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## **Gatekeeper to the Union: a comparison of the representation of European Union information in the national press of Britain and France**

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**by**

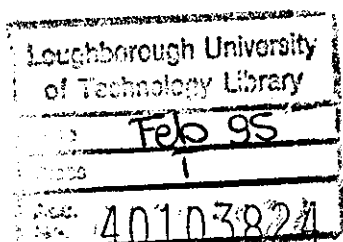
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**A Master's Dissertation, submitted  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the  
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## ABSTRACT

### Gatekeeper to the Union: a comparison of the representation of European Union information in the national press of Britain and France

The aims of this study were to discover whether the citizens of two EU member states have access, through their daily newspapers, to a different quality and quantity of EU-related information and to ascertain to what extent newspapers limit the amount and edit the content of this information.

A brief history of each country's EU membership is included, with a survey of public opinion towards the European Union. This is followed by a general description of the press in each country and a more detailed examination of the history and ownership of the six newspapers used in the study (*Le Figaro*, *France-Soir*, *Le Monde*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Evening Standard* and *The Independent*).

The survey data was collected using two methods: a quantitative analysis which recorded volume of article and volume of actual text, illustration, headline size and distribution of articles by section of newspaper and by subject; a qualitative analysis used a smaller sample of articles to detect bias for or against the European Union. The newspapers were surveyed over two time periods, before and after the European Parliament elections in June 1994.

Results show that in terms of volume and visual impact, the type of newspaper ('popular' or 'serious') is influential, while in selection of subject and detectable bias, the nationality of a newspaper is the determining factor.

Reference is made at the end of the study to the gatekeeping theory of communication, described in more detail in chapter one; it is suggested that it is gatekeepers who determine what the public know and feel about the European Union.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

This study was initially undertaken as a form of quest: to discover why the British public *appear* relatively uninterested in a body which is acquiring an increasingly active role in the political administration of this country - the European Union. It seemed reasonable to assume that the approach of the fourth set of direct elections to the European Parliament in June 1994 would signify a period of greater interest in the daily activities of the EU's institutions. Yet, in an opinion poll conducted in all twelve member states, a month before the elections, the electorate of the United Kingdom proved the most apathetic of all the EU's constituents: only 27% said that they would definitely cast their vote in the coming ballot. In contrast, 65% of French voters polled intended to take part in the elections [The European / Mori survey 1994: 6].

Clearly a number of reasons can be cited to explain this lack of interest on the part of the British electorate. The perceived importance of the European Union's role is dependent on many factors: a country's own political situation, its economic stability, levels of tolerance towards nationalism, relationships with non-European states and so on. This study, however, will focus, within this catalogue of elements which together shape individual beliefs, on one single theme, the role of the press.

Before examining the quantity and quality of EU-related information in selected newspapers (the study of which forms the central body of this work), an important assumption must first be expressed: that media content does in fact influence the public's attitudes. A 1972 survey of attitudes on race concluded that, while specific influence was difficult to identify, general effects could certainly be seen.

It may be that the media have little immediate impact on attitudes as commonly assessed by social scientists, but it seems likely that they have other important effects. In particular they would seem to play a major part in defining for people what the important issues are and the terms in which they should be discussed

[Hartmann 1972: 439]

In applying this theory to the specific field of EU information, it is indeed difficult to find convincing evidence that the content of newspaper reports has a direct



impact on people's voting patterns in European elections. Yet, despite competition from an increasing number of alternative media channels, newspapers remain a prime source of factual, topical information. In the selection and rejection of issues, the timing, displaying and shaping of material, the features, in fact, which together constitute gatekeeping theories of communication, the press is almost certainly instrumental in helping to shape the public's awareness of matters related to the European Union.

## 1.2 THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE PRESS

A public uninformed and uninterested led by a few interested but uninformed appears the inevitable results where the press neglects foreign news for sports, comic and the highly colored 'human interest' novelties that are to-day so common a feature of the news columns

[Rosengren 1981: 197]

This brief examination of the nature of today's press will focus on two central themes: the changes evident in an analysis of newspaper content towards the less serious material suggested in the above quotation; and also on the lack of any real objectivity in the information offered to the readers of contemporary newspapers.

A 1985 report on a survey of changes in U.S. newspaper content concluded with three main findings: that the number of regular columns dealing with specialised interests had decreased, that the ratio of features to hard news had changed in favour of features, and that the space given to national and world news had declined in comparison with that given to local news [Bogart 1985]. While the phrasing of this last point is particularly geared to the U.S. environment, where 'national' news signifies events on a wider scale than in this country, evidence to support the essence of this claim can also be seen in a British context. Since the mid 1970's, there has been an overall decline in numbers employed as foreign correspondents on the staff of all but two British national daily newspapers [Boyd-Barret 1977: 13]. *The Sun*, for example, did not, at the time of Boyd-Barrett's study, have either a foreign news desk or a foreign news editor. While this does not mean that coverage ceases altogether (the services of a news agency will be used to cover the most important stories), it does signify an unwillingness to allocate resources to this area and suggests a consequent decline in the representation of foreign news.

