Public Diplomacy and Democratic Legitimacy in the European Union[[1]](#footnote-1)

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Democracy is facing a global crisis of legitimacy. Overwhelmingly, since the 2008 financial crisis, citizens around the world have ceased trusting their elected governments. As the *Economist* has succinctly expressed, “Democracy is going through a difficult time.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Because of its multitiered, overlapping, and sometimes confounding democratic system, this phenomenon is especially acute within the European Union (EU). The catastrophe that bore this supranational polity – the destruction of World War II – has been supplanted in citizens’ minds by the ongoing economic crisis, and continental peace is no longer sufficient justification for citizens to trust in EU governance. Instead, Europeanist discourses hinge on the economic consequences of regional policies and actions. While security was the objective of integration, the question between war and peace, between nationalism and regionalism, had an obvious answer. It was clear that European politicians were acting in the interest of European people; peace was maintained, and citizens expected little else from Brussels. But now that integration is being led by economic priorities, this uncritical trust has been disrupted. Peace offers universal benefits that economics cannot, and accordingly, 500 million European citizens have developed diverse and often adamant positions on whether regional integration is beneficial or harmful, and more fundamentally, whether the institutions in Brussels truly represent them. As described by Ellen Huijgh, “what began in recent history as a sovereign debt crisis has ignited a full-blown crisis of public confidence in the benefits of European economic integration, the euro, EU membership, and the EU’s future.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

At its core, this crisis is one of democratic legitimacy; many Europeans recognize that the EU exercises binding powers over individuals and elected national officials, but believe that Brussels is neither representative nor democratic, and that it therefore exercises illegitimate power. Armed with this assumption, Europeans are projected to largely boycott the upcoming May elections, and up to 35% of those that do go to the polls are expected to cast protest votes for extremist and anti-European parties. Thus, it is clear that democratic disaffection is not merely a “soft” issue of public opinion. While citizens do not believe their vote to matter, they are free to use it carelessly, which in this case stands to usher truly anti-democratic parties – including fascists, anarchists, and ultra-nationalists – into positions of power. Furthermore, if voter turnout drops for the eighth consecutive election, the European Parliament and the EU as a whole will lack a democratic mandate; if only a third of Europeans participate in European governance, who can the EU claim to represent? If these democratic catastrophes are to be avoided, or at least mitigated, two barriers must be overcome. Firstly, citizens must understand how the EU works to a sufficient level where they recognize the validity of its democratic structures, including the upcoming election. Secondly, they must trust the EU to act in their best interest, or at least in the interest of the majority.

*Public Diplomacy and Democratic Legitimacy*

Considering these parameters, it makes sense to approach the EU’s ongoing crisis of democratic legitimacy through a public diplomacy framework. Defined by Nicholas Cull as “an international actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public,” public diplomacy is generally employed with the dual purpose of promoting mutual understanding between foreign publics and influencing these publics to adopt a particular opinion or action. [[4]](#footnote-4) Because the EU is a multinational entity, when it communicates with any public, internally or externally, it is useful to conceive of that action as one of public diplomacy. Brussels’ engagement with its own citizens is characterized by the same cross-cultural and multilinguistic challenges as traditional states’ foreign engagement initiatives. Furthermore, the importance of overcoming inherent distrust of the “foreign” actor is central to internal EU communications. There is only a very weak imagined community between Germany and Greece, and almost none between the United Kingdom (UK) and any continental state. Only 10% of Europeans conceive of themselves as chiefly European,[[5]](#footnote-5) which is comparable to the percentage of non-Europeans who consider themselves to have a global, rather than national, identity.[[6]](#footnote-6) Furthermore, public diplomacy strives to achieve “mutuality: the vision of an international learning experience in which both parties benefit and are transformed,”[[7]](#footnote-7) and establishing such a reciprocal system of trust and influence is critical to establishing a perceptively democratic EU.

Cull divides public diplomacy into five broad activities: listening, advocacy, international news broadcasting, cultural diplomacy, and international exchange.[[8]](#footnote-8) While he considers each separately, I will group them into two categories, determined by likelihood of short- or long-term impact, with the first three activities in the former category and the last two in the latter. Though cultural diplomacy and international exchange tend to be far more impactful than advocacy or broadcasting in the long-term, the European Union must earn legitimacy immediately. This is not to undermine the importance of regional cultural cooperation nor of the wildly successful Erasmus student exchange program, but merely to reference the empirical reality that euroscepticism is rising rapidly; the Europhiles that Erasmus will put into power in twenty years will not stop the EU from breaking apart in the next ten. Therefore, this paper will examine the functions of listening, advocacy, and international news broadcasting.

The first activity, listening, is defined as “both the collection and analysis of data or information or opinion from the target foreign public by an international actor.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Reacting to current realities concerning public knowledge, desires, and opinion can allow an actor to address issues precisely and efficiently, and can immediately increase the efficacy of other public diplomacy activities. Next, advocacy is defined as “an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by undertaking an international communication activity to actively promote a particular policy, idea, or that actor’s general interests in the minds of a foreign public,” and it is most valuable for its “short-term utility.”[[10]](#footnote-10) In addition to its immediacy, in the European case, advocacy has the advantage of invoking a clear, straightforward message. The ability of the EU to craft a compelling counter-message to increasingly pervasive eurosceptic discourses will be fundamental to re-establishing trust in regional governance. Furthermore, effective advocacy can target precise knowledge gaps with facts that are accurate, believable, and relevant. Finally, Cull considers international broadcasting to be an “an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by using the technologies of radio, television, and the Internet to engage with foreign publics.”[[11]](#footnote-11) It is important to note that while this component of public diplomacy can be conducted by states or international organizations, it can also be practiced by privately owned news corporations with an international reach and impact. In this latter case, the role of the polity is to manage the content that these private media outlets publish, not by censorship or propaganda, but by presenting journalists and reporters with information in such a way that facts the polity wishes to publicize are featured prominently in media reports. This is not about spin, but *placement*. Media will always define the political agenda by “the themes that affect people in their everyday lives or that are relevant for some other reason. The more of these criteria apply, the more something is reported on.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Presenting issues in this way has been a key challenge in Brussels; accordingly, most media outlets have ignored the EU at best and habitually disparaged it at worst, and effectively managing international broadcasting will be critical to the process of cultivating regional trust and knowledge.

For the remainder of this paper, I will employ this public diplomacy framework to consider how the EU is addressing its crisis of democratic legitimacy. After evaluating public opinion data to establish the scope and shape of the issue, I will consider the slim but vibrant literature on public diplomacy in the European Union. I will then build on this foundation to answer two key questions: Firstly, how is the EU currently employing public diplomacy within its borders? Why have these practices failed to establish democratic credibility, and how are they being adjusted, if at all, in anticipation of the 2014 elections? Secondly, are these strategies effective? In other words, is information programming reaching its intended publics? Finally, I will conclude with four brief recommendations that could, if implemented, build a stronger model of multilateral public diplomacy.

*Statistical Review*

Before evaluating how Brussels is engaging its constituents, it is important to establish the context of the European citizen; we must understand what Europeans know about the EU and its institutions, and also their feelings towards these institutions. It is widely accepted that both of these measures are suboptimal, at best. Since its founding, Europeans have not been very knowledgeable about how the EU works, nor do they generally trust it to work in their interest, which in turn limits citizens’ ability and willingness to participate in continental democratic processes. This problematic phenomenon is well captured in the knowledge deficit concept, which is effectively explained by John McCormick:

“It will be difficult for Europeans to develop a sense of belonging to the European Union if they continue to know so little about it, and as long as they know so little, they will continue to misunderstand its work and open themselves to manipulation by supporters and opponents of integration.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

While these knowledge and trust deficits are very real, in both popular and academic discourses, they tend to be dramatically overstated through selective use of statistics. Outside of Brussels, it has become common to claim that nothing can be done to make people care about or participate in European governance, and if this were true, European public diplomacy would be inconsequential. But by establishing a holistic image of European public opinion, it can be seen that representative legitimacy in Europe cannot simply be explained away as a lost cause. While the public is certainly not wholeheartedly bought in to the concept of European democracy, a large portion does trust the European Parliament as a locus of regional representation. Additionally, there are nonproblematic channels that can be used to inform even disaffected citizens, and Europeans do not automatically distrust Europe, instead forming their opinions concerning regional legitimacy, at least to a degree, through rational processes in response to large-scale events. Ultimately, it will become apparent that while knowledge and trust deficits are critical issues among the European public, they are not intractable.

Firstly, we can see that while the Parliament is not universally understood or positively viewed, it is recognized as a strong democratic core by a large minority of citizens. With 90% recognition, it is as widely known as most national political institutions. Furthermore, while 45% of European citizens do not know that the Parliament is elected by direct universal suffrage, this is actually a fairly strong measure that is comparable to public understanding of national legislatures in formidable democracies with substantial public trust.[[14]](#footnote-14) In Britain, for example, 33% of citizens think that the non-elected House of Lords is elected by direct universal suffrage, and 40% do not know the difference between the party-appointed Government and the directly elected Parliament.[[15]](#footnote-15) Furthermore, despite confusion as to its election procedures, it is widely believed that the European Parliament “is the institution that best represents the EU,” with 52% preference,[[16]](#footnote-16) and this support has been steadily increasing over time.[[17]](#footnote-17) Additionally, the Parliament is, and has always been, the most trusted EU institution, with 41% of citizens trusting it to act in their interest,[[18]](#footnote-18) and in 2012, 62% of Europeans did consider the Parliament to be democratic, which is actually a 1% increase over the previous year.[[19]](#footnote-19) Interestingly, this is a higher percentage than the portion of citizens who believe the Parliament to be directly elected. Therefore, 7% of citizens who are unaware that they can vote for MEPs still feel like the Parliament represents them, and this reflects approximately 35 million citizens who are uninformed but not disenchanted, and could easily be persuaded to vote through an effective information campaign. Thus, while much of Brussels has become overshadowed by distrust and skepticism, metrics indicate that about half of citizens do recognize the Parliament as a democratically accountable institution. While this measure is not ideal, it is far less apocalyptic than is generally assumed.

