

Explaining Citizens' Participation in a Transnational European Public Sphere

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Abstract

Globalization and Europeanization processes have led to an increasing public sphere deficit. This deficit can be addressed by a transnationalization of the individual countries' national public spheres. This requires a perception of discussions in other national public spheres, a condition which is met if citizens of a nation-state follow reporting of issues in other countries. Using Eurobarometer surveys, we examine the extent to which citizens of 27 European countries engage with foreign media and the factors that determine participation in a transnational public sphere. Only a small minority of EU citizens engage with foreign media, and there are considerable differences between countries and citizens. Using multilevel techniques we find that besides other factors education, professional status and multilingualism play a crucial role in explaining participation in a transnational public sphere, resources which are distributed very unevenly among citizens. Thus, participation in a transnational public sphere is an issue of social inequality.

Keywords

public sphere – participation – globalization – transnationalization – European countries

Many scholars have argued that processes of Europeanization and globalization have led to an increasing public sphere deficit at the European and global level (e.g. Gerhards 1993; Koopmans and Statham 2010a; Risse 2010). The point of reference for this diagnosis is usually the institutional configuration at the national level. At the nation-state level, there exists a congruent relationship (Held 1995) between citizens, governmental institutions and the public sphere (Risse 2010). There is a congruent relationship between law-makers and citizens because those who are subject to the decisions of law-makers in turn decide who the law-makers will be. A congruence (to a large extent) between the public sphere and policy-makers exists because the public informs about the decisions of the elite in power, the potential decision-makers in opposition and civil society actors. Citizens are able to make their judgements on the basis of this information, and these judgements become manifest in voting decisions and other forms of political participation. Mass media are the key institutions in this process of information exchange between citizens and policy-makers.¹

However, when political decisions are not made by nation-states, but by the institutions of the EU or by other international organizations,² this congruence no longer exists and a public sphere deficit may emerge. Citizens then cannot adequately inform themselves about the decisions nor participate in the discourse even though they are directly affected. The opportunity to inform oneself, however, is considered to be one of the central criteria for determining the quality of democratic processes by many democratic theorists, such as Robert Dahl (1989:111–112), who refers to this as “enlightened understanding”.

Consequentially, scholars like Jürgen Habermas (2001), Pieter de Wilde and Michael Zürn (2012) and many others have claimed that the “European public sphere deficit” must be overcome. Following the work of Jürgen Habermas (2001; 2006) and other scholars we will argue that two conditions must be met for this deficit to be overcome and for a fully-fledged transnational European public sphere to emerge: Issues must simultaneously be discussed in different national public spheres. In addition, citizens should be familiar with different frames of interpretation of these issues. However, many studies have shown

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- 1 From numerous studies, we know that people make adequate attempts to observe politics at the national level. For instance, in the 2010 Eurobarometer survey 85 per cent of EU citizens reported that they watched television daily or almost daily, 56 per cent listen to radio daily, and 38 per cent read a daily newspaper (European Commission 2011).
 - 2 This is indeed the case, since the members of the EU have handed over a part of their national sovereignty to the EU, the nation-states and their citizens are immediately affected by its resolutions, and European law supercedes national law.

that these frames vary widely between national public spheres (e.g. Koopmans and Statham 2010a). The debate on the more recent European financial and euro crises might serve as a good example to illustrate this point.

It seems that these crises were discussed in different national public spheres quite differently. In the Greek media, the German chancellor Angela Merkel was compared to Adolf Hitler, whereas the German media accused the Greeks for being too lazy and responsible for the crisis due to their own fault. In Finland, public opinion spoke out against further aid for indebted countries, whereas in Spain protesters called for more solidarity between the rich and the poor countries. Although the same issues were on the agenda of the public spheres of all countries at the same time, the frames at hand vary from nation state to nation state. This will most likely impact on citizens' opinion living in the respective states: They will interpret the crisis and the solutions to the crisis differently, because they are primarily exposed to the interpretations of their national public sphere.

We argue that citizens will become familiar with different frames only when they are capable to follow media coverage of other countries. Therefore, the aim of our paper is to analyze the extent to which citizens engage with foreign media.

Our analysis addresses two shortcomings in the literature on the emergence of a European public sphere: 1) Most empirical studies of a European public sphere have focused on the analysis of media content and neglected to analyze citizens' participation in a European public sphere (Machill and Beiler 2006). We will instead analyze the extent to which citizens in 27 countries participate in the public sphere of other countries. The consumption of media content from other countries does not only mean that citizens will perceive transnational issues, but also that they will become familiar with the interpretive frameworks of other national publics and thus satisfy the condition which many theorists see as crucial to processes of deliberation at the transnational level.³ 2) One can assume that people's participation in a transnational public sphere depends on specific resources like education and multilingualism. As these resources are distributed unequally between and within countries, participation in a European public sphere becomes a question of social inequality. Although theories of a European public sphere refer in abstract terms to the European people, they ignore that the citizenry is socially structured, and

3 We will focus on one form of participation in the public sphere only. Besides reading newspapers or following the news in television there exist other and more active forms of participation in the public sphere like participation in a public debate or participation in demonstration.

that the distribution of key resources is a central feature for participation in a transnational public sphere.

