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Europeanisation of the Austrian Public Sphere: Institutional Structures, Media Attention, Public Discourse & the Contribution of New Media

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Abstract

An increasing amount of literature on European integration deals with deficits of European political communication, with problems regarding the formation of a European public sphere and with their impact on transparency and legitimacy of EU politics. Empirical analyses of the formation of a European public sphere often focus on Europeanisation of national public spheres and on the mutual interconnection between them. However data on the process of Europeanisation of the Austrian public sphere is scarce, although the sanctions of the “EU-14” against the Austrian government in 2000 display a unique event in the history of the European Union. This paper intends to close this research by presenting first illustrative results regarding EU coverage on the major Austrian television news platform (ORF-ZIB). The results show a trend towards Europeanisation in Austria and they confirm the thesis that Europeanisation mainly occurs as conflict induced. Moreover, the findings support the assumption that level(s) of Europeanisation vary according to separated regulatory powers in the European system of multi level governance.

Deficits of a European Public Sphere

The starting point in this paper on the Europeanisation of the Austrian public sphere is the assumption, that European integration from above must be accompanied by Europeanisation of public political communication, in order to overcome the EU’s lack of popular involvement (see among many others Koopmans/Pfetsch 2003). The formation of a European public sphere – a space of communication between citizens and political actors for discussions on matters of common European interest – is considered to be one crucial factor for social and political integration in Europe. A
European public sphere should assure the flow of information about European political issues, public opinion formation and sufficient control over European politics. The extent and the form of the European political public sphere have an impact on the democratic quality of the European Union and the formation of a European public sphere could enhance the European Union’s democratic quality.

However, so far European political and economic integration is not accompanied by an equal level of Europeanisation of the public sphere (see Gerhards 1993; 2000). In the recent literature, deficits of the European political public sphere are discussed as barriers for social and political European integration (see Trenz/Klein/Koopmans 2003, 9; Scharpf 1999, 167). The request for the formation of a European public sphere as a central factor for European democracy did lead to an academic debate, which involves three key-aspects: (1) the discussion about an adequate conception of a European public sphere comprising normative standards derived from theories of democracy; (2) the discussion on existence and extent of a European public sphere, including the paths for its formation and the forms of its emergence; (3) the debate on deficits of a European public sphere including the barriers for its formation and proper strategies to reduce them. Some of the main results of research on the formation of a European public sphere may be summarised as follows.

**Formation of a European public sphere**

Research on the European public sphere began in the 1990ies. Early analyses consider the formation of a European public sphere either impossible at all or rather difficult. It is argued, that several barriers hamper the formation of a European public sphere:
Socio-cultural barriers (e.g. diversity of European languages and cultural identities), barriers on the part of citizens (lack of interest in European politics), on the part of the media (e.g. focus on news values; lack of transnational collaboration) and on the part of the EU's political system (marginal possibilities for citizens participation; in-transparency; consensus orientation). Early theoretical analyses focus on structural preconditions for a European public sphere (see e.g. Gerhards 1993, 100f; Grimm 1995, 41f; Kielmansegg 1996, 55), but they are not based on empirical evidence.

Later, theoretical analyses have been complemented by empirical media content analyses on the media attention and framing of the EU in the national media, mainly by research on quality press reporting. Results show a more optimistic picture regarding the existence of a European public sphere. Some empirical results indicate, that there are initial signs of the formation of a European public sphere which may be located (1) in ‘functional public spheres’ which consist of negotiation networks, comprising experts, functionaries and representatives of interest groups (Eder/Hellmann/Tenz 1998; Eder 2000); (2) in transnational communication networks of social movements (Klaus forthcoming 2006); (3) in some press and television media, which address a European elite audience (Schlesinger/Kevin 2000); (4) in a relatively high share of media attention to European issues in the quality press (Trenz 2005); (5) in sporadic transnational media attention to European political issues, which is driven by highlights on the European policy-agenda (Maurer 2003).

Simultaneously, empirical analyses point out deficits of a European public sphere. It is mentioned that (1) emerging forms of a European public sphere are often limited to the participation of special interest groups (elites, experts, etc.) but do not comprise the
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general public (Gerhards 2002); (2) the overall media- and public attention for European issues remains low, compared to attention to national affairs (Sievert 1998; Gerhards 2000; Eilders/Voltmer 2003; Peter 2004); (3) communication proceeds nationally isolated and transnational discourse remains static on a low level (Brüggemann et al. forthcoming 2006).

Contradicting estimations of extent and forms of a European public sphere mainly result from different normative requirements and varying analytical approaches. Today, there is hardly any consensus on an adequate normative conception of a European public sphere. Proposals differ strongly and several normative requirements have been made, comprising structural aspects (e.g. formation of a pan European media system), attention aspects (e.g. increasing media reporting on European affairs) and content aspects of European political communication (e.g. transnational discourse). Estimations on existence, extent and forms of a European public sphere are varying because different conceptions of democracy (liberal/representative; pluralistic/participative; deliberative/discursive) result in different empirical indicators for measurement, which lead to incompatible empirical data (see Risse 2002; 2003). Despite the increase of scientific attention for the formation of a European public sphere, by now, only single results on single characteristics of a European public sphere have been presented, which do not allow for a general assessment of overall trends for further development (see Peters 2003, 450). However recent literature shows a couple of pillars and research deficits, which serve as a basis for further analyses in this paper, which addresses questions on development, extent and forms of the Europeanisation of the Austrian public sphere.
The political public sphere can be defined as a space for communication between political actors and citizens for discussions on matters of common interest. Social integration and political legitimacy are referred to as the main functions of the public sphere. From a democratic point of view, “public debate is the single most important clue for the assessment of democratic quality, because the legitimacy of power holders can be tested in relation to affected interests” (Eriksen/Fossum 2000, 17). Public debate on matters of common interest in the public sphere involve three types of actors: decision makers (political institutions, political actors, public authorities) the addressees of decisions (the general public, citizens) and the media.