However, the Parliament is not without profound legitimacy issues. Only 35% of Europeans believe that the Parliament is “listening to European citizens,” [[20]](#footnote-20) while 67% of Europeans believe that “their voice does not count in the EU.” In Greece and Cyprus, this number soared to 89%.[[21]](#footnote-21) But even disaffected citizens can be influenced to reconsider their opinions through public diplomacy. A majority of Europeans already do have some idea of the Parliament’s initiatives and policies, and critically, many are interested in learning more – assuming the information is delivered correctly. The most recent Parlemeter reveals that a majority of Europeans are “interested in European affairs,”[[22]](#footnote-22) and 64% of Europeans have “recently read in the press, seen on the Internet or on television or heard on the radio something about the European Parliament.” This represents a 22% increase in visibility and media recall since 2007.[[23]](#footnote-23) As to how this information was received, 64% of Europeans claim they look for information about the European Parliament on television, 43% on the internet, 33% in the press, and 15% on radio. Of those who preferred internet sources, a plurality of 33% preferred “news websites,” followed by websites of the European Parliament at 17% and online social networks at 8%.[[24]](#footnote-24) Because traditional and internet broadcasting is trusted to a far greater degree when the source is a private news source, rather than a government agency, it is clear that Brussels cannot solve the knowledge deficit by simply making information available, as it has done prolifically for the past decade to little effect. Instead, it must actively manage the international broadcasting environment to ensure that citizens can access regional information from trusted international multimedia broadcasters such as BBC or France 24, as well as from national print outlets such as *The Telegraph* or *El País*.

Additionally, surveying reveals which types of Parliamentary information citizens would be most interested in receiving, and this powerful data can be used to counter longstanding knowledge deficits. Despite values-laden explanations for the EU’s existence within the Treaties of the European Union and the Parliament’s charter, only 16% of Europeans wanted more information about ideational issues, while 34% wanted more information on EU economic solutions. While only 7% wanted more information on the upcoming European elections, 75% believe that “the role played by the European Parliament in the running of the EU is important,”[[25]](#footnote-25) indicating that there is nonetheless a possibility of stimulating buy-in to the 2014 elections, perhaps by connecting it to the economic issues that respondents claimed to want more information about. Because these economic issues will sell newspaper copies and attract site visitors as much as it will mobilize voters, it is also likely that international broadcasters will be willing to pick up election-economic stories. Notably, 13% of the sample – without prompting – insisted that they “don’t want to receive more information” on any European topic, reflecting a substantial impediment to countering the knowledge deficit. But this segment is very small, and cannot be generalized to represent the average European.

Furthermore, popular knowledge concerning the Parliament has empirically rose in recent years. For example, in 2012, 11% more people knew that MEPs sit their political affinity, rather than by nationality, than in 2007.[[26]](#footnote-26) While knowledge of this fact has still only risen to 44% - indicating that most citizens think the Parliament is representative of national governments, rather than the people directly, or else have no idea either way – the relatively technical nature of this fact makes substantial recognition of it fairly impressive. Additionally, it is worth noting that 47% of those who claimed an interest in European affairs knew the seating protocol, and 40% of those who did not claim interest did as well, which is not a very significant difference.[[27]](#footnote-27) This suggests that there is substantial potential to inform even those who assert that they are not interested in learning about regional governance, possibly by issuing information on broadcasting platforms that they already read and trust.

Concerning the nonelected institutions, popular understanding tends to be substantially lower. As opposed to the 10% of citizens who do not know that the Parliament exists, 17% do not know of the Commission, and 31% do not know of the Council of the European Union.[[28]](#footnote-28) The latter institution is also the least trusted at 33%, which is puzzling, as it is the only measured institution composed entirely of nationally elected representatives.[[29]](#footnote-29) This statistic likely indicates that citizens do not understand the composition of the Council, while helps to explain why national parliamentarians such as British MP James Wharton so frequently criticize ministers for “disappearing off into Europe.”[[30]](#footnote-30) People simply do not know where their ministers go, and also do not know that they wield substantial legislative power in Brussels. However, because the Council is composed of nationally elected officials, this lack of trust is not as grave as it initially appears. If people understood the Council’s composition, it seems intuitive that this particular trust deficit could be easily rectified, though issuing this information in a credible way would require a strong public diplomacy strategy.

Another critical aspect of the institutional knowledge deficit is that “respondents who expressed an opinion but had not heard of the institution in question were unlikely to trust it.”[[31]](#footnote-31) It is worth emphasizing that the vast majority of individuals who responded “don’t know” concerning the existence of the Parliament, Commission, or European Central Bank did *not* respond “don’t know” concerning whether they “tend to trust” the institution, instead responding negatively. Those who did not know the institutions but did trust them were almost negligible, though the European Parliament fared somewhat better in this circumstance at 16%, presumably because respondents were familiar with the term “parliament” in a national context.[[32]](#footnote-32) The relationship between knowledge and trust deficits suggests the importance of working to correct gaps in understanding. In doing so, people would not only become more knowledgeable, but they would also become more trusting. Conversely, while citizens continue to know very little about Brussels, any sort of trust-based messaging will likely be ineffective.

Alternatively, many critics consider European trust deficits to be inevitable as long as the European economy remains weak. But it is inaccurate to assume that citizens automatically lose faith in the EU or its institutions following unfortunate events, as we can see by examining public opinion following the 2009 eurocrisis.[[33]](#footnote-33) Currently, 46% of Europeans are dissatisfied with “the way democracy works in the EU,” while 43% are satisfied. This measure has grown increasingly negative since peaking at 54% approval and 32% disapproval in late 2009, several months into the crisis.[[34]](#footnote-34) This is contrasted with satisfaction “with the way democracy works in (OUR COUNTRY),” which revealed 53% satisfaction and 45% dissatisfaction following the 2009 economic collapse – significantly worse than the EU measure, and a dramatic drop from the pre-crisis measures of 58% satisfaction and 39% dissatisfaction.[[35]](#footnote-35) Whereas national governments suffered a large drop in democratic legitimacy following the 2009 crisis – 58% to 53% satisfaction and 39% to 45% dissatisfaction – the EU’s measures actually rose. This indicates that distrust of European democracy is not a function of economic troubles being automatically blamed on faults of the EU, but instead of citizens’ understanding or misunderstanding of how the crisis was handled at the European level. In fact, Europeans who want a more important role for the European Union in regulating financial services represent 71% of the sample, which is a modest rise over last year’s percentage.[[36]](#footnote-36) Citizens recognize that the EU itself is not a problem, and instead consider its response to the crisis to have been insufficient. At the most basic level, this indicates that citizens do form opinions of the EU based on what they know about it, and do not automatically blame the EU, rather than their national or local governments, for economic or social problems. While this might seem like a basic conclusion, as it becomes increasingly assumed that the European recession is the exclusive fault of the EU, it must be remembered that this determination was reached only after the EU made several strategic blunders, and that better policy and communication could likely have prevented, or at least mitigated, its post-crisis drop in legitimacy. Anti-European sentiment is neither instinctual nor predetermined, and the empirically-based decision-making processes that citizens seem to be undertaking strongly emphasize the importance of providing citizens with accurate information concerning European governance.

Overall, statistical considerations of knowledge and trust deficits reveal that while real and significant, these problems are not as grave nor intractable as they are frequently portrayed, and neither is the democratic deficit that they cause. While alarming statistics can be showcased independently to dismiss the democratic legitimacy of the EU, when considered in context, the knowledge and trust deficits become much more manageable. While the deficits certainly do demand attention if the EU is to function as an optimal democracy, they should not be misrepresented as a reason that European governance is fundamentally inept, corrupt, or repudiated by its citizens. In fact, 44% of Europeans believe that “the EU should develop further into a federation of nation-states.”[[37]](#footnote-37) This surprising approval of regional integration suggests that if people were better informed of what the EU is and does, it is likely that their trust in it would grow. Additionally, “don’t know” answers to whether the EU should federalize further are fairly significant, rising to 48% in Malta and 45% in Bulgaria. These undecided citizens represent a monumental opportunity for public diplomacy to craft positive momentum for European democracy.[[38]](#footnote-38)

*Literature Review*

Prior to examining how the EU is restoring its democratic credibility, it is important to recognize the underlying structures that lead to a democratic deficit, as the institutions must address these real problems if they are to effectively move the needle of public opinion. DeBardeleben and Hurrelmann identify three key democratic challenges in the multilateral context of the EU: (1) congruence between political and sociocultural spheres, (2) accountability, and (3) representation.[[39]](#footnote-39) The first challenge and the latter two are different in that political and sociocultural congruence is barely present across the EU-28; to achieve identity-based legitimacy, Brussels must essentially engineer it from scratch. Accountability and representation, however, are largely present in European governance, but in unfamiliar forms that are often not modeled on their national counterparts. For example, the EU is unique in the depth of its representativeness in that civil society organizations are formally incorporated into its governance structure, but because this is not a nationally familiar arrangement, it does not contribute noticeably to popular perceptions of democratic legitimacy. Therefore, concerning these last two challenges, the onus is on the EU less to change its actual structures, but to effectively explain them to European citizens in ways they will find both compelling and credible.

