Changing Discourse on the EU: Analysing Dutch Newspaper Articles in 2005 and 2012

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Abstract: The EU has been in an economic crisis as well as a ‘crisis of solidarity’ for several years now and this has no doubt influenced the way that the EU is represented. In my paper I want to analyse the development of discourse on the EU in the Netherlands through the analysis of newspaper articles, making a diachronic comparison between the discourse in 2005 and 2012, before and after/during the crisis. In order to do this, a data sample of articles has been taken from popular newspaper De Telegraaf. The concept of framing is used as a way to structure the analysis, which tries to answer the question: ‘How has the representation of the role of the country in the EU in a popular newspaper in the Netherlands changed between 2005 and 2012?’ The main conclusions are that the economic crisis had a huge impact and became nearly omnipresent in the data in 2012; that the image of the EU has changed negatively, focusing more on costs; and that the main scapegoats of the EU crisis that are presented are the PIIGS countries but even more strongly, the national and supra-national elites.

1. Introduction

The results of the 2014 elections for the European Parliament have caused a lot of commotion throughout the continent. The number of Eurosceptic MEP’s doubled compared to the 2009 elections with calls for ‘less Europe’ growing. This all reflects the tumultuous decade that the EU has gone through, starting in 2004 with the largest enlargement in its history, going through the rejection of the European constitution in 2005 and the subsequent signing of the similar Lisbon Treaty. At the same time, Europe went through an economic crisis and a sovereign debt crisis in the years following 2009, which had a huge impact on the economies in the EU and especially in the European Monetary Union (EMU). The changing size and shape, but even more so the European economic crisis, have reshaped both what the EU is and how it is perceived. As mentioned, Euroskepticism has been rising and continues to do so and the EU is indeed criticized in many ways. This is partly because of the economic crisis, but also because of other, more fundamental ‘deficits’ of the EU, such as its famed ‘democratic deficit’, but also a ‘representation deficit’, an ‘identity deficit’, etc.

One way that the EU, or more specifically, the European Commission, has tried to remedy this is by improving the EU’s communication with its citizens. In particular, they have taken seriously the

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1 (Hewitt 2014)
2 (Shore 2012)
3 (Delanty 2008; D’Appollonia 2002; Harmsen 2007; and many other authors)
4 (Commission of the European Communities 2006);
importance given by Jürgen Habermas to the existence of a European public sphere in order to create a European *demos*, and to the necessity of such a European *demos* in order to grant democratic legitimacy to the EU as an institution.\(^5\) It was argued that through a combination of more transparency, more positive reporting on Europe and the emergence of a European public sphere, this could be attained. This emergence would have to take place not through creating an entirely new public sphere, but rather through the Europeanization of existing national public spheres.\(^6\) In particular the European Communication Policy, which was started by an action plan in 2005, emphasized the need to improve the communication between the EU, the European Commission and the European Parliament, and the European citizens.

The success or failure of this policy, which has now been in place for almost nine years, has been a fond topic of research. There is a vast body of scholarly work on the emergence or non-emergence of a European public sphere, both theoretical as well as empirical. A similar approach is taken in this paper, in which the changing representations of the EU in a newspaper in one EU country, the Netherlands, will be examined. First of all, this is done with the EU policy that a European Public Sphere should be created within the framework of the national public spheres, which means that studying national media such as newspapers is an appropriate way of studying the (non-)existent European public sphere as well. Secondly, a diachronic comparison will be made between newspaper articles from 2005, before the European crisis and just after the big EU enlargement in 2004, and from 2012, well after the start of the crisis.

Using this data sample of newspaper articles taken from the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf*, an attempt will be made to examine the changes in the way the EU is represented, looking at the following research question: ‘How has the representation of the role of the country in the EU in a popular newspaper in the Netherlands changed between 2005 and 2012?’ In order to be able to analyse the articles, the concept of framing is used and each of the articles will be located within a particular journalistic frame, an ‘economic frame’, a ‘responsibility frame’ and a ‘conflict frame’, which are taken from the literature. Using this as a structure for the analysis, the articles within each frame in each year are compared, looking at the language that is used and looking for answers to particular questions for each frame. The specific methods and a more detailed introduction into the concepts will be given later in this paper.

Before turning to the analysis, chapter 2 will outline the concepts and theories that will be used and the context that is necessary for analysing the topic. The third, methodological, chapter will cover the research questions and hypotheses as well as the different methodological choices that were made in more detail, describing the research design and giving an overview of the Dutch discourse on the EU in the relevant years. This will be followed by the analysis, giving first descriptive statistics of the articles and moving on from there to a more in-depth analysis. The fifth and final chapter will give the conclusions of the paper.

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\(^5\) (Habermas 1991)

\(^6\) (Commission of the European Communities 2006; Koopmans and Statham 2010)
2. Concepts and Context

2.1 Defining the EU Crisis

For defining the term “EU crisis” as used in this thesis, the clear and succinct overview of the history of the crisis as well as the complexity of the terminology that surrounds it in Bargaoanu & Durach (2013) will be followed. They argue that in 2008 it seemed that the EU had managed to not be hit by the global credit crisis, which was strongly affecting the US at that point. Despite economic turmoil and the necessity of bail-outs of banks by states such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, the EU was still considered to be the world’s superior economy. However, this changed sharply in 2009-2010 when the Greek ‘sovereign debt crisis’ became visible and Greece was unable to pay back its debts. The crisis was not limited to Greece though and spread quickly from becoming a ‘Greek mess’ to a ‘European mess’.

As mentioned before, a variety of terms were coined in order to describe this crisis, including “Euro crisis, euro zone crisis, currency crisis, sovereign debt crisis, financial crisis, banking crisis, trade imbalance crisis, solvency crisis, Greek crisis and German crisis.” Bargaoanu and Durach (2013) choose to use the term ‘the crisis of the European Union’, coined by Jürgen Habermas in 2012, as a term that encapsulates the different and manifold aspects of the crisis, a crisis that is a political crisis, an economic crisis, an institutional crisis and a confidence crisis. Within this thesis a similar approach to the crisis will be taken, trying not to focus on one aspect of the crisis (such as the ‘sovereign debt crisis’, in this view is only an aspect of this crisis) but instead to take as many elements as possible into account. Because the full term ‘crisis of the European Union’ would simply be too long for effective use, it will be abbreviated here to the ‘EU crisis’.

