EU citizens in the European public sphere(s):
An empirical analysis of the visibility of EU citizens
across the 27 member states

Stefanie Walter
Ph.D. Candidate
University of Mannheim

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2 Contact: Stefanie.Walter@mzes.uni-mannheim.de
Abstract
This article analyses the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere during the 2009 European Parliament election. It is argued that the presence of EU citizens in the European public sphere is vital since it guarantees that EU officials can hear the voice of the European people so that public opinion can be included in the decision making process. This study first of all considers the theoretical notion of the EU citizen. In a next step, a new way of defining EU citizens in the European public sphere is proposed. More specifically, EU citizens are divided into European and national EU citizens. The paper raises the question whether EU citizens are visible in the European public sphere and looks at various forms in which EU citizens can appear. In a next step, the presence of EU citizens across the national European public spheres of the EU member states is analysed. The aim is to explain cross-country differences in the degree of visibility of EU citizens.

The study is based on an analysis of secondary data of a large scale content analysis of TV and newspaper articles of all 27 EU member states gathered during the 2009 European Parliament election campaign. To explain different levels of visibility, a multi-level analysis is carried out. The results suggest that EU citizens are visible actors in the European public sphere. Yet, their presence strongly varies across the member states. The findings indicate that explanations for different levels of visibility of EU citizens can be found at both the media and country level.
1. Introduction

The year 2013 marks the 20\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the European Union (EU) citizenship and it was officially launched as the \textit{European year of Citizens} by the EU. Yet, the relationship between the EU and its citizens is not all hearts and flowers. In the initial phase of the European\textsuperscript{1} integration, the EU was predominantly perceived as legitimate due to its policy output and the involvement of citizens in European governance was not of primary importance to policy makers (cf. Dalton and Duval 1986; van Deth 2008 p.242). However, when more and more policy competences were transferred to the supranational level, the need for supplementary input legitimacy could no longer be ignored. Additionally, a growing gap between public and elite support as well as a general decline in citizen’s support for the European integration has been observed (e.g. Haller 2009; Hooghe and Marks 2009). In this context, a debate emerged about the EU citizenship, which was legally implemented with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993. This study raises the question whether the EU citizenship is merely a legal and theoretical idea or exists, in fact, as a tangible phenomenon that becomes visible in the European public sphere. In addition, it examines how different levels of visibility across the European public spheres of the EU member states can be explained.

The importance of citizenship for democratic governance is based on political legitimacy, since the exercise of power in democracies is legitimate as long as it reflects the will of the people. The notion of the public sphere provides a framework for an understanding of how the will of the people is generated and communicated towards governmental actors (Gerhards et al. 1998 p.28). Via the public sphere, an exchange between citizens and political elites can take place. More generally, the public sphere can be defined as a communicative space where various groups of actors come together and exchange their views publicly (Wessler 2011). The public sphere is a rather broad construct, but in today’s society, the mass media can generally be identified as its most important forum where political discussion takes place publicly. This is because the mass media have a broad reach and a high capacity to concentrate public attention on a small and highly specific set of themes and actors. These actors can roughly be classified into governmental actors, the citizens of the respective political community and intermediary actors. This study assumes that in order for the public sphere to fulfil its mediating function, actors from all three levels of the political system have (at least to a certain degree) to be visible in the public sphere. This is because the public sphere should enable citizens to actively participate in the political process (cf. Wessler 2007). From a historical perspective, it was exactly the demand for political participation that gave rise to the concept of the public sphere in the first place (ibid., p. 49). Within the mediated public sphere,

\footnote{The term European only refers to the EU member states, other European countries that are not members of the EU are not taken into account.}
citizens can become visible in various ways, e.g. as actors or via references to aggregated public opinion of the population as a whole.

Due to a transfer of legislative competences from the national to the EU level, a European public sphere is needed that is able to hold governance at the supranational level accountable and to bring the EU closer to its citizens. According to Dahl (1994), the transfer of decision-making powers to the supranational level has furthermore led to a decrease in citizens’ opportunities to directly participate in the political process. Hence, as far as European governance is concerned, the presence of EU citizens in the European public sphere is even heightened.

Previous research has mainly considered the extent to which a European public sphere has developed by comparing the amount of EU news and actors across countries. It can be argued that these studies have been rather elite driven in a twofold way: a) by being predominantly focused on quality media (and broadsheets in particular) and b) by nearly exclusively taking into account the presence of national and EU governmental actors (see e.g. Boomgaarden et al. 2013; Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2009; de Vreese 2004). The visibility of civil society actors and EU citizen in particular has mainly been neglected in the European public sphere research. Even if a theoretical argument is developed that calls for democratic representation of EU citizens in the European public sphere, their role is solely understood as an audience (cf. Michailidou and Trenz 2013; Vettet et al. 2009). It seems that EU citizens have so far not been comprehended as visible participants in political communication at the European level. There is at least one occasion that specifically calls for a more direct representation of EU citizens in the European public sphere, namely European Parliament elections, which are one of the few instances where citizens are able to directly participate in EU governance.

Contrary to former research, this study does not focus on the extent to which a European public sphere is developed, but takes its existence as a prerequisite. The aim of this study is to shed light on the visibility of ordinary EU citizens in the European public sphere. The main question addressed is: Are there any EU citizens in the European public sphere? If so, to what extent and in what ways are they represented? In a next step, it is considered whether EU citizens are equally visible across the national European public spheres of the member states, or there are cross country differences and how these can be explained. The questions are highly relevant with to the much debated democratic deficit of the EU, which is, inter alia, based on a lack of accountability and legitimacy of EU governance. The presence of EU citizens in the European public sphere permits that EU officials can hear the voice of the European people so that public opinion can be included in the decision making process and thereby foster accountability of EU governance. A visible European citizenry that is able to take part in the political communication at the EU level is therefore a crucial basis for EU legitimacy. This paper first discusses the concept of the EU citizen and gives a brief
overview of the European public sphere and the visibility of EU citizens within it. It then presents the research questions, hypothesis and methodology, before reporting the findings of this study that are based on a secondary analysis of content analysis data of the 2009 European Parliament election news coverage.

2. The EU citizenship

Before analysing the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere, it is necessary to define the concept of an EU citizen and to highlight its relevance for the democratic process at the EU level. Citizenship originally developed in the context of the nation state. The EU is a supranational institution and considered a political system sui generis (Hix 1998). For that reason, traditional definitions of citizenship cannot simply be transferred to the supranational level. Yet, it is helpful to consider the notion of citizenship in the first place, before discussing and defining the EU citizen.

At the national level, a citizen has been defined as a member of a state who possesses distinct civil, political and social rights (Marshall 1964), in addition to certain duties. Citizenship, then, accounts for the entity of members of a political community, such as the nation state. When understood in political terms, participation in the political community is also a defining criterion of citizenship (cf. Coleman and Blumler 2009 p.4). Thus, citizenship is of vast importance for democracy since democratic legitimacy originates from the people. In the course of the European integration, a transfer of sovereignty from the national to the supranational policy level took place (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006). Today, the EU is producing large amounts of binding legislation that affects peoples’ lives directly (Maurer 2003). This makes the case that European governance does likewise need to be accountable to the will of the European people. Otherwise, the transfer of decision making powers to the supranational level will lead to a decrease in democratic control, accountability and ultimately democratic legitimacy of governance.

The notion of the EU citizenship has already been a topic of discussion in the 1970s, when a shift from a purely economic European integration towards an supplementary political integration could be observed (c.f. Wiener 1998). Even though citizens of the member states were already granted citizenship rights, such as the right to vote in European elections, it was not until 1993 that the EU citizenship was legally implemented with the Maastricht Treaty. Referring back to the traditional notion of citizenship, an EU citizen is a person that is a member of the political community of the EU and therefore entitled to certain citizenship rights. As such, the right to participation in EU governance is a crucial element of the EU citizenship. Participation in the European political process can take place in form of voting in European elections, but also via participation in debates that occur within the European public sphere (cf. Koopmans and Erbe 2004 p.98). In the following, the concept of the European public sphere is briefly introduced and previous research on the visibility of EU
citizens in the European public sphere is discussed. Furthermore, a novel definition for EU citizens in the European public sphere is proposed.