DeBardeleben and Hurrelmann also offer useful analysis concerning the relationship between democratic credibility and international news broadcasting, which plays “a prominent role in the process of democratic legitimation and delegitimation.”[[40]](#footnote-40) Because the knowledge deficit is a major contributor to democratic uncertainty, it is essential to note that “media play an important role in determining what citizens know about the political world; they also constrain what political actors can convey to their constituencies.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Thus far, the EU has overwhelmingly seen the constraints of media broadcasting, with most outlets regularly ignoring or disparaging Brussels. However, by refining their international broadcasting strategies, Brussels institutions have the potential to benefit from media discourses and harness outlets for public education. When considering potential strategies, it is important to remember the triadic nature of the media arena, in which “two (or more) political actors compete for attention and approval by a third party, the audience.”[[42]](#footnote-42) This multisided system is even more complex in Brussels, where the three major institutions offer alternative narratives, while competing with counter-narratives from national officials that often directly contradict Brussels’ messaging. Because news media tend to “construct disagreement mostly as a controversy between two opposing camps,”[[43]](#footnote-43) and national politicians are more likely to offer conflict-based reports of EU negotiations and policies, the EU message often fails to resonate with the third party, who are in this case European citizens. Brussels will have to address this quandary in any successful public diplomacy strategy.

Additionally, Norris offers a useful explanation of the interplay between informational advocacy and democratic legitimacy. He notes that knowledge deficits can easily precipitate exaggerated perceptions of democratic deficits that “rest upon irrational, inflated, uninformed, or inaccurate expectations.” [[44]](#footnote-44) When addressing these misconceptions, Norris notes that procedural advocacy is the preferred path; democracy will be most substantially trusted if people understand how it works. However, those who are unfamiliar with a regime type will often be resistant to this principle- and structure-based explanation of democracy, and instead value its “instrumental benefits,”[[45]](#footnote-45) such as economic prosperity and redistribution of wealth, over its civic character. While most European citizens have become familiar with democratic governance over at least the past twenty years, the supranational iteration of democracy remains unfamiliar and generally confusing, especially because of the extremely limited EU education programs in European public schools. Therefore, it is critical that EU advocacy initiatives link Brussels’ democratic character to its instrumental benefits. The disadvantage of instrumental messaging, however, is that if these benefits wane, “public enthusiasm for democracy may fade.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Later in this paper, we will see how the EU is working to craft public diplomacy initiatives that balance its citizens’ interest in the material benefits of European governance with Brussels’ limited ability to provide these benefits in a time of fiscal austerity.

Though the internal public diplomacy of the EU has attracted almost no academic attention, its external public diplomacy has recently developed a slim but insightful literature, and we can derive insights into the internal dimensions of European engagement and communications from this work. When introducing *European Public Diplomacy: Soft Power at Work*, editor Mai’a Cross notes “Europeans’ self-criticism of their own efforts” and “the media’s exaggeration of controversy among member states” [[47]](#footnote-47) as key impediments to effective external public diplomacy, going on to argue that “the EU is clearly stronger when its constituent parts seek to convey a united front.”[[48]](#footnote-48) These public diplomacy obstacles can themselves be treated with inward-facing public diplomacy programming, and these two factors – rampant euroscepticism and overwhelmingly negative media coverage – are key issues that internal public diplomacy seeks to address. Therefore, internal public diplomacy is relevant not only to intra-EU legitimacy, but also to the EU’s ability to project itself abroad.

Steffen Rasmussen’s discussion of the hierarchical organization of EU external public diplomacy is also useful to my study. Though his pre-Lisbon analysis is somewhat dated, his conclusions concerning the disjointed way that EU public diplomacy is designed and executed remain relevant. He explains that “EU public diplomacy is characterized by its decentralized nature,”[[49]](#footnote-49) referring specifically to the tendency of Commission missions to third countries to design individual public diplomacy strategies. This decentralized model also seems to apply internally, with Commission Representations and Parliamentary Information Offices within member states enjoying substantial freedom to craft individualized engagement strategies. Concerning this loose hierarchical structure, Rasmussen concludes that “network organization of EU public diplomacy, although giving rise to important problems of coherence, is […] more effective than a more unitary actor that was able to speak with a single voice.”[[50]](#footnote-50) This organic efficiency can be found in internal public diplomacy as well, and later in this paper, I will consider how decentralized advocacy and broadcasting placement, coupled with centralized listening, creates a foundation for strong, coherent, and flexible public diplomacy campaigns.

Additionally, internal public diplomacy is considered even more explicitly in Ellen Huijgh’s recent piece on “Public Diplomacy’s Domestic Dimension in the European Union.” This exploratory study compares regional, national, and subnational approaches to internal information programming. She recognizes that the complex confederal-multilateral nature of the EU has allowed it to have “less reticence about ‘intermestic’ public involvement approaches”[[51]](#footnote-51) than traditional nation-states, which generally see public diplomacy as a strictly external practice. In contrast, the EU employs public diplomacy to “establish and reinforce a certain identity and legitimacy at home and abroad,” and “the EU appears particularly introspective in its response to the perceived crisis of ‘democratic deficit.’”[[52]](#footnote-52) Apart from the immediate crisis, Huijgh concludes that “PD with a domestic consciousness in the EU is about diversity governance and dealing with identity pluralism.”[[53]](#footnote-53) This statement insightfully addresses the purpose of EU public diplomacy, but she goes on to extrapolate that “[a]t the supranational level, European identity and values are central to domestic public-involvement activities.”[[54]](#footnote-54) This was likely true prior to 2009, but it is increasingly less so, as presentation of objective information about what the EU does has supplanted the less effective identity-based messaging that has proved unable to manage “identity pluralism.” Additionally, by treating Brussels as a monolithic body, and depending on interviews exclusively with officials from the European Commission and the affiliated External Action Service, Huijgh leaves a large literature gap. While this simplification may have been necessary to conduct efficient vertical analysis, Brussels is composed of a diversity of actors, and though they all participate in EU governance, they do not always share public diplomacy objectives or tactics.

In my analysis, I seek to fill this gap by examining how individual Brussels institutions are conducting public diplomacy and addressing their own legitimacy gaps. In this next section, by drawing on my personal research, I seek to answer the following question: How is Brussels leveraging listening, advocacy, and media broadcasting to engage its citizens and cultivate perceptional and institutional democratic legitimacy? Despite the dangers of developing tunnel vision within “the Brussels Bubble,” I am intentionally singling out Brussels and examining the communications strategies of formal EU institutions. While this is somewhat exclusionary, given strong transcontinental networks of individuals and civil society organizations, non-governmental actors “are not very present” in popular Europeanization discourses. Non-state actors and movements represent only 12% of pieces written on European issues outside their home countries, as opposed to 33% on domestic issues. This is representative of an “overwhelming dominance of governmental and executive actors […] of the EU”[[55]](#footnote-55) in conversations on European issues. Because the current understanding of the EU is so minimal, I believe that it will be more profitable to focus on the public diplomacy of regional institutions, which already enjoy substantial access to desired audiences. To avoid overgeneralization between institutions, I will separately consider the engagement strategies of the three major institutions: the Commission, the Council of Ministers, and the European Parliament. I also gathered information concerning the engagement strategies of the principle European consultative bodies, and most major europarties, but due to their relative weakness, I will bring this information into my analysis of the other institutions as necessary, rather than treating them independently. With the institutions’ approaches explicated, I will go on to identify the main trends that are characterizing Brussels’ public diplomacy.

**Public Diplomacy in Brussels**

*European Commission*

The central body of European governance is the European Commission, which acts as the supranational executive of the EU. It was one of the first institutions to recognize the importance of turning regional “governance into a participatory endeavor,”[[56]](#footnote-56) and has sought to match its expanding governance mandate with enhanced engagement initiatives. To this end, the Directorate-General for Communication (DG Comm) was founded with the sole mandate of conducting public diplomacy among EU member states. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Render EU citizens more aware of EU policies by delivering the policy message through media, other opinion leaders as well as the Representations.
2. Allow the Commission to be better informed on trends in public opinion and in the media landscape and on political developments.
3. Develop for European citizens a sense of ownership of European integration and of European identity and enable civic participation in the EU context.[[57]](#footnote-57)

These objectives mirror’s Cull’s ideal public diplomacy, in which listening is fundamental and mutual collaboration is prioritized. It also highlights the dual importance of indirect public education through relationship-building with key broadcasters and opinion levels, as well as direct advocacy that seeks to make Europe more “real” to its citizens. Concerning the former path, Brussels is notorious internationally for its dedication to press engagement. It boasts a massive press corps, second in size only to Washington, D.C., and DG Comm offers daily noon press briefings. Outside of Brussels, this frequency, regularity, and timing is unheard of, as it forces spokespeople to react immediately to midday events; however, this also means that the Commission has the opportunity to be a primary shaper of news narratives, and it uses this advantage to advance thematic narratives that incorporate the crises that interest the press corps, but within a framework that is decided by legislation currently under negotiation. Through this process, the Commission hopes to overcome the public misconception that Europe is still “Trying to muddle through the crisis and nothing else.” This is an especially important perception to overcome, as the European economy will take many more years to recover, and if its poor performance is the only factor that citizens attribute to Brussels, it is likely that public trust and approval will remain low.

