

WP 5 – Civil Society and the Public Sphere

Euroscepticism in the 2009 European Parliament Election campaign Codebook for the analysis of evaluations of the EU polity's worth in online debates

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Introduction

This codebook is meant to provide a guide to coding of the sampled internet 'documents' in SPSS. It mentions all variables and values which you find in the SPSS data file as well. Furthermore, it provides guidelines on how to code, what to look out for, and how to structure the choice for values. Some of the variables – especially the ones whose meaning is less obvious – will be dealt with in more detail. Others are just briefly mentioned.

Qualitative Coding

Keep in mind, that we are here conducting *qualitative coding*. Although the results will be presented in numbers primarily, the actual coding is qualitative in the sense that the coders have to make conscious decisions, rather than let the computer count words. The first important decision coders have to make is finding and demarcating the units of analysis. Secondly, you will have to decide which variables are applicable and choose from among the available values. Unlike automated computerised word counts, we expect you to use your head in the coding process. In other words, we are relying on your abilities to judge the text in its context and to interpret the phrasing of language. This qualitative coding means we are more accurately able to capture the discursive meaning of the text, thus increasing the accuracy of measurement.

However, it comes at the potential risk of different coders interpreting the same text differently. When such differences of interpretation become systematic, biases might creep into the result. There is thus the danger of low reliability of measurement. To limit the extent of this danger, this codebook provides you with as clear instructions as possible. The workshop in Oslo also serves to become familiar with the coding scheme in a collective way. Thus, we will practice on a few texts collectively to see whether we all understand the codebook in the same way. This is called an intercoder reliability test. Being together in Oslo while starting the coding also allows us to ask each other questions. Do not hesitate to do so.

It is, however, impossible to provide unequivocal solutions to every textual construction, way of phrasing, or other language use by journalists, bloggers and commentators. There will undoubtedly be moments when you are uncertain which of the values best reflects the text, and you will have to make a choice. You can ask the advice of other coders when in doubt.

Threads

In this project, we will code two different textual units, or units of analysis. The first of these are generally referred to as *threads* in internet discourse research (e.g. Strandberg 2008). A thread is a single entry into one of our sampled websites, including the main entry of the journalist/blogger and all comments directly linked to this entry. In Bloglines, which we used for the data collection, each thread takes the form of a single 'clipping'. We have asked you to sample 50 clippings from the feeds of the five websites you selected. At the end of the coding process, you will thus have coded 50 threads.

Messages

Within these 50 threads are an unknown number of *messages*. A message is one or more evaluations on European integration made by a single (collective) actor in a single time and space. The four different components of this definition will be discussed in more detail below, to help you locate and demarcate messages.

‘One or more evaluations’

We are only interested in evaluations, as opposed to description. That is to say, language in which an actor transmits an opinion to the public. Some of these evaluations are very straightforward, such as when the blogger or commentator writes he/she thinks European integration is a good/bad thing; there should be more/less European integration; the EU has become too powerful/not powerful enough. Note that an ‘evaluation’ does not necessarily mean it is about something achieved in the past. A plea for something to happen in the future is here also understood as an ‘evaluation’, since it transmits an opinion and is thereby more than mere description.

The difference between evaluation and description is sometimes very subtle. The mere sentence: ‘There will be European elections in June’, is clearly descriptive. It doesn’t transmit any opinion. However, the sentence: ‘A low turnout in the election is expected, because people do not see the importance of the election’, is an evaluation. A negative opinion of the European Union is transmitted through this text by ‘people’, implying there should be more at stake during the elections.

Secondly, note that an evaluation does not necessarily have to be ‘spoken’, but rather be ‘transmitted’ to the public in a wide sense of that word. Thus, whenever an actor ‘wants’ / ‘would rather have’ / ‘opposes’ / ‘acts in favor of’ something related to European integration, that all counts as a possible evaluation. This means an actor does not necessarily have to ‘do’ anything literally to evaluate European integration. If a journalist writes: ‘Party X is in favor of more integration’, that party doesn’t really do anything but still transmits an opinion concerning European integration to the public. We include this in our coding because we assume that the journalist in this case bases this sentence on previous actions by that party, its manifesto or an interview with a party member thereby passively reporting a previous action. We thus want you to code the meaning of the text, rather than what it literally says. You are to ask yourself the question: ‘is there an opinion of an (collective) actor transmitted to me/the public by this text?’. If the answer is yes, you code it as a message.