The focus of this article is to analyze the extent to which citizens of 27 European states participate in a transnational public sphere and how the differences between countries and between social groups within countries can be explained. The empirical basis for our analysis comes from two surveys taken in the 27 EU member states.

1 Globalization, Europeanization and the ‘Public Sphere Deficit’

There are two distinct versions of a European public sphere in the literature: the idea of a supranational European public sphere on the one hand and the notion of a Europeanization of the national public spheres on the other (Gerhards 1993; 2001; Fossum and Schlesinger 2007; Risse 2010). A supranational public sphere would involve a single European media system, whose contents are consumed in all the various countries of the EU. There have been some attempts to institutionalize a European wide media system like the weekly newspaper “European Voice” or the television programme “Arte”. But these attempts have not been very successful. They reach only a very specialized segment of experts and are heavily dependent on subsidies, whereas ordinary citizens do not belong to their followers. The few attempts which have been successful like “BBC World” or “International Herald Tribune”, have a global rather than a European reach (Koopmans and Statham 2010b:36). Linguistic and cultural barriers and institutional boundaries are the reasons discussed in the literature why the probability that a European public sphere will develop is empirically very low (Gerhards 1993; Risse 2010; Koopmans and Statham 2010a; Heft and Pfetsch 2015).

It seems more likely that a transnationalization of national public spheres will occur. As Habermas has put it: “The missing European public sphere should not be imagined as the domestic public sphere writ large. It can arise only insofar as the circuits of communication within the national arenas open themselves up to one another while themselves remaining intact” (Habermas 2006:102). But what exactly are the characteristics of a transnationalization of national public spheres?

Thomas Risse (2010) as well as Barbara Pfetsch and Annett Heft (2015) provide a very good summary of the debate. Taking up arguments of Jürgen Habermas (1996), Klaus Eder and Cathleen Kantner (2000), and Michael Brüggemann and Katharina Kleinen-von Königslöw (2009) Risse assumes that a transnationalization of national public spheres exists when two conditions

are met. 1) It must be ensured that the national public spheres in different states are mutually aware of what is discussed in the other public spheres. This is the case, for instance, when transnational issues are reported in all countries at the same time. In our view, this condition is also met when citizens of one country consume media from another and by this are informed about what is on the agenda in their neighbouring countries. 2) In addition, people should be familiar with different interpretations and frames of different national public contexts. Only through mutual awareness and knowledge of the framing and interpretation of others a comprehensive transnational discussion which transcends national boundaries can take place (Risse 2010:118).

Does reality in Europe meet these criteria of a transnationalization of national public spheres? There are numerous studies which attempt to survey the degree of Europeanization among national publics. The different works vary in the time periods, countries, policy areas considered and quite often in the theoretical foundation (Gerhards 1993; 2001; Meyer 1999; Eder and Kantner 2000; Trezn 2004; Van der Steeg 2006; Eilders and Voltmer 2003; Peter, de Vreese and Semetko 2003; Koopmans and Erbe 2004; Wimmel 2006; Machill and Beiler 2006; Koopmans 2007; Adam 2007; Pfetsch 2008; Wessler et al. 2008; Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw 2009; Downey and König 2006; Downey, Mihelj and König 2012; various chapters in Koopmans and Statham 2010a). Unfortunately, restrictions in space do not allow us to go into details at this point. Instead, we will concentrate on two aspects of the results of these studies that are significant for this article.

Regarding the first criterion for a transnationalization of national public spheres, Risse comes to the following conclusion: "In sum, these data show that European media have not only increased their coverage of EU policies and events, they are also by and large discussing the same issues at the same time. The increased salience of EU affairs in national newspapers as well as similarities in issue cycles indicate that the first criterion for europeanized public spheres has been met, albeit with some qualifications" (Risse 2010:136). The findings with regard to the second criterion are more disappointing: The frames used for the interpretation of issues in the media dominantly seem to remain nation-state specific (Risse 2010). Therefore, one cannot speak of a Europeanization of national publics in respect to the second criterion.

However, the problem with all empirical studies which have tried to capture the public sphere deficit is that they have analyzed media content, but neglect to analyze whether or not citizens choose to access this content. This is insofar problematic, as all theories of the public sphere are ultimately related to the citizens who constitute a transnational public. Habermas, whose groundwork is adopted by almost all subsequent theories, explicitly assumes

that a European public sphere should enable *citizens* to participate (Habermas 1996:306). Thus – and this is a central platform of our argument – the empirical reference point of the existing analyses does not correlate with the established theoretical concepts.

We attempt to analyze the extent to which European citizens participate in the national public spheres of other countries. The consumption of media content from other countries means not only that citizens will perceive transnational issues, but also that they will become familiar with the interpretive frameworks of other national publics and thus satisfy the condition which many theorists see as crucial to processes of deliberation at the transnational level.