2.2 Discourse on the EU: changing perceptions of the EU

In this section, an attempt is made to give an idea of the general changes in the discourse on the EU between 2005 and 2012. A more extensive overview of the discourse on the EU in the Netherlands will be given later while this section will be general and not country-specific. 2005 was an important year for the EU, in particular because of the referenda that were held or that were to be held in various European countries about the adoption of the EU constitution. The ‘no’-vote from the Netherlands and France towards the constitution can in fact be seen as a turning point in the attitude towards the EU. These results did however not come out of thin air and instead reflected a growing Euroscepticism that was only to become clearer in the years that followed. There have been a growing number of anti-European parties or of an adoption of anti-EU rhetoric by existing political parties, such as the Dutch Freedom Party or the French Front National, to just name two examples.

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7 (Bargaoanu and Durach 2013)  
8 (Bargaoanu and Durach 2013, 6)  
9 (Bargaoanu and Durach 2013, 6)  
10 (Bargaoanu and Durach 2013, 6)  
11 (Habermas 2012)  
12 (Startin and Krouwel 2013, 75)  
13 (Grabow and Hartleb 2013, 4)
It is possible to make a distinction between ‘hard’ Euroscepticism and ‘soft’ Euroscepticism. Whereas within the former the EU as such is rejected as an organization and leaving the EU is considered to be the best option, the latter accepts the EU as such but criticizes it as too bureaucratic, too powerful, too expensive, etc.\(^\text{14}\) Both forms have gained strength and prominence within national politics (as well as within the European Parliament, paradoxically) in recent years. It has been argued that this shows an inability on the part of the EU or of the traditional national elites to convince the voters of the benefits of the EU and a widening gap between the voters and the pro-EU mainstream political elites (for as far as they can still be considered to properly constitute the mainstream).\(^\text{15}\)

This has created the image of the EU being at a crossroads, at a decisive point in its history. Although it should be realized that this is also an image that can be used to advance certain policies and as such should be approached with healthy doubt, the idea that the EU is not only in an economic crisis but in a crisis that might fundamentally undermine its credibility or even its existence in the long run. Calls are made for ‘strong and decisive leadership’ to regain public trust;\(^\text{16}\) for a strengthening of community feeling Europe as a necessity in order to not only increase European integration but even to maintain the status quo;\(^\text{17}\) or for increased popular participation to counter the disenfranchisement with the European project and escape the impasse that European integration is caught in.\(^\text{18}\) Whatever is called for in particular, it is clear that in general action is called for; whatever direction one would want the EU to take, it is clear that a direction has to be chosen.

### 2.3 Deficits of the EU: the EU under criticism

It would be too simplistic to blame the rising anti-EU discourse that was presented briefly in the previous section on the EU crisis alone. In fact, criticisms of the EU have existed for as long as the EU has existed and it is arguably these issues that are more fundamental causes of the rising Euroscepticism whereas the EU crisis itself could be seen rather as a catalyst for bringing these problems to the surface. In this respect, the crisis of the EU is not just on a financial or economic level, but the EU can also be considered to be in a several more ‘fundamental’ crises, such as a ‘crisis of solidarity’,\(^\text{19}\) a ‘crisis of legitimacy’\(^\text{20}\) or a ‘crisis of representation’.\(^\text{21}\) Within this paragraph, a brief overview of the existing literature surrounding this will be given.

As mentioned before, the EU is not just in an economic crisis and there are different ways that one can conceptualize the ‘European crisis’ and many different angles to view this from. Already before the start of the sovereign-debt crisis in 2009 the EU was considered by Gerard Delanty to be in a ‘crisis of solidarity’, which he linked to the rise of nationalist and Eurosceptic parties throughout Europe.\(^\text{22}\) Delanty was however not the first to talk about such a crisis. Already in the first half of the

\(^\text{14}\) (Grabow and Hartleb 2013, 33)
\(^\text{15}\) (Startin and Krouwel 2013, 81–82)
\(^\text{16}\) (Bargaoanu and Durach 2013, 22)
\(^\text{17}\) (Etzioni 2013, 15)
\(^\text{18}\) (Habermas 2012, 132)
\(^\text{19}\) (Delanty 2008)
\(^\text{20}\) (Müftüler-Baç 2008, 205)
\(^\text{21}\) (Hayward 1995)
\(^\text{22}\) (Delanty 2008, 681)
1990’s scholars pointed towards the lack of transparency and communication between the EU and the people. A volume called “The Crisis of Representation in Europe” was published in 1995. In the introduction to this volume this ‘crisis of representation’ is linked to a ‘lack of public enthusiasm for European integration’ and greater support for anti-Establishment parties. This is a rather early mention of the debate, both popular and academic, about what has been called the ‘democratic deficit’ of the EU.

In fact, multiple deficits within the EU system have been identified. According to D’Appolonia (2002), the lack of an ‘emotional dimension’ in the citizenship of the European Union is another cause of the democratic deficit. This emotional dimension refers to the suggested lack of a certain feeling of belonging towards the EU mostly because of the failure of establishing a European identity that people can belong to. There are many reasons for this failure, and partly the ‘legitimacy deficit’ of the EU and in particular of the decision-making process within the EU structures leads to this ‘identity deficit’.

2.4 Improving the EU’s Communication: towards a European Public Sphere

Although one could point to the EU’s structural setup or point towards the still existent strength of the nation-state and blame that for these problems, one main element that is considered to be essential is that of communication. Jürgen Habermas is one of the people who have argued that a lack of communication is an important part of the deficits of the EU and that there is a need for more coverage and public visibility about European policy making within in a ‘European Public Sphere’ (EPS) in order to legitimize the European Union as an institution. This idea is similarly reflected also in official EU policy documents, in particular in the 2006 ‘White Paper on a European Communication Policy’. This document acknowledges that there is a ‘gap between the EU and its citizens’, citizens who ‘know little about the EU and feel they have little to say in its decision-making process’. It goes on to document the way that this should be changed and in this respect focuses on doing something about the ‘inadequate development of a European public sphere’.