‘On European integration’

As described in our Working Paper (Trenz and De Wilde 2009), we are interested in ‘polity contestation’. In other words, evaluations about the European Union as polity or European integration as project or principle. Please see the Working Paper for a more elaborate discussion on this. The codebook also comes back to a more detailed description of the dimensions of evaluation and their components below, in the discussions of variables M_Principle, M_Polity and M_Project.

That an evaluation has to be ‘on European integration’ means we are not coding evaluations that have to do with either the content of EU policies (as opposed to the level and/or scope of EU policies), or the election campaign as such (unless it reflects back on the EU polity), or domestic politics only. Thus, the evaluation that ‘the EU should be willing to threaten Iran with military sanctions if it doesn’t stop its nuclear ambitions’ is not coded, since it is about an EU policy without saying anything about the range of issues the EU has competencies in, or the balance of power between Member States and supranational institutions. The evaluation that ‘political parties are not doing enough to make clear what is at stake during these elections’ also is not coded, since it doesn’t reflect on the EU. It only criticises national political parties. It is an evaluation, but not on European integration. However, the previous example of ‘people do not see the importance of the election’ is an evaluation on European integration. This is so, because the meaning transmitted by the text could be reformulated into ‘people disapprove of the fact that there is little at stake during these elections’. There would be more ‘at stake’ if the European Parliament had more powers, particularly if it could elect a European

government. Thus, this is an indirect negative evaluation of the European Parliament's current powers.

This example shows two things that we would like to stress. First, it is important to code beyond the literal text. Rather than the literal text, we are interested in the meaning it transmits to its public. That is why we are asking you as native speakers, familiar with political discussions in your country of origin, to code this text, instead of running a computerised word count. Second, this example proves that it may be hard to decide whether an evaluation is on European integration or not. Here it is important to first ask yourself whether the transmitted opinion carries consequences for the principle, polity or project of integration (cf Trenz and De Wilde 2009). Keep in mind that Member States and their domestic politics are part of the European Union. An evaluation *primarily* directed at domestic actors may still have a *secondary* evaluation of European integration, in which case we code. Only if it is exclusively directed at the domestic level do we not code.

'Made by a single (collective) actor'

An evaluation needs to have an actor 'making' it. In other words, narratives about European integration have to be 'performed' in the public sphere to contribute to a Eurosceptic discursive formation on European integration (see Working Paper). There are three rules concerning defining the actor and the message. First: a single actor can only make one message in a given time and space. Second: if there is doubt as to who the actor is, prefer one of the non-journalists/bloggers categories. This will be discussed in more detail below, when elaborating on the actor variable. Three: an actor may transmit his or her opinion directly by actually saying it, or indirectly if its opinion is featured by the writer of the text. In the above example of 'people do not see the importance of the election', the actor – people – is not actually transmitting an opinion itself. Rather, the journalist features this opinion to support or contradict her own evaluation. We still code the people as an actor in a separate message, but the message is transmitted 'indirectly'.

If only the blogger presents his or her opinion, there can only be one message irrespective of how elaborate or short the text may be. If the blogger provides a platform for multiple actors, there may be an equal amount of messages included depending on whether all of these actors make evaluations. Thus, if the blogger discusses the opinions of others – e.g. political parties – these actors can each make a message of their own.

There may be times when it is unclear whether a message is made by the blogger or by someone else. For instance, if the blogger writes: 'the European Union has lost much of its legitimacy, as clearly expressed in public opinion polls', one may consider this an evaluation by the journalist as actor, or by 'the people' as collective actor, since 'the people' transmit their opinion in public opinion polls. In such instances, always prioritise other actors over the journalist/blogger. This message would thus be attributed to 'citizens' as actor.

'In a single time and space'

A single actor can only make one message in a single time and space. There may be very elaborate evaluations in blogs, however, if they are made by the same actor (most often the writer of the blog), it is still one message. If the same actor – say the journalist having written the blog – replies later to one of the comments made on his/her original blogs, it will be a separate message from the original one as it takes place in a different time. It should thus be coded as a separate message. Also, if the same actor makes the same evaluation in different threads, this will be counted as several messages (equal to the amount of threads in which the evaluation is found) as they take place in a different 'space'. Finally, if a thread reports on an actor transmitting an opinion on European integration at different time points, this would also result in multiple messages. Thus, if a

text reads: 'The majority of citizens used to be of the opinion that ..., but recent polls indicate that there is a shift of opinion towards ...', this will be two different messages, both made by 'citizens'. Although they are made by the same actor in the same space, they are made at different times.