2 Data, Variables and Descriptive Findings

Our analysis is based on Eurobarometer surveys 67.1 and 73.4 from 2007 and 2010. The sample size of each is approximately 500 people over the age of 15 in small countries, and 1,000 people in larger countries. Using appropriate weighting, the samples are representative of the EU population.

In 2010, respondents were asked about their use of foreign language media.⁴ Since most of the 27 countries have only one official language, this usually means media from another country:

In the last twelve months have you – (1) Read a book, newspaper or magazine in a language other than your mother tongue? – (2) Watched TV programmes in a language other than your mother tongue?

Both questions could be answered with “yes, often”, “yes, once or twice” or “no”. They are strongly correlated, and result in one factor in a factor analysis. We therefore only used one scale, “the use of foreign media”, with a range of 0 (no use) to 4 (frequent use). Of course, our scale only partially relates to political issues. For instance, television broadcasts include both political news and entertainment programmes. We therefore also analyzed a question from Eurobarometer 67.1, namely, whether respondents sometimes read a

4 The same question was asked in more recent Eurobarometer surveys, e.g. in EB 79.3 (2013). Unfortunately, these surveys do not contain indicators for respondents' previous migration experience, which is one of our most important explanatory variables. Moreover, a comparison of the distribution of media use across countries in 2010 and 2013 reveals only slight differences – the correlation of country means in media use is 0.993.

newspaper in a foreign language (yes or no). The focus of the newspapers is reporting on political information.⁵

Although by no means perfect, both indicators measure participation in a transnationalized public sphere. Citizens who follow media debates in other countries will be aware of the public discourse beyond their own country and are exposed to “foreign” frames of political issues. Table 1 provides information about EU citizens' participation in a transnational public sphere.

TABLE 1 *Consumption of foreign media in 27 EU countries*

Country	Consumption of foreign books / magazines / tv					Reading of foreign newspapers	
	never in %	once or twice in %	several times in %	<i>N</i>	yes in %	<i>N</i>	
LUX	0.0	8.0	4.0	88.0	505	70.8	500
MAL	4.5	22.7	9.1	59.1	499	56.5	500
SWE	5.0	33.3	15.6	42.8	1,048	21.7	1,011
DEN	7.8	42.2	9.8	38.9	1,007	21.4	1,008
NET	11.7	30.3	15.5	36.5	1,008	17.6	1,000
LAT	15.8	30.5	10.5	36.8	1,001	16.0	1,006
FIN	19.4	35.4	11.1	26.7	998	21.1	1,040
EST	20.0	31.7	11.7	28.3	1,000	19.6	1,001
SLN	21.7	33.9	8.7	27.0	1,010	22.6	1,015
LIT	21.9	34.2	8.6	30.5	1,016	13.3	1,029
CYP	25.6	37.2	9.3	16.3	504	11.6	500
SLK	29.6	24.2	10.1	23.9	1,025	11.1	1,094
BEL	32.6	26.9	9.5	21.1	1,009	15.6	1,040
POR	52.6	18.2	4.6	6.8	1,023	4.8	1,013
CZE	57.2	18.0	4.6	9.0	1,020	5.1	1,060
POL	59.0	16.9	4.6	11.0	996	5.8	1,000

5 Self-reported media usage may suffer from social desirability if respondents interpret the usage of foreign media as related to the idea of a good cosmopolitan citizen (Prior 2009). However, as we are not so much interested in the absolute numbers of media participation, but in country differences and their explanation, possible over-reporting does not matter as much.

TABLE 1 (cont.)

Country	Consumption of foreign books / magazines / TV					Reading of foreign newspapers		
	never in %	once or twice in %	several times in %	<i>N</i>	yes in %	<i>N</i>		
ROM	60.6	11.3	15.5	3.9	8.7	992	5.4	1,028
GER	60.7	8.3	12.5	5.4	13.1	1,511	13.9	1,534
GRE	60.7	9.7	17.4	5.3	6.9	998	6.8	1,000
FRA	62.6	10.4	12.7	4.6	9.8	1,018	13.0	1,031
SPA	65.3	7.5	12.7	4.2	10.3	1,006	4.6	1,006
UK	66.8	14.6	9.9	2.2	6.5	1,312	6.4	1,009
AUS	68.2	7.9	9.0	5.3	9.6	998	6.1	1,011
BUL	71.4	8.0	12.4	2.1	6.1	990	3.2	1,009
IRE	73.1	11.4	9.1	2.7	3.7	1,005	3.3	1,000
HUN	75.2	6.8	9.7	2.9	5.3	1,020	7.9	1,000
ITA	75.2	9.7	9.1	3.1	2.9	1,009	2.9	1,000
Total	58.7	9.6	14.9	5.1	11.7	26,528	9.1	26,445

Almost 60 per cent of citizens have, in the last twelve months, neither read a newspaper, magazine or book, nor watched a TV programme from another country. Those who have consumed a foreign media product only once or twice can hardly be considered to participate in transnational public spheres, especially if compared to participation in national public spheres. Moreover, less than ten per cent of EU citizens sometimes read a foreign newspaper. These findings are sobering for anyone who has hoped that a transnational European public sphere already exists.

