer from uncertainty over whether to vote owing to the fact that they are unsure about what the consequences of their actions would be. Political information can be spread from many sources (government authorities, politicians, mass media, civil society organisations and through interpersonal discussion) and, with sufficient coverage, the public should be exposed to a host of thought-provoking and conflicting ideas. In direct opposition to the elitist view that voters cannot be trusted with their political choices (Haller 2008), the distribution and consumption of significant levels of information has been shown to promote opinion formation amongst all citizens. *Haller* (ibid.) has suggested that the elites are needed to explain complex ideas and incite public discussion in circumstances when the citizens need to fully grasp the challenging aspects of an idea and take it into consideration when voting. Through this point, we can see the potential which the EU has to educate citizens through the information and communication it provides. Defeating the communication deficit is not only necessary for active citizenship but also for achieving public opinions which are well-rounded, accurate and justified. Although it is questionable as to how much information citizens need to process in order to evaluate proposals or ideas mooted by a political party or political elite [7], it is clear that the proliferation of transparent and manageable information enables citizens to hold elites accountable and supports the development of active citizenship. Furthermore, citizens with more knowledge and understanding will be more media literate and better protected from the influence and imbalanced framing of information (spin) by governments and the media. Even though information in the public domain can support citizens who are interested in participating more and using their rights as EU citizens, information acting alone is often not enough to attract and encourage participation from uninformed citizens. Having captured the attention of forces in the public sphere, information can be shared, interpreted and given public meaning and relevance through the public sphere.

2.3.2. Engaging in dialogue: the formation of a EU public sphere

In a free society, the public sphere performs the dual function of both hosting and spreading information for citizens' use and shaping and presenting a public opinion for the perusal of those in positions of power. For citizens, the public sphere provides the opportunity for public deliberation on topical issues and forms a place within which

---

[7] *Lupia* (1994) asserts that voters which little political knowledge use rule-of-thumb, social prompts and information shortcuts to avoid encountering the voter's paradox.

they can present and exchange their views. A space offering universal access to members of the public (Habermas 1974), participation in the public sphere can occur across different socioeconomic, age and ethnic groups and, therefore, poses a method of reaching a broad scope of the citizenry. Consisting of a wide variety of forms of communication (mass media, interpersonal discussion, public dialogue, etc.), the public sphere can form the place where citizens first encounter information which contributes to shaping their individual opinion as well as general public opinion. However, providing information is not the main objective of the public sphere. In addition to performing a service for citizens, it offers space for a variety of non-state actors to share their ideas and opinions and present them to the masses for negotiation. For political communication and democratic norms, what is most important about the public sphere is its mediating role between the citizens and the state (ibid.). As the site where public opinion is regularly formed and voiced, the public sphere is an invaluable point of reference for the governing power in which both groups of actors (citizens and state actors) can interact and informally engage with one another. Through this arena, citizens can make active use of "their right to impart and receive information" and it presents a legitimate but informal way (outside of the scope of the political constitution) to offer guidance and recourse to those in power (Ward 2004).The idea of an EU public sphere as a communicative space for bridging the gap between the demos and the EU elites has been a well-worn topic of recent political and academic debate. Investigations into whether such a sphere has emerged or is in the process of appearing have been carried out but have proved to find only mildly positive or no significant developments towards a pan-European public sphere (Koopmans, Erbe and Meyer 2010). However, more positive signs have been registered for the "Europeanisation of public spheres". Vertical Europeanisation refers to the development of connections between the EU polity and the national public spheres as opposed to horizontal Europeanisation through which interaction develops between the different public spheres of member states (Koopmans and Erbe 2004). A public sphere in which strong interaction between the EU polity and citizens exists would mobilise more citizens to engage in active EU citizenship. Without regular interaction with the public, the EU faces legitimacy and accountability issues particularly due to the physical distance of the polity from the publics and the potential for national governments to take advantage of citizens' unawareness of EU issues. However, a pan-European public sphere, despite being the ideal form for encouraging active citizenship, is not the only effective manner for the EU to increase their presence in the member states and communicate with EU citizens. The less ambitious ways in which they have participated and attempted to participate are dealt with in chapter 3.

2.4. The level of active citizenship in the EU

2.4.1. Voting in the 2009 European Parliament elections

In order to establish how actively citizens have been engaging in EU political life since the Constitutional Treaty, a sensible place to begin is with the development in the voter turnout for the European Parliament (EP) elections. Figure 2.1 shows the percentage of EU voters who participated in each election since the first EP elections in 1979 (invalid and blank votes are considered as negative votes). Most relevant to this analysis is the decrease in the period from 2004 to 2009. The progressive decrease in turnout identifies a negative trend amongst the electorate and suggests that either voters have become less politically active on the European level or at the very least there has been no progression in the number of mobilised citizens despite the efforts of the EU. There are several external influences to be considered when looking at these figures:

historical factors, the gradual addition of ex-communist or democratically defective countries to the member countries; factors of national law, voting being compulsory with varying degrees of enforceability in Luxembourg, Belgium, Cyprus and Greece (IDEA 2011); situational factors, such as whether local or national elections were held on the same day and the various methods of voting which were offered.[8]

Figure 2.1 Turnout at the EP Elections, 1979-2009

Source: European Parliament, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/
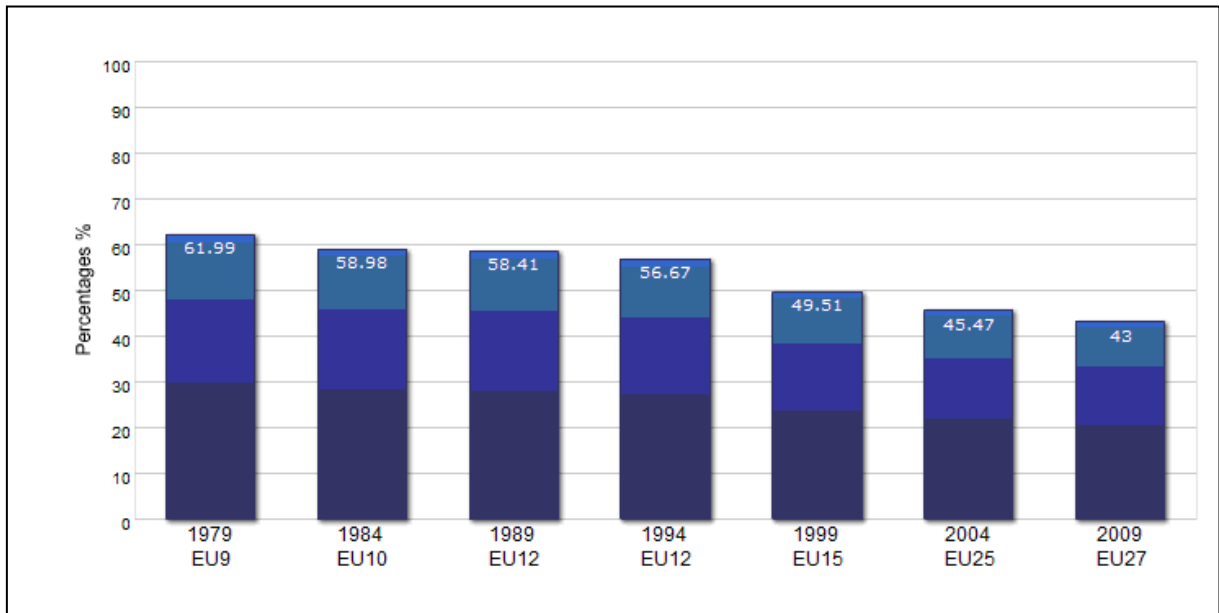
Leaving these factors aside for the time being, a closer look at the voting trends of the individual member states in Table 2.2 demonstrates that the turnout increased in only 11 out of 27 countries and still remained significantly lower than the turnout for national elections in every member state, excluding those countries where it is compulsory to vote.

---

[8] See the EU Democrats' position paper for more information on the individual circumstances of the EP election 2009 in each EU country: *Johansson, Jan Å.* "The lowest of the low, Turnout in the European Parliament elections in comparison with all other elections and referendums in the European Union 1979-2009."

**Table 2.2. Voting turnout in EP elections and national elections**

	EP Elections				Parliamentary Elections		
Country	**2004**	**2007**	**2009**	**Change**	**Year**	**Voter Turn-out**	**Difference**
Austria	42.43	-	45.97	3.54	2008	81.71	-35.74
Belgium	90.81	-	90.39	-0.42	2010	89.22	1.17
Bulgaria	-	29.22	38.99	9.77	2009	60.63	-21.64
Cyprus	72.5	-	59.4	-13.1	2011	78.7	-19.3
Czech Republic	28.3	-	28.3	0	2006	64.47	-36.17
Denmark	47.89	-	59.54	11.65	2007	86.59	-27.05
Estonia	26.83	-	43.9	17.07	2007	61.91	-18.01
Finland	39.43	-	40.3	0.87	2007	65.02	-24.72
France	42.76	-	40.63	-2.13	2007	60.44	-19.81
Germany	43	-	43.3	0.3	2005	77.65	-34.35
Greece	63.22	-	52.61	-10.61	2007	74.14	-21.53
Hungary	38.5	-	36.31	-2.19	2010	47	-10.69
Ireland	58.58	-	58.64	0.06	2007	67.03	-8.39
Italy	71.72	-	65.05	-6.67	2008	80.54	-15.49
Latvia	41.34	-	53.7	12.36	2006	60.98	-7.28
Lithuania	48.38	-	20.98	-27.4	2008	48.59	-27.61
Luxembourg	91.35	-	90.75	-0.6	2004	91.68	-0.93
Malta	82.39	-	78.79	-3.6	2008	93.3	-14.51
Netherlands	39.26	-	36.75	-2.51	2006	80.35	-43.6
Poland	20.87	-	24.53	3.66	2007	53.88	-29.35
Portugal	38.6	-	36.78	-1.82	2009	59.74	-22.96
Romania	-	29.47	27.67	-1.8	2004	58.51	-30.84
Slovakia	16.97	-	19.64	2.67	2006	54.67	-35.03
Slovenia	28.35	-	28.33	-0.02	2008	63.1	-34.77
Spain	45.14	-	44.9	-0.24	2008	75.32	-30.42
Sweden	37.85	-	45.53	7.68	2006	81.99	-36.46
United Kingdom	38.52	-	34.7	-3.82	2005	61.36	-26.66
Total EU	45.47	-	43	-2.47			
Calculated average	47.80		46.16	-0.27	Calculated average	69.57	

Source: European Election Database, 2011.

Turning to the success stories, the leading country which showed a 17% rise in voter turnout was Estonia, owing its success greatly to the introduction of online voting. Introduced in 2005, the number of voters using this voting method increased by almost 30,000 from the prior Parliamentary elections in 2007 to the EP elections of 2009 (Estonian National Electoral Committee 2011). The Post-Electoral Survey (Eurobarometer 2009) conducted by the DG Communication draws a number of conclusions from interviews with citizens on the reasons why they voted or abstained from going to the polls following the elections. In contrast to 59% of the citizens in the EU-25 who believed that they had enough information to vote in the 2004 elections, in 2009 only 53% of the EU-27 considered that they had enough information to take part.