Coding Threads and Messages

The section above has introduced the two units of analysis, at two different levels of analysis, which we will be coding in this process. Having read that, you should now be able to identify and demarcate these units. It is important you get a feel for these units of analysis, to ensure intercoder reliability. Once you have identified a thread or message, proceed with the allocation of values on the appropriate variables. This codebook and the accompanying SPSS file have three groups of variables: general variables, thread variables, and message variables. You will thus be coding different variables, depending on the unit of analysis. Attribute one value for each of the appropriate variables to your unit of analysis. Thus, if the unit you are coding is a thread, it will have one value for each of the general and thread variables and all message variables will remain open or 'missing'.

General variables

The first two variables in the SPSS file are general. That means they apply to both threads and messages. 'Country' is a variable that is stable for all your units, since each is coding the debate in one member state. Leave it open for now. It can be filled in at the very end, as it doesn't 'vary' in your case.

Country [Country]

1. Austria
2. Belgium
3. Czech Republic
4. Finland
5. France
6. Germany
7. Greece
8. Hungary
9. Netherlands
10. Poland
11. Sweden
12. United Kingdom
13. European Union

The variable 'Unit of Analysis' provides whether this coded variable is a thread or a message.

Unit of Analysis [UnitAnal]

1. Thread
2. Message

These are two variables that apply to all units of analysis. The rest applies either to threads or to messages (although some thread variables will be copied into messages as well, see elaboration later). To make it easier to remember which variables are thread variables and which are message variables, the labels of all thread variables start with 'T_', whereas the message variables start with 'M_'.

Thread variables

The coding of threads gives us background information on both the campaign itself and on the structure of the digital public sphere. Thus, rather than measuring Eurosceptic discourse (this is done at the message level), the thread level of analysis measures what the main topics are in the campaign and how many comments come to what kind of entrances. There are 6 thread variables.

Thread Number [T_Number]

This number is composed of both your country and a consecutive numbering to create a unique number for each thread in our entire study. You reach the appropriate number by taking your country number, multiply it by 100 and add the number of the thread. So, if you are coding the first thread from the German case (number 6 in variable Country), the appropriate number would be $6 \times 100 + 1 = 601$. The 40th German thread would be 640. The 12th thread from the UK will be number 1212.

Website [T_Source]

1. Der Standard
2. Krone
3. Kurier
4. Politikblogs
5. Rigardi
6. Le Soir
7. RTL
8. Le Vif l'Express
9. Le Pan
10. Le Blog Politique
11. Novikny
12. Aktualne
13. Lidovky
14. Blogy iDnes
15. Blogy iHNed
16. Iltalehti
17. Iltasanomat
18. Helsingin Sanomat
19. Kasvi
20. Soininvaara
21. Le Monde
22. Le Figaro
23. Le Nouvel Observateur
24. Plume de Presse
25. Sarkofrance
26. Spiegel Online
27. Bild.de
28. Sueddeutsche.de
29. Bildblog
30. Political Incorrect
31. Ethnos
32. Skai
33. Ta Nea
34. Press-GR
35. nonews-NEWS
36. Origo
37. index

38. Figyelőnet
39. W – For a Better Magyarland
40. Reakció – polgári underground
41. Nu.nl
42. De Telegraaf
43. NOS
44. Geen Stijl
45. Marokko.nl
46. Gazeta Wyborcza
47. onet.pl
48. TVN24
49. Janusz Palikot blog
50. Janusz Korwin – Mikke blog
51. Aftonbladet
52. Expressen
53. Dagens Nyheter
54. Rick Falkvinge (PP)
55. Politiskt Inkorrekt
56. BBC
57. Guardian
58. The Daily Mail
59. Iain Dale's Diary
60. Guido Fawkes' blog
61. Facebook
62. BabelBlogs
63. BlogActiv
64. EUobserver
65. Twitter

Enter the website from which the thread is sampled.