At the same time, there are significant differences between countries. In Luxembourg, Malta, Sweden, and the Netherlands, the majority of citizens are involved in a transnational public sphere. By contrast, the proportion of people who never consume foreign-language media is more than two thirds in the UK, Ireland, Austria, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria. Finally, the findings show large differences within countries, with only some citizens participating in other public spheres. We will see below that this is due to differences in education, class, and birth cohort.

3 Explaining Participation in a Transnational Public Sphere: Hypotheses and Bivariate Results

Although theories of a European public sphere refer in abstract terms to the European people, they ignore that unequal distribution of key resources might be a central feature explaining participation. Every EU citizen is a member of a nation-state with a particular institutional structure. These macro contexts, which are similar for all citizens of a single state, affect participation in a transnational public sphere. At the same time, citizens within a nation-state differ in characteristics such as education and social class. We will first discuss the influence of macro contexts and then discuss individual factors. A detailed description of the variables used is given in the appendix. In the formulation of hypotheses, we refer to studies in the field of transnationalization research (see Delhey 2004; Fligstein 2008; Mau 2010; Díez Medrano 2011; Kuhn 2011; Mau and Mewes 2012) and to the literature concerning multilingualism.

1) *Multilingualism*: The language system in Europe is structured according to nation-states. The linguistic heterogeneity within nation-states is very low because most EU countries prescribe only one official language spoken by all citizens. The heterogeneity between states is almost maximal: In the EU member states 24 different official languages exist. Therefore, participation in a national public sphere other than your own requires that you understand a foreign language. The degree of citizens' multilingualism varies across Europe. More than 90 per cent of the Dutch, but less than 30 per cent of Hungarians speak at least one foreign language. Since multilingualism is a precondition of participation in a transnational public sphere, participation should be higher in countries where multilingualism is common. The positive correlation coefficients reported in table 2 confirm this hypothesis.⁶

2) *Country size*: Several studies have shown that the larger a country, the weaker is its international connectedness (Geser 1992). This is especially true for highly modernized societies with a high level of division of labour. The probability of finding trading and communication partners in one's own society is much lower in small countries than in larger countries. Therefore, small countries' economies tend to be more internationally linked (Katzenstein 1985). There is another reason why country size should affect participation in

6 Unfortunately, individual language skills were not assessed. We therefore determined the average number of spoken languages at the country level on the basis of a previous Eurobarometer survey.

TABLE 2 *Consumption of foreign media – bivariate results*

	Consumption of foreign books, magazines, TV	Reading of foreign newspapers
Language skills of population	$r=0.38^{***}$	$r=0.16^{***}$
Population size	$r=-0.19^{***}$	$r=-0.002$
Educational expenditure	$r=0.19^{***}$	$r=0.10^{***}$
Education	$r=0.36^{***}$	$r=0.23^{***}$
Age	$r=-0.21^{***}$	$r=-0.09^{***}$
Occupational position	Cramer's $v=0.23^{***}$	Cramer's $v=0.20^{***}$
Interest in Europe	Tau $b=0.19^{***}$	
European identity	Tau $b=0.24^{***}$	Tau $b=0.17^{***}$
Migration background	$r=0.25^{***}$	$r=0.20^{***}$

Notes: * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$.

transnational public spheres. The production of media products requires high initial investment costs. The relative investment costs decrease with a higher demand for media products. Since media products are produced in a certain language, the potential demand depends on the number of speakers. For small groups, media companies are less inclined to produce differentiated products. For consumers, this means that they have to resort to foreign media products.

Regarding the consumption of television, magazines and books, the results confirm our hypothesis (see table 2): the smaller the population, the higher the proportion of people who consume foreign media. With regard to foreign newspapers, there is no such relationship.

3) Societal education levels: The EU countries differ in their level of educational attainment, measured by the number of those who are literate; the time citizens have spent in educational institutions, and attendance rates at higher education institutions. Since instruction in foreign languages forms part of the institutionalized curriculum in all EU countries, the education level of a country should influence citizens' language skills and therefore affect participation in transnational publics. There might be an additional effect of education. Ronald Inglehart has shown in many studies that, with modernization and education, citizens' "cognitive mobilization" increases, e.g. interest in politics and a willingness to become politically active (Inglehart 1997; Dalton 1984).

Participation in a transnational public sphere can be interpreted in this sense as an expression of a mobilized citizenry.

The correlation coefficients in table 2 indeed indicate a relationship between media consumption and the education level of a country.⁷ It is, however, unclear whether the effect is due to the increased foreign language skills, a longer period of education or to an improved general quality of education. We shall return to this point later in the multivariate analyses.

4) Respondents' education: The influence of education can be measured both on the contextual and on the individual level.⁸ The rationale for the assumed causal relationship remains the same in both cases. Firstly, we suspect that highly-educated people tend to speak more foreign languages, and thus have a crucial resource for participation in a transnational public sphere. Secondly, education increases the level of cognitive mobilization and arouses interest in politics and globalization issues. Table 2 indeed shows a strong correlation between the length of stay in the education system and the likelihood of consuming foreign newspapers and other media. Even though the countries considered vary considerably both in the average level of education⁹ and the degree of educational inequality,¹⁰ a positive relationship between education and foreign media consumption can be found in each of the countries in our sample.