3. EU citizens & the European Public Sphere

The European public sphere has been theorised and discussed by an extensive body of research (e.g. Eriksen 2005; Koopmans 2007; Sift 2007; Wessler et al. 2008; for an overview see Machill et al. 2006; Neidhardt 2006). Therefore, this paper only provides a brief definition of the concept of the European public sphere that underlies this study, before discussing research on the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere.

Overall, scholars assume that there are two forms in which a European public sphere could potentially exist: a) as a single transnational European public sphere or b) via the Europeanisation of the national public spheres of the EU member states (see Gerhards 1993). From the Europeanisation perspective, the public spheres of the EU member states become more European by either including EU affairs and EU actors (vertical Europeanisation) or events and actors from fellow EU member states (horizontal Europeanisation) to a greater extent into their coverage (Brüggemann et al. 2007).

This study focuses on the vertical dimension of the European public sphere that is constituted by an increased focus on EU governance. Extant research suggest that a European public sphere has emerged, yet, it is nationally segmented, meaning that the degree of Europeanisation of the public spheres differs among the EU member states (see e.g. Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Konigsslow 2009; Eriksen 2005; Wessler et al. 2008). With only a few exceptions (Boomgaarden et al. 2013; Kleinen-von Königslöw 2012; Schuck et al. 2013), research in this field has predominantly remained descriptive in scope and does not aim to explain these differences further. Besides, it can be said that studies have mainly been elite driven in the sense that elite media outlets (broadsheets) and elite actors have been in the center of attention. With regard to the latter, a considerable amount of studies has focused on the visibility of national and EU level executive actors, showing that the EU news coverage is still dominated by national (governmental) actors (e.g. de Vreese 2003; Trenz 2004; Peter and de Vreese 2004). Only a few studies additionally included civil society actors in their analysis (e.g. Koopmans 2007), while the visibility of EU citizens has largely been neglected.

When studies have taken EU citizens into account, it has mainly been in the context of attitude research (see e.g. Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Gabel 1998; Hooghe and Marks 2005). Studies in this area are often based on survey data provided by the Eurobarometer. This research is not interested in citizen’s actual opinions on the EU, but if and to what extent EU citizens are visible in
the European public sphere. To my knowledge, there are only four empirical projects that partially address the way in which (EU) citizens are represented in the European public sphere².

A number of publications based on the *The Transnationalization of Public Spheres in the EU* project by the Jacobs University Bremen explored the visibility of “the Europeans” in terms of a collective European identity that becomes visible in the news coverage (Hepp et al. 2012; Sifft et al. 2007; Kleinen-von Königslöw 2010). The media sample consists of broadsheets (and partially also tabloids) from five EU states and focuses exclusively on discursive newspaper articles (e.g. comments). Based on Deutsch’s (1953) definition of political community, it is argued that the use of the word “we” by actors in the news media is an indicator for the existence of a shared European identity. Hence, the studies do not account for (nor aim to examine) the visibility of EU citizens per se. Concerning their research design, it can be said that their application of Deutsch’s (1953) concept of political community might be too simplistic since there are additional forms of references to a European collective it can be thought of³. One obvious example are opinion polls that can likewise account for a way of representing “the Europeans”. Furthermore, their sample is based on the overall news coverage and can therefore not make inference concerning the European public sphere as it has been defined in this study.

Based on the same project and data, Wessler (2007) compared different actor types that become visible in the coverage of national, European and foreign policy news. European topics are defined as news stories that either concern the EU or other EU member states as such. Within this sample, the visibility of “ordinary citizens” has been descriptively examined. The results indicate that citizens are nearly invisible in European news (below 3 per cent), which is explained by the high representation of governmental actors that push other groups of actors into the background. The definition of European topics in this study has two consequences; firstly, it does not account for a European public sphere as defined in this paper since non-EU topics are included and secondly, it cannot be concluded that citizens who become visible are, in fact, EU citizens in the sense that they are members of the *European* and not national political community. Furthermore, the generalisability of the results is limited due to an exclusive focus on discursive news articles published in broadsheets.

Michailidou and Trenz (2010) examine the *online* European public sphere during the 2009 European election and the participation of citizens in discussions on journalism websites and blogs from 12 EU member states by analysing posts made by readers. Indeed, this is a way in which EU citizens are able to directly participate in the European public sphere. However, Michailidou and Trenz’s approach does not follow the same angle as this research which aims to analyse the presence

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² Studies that merely mention EU citizens among other civil society actors are not included.
³ Sifft et al. (2007, p. 133) also mention that there are additional forms of identification with a European public, such as a common European history or values, but these rather abstract forms are not referred to here.
of EU citizens in the news coverage, nor their responses to journalistic output. Schuck et al. (2011) likewise focus on the context of the 2009 European Parliament election and examine the media’s use of frames that establish a reference to the EU and its citizens in newspaper and TV news of all 27 EU member states. The study considers to what extent the media reports negative reference to a gap between the EU and its citizens or positive references concerning the responsiveness of the EU towards it citizens. Yet, the focus is more on the frame itself, rather than on EU citizens and their role in the European public sphere.

Garcia-Blanco and Cushion (2010), on the other hand, focus on the presence of citizens in the transnational European public sphere. As mentioned previously, this is not the angle of this study, which is based on the (vertical) Europeanisation of the public spheres of the member states. The study by Garcia-Blanco and Cushion is based on a television news content analysis which examines the role of “citizens of Europe” (ibid., p. 404). Topical contexts in which citizens make an appearance on screen in addition to journalistic practices used to represent citizens are analysed. However, the study lacks a clear definition of what exactly constitutes the “citizens of Europe”. It focusses on the representations of citizens in the transnational European public sphere overall and it is not distinguished whether EU or national citizens from the EU member states, or non-European countries are represented in the news. This is because it is not differentiated between citizens that appear in the context of EU affairs, news about EU member states, or within news from non-EU member states. The study accounts for the general visibility of citizens in the transnational European public sphere, which are not necessarily EU citizens. It is further limited as it only takes into account a very short time period and is exclusively focused on one European medium which has only a limited reach and can therefore hardly function as a European public sphere per se.

In sum, this section has highlighted that only a limited number of studies has taken EU citizens in the European public sphere into account. These have focused on citizens’ role as an audience or the visibility of a European identity. This study, on the other hand, aims to analyse the presence of EU citizens within the European public sphere. In contrast to previous research, it does not only aim to provide descriptive results, but also to explain the visibility of EU citizens across countries. Generally, it can be said that there is a lack of theoretically consistent and comparative research in this field. Furthermore, generalisations concerning the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere are limited due to a lack of clear definitions and mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive operationalisations. Especially the absence of clear definitions of what

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4 One exception are letters to the editor which are responses of EU citizens as an audience, but they have likewise been selected by journalists in the first place. Furthermore, only a limited number of letters to the editor are included in the sample of this study and they are not the main focus of this paper.

5 It should be mentioned here that citizens that do not have a legal status as EU citizens might also play a role for the development of the EU citizenship (cf. Saward 2012). Yet, analytically, it should be distinguished between these different concepts.
constitutes an EU citizen (in contrast to a national or non-European citizen) is surprising. Therefore, the next section is set out to discuss how an EU citizen in the European public sphere can be defined.

3.1 Defining EU citizens in the European public sphere

Legally, the Maastricht Treaty defines an EU citizen as a person that holds the nationality of one of the member states (Art. 8.1). Later on, in 1997, the Amsterdam Treaty amended the definition by adding one more sentence, namely that the EU citizenship shall complement and not replace national citizenship (Art. 2.9). This means that EU citizens are both at the same time, national and EU citizens. Hence, considerations are needed about how to distinguish between the two roles. The idea that a citizen can be a member of various political communities is not new. Easton (1965) provides an illustrative example for different levels of political community which can be nested within each other: “For a person to say that he is a Parisian, a Frenchman, and a European indicates three different levels of political community to which he simultaneously adheres. Each of these communities stands at a different level, with each lower community nesting within its next higher supra-system” (ibid. p.181). To differentiate between these different levels, Easton suggests considering which political level is responsible for resolving the respective political issues. Following this argument, to tell apart the role in which citizens appear, one first needs to identify the respective political level. This study makes the case that citizens from the EU member states can be identified as EU citizens by a reference to EU governance.