Period [T_Date]

1. 18 May – 28 May
2. 29 May – 6 June
1. 7 June – 10 June

Topic [T_Topic]

1. Domestic Party Politics [party candidates, polings, election results]
2. Other Member State Party Politics [political parties, results in other Member States]
3. European Party Politics [EP party federations, European wide election results / polls]
4. National Economy [prosperity, growth, unemployment, financial crisis]
5. European Economy [same as previous, but at European level]
6. European integration [Treaty of Lisbon, allocation of competencies, safeguarding or reversing integration, superstate]
7. Membership / Enlargement [own country's membership, enlargement with own or other country, leaving the Union]
8. Democracy [legitimacy of the European Parliament or EU, turn-out, importance of the election]
9. Other

This is one of the more complicated variables, and will require active judgment on your part. We mean to capture the main theme of the thread only. This may be indicated by

the title, or otherwise in the main text. Situations may arise in which it is hard to decide; we will discuss some of these situations and how to deal with them in Oslo in September.

Keep in mind here that most of the threads will have some domestic politics linkage or dimension. Thus, the author might compare results of Eurosceptical parties in other countries with those in their own country. Or they may write that the current national government lost in the elections / does badly in the polls. This does not necessarily make it the main topic. This is often a trick used by journalists to make their topic interesting to a domestic public. A teaser, if you will. When in doubt, prioritise one of the other values over 'domestic politics'.

Also, see that some values are more specific than others. Values 4 and 5 on economy are more specific than values 1, 2, or 3. One might say that most economy discussions during elections also have to do with party politics, but party politics does not always have to do with the economy. Prefer value 4 or 5 over 1, 2, or 3 when in doubt. The same applies to values 6 and 7. Membership / Enlargement (7) is also about European integration (6), but the reverse does not always apply. Prefer value 7 over 6 when in doubt.

Amount of Comments [T_Comments]

[Enter the total amount of comments attached to this thread. Apply '0' when there was an option for comments, but none entered. Leave open when there was no option to comment.]

Evaluations [T_Eval]

1. Yes
2. No

The answer is yes if there is one or more evaluations on European integration in the thread and no if the thread is purely descriptive or has evaluations on other topics. This means that any threads where the answer is yes will also contain messages to be coded. Threads where the answer is no will not.

Message variables

There are 11 message variables, which will be briefly discussed below. Thus, if the unit of analysis you're coding is a message, you should code a value for each of the following variables. In addition, copy the values for the variables T_Number, T_Source, T_Date and T_Topic from the thread where the message is located into all coded messages from that particular thread. The thread variables T_Comment and T_Eval remain open if the unit of analysis is a message.

Location [M_Loca]

1. Main Text
2. Comment on Main Text
3. Comment on Comment

This codes the location, and to some extent the direction, of the message. If the message is in the main text of the blog, give it value 1. If it is in a comment on the main text, it is value 2. It is also value 2 if the target of the comment is unspecified by the author. It is value 3 when the commentator actively addresses a previous comment or responds to something written in one of the previous comments.

Actor [M_Actor]

1. Journalist / Blogger [the main author of the thread]
2. Citizen(s) [either individually – i.e. most commentators – or collectively as people or public]
3. Party Actor [government, Member of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament]
4. Non-Party State Actor [judges, bureaucrats, non-elected heads of state, European Commission]
5. Non-State Actor [civil society, NGOs, trade unions, companies, media]
6. Other

This is the (collective) actor of the message. In case of doubt, prefer values 2 – 5 over 1, and 1 over 6. A party actor is an actor who is in office primarily as a representative of his or her party. Thus, Member State governments count as party actors, since it is political parties in national parliaments that form a government and supply its members. However, European Commissioners are coded as non-party members because they are in first instance representatives of their country, with party affiliation secondary. There could be reference to a vague collective actor, which does not fit well into 'citizens', such as 'Europhiles', 'federalists' or 'Eurosceptics'. Code these as 'other'. However, note that such categories as 'tree huggers', 'farmers' or 'capitalists' would be a more clear societal group and fall under 'non-state actor'.

Actor Scope [M_ActScop]

1. Regional [sub-national territorial level of action]
2. National
3. Foreign [national in another EU member state]
4. European [at EU level, supranational institution]
5. International [country outside the EU or international organisation]

This is the territorial level the actor is acting upon, particularly applicable to politicians. Thus, if the actor is the European Commission, or a Member of the European Parliament, the scope will be European. The nationality or scope of office of an actor might be explicitly given. It may also be deducible. For instance, if a commentator on a British website addresses his comment to 'you British', we may safely conclude that he/she is not British. National politicians, judges, journalists etc have the 'national' scope. If it is unknown or unclear what level the actor is acting upon, value 2 'national' is the default option. This is likely the case for most journalists/bloggers and individual citizens.