The Commission also seeks to engage citizens directly through the “Europe for Citizens” program, which was designed with the objective of “increasing civic participation and mutual understanding between people” and “bringing people together to solve mutual problems,” with the ultimate goal in increasing understanding of and trust in the Commission and the EU. Programs are decentralized, with the Commission soliciting proposals from national organizations across four predefined categories, all of which emphasize the importance of common European ideals and regional democratic participation. Because it keeps program design close to the people, at least in principle, this program effectively listens to and respects public opinion. However, these heavily idealistic categories presume a Europeanist ethos that does not fully exist within European publics. The program claims that “although most Europeans consider EU issues to be quite complex and distant, they believe in the Union’s democratic credentials,”[[58]](#footnote-58) which Eurobarometer data has shown to be overstated. By assuming that Europeans already trust in Brussels’ democratic legitimacy, the Commission hedged incorrectly, offering Europeanist messaging that viewers who did not already consider themselves to be deeply European would likely reject. Furthermore, program selection was until recently chosen based on what Commission officials found interesting, without examining how target citizens would feel about the initiative. However, over the past two years, the Commission has tried to rationalize and materialize Europe for Citizens. Programs are now linked to specific Commission proposals, as well as overarching policy objectives, and selection processes take relevance to ordinary citizens into account. Additionally, the selection committee ensures geographical breadth. This strategic reorientation has expanded within the past several months beyond program selection, and DG Comm is now crafting a standardized method of program evaluation, for example, by measuring tonality of program coverage in national media outlets, rather than simply counting a program’s mentions. This nuanced shift is especially important in the wake of the eurocrisis, which has led to dramatically increased coverage of EU issues, but largely from negative angles. By listening to how Europe for Citizens is being portrayed throughout the EU-28, the Commission will gain the necessary data to strategically choose future programs so that they can respond directly to specific regions’ specific concerns regarding the importance of their role as European constituents, rather than handing out the same intangible messages across the continent.

Traditionally, the Commission has served as the heart of European integration, and it is therefore not surprising that the most established public diplomacy initiatives are administered by this institution. But it appears that the Commission has, over the past decade, become dramatically less passionate in its approach towards Europeanization, and its public diplomacy potential is accordingly decreasing. As the Commission has expanded in size and in power, a bureaucratic culture has replaced the idealistic preoccupation with Europeanization that used to make the institution so distinctive. This phenomenon was well captured by a mid-level official who responded to a question concerning his department’s mission by stating that “no one has a global view around here except the Director.” A second official went further to suggest that mid-level officials take pride in achieving mid-level tasks, and actively avoid considerations of larger strategy. These and other interviews revealed that a civil service ethic has overwhelmingly replaced that of European progressivism. Under the leadership of three-term Commission President Jacques Delors, alternatively, a bias towards integration was expected of Commission officers and programs, who were tasked not only with executing the tasks required of their portfolio, but with *Europeanizing* the portfolio itself. This value-driven governance peaked when Commission officials drafted the federalizing Single European Act; since then, the Commission has had a negligent role in forming Treaty policy, instead channeling a civil servant ethos to implement the will of the member states.[[59]](#footnote-59) This practice has also been reflected in general governance, and in Barroso Commission, officials tend to prioritize the concept of civil service over the European polity they are serving; as one might expect, the public diplomacy consequences have been severely detrimental.

The ways in which this shift has weakened the institution’s public diplomacy is well illustrated in its approach to British euroscepticism. The Commission has no stance on the governing Conservative Party’s campaign to hold an in-or-out referendum on continued membership in the EU. This was explained by many Commission staffers in London and Brussels as necessary to avoid “a bias towards integration.” This moralization of non-opinions is severely impeding the Commission’s ability to inform and influence citizens, as it refuses to engage them on the only European topic that they are willing to listen to: the referendum. Since secession was legitimized by Conservative legislation, British newspapers and tabloids have been printing information about the EU within the context of the referendum debate that would otherwise have gone unreported, and by refusing to comment on the Britain’s status as a member-state, the Commission is surrendering a key opportunity to shape the European discourse in the UK.[[60]](#footnote-60) Additionally, British media tends to report only on sides of a debate, rather than on its objective background,[[61]](#footnote-61) and by refusing to advocate in its own defense, or even to comment on the referendum to international broadcasters, thereby using the poll to facilitate the media pickup of other EU information, the Commission essentially guarantees that the only messages that are available to the public are those of adamant eurosceptics, thereby occluding genuine understanding of European governance.

*Council of the European Union*

The Council of the European Union is composed of a rotating arrangement of member-states’ government ministers, and serves as the approximation of an upper house of parliament. As a public diplomat, it is the most conservative of the three governing institutions, as it actively avoids advocacy and proactive messaging. Overall, the institution is proud that it has no “agenda to convey.” However, it does work diligently to influence international broadcasting, with the primary goal of encouraging the accurate reporting of Council negotiations. Deliberations are notoriously secretive, and media must therefore rely on personalized accounts from either the Council secretariat or the participating ministers. Generally, the Council seeks to express that decisions within the Council are reached by discussion that ultimately leads to consensus or near-consensus, which studies show to be largely correct.[[62]](#footnote-62) However, international correspondents in Brussels prefer to print a conflict narrative, and this is easily ascertained from national ministers, who can gain political capital in their home countries by exaggerating their resistance to unpopular policies. These post-negotiation statements generally “[increase] the perception of [the Council’s] remoteness from national political life,” and the lack of a credible alternate narrative is “a major cause of the democratic deficit.”[[63]](#footnote-63) Because the Council communicates only to the “Brussels bubble,” which includes press, think tanks, and embassies, and not directly to publics, it is especially critical that it overcomes this deeply held bias within international broadcasting organizations to emphasize organizational chaos and inefficiency.

Euro-scapegoating has increased dramatically since the eurocrisis, but Council public diplomacy strategies have remained largely unchanged, relying primarily on “reactive” communications that seek to counter rumors of disarray, rather than “proactive” messaging that would push out a more accurate idea of Brussels negotiations. With few exceptions, the institution only seeks to communicate “what is currently being deliberated,” rather than pursuing larger thematic issues. But even within this narrow scope, Council engagement strategies have become mired in the tension between increasingly technical negotiations, which are the necessary result of the Council’s expanded post-Lisbon competencies, and media outlets that are increasingly interested in short and simple explanations of EU issues. While the Council has listened to the public desire for simple interpretations of legislation, and has accordingly began to publish lay-language versions of all statutes that pass through the Council, it has not managed to present this “translation” in a compelling way to international broadcasters, and has not tried to reach directly to publics. Therefore, it should be expected that international and national media frequently ignore the Council’s statements.

While the conveyance of the Council’s closed door negotiations may seem peripheral to the larger issue of informing citizens of the policies that affect their day-to-day lives, an accurate understanding of Council processes is absolutely critical to restoring popular trust in the democratic legitimacy of the EU. As long as national politicians can credibly claim that the EU forced them to make domestically unpopular decisions, and no counter-narrative is offered, the public will believe that Brussels is tyrannizing their elected leaders. And while the Council has realized the grave implications of this scapegoating, its reactive messaging has not had any significant impact on how negotiations are portrayed.

*European Parliament*

The European Parliament approximates a lower legislative house, and is elected by direct universal suffrage. MEPs belong to a European political family, also known as a europarty, which function similarly to a national party, with the exception that a europarty cannot have individual members. This disconnect leaves a gap in public engagement that has recently been filled by the Parliament’s Secretariat. The Parliament has thereby developed a public diplomacy strategy that is far more activist than those of the previous two institutions.

 However, though MEPs have had an activist reputation for several decades, until very recently, the Parliamentary Secretariat shared the civil servant ethic of the Commission, and similarly refrained from substantive political communications. However, in 2012, the Secretary-General determined that this approach was insufficient to “defend the treaties,” referring to the series of agreements that act as the EU constitution. Because the treaties are pro-European, the Parliament’s Secretariat now “does not think it is wrong to argue on that basis.” The Secretariat has thereby radically redefined its public diplomacy mandate by deeply politicizing the concept of institutional communications. As phrased by one officer within the Secretariat, “we believe this is the house of democracy,” and that therefore the Secretariat should “not allow the [public] opinion to be against the democracy.” Another asserted that “we cannot go completely neutral and sterilized,” even accepting that this activist institutionalism might upset extremist europarties, likely referring to the radically anti-European Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group. This striking declaration of institutional responsibility for managing public opinion can only be implemented through a strong public diplomacy strategy, especially because it is clear that the defense of “democracy” is understood in a staunchly pro-EU context, and this definition will not be intuitive to the majority of Europeans. With this new framework, advocacy became naturally prioritized, supported by strong international broadcasting and listening programs. As a legally unbiased organization, the Secretariat must be careful to promote a pro-EU “house of democracy” without overstepping its legal mandate, and public diplomacy tools are uniquely equipped to toe this narrow line.