This inadequate development is characterized by a lack of coverage of the EU, too little space given to European issues in national media and the non-existence of a ‘steady flow of common information’ so that European citizens can ‘see the European dimension of common issues’. Furthermore, the paper argues that the EU is presented as a faceless entity with no public identity, making it impossible for citizens to connect with Europe. The way that the document proposes to

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23 (Hansen and Williams 1999, 236)
24 (Hayward 1995, 2)
25 (Koopmans and Statham 2010, 3)
26 (D’Appollonia 2002, 189)
27 (Sowinska 2009, 32)
28 (Koopmans and Statham 2010, 3)
29 (Commission of the European Communities 2006)
30 (Commission of the European Communities 2006, 2)
31 (Commission of the European Communities 2006, 4–5)
32 (Commission of the European Communities 2006, 9)
change this has been called a ‘deficiency-model of an EPS’ in the sense that it wants to highlight the deficiencies in national governance and thus promote European governance.  

Instead of arguing for the creation of new European media or the building up of a European Public Sphere from the ground, the right path to dealing with the EU’s communication problems is to insert European issues into the existing national public spheres. In a way, this entails a Europeanization of national but also regional and local media by giving more space to European issues and EU governance within these media. This would create cooperation between EU institutions, national authorities and civil society as well as the media in order to strengthen or even ‘develop’ the place that Europe has in the (national) public sphere. This is not synonymous with a more positive representation of the EU though, as can be seen for example in Meijers (2013), who studied national TV broadcasting in the Netherlands and Germany and argues from this that the EU crisis has been a catalyst for Europeanizing national public spheres.

2.5 Framing the News: Discourse, News Articles and Framing

There is a wide theoretical field surrounding the concepts of discourse and press discourse in particular. In this chapter, the relevant theories that will be used are discussed. First of all, it is necessary to define what is meant in this paper by the term ‘discourse’ and in particular by the term ‘press discourse’, which as mentioned will be the source material to be analysed. The term ‘discourse’ has a long history in academic circles and is closely linked the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Its tradition goes back to French structuralism (in particular Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser) as well as to various other texts on language and its links to ideology, power and the construction of meaning by e.g. Robert Hodge, Gunther Kress and Robert Fowler. It sees language as a possible vehicle for power and recognizes its ability to shape social reality. Various definitions of discourse are possible, such as Foucault’s definition of discourse as ‘the production of knowledge through language’. More specifically, he argues that discourse is not a simple description of events, something that would in fact be impossible, but rather a way of giving meaning to things or events.

Discourse is a form of language in the context of society, language as a ‘form of social practice’ which is at the same time ‘socially constituted’ as well as ‘socially constitutive. It is therefore essential when analysing discourse to place it in its proper context and to be aware of its constructed and constructive nature. Press discourse is just one form of discourse or of the production of knowledge through language. Although this includes TV broadcasting, radio programmes and all other forms of press media that use language in one form or another, the focus in this paper is specifically on the analysis of newspaper articles. Journalists have to present news articles about often complex issues within a limited number of words and in order to bring their story or their

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33 (Triandafyllidou, Wodak, and Krzyzanowski 2009, 3)  
34 (Commission of the European Communities 2006, 9)  
35 (Triandafyllidou, Wodak, and Krzyzanowski 2009, 3)  
36 (Meijers 2013)  
37 (Sowinska 2009, 23)  
38 (Hall 2001, 13)  
39 (Sowinska 2009, 23)
argument across while maintaining audience interest they use certain frames. A media frame is in essence a way of organizing the structure of a news story in a positive, negative or neutral manner which emphasizes in some way certain aspects of a story. It is a way of giving meaning to events by a process of selection, emphasis and exclusion, which helps audiences to ‘locate, perceive, identify, and label’ the information that they are being told.

The use of frames can create very different images of the same events or issues and framing has been shown to have a large impact on the way that the public interprets what it is being told through the press. There is an extensive body of research dedicated to the use of frames within the field of European Studies, focusing on for example opinion-forming toward the Common Foreign and Security Policy or the possible enlargement of the EU with Serbia or Turkey. There are two basic methods that can be used when studying frames, inductive and deductive. The inductive method involves studying a small data sample and detecting the ways that an issue can be frames, taking the different frames from the data sample. The second, deductive method, means taking previously established frames from the literature and using those to analyse the available data.

Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) take five frames from the literature and test their applicability for analysing articles from Dutch media sources in 1997 discussing European politics. They conclude that these five frames, namely ‘responsibility’, ‘conflict’, ‘economic consequences’, ‘human interest’ and ‘morality’ are satisfactorily reliable and consistent for use in the context of European politics. To identify these frames, they establish 3 to 5 questions per frame that can help determine which frame is used in a particular article. Their findings show that there are differences in the frames that are used between newspapers, different types of news and the issues that are reported on. At the same, it is possible and indeed probable to have multiple frames within the discourse on a particular topic, which is why it will be necessary in the analysis of this paper to distinguish which frame is most applicable.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

The main research question of this paper is: ‘How has the representation of the role of the country in the EU in a popular newspaper in the Netherlands changed between 2005 and 2012?’ In order to analyse this, the different frames that are used to represent this will be looked at, using a deductive method. The frames that will be used are taken from the ones described by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), taking those that are considered relevant for the representation of the role of the

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40 (Valkenburg, Semetko, and de Vreese 1999, 552)
41 (C. H. de Vreese, Boomgaard, and Semetko 2010, 181)
42 (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, 94)
43 (C. de Vreese, Peter, and Semetko 2001, 108)
44 (Kandyla and Vreese 2011)
45 (Lecheler and De Vreese 2010; C. H. de Vreese, Boomgaard, and Semetko 2010)
46 (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, 94)
47 (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, 105)
48 (C. H. de Vreese, Boomgaard, and Semetko 2010)
country, namely the ‘conflict’, the ‘responsibility’ and the ‘economic consequences’ frames.\textsuperscript{49} This leads to the following two sub-questions:

1. Which frames are used mainly to represent the role of the state in the EU, comparing 2005 and 2012?
2. Within the different frames, how is the role of the state in the EU represented and how is the EU represented in this, looking at 2005 and 2012?