Transmission [M_Trans]

1. Direct
2. Indirect

This variable measures whether the actor actively makes the message with the purpose of it being publicly transmitted, or whether the evaluation is introduced by another actor (usually the journalist writing the blog or the commentator making the comment) to support, illustrate or contradict their own message (see the discussion on actors and definition of message above).

The following three variables concern the evaluative dimensions of the message and fall into the categories discussed in the Working Paper. They are a combination of topic and opinion, which will be discussed further below. Furthermore, a single message may or may not hold an opinion on all three types of evaluative dimensions, but must at least hold an evaluation on one of the three; otherwise it does not qualify as concerning European integration (see the definition of message above).

The 'Principle of Integration' is the widest, most fundamental and most general way of transmitting an opinion on European integration. It concerns the idea and/or act of cooperation among European member states in any form. We are not interested here in forms of collaboration outside EU framework. Thus, an evaluation of NATO membership or the Council of Europe does not count as being on 'European integration'. However, a general argument that economic collaboration between European countries is a good thing does count, since this area is exclusively dealt with by the EU and its direct competitors (EFTA, EEA, 'Europe of Nation States'). In case the opinion gives more detailed information on what kind of cooperation is preferred/opposed and in what institutional format, the evaluation is likely to fall into either of the next two categories: 'EU Polity' or 'Project of Integration'.

The category 'EU Polity' concerns the current institutional makeup of the European Union. It may be about any of its institutions – i.e. European Commission, European Parliament, Court of Justice etc. Secondly, it may be about decision-making rules – i.e. codecision, open method of coordination, unanimity voting. Thirdly, it may be about competencies in certain policy fields – i.e. trade, foreign policy, justice and home affairs etc. Fourthly, it may be about the membership or constituencies of the EU. This last one includes individual member states, but also societal groups such as farmers, 'the poor', 'ordinary citizens', or big business. If it concerns who decides in the European Union, including the division of power between Member States and supranational institutions, it concerns the level of integration. Thus, arguments for more powers to the European Parliament would be coded: 'Project of Integration – Level – Positive'. A defense of the current powers of the EP would be coded: 'EU Polity – Level – Positive'. If it concerns what the EU decides upon, or policy fields and issues affected by European integration, we are talking of the scope of integration. An argument that the EU should not have a say in foreign policy or that agriculture should be renationalised would be coded as: 'EU Polity – Scope – Negative'. If it concerns who is affected by the European Union or who affects the EU, whether talking of countries or societal groups, we are coding this as the inclusiveness of integration. An argument against Turkish membership of the EU would be coded as: 'Project of Integration – Inclusiveness – Negative'. An argument that big business has too much influence in the EU, that the EU is elitist (i.e. excluding ordinary citizens) or that letting Rumania and Bulgaria in was a mistake, would be coded as: 'EU Polity – Inclusiveness – Negative'. An argument that one's own country interests are adequately represented in the EU, would be coded as: 'EU Polity – Inclusiveness – Positive'. To put it very simply then: Level is about power and a more or less federal Union; scope is about issues and policy domains; and inclusiveness is about the relationship between the EU and people, whether grouped on nationality, religion, class or anything else.

There may – again – be difficult situations. For instance, arguments for a more social or greener Europe could be both positive about the scope, or the inclusiveness, of the Project (since it argues in favor of integration in a certain direction). If it is phrased in such general terms, where constituencies are not named or directly implicated, we code scope. If however, in the argument 'the EU should create a globalisation fund to finance reeducation of people who lost their jobs due to integration or globalisation', the constituency is clearly mentioned. The plea could be rephrased as: 'the EU should actively affect the lives of more people in the future, who are now left out'. The last example would thus be coded as: 'Project – Inclusiveness – Positive'.

The third and final category 'Project of Integration' concerns plans for future integration, as opposed to integration already achieved and represented in the current EU polity. The Project may concern institutional change, enlargement, pleas for a 'different' Europe or changes in the competencies of EU institutions. The same three distinctions applying to Polity – Level, Scope and Inclusiveness – also apply to Project.