The Directorate for Relations with the Citizens is responsible for executing this expanded informational mandate, and it manages ongoing engagement programming that seeks to bring incomprehensibly technocratic legislation to citizens in a form that they will find both compelling and understandable. These efforts are divided into five thematic categories; firstly, the Secretariat supports the European Year topic, which is determined by the Commission. Currently, it is the Year of the European Citizen, in anticipation of the upcoming election. Secondly, the Secretariat runs an information campaign on human rights, which is couched in the Sakrahov Prize, which recognizes “freedom of thought.” This humanist public diplomacy priority resonates with the human rights activism of MEPs, which has increasingly characterized the Parliamentary approach to foreign policy. Here, we see a rare example of policy and communications strategies cooperating coherently. The next category is cultural diversity, which is also publicized through an award: the LUX Prize for socially and culturally engaged films. This is complemented by an ongoing information campaign on the Parliament’s role in promoting gender equality. Finally, there is the election campaign. Officials frequently clarified that despite the Secretariat’s structured approach to ongoing programming, it is election initiatives that have received most resources and attention over the past two years.

Notably, due to the “longer view of the Secretary-General,” evaluation has recently become central to engagement initiatives within each of these five categories. A newly created Strategic Planning Unit has been tasked with evaluating program effectiveness along standardized, technical criteria, described as an “American, factual approach.” Overall, Parliamentary public diplomacy is incredibly dynamic; due to increased institutional attention, newly strategic planning, and political activism, institutional information programming has become far more prolific and effective. But most officials agreed that the crowning achievement of Parliamentary public diplomacy is the Secretariat’s 2014 election campaign.

Following the disappointing 2009 election, which saw an all-time low in voter turnout and an increase in extremist protest votes, the Parliament’s Secretary-General realized that a new “strategic concept” was needed. In the 2010 strategy, advocacy became a strategic linchpin: “the institution itself does an information campaign,” rather than simply facilitating the campaigns of the europarties and MEPs. This represents substantial evolution since the Secretariat’s first election campaign in 1999, when the only message was the date of the elections, and even this was only promoted one month prior to the poll. In 2004, a common motto and visual identity was given to the campaign, but because neither was related to existing European Union brand concepts, they failed to achieve significant impact. In 2009, a much more sophisticated advocacy campaign was executed, in which “the notion of choice” was emphasized. For example, one group of advertisements for the campaign featured the question “How open should our borders be?” along with an image of a fortress wall and a far less intimidating hedge. This advocacy strategy was well developed in that it emphasized the two-way nature of European policy; citizens were asked to become active participants in European governance through messages that emphasized their direct influence over European legislation, and as explained by Cowan and Arsenault, “nothing creates a sense of trust and mutual respect as fully as a meaningful collaboration.”[[64]](#footnote-64) However, in 2009, the Secretariat intentionally did not coordinate with the europarties, which in turn did not coordinate with each other. This institutional-political barrier was erected intentionally; the Secretariat sought to portray choice without explicitly referring to parties, as that was understood at the time to transgress the institutional mandate. But this firewall, however well intentioned, impeded both political and institutional initiatives, and for the seventh consecutive election, turnout continued to decrease. Fundamentally, voters vote for parties, and disavowing politics severely decreases the relevance and credibility of the Parliament’s advocacy. Furthermore, the credibility of advocacy programs are derived from their “proximity to government,” and if there is a “perceived distance” between messaging and the government that is being discussed, the advocacy is likely to be ignored.[[65]](#footnote-65)

But following the supranationalization of the Treaty of Lisbon, the Secretariat adopted a far more activist public diplomacy program. A 14-month campaign was designed to run from September 2013 to November 2014, seven months before and after the election. This uniquely comprehensive timeframe was intended not only to ensure that citizens not only know to vote, but also that their vote mattered, and that they directly influenced EU policy. The campaign is built to “complete the narrative of the President of the Commission being elected,” and thereby create a two-track influencing structure. While the Parliament influences citizens to vote, they must in turn feel like they influence the Parliament, the Commission, and the trajectory of the EU. This mutuality is critical so that citizens do not feel manipulated by parliamentary communications, and while the 2009 campaign attempted to establish a narrative that invoked this closed system of influence, it could not be achieved without recognizing the political nature of the parliament and the elections.

To achieve this politicized mutuality, the Secretariat’s electoral information campaign has been divided into four phases. The first, which took place from September to October 2013, was initiated in conjunction with Commission President Barroso’s State of the Union address, which was chosen to provide news broadcasters and citizens with a familiar political event to which they could easily draw national corollaries. Furthermore, the Secretariat sought to emphasize the Presidency, rather than the Parliament, as it had instructed each europarty to choose a candidate for the Commission Presidency prior to the election, with the assumption that the most successful party’s candidate would succeed Barroso following the election. However, the Secretariat decided on this method of politicized campaigning without consulting with the European Council, a summit of EU heads of state who have the legal mandate to choose the Commission’s president. Thus, the Parliament’s ambitious approach to public diplomacy lay bare a key duality to public debate, which “may expose weak justifications or improper procedures and thus delegitimize decision makers or decision-making processes. On the other hand, conflict can contribute to clarifying underlying differences of interest as well as empirical claims.”[[66]](#footnote-66) Since the first phase of the campaign, the Parliament has been attacked for deceiving the public by pushing out advocacy concerning a legal procedure that does not actually exist. However, the Secretariat maintains that this risk was reasonable given the importance of providing citizens with a set of faces to clarify the differences between and importance of europarties that have until now achieved only negligible name recognition in public spheres.

The second phase of the campaign stretched from October 2013 to February 2014, and is planned around issue promotion. Each month featured a different theme, including jobs, the economy, EU in the world, and European quality of life. These themes were chosen to unify europarty and institutional communications, and thereby enhance their impact. To convince the public that these issues are important and that “the European Parliament is doing something about them,” the Secretariat promoted them through conferences, informational materials, and advertisements, all unified over time and across the continent by theme and logo. Additionally, all election promotions prominently featured the date of the poll, which addresses structural knowledge deficits on a basic but critical level.

The third phase is built around the actual election, and its highlight will be two to three presidential debates between the presidential candidates of the five major europarties, as well as several additional debates between the candidates of the largest two parties. These events were designed to further reinforce the human nature of the campaign, while drawing additional parallels between European and familiar national political processes. Additionally, there was hope that the debates would serve to further delineate the differences of the various europarties and therefore the importance of voting for the party that best aligned with one’s views. However, after the first debate between centre-right candidate and Eurogroup President Jean-Claude Juncker and centre-left candidate and European Parliament President Martin Schulz, was widely criticized for not being a debate at all; overwhelmingly, both candidates agreed with each other, even when explicitly asked where they disagreed. However, the ultimate success or failure of this phase will not be evident until after the May 22-25 elections.

The final phase of the campaign will focus on “outcomes,” and will be completed at an inauguration ceremony for the Commission President, which will take place in front of the Parliament. This ceremony was created by the Secretariat to help concretize the impact that citizens achieved through their votes. It will “complete the narrative of the President of the Commission being elected through the European Parliament.” In doing so, the Secretariat seeks to overcome the image of Brussels as a hopelessly complex and out of touch group of institutions, and to display the EU to its citizens as a single, coherent government that was directly elected by the citizens themselves. It is expected that this outcome will be far more palatable to broadcasters and citizens. However, it is vulnerable to the decision of the European Council; if the heads of state decide to pass over the “elected” presidential candidate, this final phase would strongly reinforce popular perceptions of democratic deficit.

While this campaign is clearly steeped in advocacy and international broadcasting initiatives, listening was also incorporated into all four phases, with the primary objective of designing a rational approach to regional tailoring. The Secretariat conducts extremely detailed studies of European constituencies concerning the European issues that they care about, and gives this information to its regional Information Offices, which are responsible for conducting localized campaigning. However, a key weakness in this strategy is a fundamental disconnect between strategists in Brussels and the local officials who carry it out. For example, the staff of one Information Office claimed to ignore the survey results entirely, as they considered it impossible to get press attention for the issues that their local survey had revealed as most important. Effective listening must take place as close to the ground as possible, and the Secretariat’s top-down system mitigates the positive impact of this data-driven approach. However, because Information Offices are granted substantial autonomy to implement or ignore the Secretariat’s findings, the result of this disconnect is incoherence rather than local alienation, which would undoubtedly be more detrimental. Given the context in which citizens feel as if democracy is disappearing as governance moves upwards, locally sensitive campaigning is critical.

**Key Trends**

 After examining the discrete public diplomacy activities of the Commission, Council, and Parliament, several trends become clear. On the whole, though room for improvement certainly remains, the EU is beginning to craft increasingly effective public diplomacy campaigns, many of which have the potential to help restore Brussels’ democratic legitimacy.

*Politicization of Public Diplomacy*

A key trend that emerges from this institutional landscape is the profound difficulty of achieving popular or media interest in apolitical messaging. The Commission and the Council struggle to have their apolitical messages taken up by journalists, and as Eurobarometer reveals, citizens are overwhelmingly more receptive to receiving information through news broadcasters than from the institutions themselves. Therefore, these institutions’ refusal to champion agenda-driven messaging severely limits their impact. Though the Commission has historically been known as the heart of the European project, its bureaucratization has limited its role, while the Parliament has become the core of Europeanist momentum, both in terms of European policy and engagement. While the Parliament may have begun as a “multi-lingual talking shop,” it has clearly developed into “one of the most powerful legislatures in the world both in terms of its legislative and executive oversight powers,”[[67]](#footnote-67) and it is using this hard-won power to boldly defend the EU through advocacy and broadcasting campaigns that present the EU as a platform for policymaking, rather than as an issue itself. This messaging is apt as the Parliament itself rapidly politicizes, and increasingly takes on the political habits of traditional parliaments: “Politics in the European Parliament is becoming increasingly based around party and ideology. Voting is increasingly split along left-right lines, and the cohesion of the party groups has risen dramatically.”[[68]](#footnote-68) Accordingly, the Parliament’s messaging and tone has taken on this same political character, and thereby become much more palatable to media outlets that are looking for traditional political conflict. The Secretariat’s election strategy is less innovative than pragmatic; for the first time, an international organization has taken on the political trappings of a national election, complete with the recognizable fixtures of debates, manifestos, and candidates, and it is these fixtures that are emphasized in Parliamentary advocacy, picked up by broadcasters, and understood by citizens.