Moreover, linking back to the distinction between vertical and horizontal Europeanisation of the national public spheres, this research makes the case that the EU citizenship likewise has a vertical and horizontal dimension. Regarding the horizontal aspect of the EU citizenship, EU citizens split up into nation-specific subgroups. This is because the definition of the EU citizenship explicitly states that the national citizenship is not replaced, but complemented. In this study, this type of EU citizens is referred to as national EU citizens. National EU citizens are citizens from the EU member states, they account for EU (not national) citizens when EU governance is concerned. An example for this group are German citizens that vote in the European Parliament election.

From a vertical perspective, EU citizens cannot be differentiated by nationality, but are exclusively defined by a reference to EU governance and account for the citizens of the EU as a whole. Citizens that account for this group of supranational, European citizenship are called the European EU citizens. One example for European EU citizens are the European voters that cast a vote in the European Parliament election. From a normative perspective, European EU citizens are a particularly interesting case since they represent a more advanced and integrated European citizenry, while references to national EU citizens simultaneously link back to national sentiments.
The next section is set out to present the research questions and hypothesis regarding the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere.

4. Research Questions & Hypotheses

The previous section has highlighted the relevance of European public sphere and the visibility of EU citizens as actors. It is argued that EU citizens should be visible so that the European public sphere can fulfil its mediating function and facilitate between the EU citizens and those who govern at the EU level. Knowing whether EU citizens are visible actors in the European public sphere is vital with regard to accountability of EU governance and consequently related to the discussion of the European democratic deficit. Yet, previous research has to a large extent focused on the presence of elite actors in the European public sphere, while the visibility of ordinary EU citizens has mostly been ignored. Therefore, the initial question addressed by this study is: *Are EU citizens visible in the European public sphere? If so, how are they represented and are they equally visible across the European public spheres of the 27 EU member states?* While these research questions are rather explorative, they provide the basis for further explanatory investigation. The follow-up research question is: *How can potential cross-country differences in the visibility of EU citizens be explained?* Related hypotheses regarding this explanatory part of the paper are presented in the following.

4.1 News media & EU citizens

Studies on the European public sphere typically examine the extent to which different degrees of “Europeanness” of the news coverage in terms of EU topics and actors can be explained by media characteristics. Commonly, it is differentiated between different types of media (newspaper and television) as well as different media outlets (quality vs. popular). Findings show that the coverage of newspapers and quality media tends to be more “European” in terms of including EU topics and actors to a greater extent (Kleinen-von Königslöw 2010; Peter and de Vreese 2004). In contrast, this study does not aim to analyse the degree of Europeanisation, but to explain the visibility of EU citizens within the EU news coverage. Nevertheless, this paper proposes that there might likewise be variance between different media types and outlets, but for other reasons, namely personalisation of the news coverage and the use of episodic framing. Both arguments are outlined in the following.

*Media type*   Despite presumably being less Europeanised, EU citizens might be more visible on TV, because television news coverage is generally more personalised compared to the press (Bentele and Fähnrich 2010 pp.54–56) and relies to a greater extent on episodic framing (Iyengar 1991). Personalisation as a stylistic device is used by journalists to reduce complexity and enable their audience easier access to information (Bentele and Fähnrich 2010), e.g. by relating news
to people’s everyday life. Episodic framing, *inter alia*, portrays news in terms of individual incidents, rather than providing a broader picture and background information.

One stylistic element that might accomplish episodic framing and personalisation is the use of vox pops. Vox pops or interviews with persons on the street are statements made by citizens and selected by journalists that might or might not be of a representative nature for society at large (Daschmann 2000 p.161). Even though vox pops can also be found in print media (ibid.), they might be more characteristic for television news, because television can make better use of their dynamic and visual element. Because of a more pronounced tendency towards personalisation and episodic framing which might be accompanied with a more frequent use of vox pops, the respective hypothesis derived is:

**H1** The visibility of EU citizens in television news is higher than in newspaper coverage.⁶

*Media outlet* Personalisation and episodic framing are not only a characteristic of television, but also of popular media outlets. News value research argues that: “[t]he more the event can be seen in personal terms, as due to the action of specific individuals, the more probable that it will become a news item” (Galtung and Ruge 1965 p.68). Traditionally, the concept of personalisation has been applied to elite actors. Yet, it might likewise be true for the visibility of citizens, especially during election times. In general, research has shown that the European election coverage is relatively low (e.g. Tenscher and Maier 2009) and that the EU is perceived as a rather abstract concept by voters. To generate interest and to bring the European election coverage closer to their audience, media might draw on personalisation.

The same logic applies to episodic framing. Iyengar (1991) has argued that episodic framing predominantly results from market pressure, since there is demand for this kind of news. It is suggested that if journalists adopt a self-concept as service providers, this result not only in an attempt to adjust the news coverage to audience’s demands, but also in a higher presence of citizens in the news coverage itself (Hepp et al. 2012 p.164). Especially for television, market pressure is more relevant for private TV stations since they rely to a greater extent on advertisement revenue compared to their public counterparts. More generally, it has been argued that popular media is able to establish an *alternative public sphere* (cf. Örnebring and Jönsson 2004) that aims to address (and possible also include) a non-elite audience by focussing to a greater extent on human interest news, also in the context of EU affairs (Kleinen-von Königslöw 2010). Due to a more extensive use of personalisation and episodic framing in popular media, the second media-related hypothesis is:

**H2.1** EU citizens are more visible in popular than quality media outlets.

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⁶ If not further remarks are made, I assume that the hypothesis applies for both European and national EU citizens.
However, when thinking about the concept of the *European EU citizen*, the opposite might be correct. This is because, as mentioned above, *the European EU citizen* represents an image of a more integrated European citizenry. Previous research indicates that quality media are generally more open towards a more extensive integration, while popular media and tabloids in particular sometimes conveys a more Eurosceptic view (cf. de Vreese et al. 2006). Therefore, it is possible that:

**H2.2 In contrast to national EU citizens, European EU citizens are more visible in quality than popular media outlets.**

*Europeanisation*  In the European public sphere, EU governmental actors and their actions become visible to citizens and a forum for debate and opinion formation on EU governance is provided. Therefore, the European public sphere contributes to accountability of governance and is linked to the democratic performance of the EU as a whole. A functioning and vital European public sphere also indicates awareness of a shift in governance that has been taking place from the national to the EU level. As mentioned previously, research has shown that the degree to which national public spheres are Europeanised in terms of visibility of EU news and actors varies across the EU member states (see e.g. Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Koningslöw 2009; Peters et al. 2005; Peters et al. 2006; van de Steeg 2002). If a more developed European public sphere improves the democratic performance of the EU, it might also lead to the insight that EU citizens need to be represented and included in public debates on EU governance, especially given the much debated gap between public and elite support for the European integration. In addition, a more extensive focus on EU affairs might go hand in hand with a larger range of EU issues that are covered, which might consequently also broaden the range of actors that become visible in the European public sphere. The relationship should be stronger for *European EU citizens*, since the concept is more closely linked to this vertical dimension of the Europeanisation process. *European EU citizens* represent a more Europeanised and integrated image of a European citizenry that might be fostered by a higher degree of vertical Europeanisation. Hence, one can expect that:

**H3.1 The more Europeanised a national public sphere is, the higher the presence of EU citizens compared to national public spheres that are less Europeanised.**

**H3.2 The relationship between the degree of Europeanisation of national public sphere is stronger for European EU citizens compared to national EU citizen.**