Although the new Member States (Romania and Bulgaria) also recorded percentages under the EU average, the reason for the decline appears to lie with the former EU-15 countries[9] in which the share of the population boasting enough information to vote decreased by 8 percentage points. Having plotted these figures against the voting turnout for each country, positive correlation between the figures can be observed in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3. Positive correlation between voting turnout and perceived information level, 2009.
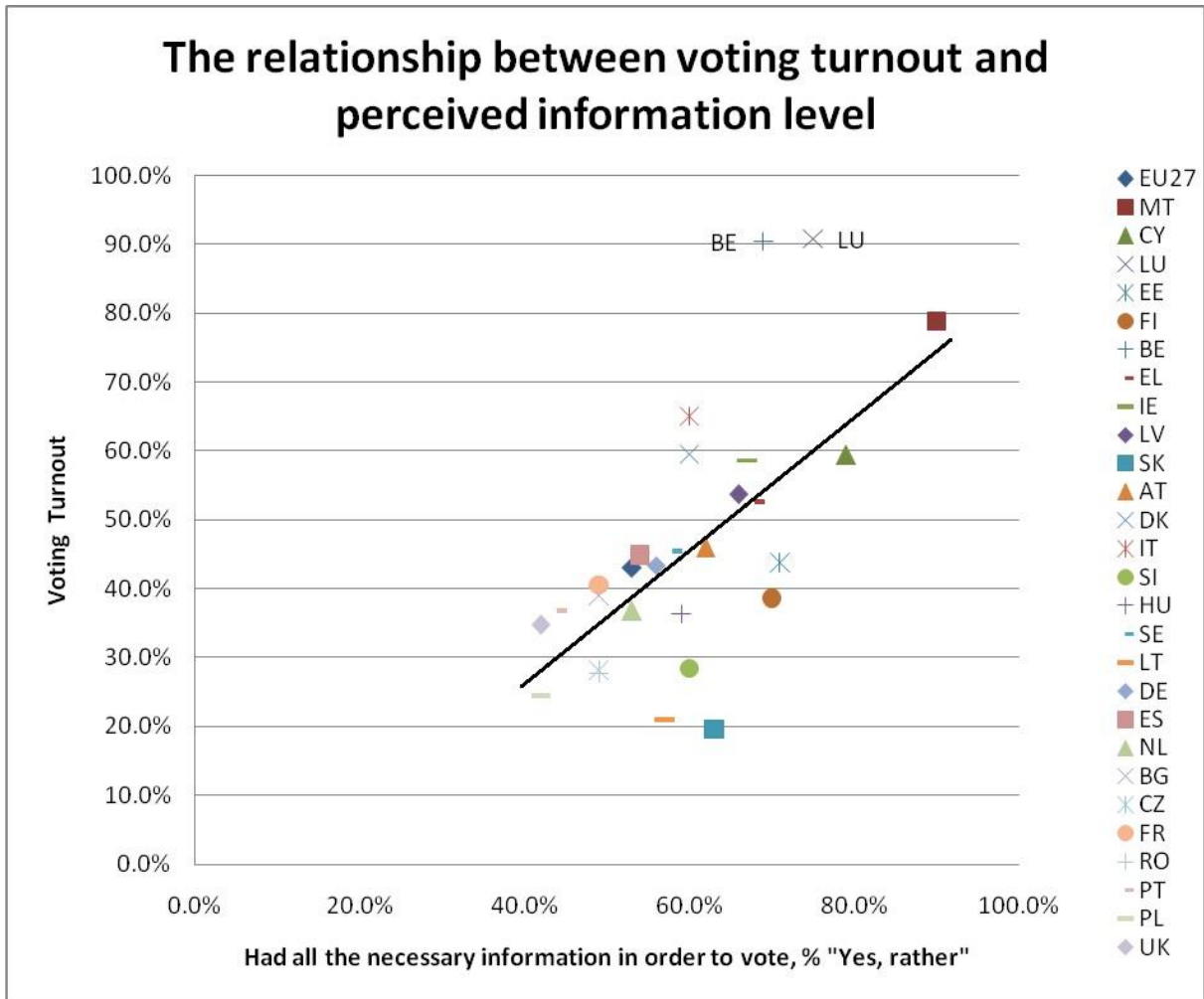
Source: Eurobarometer 2009a, own graph.

The line of best fit highlights this tendency and directs one to the conclusion that higher levels of citizen engagement during the EP elections occur in countries where information is more abound and where the citizens perceive themselves to have a higher degree of political knowledge. One must disregard the anomalies of Belgium and Luxembourg is necessary to obtain a more balanced picture since voting is compulsory and more stringently monitored in these countries. With a question on the awareness of citizens of campaigns prior to the elections, one can compare the exposure of citizens and the effects of the media which attempted to engage them into political activity. The

---

[9] The EU-15 consists of the following Member States which belonged to the European Union prior to the Eastern Enlargement in 2004: Austria, Germany, United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Italy.

results reveal that 67% of EU citizens remembered a campaign encouraging political participation prior to the elections. If one were to compare the figure with that of a similar question in the 2004 Post Election Survey (Eurobarometer 2004), it reveals an increase of 31% (from 36%). However, it would not be wise to assume that these two questions can be directly compared since the 2004 question was phrased differently and referred to the confusing concept of a "non-party campaign or advertisement". In the 2009 question, the question is posed more generally and asks about media which appeared on the TV, internet, radio, in the newspapers or on posters, not whether it was a party campaign or not.[10] Under such circumstances, the dramatic increase in citizens who answer with "Yes" should not be taken as a clear indication of more widespread media exposure. A more negative picture is presented when one considers that, in spite of the generality of the question and the broad nature of the media sources, almost one third of citizens still report that they were not exposed to campaigning through these media. It is of added interest to note that when comparing the percentage of citizens who remember campaigns to those who feel that they had enough information, one finds that in 21 out of 27 countries the share of citizens who remembered a campaign was larger than the portion which asserted that they had enough information. This suggests that the information provided through campaigns could be substantially improved. Only one country, Belgium unsurprisingly, had over 4% more citizens who received enough information to vote than citizens who were able to remember a campaign encouraging people to vote.

2.4.2. Identity and nationality

Recent evidence from the Eurobarometer (2010) clearly indicates that European citizenship is no competition for nationality and that the latter exudes much more influence on how citizens view themselves. In the cases where citizens feel as though they are European citizens, the feeling either comes alongside their original nationality or not at all (ibid.). Although it was not to be expected, nor was it even suggested in the Treaty, that developing a sense of being European would be at the expense of one's original nationality, the significant share of citizens (46%) who report not feeling European at all is extremely noteworthy. In order to assess what the consequences for active citizenship are, the first step is to isolate what being European or having a European identity could mean.

In a political community made up of countries with predominantly divergent histories and many cultural particularities, the prospect of establishing a European identity has long provoked debate. It is tempting to expect a collective identity to have developed in Europe particularly in the core EU countries which have experienced significant integration since 1957. Such a collective identity would be based on feelings of belonging, sharing the same fate and on being part of a community (Thompson 1995). The poor results suggest that neither Thompson's collective identity nor the political identity mooted by Casteglione in chapter 2 have managed to develop. Given the generality of the question it is difficult to assert whether those who felt European did so based on emotional, historical or political bonds. However, even if the question had been specific, citizens are not often consciously aware of the reasons behind their

---

[10] 2009 Question: Personally, do you remember having seen on TV, in the Internet or on posters, read in newspapers or heard on the radio a campaign encouraging people to go to vote on the European elections? Answer: Yes, remember. No, don't remember. Don't know.
2004 Question: You have been aware of a non-party campaign or advertisement encouraging people to vote in the European Parliament elections? Answer: Yes, No, Don't know

attitudes or indeed if they are based on just one or multiple bonds. The low number of people who felt European can be seen as both a causal and consequential factor for abstaining in the EP elections. Supporting this presumption that citizens do not feel part of a community within the EU, one finds that 66% of EU citizens either did not know if their voice counts on the EU level or tended to disagree with the statement that their voice does count (Eurobarometer 2010). The percentage has not only risen in comparison to the previous year but after scrutinising the corresponding question regarding the member states "My voice counts in my country", it was clear that 24% more citizens feel that they are of more political consequence in their country. The stark differences between how many citizens identify with and feel relevant in the EU polity and in their national polity show that citizens consider themselves to have very little incentive to break away from their national ties and engage more directly with EU politics. The figures show that EU citizens are no closer to the EU nowadays than they were after the Constitutional Treaty, suggesting that the EU have not succeeded to convince the citizens that they are a source of valuable input to the EU during their information and communication campaign. Nowadays, given the high level of integration which has already been achieved, it is clear that citizens feel isolated and confused about their role in the EU and what it does for them. Until the citizens become more involved in the political deliberations and processes of the EU, they are very unlikely to internalise its aims and view themselves as a part of the EU community. Having seen that many citizens do not share in the sense of having acquired a collective European identity, more horizontal Europeanisation may serve to develop stronger links between member states. For active citizenship to flourish, attitudes towards the EU must change and this can only happen through either reform to the institutional procedures or through a communicative and deliberative approach which gives citizens more input and information.

2.5. Who are the public? Active citizenship amongst the non-elites

In accordance with the largely uncontested assessment that the EU has been guided and shaped by elites since its creation and that the permissive consensus has now disappeared, it is pertinent to take a closer look at how political participation is developing amongst the non-elites. The data which will be employed to explore the engagement of the non-elites in EU politics comes once again from the 2009 Post-Electoral Survey (Eurobarometer 2009a). Table 2.3 indicates that according to the figures presented in the survey more than half of those employed as manual workers, house persons and close to three quarters (72%) of the unemployed did not participate in the elections. The percentage of interviewees who were registered as managers and did not participate in the elections was considerably lower, whilst remaining significant, at 47%. Although the section of the population who are registered as managers appears *prima facie* to correspond to citizens who may potentially be classified as elites (economic elites), it is difficult to conclude that this is the case since many managerial positions are part of a large institutional hierarchy and have little or no influence upon wider society. What can be concluded from the data is that citizens with a lower socioeconomic employment status are less likely to vote. A rather worrying figure from these results is the percentage of students who did not vote (66%). However, according to *Milner* (2002) low voting turnout and low political interest is increasingly common amongst the younger generations. Although this still presents a problem, it suggests that it is rather an inherent societal issue that needs to be addressed through education and

culture on the member state level rather than with intensive EU-awareness campaigns on the EU level.

The electorate is often described as being uninterested in EU politics and an elitist view may consider EU issues to be beyond the general political understanding and capabilities of the general public. In the Post-Electoral Survey (Eurobarometer 2009a), the decrease in the number of citizens who are very interested in politics by 7 percentage points provides evidence that levels of political interest among a citizenry are not fixed and should not be accepted as unalterable. Even though it cannot be said that the same people were interviewed, which would have demonstrated a more conclusive change in the political interest of individual citizens, the fluctuation is large enough to support the statement that sections of the population who select reasons such as "disinterest in politics" should neither be immediately excluded from the prospective electorate, nor assumed to be incapable of becoming politically active. In contrast to the negative pattern of active citizenship identified for the EU, the publics in Western societies are nowadays more informed and interested in politics than ever before (Voltmer 2010), suggesting that perhaps the context of this EU conducted survey led interviewees to interpret the politics as meaning EU politics. In order to investigate further why citizens are failing to embrace their political rights, we will now explore how the EU has attempted to encourage citizens' interest on the EU level through their communication and information policy.

3. The EU Communication Deficit

As a political *sui generis*, thus lacking a historical comparative, the optimum degree of transparency, communication and information to be provided on the supranational level to a widespread and culturally diverse public is far from easy to assess. Nowadays, it is generally accepted that the EU remains too distant from its citizens when one considers how much influence and legislative power the EU carries. To overcome this, greater interaction and understanding from both parties would be beneficial. As a consequence of the failed referenda in 2005, the importance of the EU's communication strategy rose considerably and focus was placed on intensifying "debate between the European Union's democratic institutions and citizens" (EC 2005a). However, communicating the intentions and objectives of the EU has no binding influence on other policies or what happens in practice. Just two years after the beginning of the new strategy and under the shadow of the approaching Treaty of Lisbon, Margot Wallström, the Commissioner for Communication and Inter-institutional Relations at the time, stated with acute foresight:

"There will be a temptation by some to believe that we can return to business as usual, to the days of elite-driven integration with no participation from Europe's citizens. I believe this is a real risk and would be a mistake. " (European Voice 2007)

The subsequent negotiation and agreement on the Treaty of Lisbon behind closer doors suggests that the "some" Wallström is speaking of is actually a majority of the key players rather than a few rogues elites. Unlike the Convention on the Future of Europe which was at least conducted as a process involving a wide variety of state and non-state actors with public plenary sessions (Haller 2008), the Reform Treaty (later known as the Treaty of Lisbon) was negotiated quickly without public interaction and very little content was actually changed from the original version. Given the fears of the former Commissioner and the context of the Treaty of Lisbon, the question of whether

the new communication and information policies made an impact following the abandonment of the Constitutional Treaty must be addressed.

In this chapter, the EU's approach to communication, as well as some of the main initiatives which were launched by the EU from 2005, is evaluated on its success at encouraging citizen participation across all sections of the citizenry.