In order to study this, a choice has been made for analysing newspaper articles in the chosen years. The next section will describe the final data sample as well as the newspaper that was chosen. The subsequent section will give an overview of the discourse on the EU in the Netherlands. A final section will describe the exact method of analysis and its structural setup.

3.2 Creating the data sample

The data sample consists of a total of 142 articles, of which 61 were published in 2005 and 81 in 2012. In order to obtain the articles, the search engine Lexis-Nexis was used, searching first articles that contained the term “EU” or “Europese Unie” and then narrowing these down on the basis of whether they discussed the role of the country in the EU or not. Furthermore, in order to create a data sample of more opinionated and generally longer articles, the sample was limited to articles with more than 500 words. As a final method of narrowing down, only articles from the Saturday newspapers were taken. While this is first of all a random way of narrowing down, the Saturday edition also normally has more space for opinionated articles and as such serves the purpose of this paper better.

Concerning the newspaper, as the goal of this paper is to get the closest to the general public discourse, the choice of a popular newspaper was logical.\textsuperscript{50} At the same time, tabloid newspapers were not considered as more in-depth articles are more useful in the type of analysis used. This led to the choice for the \textit{Telegraaf}. This newspaper, which has existed since 1893, is the largest circulation newspaper in the Netherlands and generally considered right-leaning. It has however traditionally been independent of the different ‘pillars’ in which Dutch society was divided till the 1960’s and 1970’s.\textsuperscript{51} It is considered a popular newspaper and has been called a ‘tabloid-style newspaper’. It can however not be considered as a tabloid to the full extent, missing the ‘sensationalism’ of for example \textit{The Sun} in the UK, and incorporating next to gossip articles also serious financial news and respected news reporting.\textsuperscript{52}

3.3 Discourse on the EU in the Netherlands

In the last 25 years, the Dutch discourse on the EU has gone through quite significant change. To give a telling example, Wellenstein (2006) speaks of a transition from ‘Founding Father’ to ‘Lost Son’,

\textsuperscript{49} (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000)
\textsuperscript{50} (Koopmans and Statham 2010, 51)
\textsuperscript{51} (Brants and Voltmer 2011, 66)
\textsuperscript{52} (Hoogendam 2009, 19)
referring to the fact that the Netherlands has been an original member of the EU as well as of the EEC and the ECSC before it.53 For most of this period, the Netherlands was considered a loyal supporter of European integration, an image that was ultimately destroyed or at least seriously harmed when the Dutch voters rejected the European Constitutional Treaty in 2005.54 Eurosceptic parties form an important and clearly significant part of Dutch politics, with Geert Wilders’ Freedom Party (PVV) being an example of hard Euroskepticism that it partly shares with the Socialist Party and a softer Euroskepticism in the program of the Liberal Party (VVD), the current governing party.55.

There are various elements in the negative attitudes towards Europe in the Netherlands. Economic issues play an important although arguably not a main role in the Dutch discourse on the EU and on European integration. Considering economic issues, one of the main arguments that can be heard is nostalgia towards the guilder, or if not that, at least complaints about the loss in purchasing power that the introduction of the Euro has meant for the Netherlands (as compared to for example the German Mark).56 The PVV (Freedom Party) has argued for a return to the guilder, preferably followed by a full exit from the EU. The separation that this party argues for between is for a great deal economic, in order to stop ‘bureaucratic interference’ in Dutch financial politics, exemplified by the election slogan “Their Brussels, Our Netherlands”.57 Other issues that are linked to this include increasing unemployment which is blamed on the opening borders as well as welfare state retrenchment out of a fear of not being able to keep the current welfare provisions due to European regulations and mass immigration.58

At the same time there are significant calls for the necessity to preserve Dutch identity.59 This includes opposition to the accession of Turkey to the EU, which would supposedly damage the ‘Judaeo-Christian’ European identity in which Turkey would be a ‘fremdkörper’, or a foreign body.60 This goes back to the political activities of Pim Fortuyn and his LPF, a political party which was already officially disbanded in 2008 after years of disintegration following Fortuyn’s assassination in 2002, but which has had a massive impact on the Dutch political landscape.61 In particular, it brought a critique of ‘multiculturalism’ and immigration policies into mainstream discourse, issues that have since been taken up by several other parties and in particular by the PVV.62 It is argued that through immigration towards the Netherlands on the one hand and dissolution of Dutch sovereign policy-making through growing EU power the Dutch identity would be compromised while immigration.

This is of course closely linked to a fear of a loss of sovereignty of the national state, through the rise of a ‘European super state’.63 This would undermine the independence of the Netherlands and the sovereignty of the Netherlands to make policy decisions, maintain its welfare state and keep its

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53 (Wellenstein 2006)
54 (Harmsen 2008, 317)
55 (Vollaard 2012, 16)
56 (Startin and Krouwel 2013, 70)
57 (Grabow and Hartleb 2013, 193)
58 (Startin and Krouwel 2013, 71)
59 (Vollaard 2012, 9)
60 (Startin and Krouwel 2013, 71)
61 (Grabow and Hartleb 2013, 193)
62 (Vollaard 2012, 13)
63 (Harmsen 2007, 10)
Harmsen (2008) calls this the development of a ‘discourse of limits’, in which the principle of subsidiarity (both horizontal as well as vertical) plays a fundamental role in the criticism of the EU. Within political parties, there is ‘reluctance to ceding sovereignty’, as this might alienate the more and more nationally oriented citizens. This is partly caused by the changing position of the Netherlands in the EU through the several enlargements that have taken place, especially those of 2004 and 2007, which were considered to be too fast, leading to a so-called ‘enlargement fatigue’. Whereas the Netherlands, like for example France, used to see itself as a central player or at least as one of the ‘chosen few’ within the EU, it has not been able to create a ‘convincing discourse’ about their place in this new and much larger Union.