The single ‘public sphere’ is a theoretical normative construction but the public sphere practically consists of highly differentiated fragmented and partly overlapping public arenas. These arenas are integrated and interconnected via communication which is the constitutive element of the public sphere. Therefore, empirical analyses measure the spatial reach and boundaries of public spheres by assessing the relative density of public communication within and between different political spaces (Koopmans/Erbe 2003, 5). It is widely agreed, that communicative intermediation between decision makers and the general public today is mainly constituted via modern mass media. In our analyses, we will focus on the media arena to grasp Europeanisation on the intermediation level.

Regarding the formation of a European public sphere on the media level, two potential paths for Europeanisation have been identified in early research: (1) The development of a pan European public sphere based on a common European media system; (2) the Europeanisation of national public spheres (see Gerhards 1993, 100). Today, these
paths are not seen as mutually exclusive, but complementary (see Trenz 2003, 162). Most scholars point out that the emergence of a common European media system is neither necessary nor realistic in the near future. Hence, emphasis of recent analyses is put on the Europeanisation of national public spheres and on transnational interconnection between them. The term “Europeanisation” refers to a *temporal process*, but only a view approaches grasp the formation of European public sphere via longitudinal analyses (Gerhards 2000, Brüggemann et al. forthcoming 2006). Additionally, recent research focuses on large European nations. Small countries and new EU Member States do not gain significant scientific attention. Given that also Austria is a widely neglected case (see also below), we will focus on development, extent and forms of the Europeanisation of the Austrian public sphere.

*Media attention for European affairs* is the first important indicator for empirical analyses of Europeanisation processes. It is the single most important factor for the visibility of political processes and political actors hence it is of high relevance for political transparency in the European context. A common standard for an adequate level of Europeanisation does not exist, but it can be stated, that increasing European political integration should be accompanied by an increase of media attention for European politics (see Gerhards 2000). This paper investigates whether this normative requirement is fulfilled in the Austrian case. Based on a media content analysis we grasp extent and development of media attention to European affairs on the major Austrian television news platform “Zeit im Bild” (ZIB) from the public service broadcaster ORF. We analyse communicative linkages between the national and the European level (vertical Europeanisation⁵).
However, looking at the development of Europeanisation distinctions have to be made. According to Pfetsch/Koopmans (forthcoming 2006) Europeanisation does not proceed equally across all policy fields. A higher level of media attention to the European Union is required and expectable where the EU can resort to strong regulatory competences, especially in “communitised” policy fields. Hence we distinguish policy fields, where the EU holds strong competences from others. Monetary politics and agriculture for example are fields with strong competences on the supranational level. On the contrary, immigration and culture politics are primary national competences (see Koopmans/Erbe 2003, 19).

Many proposals for the analysis of the formation of a European public sphere – at least implicitly – imagine the Europeanisation via an increase of media reporting on European affairs in national public spheres, combined with increasing “mutual interconnections between national public spheres”. Especially deliberative models of the public sphere complement the criterion of media attention to European politics with additional requirements regarding transnational interaction (horizontal Europeanisation). It can be argued, that the increase of European key decisions (e.g. enlargement, constitution) and the extension of the community method (qualified majority voting in the Council) demand for an increase of mutual observance between Member States. To grasp horizontal Europeanisation in the case of Austria, we search for news about other EU Member States, in order to find out whether the Austrian public sphere is increasingly opening up for contributions of other members of the EU.

Media attention for EU politics and for the EU-related politics of other member states are widely accepted as normative requirements for the democratic quality of the EU and
as indicators for the formation of a European public sphere. They serve as a basis for transparency and control in the European context. Beyond these minimum requirements several further indicators for Europeanisation are identified in theoretical and empirical research on the formation of a European public sphere: e.g. transnational discursive interaction, public involvement and collective identification. The respective selection and compilation of indicators strongly depends on the normative model of democracy on which analyses are based. With Neidhardt (forthcoming 2006) the discussed indicators may be conceptually covered by distinguishing “increasing ambitious dimensions of European added value” (“Dimensionen europäischer Wertschöpfung”). The whole continuum from minimum requirements (transparency) to optimal conditions (collective European identity) could be integrated into multidimensional analytical approaches. This allows for grasping the status and progress of Europeanisation empirically. The below presented results on the Europeanisation of the Austrian public sphere focus on the minimum requirements regarding transparency, because media attention for European issues serves as the structural basis for further steps towards Europeanisation within the more demanding dimensions of European communication.

2. The Austrian Public Sphere and the European Union

There are three reasons why Austria is an interesting case for analysis of Europeanisation processes. First, regarding the Europeanisation of national public spheres in Europe, Austria did not gain much scientific attention so far. Second, the public support for the European Union and the enlargement significantly falls below the
European average. Third, the sanctions of the “EU-14” against the Austrian government in 2000 due to the coalition between the ÖVP (people’s party) and the far-right FPÖ (freedom party) are a unique event in the history of the European Union, and its impact on the Europeanisation of the Austrian public sphere has been rarely investigated.