4.2 EU member states, the EU & EU citizens

*EU support*  The legitimacy of a democratic system is essentially based upon citizen’s support. This holds true at the national, but also at the European level. According to Easton (1965), legitimacy of a political system depends on specific and diffuse support. Diffuse support accounts for “generalized attachment to political objects” (ibid. p.444). As such, *European identity* has been used as a measure to determine support for the European integration (cf. Risse 2003 p.489). Research has
shown that a strong national identity can lead to a decrease in support for the EU (see e.g. Carey 2002) and that there is a strong correlation between an exclusive national identity and Euroscepticism (Hooghe and Marks 2004). Vice versa, it can be expected that the more citizens feel attached to the EU, the higher their support for the European integration. Referring back to the customer demand of the media coverage, one can assume that the more European citizens feel, the more likely it is that journalists are of the opinion that their audience is interested in EU affairs. Previous research has shown that journalists’ concerns about audience preferences are crucial when reporting EU news (Statham 2008). Hence, citizens might be included in EU news to a greater extent to satisfy consumer demands. It can be argued that this effect should be more pronounced for the European EU citizen, since the concept is more closely related to a European identity. This is because compared to the national EU citizen, the European one does not refer to national sentiments, but has a truly European character. In other words:

**H4.1** The more developed the European identity in a member state, the higher the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere.

**H4.2** The effect of a more developed European identity on visibility is stronger for European EU citizens compared to national EU citizens.

Another widely acknowledged indicator for public support is turnout. In general, turnout at the European election has been interpreted in terms of support for the European integration, but turnout is also closely related to citizenship (Heater 1999, p. 130). This is because voting is the key element in political participation and can even be seen as a defining criterion for citizenship itself (Dahl 2000).

Turnout in the European Parliament election has been extensively discussed by a body of research ever since the first election took place in 1979 (see e.g. Reif and Schmitt 1980; Franklin 2001; Steinbrecher and Rattinger 2012). As turnout in European elections is relatively low (compared to turnout in national elections) and has additionally been declining, it has often been argued that it indicates a decline in support for the EU, its policies and the European integration in general (e.g. Steinbrecher and Rattinger 2012, for a discussion see also Franklin 2001). Blondel et al. (1998) make the case that turnout rates can be seen as an indicator for both democratic legitimacy of the European Parliament and the EU as a whole, as well as an indicator of citizens’ support. Following this logic, lower turnout can be seen as a sign for a lack of a vital European citizenship and as a missing link between citizens and the EU as a polity, which might become visible in the national European public spheres. Hence, it is argued that:

**H4.3** The higher the turnout in European Parliament election, the more visible are EU citizens in the European public sphere compared to EU member states with a lower turnout.
**Situational Factors**  Furthermore, there might be temporary or rather situational elements that influence a member state’s relation to the EU and have an impact on the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere. The recent economic crisis might be such an event. In general, the EU’s economic policy is an important topic of debate within the European public sphere (cf. Meyer 2005). Already at the beginning of 2000, fiscal policy and public deficits of the member states were prominent topics on the news agenda (ibid.). The following years were marked by the global financial crisis, the economic crisis as well as the European sovereign debt crisis. Even though the economic crisis is still ongoing, it already had a severe impact on the economy of the EU member states in 2009, when the European Parliament election took place. For example, a rise in unemployment as well as a sharp drop in GDP growth has been observed (Eurostat 2013b and 2013a).

Recent public opinion surveys have shown that citizens expectations regarding the EU are closely linked to economic issues such as employment in general and the economic crisis in particular (cf. European Commission 2012). In addition, the economy is seen as the topic that is most likely to generate a feeling of community among the EU citizens (ibid.). By entering the Eurozone, member states agree to give in parts of their national sovereignty and to transfer it to the EU level, namely their national currency and monetary policy. One of the consequences is that during times of crisis, Eurozone members are unable to act independently, e.g. by devaluing their currency (De Bardeleben and Viju 2013). The economic crisis is also linked to accountability of governance, since it became increasingly more difficult for citizens to allocate responsibilities to the national and EU level (ibid.). This impacts democratic legitimacy since people are unable to estimate who to hold accountable, the EU or their national governments.

This paper makes the case that being affected by the economic crisis and possibly depending on EU support as well as solidarity by other EU member states stresses the interdependency of EU member states. Due to this process, citizens of EU member states that might need financial support become more aware of the consequences and depth of the European integration process. As a side effect, those people might become more conscious of the EU citizenship and its consequences compared to people living in EU member states who are not directly hit by the financial crisis. It should also be mentioned here that this might have changed in the further course of the ongoing economic crisis. Yet, the year 2009 just marked the beginning of the economic crisis in Europe. In addition, since the crisis has direct impacts on people’s lives, media outlets in the member states struck by the crisis might generally tend to include citizens to a larger extent, e.g. by reporting on people affected by austerity measures. The consequent hypothesis is:

H5 References to EU citizens are higher in European public spheres of member states that are severely affected by the financial crisis compared to EU member states that are less influenced by the crisis.
4.3 Active national citizenry & EU citizens

Social Capital  
 Besides media and country specific factors that are related to the EU, there might be factors at the national level independent of EU governance that impact the visibility of citizens in the public sphere in general. As such, the extent to which citizens tend to participate in the political process might vary across countries. Voting has already been discussed as one possible explanation. Yet, there are other and less formal means of participation. In this context, social capital plays an important role. Social capital can be defined on the individual level as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam 2000 p.19) and can be considered at the societal level as a collective good (van Deth 2003 p.82). The notion of social capital is closely related to the quality of democratic governance as well as political and civic participation (cf. e.g. Lin and Erickson 2007; Portes 1998; Tonkiss and Passey 2001; van Deth and Kreuter 1998).

Regarding individual social capital, Lin and Erickson (2007, p.6) argue that people with more diverse social networks are exposed to different political information and point of views, which positively affects political knowledge and considerations. Lin and Erickson (ibid.) furthermore assume that the more diverse someone’s network, the higher likelihood to get in touch with a person that is “a political enthusiast” who aims to motivate others to take part in political activities. Hence, high social capital has the capacity to lead to various political activities (ibid.) and can be seen as an indicator for an active citizenship that plays an important role for determining the degree of civic involvement of a society.

Membership in voluntary groups is frequently used by research as a proxy to determine social capital (e.g. Bekkers et al. 2008; van Deth and Kreuter 1998; Welzel et al. 2005). In general, civil society organisations are related to a healthy democracy, because they are additional channels that permit people to participate and express public concerns apart from voting, lobbying and talking to public officials directly (Fung 2003 p.516). Membership in groups allows citizens to promote their civic concerns (ibid., p.523). As intermediary organisations, voluntary associations thereby facilitate between citizens and governments. Voluntary organisations are considered “conditio sine qua non for political decision-making in democratic societies and for political involvement of individual citizens” (van Deth and Kreuter 1998 p.135).

In sum, social capital is associated with a higher degree of political participation and representation of citizens. The more participatory a society is the more visible and better represented are citizens in the political process in terms of politicians being able to perceive citizens demands. At the same time, journalists might become more aware of citizens’ actions and perceive citizens as relevant actors in the political process. Furthermore, previous research has shown that membership in voluntary associations is related to socialisation processes (Hooghe 2008).
Socialisation is seen as the mechanism that can explain the relationship between voluntary membership and civic attitudes. By being socialised in a society with an active citizenry that participates in the political process, journalists might be primed to see citizen as relevant political actors that should have a say in public debates. Linking back to the visibility of EU citizens, a European public sphere of a member state with a more active citizenry that participates in the political process might include citizens to a greater extent into public debates, because journalists are generally paying more attention to citizens as political actors. Hence, the social capital hypothesis regarding the visibility of EU citizens is:

**H6** The higher the stock of social capital of an EU member state, the higher the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere compared to member states with lower stocks of social capital.

5. Data and Methodology

To analyse and explain the visibility of EU citizens across the European public spheres of the EU member states, this study draws on a large scale content analysis of the 2009 European Parliament election carried out by the Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union (PIREDEU) project. For explanatory variables on the country level, the content analysis is supplemented by Eurobarometer and European Value Survey data as well as Eurostat statistics.