This together with the growing fear of losing economic and political sovereignty or of growing bureaucracy has had clear effects on the way the EU is seen in the Netherlands. In 2005 the chair of the Labour Party (PVDA) Ruud Koole spoke of the rise of a ‘European monster’ within the Dutch discourse, meaning the growing depiction of the EU as a huge, uncontrollable organism. In general, the self-understanding of the Netherlands within the EU and its place and weight within the policy-making process of the EU had to change. This, together with the economic downturn, rising unemployment and budget cuts, all of which are blamed to some extent on the EU, as well as fears of immigration and loss of identity and sovereignty, have created a distinctly Eurosceptic attitude. However, this is not a complete picture, but rather an overview of the rise of Euroscepticism. There are several parties in the Netherlands that are clearly pro-EU and in the 2014 European elections the biggest party turned out to be D66 (Democrats ’66). This party is in favour of greater European integration, based on arguments of economy and trade, security and global political impact. The Freedom Party (PVV) actually suffered a loss in these elections, but the turn-out was quite low at 37.0%.

3.4 Research Design

Different methods of analysis are used to answer the different research questions posed before. First of all, the ‘surface’ elements of the articles are extracted, date, author, type of article, date of article, length of article and the page the article was published on. The types of articles that will be distinguished are news articles, interviews, feature articles, columns and opinion sections as well as readers’ letters. Then the articles will be analysed using the three frames, using the questions provided by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000):

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64 (Grabow and Hartleb 2013, 192)
65 (Harmsen 2007, 17)
66 (Vollaard 2012, 8)
67 (Müftüler-Baç 2008, 217)
68 (Harmsen 2007, 17)
69 (Mair 2007, 2)
70 (Startin and Krouwel 2013, 70)
71 http://europedecides.eu/results/nl/
72 (Carvalho 2000, 21)
Attribution of responsibility
  o Does the story suggest that some level of gov’t has the ability to alleviate the problem?
  o Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?
  o Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?
  o Does the story suggest that an ind. (or group of people in society) is resp. for the issue-problem?
  o Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?

Conflict frame
  o Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries?
  o Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another?
  o Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?
  o Does the story refer to winners and losers?

Economic frame
  o Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?
  o Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?
  o Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?

Answering each question with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ for each article, for every frame the results of all the relevant items are added per article and divided by the number of relevant items, creating a score of 0.00 (not belonging to the frame at all) till 1.00 (perfectly fitting within the frame). The meaning of the frames is however not simply that if an article is about economic issues, it fits within the economic frame. Instead, when an article fits in the ‘economic’ frame, this denotes a framing of the story in terms of costs and benefits and/or economic consequences; when an article fits within the ‘responsibility’ frame, this indicates a framing of the story in terms of who caused an issue, how it should or could be solved and who is responsible for this; finally, when an article fits within the ‘conflict’ frame, this means the article focuses on disagreement between actors, different sides of an argument or issue and/or the winners and losers in a certain argument. \(^73\)

Moving on to the second sub-question, it will be necessary to assess whether there are articles that do not substantially belong in any of the frames and whether it is possible to create a fourth frame that will successfully incorporate these articles. Then, in order to answer the third sub-question, the method of ‘critical reading’ as outlined by Carvalho (2000) will be used to see what language is used to describe the state and the EU in the different frames. \(^74\) Here, recurrent metaphors, types of adjectives and descriptive terms will be taken into account, trying to create a picture of the ways the EU and the state are represented within the different frames, either in different or in similar manners.

\(^73\) (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, 95–96)
\(^74\) (Carvalho 2000)
4. Analysis: the Dutch case

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

As has been mentioned before, the first step of the analysis is the extraction of the surface data. A first element is the type of article and 5 types of articles are distinguished: columns/opinion articles, news articles, interviews, feature articles and readers’ letters. In figures 4 and 5 in Appendix 2 the types of articles per year are shown. As can be seen, there is a shift between the years, with the majority of articles in 2005 being news articles with columns quite far behind. In 2012 however, a majority of the articles consists of columns and news only has a second place in terms of size. A particular type of article is the recurring readers’ letters, something that will be dealt with in a different way as it does not constitute the discourse of the newspaper in the same way. Also, the letters are never actually more than 500 words and the reason that they do appear in the data sample is because of the collective size of the letters. They do give a fascinating insight into the varied opinions on the EU and will be dealt with accordingly in the in-depth qualitative section of this analysis.

Figure 3 gives an overview of the number of articles in the data sample per month in each year. A spike can be seen in May and June 2005, which can most probably be attributed to the Dutch and the French referenda on the European Constitution. One large spike is visible in September 2012, most probably due to the national parliamentary elections and two smaller spikes can be seen in March, at the time of the signing of the Stability and Growth Pact, and in June, when there was a Euro summit in Brussels.

As has been described in the chapter on methodology, the articles have been coded for several questions making it possible to decide in which of the three aforementioned frames the article best fits. Figure 4 shows the amount of articles that mainly fit into each of the frames for each year. As can be seen, the expected increase of articles written in the economic frame is not visible. Instead, there is a relative increase of articles written from the frame of ‘attribution of responsibility’.

In the graphs in figure 6 and 7 the number of articles per frame for each month will be given for both years. As can be seen, there are significant changes in the visibility of the frames over the years. The most clear-cut spikes are for the conflict frame in May and June 2005, just before and after the referenda on the European Constitution and in March 2012, with the signing of the Stability and Growth Pact. A spike for the attribution of responsibility frame as well as the economic frame can be seen in September and October 2012, during the Dutch national parliamentary elections. When looking at this data, it is important to keep in mind that each article has been put within one frame. Looking at the overall average applicability of each frame per article, there is a shift towards more mentioning of economic issues, as can be seen clearly in figure 5.
4.2 Responsibility, Conflict and Economic Frames: 2005

4.2.1 Responsibility

Within the responsibility frame, there are several questions that can be asked. Considering that this frame is about causes and solutions, the question that first of all arises is what is the problem that is discussed for which there are causes and solutions. This is followed by the questions of who is responsible for causing the problem on the one hand and who is responsible for the solving it on the other hand. Within the articles in this frame in 2005, there are several issues that are discussed, which can be fit into three general categories.