Most empirical analyses deal with Europeanisation in major EU member states (Machill/Beiler/Fischer forthcoming 2006). However comparatively little data is available for the Austrian case. Austria is only mentioned in a few transnational analyses: By Sievert 1998 (Profil, News), Maurer 2003 (Die Presse, Der Standard), Eder/Trenz in an ongoing project (Die Presse, Kurier), Brüggemann et al. forthcoming 2006 (Die Presse), Díaz Nosty 1997, Risse & van de Steeg 2003; Steeg 2003 (Die Presse, Der Standard; Neue Kronen Zeitung), de Vreese 2003 (ORF news). Almost all existing investigations focus on Austrian press reporting on EU issues. There is a lack of data concerning Austria in general and Europeanisation in Austrian TV news broadcasting in particular. Especially longitudinal analyses on the process of Europeanisation of the Austrian public sphere are completely missing.

Public opinion on European Integration & Enlargement

A further reason why Austria is an interesting case is the fact, that the public opinion on EU issues in Austria is comparatively negative. Regarding the Austrian EU membership (see figure 1) and the enlargement of the European Union (see figure 2) the Austrians show lower support than the people throughout the EU. There is a lukewarm balance sheet for Austria’s own EU membership:
Figure 1:

Sources: Eurobarometer 43, 45-63, own compilation.

Regarding EU-membership, the Austrian respondents trail behind the rest of Europe. Recent Eurobarometer data (spring 2005) point out, that only 37% of Austrians see the Austrian EU membership as “a good thing” while on the average, 54% of Europeans see the EU membership of their countries as “a good thing.” Austrians 37% result in the second-weakest level of support after the British (36%).

In opposition to the European trend of only a slightly decline in perceptions of membership as “good thing” between autumn 2002 (55%) and spring 2004 (48%) the Austrian support has dropped sharply from 46% to 30%. In autumn 2004 Austria gained the peak value of 46%, which it scored backwards once only – in autumn 2002. Then however the amount of opponents was minor (18% vs. 13% “bad thing”). The Austrian respondents attained the lowest value in considering the membership as “good thing” in spring 2004 – the low value of 30% was reached before only in spring 1997.
Figure 1 shows a parallel EU-wide increasing perception of membership as “good thing” when it increased in Austria.

In the percentage of respondents who are opposed to membership Austria is clearly above the EU-wide average. 23 % of Austrian citizens consider that the membership of the European Union is a bad thing. On average, 15 % of the people throughout the EU consider the same.

Observing the attitudes towards the enlargement of the EU the Austrian respondents turn out to be one of the strongest opponents (see figure 2):

Figure 2:

Sources: Eurobarometer 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63; own compilation
Figure 2 shows that the refusal of the enlargement of the Austrian respondents continuously increased from autumn 2002 (31% opponents). In spring 2004 – shortly before the accession of 10 new members in Mai 2004 – a majority of 52 % was against the enlargement. Eurobarometer 61 included the question about the support for further enlargement for the first time. 59 % of the Austrians were against it, in autumn 2004 (No. 62) the opponents reached 62 %. In spring 2005 the percentage of citizens against a further enlargement had fallen by 4 points to 58 %. The support was at 31 % (plus 3 points), which still puts Austria last in the EU-25 list of enlargement supporters.

The Austrian respondents are clearly more negative attuned to a further enlargement than the EU-wide average. The refusal of enlargement to 10 countries was throughout the EU constantly under 40 %. And the further enlargement is also supported by more than the half of the respondents in the 25 Member States. In spring 2005 an EU-wide average of only 42 % (EU-15) resp. 38 % (EU-25) respondents is against it. Taking account of the 10 new countries into the comparison to Austria the wide difference of 27 % (autumn 2004) resp. 20 % (spring 2005) occurs. The Austrian citizens are far more negative attuned to further enlargement of the European Union than the EU-wide average.13

Taking into account the question about a Turkish accession, the Austrian response is a resounding “no”. Austria shows the weakest support within the EU towards the accession of Turkey (10% supporters), even far behind Cyprus (16 % supporters). A majority of 80% Austrian citizens are opposed to membership being granted to Turkey. EU-wide, an average of 35 % respondents are in favour and 52 % against a Turkey membership. It is noteworthy that citizens in the new Member States have a more open
and approving attitude than respondents of the EU-15. The strongest supporters within the EU-15 are Great Britain (45%) and Sweden (50 %), within the new members Hungary (51 %), Slovenia (53 %), and Poland (54 %) a majority supports the accession of Turkey.

Which media have been selected for analysis and why?

Mass media have the function to intermediate between the European public authorities and the citizens, in order to insure legitimacy and effectiveness of governance (see Wimmel 2004, 8). Recent empirical research on Europeanisation predominantly focuses on national press reporting (see above). This is accompanied by a lack of attention to Europeanisation in television and may hold a shortcoming, since television is the most relevant source of information about the European Union.

Citizens predominantly television to acquire information about the European Union and EU related matters. According to the latest Eurobarometer survey\(^{14}\) (Eurobarometer 63\(^{15}\)) seven out of ten Austrian respondents turn to television in order to obtain information\(^{16}\) about the European Union, 61 % acquire information from daily newspapers (EU-wide 43%) and almost half of them listen to the radio (43%; EU-wide 32 %). Discussions with friends, relatives and colleagues come in fourth place (37 % in Austria, 23 % in EU-25). EU-wide this is followed by the Internet, which obtains a higher score than other newspapers or magazines for the first time (22% resp. 17%) as a source of information about the European Union. However in Austria the use of Internet (15%) as source of information is clearly below the EU-wide average. It is on the seventh place behind magazines (24 %) and books & brochures (17%). 14 % of the
Austrian respondents are not interested in information about the European Union, with this score Austrian citizens are head-to-head to the Irish, only beaten by 27 % of the British respondents who are not interested in information about the European Union.