5) Respondents' age: We suspect that, due to a cohort effect, younger citizens are more likely to participate in transnational public spheres than older citizens. Since the inception of the European project in the 1950s, (1) the education level of the populations has increased (2) and societies have become more

7 There are various indicators for education at the country level. For reasons of data availability, we use the expenditures for public and private educational institutions compared to a country's GDP. Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Malta and Cyprus spent more than seven per cent of their GDP on education. Bulgaria, on the other hand, invested less than 3.5 per cent.

8 Normally one would use the indicator of individual level. In our case, however, it makes sense to analyze both levels, especially since the individual level indicator measures only the duration of education.

9 In the Eurobarometer samples considered, the average age at which formal education is completed varies between 15 years in Portugal and more than 21 years in Denmark.

10 The coefficient of variation – a measure of dispersion that corrects the standard deviation for the mean – of years of education completed is particularly high in Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Cyprus, indicating high educational inequality. On the other hand, education inequality is particularly low in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, and Estonia.

Europeanized and globalized as their economic, political, and social links with other countries both within and outside Europe have grown (Fligstein 2008). Both changes have an impact on the different age groups. Older generations are on average less educated, and thus had less opportunity to learn a foreign language. Apart from this, a life-course effect may be presumed: Foreign language skills acquired as a student might be lost over time, especially without an opportunity to practice foreign languages. Consequently, the ability to participate in a transnational public sphere diminishes.

Table 2 indeed shows a negative correlation between age and the consumption of foreign books, magazines and television programmes and a similar, but weaker correlation with respect to foreign newspapers. This is striking considering the fact that in general older people read more newspapers than younger people. Data from Eurobarometer 64.2 (2005) shows that only 22 per cent of 24-year-olds read the news in a daily newspaper, while among respondents over 55 almost twice as many do. This seems, however, to be limited to national newspapers, while the reception of transnational media is more common among younger people. We suspect, however, that the influence of age is reduced if one takes into account respondents' education in multivariate analyses.

6) Respondents' professional status: For two reasons, we assume that professional status is related to participation in a transnational public sphere.

a) Access to jobs highly depends on education, which is in turn associated with multilingualism and political interest. Therefore, multilingualism and political interest are more common among those in higher professional positions. Likewise, the frequency of participation in a transnational public sphere should also increase. This association should disappear when education is controlled for in a multivariate analysis.

b) Professional positions may also exert a direct influence. Different occupations require varying degrees of transnational skills. Managers in multinational corporations, for instance, are often abroad on business, and negotiate with people from other countries (Hartmann 2010). Therefore, they must develop transnational skills and accordingly participate in transnational public spheres. The requirements for unskilled and manual labour are quite different. Since the job takes place locally within one country, the employee is not expected to have or develop transnational skills.

In the Eurobarometer survey, a simple occupational classification system (see appendix) is used. We assume that people in highly skilled and managerial positions participate to the highest degree in a transnational public sphere, followed by skilled employees. Employees engaged in office work should

have a greater orientation towards transnationalism than manual labourers because their jobs depend to a greater degree on communication skills – possibly even foreign languages.

The results in table 2 confirm the expected link between professional position and media consumption. It remains to be seen whether these effects hold in a multivariate analysis.

7) Identification with and interest in Europe: The variables discussed so far relate to the resources and the opportunity structure for participation in a transnational public sphere. However, citizens' interests and motivations may also play an important role. We suspect that those who have an interest in European issues are also interested in discussions in transnational public spheres to a greater extent than those whose personal interests are located more at the national level. Likewise, we suggest an effect of identification with Europe. People who identify with the idea of Europe and see themselves as Europeans are probably more motivated to pursue transnational discussions than people who identify primarily with their own country.¹¹ In line with our expectations, table 2 confirms that those who see themselves primarily as Europeans and who discuss European issues with others participate to a higher degree in a transnational public sphere.

8) Foreign background of respondents and their parents: Many people in the EU member states come from a transnational, migrant background. A move between states is very often linked with a change in language, requiring migrants to learn a new language, which enables them to participate in a transnational public sphere. In addition, people with a migrant background often identify with or have an interest in their home country. This has a positive impact on motivation towards participation at least virtually in events in their home country.

The results in table 2 confirm that respondents who (or whose parents) have migration experience are more likely to participate in a transnational public sphere than others.

11 Unfortunately, we are not able to test whether the assumed direction of causality is correct. It might also be the case that participation in a transnational public sphere increases identification with Europe.

4 Explaining Participation in a Transnational Public Sphere: Multivariate Analysis

Most of our theoretical assumptions were confirmed in the bivariate analyses. We will now examine whether these associations hold in multivariate analyses. This is important because our explanatory variables are not independent. For example, respondents' education influences their professional position. Accordingly, part of the effect of professions might be due solely to education. Therefore, we will introduce the variables one after another into multilevel regression models and observe the changes in their effects.