Finally, whether an evaluation is 'positive' or 'negative' depends on the implications for European integration, as opposed to the tone of voice. Thus a comment such as 'those

damn Eurosceptics are ruining everything' has a clear negative tone of voice, but would be coded as: 'Principle of Integration – Positive'.

Principle of Integration [M_Principle]

1. Positive
2. Negative
3. N/A [no evaluation on Principle of Integration in this message]

EU Polity [M_Polity]

1. Level – Positive
2. Level – Negative
3. Scope – Positive
4. Scope – Negative
5. Inclusiveness – Positive
6. Inclusiveness – Negative
7. N/A [no evaluation on EU Polity in this message]

Project of Integration [M_Project]

1. Level – Positive
2. Level – Negative
3. Scope – Positive
4. Scope – Negative
5. Inclusiveness – Positive
6. Inclusiveness – Negative
7. N/A [no evaluation on Project of Integration in this message]

Keep in mind that a message may include one or more evaluations. Thus, it could transmit an opinion on all three categories of European integration, two or just one. Logically then, a message can not have the value 'N/A' for all three of these variables. A message may, however, be highly complex and have multiple evaluations for each of the three dimensions of evaluation. In such a case, the coder will have to make a choice which of the evaluations is the primary one for each of the categories, since a single message cannot have more than one value per variable. Unless one of the evaluations clearly is given more importance in the text than the others, prefer the first evaluation made.

Also keep in mind that evaluations may be implied, but not made. Thus, when a message is positive about the Polity, it is implicitly also positive about the Principle. After all, most actors who support the EU as it currently exists are also in favor of the idea of cooperation between European countries to begin with. However, you would still code 'N/A' in the Principle variable, unless the same actor actually makes an evaluation on the principle. Thus, as a coding rule, you cannot allocate values on dimensions of evaluation which the actor does not address in the text. In other words, only dimensions of evaluation discussed in the text are coded.

The next three variables concern whether the message meets the *cooperative principle* of communication as conceptualised by Price and discussed in Widdowson (2007: 56-65). Please read these ten pages carefully, as you will be required to judge whether three of the four *maxims* are met by the message you are coding. The purpose of coding these variables is to see whether the manner of communication of journalists, bloggers and commentators meets certain standards of expectation. By deviating from these standards, language may become insulting, ridiculous, ironic, sarcastic etc. Since these

labels are, however, hard to define in a more or less objective way to safeguard inter coder reliability, we have opted to use and adapt the cooperative principle of Price.

We are interested in this 'style' of communication in order to assess whether the same kind of journalistic language is used on the internet as in newspapers and television. We assume thereby, that these maxims are generally met in traditional (quality) mass media. Thus, if they are met on internet as well, it is an indicator that internet may be a different forum, but doesn't provide different discourse. If maxims are consistently breached, the discourse online differs from that 'offline'.

These maxims are relative. That means, whether they are breached or not can only be judged in light of two factors.

- a) Previous communication that has set the standards. This previous communication may be located in the same thread. If so, use this as a relative anchor point. If you do not find it in the same thread, use your knowledge of general discourse in your quality national newspapers and public broadcasting television news as an anchor point.
- b) Netiquette, or Internet etiquette (see, for example, <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/> and http://www.livinginternet.com/i/ia_nq.htm). Netiquette is a set of standard rules that permeate internet communications, including email, chat rooms and discussion fora. These rules are used here to anchor, and also adapt when necessary, Price's maxims to the reality of online communication.

Keep in mind that maxims may be breached both intentionally and unintentionally. Thus, maxims might be breached because people try to be funny or insulting, or they may be breached simply because people are not able to communicate 'decently'. The only thing we are interested in is whether or not the maxims are breached (in your assessment), not whether this happens on purpose.

Maxim of Quantity [M_MaxQuan]

2. Yes [the criteria of the maxim are met]
3. No [they are not met]

The maxim of quantity discusses whether the message provides enough information, without giving too much information. The first question to ask yourself as a coder is whether the actor makes clear what his/her evaluation is and how or why he/she came to that evaluation. If that information is provided, you ask yourself whether you find the message unusually short or long. Does it adequately reply to messages in the previous text? For instance if a journalist asks in the text what the opinion of readers is on the European Union and one of the comments merely states 'it sucks', the commentator does not meet the maxim of quantity. . In addition, bear in mind that online messages have to conform to Netiquette, particularly the rule against 'flooding'. Whether writing an email or public forum message, users are expected to keep messages relatively short to avoid flooding other people's screens with a lot of text. As a rule of thumb, anything longer than 10-15 lines of text (excluding line spaces) constitutes flooding. Moreover, white space is a requirement, i.e. users are expected to include line spaces every few sentences, to enhance the 'readability' of the text on screen. At the same time, one-line responses also constitute a breach of the maxim of quantity. If it doesn't meet the information criteria and/or the appropriate size, code no. Only if the answer to both questions is yes, do you code value 1.