3. Europeanisation of Austrian Television News

Methodology

Searching for empirical evidence for the Europeanisation of the Austrian Public sphere we limit our analysis to the most important Austrian television news platform: The “Zeit im Bild 1” (ZIB 1) of the Austrian Public Broadcasting Cooperation (ORF).17 “Zeit im Bild 1“ emits every day at 7:30 p.m. in both public channels. In 2004, ZIB reached an annual average coverage of 20.5 % 18 of the population over 12 years. This corresponds with an average of 1.38 million viewers daily (see ORF-Media research 2005). The market share of ZIB 1 is approximately 60 %. So “Zeit im Bild 1” is the most seen news program in Austria by far.

ORF runs an archive where all television news contributions are recorded and stored. In order to find specific news again for further utilisation, all audiovisual contributions are described with “meta text”. Each single text-dataset for each single audiovisual news contribution is stored in a databank (Farao). The structure of this databank allows for selective and systematic queries for research purposes.
(1) The meta text comprises a short description on the content of the news which is identical with the text of the news presenter. Enquiries on the news presenters text allows to search for the explicit references made on/to the EU by the news presenters. For our purposes, we looked for references on the “European Union” and the “EU*”. The database for our analyses contains 156,714 news contributions which were transmitted on “Zeit im Bild” in the 10 years between 1995 and 2004. In this period of time 12,600 contributions contain verbal reference to the “EU” made by news presenters. Hence, the average level of “Europeanisation” measured via the share of explicit verbal references to the EU in the total amount of news reporting is 7.6%.

(2) The meta text shows the geographical focus of the news. Each news contribution is assigned to one country or some countries in a data line called “Geo picture” (Geobild). It shows in which country the audiovisual news were recorded and/or which country/countries are dealt within the news. For our purposes we limit our analysis to 48 Countries, comprising all “European Countries” from a geographical perspective (incl. Turkey, the Ukraine, Moldavia, Belarus). For comparison we also take account of selected countries outside Europe which were mentioned more than 500 times in the investigation period (USA, Russia, China, Israel, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan). In total, we find 171,313 references to these countries within the 156,714 news contributions under research. In 16,364 cases the news additionally contains verbal references to the European Union. Hence the level of “Europeanisation” in the news geography of our country selection is 9.4%. Systematic analyses show the differences of “Europeanisation” in the news about/from selected countries.
(3) In Farao, each news contribution is assigned to one or some keywords in a data line called “Key terms” (Sachbegriffe). The key terms refer to main thematic issues discussed in the news. The Farao system contains 84 key terms ranging from “Alter” (age) to “Zerstörung” (destruction). We limited our analysis to 50 keywords with political relevance (ignoring issues such as “fashion” or “TV-Hit”). In total, we find 413,073 references to the selected keywords within the 156,714 news contributions under research. Hence, on the average, each news contribution was labelled with 2.6 keywords. In 35,381 cases the news additionally contains verbal references to the European Union. Hence the level of “Europeanisation” in the thematic geography of our selection is 8.5%. Most frequently we find the combination International Politics (22,684 entries) and European Union (8438 entries). Hence, the level of Europeanisation in the thematic segment of International Politics is 37.2% while for instance the level of Europeanisation in the thematic segment of Transport is 6.2% (15,651 References on Transport of which 975 contain references to the EU). Systematic analyses show which thematic segments show stronger Europeanisation than others.

(4) Finally, the meta text comprises the day/date of transmission. The analysis of the dates of transmission of the news allows for composing time series on the amount of reporting on EU-matters in a temporal perspective. Moreover, a systematic combination of the dates of transmission with the data on “Geo picture” (countries) and “Key terms” (thematic issues) shows the development of Europeanisation across countries and issues in the course of time. Investigations on the trends of development are driven by our conception of the formation of a European public
sphere, which refers to a temporal process. The process perspective demands for longitudinal analyses. Our results show, that the highest amount of references to the European Union within the time period under research (1995–2004) occurred in the year 2000. Europeanisation was strongly related to the political turnaround (“Die Wende”) in Austria with the middle-right governmental coalition between ÖVP and FPÖ and to the subsequent reactions of the EU-14 – the so called “sanctions” against Austria.

In total, our investigation is based on an empirical analysis on the ORF-ZIB news reporting in the 10 year period from the Austrian accession to the EU (1995) until the EU’s eastern enlargement (2004). The data set comprises 156,714 news contributions, 171,313 references to 48 selected countries and 413,073 references to 50 thematic issues. Each country and each issue are under research twice. First we ask for the total amount of thematic and geographical entries on Farao per year. Second, we ask for the combination of thematic/geographical entries with verbal references to the EU per year. In total our analysis is based on 960 geographical data points and 1000 thematic data points. The main results of our inquiries can be summarised as follows.

*The level(s) of Europeanisation*

The average level of “Europeanisation” measured via the share of explicit verbal references to the EU in the total amount of news reporting is 7.6%. However this result is hardly interpretable and comparable. There is no definition of an “adequate” level of Europeanisation that could serve as a benchmark. Alternatively one could compare this
level of Europeanisation with results from other studies. However, serious comparison is impossible, because the applied approaches to grasp levels of Europeanisation empirically vary widely within the literature.