3.1. Arcane policy or transparency?

Whilst the task of communicating general policy objectives and results of the European Union is an aim incorporated into most policy areas, proactive openness is a relatively new line of strategy and diverges greatly from the elitist approach of *Jean Monnet* whose plans for integration avoided active public involvement (Haller 2008). Though this paper will look at the communication and information policy following the Constitutional Treaty, the Commission had already recognised the need for more transparency and citizen participation in the White Paper on Governance in 2001 (EC 2001). Looking back to research of the communication strategy of the EU prior to the discussion of the "Future of Europe", the objectives appear to have been the pursuit of the citizens' approval and admiration rather than empowering them with understanding and information (de Vreese, 2003). Unfortunately, this still appears to be the case in 2005, in the 'Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate' (Plan D, from here on)[11] the "objective of the Commission is to stimulate this debate and seek recognition for the added value that the European Union can provide" (EC 2005a). Given the citizens' rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and Netherlands, it is understandable for the EU to want to boost its levels of approval from the citizens. However, the intention of the Commission to pursue passive approval through communication is problematic and suggests that the debate is more concerned with providing the public simply with space to be heard, not to engage in productive debate. Such fears are confirmed when one considers a best practice example from Plan D: an information campaign in Finland entitled "101 ways in which the EU has improved your life" (EC (Secretariat General) 2006). Taking the resultant policies into consideration, there appears to be a tendency towards superficial, public relations initiatives to win over citizens rather than to engage in a constructive two-way dialogue from which both parties can gain and moves towards greater participation. *De Vreese* (2003) has criticised such pro-European messages as uninteresting both for the media and for the citizens. For active citizenship, these initiatives would have the potential to mobilise citizens if they believed that becoming more involved would make a difference.

As a result of focusing on self-promotion and trying to convince citizens of the EU's added value rather than promoting information and dialogue, the communication initiative runs the risk of having the opposite of its intended effect. According to *Haller* (2008), the "split between promises and achievements" apparent in communication from the EU may be causing a significant negative impact on the public image of the EU. Given the limited exposure of the EU's promises, the poor EU knowledge of citizens and contemporary scepticism towards politics, it is unlikely that the citizens felt mislead by this policy. However, the fact that such information does not reach citizens reinforces its failure in serving the democratic needs of citizens. One suitable example was the finding that in 2005 almost 20% of citizens had still never heard about the Constitution (Eurobarometer 2005). It seems that, rather than broken promises, the

---

[11] The 13 initiatives of Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate are listed in Appendix 1.

apparent continuation of the elite-driven status quo may be the source of apathy and lack of active participation.

In light of the PR concentrated policy communication, the sufficient availability of administrative and legislative information becomes even more important for the task of keeping citizens well-informed on EU developments. The majority of applications to view documents are completed by "EU specialists" and not normal citizens (EC 2007b) but this does not mean that greater openness would not affect active citizenship. Through transparent processes, non-state actors are able to take on the role of raising citizens' awareness and bringing debate on EU policies into the media and public spheres. Following a number of recent cases regarding transparency before the ECJ, the Court has ruled against the Council relying upon Article 15(3) TFEU and Regulation 1049/2001[12], the aim of which was to "give the public the widest possible right of access"[13] to EU documents. Most recently, the Council has attempted to use Article 4(3) of this Regulation which allows the refusal of a document on the condition that its disclosure would "seriously undermine the institution's decision-making process". The claim of the Council was forged on the basis that the requested document featured the names of member states and their suggestions for a reform to the aforementioned Regulation whilst in preliminary discussions. The Court upheld the citizens' right of access to documents and clarified that Article 4(3) was to be applied strictly in order for citizens "to participate more closely in the decision-making process"[14] and for the "effective exercise of their democratic rights"[15]. The discussion taking place between the institutions on how the Regulation should be updated began back in 2007 but so far only limited progress has been made. Though the EU has made progress on transparency over the last ten years, as *Wallström* maintained, the very real possibility of returning to the ways of old still exists. It appears that superficially the EU wish to be transparent, clear and interactive but in practice there is simply too much mistrust that bringing citizens closer to the EU would bring more conflict and strife for member states and tie down the speed of integration.

3.2. Quantity and quality: the information and communication strategies (2005-2009)

Since the EU had proactively begun to widen its exposure prior to 2005 via audiovisual strategies, its own internet presence and more transparent procedures, many of the changes made after the abandonment of the Constitutional Treaty were building on an already existing foundation. Plan D was the action decided upon in the wake of the reflection period in order to connect citizens with the EU and promote debate on the future direction of the EU. The three main areas of this plan were "stimulating a wider public debate", "promoting citizen's participation in democratic process" and "tools to generate a dialogue on European policies" (EC 2005a). The following Communications and Action Plans initiated by the Commission were as follows: "Action Plan to Improve Communicating Europe by the Commission" (EC 2005b), "White Paper on a European Communication Policy" (EC 2006b), "Communicating Europe in partnership" (EC

---

[12] Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents, OJ 2001 L 145/43
[13] ECJ, T-233/09 *Access Info Europe* v *Council*, OJ 2009 C205/75; ECJ, Joined Cases C-39/05 P and C-52/05 P, *Kingdom of Sweden, Maurizio Turco* v *Council of the European Union, Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Finland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Commission of the European Communities,* [2008] OJ C 209/02.
[14] ECJ, T-233/09 *Access Info Europe* v *Council*, OJ 2009 C205/75 paragraph 56.
[15] ECJ, T-233/09 *Access Info Europe* v *Council*, OJ 2009 C205/75 paragraph 57.

2007a) and "Communicating about Europe via the Internet" (EC 2007c). A series of wide-ranging proposals were made across these documents, some which have never been stringently pursued[16] but for the sake of clarity and brevity only the most common proposals and salient initiatives which were aimed at developing active citizenship will be dealt with.

3.2.1. Information overload?

The flagship internet initiative of the EU is undoubtedly the Europa website; an online project to facilitate citizens' access to EU data. Having been set up in the mid-1990s, the website was later further developed as an important strategic component of the EU's internet presence (EC 2007a). The website features a long list of European publications, policy information, visual guides to the institutional structure of the EU and, more recently, an increasing share of interactive elements (videos, quizzes, social media, etc.). Despite the substantial investment in this project, the specialised nature of much of the information on the website (legislative documents, policy briefs, etc) does not appeal to common citizens but rather to those who are already active in the realm of EU politics or law. According to research by *Hoppmann* (2010), the Europa website is constructed of so much dispersed information that even employees of the Commission find it difficult to navigate. Under such circumstances, members of the public with much less contextual knowledge stand very little chance of gaining an efficient overview and leaving the site with the impression that they have found what they were looking for. Defending the website somewhat, the challenge of communicating a complex multilevel polity is no mean feat and given the fragmented nature of the internet as a whole, citizens are becoming ever more competent at finding, sorting and evaluating information found on the World Wide Web.

As part of the EU's bid to "go local", Plan D proposed hosting more regional events through the Europe Direct Information Centres to become more involved and visible in the local communities across the EU (EC 2005a). Despite the importance of establishing these decentralised points of contact between the EU and citizens, any influence these centres exert on communities has been small and restricted to those who show interest in EU topics. The contact service provided by the Europe Direct centres has similarly proved to be a main source of information for citizens who are generally professionals, with a university degree and interested in the EU already (EPEC 2010). Although the centres may increase the official involvement of the EU in communities, the effectiveness of this approach in bringing normal citizens closer to the EU is very limited.

3.2.2. Symbolism and personalisation

The EU's tendency to use symbols and "empty clichés" (Haller 2008) in order to communicate with citizens reflects its desire to rally up a community of supporters and a Europe of solidarity. Attempts to give the EU the trappings of a nation state (e.g. the EU flag, the anthem, Europe Day) have been scaled down, at least in public, since the disappearance of the permissive consensus. However, the heavily influenced PR influenced approach of providing faces and personalities to help citizens to identify and support with the EU has played a part in the post-Constitutional Treaty projects to

---

[16] It is suspected that the European Goodwill Ambassadors action has not been developed further. Even if any further action has been taken, the impact has been so minimal that information on this topic is virtually non-existent.

engage citizens. The presence of Commissioners in member states and their promotion as "public faces" of the EU (EC 2005b) appears to be addressing the complaint that the EU is not visible or accountable to citizens. Many commissioners and MEPs allow citizens to follow them via social media channels such as Twitter, YouTube and their own blogs, writing about their specialist areas and informing citizens on current issues or important events they attend. With every commissioner having a personalised website (with a photo) on the Europa website, one can no longer say that the EU is publicly faceless. Having commissioners visit the member states, particularly their own member states, may appear to be a positive step but, as *Theiler* (2005) has concluded for all public relations exercises in the EU, it is difficult to assess the precise impact of such activities. What is certain is that appearances by high powered elites can only contribute to information gain when topics close to the interests of common citizens are discussed and there is room for debate and contestation. Such a situation should also result in subsequent media coverage reaching the wider public. The strong predominance of nationality over European citizenship seen in the earlier Eurobarometer results, visits of national commissioners would have the largest impact on citizens. However, accountability would still be lacking as each commissioner specialises in a different policy area and may hesitate to speak on behalf of the other commissioners. Following this reasoning, a more suitable candidate for EU spokesperson would have been either the President of the European Commission, who only managed to make five visits to member states in the scope of Plan D during its first year (EC (Secretariat General) 2006). Though a variety of citizens were invited to take part in the visits, they were mostly students, media workers, NGO representatives and academics (ibid.). All of the major personalities in the EU find themselves swimming in a confused dichotomy of promotion and suppression. Although they are encouraged to become key spokespeople for the EU, member states are often interested in speaking on some issues for themselves, particularly the larger member states. The main reasons for this are policy differences (foreign and security policy, most notably) and in order to assert their global power. Although not having come into being until the Treaty of Lisbon, the creation of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, originally the Minister for Foreign Affairs,[17] has demonstrated to be such a position which has failed to produce a European personality and spokesperson. In theory, Lady Ashton holds one of the most important positions in the EU but in practice she is a relatively irrelevant character for EU citizens[18]. Although more appearances of such strong personalities could prove to have a positive effect, it would only be through the coverage of the national media that a large audience could be reached. Overall, though symbols and personalities rouse trust and ties over the long term, in terms of information and debate very little is achieved.

3.3. Building a European public sphere

In their Communications following the Constitutional Treaty (eg. EC 2005a, EC 2007a), the Commission have declared their ambitions to support the development of a European public sphere. Despite the fact that top-down processes alone cannot build a public sphere, the EU is in the position of being able to support an emerging European public sphere by producing information and setting up deliberative areas for citizens to utilise. *Brüggemann* (2005) posits that the Commission's information policy as forming

---

[17] The position was titled "Minister for Foreign Affairs" in the Constitutional Treaty.
[18] A recent look at Lady Ashton's relevance to the public during the intervention in Libya and the uprisings in Northern Africa exemplifies the current strength of this position in the public eye.

"the most direct link between the institution and the EPS" (European public sphere). The main initiatives brought about by proposals from the Commission with the aim of supporting more public interaction will be evaluated below.

3.3.1. Debate Europe

Following the expiration of Plan D, an online forum for discussion on the future of the EU, "Debate Europe" (EC 2006a), was created to enable citizens to join together easily for the purpose of discussing the EU. The website has been heralded as one of the most successful initiatives of the Commission since the Constitutional Treaty and its former failed attempt to set up a similar internet forum, "Futurum" (Michailidou 2010). As a website where citizens could discuss among themselves what kind of form the EU should take in the future, Debate Europe represented a listening exercise from the perspective of the Commission. Reporting to have received over 1 million visitors during its first six months and over 19,000 comments (EC 2006a), the success of this initiative has, nevertheless, been dampened by its decommissioning in early 2010. Despite the difficulty of claiming that this area for discussion formed a step towards more participatory democracy, the opportunity for citizens to engage in public debate on a forum sited on the official EU website represented a positive and open-minded EU approach to widening citizen participation. It is true that the contributions did have an effect on the input legitimacy of the EU, nor was there any evidence that the comments were taken into consideration by the EU. But for the few citizens who were not disheartened by such circumstances and enjoyed spending their time discussing political issues, the forum offered a small step towards a truly European communicative space open to all. This opportunity was no mild achievement in bringing citizens together and overcoming national issues which typically dominate the national public spheres.