European Parliament elections are an interesting and ideal setting for research on the European public sphere, since they take place simultaneously and are relevant events for all member states. Furthermore, European elections are crucial since they allow citizens to directly participate in EU governance. This arguably also impacts the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere during this particular time period. Since it is the EU citizens who determine the outcome of an election, their visibility in the news coverage is arguably higher compared to non-election times. This means that this analysis is carried out under favourable conditions which probably increase the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere. As a consequence, the effects found by this study might be less strong during routine periods of the EU news coverage. This needs to be kept in mind when interpreting the results, especially with regard to generalised statements on the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere.

5.1 Sample

The 2009 PIREDEU media study (ESS 2009) includes content analysis data from all 27 member states which means that this research is able to provide an inclusive image of the mediated European public sphere. For each country, two broadsheets and one tabloid newspaper, in addition to two television
news programmes from the most widely watched public and private TV stations were coded. The time frame covers three weeks prior to the European Parliament elections. Depending on the date of the election in the respective country, the sample period covers the time span of three weeks between May 14 to June 4 and May 17 to June 7.

Regarding the selection criteria for news stories, all television news items have been coded. For newspapers, the title page and one randomly selected page (within the Political/News, Editorial/Opinion/Comment, and Business/Economy sections) were coded. In addition, all news articles concerning the EU and/or the European election were included. EU stories are defined as news that mentioned the EU, its polity of policy at least once. EU election stories account for news that explicitly refer to the European parliament election or its campaign. Overall, the data set includes 48983 news stories (30620 newspaper articles and 18363 TV news). Out of this population, 19076 news stories either mention the EU, its institutions or policies or the European Parliament election.

However, further limitations need to be made since this study is interested in the presence of EU citizens, which have been defined as citizens from the EU member states that are addressed in the context of EU governance. Ideally, the coders would have been instructed to code EU citizens only if their appearance is unambiguously related to the context of EU polity, policy or politics. However, this study draws on a pre-defined data set, which has the main advantage of including content analysis data from all 27 EU member states which is crucial since this study is interested in exploring cross-country differences in the visibility of EU citizens. In order to maximise the likelihood that EU citizens appear in the context of EU governance, the date set is limited to EU news stories that discuss EU affairs extensively (V22a-e=2) or whose main focus (V22a-e=3) is on EU policy, polity or politics. This leaves a total of 12850 news stories. Regarding the reliability of the data, the inter-coder reliability has been tested, using Krippendorff’s alpha. For the PIREDEU data set, the actor coding and the visibility of EU news in the media proved to be reliable (Schuck et al. 2011). The same applies for the reporting of polls (Krippendorff’s alpha=0.66) and vox pops (0.81).

5.2 Method

To examine the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere, the analysis is conducted at two different levels. The initial descriptive analysis is carried out on the news story level (n=12850). For the explanatory analysis, the data was aggregated to the media outlet level. This means, the media outlet represents the unit of analysis, therefore, the analysis is based on 143 cases. The outlet level was chosen to be able to account for different levels of visibility of EU citizens that are

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7 One exception is Belgium, which has been coded as two media system (Flanders and Wallonia). Furthermore, four TV programmes for Germany; one programme Luxembourg; three programmes for Malta and three programmes for Spain have been coded.
influenced by media-specific characteristics. The individual news story might not be the most appropriate level of analysis when additionally country characteristics are assumed to have an impact on the visibility of EU citizens, while an analysis on the country level alone might not be able to account for heterogeneity within a state (cf. Livingstone 2003 pp.479–480).

For the explanatory analysis of the visibility of EU citizens in the national European public spheres, this study follows the multilevel approach of Schuck et al. (2011), who apply an OLS regression with random effects estimation and robust standard errors. This is, because it is assumed that different degrees of visibility of EU citizens can be explained by media and country level characteristics. Even though there is consonance across media beyond national boundaries, it is likely that media outlets from the same country share common characteristics and are not independent from each other. A high correlation between the media outlets from one country potentially leads to biased OLS estimates that could distort the results (Arceneaux and Nickerson 2009). Therefore, a model is used that accounts for the clustered structure of the data set. Random effects are able to allow for correlations within countries. Another issue is the number of the clusters, which is limited to 27 according to the total number of EU member states. In the literature, it is suggested that a minimum of 20 clusters is sufficient to derive reliable estimates (ibid.).

5.3 Measures – Dependent Variables

This research is interested in the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere. An EU citizen has been defined as a citizen from the EU member states who takes a role as an EU citizen when EU governance is concerned. This study has proposed that in the European public sphere, it can be differentiated between European and national EU citizens. EU citizens have been defined as ordinary people who are members of the political community of the EU. Hence, what is explicitly excluded in this study are intermediary organisations that ought to represent and mediate civic interests in the public sphere. This is because this study assumes that from a normative point of view, citizen should, at least be to a certain degree and especially during election times, be directly visible in the European public sphere. The operationalisations of the dependent variables in this study are presented next.

EU citizens The category EU citizens is operationalised as a compound of various forms in which EU citizens can be represented in the news coverage. On the one hand, it accounts for the visibility of EU citizens as actors in the news coverage (national and European EU citizens), but also for other means in which EU citizens might be represented in the media, namely via vox pops and opinion polls. For each news stories it has been coded whether one of the forms in which EU citizens can appear has been included or not and a dummy variable has been created (reference to EU citizens

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8 For an overview of the descriptive statistics as well as a systematic overview of the dependent and independent variables see Appendix.
As mentioned previously, for the explanatory analysis, the data has been aggregated to the outlet level. In this case, EU citizens are operationalised as the percentage of EU news stories by media outlet that refers to EU citizens, or rather to at least one of the above mentioned ways in which EU citizens can appear in the EU news coverage. The respective components of the EU citizen are discussed in the following:

**National EU citizens** In case of national EU citizens, EU citizens split up into nation-specific subgroups. In the data set, for each news story, up to six actors were coded when they were referred to at least twice in the respective news story. An actor can be persons, but also groups, institutions or organisations. The first actor coded is the main actor of the news story, which was identified by the number of mentions and general importance in the story. The remaining actors were coded in order of their appearance. To operationalise national EU citizens, I draw on the PIREDEU actor scheme of the content analysis codebook, where for each EU member state, non-organized ordinary citizen(s), non-organized population groups or the population of a country as a whole (e.g. voters, people or the public; for television, e.g. country's ordinary citizens being interviewed) were coded. Together they account for the national EU citizens in this study. A dummy variable indicating whether a news story includes national EU citizens as actors or not was created (reference to national EU citizens =1; no reference=0). In the explanatory analysis, national EU citizens account for the percentage of EU news stories by media outlet that includes national EU citizens as actors.

**European EU citizens** The concept of European EU citizen refers to a supranational, European citizenship, meaning that the respective citizen or group of citizens cannot be distinguished by nationality, but accounts for the EU citizens as such. To operationalise European EU citizens, I rely again on the PIREDEU actor scheme. At the level of EU-wide actors, non-organized ordinary citizen(s), non-organized population groups or the EU population as a whole (e.g. Europeans, European voters, European citizens, European population or European public) were coded, which constitute the European EU citizens in this study. A dummy variable was created, indicating whether a news story includes European EU citizens as actors or not (reference to European EU citizens =1; no reference=0). In the explanatory analysis, European EU citizens account for the percentage of EU news stories by media outlet that includes European EU citizens as actors.