Sievert (see 1998, 342) found different levels of media attention to EU-issues in selected European news magazines in 1996. The share of EU-related articles in the total amount of news differs between 0.8% and 5.3%. Sievert limited his analysis to reports on EU-issues, but he ignored reports on non-EU-issues that were linked to the EU. Gerhards (see 2000, 293) found an average share of 6.9% articles on European-issues in German print media between 1950 and 1995. Gerhards based his secondary analysis on primary data of Mathias Kepplinger who analysed the most important issue within an article only. Hence his analysis is limited to the main topics of the news. We base our results on the text of the news presenter. This additionally allows for grasping references to the EU even when the main-topic of news is a national issue for instance. Eilders/Voltmer (2003, 257) found a level of Europeanisation of 5.6%, but Eilders/Voltmer limited their analysis on political commentaries in the German quality press between 1994 and 1998. Our analysis is related to the whole amount of news in the period under research. The University of Amsterdam analysed in its “European election study” news on television in all Member Countries in the two weeks prior to the 1999 European Parliament elections. Regarding the ORF news they found out, that 12% of the total news program dealt with the EP elections and about 5% dealt with other EU topics (see de Vreese 2003, 11f). Their data is not comparable to ours because they examined only the short-time period of two weeks, in which additionally an election was imminent. Peter (2004) analysed news on several European public and private broadcastings in the year 2000. He found an average level of 3.6% media
attention to EU-issues in relation to the total amount of news reporting. He further found a level of 8.5% of EU-related news in the segment of political news. Comparison with our results in this case is also difficult. Peter only coded news as “EU news” if they contained two references on EU-politics, EU-events, EU-institutions or decisions on the EU-level. In our analysis a single reference in the news presenter moderation-text is enough to classify news as EU-related. Finally, Trenz (2005, 197; 2004, 297f) found in an analysis on political news-reporting in the European quality press in the year 2000 more than 33% of articles with references to Europe. However his analysis was not limited to the European Union as it was in our case.

In sum, results on the level(s) of Europeanisation differ strongly with databases (all news, political news only or commentaries), indicator systems (EU or Europe), and they are hardly comparable. Even in our analysis we find different levels of Europeanisation depending on selection criterions: The average level of Europeanisation in the total amount of news reporting is 7.6%. The average share of Europeanisation in the segment of political news is 17.5%. The average share of Europeanisation in selected years differs between 2.7% (1995) and 16.6% (2000). This incomparability makes results on the levels(s) of Europeanisation hardly interpretable. Moreover, the analysis of the level(s) of Europeanisation in a short period of time is of little significance for the process of Europeanisation. We argue that research with the purpose to find out anything about the formation of a European public sphere needs an analytical framework that mentions the long-term perspective. We therefore analyse the trend towards Europeanisation of the Austrian public sphere.
Looking at the suggestions for the paths of development of the European public sphere there is wide agreement that its formation depends on the Europeanisation of national public spheres and on mutual interconnections between these national public spheres. Europeanisation refers to a temporal process, but research that tries to grasp Europeanisation via longitudinal analyses is widely missing. Most studies deal solely with short time periods of media-coverage on European issues or with media-coverage on selected “events”. Hence, recent literature does not provide sufficient results on the development of the Europeanisation process. In order to fill this gap at least for the Austrian case partly, we provide first illustrative results for Europeanisation on the ORF-ZIB. We base our analysis on 171,313 geographical references to 48 selected countries. We compare the amount of news about Austria (self referential) with news about European countries (horizontal Europeanisation) and non-European countries, and we look at the development of explicit references to the EU (vertical Europeanisation) within news reports on the selected countries (Figure 3).
Looking at ORF-ZIB’s news-geography, results show that reporting about national, Austrian issues plays a dominant role. More than the half of news-coverage (51.4\%) is related to national issues. In the year 2000 national self-referentiality reached its top (56.7\%) due to the formation of the middle-right coalition between the conservative ÖVP with the far-right FPÖ. This political turnaround ("Die Wende") was followed by heavy national and international reactions which also included the “sanctions” of the EU-14 against Austria. Obviously, in 2000 Austria was strongly occupied with itself.

The high level of self-referentiality in 2000 was accompanied with an increase of vertical Europeanisation due to increasing media attention for “the EU” (16.6 \%). This result supports the assumption that rising self-referentiality and vertical Europeanisation were driven by interventions of the EU-14 against the new Austrian government. Our results heavily confirm the thesis, that Europeanisation mainly occurs as conflict induced and conflict driven (see Tobler, forthcoming 2006).
The results on Europeanisation of television news may be related to the development of the Austrians public opinion on the EU. In spring 2000 only 32 % of the Austrian respondents considered the Austrian EU membership as a “good thing” and a high value of 25 % thought being an EU member is a “bad thing.” The high amount of opponents was excelled once only – in spring 1997. The significant decline in supporting the EU membership in 2000 obviously was related to the sanctions. However a clearly negative impact of the sanctions on the public opinion in a long run is not visible. Support for EU membership increased shortly after the “sanctions” between 2000 and 2002, but it dropped again sharply between 2002 and 2004.19

Beside the particular case regarding the “Wende” in 2000, our results clearly show a trend towards vertical Europeanisation between 1995 and 2000. The share of news with references to EU increased from 2.7% (1995) to 16.6% (2000). In the period from 2001 until 2004 the shares oscillated on levels above 11.0%, but they did not return to the top-level of 2000.

While references on Austria show a stable development apart from the exception in 2000, geographical references on other European countries are decreasing in the course of time: From 32.6% (1995) to 23.1% (2003). The decrease resulted from a turn in the news focus: From the conflict areas on the European Balkan (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia) to areas of conflict outside Europe. The increase of media attention for the new areas of conflict in non-European countries began with the terrorist attack in New-
York (2001) and it was followed by stronger media attention on the wars in Afghanistan (2001/2002) and the Iraq (2003).

This decreasing attention for Europe would indicate a “De-Europeisation” which contradicts the normative assumption that political and economic European integration should be accompanied by increasing media attention for other European countries. However, we argue that attention to European countries has to be analysed in more detail, by making differences between EU Member States and other European countries. The normative requirement regarding increasing attention mainly refers to references to EU Member States because of their political relevance in EU-decision making processes. Our results show a widely stable pattern above 20% of media attention to the other 24 EU member states between 1995 and 2004. However they do not show a significant trend towards a higher density of attention. Horizontal Europeanisation remains static on a rather high level.