Similarly, although quantified evidence is not available here, a cursory glance through today's newspapers shows a move away from 'hard' news and in-depth analysis, to feature articles and 'human-interest' stories. This 'tabloidization' of the British press has even resulted in bingo games appearing in the pages of *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*, albeit with attempts at a more upmarket theme.

These visible trends can perhaps be ascribed primarily to the impact of broadcast media; the immediate and fast-moving nature of television news, it can be claimed, has accustomed the public to expect short, easily accessible pieces of information from all news outlets. Whether this is true or not, one implication of these changes is a decrease in space given to EU-related information, for, as the next section will indicate, its very nature renders most items about the European Union inappropriate in the journalistic climate of today.

Before moving on to that subject, however, it would be appropriate to look briefly at the perhaps outdated notion of objectivity in the press. Anthony Smith suggests that audience expectations are confused on this point.

...sometimes we speak of being objective as of a technique, sometimes as a glorious goal, occasionally as an external purpose which the journalist is supposed to serve  
[Smith 1978: 153]

Newspapers of the last century, much of whose content consisted of reproductions of notable speeches by people in powerful positions, could perhaps strive for a fairly neutral position in reports. The internal and external pressures which exist in the highly competitive business-oriented environment of contemporary journalism, however, make such neutrality a somewhat unrealistic aim. The economic independence which is a necessity for a purely impartial presentation of information is a rare commodity in a world where newspaper ownership has been progressively concentrated into the hands of a small number of organisations.

Tunstall's work on the goals of news organisations identifies three main areas: audience-revenue goal, advertising-revenue goal and non-revenue goal [1972]. The first two of these objectives are fairly self-explanatory; gaining audience (in this context, readers) and gaining revenue from advertisers. The third Tunstall defines as "furthering cultural or educational objectives or merely increasing general prestige" [1972: 260].

In very broad terms, it is this third goal which appears to have suffered in recent years; where profit has become a goal in itself, the more abstract aims, above, and the accompanying pursuit of providing impartial, accurate information for readers become less important.

### 1.3 THE NATURE OF EU INFORMATION

As the following examination of gatekeeping theories of communication will attempt to make clear, one of the most crucial elements in the complicated process of original information reaching the public through the medium of a newspaper, is that it should, at a certain stage, be perceived as 'newsworthy'.

Galtung and Ruge's study [1973] identified a series of determining factors which assess newsworthiness; the most relevant are listed below:

*Frequency* - events with a short time-span are far more suitable for daily newspaper coverage than those which last for weeks or months without reaching a conclusion

*Unambiguity* - the number of potential interpretations of an event should be limited to facilitate easy understanding

*Unexpectedness* - the shock value of unforeseen events increases their potential interest value

*Personalization* - the actions of individuals are seen as being more comprehensible to an audience than the actions of institutions and anonymous bodies

*Meaningfulness* - events should be relevant to the cultural background of the anticipated audience

Scored against these five categories, the type of information which is produced by the activities of the European Union does not fare particularly well. Events in Brussels are rarely completed in a short period of time; the nature of any government work is such that discussion, dispute and debate take place over a

prolonged period before decisions are made and eventually implemented. Ambiguity is perhaps less of a problem, for while the implications of Brussels-based decisions may be very different for different member states, a newspaper will usually portray information from the single point of view of its own predicted readership. Events are not always simple to follow, however, particularly if true understanding demands a certain level of background knowledge. In terms of unexpectedness, the actions of governing bodies, however far-reaching their eventual effects, simply do not contain the same impact as a murder or an earthquake. Parallels can be drawn with the frequency factor; events which happen quickly have intrinsically more shock value.

Personalization is a particular problem here; newspapers often refer to 'anonymous Brussels bureaucrats and readers are left with the impression of legions of grey-suited, petty-minded administrators, working against 'our' national interests. The scale of the organisation is really the root of this problem; with almost 10,000 employees, the European Commission has little chance of creating images of individuals. Yet, even those elected by the voters of each country remain relatively anonymous; it is safe to assume that only a small percentage of the British electorate could name their representative MEP. It is of course a vicious circle, for while readers remain unaware of individual personalities, newspapers will not rate their actions as newsworthy, yet the newspapers themselves constitute the main source of EU information for many readers.

Finally, meaningfulness can prove problematic to assess in the context of the EU. While it is easy to argue that any decision made by the EU is as relevant to the readers of a British newspaper as one taken by the country's national government, it is clearly not perceived as such by a majority in this country. Yet, were individual newspapers to deem relevant and meaningful more EU-related information, would the perceptions of the public in this area not change?