A larger step towards getting citizens involved in EU politics was the online forum "Your Voice in Europe". Here, it is pertinent to return to the 66% of people who were unsure or believed that their voice did not count on the EU level. Set up in 2001, the website hosts consultations which allow citizens, state and non-state actors to provide feedback or fill out questionnaires based on EU policies. The opportunity to submit opinions on proposed legislation is a positive development but despite citizens' access, one must question how practical it is for the majority of citizens who do not proactively look up proposals and generally are notified only after legislation has been passed. Direct interactivity of this kind is most suitable for those citizens who are already mobilised and politically active, not the common citizens who are suffering from a lack of EU information and interest at the moment (Norris 2000). The influence which lobby groups and corporate actors play in these consultations instead of common citizens has often been identified as problematic given that they have no legitimacy to act on behalf of citizens, are entwined in a multifaceted relationship with the EU and are often viewed by officials as "vehicles to sell the Union to the EU citizens" (Cullen 2009). Furthermore, some consultation procedures restrict contributions to the simple completion of multiple choice questions, thereby not accommodating free comments. Given the scope for misinterpretation and question framing, not incorporating a field for comments in every questionnaire reflects the systematic and superficial manner in which the EU often constructs its dialogue with citizens, preferring to collect opinions rather than engage in deliberation. Considering these two attempts to engage with the public, the "Your Voice in Europe" boasts more concrete possibilities to contribute to legislation but as a form of one-way communication. It holds few powers to encourage dialogue either among citizens or between citizens and the EU polity. In contrast,

Debate Europe posed a promising opportunity to host a long-term interactive website for citizens which could have played a bigger role in increasing active citizenship in the future and would have sustained a pan-European communicative space with access for all citizens to visit and discuss Europe whenever they see fit.

3.3.2. Deliberation and accountability

In the Communication on Plan D (EC 2005a), it was made clear that organising public debate would be left to the member states and the EU would simply play a supporting role for member states. Leaving such a task to the member states creates a number of problems. Firstly, in facing the national publics, governments have their nationally focused promises and the objective to remain in power which normally takes top priority. Evidence of how governments use the EU to deflect negative public opinion away from them has been widely produced (e.g. Tench and Yeomans 2009). Secondly, in such a situation where the member states are the principal instigators, the EU sways in the sidelines and seems to validate the claims of those who believe the EU are not interested in hearing citizens opinions and simply want to pursue their own elite-inspired mandate. Since EU involvement was primarily through proposals, funding and promoting their added value, nothing was done to correct the missing direct accountability of the institutions to the public (Ward 2004) which could have been addressed through more direct deliberation efforts between the EU and the citizens.

Through Plan D, many civil society groups and NGOs were funded to run projects throughout the EU in order to establish local, national and cross-border communication links. Going local was intended to bring the EU to citizens in order to lighten the load of becoming politically engaged and introduce the EU directly into citizens' daily lives. Regrettably, only a minority of the projects funded by Plan D were of a participatory nature and they were more information-based than focused on encouraging debate or deliberation (EC 2009). In addition, France, Germany, the UK and the Netherlands received half of the total grant money whereas no projects were funded in Sweden, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Poland, Greece, Luxembourg and Romania (ibid.). In reference to the overall aim of entering into a debate about the future of Europe, the deliberation that was achieved through these activities was minimal. *Peters* (2005) defines public deliberation as "a collaborative argumentative effort to obtain collectively acceptable solutions to problems or resolutions of conflict." After having analysed the policy proposals of the EU, it is clear that a truly deliberative process was never foreseen, particularly one in which the possibility existed for the EU and its citizens to arrive at a mutual compromise. Considering the results of the projects, the small number of participants who were involved meant that no widespread public debate took place and, therefore, no "acceptable solutions" could be found. Even with the larger-scale projects, such as the internet and "going local" initiatives, there was little incentive for those who are fairly uninformed on EU topics to take part. For those who did participate, the results and influence of their participation were not clearly visible since their opinions would only, in the best possible case, be passed on to EU officials. Under such conditions, only people who wish to influence the opinions of other citizens would see potential value in participating, resulting in, yet again, the participation of groups of citizens who are already politically mobilised rather than those normal citizens who could be. Considering the initiatives undertaken, their conditions and results, clear parallels can be drawn between the 66% of citizens who believe their voices do not to count and the failure of the EU to convince them otherwise.

3.4. The European Parliament: reaching the electorate

As the EU institution with the strongest claim to democratic legitimacy due to having been directly voted in by the people, MEPs have the potential to become significant players in developing stronger European communication links and active EU citizenship. *Clark* (2010) has found that the more people believe the EP to be influential and representative, the more likely they are to vote. Therefore, a great potential lies in tasking MEPs to invest more time and energy into informing and listening to their constituents as well as providing them with feedback on how the EP functions and contributes to decision-making. The institutional stumbling blocks, such as the EP not having the right to propose legislation and co-decision not being applicable for all legislation, have been widely blamed for voter abstention. However, this effect, and its persistence, is likely to be restricted to citizens who have a high knowledge of the EU since knowledge and criticism of the constitutional characteristics of the EP would imply that citizens have a much better knowledge of the workings of the EU than in reality. It is more likely that criticism is carried through the public sphere, rather than existing in the personal convictions of normal citizens and the stronger presence of MEPs in the respective public spheres could serve to introduce new, alternative perspectives. Given that a significantly higher proportion of citizens in lower socio-economic groups abstained in the 2009 elections, by increasing the visibility and relevance of the EP in the public spheres these citizens would be encouraged to participate.

Unlike the other EU institutions, the EP bears the most outward resemblance to governments in member states, more specifically the national institutions which citizens come into contact with most often: national parliaments. Since institutional clarity in a political system encourages citizen participation (Przeworski et al. 1999), the Parliament has the potential to form a central role in the development of interaction between the EU and citizens. Nevertheless, there are a number of hurdles holding the institution back, namely the low level campaigning and publicity of the Europarties, and the high number of parties which take part leaving the institution not quite so clear as it may seem. As *Gordon* and *Segura* (1997) have pointed out, the more parties there are to choose from in an election, the more information a potential voter needs to manage thus the less attractive voting becomes. In addition, the three-level party system in the European Parliament (transnational groups, European political parties and national parties) makes it challenging for citizens to monitor how their vote has contributed to the end result and the subsequent policies. Therefore, even if a voter manages to comprehend the system and receive enough information to vote, the costs of actively following the ensuing politics in Parliament are extremely high and do not facilitate a high level of engagement. The invisibility of the EP on the national stages and the predominance of national parties in election campaigning prove to bewilder voters further. As a result of the fluidity of the groups with national parties changing their allegiances from time to time, it may be problematic to have MEPs focus their campaign more on their Europarty rather than their national party. However, when citizens are unfamiliar with the actors and groupings, they believe them to be less consequential.

Despite the increase in funding and campaigning for the 2009 EP elections, *Rosema* and *de Vries* (2011) have highlighted the problem that the main parties in the European Parliament showed very little contrast in their general approval of European integration. Despite not forming a communicative restraint, this institutional and ideological feature may have resulted in a group of lost voters who wished to stick to

their personal ideological voting preferences but who had a different view on European integration. Support for more or less EU integration is the most decisive and contentious topic amongst citizens, especially since many citizens feel as though they have never had a choice on this topic. Therefore, forcing citizens to choose a party with contrasting ideological values to their own simply in order to express their wish to halt or continue with integration represents the clash of the two most salient voting considerations regarding the EU. Greater information could potentially support voters to consider a wider variety of policy positions and weigh up the different parties. Nonetheless, given the perceived costs and benefits it seems likely that citizens who found themselves in such a situation would abstain from voting, particularly those against further integration.

3.5. Evaluation of impact on active citizenship

Through the implementation of various initiatives to enhance active citizenship since 2005, the EU has managed to reach and engage in projects with small groups of normal citizens and to allow broad audiences the chance to raise their voice for a specific period of time. Regrettably, amongst a population of over 450 million citizens, the success experienced has been limited and the policies and actions alone have failed to support lasting active citizenship. Connecting with citizens through a stronger internet presence was a key feature of the policies which, although innovative and modern, simply offered a better tool for politically active citizens and did not lead to notable political engagement amongst normal citizens. Additionally, with only 60% of households having internet access at the end of 2008 (Eurostat 2008), the EU's Internet efforts are cutting out a large portion of the citizenry from the debate who may have been more actively involved had the debate been through the more traditional and popular communication means: television, radio or newspapers. Though the EU declared that they wanted to listen to citizens during these exercises, the lack of clear output legitimacy could have left citizens wondering what the benefits of participating were. The Internet was idealised as "the principal medium for cross-border debate" (EC 2007a) and an instrument to build stronger links between the EU and citizens. However, the manner in which the Internet "fragment(s) the huge mass public" (Habermas 2009) precludes its importance in the creation of a European public sphere which the Commission have strived for.

Overall, though the EU may be deceived into believing they have the tools to build active citizenship through their internet presence, without informing or incentivising the citizens to use the tools, they will remain redundant and reserved for the use of a small minority of interest-motivated parties. In building temporary connections with citizens, a degree of dialogue and communication have taken place but have mostly served to provide citizens with information and neither given them the opportunity to provide an input into decision-making, nor view any consequences or results of their engagement. From the evidence provided, it is apparent that supplying information directly from the EU is not enough alone to induce more active citizenship. The actors who have benefitted from the information and communication actions of the EU have been those who were already EU-aware (NGOs, professional people with existing knowledge and political ties, national elites, etc.). Overall, the strategies have provided very few benefits both to the EU and the citizens given that the crucial debate on Europe's future failed to provide a clear and legitimate opportunity for citizens to deliberate on their perceptions of the role of the EU in the future.

4. Mass Media: The Fourth Estate of Europe?

Having looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the recent EU approach to communication and information policy, attention is drawn to the influence of the mass media in the relationship between the EU polity and the citizens. Various events over the last few decades (e.g. the expansion of commercial media sources, advances in communication technology, rise of the internet, etc.) have led to a monumental increase in the quantity of information available in the public arena (Norris 2000). Whether the hoards of information on offer through the mass media can be classed as mobilising or swamping citizens is a matter of much discussion across all spheres of interest. However, given the cultural and historical proximity of the national mass media to their audiences[19], it is important to explore whether it could form an invaluable instrument to help the EU to communicate more successfully with the citizenry, construct more appropriate information policies and foster active EU citizenship.

4.1. The influence of mass media in society and governance

Heralded as the "prominent player" regarding the task of providing citizens with information on politics (Koopmans and Statham 2010), the modern media in democratic states has developed the diversity and skills to confer information across all socioeconomic levels to every citizen (Norris 2000). Across the EU member states, the quantity and variety of print media differs but considering the entire scope of media (television, radio, newspapers, internet, etc.) political information has never before been so accessible for the general public.

Holding the principal communication links between the political elites and the common citizens, the mass media wields strong influence and carries significant responsibility in creating and maintaining a healthy public sphere. *Trappel* and *Nieminen* (2010) list the functions of media in a political society as informative (distributor of public affairs knowledge), supervisory (watchdog role) and mediatory (public opinion creator). With the availability of information and opportunities for participation being two key steps encouraging active citizenship, the media has the tools to support the growth of active citizenship. Within the borders of the national public spheres, citizens have expectations of how successfully the media system in their country or region fulfils these functions on a national level. The familiarity of the citizens with their national media and vice versa places the national systems in an ideal position to mediate between the EU polity and the individual publics. The extent to which citizens can truly understand the media depends on whether media literacy is taught and perhaps also on the quantity of diverse media sources available. A large variety of competing media, with a wide choice for a selection of audiences, would also create an environment in which supervision and cross-media criticism can take place.[20]

With such close ties to the public, one might be forgiven for considering control of the media power as the key to obtaining public support. However, not only is the freedom of the press an unquestionable democratic priority but media is not free from scrutiny and has shown to lose a certain share of its power when it is overly managed. *Lazarsfeld*, *Berelson* and *Gaudet* (1949) stress the limits of the media's power and focus on the importance of discussion and interaction of political opinions with people of a high social relevance to oneself. In this paper, the positive nature of interpersonal

---

[19] Particularly among the EU member states where a high degree of media freedom is demanded and democratic practices are well-established

[20] Such media on media criticism has been reported in the USA by Norris (2010).

exchange remains unquestionably important for political opinion formation and engagement. However, there are also situational reasons why nowadays the media plays a much larger role in supporting public opinion formation on the EU. Firstly, the lack of general information about the EU, its decision making processes and how it directly affects normal citizens limits the depth and regularity at which interpersonal discussions occur. In addition, contrary to *Lazarsfeld et al's* argument that voter preferences can be much more deeply entwined with social identity and expression thus hindering media influence, the relationship between MEPs and citizens in the EU is hindered by both the citizens' unfamiliarity with the Europarties and the high ratio of citizens to MEP making strong ties and affiliations to parties or people very unlikely.[21]

Rather than a power wielding institution, the main role of the media which contributes to enhancing political participation amongst citizens by keeping citizens informed and providing space for open dialogue. Even though citizens' trust of the media can dilute the efficiency of this function, media remains an invaluable bridge of communication and integral part of the national public sphere. It is widely know that television is more trusted as a news provider than newspapers (Eurobarometer 2009b) and has been a successful and growing media form which gathers large viewing audiences whilst forming a platform for the voicing of diverging opinions and debate.
It is through both television and radio that public service broadcasting has most prominently developed as a national public good, despite its negative reputation in many of the formerly dictator-ruled or ex-Communist countries. *Harrison* (2010) details the core values of public service broadcasters as being "honesty, objectivity, integrity and impartiality," which seem very much like values which the both the media and the EU would benefit from when communicating with the public.