Maxim of Relation [M_MaxRela]

1. Yes [the criteria of the maxim are met]
2. No [they are not met]

This maxim measures whether the evaluation on European integration is on topic. Thus, whether it speaks directly to the main topic of the thread or is off the central thread of the discussion (also known as 'trolling' in Netiquette, a practice not advisable generally). Take the following message as an example.

'In that most europhobic rag, the Daily Telegraph, their columnists routinely blame the EU for every ill from the world economic crisis and swine fever to the otherwise inexplicable death of Mrs Smith's goldfish coupled with continuous predictions of the imminent demise of the euro.'

This sentence was part of a comment on an article in the Guardian evaluating British Membership of the EU. The commentator argues in favor of Membership and argues lies by British Tabloids make Britons unreasonably disapproving of the EU. As such, his message is on topic and thus meets the maxim of relation. However, had the sentence above been the only thing this commentator had written, it would not have met the maxim, since its main topic is British Tabloids, rather than Britain's membership of the EU. Aside from a direct message by the commentator, there is also an indirect one made by the Daily Telegraph. This one, however, does not relate to British Membership of the EU, but rather to the EU as a whole. It is thus not directly relating to the topic of the thread.

Maxim of Manner [M_MaxMann]

1. Yes [the criteria of the maxim are met]
2. No, substantiated [good flaming]
3. No [criteria are not met]

This maxim measures whether messages use 'commonly acceptable language and arguments'. You, therefore, need to consider the following issues:

- a) Flaming: '[Flaming](http://www.livinginternet.com/i/ia_nq_send.htm#flame) is the act of sending someone an outrageously insulting message, whether by private email or in a public Usenet posting, usually because you disagree with something they have said.' (http://www.livinginternet.com/i/ia_nq_send.htm#flame) Although not all flaming is bad (in fact, it is considered essential part of cyberspace 'ecology', see <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/0963702513p71.html> on the Art of Flaming), users are generally advised to avoid it. For the purposes of our project, understand messages as 'bad flames' (and thus breaching the maxim of manner) if they constitute an insulting attack on another respondent, person or institution without giving reasons and presenting a rational argument. For example, messages along the lines of 'I have never read such rubbish in my life as Bob32's view on...Bob32 you are ignorant and [insert any other insult of your choice here]' is a gratuitous flame and breeches the maxim of manner. If, on the other hand, you are presented with a message which starts 'The absurdity of your ideas is exceeded only by the incoherence of your remarks, beginning with...' (http://www.livinginternet.com/i/ia_nq_send.htm#flame), followed by rational counter-arguments to a previous contributor's views, then this is a 'good flame'. The language still deviates from what would be considered decent 'offline', but not from what one finds acceptable online. The key here is whether a contributor is able to move beyond insults and one-line statements and argue about his/her case. In case of no flaming, the maxim of manner is

met (code value 1). In case of 'good flaming', the maxim of manner is breached, but with reason (code value 2). In case of 'bad flaming', code value 3.

- b) Shouting: When a contributor uses capital letters in his/her message this constitutes shouting, it breaches the maxim of manner (code value 3).

If either gratuitous flaming or shouting is found in a message then the maxim of manner is breeched and you need to code that message as value 3 (No). Value 2 only applies in case of 'good flaming'.

It is important to note here that what is considered acceptable language and arguments online slightly differs from the standards generally established for offline journalism. Consequently, the maxim of manner is not breeched if:

- a) There are grammatical or spelling mistakes in the text. In fact, Netiquette requires that users do not post messages whose sole purpose is to highlight another participant's lack of linguistic skills;
- b) Informal language, colloquialisms and/or phrases/words with negative connotations: Internet language is generally expected to be simpler and accessible than that used in academic papers or analytical journalism. Similarly, the use of emotive words/phrases such as the one included in the message above ('Europhobic rag') is acceptable (good flaming). In the above example, the term 'Europhobic rag' is a flame, but the author substantiates this flame with a rational argument. Generally, bear in mind that messages with truly offensive language are hard to come by in most discussion forums, as they are likely to be blocked or removed by the moderator(s).