**Vox pop** In addition to including EU citizens as actors, the media can draw on vox pops (also called vox populi or interviews with the “man on the street”) to give citizens a say in EU news. Vox pops are a more direct, though less formal, way to include citizens in the news coverage and used to exemplify the issue that is discussed. Vox pops are a stylistic device used to represent opinions of the EU citizens. As such, they may or may not be representative for the EU citizens or parts of the EU’s population. Vox pops are likely to appear along with EU citizens being coded as actors at the same
time. Yet, the criteria for the actor coding laid out above as well as a specific style of vox pops might result in additional references to EU citizens via vox pops. Based on a data set it is not possible to differentiate vox pops into the categories of *national* and *European EU citizens*. Nevertheless, vox pops are included as a form of representation of the EU citizens since they represent public opinion of the EU citizens which is directly communicated to the audience (cf. Brookes et al. 2004, p.66). Vox pop is a dummy variable (V50), indicating whether the respective news story includes vox pops or not (reference to vox pop =1; no reference=0). In the explanatory analysis, *vox pop* accounts for the percentage of EU news stories by media outlet that includes vox pops.

**Polls** Reporting on opinion polls and surveys is another, though less direct way, to refer to EU citizens. Polls are nevertheless an important form in which EU citizens can become visible in the European public sphere since they provide information on and represent the opinion of the EU citizens. Polls might refer to the EU citizens as a collective (*European EU citizens*), or only report on *national EU citizens* from one or more EU member states. Yet, due to limitations of the data set, this study is only able to account for the visibility of polls in general. A dummy variable, indicating whether the respective news story included a reference to an opinion poll was generated (reference to poll =1; no reference=0). In the explanatory analysis polls account for the percentage of EU news stories by media outlet that report on opinion polls.

### 5.4 Measures – Independent Variables

As mentioned above, the data for the explanatory analysis has been aggregated to the outlet level. Therefore, the media-specific dependent variables are likewise aggregate measures or dummy variables for the respective media outlet. The country-specific characteristics, on the other hand, are aggregated to the country level.

**Media type** To analyse whether there are differences in the visibility of EU citizens in different types of media, a dummy variable that separates TV from newspapers was created (TV =1; newspaper=0).

**Media outlet** It has been argued that there might not only be differences between media types, but also between different media outlets, namely quality and popular media. Quality media is understood as media outlets that cover predominantly hard news and ought to have rather elitist audience. Popular media, on the other hand, rely to a greater extent on advertising revenues and aim to reach a broader audience by decreasing the amount of hard news and increasing the coverage on human interests (cf. e.g. Esser 1999). For the distinction of quality and popular media, broadsheets and public broadcaster have been recoded into quality media, while tabloids and private TV channels
account for popular media outlets. A dummy indicating whether the respective media outlet is considered quality media or not is included (quality media = 1; popular media = 0).

**Europeanisation**  The underlying concept of the European public sphere in this study is the one of a Europeanisation of the national public spheres. Previous research has shown that the European public spheres of the EU member states vary in the degree they are Europeanised. With regard to vertical Europeanisation, there are two important indicators, namely the amount of EU governmental actors and EU news reported in the national media. In this particular case, references to actors from the EU governmental level might be a less adequate indicator. In the European public sphere, actors are competing for visibility (Thompson 1995). As a consequence, the more the news coverage focusses on elite actors, the less space is available for references to EU citizens. Hence, the indicator for Europeanisation of the national public sphere used in this study is the amount of EU news reported. The variable is based on the PIREDEU data set (V22a-e=2 and V22a-e=3) and operationalized as the percentage of EU news (with dominant or extensive focus on the EU affairs) of the total coverage by media outlet.

**EU support**  This study applies two measures for EU support, namely the strength of a European identity and turnout at European Parliament elections. To measure *European identity*, this study follows previous research that has largely relied on the Eurobarometer question (QA15) “In the near future do you see yourself as [NATIONALITY] only, [NATIONALITY] and European, European and [NATIONALITY] or European only?” (European Commission 2007). Commonly, the indicator is recoded into a dummy variable and used as a measure for strength of an exclusive national identity. This is because it is, for example, assumed that the strength of national identity is negatively related to support of the European integration and increased Euroscepticism. In contrast, this study is interested in the scope of a European identity. It takes into account the percentage of respondents that see themselves as exclusively (European only) or predominantly European (European and [NATIONALITY]). What is important is that data previous to the European election is used⁹. This is, because the hypothesis assumes that journalists are able to sense general societal trends. Yet, it might take some time until an effect on the coverage can be observed. *Turnout* at the European Parliament elections is used as a second indicator for support of the EU. Turnout measures the percent of the voting population by country that turned out to vote in the 2009 European election.

**Situational Factor**  The recent economic crisis has been identified as a temporary, situational factor that might influence the visibility of EU citizens. There are several potential indicators that account for economic crisis. Previously, the government deficit and debt as well as GDP growth and

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⁹ I rely on the Eurobarometer 67.1 from 2007. This is, because there is a break in the time series in 2008 and 2009. The Eurobarometer 67.1 is the earliest data available that was collected previous to the 2009 European Parliament election. Yet, the strength of a European identity has been very stable over time.
unemployment have been used (Inotai 2013). This study includes *unemployment change* as a measure for economic crisis. First of all, unemployment is the best suited indicator for economic crisis when EU citizens are concerned. This is, because it is more directly related to peoples everyday lives and might have a more severe personal impact compared to more abstract economic indicators (cf. Bengtsson 2004; Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000). Yet, unemployment is likely to be influenced by structural factors other than the economic crisis alone. To reduce the effect of additional factors, the change in unemployment that occurred between 2008 and 2009 is used as a measure. The data for unemployment is taken from Eurostat (2013b). Unemployment change is measured as the percentage change in the annual average of the number of people unemployed of the labour force between 2008 and 2009 by EU member state.

**Social capital** To measure social capital in an EU member state I rely on membership in associations, which is not the only, but a frequently used measure of social capital (e.g. Bekkers et al. 2008; van Deth and Kreuter 1998; Welzel et al. 2005). In the literature, there is an ongoing debate whether membership in general is related to higher social capital, or this is only true for an active membership as well as for certain types of associations. Regarding the former, research suggest that not only an active membership has beneficiary effects on social capital (cf. Wollebæk and Selle 2003). What kind of associations are more beneficiary for developing positive attitudes for civic engagement arguably varies across countries (Hooghe 2008 p.573). Therefore, general aggregated membership figures are used. The data is drawn from the European Value Study 2008, based on the question: “Please look carefully at the following list of voluntary organisations and activities and say a) which, if any, do you belong to?”. Following previous research (cf. e.g. van Deth and Kreuter 1998 p.137; Welzel et al. 2005), the percentage of the population of the respective EU member state that is a member of at least one voluntary association was calculated.

**5.5 Control Variable**

*Turnout at national election* is included as a control variable. National turnout was included to control for cross-country variance in turnout that may occur independent of the EU context and e.g. depend on the respective electoral system. Turnout at national elections is measured as the per cent of the voting population by country that voted in the most recent national-wide election prior to the European Parliament election 2009.\(^\text{10}\).

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\(^\text{10}\) In case of Luxembourg, where the European and national election took place at the same time, the data from the simultaneous national election is used.
6. Results

This study is interested in the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere. So far, research has mainly focused on elite actors and largely neglected the presence of ordinary citizens in the EU news coverage. This study first considers whether and in what way EU citizens become visible in the European public sphere, before turning to potential cross-country differences and their explanation.

6.1 Descriptive Analysis

Initially, this research raised the question whether there are any EU citizens in the European public sphere. The answer to this question is yes, there are and rather surprisingly, 30 per cent of the EU related news stories include references to EU citizens.\(^{11}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Forms of Representation of EU citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form of visibility</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National EU citizens</td>
<td>2546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European EU citizens</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polls</td>
<td>981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vox Pops</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU citizens</td>
<td>3905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second research question asked in what way EU citizens become visible in the European public sphere. The results (Table 1) first of all show that both concepts of the EU citizen, the European and national version are present in EU news. Yet, references to national EU citizens clearly prevail, while European EU citizens as actors, polls and vox pops are less visible. Especially the rather low visibility of polls compared to national EU citizens seems surprising, since research suggests that elections are predominantly covered from a horserace angle, reporting who is ahead and behind in the run-up to the election (see e.g. Iyengar et al. 2004; Brookes et al. 2004). Such horse race frames are equally present in EU news on European Parliament elections (Schuck et al. 2013). Yet, overall, EU citizens are predominantly visible as individual actors in EU news.