Multilevel regression analysis allows us to investigate effects at the country level and at the individual level at the same time (Snijders and Bosker 1999; Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). To explain the use of foreign media we estimate multilevel linear models, while for the dichotomous variable of newspaper reading, multilevel logistic regression models are used. The results are reported in table 3 (media use) and table 4 (newspaper reading).

The first model contains no explanatory variables, but reports the distribution of the variance of the dependent variable at the individual and country level. About one third of the variance in the consumption of foreign media is due to cross-country differences, whereas two thirds are due to differences between individuals within countries. In the logistic model, no such distinction can be made, since the individual-level variance is held constant in the estimation.

Model 2 contains two individual-level variables: age and gender, which serves as a control variable. Both have negative effects on foreign media and newspaper consumption. The influence of gender on the consumption of foreign books, magazines and television programmes is not highly relevant, while the effect of age is larger. Everything else being equal, a 20-year-old and a 50-year-old differ by a value of 0.6 on the dependent variable, which ranges from 0 to 4. In terms of newspaper reading, there are marked differences between men and women: Men read foreign newspapers more often. This gender difference is equivalent in size to an age difference of about 16 years. These relative differences in comparison to media consumption are due to the fact that men and older people generally read more newspapers, which is not necessarily the case concerning television and book consumption.

In model 3, respondents' education is used as an additional explanatory factor. Education evidently has a strong impact. For instance, the odds of reading a foreign newspaper increase by 22 per cent with each year of schooling (table 4). The significant improvement in model fit indicates the high relevance

of education for participation in transnational public spheres. Moreover, as expected, controlling for education reduces the age effect. Apparently, the differences between age cohorts in their consumption of foreign media are primarily due to poorer educational opportunities of earlier generations.

TABLE 3 *Consumption of foreign media – multilevel analysis*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
FIXED EFFECTS							
Sex	-0.11*** (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.09*** (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.05* (0.02)
Age	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Education		0.10*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Still studying		2.43*** (0.15)	2.03*** (0.15)	1.70*** (0.13)	1.69*** (0.13)	1.69*** (0.13)	1.69*** (0.13)
Senior position			0.66*** (0.08)	0.52*** (0.08)	0.53*** (0.07)	0.53*** (0.07)	0.53*** (0.07)
Highly-skilled employees			0.49*** (0.07)	0.36*** (0.07)	0.38*** (0.07)	0.38*** (0.07)	0.38*** (0.07)
Self-employed			0.26*** (0.07)	0.16* (0.06)	0.16** (0.06)	0.16** (0.06)	0.16** (0.06)
Employees: office, service			0.16*** (0.05)	0.094* (0.05)	0.10* (0.04)	0.10* (0.04)	0.10* (0.04)
Skilled worker			-0.03 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)
Never worked			-0.09* (0.04)	-0.10* (0.05)	-0.08 (0.04)	-0.08 (0.04)	-0.08 (0.04)
EU often topic				0.52*** (0.04)	0.51*** (0.04)	0.51*** (0.04)	0.51*** (0.04)
EU sometimes topic				0.21*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)
Mixed identity				0.35*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.03)
European identity				0.64*** (0.10)	0.53*** (0.08)	0.53*** (0.08)	0.53*** (0.08)

TABLE 3 (cont.)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Migration background						0.55*** (0.11)	0.54*** (0.11)
Population Size (ln)							-0.13*** (0.04)
Educational Expenditures							0.13*** (0.04)
Foreign Language Skills							1.17*** (0.09)
Intercept	1.57*** (0.86)	1.54*** (0.18)	1.52*** (0.16)	1.52*** (0.16)	1.52*** (0.16)	1.52*** (0.16)	1.44*** (0.05)
VARIANCE							
Intercept	0.82	0.82	0.70	0.70	0.67	0.63	0.05
Residual	1.70	1.60	1.48	1.45	1.39	1.36	1.36
MODEL FIT							
Observations	25180	25180	25180	25180	25180	25180	25180
Log-likelihood	-42557	-41759	-40811	-40539	-40021	-39765	-39731
Pseudo-R ² – ind. level	0.061	0.129	0.148	0.182	0.199	0.199	
Pseudo-R ² – country level	0.000	0.144	0.151	0.186	0.234	0.937	

Hierarchical linear models (individuals nested within countries). Unstandardized coefficients are reported; standard errors in parentheses. Reference category for class fractions: unskilled workers. Calculation of pseudo-R² according to the method proposed by Bryk and Raudenbush (1992:70), but with the random-intercept-only-model as reference model both for both levels. *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

In model 4, we examine what happens to the effects of respondents' professional positions when controlled for education. Considering not only the significance (which is usually given in such large samples), but also the size of the regression coefficients, we find that relevant differences with respect to media

consumption (table 3) can be found for those in senior professional positions and skilled employees, whereas the effects for employees and self-employed are weaker. This also applies to the reading of foreign newspapers (table 4), where the effects are generally stronger. For these occupations, higher education alone does not explain the increased consumption of foreign media. Presumably, this is a result of increased transnational demands at work and perhaps a greater interest in other countries.