4.2. Assessing national media coverage of the EU

In spite of being severely overshadowed by domestic news in the national media (Machill, Beiler and Fischer 2006), news about the EU is now a regular feature in the national media of the member states. Following the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, a period of reflection and debate was called for in order to consider how the future EU could, or should, look and function. In a national public sphere, this process of consideration would have been played out under the watchful eye of the media. An exchange of opinions amongst politicians, civil society actors, community leaders and other non-state actors through the mass media would have helped to inform the citizens of the terms of debate and, finally, supported them with the formation of their opinion in order to engage in debate. In the aftermath of the Dutch and French referenda, public debates on the constitutional question in the press reduced considerably both in the emerging European public sphere and in the national public sphere (Liebert and Trenz 2008). Although there had been significant coverage of the referenda campaigns and their results across Europe (Parsons 2007), the press articles on the constitutional future for the EU reduced unreservedly in quantity to prior levels. It is clear that as a result of the focus turning back to member state negotiation and away from citizen participation, the incentive to engage in discussion on this topic diminished too. Whether encouraging citizen participation was ever an intention in some member states is related to a certain extent to whether they had planned to hold a referendum. However, even in a country holding a referendum, the Netherlands, the media was found to have reported more on

---

[21] Though a large majority of the population can be said to have political affiliations through their social standing or family traditions, finding a comparable party in the European Parliament takes time and political engagement which must be weighed against the potential known benefits (see Chapter 2.2)

the referendum and the other member states than the actual content of the Constitution (van Noije 2010). For active citizenship, the missed opportunity to inform citizens on the details of the Constitution and to develop a debate on the pros and cons of the document is regrettable. However, the strong coverage of the referendum and awareness of other member states can also be seen as a positive development which resulted in a turnout of 63%, almost double the number of Dutch voters who participated in the EP elections in 2004 and 2009 (European Election Database 2011).

Continuing more positively, European actors have showed signs of becoming more prevalent as claim makers in the media as a consequence of the EU having widened and deepened its competences (Koopmans, Erbe and Meyer, 2010). The exclusive, or even shared, competences of EU actors in some policy fields are a determining factor for their appearance in the media (the ECB's influence in monetary politics would be a good example). Having EU actors presented more often in the media enables citizens to put a face to the European polity, which not only creates a certain creditability and tangibility but fosters European identity formation amongst the European publics who will be reading or viewing the information during the same timeframe.

It cannot be said that the long awaited European public sphere came into being in the wake of the post-2005 dialogues which were aiming to engage citizens in open dialogue and debate, characteristic of a public sphere. However, the increasing Europeanisation of national public spheres (Gerhards 2001) in specific, and so far limited, policy areas can be seen as indicating progress towards encouraging a stronger vertical link between the publics and the EU. It is argued that there is space for horizontal connections between the different national publics to flourish in those areas of policy where policy implementation is minimal or nil on the national level and coordination is mostly supranational. Rather than analysing which country is implementing legislation or recommendations from the EU most diligently, thereby highlighting divergences, one would expect the outcome of covering coordinated policy areas in the media to be the development of a stronger sense of community identity. However, the recent bailout crises for Greece, Ireland and Portugal have shown that in times of political unease and heavy media coverage, the decisions are taken by the national leaders and it is fairly common for EU actors to only present themselves once a decision has been made, if at all. Following *Liebert et al's* research on the Constitutional Treaty crisis, in such situations when the member states assert their control and perform as individual national actors in the public eye, the EU appears weakened, in the form of an international organisation rather than supranational entity. In short, when dialogue and political engagement on the EU reaches its peaks of interest and controversy for citizens, the actors and debates become nationally oriented and the prospects of European-wide debate are constrained.

The relative low importance of the internet during the EP elections is likely to be owing to the active nature of searching for information when using the internet (de Vreese, Banducci et al, 2005). Nevertheless, more recent research has shown that a more prominent role for the internet does appear to be coming into being. This research was based on the election discussion among citizens which took place on online forums prior to the 2009 EP elections (Michailidou 2010) and the now commonplace and popular option for citizens to comment and discuss news through online news media. Given the limited active citizenship in the EU, television remains the most common source of information on the EU being a form which is mainly passive for the audience. Most of the media studies carried out analyse newspapers, including the elitist quality and broadsheet press, to approximate how prevalent the EU is through television, one

can take the results of the print media as overestimations of the prevalence of the EU amongst citizens who rely on television news. Television newscasts generally contain much less information and are under greater pressure to keep viewers interested due to the competition posed by other channels which are very easily accessible (Norris 2000).

All in all, assessing the coverage of the EU in national media spheres is more like analysing points of high frequency rather than establishing long-term, general trends. In spite of the enormity of the task, further research covering the full range of member states and dealing specifically with the last five years is needed. Perhaps a comparison of recent press coverage where prolonged salience appears to have been achieved in the area of the EMU would be able to further support the suggestion that the national public spheres are become more Europeanised.

4.3. Information bearers and shapers

Despite the tendency to criticise the media for their heavy coverage of trivial matters[22], media can perform a public service as an information provider, most openly visible in the form of public service broadcasters. However, every media source has interests and influences and only a very small part of the mass media can be viewed as coming anywhere close to acting as altruistic public service providers. Most obviously, the complex economic and political connections to the national government and elites make the idea of the media as impartial information sources problematic. According to *Freedom House* (2010), three EU countries continue to feature only a partially free press (Italy, Bulgaria and Romania) which along with the recent media law scandal in Hungary addresses the varying environments through which information and news on the EU is supposed to be transported. Even where the press is considered to be free, the commercial interests and partisanship of many newspapers influence the manner in which a story is presented (spin) and, as such, the attention it will receive amongst the audience. In the EU, these influences can both positively or negatively affect coverage of EU politics thus impacting the quality and quantity of the information received by the citizens. How this impacts on the potential for active citizenship to occur will now be analysed.

4.3.1. National news framing

The news media have a powerful role in setting the agenda in the public sphere but their influence does not end in their choice of topics to write about. The manner in which news is presented and portrayed shapes how it is received by the audience, this phenomenon is called news framing (de Vreese, 2002). According to the research carried out by *Schuck* and *de Vreese* (2006), citizens with lower knowledge of the EU are more susceptible to news on the EU which is framed as either a risk or an opportunity. Although, these results appear to contrast with the virtuous circle theory (Norris 2000), this would only be the effect in a public sphere where alternative opinions would not be expressed and public deliberation could not take place. Input from different sources (EU level, national level, non-state actors, etc.) is particularly important in such a predicament in order to maintain an unbiased and well-informed presentation of the facts. Looking at the scope of the media system as a whole, it can have a beneficial effect on active citizenship despite the presence of high impact, "risk" news framing when other information is presented alternatively and debate ensues.

---

[22] Derek Heater (2010) observes the popularity of celebrity news coverage rather than serious news nowadays.

Indeed, as discussed in chapter 4.4., conflict arising from differing opinions can have a positive effect on mobilising citizens. Through universal negative framing can affect public opinion, it does not have a permanent effect and the spillover from the attention drawn to the EU could have positive effects for active citizenship.

As an example of positive framing, *Olausson* (2010) reports on glorification and European identity props in Swedish media on discussing climate change and in comparison to the USA. Such reports challenge the belief that negative news is predominant in the EU and shows how national identity and European identity can be presented at the same time and do not have to be at odds with one another. The coverage of environmental issues, which involve an area of community values with general positive support across the EU, demonstrates an area which is not marked by stringent policy convergence but could still potentially engage citizens. Such positive media coverage promotes temporary positive attitudes towards the EU just as negative framing brings disapproving attitudes. It is interesting to contrast the influence of a media news frame with the generally fixed subjective news frame of the EU. Given the wide range of topics covered by the media, there are more opportunities to engage a wider range of citizens who may not have been interested in the EU news but will watch the news or read the newspaper out of habit or other interests. The information that is picked up may be minimal but over time and continuous media presence the likelihood of growth in understanding and identification is higher than by any of the short-lived EU initiatives which took place as part of Plan D.

4.3.2. Transnational media and the elites

The notion that in a European public sphere topics of interest would have to be presented and debated at the same time across member states (Habermas 2009) could potentially be adequately addressed by transnational newspapers or television channels. There has been a long history of efforts to set up successful transnational media in the EU dating back to the short-lived satellite channels "Eurikon" and "Europa" in the 1980s. Constituting the first attempts of pan-European media providers to collaborate and produce cross-border content, *Collins* (1993) suggests that the failure of these channels is evidence of the difficulties when dealing with nationally-oriented organisations for a transnational goal and of the cultural divides between the European viewing audiences. Almost twenty years after his report, these reasons seem rather trivial given the integration experienced in the EU since the early 1990s and the spread of globalisation which has resulted in many programmes being imported from abroad in member states. Progress has clearly been made with the EU-funded channel, Euronews, which has made the most successful steps towards setting up a public service broadcasting channel for Europe. As opposed to its English-speaking competitors which are mainly addressed to elites (e.g. BBC World, CNN), Euronews has focused on offering its services in a wide range of languages and as such could slowly be progressing towards the model of a European public broadcasting service[23]. Even if this were to the be case, with only 6 official EU languages represented and relatively low viewing figures, it is clear that Euronews faces a long journey to becoming the hailed cross-border channel for EU citizens'. It is not to be forgotten that such a wide spanning, yet accommodating, news channel would be unprecedented across a landscape with the intense linguistic and cultural diversity of the EU. Though Switzerland is often named

---

[23] Euronews has an Editorial Charter as part of its contract with the European Union which mirrors the values and objectives of a public broadcasting service (high respect for viewers, diversity, etc.). The document is available online at http://www.euronews.net/services-ue/

as the example country in which the public sphere transcends linguistic and ethnic boundaries, the challenge of attracting such a distant and diverse audience as that of the EU-27 is significantly more difficult. Indeed, Euronews has been handsomely financially supported by the EU and features 'infomercials' on EU policies demonstrating its clear imperfection as an public service broadcaster (Theiler 2005). Nevertheless, if achieved, success in producing a popular European public service channel would be a landmark in EU history and would certainly reflect deep running changes occurring in the EU. At present, such an occurance cannot be imagined until citizens begin to demonstrate a greater affinity with Europe and, as *Harrison* (2010) asserts, until the EU elites show that they can accept a space in which "genuinely open and free discussion" can take place. (The recent reluctance of the EU to engage in such dialogue has been shown in chapter 3.)