The first category is that of issues caused by regulations or a lack of regulations on the EU level. An example is the EU regulations on the amount of eel that can be caught per year, something that was heavily protested against by fishermen who were ‘fed up with all those bans, regulations and insecurities’. While the EU regulations are criticized, it is still the EU that is responsible for changing this, as it is recognized that ‘this problem lies not only with us in the Netherlands, but in the whole of Europe’. Because the cause of the problem is partly seen to be activities in specifically the Southern European countries, a call is made for improved regulations and not for a complete ban of regulations. Something similar can be seen when discussing plane safety issues, where a lack of safety combined with different approaches to this from national governments leads again to a call for improved EU regulations. Interestingly enough, the possibility of a EU constitution is criticized on the basis of the lack of such regulations: “how does the European Parliament want to make a constitution work, when in this type of crucial areas [...] the legislation can apparently be made on a national level?”

The second category concerns responsibility for economic problems. For example, following the French and Dutch ‘no’ to the European Constitution, the political chaos on the EU level is seen as responsible for ‘plunging Europe into a deep crisis’. The ‘European citizen’ is the victim of this situation where there is a threat that Europe will become ‘a rudderless ship that is unable to take hard decisions’. The main cause for this is seen as the dividedness of Europe, both on a political as well as on the economic level. This is visible in the argument that ‘there is something structurally wrong with Europe’ but that there is an elite that is ‘exclusively interested in its own interests’ and who ignore the fact that Europe is ‘economically a very heterogeneous area’. To an extent, the responsibility for the economic problems is shared by the EU elite on the one hand and the national politicians who are unable to reach consensus on the other, but at the same time the argument that the EU is essentially causing these issues is clear.

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75 “Palingvisserij naar de haaien” February 26, 2005; all articles quoted from newspapers in chapter 4 are from the Telegraaf, translations are by the author
76 “Palingvisserij naar de haaien” February 26, 2005
77 “Hoe veilig is vliegen?” May 21, 2005
78 “Hoe veilig is vliegen?” May 21, 2005
79 “Falende leiders storten Europa in diepe crisis”, June 18, 2005
80 “Falende leiders storten Europa in diepe crisis”, June 18, 2005
81 “Verdeeld Europa”, December 17, 2005
A third category that is visible is that of shared responsibility between the state and the EU. This is for example visible when referring to the negotiations on environmental regulations, when discussing the problem of climate change. Considering this, there was “a large pressure from society to do something about the climate” and the institution that was responsible for getting this done on an international level is clearly the EU. At the same time, the responsibility for execution of the goals set on an international level is put at the state, which also has a role in inter-EU negotiations. In this case, responsibility for an issue is shared by the EU and the state. Something similar can be seen when rules concerning extreme salaries (topsalaris), where legislation limiting these salaries is proposed on an EU level, with the state being responsible both for negotiation of the legislation as well as for its execution. These are various examples of ‘shared responsibility’, also visible for example when discussing peace and security or trade agreements, that show a mutually beneficial interplay between the national and supranational level.

4.2.2 Conflict

Within this frame there are again several questions that must be answered to understand how this frame is used in the data. The main question is of course who the conflict is between, followed by how the different sides are presented and who is seen as the winner or loser. Again, three categories can be distinguished. The first shows different parties with clashing economic interests. This can be between the different national parties in the EU, especially when describing budget talks, with the talks in June being described ‘hours-long negotiations with the knife on the table’. At the same time, responsibility is given to the EU as well, with criticism of for example the ‘gigantic European agricultural subsidies’. A readers’ letter arguing that it would be better to ‘put the contribution to Brussels in our own economy’ reflects a general tendency to describe a conflict between the financial demands of ‘Brussels’ and the necessity to deal with economic issues in the Netherlands.

A second category of conflict concerns the fear of losing the national identity because of the EU. This is discussed for example in an interview with Jan-Peter Balkenende, then Prime Minister, who argues instead that the ‘Oranje-feeling’ will stay and that Europe ‘will not become a superstate’. This is also reflected in discussions about the possibility of accession to the EU for Turkey, where the issues that people are afraid of are described as ‘islam’ and the ‘too fast enlargement of the EU’ with countries that do not share similar values. At the same time, it is important to note that only a small part of the articles within the conflict frame fit in this category, and that the argument that the EU threatens the national identity is often presented from the other side by people who oppose it.

82 “Champagne na slapeloosheid”, February 5, 2005
83 “VEB wil topsalarissen veel hoger op Europese agenda”, February 19, 2005
85 “Vrije wereldhandel ver weg”, November 12, 2005
86 “Begroting splijtsteen van EU”, June 18, 2005
87 “Begroting splijtsteen van EU”, June 18, 2005
88 “Bijdrage Brussel kunnen we beter in eigen economie steken!”, June 18, 2005
89 “Oranjegevoel blijft!”, May 28, 2005
90 “Ontvangst Turkije aan tafel EU tot het laatst onzeker”, October 1, 2005
A third category within the conflict frame, which is also not very visible, covers the conflict between the ‘Brussels elite’ and the ‘European citizen’. According to a readers’ letters, EU policies are characterised by ‘hypocrisy’ and ‘the ‘democratic’ Europe starts to look more and more like a dictatorship’.\(^{91}\) This is further reflected by a distinction that is made between ‘the citizen’ and ‘the EU’, by saying that ‘politicians often mess up’ at the expense of the average person or by referring to the Dutch ‘no’-vote as a sign towards the ‘political elite’ who consciously ‘kept the citizen out of their workplace because he would only create annoyance anyways’.\(^{92}\)

### 4.2.3 Economic

In this frame, the focus is on costs and benefits in financial or economic terms, which begs the questions whether the article discusses costs or benefits and who is paying and/or benefiting in the articles. Looking at these questions, there are again different categories visible. First of all, there are examples of economic and/or financial benefits that the Netherlands has because of its membership of the EU, such as for example through trade agreements. A free trade agreement with the South-American Mercosur Union would for example give European companies ‘a cost benefit compared to the Americans, who do have to pay import tariffs.’\(^{93}\) Another example would be the possibility of Dutch intra-EU investment in the Czech Republic, which at that point had only been an EU member for 1 year and ‘which has much to offer’ in terms of ‘market opportunities’.\(^{94}\)