The difficulties of creating newsworthy articles about the EU are summarised in the following quotation from a Brussels-based British newspaper correspondent.

These subjects really are terribly dull for a newspaper. It's jolly difficult to make them sound important - even if as a journalist with a really good mind you quickly realise their importance. You tend to over-dramatise things, which are dramatic of course, but not on a day-to-day basis

[Winder 1983: 13]

## 1.4 THE GATEKEEPING THEORY OF COMMUNICATION

The concept of gatekeeping was first applied to the study of communication in 1947 by Kurt Lewin. Using as a metaphor the process of food passing from shop or garden to the table, Lewin illustrated how a number of channels are employed, with 'gatekeepers' positioned at strategic points to make important selection and rejection decisions. A farmer will weed out a percentage of his crops, a supermarket wine buyer will select only a necessarily limited range of wine for the shop to sell, the individual shopper chooses a smaller selection of goods to take home and consume [Shoemaker 1991].

One important feature of Lewin's model was his suggestion that positive or negative forces operate around each gate; vegetables which look in good condition are more likely to be selected or the price of an item may be a deciding factor. Similarly, if a shopper has chosen two packets of biscuits, the chances of a third packet being selected are small. These observations can all be applied to the process of news production.

In analysing this process in a media context, the most important factor to bear in mind is that the journalist does not operate within a vacuum. The selection of issues to be included is not decided solely on the obvious basis of time and space, nor even on the basis of news values, outlined in the previous section. Any study of news production must acknowledge political, economic and cultural influences and recognise, furthermore, that it is a product which has been generated through a series of institutionalised practices within an organisation, all of which may affect its eventual shape and content.

As news organisations have grown, the channels through which information must pass before reaching the reader have grown longer. The news editor who assigns stories, the reporter who writes, the sub-editor who refines, the editor who decides which pieces get priority - all these individuals come to work with their own political and cultural prejudices intact, and while most will claim that, to a large extent, these prejudices do not affect their role in producing news, it is unrealistic to expect of any individual complete detachment from their background.

In addition to these factors, all gatekeepers also conform to the expectations and demands, overt or concealed, of the organisations for which they work. Curran summarised this process.

...control in media organisations was not exerted directly or crudely. It depended on social control via informal channels...embedded in the provision (or withholding) of organizational and professional rewards...The produced conformity by media personnel to the overall goals, policies and 'editorial lines' of the organizations for which they worked.

[1987: 65]

To return, then, to Lewin's original model, it can be noted that the positive and negative forces which operate around each 'gate' and are perceived to be there by each gatekeeper, are numerous and diverse.

Any process of selection is accompanied implicitly by one of rejection and it is this aspect of newspaper content which may prove to be particularly relevant to this study. McQuail notes that

Comparative content analyses of news in one or several countries have added evidence of systematic omission in the attention given to certain issues and parts of the world

[1987: 101]

The implication here is that stories are not chosen because of their actual content; in fact, many other factors may come into play. Non-conformity to news values is a prime concern; equally, the presence of other items on the same or similar subjects may prevent selection. The resources necessary to cover a subject may prevent it being seriously considered; the cost of sending reporters to a foreign country, for example, may be difficult to justify. (Conversely, if a decision has been taken *in favour* of investing resources in this way, then the story will probably get even greater priority than would usually be expected, in order to justify the outlay).

Perhaps most relevant in the context of EU-related news is the fact that the *source* of a news item may influence the gatekeeper who has to select or reject it. Shoemaker [1991] describes three main channels through which information reaches news organisations: enterprise, informal and routine. Enterprise sources include investigative reporting or spontaneous events witnessed by a reporter;

informal channels encompass background briefings, news reports from other news organisations and nongovernmental proceedings; the third category, routine sources, includes official proceedings (trials, elections, parliamentary procedures), press releases, press conferences, briefings by P.R. personnel or 'official spokespersons' and nonspontaneous events, such as speeches and ceremonies.

Most information relating to the European Union will probably fall into this last division, a fact which can work for and against it, in the competition to be selected. On the one hand, the limited resources available to news organisations may mean that ready-packaged information is welcomed ; neither time nor money needs to be deployed to shape these potential stories into articles, for officials will have worked to "create their own messages and...ensure that they will enter media channels and pass through all gates" [Shoemaker 1991: 19].

However, quite apart from the fact that these 'manufactured' stories may not be considered newsworthy, journalists may be sceptical of their accuracy and predisposed to reject them. Winder suggests that this is indeed the case, with regard to the information policy of the EU

It is unfortunately generous, in that journalists characteristically mistrust spoonfed information and cannot be content to listen only to these proclamations.  
[1983: 25]

The very nature of this kind of information may lessen its chances of being selected for coverage in a newspaper.