Similar to the development in transnational television, the transnational share of print media in Europe has been dominated by English language ventures. Newspapers, including the Financial Times, International Herald Tribune, European Voice, etc., are aimed even more explicitly at elites due to their highly specialised economic or political content. In spite of *Schlesinger's* assertion (2007) that English is taking a hegemonic position in administrative and academic circles, establishing English as a lingua franca in a hypothesised European public sphere to develop active citizenship would only result in skewed societal representation. Rather than a European public sphere for the masses, the transnational print media have aided the construction of a European, or rather international, elite space for communication which supports and extends the status quo rather than branching down to normal citizens. Although the results appear to be negative from the perspective of the non-elites, an optimist forecast would suggest that the strengthening of a European elite public sphere through transnational media may result in the eventual launch of similar media for a non-elite European audience. The divide between an information-rich, transnational public sphere for the elites and less regular coverage on EU issues through the tabloids or virtual non-existence through the television news (de Vreese 2003) for normal citizens presents a problem given the political role of the public sphere. Norris suspects such a "knowledge gap" phenomenon not to occur due to the diversity of media available. However, there are strong claims to say that in the EU this has been a problem in the past and only limited progress has been reported.

4.4. Public discussion and mobilisation through media

In his definition of a public sphere spanning Europe, *Habermas* (2001) called for "a network that gives citizens of all member states an equal opportunity to take part in an encompassing process of focused political communication". The media's role as a means of proactively encouraging citizens to participate in civil life is often forgotten due to the prevalence of the belief that it induces mistrust and chronic negative attitudes towards certain aspects of society amongst the citizenry, particularly when considering the medium of television. However, videomalaise theory (Robinson 1976) or media malaise (Norris 2010) are becoming more and more irrelevant in modern European societies with increasing direct interaction between the media and citizens, the spread of media literacy and the popularity of social networking channels. *Norris's* virtuous circle theory (ibid.) has already been introduced as a means of qualifying the first hypothesis at the start of this paper and it is turned to here in order to demonstrate the potential of the media to mobilise citizens. The causality is difficult to assess, since citizens may have sought out the media because they were interested in politics or the media could

have raised their interest in politics. Instead of picking one or the other, *Norris* proposes that the most likely situation is one in which both media and politics initiate a virtuous circle of information acquisition and deeper citizen engagement (ibid). In the EU, mobilisation has been limited due to insufficient presentation of information and media coverage which comes in bursts and does not currently appear to be extensive enough to sustain the momentum of the cycle.

On the micro level, *de Vreese* and *Tobiasen* (2007) go as far as to assert that conflict framing in the news before an election can have positive results on political mobilisation by presenting a choice of opinions to the electorate and encouraging political discussion. However, the success depends on citizens recognising that such disagreement and debate belongs to the democratic process and not arriving at the conclusion that politics is more involved with disagreeing than problem solving (ibid.). The association which was found could also be applied to the news outside of the election period in order to broaden the spectrum of debate on EU topic for normal citizens. In the EU, conflict is a way of political life, particularly given the large number of governance levels on which member state representatives and parliamentarians can clash. Given that the majority of the most consequential and interesting debates for citizens take place amongst the national ministers in the Council of Ministers, a move towards greater transparency and media coordination in this area would allow the media to present more discussion provoking news. Likewise, a clearer presentation of the political stance of each member state on topical policies would fuel national debates on whether the policies were in the best interests of the country. Perhaps this could eventually establish a citizenry privy to those political battles which have been historically swept under the superficial presentation of consensus.

Liebert and *Trenz* (2008) showed how during the reflexion period after the abandonment of the Constitutional Treaty, national media were dominated by national actors who presented negotiations with other EU member states as intergovernmental and refused to engender national public debate on EU constitutional politics. In line with their findings, the national media seem to follow a pattern of peaks and troughs with regards to their focus on EU topics, with greater attention at times of crisis or integration (Norris 2000). However, due to the EP's limited involvement at such influential times and the media focus on state actors and bargaining, the opportunity for the public to contribute their ideas becomes even smaller.

4.5. Evaluation on the impact of active citizenship

The media scene in each of the EU's member states is wildly diverse but one aspect appears to unite them all: the "deficit in European media reporting" (Machill et al 2005). There has not been an ample amount of research on many of the Central and East European countries[24] but the more limited spread of the Internet and with media systems, such as the one run by five oligarchs in Romania (Hume 2011), strongly suggest that unbiased and informative media coverage on the EU is rare. An increase in active EU citizenship can only happen when citizens are empowered through information gains, communication networks and access to public spheres in which citizens can participate. Though Norris' virtuous circle theory holds potential for the future of EU politics, the growth of information and political engagement can only be observed from elite groups

---

[24] *De Vreese, Banducci et al* (2006) carried out a research project on the 2004 elections in which it was discovered that media coverage was high in the new member states than the old member states. As this was the first EP elections for the new countries and they had only just joined the EU, this does not guarantee that media coverage continued.

or from those who are already politically motivated. Supported by the evidence found in the Eurobarometer that a majority of citizens in all social categories wanted to know more about their rights as a citizen of the EU (EU, 2010), the opportunities to increase citizen awareness of the EU and intensify European political engagement through the media are ample. The problem lies in raising the importance of such news items in the media when there are no attention grabbing events taking place. The media needs to play a more informative and deliberative role as a public service in order to support the growth of interest and awareness on key EU issues. Only by support from the national public spheres can citizens become involved in politics at the level where there are the most policies.

5. Developing a Sustainable Foundation for Active Citizenship

Before coming to a conclusion on the findings and hypotheses presented in this paper, the focus is turned once more to the question of widening the citizens' awareness of EU citizenship, their rights and encouraging greater citizen participation. In this chapter, the opportunities and restrictions to achieving these goals will be explored. How can communication, change and coordination support the growth of active citizenship for a stronger, more citizen oriented EU?

5.1. Institutional, legislative and policy reform

The ratification of the Lisbon Treaty introduced the legal basis for closer citizen involvement in the legislative process of the EU: the European Citizen's Initiative (ECI)[25]. Judicially speaking, this instrument of direct democracy is exactly the kind of instrument which *Sierp* (2010) was calling for in order to extend the rights of citizens thus increasing the value of EU citizenship and the incentive for greater engagement. Negotiation in the Council of Ministers has already resulted in a regulation specifying the implementation criteria and has fixed the conditions at a more generous, liberal level than was expected according to the existing Treaty condition for other legislative instruments[26]. Despite the promising outlook, the initiative cannot be expected to have a large impact on normal EU citizens in the existing environment of fragmented communication and low engagement. The real winners appear to be lobby groups and international organisations whose influence has been widening in Brussels over the last decade. Under these circumstances, the legitimacy of focusing on the involvement of civil society at the expense of broader citizen participation should be brought to question. Whilst working closely with civil society groups helps to connect the Commission to issues on the ground, many of these groups are heavily funded by the EU (see chapter 3) and in any case cannot serve as a replacement for genuine direct engagement with the normal citizens. Another opportunity to bring citizens into closer contact with the EU and engaged in meaningful and consequential interaction would be through European referenda.

Since the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, much discussion has explored the advantages and mechanics of introducing EU-wide referenda as a means of increasing the accountability and responsiveness of the EU with respect to its public. Perhaps fear of a repeat of the failed referenda has been one of the principal stumbling blocks

---

[25] Article 11 (4) TEU

[26] Most specifically in the detail that the group of citizens submitting the proposal must consist of citizens from one quarter of member states: lower than the comparable share of member states which need to find a consensus before being able to initiate the sanctions procedure under Article 7,TEU.

hindering the acceptance of this proposal since arguments that it would be unfeasible due to the size of the EU do not hold up. Issues which could be put to a referendum could be the position of President of the European Council. By allowing the citizens to choose between candidates, they would be able to vote for a candidate who best represents their preferences on the future direction of the EU. After all, prior to the Treaty of Lisbon this position was a rotating chair, therefore, it would not be unprecedented to have candidates from both right and left- wing leanings in the race. The most important effects that this reform would bring would be the possibility of Europe-wide dialogue on a candidate, the creation of a powerful, citizen-approved and accountable representative for a stronger media presence and the strengthening of a European political identity which would not occur at the expense of national culture and traditions.

5.2. Adapting to a changing media environment

The Internet and social media have truly revolutionised modern society and both the mass media and the EU have embraced the changes by adapting their strategies and moving into territories previously unknown (e.g. non-stop news coverage, webcasts of ministerial or parliamentary meetings, blogging, international audiences, etc.). Although the EU initiatives to use the Internet to reach citizens has so far led to few changes in the number of active citizens, the construction of a information portal which contains factual information, albeit with a positive approach, could prove to be an important resource for citizens if and when EU politics becomes a publicly discussed topic. One of the most worrying developments in the pursuit of a more participatory approach in the EU is the decreasing number of journalists based in Brussels (The Economist, 2010). The media policy of the EU has improved over the last few years[27] and as information becomes easier to access over the Internet, the media moguls have started to consider the costs of sending journalists to Brussels. The negative repercussions of fewer journalists in Brussels are manifold: there are fewer opportunities for interaction between journalists and EU elites, the potential for horizontal Europeanisation and developing connections between national media from different member states decreases, the audiovisual material created is not tailored to the national audiences, the opportunities for investigative journalism on EU topics are lowered, *inter alia*. The results may be considered by some as positive signs allowing the EU to have more control over the way in which the polity and its policies are presented. However, this development does not support active EU citizenship and, should the numbers of journalists continue to descend, national news coverage on the EU may become less important and interesting to citizens, reinforcing its distance from the citizens rather than inciting participation.

---

[27] In relation to supporting the media, the development of a second Europe by Satellite (EbS) channel and the transmission of a wide range of press conferences have created new paths to disseminate information about the EU.

5.3. Growing European dialogue

One of the principal arguments of this thesis is that effective communication links between the common citizens and the elites need to be established before citizenship can flourish into a valued entitlement in the European Union. Based on *Hurrelmann*'s research (2007) into how EU legitimacy is dealt with in the German and British media, the recent coverage of the European financial crisis could be interpreted as playing a role in bringing about legitimising discourse by presenting the EU as a whole entity. Despite the negative tone of articles suggesting that the EU has become a transfer union, this simultaneous discourse, albeit predominantly in the national public spheres, could be moving towards a stronger European political identity, in which the member state dependencies and interaction with one another are more widely recognised. In order to pursue the dream of a non-elitist, truly European public sphere, many changes need to occur in the existing media and political communication structures. It would be more realistic to focus on bringing the EU into the national public spheres by harnessing the power of television and potential educational value of public service broadcasting, supporting the setting up of alternative media for the masses, than striving for the ideal of a united and synchronised EU public sphere. In addition, rather than talking about the Europeanising of public spheres, which seems to imply a homogenisation of sorts, an important start would be to bring more EU information to the non-elites and increase the dialogue through each national public sphere. Only once fundamental debates on the role of the EU for each member state have finally taken place can progress be made to develop a public sphere for the EU which would accommodate the desired structure and integration decided upon. It is at this point that one can return to the idea of a European public service broadcasting channel as facilitating the transferral of reliable information and hosting a variety of opinions in a convenient, manageable and interesting manner for all citizens. Although "politics but no policies" currently exist on the national level (Schmidt 2006), national dialogue and debate on EU politics may be able to develop through national public broadcasting services which specialise on European and EU topics and successfully bring politics to the citizens in each of the member states' idiosyncratic media systems and public spheres. Television is by far the most appropriate means to reach the non-elites and could accommodate the exchange of programmes in other respective public service broadcasters across the EU which would prove of interest to the national audience. Achieving the ambitious goal of popularity, funding and acceptance in each member state would be dependent on receiving the much-needed support and participation from all political levels (local, national and European). The incorporation of all political levels is necessary in order to ensure the channel does not turn into a propaganda exercise. Citizen involvement in programmes and dictating topics of discussion would also strengthen the impact such a service would have on political understanding and participation.