However, this trend is far from obvious to many observers, who could point to the meager 43% of Europeans who voted in the 2009 European elections.[[69]](#footnote-69) But it is important to note that while the elections are referred to as “European,” they have actually been parliamentary, as the Commission – the EU executive – was nominated by heads of state and government, rather than the Parliament. Compared to other non-executive elections, the 2009 turnout is relatively high. For example, only 37.8% of Americans voted in the 2010 midterm election, in which legislators but not the executive were on the ballot.[[70]](#footnote-70) Thus, the presidential politicization of European elections that is defining the 2014 poll has dramatically redefined the Parliament’s ability to influence constituents. The new election structure has given the Parliament and its MEPs a presidential rallying point, and the Parliament, as well as the europarties, have constructed robust public diplomacy strategies to capitalize on this advantage.

A key indicator of the politicization of public diplomacy is the extent to which Commission presidential candidates are defining the election campaign. For example, all communications from the Party of European Socialists, the center-left and second largest europarty, are being heavily branded with their presidential candidate, Martin Shultz, with their website’s former home page being replaced by a smiling headshot of Schulz asking “Are you in?” The European People’s Party (EPP), the center-right and largest europarty have also replaced their homepage with a large picture of their presidential candidate, Jean-Claude Juncker. Despite the Barroso Commission’s insistence on rigorous depoliticization, this narrative is being overwritten by the activism of the Parliament. Perhaps more critically, the parties’ candidates have begun to organically interact and debate. After the EPP presidential nomination conference, the presidential candidate of the European Left posted a rebuttal, attacking Juncker’s manifesto. While these discourses do remain largely unreported in mainstream news outlets, and formal debates remain largely consensus-based, I see this politicized discourse as the beginning of what will become a larger and more visible trend; national media outlets are generally interested in conflict, and when Europe can be conveyed through political arguments that resemble those with which citizens are familiar, Brussels has a much stronger change of bringing European issues into national discourses.

*Transition from Ideological to Material Messaging*

A second major trend is the transition from ideological to material messaging. Prior to the eurocrisis, institutional communications were largely couched in appeals to “European values.” But over the past five years, the three major institutions have learned to focus on “things you can count,” and “how policy will impact individuals,” as explained by a Commission spokesperson. While the Commission shares EU policies through the Europe for Citizens initiative, the Council seeks to explain how these policies are created, and the Parliament explains how you, as a citizen, can impact and change the policies. To put it another way, the institutions are beginning to move away from the EU itself as a policy issue, and to instead debate what Europe is doing, and what it should be doing, rather than whether the EU should exist at all. As expressed by a senior official in a Commissioner’s cabinet, “People have to stop thinking about the EU as *if*, and start talking about what it's doing.” He went on to suggest that the weakness of MEPs impede this process, but increasingly, the institutions are filling this gap in policy communications; they are beginning to frame the EU as a forum for policy, rather than as a policy in itself. From the perspective of democratic legitimation, there are three fundamental reasons that these appeals to concrete policy bear substantially more utility than abstractions of Europe.

Firstly, European ideals are not exclusively European. The principles that Brussels claims as its own, including “respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and the respect for human rights”[[71]](#footnote-71) are not strictly European, but instead the cosmopolitan ideals of the French Enlightenment. While these principles do largely characterize the EU-28, and candidate states cannot legally accede to the union until these principles are demonstrated,[[72]](#footnote-72) they are equally emblematic of governance throughout the developed world. While the specifics of European, American, and Japanese governance will certainly differ, the Enlightened ideals that underlie them are comparable, and this lack of uniqueness makes them a difficult rallying point. Additionally, because the national governments of the EU-28 also tend to embrace these same principles, they cannot imbue any added value to the European level of governance.

Secondly, abstract terms have little resonance in the post-crisis political environment. Prior to the eurocrisis, when the collective memory of WWII was still the chief justification for European governance, these values did have a place in institutional messaging. Within this original framework, the EU was a key facilitator of continental harmony, and it could therefore be seen to create a peaceful, respectful environment in which liberal principles could flourish. However, in the contemporary space, they do little to legitimize European governance. If anything, it is likely that these highfalutin terms alienate disenchanted citizens who are looking for the EU to represent and promote their individual interests, rather than some vague concept of European society or solidarity.

 Finally, appeals to European values cannot motivate participation in European governance, especially in terms of voting behavior. For example, a citizen will not be encouraged to vote because he dislikes capital punishment, a principle that the EU represents, as there is no concept of choice. If a value is European, it connotes that there are no options concerning its implementation within European borders. If you are a good European, you already do subscribe to these values, as does your government, and your vote will not impact the value one way or another, as it is *already* European. Furthermore, values of any sort do not impact most people in their day-to-day lives. While voters may feel morally activated by the death penalty, it likely does not affect them or their family in a direct way, and again, this punishment is already illegal. Therefore, with the exception of certain activists, Europhiles, and cosmopolitans, appeals to European values can be expected to fail to increase democratic participation. Empirically, this conclusion has been supported; only 16% of Europeans were interested in learning about “values defended by the EU” from their MEP, while over twice that amount were interested in learning about “EU solutions to tackle the [economic] crisis.”[[73]](#footnote-73)

*Bottom-Up Messaging*

 A final trend in EU public diplomacy is the incorporation of bottom-up messaging strategies. This practice builds on the material communications explained above, but are distinct in that Brussels is actively considering its citizens interests, needs, and skepticisms when issuing information. In the past, Europe has been accused of a certain paternalism; Brussels was understood to act in the interests of citizens as defined by European officials, and not necessarily according to what citizens actually wanted, and this perception is likely not far from the truth. Furthermore, this mild disdain was easily discernable in its communications. But now, European officials are listening and adapting based on the needs, concerns, and lifestyles of target publics. They are learning to convey their activities and policies in terms of how they will benefit European citizens in their material, day-to-day lives. As stated by a Commission spokesperson, “it’s all about cost-benefit.” The institutions have learned to make, for example, a highly technical environmental document palatable to citizens by phrasing communiques in terms of, “what does renewable energy mean for you?” Concerning the election campaign, the four thematic issues that will be promoted were chosen because of their importance to the average citizen, as revealed through Eurobarometer data. Even the theme “European way of life,” which could have been executed through the value-based frameworks that citizens have traditionally ignored, incorporated everyday concerns such as nondiscriminatory equal pay and immigration regulation. Overall, public diplomacy thinking in Brussels has overcome the tendency to “[listen] only to one’s own circle,” and is genuinely speaking with citizens, and not at them.[[74]](#footnote-74) If this trend continues, it should be expected that trust will be built between Brussels and citizens, who will increasingly believe that the EU does care about the issues that they care about, as well as their opinion on these issues. Thus, Brussels is moving towards the “holy grail of public diplomats,” in which “responding to international opinion” is central.[[75]](#footnote-75)

**Discourse Analysis & Impact Analysis[[76]](#footnote-76)**

*Methodology*

 To measure the impact that these public diplomacy strategies, practices, and trends are achieving, we can examine how the 2014 elections are being portrayed by international broadcasters. While Brussels’ public diplomacy activities expand far beyond the scope of the upcoming poll, it is easiest to measure messaging take-up in conjunction with the elections for two reasons. Firstly, the election campaign has clearly defined messaging and behavior goals that can be checked against actual coverage of the poll and the candidates. Secondly, because it resembles domestic processes, the election is easy for national news outlets to cover, and this is therefore a relatively easy case. Because I am searching for the beginning of an unprecedented trend in accurate and informative European reporting, it is important to analyze a topic where even small impacts will be apparent. Therefore, I tracked the usage of ten election-related keywords over four sample time periods in British and Spanish newspapers. These two case countries were chosen as representative of pro-EU and anti-EU environments; it should be expected that Brussels’ democratic messages will not be received identically across the EU-28, and these cases allow us to segment Brussels’ public diplomacy impact between publics that are friendly towards European governance, represented by Spain, and those that are generally opposed to it, represented by the UK. In the Spanish market, I analyzed *El País*, as this leading newspaper commands a comprehensive and cross-demographic readership across the country. In Britain, I examined the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail*. The first paper is a center-right publication that has a reputation for euroscepticism, while the second is a tabloid that is known for radically anti-European stories that are often largely fabricated. It is important to analyze both, as UK newspaper readership is largely segmented by class. While the political and financial elite will read the *Telegraph*, most average people use tabloids such as the *Daily Mail* as their primary news source, and this double analysis will therefore make it possible to identify trends in messaging even if they are only present at one societal stratum.[[77]](#footnote-77)

 Within these newspapers, I analyzed the following 11 keywords by frequency, tone, partisanship, Europeanization, and associated terms: European elections / euroelections, European Parliament, European People’s Party (EPP), Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), European Greens, Europe of Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), European Left (EL), Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD), presidential nominees / presidential candidates, and State of the Union.[[78]](#footnote-78) The first two terms are clearly integral to election messaging, the next seven are the largest europarties, and the final two are markers to see whether Brussels’ framing is being picked up in national media, and also whether the politicization of the Parliament and its Secretariat is filtering down to national reports. For the sake of feasibility, I collected these terms from all media articles within four sample weeks. These weeks were chosen to be representative of the three campaign phases that have passed thus far, as well as a baseline week prior to the campaign’s launch. To maximize consistency, I used the last full Monday to Sunday week of each phase.[[79]](#footnote-79) Within each sample week, I analyzed every digitally published article by the three newspapers. Each term was counted independently, regardless of whether the same term was found multiple times in one article. Despite every effort to collect this data rigorously, because of the relatively small data set that this process returned (342 terms), resulting analysis should not be read as a hard prediction, but instead as a softer method of identifying possible trends and relationships.