The importance of the gatekeeper's role, then, cannot be underestimated. If it is accepted that the media are instrumental in creating the public's perception of social reality, it can be seen that it is gatekeepers who create a social reality within the media. It is on these individuals that responsibility falls for the quantity and quality of EU-related information in today's newspapers.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE EUROPEAN UNION**

### **2.1 ORIGINS AND HISTORY**

The notion of European unification was first suggested as early as the 1920's. Growing unease over a perceived increase in American power and the potential threat of post-revolutionary Russia prompted serious examination of what had previously been seen as idealistic suggestions. Disagreement on the form that integration should take, however, was apparent even at this early stage. Much of the move towards unification came from the business community, who saw economic cooperation as a prime objective, and established the International Steel Cartel in 1926 as a first step in this direction.

Political parties, on the other hand, adopted the goal of European unity to suit their own more abstract agendas. A concrete proposal was in fact put forward at the end of the decade by the French premier, Briand, but, as can be seen from Weigall and Stirk's study of the period, the questions which prevented integration then are those which, to a large extent, remain unresolved today.

Was political union to precede economic union, or vice versa? How much sovereignty would European states have to surrender to construct a viable union?

[Weigall and Stirk 1992: 6]

In fact, it would take another war and unprecedented wide-scale destruction before Europe would again seriously consider cross-continent unity.

#### **2.1.1 Post-war cooperation**

The antecedents of today's European Union lie in the late 1940's, the post-war years of devastation and slow reconstruction. The damage done to the infrastructure of many European cities and the ensuing food shortages, lack of housing, communications breakdown and decline in industrial output dictated a need for immediate action on the part of all affected nations.

Financial help came in the form of the Marshall Plan, a programme of U.S. aid, designed to promote economic recovery throughout Europe. The Organisation for



European Economic Cooperation (OECC) was established in 1948 to administer the programme and allocate the aid (its membership, interestingly, was similar to that forecast for the European Union of the mid 1990's, with the likely accession of Austria and the Scandinavian countries).

It has been suggested that implicit in this financial support was an unspoken pressure from Washington for Europe to align itself with the U.S.A.; that is, *not* to turn for help to its other wartime ally, communist Russia [Weigall and Stirk 1992]. Other commentators, however, identify a positive desire within Europe to form a supranational body, partly to insure against further outbreaks of the nationalism seen in the Third Reich, and partly because they "understood...the great advantage of a common, greater market" [Laqueur 1992: viii].

From these two strands of reasoning, two separate organisations can trace their roots: 1949 saw the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, a loose grouping of fifteen countries, including the United States and Canada, with the objective of general cooperation in military and defence decisions, and also the establishment of the Council of Europe, committing those nations who joined to "political cooperation" [History of the European Community 1984: ix]. While progress towards this cooperation was slow and the Council was later subsumed by the EEC, it left an important legacy in the form of the European Court of Human Rights, still operating in Strasbourg.

True unification, however, had yet to take shape. It took two Frenchmen, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, to make a decisive move in this direction.

### **2.1.2 The treaties of Paris and Rome**

The Paris conference of 1951 brought together six countries: France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg. Under the influence of Monnet in particular they formed what was, in fact, a 'common market', the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), intended to break down inter-country competition and promote growth in these two key industries. Monnet declared it to be "the first expression of the Europe that is being born" [Laqueur 1992: 119] and indeed, as an initial step towards the dismantling of international trade barriers, it proved a great success. Steel production rose by 42% [Laqueur 1992:120] and trade increased between the member states; the ECSC was later

recognised to have been a "valuable dress-rehearsal for the Common Market" [Ardagh 1982: 37].

From this success it was a logical step to further integration. The Rome conference of 1957 saw the same six countries setting up Euratom, "a peaceful-uses-only nuclear club...a dead letter within a year, because de Gaulle when he became president started French nuclear tests" [History of the European Community 1984: ix] and, at the same time, the European Economic Community (EEC).

The EEC's main objectives were

to promote ever closer union of European peoples, to ensure economic and social progress by eliminating barriers and to improve living and working conditions  
[Great Britain, Central Office of Information 1971]

While the first of these is clearly difficult to quantify, the Social Chapter (signed by all but one member) and the Single European Act of 1992, both of which will be examined further below, show that progress, although slower than anticipated in the optimism of Rome, has been constant. Other European countries, unable to ignore the Community's rapid economic success, were eager to be admitted: Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom joined in 1973, Greece in 1981 and Portugal and Spain in 1986.

Yet, despite its achievements, how many of the EU's 340 million inhabitants [Gray 1992] would agree with Britain's ex-prime minister, Edward Heath, who declared the Community to be "the greatest success story of the post-war world" [Heath 1993: 18]?