While our results show a clear trend towards vertical Europeanisation, here again comparison with results of further research is difficult. Only very few authors try to grasp Europeanisation via longer periods of time under research. And here again serious comparison is not easy, because the applied approaches vary. Gerhards (see 2000, 293) analysed in his above mentioned article German print news on European issues between 1950 and 1995. According to his data, media attention for European issues was decreasing a little from 1961 until 1990. An increase was observable at the beginning of the 1990ies. Gerhards analysis stopped in 1995 where our period under research begins. However, we may also find comparable results: Gerhards found an average level of
60.4% of news on German issues (German national self referentiality) and a significant increase up to more than 70% in the years of the German Unification in 1989/90. Our results show a 51.4% average share of news on Austrian issues and a significant increase up to 56.7% in time of the political “Wende” (2000). Beside Gerhards only Brüggemann et al. (forthcoming 2006) provide results on Europeanisation processes. Their results are based on a transnational comparison of “opinion articles” in the European quality press between 1982 and 2003. Their results indicate a strong trend towards Europeanisation. The share of articles with the EU as the primary subject increased from 2% (1982) up to 9% (2003). The share of articles where the EU is mentioned as secondary issue increased from 8% (1982) to 22% (2003). However, here again comparison with our results is difficult because we can’t separate primary- and secondary issues.\textsuperscript{21}

**Europeisation across policy fields**

Europeisation does not have to proceed equally across policy fields. In the European system of multi level governance regulatory competencies are spread between the national and the supranational level. According to Pfetsch et al. (see 2004) and Pfetsch/Koopmans (forthcoming 2006) a higher level of Europeanisation is required and expectable in policy fields where the EU can resort to strong regulatory competencies.

An essential indicator for the division of powers between the national and the European level is the architecture established by the Treaty on European Union, which forms
three pillars. The European Community (first pillar) comprises the arrangements set out in the European Community (EC), European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) Treaties, i.e. Union citizenship, Community policies, Economic and Monetary Union. The second pillar comprises the common foreign and security policy, which comes under Title V of the EU Treaty. The third pillar refers to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, which comes under Title VI of the EU Treaty. In “communitised” policy fields of the first pillar the “community method” is the predominant institutional operating mode. Its most salient feature is the widespread use of qualified majority voting in the Council. It contrasts with the intergovernmental method of operation used in the second and third pillars, which proceeds from an intergovernmental logic of cooperation where the Council generally acts unanimously. Matters falling within the second and third pillars are handled by the Community institutions (the European Council, the Council, the Commission, the European Parliament etc.), but intergovernmental procedures apply.

The European Constitution currently being ratified provides for the merger of the three existing pillars but retains certain specific procedures for the common foreign and security policy, including the defence policy. This will make it possible to “communitise” most of the matters currently handled by the intergovernmental method. It should further clarify the powers of the Union by specifying the areas in which the Member States have transferred their powers of action to the Union by establishing a classification of Union powers in the following categories: (1) Exclusive powers: the highly specific matters where the Union acts alone on behalf of all its Member States. This category particularly concerns the customs union, the competition rules needed for the operation of the internal market, monetary policy and the common commercial
policy. (2) Shared powers: matters where the Union acts because its action contributes substantial value added to the action undertaken by the Member States. These include the internal market, economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture, fisheries, the environment, consumer protection, transport, energy and the area of freedom, security and justice. (3) Supporting, coordinating or complementary powers: the Union acts here only to coordinate or complement the action undertaken by the Member States. This concerns matters such as the protection and improvement of human health, industry, culture, tourism, education, youth, sports and vocational training.

In sum, the EU does not hold the same amount of regulatory competencies across all policy fields. For some areas, such as agriculture for instance, many regulatory competencies have been transferred to the EU level, in others – such as security policy – an increase of common European regulatory effort is observable. Other sectors – such as culture and arts – are primary regulated on the national level. Hence, we analyse and compare the levels of Europeanisation across various news issues. Our results are based on an analysis of 50 keywords with political relevance from the Farao archive system. We find 413,073 thematic references in total, of which 35,381 additionally include a verbal/literal reference to the EU. Hence the average level of “Europeanisation” across selected news issues is 8.5%. However, as expected by theoretical arguing Europeanisation is not spread equally across thematic issues. In order to show the differences we group the 50 keywords into 9 categories with political relevance (Figure 4).
Figure 4:

We find the highest level of Europeanisation for the issue *Environment & Food* (19.5%). This supports the thesis that a high level of Europeanisation occurs in sectors where the EU holds strong regulatory competencies as for agriculture for instance. Our data may be influenced by the fact that the Austrian Franz Fischler did hold the position of the EU-Commissioner for agricultural affairs during the period under research. Due to his prominence reports on agricultural affairs may have been more often presented with reference to the EU as usually.

Comparing the levels of Europeanisation further, *Environment & Food* is followed by *Politics* (17.5%), *Economic Issues* (10%) and *Infrastructure* (6.2%). These are the fields where the EU can resort to strong regulatory powers. Our results support the general picture of the EU as a Political & Economic Union. On the contrary little
references on the EU are made in sectors, where the EU does not hold regulatory competencies. *Youth & Education* (2.4%), *Art & Culture* and *Social Affairs* (4.8%) are primary national issues.