 To measure the ways in which these terms were used, I examined four measures: tone, partisanship, extremism, and Europeanization. It was established earlier that trust and knowledge deficits are the key barriers to democratic legitimacy, and these parameters are useful in determining whether these issues are being mitigated or exasperated by broadcasters. Tone was ranked simply as positive, neutral, or negative, and this ranking was determined strictly by how a given term was presented, and not by the overall tone of the article or author. In the post-crisis media environment, it is especially important that tone is taken into account; while Brussels press officers were sure that the EU had become more frequently mentioned in national media since 2009, this increase could easily be caused by the eurocrisis, and not by any counter-messaging from Brussels, and the negativity of EU coverage can help determine the extent to which coverage reflects active European advocacy or passive reactions to the crisis.

 Concerning partisanship, I ranked terms from -2 to 2, with each integer representing, respectively, far-left, center-left, centrist, center-right, and far-right. If partisanship was not present, the term would be logged as non-partisan. Terms were considered non-partisan when they were not associated with any right-left ideological position or figure, or if they were discussed in the context of the merits or drawbacks of European governance, rather than the policies that the EU implements or the officials who support them. For terms that did have partisan associations, the partisan ranking was determined by comparing against the party platforms and manifestos of the seven major europarties. This common standard allowed me to systematically categorize partisanship regardless of whether the partisanship came from references to national political parties, European parties, or partisan concepts unaffiliated with a formal party. Because of the importance of communist, anarchist, and fascist extremists to this election, the -2 and 2 terms were used only to refer to these anti-establishment, anti-European parties. So even though the European Greens, for example, lie to the left of the Socialists and Democrats, both were considered center-left in this analysis, as both are interested in working within the existing European system and are not seeking to radically alter the relationship between governments and their citizens. For analytical purposes, it is more important to clearly distinguish between disruptive and cooperative parties than to note different shades of traditional leftism, which could distract from the former purpose. If multiple partisan stances were invoked, the ranking of each was averaged. To ensure that it would still be clear where extremism was invoked, I also measured extremism separately, with measures of “true,” “false,” or “mixed,” in cases of extremism being discussed in the context of mainstream politics.

 Finally, I measured Europeanization. A key problem with past European elections is that they were contested only in a national context; candidates ran on domestic rather than European issues, and voters made decisions based on the actions of their national governments, instead of on how different European policies would affect their lives. EU knowledge deficits have been largely attributed to this phenomenon, and the public diplomacy campaign surrounding the elections is explicitly targeting this practice. Therefore, it is important to know whether European issues are being covered as fundamentally European, or as a footnote to domestic politics. Europeanization is far harder to operationalize than the previous three terms due to its relatively abstract nature, and to keep my quantification as objective as possible, I evaluated Europeanization only as “true” or “false.” Within this dichotomy, it becomes possible to define whether a term is used in a regional or national context in a fairly straightforward way. If a term is used to evaluate or predict national events, for example, by explaining how the European elections will impact proximal domestic elections, it is not Europeanized. If the term is used in a European context, for example, by explaining how the European elections will impact the recovery of the euro, it is considered Europeanized. I excepted this rule only if the term was used in conjunction with an explanation of the domestic politics of two or more countries outside of the newspaper’s home state, as this continental outlook denotes a European mindset, even if it is expressed through national-level events.

*Quantitative Trends*

 At the basic level, we can evaluate the impact of Brussels’ public diplomacy by analyzing the frequency with which the keywords were described in particular ways, or mentioned at all. Firstly, the sheer number of occurrences different dramatically across the papers, with 246 in *El País*, but only 57 in the *Daily Mail* and 41 in the *Telegraph.* This confirms widespread research that has noted the British public sphere to be dramatically smaller than spheres in Spain and other pro-EU countries. The average tone in Spain was also much higher at .286, while the *Telegraph*’s average was .05 and the *Daily Mail* had a very low -.607. These metrics also confirm expectations given the paper’s reputation, as do low levels of Europeanization in the UK and higher levels in Spain. However, concerning extremism, the *Telegraph* European reports were surprisingly issue-based, with economic and infrastructure issues complementing a still very present fascination with the referendum and UKIP. This issue articles show that some of Brussels’ information is being picked up within the UK, at least on the elite level, despite the small size of the public sphere.

Additionally, we can examine the correlations between different components of message framing. It should be noted that most computed correlations were fairly weak, with correlation coefficients between .3 and .5, but because we are looking for the beginning of larger trends, these correlations are still significant. Firstly, partisan conflict is negatively correlated with Europeanization, which suggests that partisanship at the European level is generally portrayed in a national context. In other words, if S&D and EPP MEPs are reported as disagreeing, the MEPs in question will generally be discussed in a national context – for example, by predicting how this fight will impact domestic elections. Consensus, alternatively, is European. When institutions act as one, or when officials of multiple nationalities agree with each other, this is generally a Europeanized discourse.

 Next, we see that extremism is generally portrayed negatively. In the Spanish context, this is surely a victory of legitimacy; extremism is not very prevalent, and where it is mentioned, it is dismissed as a poor option. However, in the UK, and especially in the *Daily Mail*, where extremism is mentioned in 69% of cases, this correlation means that near-constant negativity is reflected on the institutions, which are reported on almost entirely in the context of extremist parties. Another important point concerning extremism is the absence of a pan-European extremist public sphere. Over the past two years, academics and pundits have asserted that the only European demos is one of anti-Europeanism. However, this does not materialize, with extremism strongly correlated with national frameworks in the *Telegraph*, and with no meaningful correlation in the other papers. Conversely, at least among British elites, it seems that central parties are positively correlated with concepts of Europeanization. This is surprising within such a eurosceptic country, and shows that Parliamentary advocacy to push Europe into the political mainstream may be having an impact.

 Finally, the correlations between tone and Europeanization in the *Daily Mail* and the *Telegraph* are near-exact opposites, with a correlation coefficient of .3951 for the *Telegraph* and -.4087. While neither correlation is very strong, they do differ substantially. Since the eurocrisis, nearly all British politicians have taken to publically bashing Europe, but these numbers indicate that elites do have access to information that portrays Europeanized concepts in a fairly positive way. It is unlikely that they simply ignore this information, and more probably that they are disparaging Europe to gain approval from the *Daily Mail* readers who are being provided with antithetical information. While it may be impossible for Brussels’ public diplomacy to break through the hardline euroscepticism of the *Daily Mail*, it does seem to be impacting the *Telegraph*, whose traditional euroscepticism is being slowly being permeated, at least in the context of the election.

*Qualitative Trends*

 In both British papers, the vast majority of all keywords were associated with secession concepts, with UKIP or in-or-out referendum legislation connected to 56% of keywords in the *Daily Mail* and 32% in the *Telegraph*. Furthermore, the *Daily Mail* did not mention a presidential candidate once, despite Juncker and Schultz being appointed during the March sample week. In the *Telegraph*, Schulz was mentioned in his capacity as Parliament President concerning the Parliament’s reaction to the Ukraine crisis, but again, no candidacies were mentioned. Similarly, the EPP is mentioned only in reference to Ukraine. Otherwise, the only Europarty mentioned was the far-right, secessionist EFD. Furthermore, Ukraine stories are one of the very few examples of Europeanized discourse in the *Daily Mail*. This seems to indicate that the EU may be able to break into the British discourse with a heavy emphasis on the EU as a foreign affairs actor. British euroscepticism tends to be founded in fear of Brussels impinging on British sovereignty to the detriment of the country’s citizens, and in this framework, foreign action does not resonate as strongly as economic or social issues, as international affairs does not directly impact the average Britton to the same extent as the latter issues. Thus, while the campaign has struggled to influence middle class or elitist discourses in the UK, there remains substantial potential to engage the British public.

 In *El País*, we see a triumph of the presidential public diplomacy framework. Once the four major parties declared their presidential candidate, articles often listed all five candidates (as the Greens selected dual candidates) without explicit reference to their party. Rather than invoke the names of the largely unknown europarties, the candidates are presented as representatives of party policies and principles. Additionally, the paper has run multiple profiles on Juncker and Schulz, the candidates of the two major europarties. Aside from their policies, Junker is consistently referred to as a great negotiator, while Schulz is known as an activist who can break through bureaucratic red tape. These relatable characterizations have helped to clearly differentiate the policies of each party through a human interest framework that can appeal even to citizens who are not interested in politics, let alone at the European level. Thus, while the europarties are still not gaining traction in the media, their candidates are, which is a substantial victory for the campaign’s presidential framework. This is especially important in a prolific multi-party democracy such as Spain, whose many small regional parties can make a specific candidate’s beliefs more salient than party ideals, which can shift through fluctuating coalitions and alliances. The key exception to this presidentialist messaging, however, is the EPP, which was mentioned 38 times within the sample weeks, compared to S&D’s 2 mentions. The EPP is by far the most formally organized europarty, and it takes pains to resemble a national party in structure, image and communications. Thus, its Dublin party conference received daily coverage, while the S&D conference that was simultaneously occurring in Rome was not covered. However, the S&D presidential candidate was mentioned very frequently, including in almost all articles covering the EPP Dublin conference. Therefore, the S&D’s choice of a strong presidential candidate – Schulz’ potential as president has been compared to that of the legendary Delors – seems to have saved their campaign from obscurity.