On the other hand of course, there are costs that the country suffers because of the EU. The fact that the Netherlands is a net payer towards the EU budget is something that is repeated regularly, while the relative high Dutch contribution is blamed on ‘bad negotiations’ in the past, ‘few backwards regions’ and a ‘relatively slow economic growth’.\(^{95}\) In particular the high costs of the EU’s agricultural blocks are mentioned as well as its indirect cost by being ‘the biggest bump on the road’ to international trade agreements.\(^{96}\) Missed opportunities for Dutch companies such as KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines) due to the necessary agreements being ‘held up in Europe’ are also mentioned as costs for the Netherlands.\(^{97}\) However, costs because of certain regulations from the EU are also described, for example the EU legislation on fair competition, which is described as ‘unfair’ and as causing ‘distortion of competition’.\(^{98}\)

\(^{91}\) “Links heeft niets geleerd van politieke moorden!”", November 5, 2005
\(^{92}\) “Europa heeft wortels nodig”, June 23, 2005
\(^{93}\) “Vrijhandelsrace Mercosur”, January 12, 2005
\(^{94}\) “Treurig Tsjechië ontdoet zich rap van grauwsalue”, 28 May 2005
\(^{95}\) “Tien brandende vragen”, 11 June, 2005
\(^{96}\) “Landbouwsteun EU sleutel akkoord”, December 10, 2005
\(^{97}\) “KLM slachtoffer vete EU-VS”, December 24, 2005
\(^{98}\) “Schimmige subsidies in de lucht”, April 9, 2005
4.3 Responsibility, Conflict and Economic Frames: 2012

4.3.1 Responsibility

As was mentioned in the description of the responsibility frame in the articles from 2005, several questions can be asked with respect to this frame. These involve essentially the problems that are discussed, who is responsible for causing and who is responsible for solving it. In the articles from 2012 within this frame there is a clear shift towards searching for the responsible actor for the economic malaise. The EU and in particular the EU elite is blamed for this, to a quite extreme level in a column that compares the EU to a religion and speaks of ‘EU-missionaries’ who have caused the EU crisis in an attempt to give the EU ‘everything that a normal country also has’. It is the ‘national and supranational elites’ who are blamed for bringing Europe to ‘the edge of the abyss’ and in particular the ECB which tries to gain even more power over the countries through a ‘technocratic seizure of power’. A large majority of the articles within the responsibility frame focus on the economic crisis and blame this on either the structure of the EU, the inadequacy and hypocrisy of the ‘Brussels bureaucracy’, or on the Southern European countries.

At the same time, there is criticism of regulations that are supposedly coming from the EU and which have negative effects on the country. An example is the ‘unrestrained immigration of non-western allochtonen’, forced upon us by the EU’ which costs ‘7,2 billion euros per year’. Or, to give another example, the ‘completely failed European policy of former decades’, which has created ‘all misery’ in the bio-industry through ‘promoting cheap sources of food’ is criticized. Similarly, there is criticism of plans to introduce obligatory travel insurance on an EU level for people travelling outside the EU, which is seen as another instance of the ‘regulative urge of the meddlesome government’ which people are ‘completely fed up with’.

There were also supporters of this plan however, which shows an example of how there could be a shared responsibility between state and EU. It is difficult to find other examples of this category in the articles from 2012, but it is for example visible in the discussion about the international banking supervision, which negotiated by national government leaders, executed by the state in an EU framework to counter the EU crisis. The positive interaction between the EU and the country is much less visible than it was in 2005 though.

99 “De EU als religie”, February 11, 2012
100 “Ons geld wordt straks waardeloos”, September 8, 2012
102 “Historische machtsgriep”, May 19, 2012
103 “Lappen en nathouden binnen de eurozone”, December 8, 2012
104 Typical Dutch word for which there is no adequate translation – the word is a term for a person living in the Netherlands who is not from Dutch origin.
105 “Dansen op een vulkaan”, September 15, 2012
106 “Vlees moet duurzamer; Bio-industrie heeft het platteland verziekt”, July 7, 2012
107 “Onbezorgd reizen; Evenveel vóór- als tegenstanders van verplichte reisverzekering”, March 24, 2012
108 “Bankentoezicht nog geen eitje”, October 20, 2012
4.3.2 Conflict

As could be expected, many articles that fit within this frame focus on a conflict between different national economic interests or between national interests and EU interests. An example is in the way the enforcement of the 3% deficit limit is described. Here, the option to give the Netherlands an exception is something that ‘it shouldn’t reckon with’ according to German Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel, while leading to a warning from European president Herman van Rompuy that the country ‘would not get a special position.’

At the same time, there is a conflict situation portrayed between the economizing northern countries, with southern countries ‘still spending too much money while the ample pension system is left virtually unchanged.’ What is made very clear throughout the articles and throughout the years is the economic costs that have been created by the EU, the introduction of the Euro, or the EU crisis, and that ‘whether we stay in the euro or we leave it, the costs that accompany them are enormous’. The conflict between the national economy and the European agenda plays a major role in the articles from 2012.

At the same time, there is an increased fear of the EU threatening the national identity, with for example references to ‘us sitting in the straitjacket of the European Union, which does nothing else but undermine our national identity’. The language has become more extreme, with references to the desire from the part of the EU to ‘humiliate the shamefully Eurosceptic Netherlands’, something that is likened to the ‘roaring of the europarliamentary mouse, in the expectation that the Dutch lion subsequently would anxiously admit its wrongs’. In an interview, the creation of the EU is seen as the opposite of that of the US, instead being ‘from above, with force, the forging of a union that is grounded on not a single idea except for that of the will of a political elite’.

This ‘supranational elite’ is referred to often and in various terms. One commentator argues that the EU ‘hopes that we will be brainwashed to such an extent that ultimately we will agree with everything that the Brussel bobo’s force upon us’. There are references to ‘power-hungry politicians who try to bring Europe under one administration’, going so far as to compare this one-on-one with Hitlers’ ‘Ein Volk, Ein Land, Ein Führer’ (One People, One Country, One Leader) policy. There are also plenty of references to the referendum of 2005, which according to one columnist goes to show that ‘it’s not the will of the people, but the will of politicians, lobby-groups and activists that rules us.’