We find more media attention to the EU in policy fields, where the EU is developing common politics. Issues such as *War & Conflict* (5.8%) and *Security & Justice* (5.0%) are more often presented with reference to the EU than issues such as *Youth & Education*, but less than *Economic* and *Political issues*. Analysis supports the thesis that the EU is not (yet) a Defence-, Security and Social Union. Here it has to be taken into account that efforts are made to develop a Common European Defence- and Security Policy. Only longitudinal analysis could show whether those efforts are accompanied by raising media attention to the EU in the particular policy fields.

Moreover, our results on the varying levels of Europeanisation have to take into perspective the varying levels of media attention across issues. The news on the ORF ZIB is dominated by reports on *War & Conflict* (25.9%) and *Politics* (17.5%). Issues such as *Environment & Food* (1.8%) only gain very little media attention. Due to low media attention for the sector the visibility of the EU in the media may be low in those sectors even if the sector gains a high level of Europeanisation.

**Summary**

Analyses in this paper are based on the assumption, that European political and economic integration demands for the formation of a European public sphere for the
public discussion of matters of common European interest. However, it is often argued
that there are major deficits of European political communication which form part of
the European Unions democratic deficit. Hence, the question emerges whether there is a
trend towards the formation of a European public sphere which could enhance the
European Unions democratic quality.

Recent literature proposes to grasp the formation of a European public sphere by
analysing the Europeanisation of national public spheres and the mutual interconnection
between them, but analytical approaches and applied indicators for measurement differ
widely. This results in incompatible empirical data and contradicting estimations of
extent and forms of a European public sphere. Notwithstanding media attention to EU
politics and for EU-related politics of the EU member states are referred to as minimum
requirements for transparency and public control in the European political context.
Theoretical arguing suggests, that increasing transfers of regulatory competences and
powers to the EU level demand for increasing media attention to European political
affairs. Additionally it has to be taken into consideration that the EU can not resort to
equal regulatory powers across all policy fields. This requires a differentiated analytical
approach according to the separated regulatory powers in the European system of multi
level governance.

Against the background of these normative assumptions the paper presents first
illustrative results on the Europeanisation of the Austrian public sphere. Empirical
evidence on the Austrian case supplements the existing international research on the
formation of a European public sphere because Austria gained comparatively little
scientific attention yet. Moreover, Austria possesses an interesting background for a
case study, because support for European integration and enlargement is rather low, and because the sanctions of the “EU-14” against the Austrian government in 2000 display a unique event in the history of the European Union. The main results of the investigations into the media attention for European affairs on the main Austrian television news platform “Zeit im Bild” (ZIB) may be summarised as follows:

The average level of Europeanisation in the total amount of news reporting is 7.6%. However, this result is hardly comparable and interpretable, due to the absence of a definition of an “adequate” level of Europeanisation and in consequence of the heterogeneity of applied approaches to measure the level(s) of Europeanisation in the literature. The existing variety of approaches to grasp the level of Europeanisation across counties and media empirically is one of the main problems for international research on the formation of a European public sphere and central challenge for further research.

A reasonable approach to deal with the difficulties of varying level(s) of Europeanisation is to turn the focus of research to the development of Europeanisation (process perspective). However longitudinal analyses on the paths of development are widely missing. This paper purpose is to close this research gap for the Austrian case at least partly. Results show an increase of media attention for the EU (vertical Europeanisation) in the course of time and a stable trend of media attention for other EU countries (horizontal Europeanisation). Beside these general trends the year 2000 displays a significant exception from the over all picture. The political turnaround (“Wende”) due to the entry of the far right freedom party (FPÖ) into the Austrian government, and the subsequent sanctions of the EU-14 against Austria pushed national
self-referentiality and vertical Europeanisation significantly. Our results heavily confirm the thesis, that Europeanisation mainly occurs as conflict induced and conflict driven. However a clearly negative impact of the sanctions on the Austrian public opinion on the EU in a long run is not verifiable on the basis of existing empirical data.

Finally, our data support theoretical arguing according to which higher media attention for European affairs is required and expectable in policy fields where the EU can resort to strong regulatory competences. The comparison of levels of Europeanisation across policy fields shows a higher density of references to the EU in “communitised” policy fields (Environment & Food, Politics, Economic Issues, Infrastructure & Energy) compared with policy fields with rather strong national regulatory competencies (Youth & Education, Art & Culture and Social Affairs). Our results support the general picture of the EU as a Political & Economic Union and lack of powers to develop a Defence-, Security- and Social Union. However, it has to be taken into account that efforts are made to develop a Common European Defence- and Security Policy. Further research should show whether these efforts are accompanied by raising media attention to the EU in the particular policy fields.

Notes

1. This paper presents results of the research project “Europeanisation of the Austrian Public Sphere: Institutional Structures, Media Attention, Public Discourse & the Contribution of New Media”. The project is carried out at the Department of Communication of the University of Vienna. It is supported by the research program “New Orientations for Democracy in Europe” (Node) of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (bm:bwk). The authors would like to thank Barbara Pfetsch (University of Hohenheim) and Hannes Haas (Universität of Vienna) for valuable comments and suggestions.

2. See basically Gerhards (1993) and Meyer (1999). Some of these factors are widely agreed to as barriers for Europeanisation processes (e.g. in-transparency). On the relevance of others we find dissensions (e.g. language). For a critical review on the relevance of these barriers see Kantner (2003).

3. For an overview on institutional, cultural and discursive conceptions of a European public sphere see Eder/Kantner (2000); Wessler (2004). The discussion of an adequate conception is driven by the question, whether standards developed for national public spheres and national polities are
transferable to the EU-level, or whether the EU as a democratic polity beyond the nation state requires a different approach.

4. For an overview on several indicators for the formation of a European public see Tobler (forthcoming 2006).

5. For distinction of vertical and horizontal Europeanisation see Koopmans/Erbe (2003, 6f). Vertical Europeanisation may be characterised by two basic processes: (1) a bottom-up one, in which national actors address European actors and/or make claims on European issues; (2) a top-down one, in which European actors intervene in national policies and public debates in the name of European regulations and common interests.