 Another series of stories in the phase three sample followed Spanish Prime Minister Rajoy at the EPP Dublin Convention, focusing on his decision-making process concerning who he would support for the party’s presidential candidate. Ultimately, Rajoy put Spanish votes behind Juncker, despite favoring Commissioner Michael Barnier, who was believed to be willing to offer Spain more favorable management of its ongoing bailout. *El País* reported that he ultimately chose to support Juncker because he was German Chancellor Angela Market’s preferred candidate. Up to here, this could be a standard case of national politicians and media scapegoating Brussels for “forcing” them to make unpopular decisions. However, the paper goes on – in multiple articles – to explain that Rajoy made this choice “to gain more power in Brussels.” All articles describing the deal explicitly stated that Rajoy was not forced to support Merkel’s candidate, but instead made a rational choice in a calculated attempt to gain political capital within the EPP and the Commission. It is likely that this shift from blaming Brussels negotiations to explaining them was caused, at least in part, by the politicized format of the EPP convention. Backroom political dealings concerning party leadership are common to all of Europe’s parliamentary democracies, and these processes are relatable and compelling.

 Another notable concept that is conveyed in *El País* is that of the Parliament as the defender of the European people against rest of Brussels, as well as national governments. This message is especially prevalent in public interest issues such as tobacco regulation, environmental protection, and workers’ rights. In these cases, the Commission, Council and national governments are associated with big business, lobbyists, and elite interests, while the Parliament is presented as the idealistic defender of the average citizen. This is reflective of the Secretariat’s core advocacy strategy, which is to explain to voters that the Parliament is accountable to individual citizens, and that citizens’ interests directly inform the Parliament’s composition and actions. However, in these cases, the Parliament was never addressed from a partisan perspective; the Parliament itself was described as an actor, rather than the parties within it. So while the concept of a partisan Parliament as a standard political body is not being incorporated, the net value seems to be positive, as the Parliament is seen as a genuine – if unitary – protector of the public interest.

 Finally, in *El País*, any reference to the elections are always noted with the date, and the date is used in reference to the elections a notable 34% of the time in the British papers as well. This practice was not reflected to the same extent in references to national or municipal elections, which suggests that the date references are being lifted from Commission, Parliament, or europarty press releases, which have prioritized the diffusion of knowledge concerning when the elections are, in recognition of the fact that even voters who think the EU is important cannot vote if they don’t know when to do so. In most countries, European elections are not at the same time of the year as local or national polls, which makes this messaging point critical. Therefore, at a basic but critical level, reports of the election date are dealing a critical blow to the European knowledge deficit.

**Recommendations**

 While EU public diplomacy had made inroads towards overcoming knowledge and trust deficits, there is more that could be done. For the first time in its history, in the 2014-21 Financial Framework, the European budget shrunk, and this is not the time to discuss new programs. However, existing strategies can be reoriented to maximize their effectiveness by strengthening the policy-communications relationship, emphasizing the relevance of European negotiations to national audiences, and promoting transformative institutional cultures.

*Build Public Diplomacy into Policy*

 European democracy would be perceptively and institutionally strengthened if communications were more deeply integrated into the policy-making process. Not only will this allow communicators to proactively plan overarching strategies to explain EU policies to the public, but it will also create policies that are more resonant with public desires. Communicators in Brussels are increasingly listening to the public through survey and media analysis, and they have their finger on the proverbial European pulse. They know what will outrage citizens, what they will ignore, and what they will appreciate. Therefore, their involvement in policy writing will create legislation that is more in touch with constituent’s desires and needs, thereby adding layers of democracy in the public mind, as well as in a hard institutional sense. This is true in any government, but it is especially important in Brussels, because the unelected Commission is the only institution that can introduce legislation. At a low level, communicators and policy-makers do currently coordinate. For the past 2-3 years, a Commissioner’s “cabinet must have written outlines of what this [policy] will mean in terms of communication,” but this rule is often respected in name only, with civil servants writing a policy and simply asking communicators to “sell it.” In the past, this has had severely detrimental effects; when Michel Barnier, the Commissioner for the Internal Market, presented a policy on water reform, it was overstated by broadcasters as water privatization. The legislation had nothing to do with privatization, but this narrative was nonetheless accepted by publics, and widespread protests. Because the policy was created without considering how its wording – as well as its neoliberal content – would resonate with citizens, Barnier was ultimately forced to withdraw the bill, to the detriment of the Commission’s popular mandate, as it now seemed out of touch with ordinary people, as well as to water services, which still required reforms. If communicators had been integrated into the water legislation’s creation from its early stages, the dissonance between the policy, likely media interpretation, and public opinion could have been recognized and harmonized before the proposal was released.

*Explain the National Relevance of Negotiations and Policies*

My quantitative and qualitative analysis suggested that firstly, partisan conflict at the European level is generally portrayed a national conflict, and secondly, that this conflict is beginning to be portrayed, at least in the pro-EU bloc of member-states, as legitimate negotiations, rather than oppressive foreign rule. While the latter case is still far more frequent, the limited but significant media pickup of genuine negotiation analysis shows that broadcasters are willing to place this framework. Therefore, it is important for Brussels, and especially for the Council of Ministers, to actively accelerate the portrayal of European negotiations and policies as nationally relevant. In other words, it should be made clear what individual leaders have achieved through negotiations, as opposed to the status quo, in which most national politicians blame negotiations for “forcing” them to take unpopular actions. Currently, the Council has two main communication priorities: explaining the impact of legislation on individuals and conveying Council negotiations as consensual endeavors. This remains important, but legislation does not impact all member-states equally, and consensus is more than a concept; it is a process that involves specific tradeoffs. Rarely does one entirely win or entirely lose in a consensus-based negotiation, and explaining the tradeoffs that ministers made while designing a policy would combat the predominant scapegoating narrative in which Brussels negotiations can only cause harm. The Council, as well as the other institutions, have up to now avoided nationally tailored messages, for fear of them contradicting. But what needs to be conveyed is not different concepts, but the actual details of the negotiating process. Council negotiations have historically been intensely secretive, and it would be unrealistic to expect the proceedings of the negotiations themselves to be publicized. However, it would be possible to highlight how particular ministers achieved their national goals. This could be as general as socialist prime ministers securing a progressive labor amendment, or as country-specific as a particular bailout adjustment. Even though EU negotiations do largely progress through consensus, this does not change the fact that different leaders are achieving different goals, and the Council could do more to present these achievements as a positive sum game in which all of the EU-28 comes out ahead, if in different ways. Surely this will not cause EU scapegoating to go away, but if national achievements can be explicitly identified, then there will at least be a credible counter-discourse, and scapegoating will not be able to continue unquestioned. In this information environment, citizens will be far less likely to believe that Brussels is trampling over their democratically elected national leaders.

*Promote Transformative Institutional Culture*

 Finally, Brussels could conduct stronger public diplomacy, and counter antidemocratic perceptions more effectively, if its engagement strategies were designed and managed with stronger conviction. While the Commission used to design policies with Europeanism in mind, over the past several decades, this transformative culture was replaced by a civil service ethic that prevents the Commission from speaking on the contentious issues that broadcasters and individuals would listen to. Since 2010, the Parliament has stepped up to fill this gap in Europeanism, and the results, from a public diplomacy standpoint, have been overwhelmingly positive. By having an opinion on almost every issue, and encouraging its Secretariat to “defend the Treaties of the European Union,” rather than to simply execute their portfolio responsibilities, the Parliament has managed to portray itself – even in eurosceptic countries – as the legitimate and democratic core of the EU. If the Commission and Council could position themselves similarly, Brussels would have taken a large step towards ending the knowledge, trust, and democratic deficits.

**Conclusion**

Overall, it seems that where Brussels has embraced innovative and active public diplomacy strategies, it has made substantial progress towards reestablishing democratic legitimacy. But in areas and institutions where public diplomacy has been conservative or limited, sizable democratic doubts remain. If nothing else, this conclusion indicates that Europe is not doomed to disintegration or spiraling extremism. While both are tenable possibilities, they can be avoided by listening to public perceptions, knowledge, and desires, advocating directly to citizens on topics they care about, and effectively managing the international broadcasting environment.

Mid-way through 2014, crises of democracy extend beyond Europe, and it is not unreasonable to look to regional organizations to fill democratic gaps around the world. While the EU is far more integrated and powerful than its Asian, Latin American, and African counterparts, regional governance can still begin to compensate for globally plummeting levels of trust in and satisfaction with national governments. Even intergovernmental associations such as ASEAN, Mercosur, and the African Union can serve as a democratic layer that transcends national and local governments that may be kleptocratic, autocratic, or simply stagnant. However, for these nonelected regional organizations to earn popular legitimacy, they must engage their citizens on a profound level; for this, they may look to the EU for a model that is imperfect but nonetheless deeply impactful.

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Apendix: Correlations

Integrated *Daily Mail*



 *Telegraph* *El País*



1. Please note that this is an unfinished piece. Further analysis, as well as necessary corrections, will be incorporated following the May 2014 elections to the European Parliament. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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79. With the exception of Phase 3, which had not yet ended at the time of the analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)