## **2.2 THE EU TODAY**

### **2.2.1 Structure of the institutions**

Three distinct bodies are responsible for the formation and implementation of EU policy. The Council of Ministers heads this hierarchy and has the power to veto proposals from both the Commission and the Parliament. Ministers from each national government meet to discuss and vote on those areas of policy which are relevant to their own portfolios; all twelve agriculture ministers, for example, will

convene to make decisions on the Common Agricultural Policy, "representing *national* (government) interests [The levels of power 1984:vi]. Voting is weighted according to the population of each country and, until the recent move to a qualified majority system for most areas of decision, unanimity was required for a proposal to be passed (the effect that this had on Britain's entry to the Community will be outlined below).

The European Commission has a managerial role, running the vast bureaucracy which is, in effect, the EU's civil service. At present it comprises seventeen Commissioners (two from each of the five largest Member States and one from each of the others); until recently Commissioners have been recommended by their own governments (they must now be approved by the European Parliament) but, nevertheless, are expected to act in the best interests of the EU, to "miraculously...cease feeling any national or party loyalties" [The levels of power 1984: vi]. From their ranks the President is elected, for a five-year term.

With a dual function of proposing new laws and then, if they are accepted by the Council of Ministers, actually enforcing those laws, it would appear that the Commission's role is fundamental. It has been suggested, however, that the President in particular has rather limited powers.

Confronted by colleagues appointed by national governments, straitjacketed by the European Council and loosely supervised by the European Parliament  
[Marthoz 1994:12]

Marthoz's last point is especially interesting, for as we shall see, the Single European Act (SEA) of 1992 considerably increased Parliament's powers.

Ten years ago the European Parliament was described as the "least important of the three main institutions" [The levels of power 1984: vi]. Directly elected only since 1979, Europe's (now 567, then) 434 MEP's were indeed limited in their power to instigate new ideas or prevent those of the other bodies being put into practice. The SEA, however, and more recently the Maastricht Treaty, have both increased Parliament's ability to make its voice heard. In addition to the command they now wield over the make-up of the Commission, MEP's can now influence decisions on matters such as Community expansion and budget allocation.

This growth in power did not go unmentioned in newspaper reports preceding the 1994 European elections.

Parliament has been tolerated, humoured or ignored but rarely feared by the other arms of government. Yet supporters still claim Strasbourg is on its way to becoming a formidable institution...extension of its powers encourage the view that it will eventually be able to rein in both the Council of Ministers, seen by many as the true, and secretive, legislative body within the EU, and the Commission.

[Smart and Watson 1994a: 6]

and more dramatically

If the Parliament has never set the adrenalin pumping yet, it might just be about to do so

[Smart and Watson 1994b: 12]

Yet, despite the implication in these reports and others that Parliament's increased powers might call for a higher degree of interest from the electorate, overall turnout in these latest elections was at a record low [Nash 1994: 10].

It seems that either, as one commentator suggests "A gradual awareness of Parliament's limitations has turned would-be voters more sceptical" [Smart 1994: 10], or Europe's citizens are simply unaware of the EU's relevance to their lives. In both cases it could be argued that the EU's own communications machinery, disseminating limited, out-of-date information, or worse, none at all, is not performing as it should.

### 2.2.2 Information provision

Two separate information divisions operate from Brussels, both as part of the European Commission. The Directorate-General (DGX - Information, Communication and Culture) is responsible for coordinating long-term information policy, producing a range of literature to help further "understanding of the EC amongst the citizens of the member states and elsewhere" [Thomson 1989a: 122]. Perhaps most important of their many publications is the Eurobarometer, a public opinion poll carried out twice-yearly since 1973, covering European's attitudes on issues such as democracy, living standards and of course the EU itself [Thomson

1989a:124]. Whilst the poll is officially meant for use within the Commission and is not readily available to the public, the media have access to copies and can extract any useful information.

The Spokesman's Service, however, is the channel through which journalists will more often discover what has been happening. With a remit of disseminating daily news, the Service holds a briefing at noon every day, informing the press corps of developments and issuing background and explanatory material. A regular commitment to such openness seems admirable, yet, as Winder notes (see section 1.4) it has been suggested that the EU in fact suffers from this policy. It must be noted here that a mistrust of 'spoonfed' information may not be the only reason why journalists search for different stories or choose not to file anything at all; information which the Spokesman's Service believes to be vital may be perceived by elements of the press as inappropriate for their newspapers, an issue which was examined in chapter one.

In addition to these Brussels-based organisations, DGX has outposts in all Member States (Press and Information Offices), which are charged with two duties: relaying back to Brussels opinions on the EU within the country in which they operate, and keeping nationals of that country fully informed of EU activities, aims and policies [Thomson 1989b].