This last assumption is confirmed in model 5. The effect of interest in European issues is investigated in table 3 only, while the effect of identification with Europe is reported in both tables. Obviously, both factors play a role in the reception of foreign media. The effects are, as expected, both positive and significant. Those who discuss European issues and who identify not only with their own society participate more in a transnational public sphere. The same applies to newspaper reading. However, the direction of causality should be treated with caution. It is also conceivable that the consumption of foreign media encourages interest in European issues and identification with Europe.

Next, model 6 examines whether respondents who or whose parents were born abroad consume more foreign media. The strong positive regression coefficients and the improvement in model fit support this assumption. The odds of reading a foreign newspaper are more than twice as high for those with a migrant background. On the one hand, migrants might have a high interest in their country of origin. On the other hand, they have the appropriate language skills in order to consume media from these countries.

In the final model, we add the country level variables: population size, annual educational expenditures, and the average mastery of foreign languages by the population of a country. These factors can only explain differences between countries, but not between respondents within a country. We had expected that people consume more foreign media and newspapers in smaller countries, in countries with a high level of education and in countries where many foreign languages are spoken by the population. Table 3 shows the expected effects on foreign media consumption, whereas population size does not seem to matter with regard to reading foreign newspapers (table 4).

In both tables, the effect of foreign language skills is particularly strong. If, on average, one more foreign language is spoken by the population of a country, the consumption of foreign books, magazines and television programmes increases by more than one point (on a scale from 0 to 4), and the odds of reading foreign newspapers increase by a factor of about 2.5. The mastery of foreign languages indeed seems to facilitate participation in transnational public spheres. Of course, a causal relationship may operate in both directions: Good

TABLE 4 *Reading of foreign newspapers – multilevel analysis*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
FIXED EFFECTS							
Sex		0.72*** (0.03)	0.75*** (0.03)	0.78*** (0.03)	0.80*** (0.04)	0.79*** (0.04)	0.79*** (0.04)
Age		0.98*** (0.00)	0.99*** (0.00)	0.99*** (0.00)	0.99*** (0.00)	0.99*** (0.00)	0.99*** (0.00)
Education			1.22*** (0.01)	1.15*** (0.01)	1.14*** (0.01)	1.14*** (0.01)	1.14*** (0.01)
Still studying			90.3*** (14.7)	38.2*** (7.13)	27.81*** (5.26)	28.7*** (5.46)	27.7*** (5.25)
Senior position				2.97*** (0.31)	2.61*** (0.27)	2.63*** (0.28)	2.65*** (0.28)
Highly-skilled employees				2.38*** (0.24)	2.10*** (0.21)	2.11*** (0.21)	2.12*** (0.21)
Self-employed				1.79*** (0.21)	1.61*** (0.19)	1.62*** (0.19)	1.63*** (0.20)
Employees: office, service				1.34*** (0.12)	1.22* (0.11)	1.23* (0.11)	1.23* (0.11)
Skilled worker				1.04 (0.10)	1.00 (0.10)	0.99 (0.10)	0.99 (0.10)
Never worked				1.02 (0.12)	0.98 (0.11)	0.97 (0.11)	0.98 (0.11)
Mixed identity					2.25*** (0.11)	2.17*** (0.11)	2.17*** (0.11)
European identity					3.79*** (0.41)	3.25*** (0.36)	3.27*** (0.36)
Migration background						2.24*** (0.13)	2.24*** (0.13)
Population Size (ln)							0.94 (0.05)
Educational Expenditures							1.13* (0.07)
Foreign Language Skills							2.47*** (0.43)
Intercept	0.12*** (0.02)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.0046)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
VARIANCE							
Intercept	1.04	0.48	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.31	0.081
Observations	25424	25424	25424	25424	25424	25424	25424

Hierarchical logistic regression models (individuals nested within countries). Odds ratios are reported; standard errors in parentheses. Reference category for class fractions: unskilled workers. All models include dummy variables for Luxembourg and Malta, since these are outliers in terms of foreign newspaper reception (effects are not reported). In logit models, the individual-level variance is held constant; therefore, there is no R^2 measure comparable to the linear models. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

language skills are a necessary precondition for the consumption of media in other languages. Conversely, (passive) language skills will improve the more frequently and intensely one consumes books, magazines and newspapers in other languages.

Critics might argue that the effect of foreign language skills is due to countries with more than one official language, such as Belgium, where citizens might consume national media in a foreign language but are counted by us as part of a European audience. However, in a separate analysis we have checked that this is not the case. The effect of foreign language skills holds both in models controlling for multiple languages within one country, and in models limited to countries with only one official language. This makes sense, since even in multilingual countries, English is the foreign language spoken by most citizens, especially among the younger population. In Belgium, for instance, 78 per cent of the Flemish population 34 years or younger speak French and 28 per cent of the Walloons speak Flemish, but 87 and 42 per cent speak English, respectively.