To estimate whether the visibility of EU citizens as actors is high or low, it is helpful to look at their visibility in comparison to other actor groups within the EU news coverage (Table 2). Not

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\(^{11}\) When interpreting these results, one should keep in mind that EU citizens mainly appear as secondary rather than main actors of the respective news story. About 40 per cent of the references appear in the thematic context of the European election.

\(^{12}\) The percentages of the ways in which EU citizens can become visible in the European public sphere do not simply add up, since news stories can include more than one reference at the same time.
surprisingly, and in line with previous research, governmental actors\textsuperscript{13} from the EU and national level dominate the news coverage. About five per cent of the EU-related news includes \textit{European EU citizens} as actors. The number seems relatively small, yet, their representation is still higher compared to political groups of the European Parliament and EU-level civil society actors, including interest groups, think tanks and NGOs, but also individual actors such as activist, experts, journalists and the media. What is remarkable with regard \textit{national EU citizens} is that they are more visible than national civil society actors, but also MEPs and candidates that run in the European Parliament elections and should therefore be among the key actors of the election coverage. This highlights the importance of EU citizens as actors in the news coverage.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Visibility of actors groups}
\begin{tabular}{l|l}
\hline
Actor group & Per cent of news stories \\
\hline
EU governmental actors & 44.71 \\
National governmental actors & 36.74 \\
MEPs & MEP Candidates & 13.68 \\
MPs & 31.91 \\
European Parties & 3.48 \\
National Parties & 32.60 \\
European civil society & 1.98 \\
National civil society & 17.55 \\
European EU citizens & 4.82 \\
National EU citizens & 19.81 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Previous findings suggest that the degree of Europeanisation and the visibility of EU governmental actors varies across countries. This study examines whether this is likewise true for the visibility of EU citizens. Figure 1 below compares the presence of the aggregated EU citizens as well as the visibility of \textit{national} and \textit{European EU citizens}. The results show considerable differences across the European public spheres of the EU member states.

\textsuperscript{13} EU governmental actors include the European Commission and Commissioners, the European Council, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the political administration. National governmental actors include the government, the head of the state, ministers and the political administration.
Overall, the visibility of EU citizens in EU news varies from about 15 to 49 per cent. While the visibility is the lowest in Lithuania, Germany and Malta, EU citizens are most present in the news coverage of Romania, Estonia and Finland. Neither the visibility of national nor European EU citizens follows the exact same pattern across-countries\textsuperscript{14}. While the visibility of national EU citizens varies between 8 and 39 per cent, the visibility of European EU citizens is significantly lower. European EU citizens are nearly invisible in some countries such as Lithuania, while included in a maximum of 14 per cent of news in other states (Romania). At first glance, the visibility cannot be explained by the length of the EU membership, nor does it indicate an East-West cleavage. The question then is: How can the visibility of EU citizens in the national European public spheres of the EU member states be explained? In order to answer this question, a multilevel analysis is carried out.

\textsuperscript{14} The overall visibility can only be compared between national and European EU citizens, since EU citizens is a compound that includes the two types of actors in addition to polls and vox pops.
6.2 Explanatory Analysis: Explaining the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere

After the general presence of different forms of representation of EU citizens in the European public sphere has been examined and cross-country differences have been indicated, the next part of this paper turns to possible explanations for different degrees of visibility. Three different models that aim to explain the visibility of EU citizens, national EU citizens and to the European EU citizens are presented in the following.

The results of the regression models (Table 2) first of all indicate that there are significant differences regarding the factors that explain the visibility of EU citizens and national EU citizens compared to European EU citizens. Regarding the first media hypothesis (H1), it has been argued that EU citizens are more visible on TV due to a more extensive use of personalisation and episodic framing. This can be supported by the empirical analysis for the national and EU citizens since TV has a significant positive impact on visibility, but it does not hold true for European EU citizens. The second media related hypothesis argued that the media outlet might have an effect and it was expected that EU and national EU citizens are more visible in popular media outlets (H2.1), while the opposite was predicted for European EU citizens (H2.2). Yet, the media outlet does not significantly influence the visibility of EU citizens, nor can evidence be found that quality media have a leading role in promoting the image of the European EU citizen.

As mentioned previously, European EU citizens are a particularly interesting case, since they represent a more Europeanised and integrated image of the EU citizenship. This can in general be supported by the empirical findings. The Europeanisation hypothesis (H3.1) assumed that the more Europeanised a national public sphere is, the more visible are EU citizens within it and it was argued that the relationship should be stronger for European EU citizens compared to national EU citizens (H3.2). For EU and national EU citizens, no clear cut increase in visibility can be detected. This means, a more Europeanised public sphere does not automatically lead to a higher visibility of citizens within it. For European EU citizens, on the other hand, the extent to which the national public sphere is Europeanised does have a significant positive impact on visibility which is in line with the second Europeanisation hypothesis.
Table 3  Explaining visibility of EU, national and European EU citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EU citizens</th>
<th>National EU citizens</th>
<th>European EU citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummy TV</td>
<td>10.82***</td>
<td>6.00**</td>
<td>1.24 (0.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummy Quality media</td>
<td>-2.17 (2.56)</td>
<td>-1.03 (2.30)</td>
<td>1.31 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share EU news</td>
<td>0.05 (0.09)</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.08)</td>
<td>0.05** (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Identity</td>
<td>-0.27 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.24)</td>
<td>0.23*** (0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>0.26* (0.15)</td>
<td>0.05 (0.13)</td>
<td>0.07** (0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>0.34*** (0.07)</td>
<td>0.21*** (0.08)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment change</td>
<td>-0.17 (0.83)</td>
<td>0.39 (0.85)</td>
<td>-0.25** (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Turnout</td>
<td>-0.56***</td>
<td>-0.29* (0.17)</td>
<td>-0.14*** (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>46.10*** (7.95)</td>
<td>31.00*** (7.68)</td>
<td>6.10* (3.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 N</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 N</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 within countries</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 Between Countries</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 Overall</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < .10. **p < .05. ***p < .01. Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by country in the RE specifications. Calculations were made using the xtreg option in Stata 12.

Turning to the two indicators for EU support, it has been argued that a more developed European identity and higher turnout should be positively related to the visibility of EU citizens (H4.1 and H4.3). Regarding the aspect of a European identity, it has again been argued that this effect should be stronger for European EU citizens in contrast to national EU citizens, since they represent a more Europeanised image of the EU citizenry which is reflected in a more pronounced European identity (H4.2). In contrast to national and EU citizens, an exclusive European identity is significant and positively related to the visibility of European EU citizens, which confirms the second European identity hypothesis. Turnout, on the other hand, does lead to an increased presence of both EU and European EU citizens, which partially supports the hypothesis, since no significant effect can be found for national EU citizens.

15 To test the robustness of the results, the regressions have been run controlling respectively for first European Parliament election, simultaneous national election/referendum, as well as post-communist countries. Furthermore, instead of the quality media dummy, separate dummy variables for the respective media outlets have been tested. The results in all three models are similar. European identity has been replaced by the respective measure for the strength of national identity, which is producing very similar results, but has a significantly negative effect on the visibility of European EU citizens, which supports the hypothesis.
Furthermore, it has been argued that situational factors impacting EU member states, such as the economic crisis, might influence the visibility (H5). While a positive effect has been hypothesised, a rise in unemployment seems to significantly decrease the presence of European EU citizens in the news coverage, while no impact can be found in the other two models.

Besides these differences, it has been argued that variance in visibility might be a cause of country level characteristics that are independent of EU-related factors. In this context, social capital has been discussed (H6). It has been expected that higher social capital has a positive effect on visibility, since it is an indicator for a more active citizenry that participates in the political process. Due to socialisation processes, journalists of EU member states with higher social capital might include citizens to a greater extent into public debates. The results show that social capital does, in fact, lead to a higher visibility of EU and national EU citizens, while it does not seem relevant for the visibility of European EU citizens. Hence, the social capital hypothesis can only be partially supported.