5.4. National and supranational government interaction

It is often challenging for the public to draw a clear line between the EU and the member state governments since the national government representatives are heavily involved in the EU decision-making procedure in the Council of Ministers. However, when speaking of the communication and information policy of the EU, it is much easier to discern divisions and competences given that the EU only has no legislative power to force the member states to act and it boasts stronger interests in assuring its

own survival. The "Communicating Europe in Partnership" initiative signed in 2008 by the Commission, the Council and the Parliament marked a new stage in the communication of the EU. As part of the declaration, member states agreed to identify "common communication priorities" regarding the EU and this has happened on a yearly basis ever since. One of the main objectives of this initiative was to "empower citizens"; however, the list of country priorities from 2009 - 2012 have been concentrating on climate change, growth and economic stability. The latest published commitments provide us with a rough outline of the areas in which member states will focus their national communication on the EU in 2012, the year in which the ECI is set to come into force. Only Sweden and Poland explicitly listed the ECI as one of their planned topics of communication which does not bode well for those who had hoped that this initiative would promote more actively involvement from citizens who are not already politically active. The silver lining comes in the fact that twelve countries already have a similar initiative on their national level (Austria, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and The Netherlands) and four additional member states have it on their regional or local levels (Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Luxembourg) (EC 2011). These countries present a surprising picture of citizens' rights to propose legislation across the EU. It would not have been foolish to have expected this array of Central and Eastern European countries to have the most difficulties to accommodate elements of participatory democracy into their governmental systems.   Across the EU, the national governments are tied to electoral promises and predominantly interested in the success and continuance of their cabinet in the national arena. For this reason, it is often difficult for them to make their position on EU topics clear. Explaining this proactively, as well as the reasons behind their stance, would be an important step towards establishing a more informed EU citizenry. Starting up a new debate on the role of the EU in the future would also be beneficial but, once again, fear of rocking the boat, particularly when many EU member states are facing economic hardship, means that such a discussion is very unlikely to be initiated by governmental actors. The failed referenda have driven the Council back to a 'schizophrenic' system of promoting citizen mobilisation in theory and in public as actors in the Council, whilst favouring depoliticisation on EU topics on the national level (Liebert et al, 2008).

Whilst the Commission continues to insist that the member states take the lead in communicating EU policies to their citizens, the member states will be able to maintain their selective presentation of the EU to citizens, particularly in countries where active citizenship is at its lowest and such an approach is therefore not questioned. According to *Brüggemann* (2003), the Commission pursues such a position in order to avoid receiving blame for not communicating successfully. However, they must also be careful to avoid stepping on the toes of the member state governments and respecting the principle of subsidiarity. One must only glance at the diverse media landscapes and cultural challenges across the 27 countries and it is quickly evident that if the Commission took over responsibility for communication the task would be enormous, resource draining and much less guaranteed to succeed. The EU's attempts to support the establishment of a pan-European television service (Euronews) can be viewed as tentative, though not unimportant, steps towards creating a communication channel directly bypassing the member states and national media.

6. Concluding Remarks

During the progression of this thesis, the development of a communicative area through which EU citizens can become more actively engaged with the EU polity has been explored. Attempts from the EU to establish links with the citizenry failed to mobilise citizens to use their political rights to vote in the EP 2009 elections. Other gathered evidence from public opinion surveys and looking at participation in EU initiatives suggest that there is a clear communication deficit which neither parties are yet to overcome and which results in citizens behaving overwhelmingly as national citizens and placing little value on their EU political rights. This analysis focused on the dissemination of valuable information, the generation of debate and public opinion, and legitimate interaction with the EU polity as factors which would empower citizens to become politicised and more participative. These factors were focused on as they mirrored the manner in which citizens engage in national politics and because they cumulatively enable citizens to become more 'active'. However, there are a multitude of additional institutional and sociological variables hindering or restricting active citizenship which has made a comprehensive analysis and evaluation difficult. Therefore, the aim has been to concentrate on the availability of the main tools for empowerment when analysing the EU initiatives and the mass media.

Having analysed the efforts of the EU to offer greater transparency and build more direct connections to the public, it is clear that a large proportion of EU citizens still do not have enough EU knowledge to make use of their political rights as citizens. The media and the EU continue to produce information which is generally speaking not conducive to the development of informed opinions on EU topics. Either being too self-congratulatory and remote or in the case of the media too intermittent and nationally focused, support for citizens wanting to use their political rights has been far from ideal. On the optimistic side, there appears to be positive signs from the media since a growing selection of news items relating to the EU are starting to appear. The potential for the EU to play a larger role in the national public spheres would be most likely through policy areas in which the EU is the principal legislator and there is a significant amount of conflict or controversy e.g. the salient and broad media coverage of the financial support offered to Greece, Portugal and Ireland as a result of their EU membership.

From a democratic perspective, the missing accountability and limited scope of the two way communication between the EU political elites and the citizenry is becoming ever more disquieting as the EU's political competences increase. Nevertheless, the policy initiatives and agenda setting of the Commission since the Constitutional Treaty have been innovative and proactive, aiming for closer cooperation with citizens. Given the actual results, these efforts should be acknowledged and maintained as a benchmark for the minimum level of interaction which should take place between the EU and the citizens. Resources should also be invested into long-term deliberative efforts to be more present and vocal in the national spheres and to show citizens that their opinions matter. A clear and honest analysis of why policies are taken and whether citizens' contributions are considered would support those who want to be involved in a political process and not simply participating in a fruitless discussion. Reasons and explanations should be given on the nature of the interaction and general accountability needs to be built up.

Rather than signifying a need to focus less on communication and information policy, the slow progress on the vertical Europeanisation of the public sphere should be viewed as a call to develop stronger relationships with the media, tailoring the EU's

communication policy to areas of the populace where information is at its thinnest, provided support for journalists and being careful to refrain from the elitist, self-congratulatory communication strategies which were previously employed (de Vreese, 2003). Following an examination of whether the hypotheses at the beginning of this thesis hold true, the subsequent conclusions can be made:

H1 – "*active citizenship in the EU is influenced by the success of EU information and communications policy and the level of mass media coverage of the EU*"

Over the course of the EU initiatives, only short and restricted bursts of active citizenship can be seen and it is probable that most of these citizens were politically active and interested in EU affairs prior to becoming involved in the EU projects (Debate Europe, Europe Direct, etc.). This thesis has tried to focus on the period following the Consitutional Treaty, however, due to limits in available research and relevant events having occurred outside of this time period, the media's coverage of the referenda in 2005 was mentioned. The Dutch referendum in particular is evidence of the influence media coverage can have on engaging citizens since it was heavily present in the media at the time and a relatively high turnout was recorded. Without a focused analytical study of the exact political and media coverage at the time, it cannot be concluded that the evidence of active citizenship was a consequence of media coverage or in spite of it. Once again, Norris's virtuous circle theory poses the likely answer that external factors made citizens interested in reading the media coverage and those who were not exposed to the external factors could have been motivated by the media. Although there are some correlations to suggest that more interactive communication from the EU and a stronger presence in the media could increase the level of political involvement of its citizens, until active citizenship actually rises it will be difficult to make conclusions on which one of the many factors plays the decisive role.

H2 – "*low levels of active citizenship in the European Union are a consequence of the Commission following an information and communication policy which failed to mobilise the non-elites.*"

Due to the breadth of the time period, the many events that have occurred during that time and the lack of growth in active EU citizenship, it is difficult to pinpoint one factor as having a more significant effect on the establishment, or non-establishment, of active citizenship. It has remained clear throughout the analysis that the citizens with a lower socioeconomic status are situated most remotely from the EU polity and the groups with the least number of active citizens. On exploring the EU initiatives to stir up more discussion on Europe, there were very few which reached the non-elites directly and those projects which did involve normal citizens had a low impact due to their small size and the lack of evidence of any output legitimacy. The EU has been able to reach normal citizens most successfully through the mass media, though this has also not been without its problems, mostly due to the EU being more visible in elite printed media and television news having so far as *de Vreese* (2008) puts it, "failed to leave the nation state". Addressing women, students, civil society organisations and providing tools for those who are already politically active, the EU has failed to address the largest group of inactive and disassociated citizens in the EU: manual workers and those with the lowest number of years in education. Many of the negative socioeconomic effects of integration have impacted these groups of citizens (reallocation of industry, rise in immigrant workers, the dismantling of many uncompetitive public companies, etc.).

40

Having no access to a public sphere where these issues can be addressed and the EU can be held accountable highlights the intimate connection between the communication and the democratic deficit in the EU.

Reflecting on active citizenship as a continuum, political communication must be a long-term, permanent process in order to be effective and to avoid transient projects which could lead to an increase in the political cynicism. Until the EU and member states can engage in a meaningful and genuine dialogue with the citizens of the EU and decide reasonably on the future of Europe, there will only be marginal and fluctuating progress towards increasing active citizenship and democratic legitimacy. The decision on what kind of role the EU should have in the future has been passed around and there is currently no group of actors which wants to open discussion.

Bibliography

Brüggemann, Michael, (2005), How the EU constructs the European public sphere: Seven Strategies of Information Policy. In: Javnost/The Public, 12 (2), pp. 57 – 74;

Castiglione, Dario. (2009), "Political identity in a community of strangers", in: Checkel, Jeffrey T. and Katzenstein, Peter J. (eds.), European Identity. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp. 29-54;

Clark, Nick. (2010), "Explaining Low Turnout in EP Elections: Voter's Perceptions of the European Parliament." Paper presented at the PIREDEU Final User Community Conference "Auditing Electoral Democracy in the European Union" in Brussels, Belgium from 18th - 19th November 2010, available online at: http://www.piredeu.eu/Database/Conf_Papers/III1_3-PIREDEU_Clark.pdf, (accessed on 17th May 2011);

Collins, Richard, (1993), "Public service broadcasting by satellite in Europe: Eurikon and Europa." In: Screen, 34 (2): pp. 162-175;

Craig, Paul, and De Búrca, Gráinne. (2008) EU Law Text, Cases and Materials 4th edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Cullen, Pauline, (2009) "Pan European NGOs and Social Rights: Participatory Democracy and Civil Dialogue", in: Joachim, Jutta, and Locher, Brigit (eds.), Transnational Activism in the UN and the EU, Routledge, pp. 134-144;

Delanty, G., (1997), "Models of citizenship: defining European identity and citizenship." In: Citizenship Studies, 1:3, pp. 285-303;

Downs, Anthony, (1957), An Economic Theory of Democracy. Harper & Row: New York;

Filer, John E. and Kenny, Lawrence W. (1980), Voter turnout and the benefits of voting. Public Choice, 35, 5, pp. 575- 585;

Fligstein, Neil, (2008), Euroclash: The EU, European Identity, and the Future of Europe. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Gerhards, J. (2001) 'Missing a European Public Sphere'. In: Kohli, M., and Novak, M., (eds), Will Europe Work? Integration, Employment and the Social Order. Routledge: London/New York, pp. 145-158;

Gordon, Stacy B. and Segura, Gary M., (1997), "Cross–National Variation in the Political Sophistication of Individuals: Capability or Choice?" in: The Journal of Politics, 59: pp.126-147;

Habermas, Jürgen, (1974), The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964) New German Critique. No. 3. Autumn 1974. pp. 49-55;

Habermas, Jürgen, (2001), "Why Europe needs a constitution", in: New Left Review 11, September-October 2001, pp. 5-26;
Habermas, Jürgen, (2009), Europe – the faltering project. Polity Press: Cambridge;

Haller, Max, (2008), European Integration as an Elite Process. The Failure of a Dream? Routledge: New York;

Harrison, Jackie. (2010), "European Social Purpose and Public Service Communication" in Bee, C. and Bozzini, E. (eds), Mapping the European Public Sphere: institutions, media and civil society. Ashgate Publishers: Farnham, Surrey, pp. 99-116;

Heater, Derek, (2010), "Active Citizenship for Europe and International Understanding", in: Crick, Bernard and Lockyer, Andrew (eds.) Active Citizenship: What could it achieve and how? Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, pp.137-153;

Horowitz, Donald L., (1985), Ethnic groups in conflict. University of California Press: Berkeley, London;

Hoppmann, Talke, (2010), Citizen Perceptions of The European Union: The Impact of the EU Web Site. Cambria Press, New York.