As model 7 includes all explanatory factors, it is best suited to test our hypotheses. With regard to both newspaper reading and the scale of media consumption, the model performance is satisfactory. 20 per cent of the individual-level variance in the use of foreign books, magazines and television programmes is explained by our variables, and almost the entire country-level variance. Considering the distribution of variance across levels, this amounts to more than 40 per cent of the overall variance. The strongest effects emerge from the education of the respondents, the language skills of the population and the migrant background of respondents or their families in both cases. Identification with Europe and an interest in European issues are also

important factors. The importance of the age of respondents, of population size and educational expenditures are, in contrast, lower when controlled by all other variables. This, however, was anticipated.

5 Summary

One way to address the so called public sphere deficit can be found in the transnationalization of the national public spheres of the individual European countries. This requires, first, a perception of what is being discussed in other national public spheres and, second, knowledge of the different interpretive frameworks which are used to understand issues. Both conditions are met, we believe, if the citizens of a nation-state follow reporting of issues in other countries, consume foreign media and are exposed to “foreign” interpretations of political issues. While other studies relate their analyses almost entirely to the content supply structure available to the European public, we analyze the extent to which citizens in 27 EU countries engage with foreign media. This is particularly important because all theories of the public sphere ultimately refer to the citizens, who need to be included in a transnational public sphere.

Over 90 per cent of EU citizens indicate that they have not even glanced at a foreign newspaper in the last twelve months. Nearly 60 per cent have not viewed a foreign magazine, book or TV programme. But even those who have consumed a foreign-language media product once or twice are not necessarily included in a transnational public. Regarding the question of the existence of a transnational Europeanized public sphere, this is a very sobering finding.

Our analyses also show significant differences between countries. While in Luxembourg and Malta, the majority of the population consume foreign media, only a very small minority in other countries do so. The reasons for this primarily lie in the language skills of its citizens, which are mediated by the education system. Our analysis suggests that countries which invest relatively large sums of money in their education systems, including language training, indeed have a better educated population. Well-educated citizens, due to their better knowledge of foreign languages, are more likely to consume the media of another country. This also applies to people who have acquired such knowledge outside of the education system, such as immigrants. Transnational linguistic capital, the ability to speak several languages, proves to be a key resource for the consumption of foreign media and thus participation in a transnational public sphere. Education and multilingualism are, however, resources which are distributed very unevenly between and within countries. Thus, participation in a transnational public sphere is an issue of social inequality, a question

which is almost entirely neglected in the debate over the emergence of a transnational European public sphere.

Resources are a necessary, but not sufficient condition of participation in transnational discourses. In addition, people must have a substantive interest in issues beyond those that affect only their own nation-state. People who see themselves not only as members of their own nation-state, but also as EU citizens with an interest in European issues, are more likely to consume foreign media. Alongside resources and motivation, opportunity structure also plays an important role, for instance, the size of a country. We attribute this to the fact that foreign media providers are more present in small countries than in larger countries. A general model of participation in a transnational public should therefore account for three different factors: opportunity structure, resources and skills that enable consumption of foreign media, and the motivation to access media from outside one's own nation-state frame of reference.

Finally, we should draw attention to a weakness in our analysis. The indicators used are suboptimal to measure engagement in a transnational public sphere. They measure the frequency of use of foreign-language media, but we know little about what specific content is consumed. It seems plausible that in newspapers, current political issues concerning nation-states framed in specific national patterns of interpretation are consumed. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that this is only a very indirect measure of participation in a transnational public sphere.

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Appendix

TABLE A1 Operational definitions of variables

Variable	Operationalization
Consumption of foreign media (EB 73.4)	In the last 12 months have you – a) Read a book, newspaper or magazine in a language other than your mother tongue? – b) Watched TV programs in a language other than your mother tongue? 0=no, 1=yes, once or twice, 2=yes, on several occasions; answers to both questions were added up to form a scale from 0 to 4.
Reading of foreign newspapers (EB 67.1)	Which, if any, of the following statements apply to you? – "You sometimes read newspapers in foreign languages." 0=no, 1=yes.
Age	in years.
Sex	0=male, 1=female.
Education	Age when stopped full-time education; values above 25 years were set to 25.
Still studying	0=no, 1=yes (still studying).
Interest in European political topics (EB 73.4)	When you get together with friends or relatives, how often would you say you discuss European political matters? 0=never, 1=occasionally, 2=frequently.

Variable	Operationalization
European Identity	In the near future, do you see yourself as . . . – (British, German . . .) only, (British, German . . .) and European, European and (British, German . . .), or European only? 0=(British, German . . .) only, 1=both, 2=European only.
Migration background	0=respondent and parents were born in respondent's country of residence, 1=respondent or parents were born outside of respondent's country of residence.
Population size	Size of population of country in millions of inhabitants; Source: Eurostat.
Educational expenditures	Annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions as per cent of GDP; Source: Eurostat.
Foreign language skills of population	Mean number of foreign languages spoken by a country's population (between 0 and 3)

Note: Operationalization in EB 73.4 and EB 67.1 is identical unless otherwise specified.