6. In “communitised” policy fields of the first pillar of the European Union the “community method” is the predominant institutional operating mode. Its most salient feature is the widespread use of qualified majority voting in the Council. It contrasts with the intergovernmental method of operation used in the second and third pillars, which proceeds from an intergovernmental logic of cooperation where the Council generally acts unanimously. “Communitisation” means transferring a matter which, in the institutional framework of the Union, is dealt with by using the intergovernmental method (second and third pillars) to the Community method (first pillar).

(\url{http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/glossary/communitisation_en.htm} (27.10.2005))

7. See basically Habermas (2001, 120) who states, that the formation of a European public sphere requires that the “national communicative cycles must embrace one another [Habermas uses the German term: “miteinander verschranken”] such that different contributions are osmotically absorbed from each national arena” [our translation].

8. Horizontal Europeanisation means the communicative linkages between different member states. The transnational interconnection can occur in a weak and a strong variant. In the weak one, the media in one country cover debates and contestation in another member state, without a linkage between the countries in the structure of claims-making itself. In the stronger variant, actors from one country explicitly address, or refer to actors or policies in another member state (see Koopmans/Erbe 2003, 6f). For a similar approach see Brüggemann et al. (forthcoming 2006).

9. The analysis is limited to the two weeks prior to the 1999 European Parliament elections.

10. The question was: „Generally speaking, do you think that (the respective Country’s) membership of the European Union is a good thing – a bad thing – neither good nor bad?” EU-wide at all terms approx. 30% of the respondents answered “neither good nor bad”, in Austria approx. one-third.

11. The negative attitude of the British people is accompanied by comparatively negative news reporting on European issues by the British press. “[E]uropean integration is played down on the issue agenda, (…) European scopes are neglected, (…) European issues are opposed and European actors are portrayed in the most negative light ever” (Pfetsch et al. 2004).

12. Since the Eurobarometer 54 (11/12 2000) the questionnaire contains the question: „What is your opinion on the following statements? Please tell me whether you are for it or against it. The European Union should be enlarged to include new countries. “ Since the Eurobarometer 56 the last part of the question was modified to: „The enlargement of the European Union to include new countries. “ In the Eurobarometer 61 (Spring 2004) the question was separated for the ten new member countries of Mai 2004 and for further enlargement. The questions were: „The enlargement to include ten new countries. “ and „Further enlargement of the European Union to include other countries in future years. “ Since Eurobarometer 62 only the latter question is posed.

13. Due to these negative opinions regarding the European Union a subsequent step of our project will focus on the Austrian media discourse on the enlargement and – to draw a comparison – to the media discourse on atomic energy.

14. Primarily linguists (see e.g. Potter/Wetherell 1987) point out that production of attitudes depends on the social context or the target of communication. In the context of opinion polls this means that respondents answer according to contextual requirements. Hence, their answers can not be translated directly as their “attitudes” (see Krausner/Muntigl/Wodak 2001, 2). Further problems with opinion surveys arise for instance from the phenomenon of “social desirability” of answers, from the influence of interviewers, etc. (see e.g. Mähring/Schlütz 2003, 45ff.). Notwithstanding such objections we use opinion surveys about the European Union and regard them as indicators for public opinion.

15. All Eurobarometer surveys are available online:
\url{http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm}

16. „When you are looking for information about the European Union, its policies, its institutions, which of the following sources do you use? Which else?”
17. Austria is a competitive TV market. By 2003 85% of all Austrian households were able to receive foreign television programs either by satellite or cable television. Therefore ORF competes with a variety of German language channels which are available via cable or satellite. Foreign channels in other languages than German only reach a statistically insignificant number of viewers. ATV+ was launched in 2003 as the first nationwide terrestrial TV channel in private hands. At present about 75 % of all TV households receive ATV+, the audience share it achieves is about 2 %. Despite this nationwide private channel and the two channels of the ORF there are some private regional TV stations.

18. The coverage is declining in the recent years. 1990 the Zeit im Bild 1 had a coverage of 38.7 %, but coverage sunk to 30.2 % (1992); 24.1 % (1998); 22.4 % (2002) (see Plasser/Ulam 2004, 59).

19. The varying tendencies in the public opinion on the Austrian EU membership require for further analyses in subsequent steps of the project. Further analyses not only mention media attention on European affairs, but also positive and negative media coverage on particular issues.

20. Their sample encompassed „discursive articles“ such as editorials and editorial page opinion articles, political columns, interviews and opinion articles by external authors (see Brüggemann et al. forthcoming 2006).

21. In this case further research into the content of the news is necessary. Our detailed content analysis on the Europeanisation of media attention is based on a representative sample from the 10 year period from 1995 to 2004. The quantitative content analysis is not limited to the ORF-ZIB, we further apply our approach to the political news on ORF-ON (the ORF Internet news platform) and from the daily Der Standard (quality paper) and Neue Kronen Zeitung (tabloid paper). Therefore we are able to analyse differences between public and private media and between quality and tabloid media.

22. See http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/glossary/community_powers_de.htm

23. “Communitisation” means transferring a matter which, in the institutional framework of the Union, is dealt with using the intergovernmental method (second and third pillars) to the Community method (first pillar). The Treaty of Amsterdam for instance has transferred some of the fields formerly covered by the third pillar to the first pillar. Following the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam (May 1999), questions relating to the free movement of persons, which used to come under cooperation on justice and home affairs (third pillar), have been “communitised”. After a five-year transitional phase, therefore, they will be dealt with under the Community method.

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