Hume, Ellen, (2011), Caught in the Middle: Central and Eastern European Journalism at a Crossroads. A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance, CIMA, available online at: http://cima.ned.org/publications/research-reports/caught-middle-central-and-eastern-european-journalism-crossroads (accessed on 4th June 2011);

Hurrelmann, Achim, (2007), Constructions of Multilevel Legitimacy in the European Union: A Study of German and British Media Discourse. Conference paper. EUSA Tenth Biennial International Conference, Montreal, May 17–19, 2007. Available at: http://aei.pitt.edu/7912/ (accessed on 29th May 2011);

Johansson, Jan Å, (2010), "The lowest of the low, Turnout in the European Parliament elections in comparison with all other elections and referendums in the European Union 1979-2009." 15th February 2010. Available at: http://www.eudemocrats.org/eud/uploads/Lowest%20of%20the%20Low%20FINAL.pdf (accessed on 10th June 2011);

Kymlicka, Will, (2002), Contemporary Political Philosophy. Oxford University Press: Oxford;

Kymlicka, Will, and Norman, Wayne, (2004), "Citizenship in Culturally Diverse Societies: Issues, Contexts, Concepts" in: Kymlicka, Will, and Norman, Wayne (eds.), Citizenship in Diverse Societies, Oxford University Press: Oxford , pp. 1-41;

Koopmans, Ruud and Erbe, Jessica, (2004), 'Towards a European public sphere? Vertical and horizontal dimensions of Europeanised political communication.' Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research. Volume 17, Issue 2, pp. 97–118;

Koopmans, Ruud, and Statham, Paul, (2010), "Theoretical Framework, Research Design and Methods", in: Koopmans, Ruud, and Statham, Paul (eds.) The Making of a

European Public Sphere. Part I, Chapter 2. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp. 34-59;

Koopmans, Ruud, Erbe, Jessica, and Meyer, Martin F., (2010), 'The Europeanization of Public Spheres: Comparisons across Issues, Time and Countries.' In: Koopmans, Ruud, and Statham, Paul (eds.) The Making of a European Public Sphere. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp. 63-96;

Lazarsfeld, Paul F.; Berelson, Bernard; Gaudet, Hazel, (1949), The people's choice: how the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign. Colombia University Press: New York;

Liebert, Ulrike, and Trenz, Hans-Jörg, (2008), "Mass Media and Contested Meanings: EU Constitutional Politics after Popular Rejection." EUI Working Papers, RSCAS 2008/28. Available online at http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/9147; (accessed on 10th May 2011);

Lister, R, (2003), Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives, 2nd edition. Palgrave: Basingstoke;

Lupia, Arthur, (1994), Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections. American Political Science Review. 88: pp. 63-76;

Machill, Marcel, Beiler, Markus and Fischer, Corinna, (2005), Europe topics in Europe's media. Paper submitted for the CONNEX workshop "A European Public Sphere: How much of it do we have and how much do we need?" Amsterdam, 9th-10th December 2005. Available at Mannheim Centre for European Social Research: http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/ (accessed on 12th May 2011);

Mak, Jeannette, (2001), Selling Europe: Communicating Symbols or Symbolic Communication? The Role of the European Commission and the Dutch and German National Governments in Achieving Public Acceptance of the Euro. Florence: European University Institute;

Marshall, T.H. (1963), 'Citizenship and Social Class', in: Shafir, Gerson. (1998), The citizenship debates: a reader. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, pp. 93 – 111;

Michailidou, A. (2010), 'Vertical Europeanisation of the online public dialogue: EU public communication policy and online implementation', in Bee, C. and Bozzini, E. (eds), Mapping the European Public Sphere: institutions, media and civil society. Ashgate Publishers;

Milner, Henry, (2002), Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work, University Press of New England: Hanover;

Moravcsik, A., (2002), ''In Defence of the 'Democratic Deficit': Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union", Journal of Common Market Studies (JCMS), 40, 4, pp. 603-624.

Mouffe, Chantal, (ed.) (1992), Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community. Verso: London;

Newton, Kenneth. (1999). "Mass Media Effects: Mobilization or Media Malaise?" British Journal of Political Science, 29: pp. 577-99;

van Noije, Lonneke, (2010), "The European paradox: A communication deficit as long as European integration steals the headlines" in: European Journal of Communication September 3, 2010, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 259-272;

Norris, Pippa. (2000). A Virtuous Circle Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies, Cambridge University Press, New York;

Olausson, Ulrike, (2010), "Towards a European identity? The news media and the case of climate change." In: European Journal of Communication, vol. 25, no. 2, 14th June 2010, pp. 138-152;

Parsons, Craig, (2007), "Puzzling out the EU Role in National Politics," in: Journal of European Public Policy 14(7): pp.1135-1149;

Peters, Bernhard, (2005), '4. Public discourse, identity and the problem of democratic legitimacy.' In: Eriksen, Erik Oddvar, Making the European polity: reflexive integration in the EU. Volume 2 of Routledge studies on democratizing Europe. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 84-124;

Przeworski, Adam, Stokes, Susan Carol, Manin, Bernard (1999), "Elections and Representation" in: Przeworski, Adam, Stokes, Susan Carol, Manin, Bernard (eds.) Democracy, accountability, and representation. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp. 29-54;

Robinson, Michael J. (1976): Public Affairs Television and the Growth of Political Malaise: The Case of "The Selling of the Pentagon", in: American Political Science Review 70, pp. 409-432;

Rosema, Martin, and de Vries, Catherine, (2011), 'Assessing the Quality of European Democracy: Are Voters Voting Correctly?' in: Rosema, Martin, Denters, Bas, Aarts, Kees (eds.), How Democracy Works: Political Representation and Policy Congruence in Modern Societies. Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam (not yet released, available at http://doc.utwente.nl/76847/1/Rosema11how.pdf), pp.199 – 219;

Scharpf, Fritz, (2007), Reflections on Multilevel Legitimacy. Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, MPIfG Working Paper 07/3 available at: http://www.mpifg.de/pu/workpap/wp07-3.pdf (accessed on 15th April 2011);

Schlesinger, Philip, (2007), The Babel of Europe? Networks and Communicative Spaces. In: Castiglione, Dario and Longman, Chris, (eds.). 2007. The Language Question in Europe and Diverse Societies: Political, Legal and Social Perspectives, Hart Publishing: Oxford, pp.253-272;

Schmidt, Vivien. A., (2006), Democracy in Europe: the EU and national polities. Oxford University Press: Oxford;

Schuck, Andreas R.T., and de Vreese, Claes, (2006), "Between Risk and Opportunity, News Framing and its Effects on Public Support for EU Enlargement", in: European Journal of Communication, March 2006, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 5-32;

Sierp, Aline, (2010), "A question of impact: EU citizenship without citizens?" In: Open Citizenship (Berlin), 1 (Autumn 2010), 1, pp. 6-27;

Tench, Ralph and Yeomans, Liz,. (2009), Exploring Public Relations. 2nd edition. Pearson Education/Prentice Hall: Harlow;

Theiler, Tobias, (2005), Political symbolism and European integration, Manchester University Press: Manchester;

Thompson, John B., (1995), The media and modernity: a social theory of the media. Polity Press: Cambridge;

Trappel, Josef, and Nieminen, Hannu, (2011), "Media Serving Democracy" in: Trappel, Josef, Meier, Werner A., d'Haenens, Leen (eds.) Media in Europe Today. Bristol: Intellect;

Voltmer, Katrin, (2010), 'The media, government accountability and citizen engagement', in Norris, P. (ed.) Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform, The World Bank: Washington DC, pp. 137-159;

de Vreese, Claes, (2003), Communicating Europe. Next Generation Democracy, British Council & Weber Shandwick Public Affairs, available at: http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/89.pdf (accessed on 10th May 2011);

de Vreese, Claes, Banducci, Susan A., Semetko, Hollie A., Boomgarden, Hajo G, (2006) The News Coverage of the 2004 European Parliament Election Campaign in 25 Countries, in: European Union Politics; 7; pp. 477-504;

de Vreese, Claes, and Tobiasen, M., (2007), "Conflict and identity. Explaining turnout and anti-integrationist voting in the Danish 2004 elections for the European Parliament." in: Scandinavian Political Studies, 30, pp. 87-111;

de Vreese, Claes, (2008). "Television news has not (yet) left the nation state: Reflections on European integration in the news." in: Bondebjerg, I., and Madsen, P., (eds.), Media, Democracy and European culture. Intellect Books: Oxford, pp. 135-142;

Ward, David, (2004), The European Union democratic deficit and the public sphere: an evaluation of EU media policy. IOS Press: Amsterdam.

List of Documents

EC (2001), European governance – a white paper, COM/2001/0428 final, Official Journal 287, 12/10/2001 P.0001 - 0029

EC (2005a), Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond - Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate, COM (2005) 494 final, Brussels;

EC (2005b), Secretariat: Action Plan of 20 July 2005 to improve communicating Europe by the Commission [SEC(2005) 985 - Not published in the Official Journal] available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/communication_com_en.pdf (accessed on 20th May 2011);

EC (2006a) White Paper on a European Communication Policy, 1st February 2006, COM(2006) 35 final, Brussels;

EC (2006b) Debate Europe - giving citizens a voice, IP/08/487, 2nd April 2008, Brussels,available at:
http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/487 (accessed on 17th May 2011);

EC (2007a). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Communicating Europe in partnership. COM (2007) 569 final. Brussels;

EC (2007b), Green Paper, Public Access to Documents held by institutions of the European Community, A review. COM (2007) 185 final, Brussels;

EC (2007c), Communication to the Commission: Communicating about Europe via the Internet, 21 December 2007, SEC(2007) 1742, Brussels;

EC (2009), Evaluation of the Plan D / Debate Europe citizen consultation projects. Technical Report. Version 1.2 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/pdf/ evaluation_citizens_consultations_sep2009_en.pdf (accessed on 1st June 2011);

EC (2011), European Secretariat General "The European Citizens Initiative," available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/citizens_initiative/ docs/faq_en.pdf (accessed on 6th June 2011);

EC (Secretariat General) (2006), Information note from Vice President Wallström to the Commission. Plan D – Wider and deeper Debate on Europe. 24th November 2006. OJ 1767 – point 19.1;

EPEC, (2010), Evaluation of the Europe Direct Contact Centre – Final Report, available at: http://europa.eu/europedirect/pdf/2010/epec-edcc_evaluation_final_executive_summary_en.pdf (accessed on 20th May 2011);

Estonian National Electoral Committee, (2011), Statistics about Internet Voting in Estonia, available at: http://www.vvk.ee/voting-methods-in-estonia/engindex/statistics (accessed on 15th May 2011);

Eurobarometer (2004), Post-European Elections 2004 Survey, July 2004, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/FL162en.pdf (accessed on 20th May 2011);

Eurobarometer (2005) Eurobarometer 63, September 2005, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63_en.pdf (accessed on 20th May 2011);

Eurobarometer (2009a), Post-electoral survey 2009, Report. November 2009, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_320_en.pdf (accessed on 20th May 2011);

Eurobarometer (2009b), Eurobarometer 72, October – November 2009, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_hr_en_exec.pdf (accessed on 20th May 2011);

Eurobarometer (2010) Eurobarometer 73, May 2010, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb73/eb73_vol2_en.pdf (accessed on 20th May 2011);

European Election Database. (2011), Norwegian Social Science Data Services, available at: http://www.nsd.uib.no/european_election_database/about/ (accessed on 20th May 2011);

European Voice. (2007). 'What to do after the birthday party'. 4th April 2007. http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/what-to-do-after-the-birthday-party/57165.aspx (accessed on 20th May 2011);

Eurostat (2008), "Internet access and use in the EU27 in 2008. Nearly 30% of individuals use internet banking. 60% of households have internet access" STAT/08/169, 2nd December 2008, available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=STAT/08/169 (accessed on 20th May 2011);

Eurostat (2009). Statistics in focus: Population and social conditions 94/2009. Available at: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-09-094/EN/KS-SF-09-094-EN.PDF, (accessed on 6th June 2011);

Freedom House (2010) Map of Press Freedom. Available at: http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2010 (accessed on 12th May 2011);

IDEA (2011). International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Voter Turnout Database, available at: http://www.idea.int/vt/index.cfm (accessed on 10th May 2011).

The Economist (2010), "The incredible shrinking EU press corps", 15th March 2010. Available at: http://www.economist.com/blogs/charlemagne/2010/03/ journalists_deserting_brussels (accessed on 17th May 2011);

<u>Appendix. 1.</u>
Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate: 13 specific EU initiatives and actions in order to strengthen and stimulate dialogue, public debate and citizen's participation
(EC 2005a)

Stimulating a wider public debate
- Visits by Commissioners to Member States
- European Round Table for Democracy
- European Goodwill Ambassadors
- Utilising Europe Direct centres for regional events
- Representations open to the public
- Commissioners availability to National Parliaments

Promoting citizens' participation in democratic process
- Greater openness
- Increased voter participation
- Promoting more effective consultation
- Support for European citizens' projects

Tools to generate a dialogue on European policies
- Specific Eurobarometer on the future of Europe
- Internet
- Targeted focus groups