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109 “Gidsland Nederland snijdt in eigen vinger; geen respijt van EU voor tekort”, March 3, 2012
110 “Ook DNB steekt nek uit bij geldepers ECB; de sigaar als het misgaat”, September 8, 2012
111 “Een tijd van kiezen”, September 1, 2012
112 “Nederland heft zichzelf op”, July 14th, 2012
113 “Eigen parochie”, March 17, 2012
114 “Een verzorgingsstaat kan geen immigratiestaat zijn”, March 10, 2012
115 “Verzorgingsstaat in zuiden doet ook noorden de das om”, July 28, 2012
116 “Eén volk, één rijk, één leider (deel 2)”, June 23, 2012
117 “Eén volk, één rijk, één leider (deel 2)”, June 23, 2012
118 “De wil van het volk?”, March 3, 2012
4.3.3 Economic

Articles that fit within the economic frame focus on costs and benefits, but looking at the articles in this frame from 2012 it is difficult to find articles that discuss benefits for the Netherlands. There is one mention of a Free Trade Agreement that benefits Dutch trade and investment in Panama and that has been signed ‘with the European Union’. Furthermore, there is interview that stresses the ‘vital importance of the euro and the EU for the Dutch economy’ while it is argued at the same time that the EU has more potential as a trade block. Apart from these two articles, nearly all articles within this frame in 2012 focus on the economic losses that the Netherlands suffers in the EU and in the EU crisis. A readers’ letter even refers to the South-European states as ‘black holes in which all of our euros disappear’.

A column paraphrases Shakespeare’s ‘If it were done, when tis done, then twere well it were done quickly’ as ‘pull the plug, before it’s too late’, arguing that its pointless to transfer millions to a ‘country that in a couple of months won’t take any note of agreements that are signed now’. A different columnist highlights the fact that whichever course of action is taken, the costs will be enormous, likening it to a ‘financial sword of Damocles’. Another telling example is an overview of the debate over reintroducing the 40-hour working week, which is ultimately rejected because ‘it would only increase the gap with other, less productive EU-countries’. Overall, like in the other frames in 2012, the language has become stronger, the positions have become more pronounced and the attitude towards the EU has become more negative and more ubiquitous at the same time.

5. Conclusion

As was already said in the last paragraph of the analysis, there is a clear difference between 2005 and 2012. Despite the fact that the descriptive statistics did not show very pronounced changes, the more in-depth analysis most certainly has. As becomes clear from the second part of the analysis, the increase in articles in the responsibility frame and relative decrease of articles in the economic frame in 2012 as compared to 2005 does not indicate that the economy was less of a talking point. Instead, the economy has become omnipresent and involved in some way in nearly every article about the role of the country in the EU. However, the focus is not so much on costs and benefits or losses and gains as was expected, with instead more attention going to who is to blame for the economic downturn and the economic crisis in general. The finger of blame points in a majority of the cases to the elites on both national and supranational levels and in fewer cases towards the Southern European countries. This is already a surprising result, as the scapegoat for the EU crisis is generally assumed to be the Southern European countries. At the same time, this result points out the difference between articles in the ‘economic frame’ and articles that discuss economics.

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119 “Hollands glorie in Panama”, February 4, 2012
120 “Niet praten, maar lassen”, September 29, 2012
121 “Zwarte gaten waarin al onze euro’s verdwijnen”, September 1, 2012
122 “Stekker eruit”, February 18, 2012
123 “Het eerlijke verhaal”, September 1, 2012
124 “40 uur” May 26, 2012
The general conclusions that can be drawn from the articles in the conflict frame creates a similar image, as they mostly describe conflicts between ‘the Dutch citizens’ and ‘the Brussels’ elite’ or between ‘the Dutch taxpayers’ and the ‘Southern-European countries’. These conflicts can be about various things, with regulations and national sovereignty, identity issues and economic effects as most important issues. Interestingly enough, the articles in 2012 within the conflict frame do not refer more to economic conflicts, but rather focus more on identity conflicts and the fear of losing the national identity because of the EU. This leads to the conclusion that the economic crisis does not necessarily redirect all attention towards financial and economic issues, but rather, to an extent indirectly, leads to a greater emphasis of national identity. This is in a way an indication of a trend towards isolating the country from the rest of Europe and a creation of a national ‘us’ against a European ‘other’.

Moving on towards the economic frame, it is clear that there are still many articles in 2012 that fit within this frame. There is however a distinct shift visible compared to 2005 from economic costs towards economic benefits, with the latter being hardly mentioned in 2012. The costs which are mentioned either consist of payments to Southern European countries such as Spain, Portugal or Greece or of more general consequences of the EU crisis. This is also a shift compared to 2005, where the main costs that were discussed were the contributions to the EU budget, with particular attention being paid to the Common Agricultural Policy. In short, the impact of the crisis is very visible also in this frame. The EU is seen as creating costs or is associated with costs, which are generally linked to the EU crisis. These are being paid by the ‘Dutch taxpayers’ or the ‘hardworking Dutch citizens’ and refer not so much to the budget as well as to the crisis.

As a general conclusion from the three frames, there are several things that can be said about the way the representation of the EU in De Telegraaf has changed between 2005 and 2012. First of all, the impact of the crisis is clear and unavoidable, with the EU and the EU crisis being associated together very closely. Secondly, there are two groups that are blamed for the crisis. On the hand there are the PIIGS countries, in particular Greece. On the other hand, both the national and the supranational elite that are in favour of the ‘European project’ are blamed for causing the crisis, for being unrealistic, undemocratic and corrupt and for not taking into account the view of the ‘ordinary citizen’. It is this ‘ordinary citizen’, the hardworking Dutch taxpayer, who is generally put as the opposing figure against either of the two scapegoats, whether it is the (supra-)national elite or the PIIGS countries. The exact opposite from the EU’s goals in its 2005 Communication Policy can be seen: an increase in the distance between the EU and its citizens, a decrease in trust in the EU and a greater association of the EU with negative developments.

6. Bibliography


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7. Appendix

7.1 Appendix 1: Descriptives statistics articles (figures 1-7)
Figure 6:
Amount of frames per month (2005)

Figure 7:
Amount of frames per month (2012)