The European Parliament also has representative offices in each capital city, often working in tandem with the Commission in publicising EU issues. Informing the public, however, is not such a high priority for the Council of Ministers, perhaps for the reason suggested by a former Commissioner, Lord Thomson of Monifeth, that "Not even a Solomon amongst civil servants could aspire to speak for the [then] nine national Ministers" [1979]; nevertheless, even the Council publishes a certain amount of background material to explain its decisions.

From this brief scan of the EU's own information institutions, it seems that, far from operating inadequately, great emphasis is placed on providing EU citizens with a variety of information sources. In a review of the 1979 European elections, Jay Blumler noted

Since many people are all but informed about international affairs and slow to see their relevance for their own lives, it would require a communication effort of

considerable scope and complexity to overcome electoral unfamiliarity with EC institutions, candidates and issues  
[1983].

Clearly the bodies of the EU cannot be expected to overcome *alone* such difficulties: is it, then, the other major player in this communications process, the media, who are to blame for the public's apparent lack of interest in EU matters? While the rest of this chapter will chart attitudes to the EU in both France and the UK, it is to this central question of the media's role that the study will return in chapter two.

## 2.3 FRANCE AND THE EU

When France lined up so massively behind de Gaulle in the 1960's, it seemed the most toughly nationalist state in Europe; twenty years later under Mitterrand it had become one of the most fervent proponents of a supra-national European Union. How on earth to explain such a violent and rapid turnabout?  
[Johnson 1990: 20]

### 2.3.1 De Gaulle's veto

French attitudes to the EU have always been influenced by their feelings towards Germany. From its inception the Common Market represented both an insurance against further military outbreaks across the Franco-German border and a passport to share in the economic growth which Germany was soon experiencing.

De Gaulle, who came to power for the second time a year after the Treaty of Rome, recognised the importance of France's relationship with the ancient enemy: his concept of a strong European union was one in which each state retained their national sovereignty, while economic cooperation progressed under the direction of a powerful Franco-German axis. Furthermore, his policy included plans for Europe to become a third 'superpower', a balance between the blocs of East (Soviet Union) and West (America), but aligned to neither. This policy led to France's withdrawal from NATO in 1959 and to de Gaulle twice vetoing, in 1963 and 1967, Britain's entry to the Common Market, claiming that the U.K. was too dependent on the

U.S.A.. He was worried also that Britain "would have constituted a serious rival to French leadership of the Community" [Lagueur 1992: 331].

With regard to the institutions of the EEC, de Gaulle fought against an increase of power for the Commission and the European Parliament, suspicious of any body which demanded that its members surrender national interests. In 1965 he actually withdrew French representation from Brussels, forcing the EEC, threatened by the unthinkable loss of such a powerful member, to move the balance of power back in favour of the Council of Ministers.

The elections of Pompidou as president in 1969, and Giscard d'Estaing just five years later, brought a softening of government attitude to the EEC. The veto on British entry was lifted and Giscard, in particular, supported moves to further European cooperation (although still trying to maintain France's strong position by developing a close relationship with the German chancellor, Schmidt [Johnson 1990] ).

### **2.3.2 Mitterrand, Maastricht and beyond**

It has been primarily under Mitterrand's thirteen year presidency that France, officially at least, has swung right away from de Gaulle's nationalist policies of self-interest to full and active support for European political unity.

France, unlike Britain, has been consistently in favour of the European Monetary System (EMS) and, in spite of its depressing effect on the French economy, has remained within the exchange-rate mechanism, recognising it as a logical step.

The accession of Spain and Portugal was supported by Mitterrand (although many of those in the agricultural sector feared the threat of competition). Austria, Sweden, Finland and Norway he has accepted, but the President has spoken out against further enlargement of the EU, anticipating a dissipation in EU powers with a wider membership.

Perhaps most importantly, Mitterrand played an instrumental role in preparing the Treaty on European Union, the Maastricht Treaty. In a 1992 television interview he "declared that 'the Maastricht Treaty is a design conceived by France (un projet

de la France)' and as such, was squarely in the tradition of Monnet and Robert Schuman" [Sutton 1993: 5].

It has been argued that France's overriding concern in helping to strengthen the EU has been to "bind Germany tightly into Western Europe" [Sutton 1993: 5]. Yet, even if this is the case, those in favour of a united Europe can only be grateful to recent French governments who have worked towards this goal. Johnson's suggestion, that fear of a newly-powerful Germany is the impetus behind French action [1990], does not detract from what Mitterrand, in particular, has achieved.

### 2.3.3 Public opinion

The founding of the ECSC in 1951 provoked opposition in France from the *Patronat*, the employers' federation, who feared that the French steel industry would suffer in competition with that of Germany. The success of that organisation though, and later the rapid increase in trade with the other five members of the EEC, persuaded most sectors of industry of the benefits of economic cooperation. Ardagh claims that while many of the French "share Europe's general scepticism about the workings of the EEC in practice...almost every executive believes that it has done a valuable job for French industry" [1982: 37].