Again, the example of the Daily Telegraph quote helps illustrate this. The indirect message made by the Daily Telegraph meets the maxim of manner. It may be untrue, but it still speaks in acceptable language. On the other hand, the evaluation made by the commentator does not, since the word 'rag' is not a normal word used in public for referring to a newspaper, nor is it likely that the Daily Telegraph actually blames the EU for the death of Mrs. Smith's goldfish. However, the author substantiates why he/she thinks the Daily Telegraph is a rag, namely because it tells lies.

To conclude then, the two messages contained in the above example would be coded as follows. First, the message by the author of the comment as: 'MaxQuant – Yes, MaxRela – Yes, MaxMann – No, substantiated'. Second, the message by the Daily Telegraph as: MaxQuant – Yes, MaxRela – No, MaxMann – Yes'.

Finally, we code the justification of worth given in the message. This can be understood as an explicit *reason* given by the actor of the message for his evaluation – i.e. 'I want ..., because ...', or it may be a vaguer *context* or *motivation* providing the background for the message. To find out whether there is a justification of worth, and if so, what it is, the coder should fill in the following sentence: 'European integration is positive/negative in light of our shared value of ...'. If that sentence cannot be finished, try filling in the following sentence: 'The actor in the message implies that European integration should be evaluated with criteria of ...'. If the message and its context do not allow you as coder to finish either one of these test sentences, there is no justification of worth.

For example, the message '*the people know Britain is better off in the EU*' holds a clear evaluation of 'EU Polity – Inclusiveness – Positive'. However, the word 'better' does not give us anything on the right criteria supporting this evaluation. Consequently, there is no possibility to finish either of the above two sentences and thus no justification of worth. On the other hand, the message: '*You are so in love with the idea of destroying Britain and creating the European superstate that you don't care about the practical results*' does give a clear answer, namely 'practical results', which would fall under value 3: necessity. By the way, this message has two evaluations. It is both negative about

'the idea of destroying Britain' and about 'creating the European superstate'. This would be coded as 'Principle – Negative' and 'Project – Level – Negative' within the same message.

Note that the justification of worth does not incorporate any positive attitude towards European integration. In other words, if the justification of worth of a particular message is democracy, the evaluations in that message may still either portray European integration as supporting democracy or as damaging democracy. As with other variables, in case of multiple justifications, prefer the first one given unless a later one is given clear priority. Consider the following example: *'The European parliament should not be given more powers as it is an inefficient and unnatural institution. Even more important, it is not recognised by the citizens of the EU as legitimate.'* Although the first justification given (inefficient) would point to value 3: Necessity, and the second (unnatural) to value 2: Culture, the last one is given more importance and the right value should thus be 1: Democracy.

Justification of Worth [M_Worth]

1. Democracy [citizen influence, legitimacy, accountability]
2. Culture [tradition, identity, community values]
3. Necessity [governability, efficiency, effectiveness, obligations]
4. Economic Prosperity [economic growth, employment, wealth]
5. Safety [social security, stability of society, internal security, external security]
6. Other
7. N/A

These are all the variables and values involved in our study. It should be noted that our codebook necessarily forms an abstraction of reality. Thus, not every interesting aspect you will find in your data will be captured in the coding. For instance, we are not coding whether Euroscepticism targets the Euro, the European Commission or Turkey. It is recommended that you make notes while coding on information that you think is relevant, but is not captured by the coding scheme. You can use this to illustrate and clarify the quantitative results in a qualitative manner in your final country report.

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RECON Codebook WP 5. Project:

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Euroscepticism in the European Parliament elections of June 2009

http://www.reconproject.eu/projectweb/portalproject/CountryReports_Euroscepticism.html.

WP 5 (Civil society and the public sphere)

Hans-Jörg Trenz, Ulrike Liebert.

Codebook for the analysis of evaluations of the EU polity's worth in online debates

Pieter de Wilde, Hans-Jörg Trenz,
Asimina Michailidou.

Non-RECON members are allowed to draw on this codebook for their own research purposes, provided that they make appropriate reference to this source, and the web address where it can be found. This applies to the usage of the general structure of threads and messages coding, as well as to individual variables and category systems.