Taking all three models into account, it can be concluded that the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere is influenced by media and county level factors. Yet, cross-country differences seem more important than media-specific characteristics since the amount of the variance explained is larger on the country than media outlet level in all three models. While the visibility of EU and national EU citizens seems to depend on factors that can rather explain the visibility of citizens in the public sphere in general, namely on TV and social capital, this cannot be confirmed for the presence of European EU citizens. In contrast, the visibility of European EU citizens is almost independent of media-related influences, with the exception of the degree of Europeanisation of the media outlet.

The visibility of European EU citizens does nearly exclusively rely on EU-related explanatory variables. Hence, the concept of the European EU citizen seems to be of a truly European nature since support for EU governance in form of a European identity and turnout at European elections play a more pronounced role. Therefore, it can be concluded that civic support for the European integration is vital for the emergence of a European citizenry that can hold governance at the EU level accountable as well as for a functioning European public sphere that is able to mediate between the EU and the citizens.

Furthermore, some evidence has been found that the visibility of citizens in the EU news coverage depends on situational factors, such as the current economic crisis. It has been argued that being affected by the crisis should lead to an increase in visibility. The hypothesis is based on the rationale that the crisis has a direct impact on people’s lives and citizens are therefore to a greater extent included in the news coverage. Unemployment proved to be significant for European EU citizens; yet, it has the opposite effect and leads to a decrease in visibility. One possible explanation is that the economy and the economic crisis in particular are complex and multi-dimensional issues
that therefore predominantly focus on elite actors. It might also be possible that the economic crisis leads to a “resurgence of national identities” (Kleinen-von Königslöw 2010 p.53) and to a decrease in reference to European EU citizens. Furthermore, one has to keep in mind that the economic crisis had just hit the EU member states in 2009. The European debt crisis, therefore, might have had a more severe impact on the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere in the following years.

7. Conclusion
This study set out to determine whether EU citizens are visible in the European public sphere. This question has not been sufficiently answered by previous research, but is highly relevant to the accountability and legitimacy of EU governance. Rather surprisingly, the overall visibility of EU citizens is not marginal, but they are present in 30 per cent of EU-related news reported during the European Parliament election campaign. The presence of EU citizens as actors even exceeds the visibility of other actors in the European public sphere, such as MEPs and civil society actors. The results also indicate that there are different ways in which EU citizens become visible in the European public sphere: as actors or in the form of polls and vox pops.

This study has not only provided empirical evidence for the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere, but also contributed to its theoretical conception by introducing the distinction between the concept of the national EU citizen and European EU citizen. Both concepts have proved to be present in the European public sphere, yet, references to national EU citizens clearly prevail in the EU related news coverage. The two concepts can furthermore be differentiated on the basis of the empirical findings. While EU citizens in general and national EU citizens are more frequently visible on TV news, this cannot be confirmed for European EU citizens. Contrary to the media type, differences between media outlets based quality and commercial media do not play a role for visibility. Furthermore, the stocks of social capital in an EU member state, or rather the extent of an active citizenship does seem to have a positive effect on visibility, with the exception of the presence of European EU citizens. The visibility of European EU citizens rather depends on the degree of Europeanisation of the respective national European public sphere as well as on indicators for EU support. Furthermore, the findings indicate that visibility might fluctuate in the course of certain events, such as the recent economic crisis.

Yet, this study was limited since it could only provide an image of the EU citizen in the European public sphere during the European Parliament election time, which probably results in an increased visibility of EU citizens. Analytically, it has only included EU news articles that have a dominant or extensive focus on EU-affairs, which was used to increase the likelihood that national EU citizens appear in the context of EU affairs. This approach is not ideal, since some wrongly classified
cases might be included in the analysis, but has been chosen since the advantages of the data set including all 27 EU member states outweigh the disadvantages.

Nevertheless, this study was able to provide important insights into the presence of one of the key actors in the European public sphere that has so far been missing, namely EU citizens. Overall, the degree of visibility can be interpreted as a positive sign for a healthy European public sphere. Yet, further investigation is needed that considers the presence of EU citizens in the European public sphere during routine periods of EU governance and additionally examines whether EU citizens are also given an active voice to articulate their opinion in the news coverage, or they are rather used by the media to set the scene.

Knowing whether EU citizens are present in European public sphere is important with regard to legitimacy of EU governance. Since politics these days is primarily mediated, the visibility of EU citizens in the European public sphere is an important precondition for adequate communication between the EU and the citizens of the EU member states. The results of this study also indicate the importance of an active citizenry at the national level for the visibility of EU citizens. The EU citizenship, therefore, requires more than a legal framework that is introduced in a top-down manner. Above all, it depends on support and actively lived participation rights by the citizens of the EU member states to become a politically meaningful concept. In the long run, a visible and active EU citizenry in the European public sphere might help to overcome the gap between the EU and its citizens.
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Comparing Media Systems and Media Content: Online Newspapers in Ten Eastern and Western 

### Appendix

**Descriptive Statistics of Variables in Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU citizens</td>
<td>34.31</td>
<td>16.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National EU citizens</td>
<td>23.15</td>
<td>13.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European EU citizens</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV (dummy)</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Media (dummy)</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Identity</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>5.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>47.57</td>
<td>19.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>42.80</td>
<td>21.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment change</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Turnout</td>
<td>70.20</td>
<td>15.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overview Dependent Variables and Components**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description/Operationalisation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU citizens</td>
<td>Share of EU news stories that include national EU citizens, European EU citizens, vox pops, polls (operationalisations below)</td>
<td>PIREDEU (recode)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National EU citizens</td>
<td>Non-organized ordinary citizen(s), non-organized population groups or the population of a country as a whole (e.g. voters, people or the public; for television, e.g. country’s ordinary citizens being interviewed) were coded. V14a-V14f Actors, Country code + 5013</td>
<td>PIREDEU (recode)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European EU citizens</td>
<td>Non-organized ordinary citizen(s), non-organized population groups or the EU population as a whole (e.g. Europeans, European voters, European citizens, European population, European voters or European public) were coded V14a-V14f Actors, Code 318</td>
<td>PIREDEU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vox Pop</td>
<td>Explicitly (only if the story or somebody in the story says so): Does the story mention interviews of persons in the street (= vox populi) (i.e., an actual statement, quote from a person in the street; paraphrasing does not count, neither does a reference by a politician to a remark made by e.g. Joe the Plumber)? V50</td>
<td>PIREDEU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll</td>
<td>Explicitly (only if the story or somebody in the story says so): Does the story mention opinion poll results predicting the outcome of the European Parliamentary elections in [COUNTRY] (=survey results about vote choice intentions)? V47 (recode yes / no)</td>
<td>PIREDEU (recode)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Overview Independent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description/Operationalisation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Dummy (TV=1, newspaper=0)</td>
<td>PIREDEU (recode)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality media</td>
<td>Dummy (quality media=1, popular media=0)</td>
<td>PIREDEU (recode)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Share EU news outlet      | Topic discussion: What is the extent of discussion of the topic relative to the total length of the story? V22a-e  
2 = Discussed extensively, but not the main focus. The topic is discussed in several sentences, but is not the focus of the story  
3 = Focal or key topic. The topic serves as the central point of discussion in the story and will be discussed at length generally throughout the story. | PIREDEU (recode)        |
| European Identity         | In the near future, do you see yourself as...? QA15, 3=European and [National] or 4=European only | Eurobarometer (67.1)    |
| Turnout EP election       | Per cent of the voting population by EU member state that turned out to vote in the 2009 European Parliament election. | European Parliament     |
| Membership                | Please look carefully at the following list of voluntary organisations and activities and say a) which, if any, do you belong to? Q5, V10-V24, 1=mentioned | European Value Study (2008) (recode) |
| Unemployment change       | Percentage change in unemployment by EU member state from 2008 to 2009.                       | Eurostat (recode)       |
| National Turnout          | Per cent of the voting population by country that turned out to vote in the most recent national election prior to the European Parliament election 2009. | Eurostat                |