For those working in agriculture the EU has brought mixed blessings. Initially it seemed that they could only benefit: with the highest production of 'the six' and the lowest wholesale prices [Ardagh 1982] the fixed price system introduced by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) meant an inevitable increase in income for French farmers. However, in recent years the growing efficiency of other members' farming industries, the admission of new countries with similar agriculture-based economies and the EU-US farm trade accord have all led to opposition from French farmers to decisions taken in Brussels.

The 1992 referendum on the Maastricht treaty proves a useful, recent measure of the French public's attitude to its membership of the EU. Just over 50% voted in favour of Mitterrand signing the Treaty [Macshane 1992] and clear divisions were visible between those in favour and those against.

The cities voted Yes, against a rural No...the young voted strongly Yes, as did the regions that bordered other countries...Vichy France voted No...the unemployed



voted No, the employed voted Yes...[the No vote] was based on reaction, chauvinism and not a little invocation against other Europeans  
[Macshane 1992: 12]

Clearly, then, the wholehearted support which Mitterrand continues to give to European unity is not fully reflected by the electorate. Indeed, voting in the recent European election showed a decided swing to the right and a certain support for the l'Autre Europe list, an anti-Europe party.

Despite these results, however, commentators unite in the belief that the French accept the EU as an inevitable part of the political landscape. The view is summarised by Thomson, "The simply tend to take the Community for granted, as part of the general framework of government" [1979: 423], and again by Ardagh, "very few people, save on the extremes of Right and Left, call for French withdrawal or question the need for France and her neighbours to stick together. This is simply not an issue" [1982: 466].

As the next section will show, this has not been the case across the Channel.

## **2.4 BRITAIN AND THE EU**

If events had turned out differently, Britain might have been a founder member of European Economic Community...Instead, it took nearly two decades and two rebuffs by France under President Charles de Gaulle before the United Kingdom finally acceded to the EEC in 1973  
[Burgess and Edwards 1988: 393]

### **2.4.1 Standing alone**

When Foreign Ministers gathered in Rome in 1957 to discuss and ultimately agree to the creation of the EEC, a representative from Britain was among them. The decision not to join 'the six' at that stage has been attributed to a number of reasons: despite extensive bomb damage, Britain, unlike France, did not experience German occupation during the war and perhaps did not feel such an urgent need to curb future German strength; decolonisation in Commonwealth countries was occupying much government time; and, most pertinently, Britain simply did not anticipate the

economic success of the Community. Both main political parties adopted an independent stance.

Labour and Conservative alike were opposed to joining Europe; they 'knew in their bones' (as Anthony Eden said in 1952) that they could not join a European federation

[Laqueur 1992: 215]

Within just a few years, however, it became clear that in terms of increased trade, at least, 'the six' were experiencing great prosperity. Economic crises at home finally prompted Anthony Eden, then Conservative Prime Minister, to apply for membership in 1961. De Gaulle, for reasons explained above (2.3.1) used his power of veto to block the application, against the wishes of the other five members and the European Commission.

Six years later, under a Labour government, Britain applied again. The Labour leader, Harold Wilson, declared his commitment to being part of a Europe-wide body.

Over the next year, the next ten years, the next twenty years, the unity of Europe is going to be forged, and geography and history and interest and sentiment alike demand that we play a part in forging it, and in working it.

[Weigall and Stirk 1992: 141]

Again de Gaulle prevented British entry, and it was not until after his resignation that the application was accepted; the United Kingdom finally became a full member in 1973.

#### **2.4.2 Change of party position**

Two decades of EU membership have seen dramatic changes in position for both Labour and the Tories. Although Wilson's 1974 government was in favour, a large section of his own party, particularly on the left, was hostile, claiming that the EEC was in effect a 'rich man's club', promoting its own economic prosperity and ignoring its responsibility to help the developing third world. A referendum in 1975, however, found over 60% of the electorate [Weigall and Stirk 1992: 142] in support of continued membership.

In the last few years, after more than a decade in opposition, Labour has managed to restructure itself as *the* party of Europe. A *Daily Mirror* editorial, exhorting its readers to vote Labour in the recent European Parliament elections, recognised this.

There is one single fact the doubters and sceptics forget. Britain IS part of Europe. Not just because we are linked to it under the Channel but because we are inescapably part of it economically, politically and even culturally. Labour understands that.

[Vote for our future 1994: 6]

The Conservatives, on the other hand, having led Britain into the EEC, now face sharp divisions within their party as to what kind of union Britain should be part of. Margaret Thatcher began her eleven-year term relatively supportive of the Community; indeed, in 1982 her Foreign Secretary, Francis Pym, declared

The present British Government took office in 1979 determined not just to make a success of British membership, but to contribute to the success of the community as a whole. That determination and our commitment to Europe, is just as strong today.

[Great Britain. Central Office of Information 1983:1]

Towards the end of her premiership though, Thatcher "began to pick quarrels with the EEC" [Laqueur 1992: 472] and made it clear that she was against any extension of EEC powers.

Her successor, John Major, has continued this policy, fully supportive of enlarged membership, but anxious to retain sovereignty. His refusal to accept the federalist Belgian, Jean-Luc Dehaene, as the next President of the Commission, has been perceived by Tory 'Euro-Sceptics' in this country as an honouring of "his pledge to veto further moves towards a federal Europe" [Grice 1994: 1]. This internal support notwithstanding, Labour's overriding majority in the European elections suggests that Major may not find the British electorate backing such a nationalist stance.

### 2.4.3 Public opinion

Popular attitudes in Britain long outlasted the British government's decision to apply for membership. The question as to whether Britain should or should not join the Community and then, once having joined in 1973, whether it should remain in, were live political issues until the mid-1980's  
[Weigall and Stirk 1992: 141]

With a relatively small farming sector, and faced with the CAP using 75% of the total EEC budget [Ardagh 1982], Britain has consistently been a net contributor to the EU budget. It is this simple fact, used to great propagandist advantage by the anti-European lobby, which has given the British the image in Europe of a nation of self-interest, determined on "getting our money back" [Johnson 1990: 21]

In recent years though, the issue of budget contributions has become less important, as the British have had to consider the long-term prospects of further political and monetary union. Unlike the citizens of many other Member States, the British electorate was not offered the opportunity of voting for or against the Maastricht Treaty; it is difficult therefore, to gauge a precise feel of the nation's attitude. A poll conducted by *The European* in May of this year, however, suggests that the British remain sceptical about the introduction of a central bank of Europe and a single currency [The European / Mori poll 1994:7].

It seems, then, that despite the Tories' low representation in the new European Parliament, Major may in fact be more attuned to the wishes of the electorate (on European issues, at least) than might initially be assumed.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE PRESS

### 3.1 THE PRESS IN FRANCE

French journalism has always been more one of self-expression than of the reporting of events: it tends to favour discussion and commentary over reporting and accounts of occurrences...In that, it differs fundamentally from Anglo-American journalism, for which news always has primacy over comment.

[Fortin 1986: 505]

#### 3.1.1 Brief post-war history

As the previous chapter showed, French wartime experiences had a direct influence on later attitudes to European unification; similarly, the effects of the occupation are also visible in an examination of the structure of the press.

Immediately after the country was liberated a large section of the newspaper industry, owned and run by industrialists revealed to be collaborationists, was seized by the government and redistributed to groups of journalists who had been active in the resistance press. Freiberg [1981] identifies three important consequences of this dramatic restructuring: while pre-war owners were generally of the industrial bourgeoisie, their successors were mainly of a middle-class background; many of the latter were openly left-wing, in contrast to the conservative views held by, and expressed in the newspapers of the pre-war owners; and lastly, the structural changes to small, independent groups halted moves to concentrated ownership which had seemed likely before the war.

The occupation can also be perceived as an important factor in the growth of the regional press in France. While the country was divided in two, transportation inevitably was rendered less efficient; the Parisien daily newspapers were unable to maintain pre-war levels of distribution, and as a consequence, circulation of regional papers increased.

This has continued to be the case in the years since the war. Regional dailies did not encounter the strong union opposition experienced by Parisien-based national newspapers when introducing new technology, and, while some have merged or

disappeared, others have seen circulation figures rise well above their national counterparts; in 1990, for example, the best-selling French daily newspaper was the Rennes-based *Ouest-France* [Guerin 1993].

The issue of press ownership, on the other hand, has not evolved as the decision-makers of the post-liberation government probably intended. Within the last few decades the process of concentration in media ownership has been as rapid in France as in many other Western countries. Titles have been amalgamated or bought out to such an extent that the press has become dominated by a small number of industrial tycoons.

### 3.1.2 The present situation

The French press today, while editorially independent of the government, relies to a certain extent on government subsidies: a support fund was established in the spring of 1993 to ensure that newspapers would "have priority when it came to placing advertisements for the forthcoming privatisation of 21 companies" [Nundy 1993: 9].

Yet, despite this attempt and others to counter falls in revenue, circulation generally has continued to decline: *Le Parisien*, the nearest equivalent to a British tabloid, lost over 5% of its readers between 1989 and 1990; the Communist paper, *l'Humanite*, over 11% [Guerin 1993]. Television can perhaps be cited as a possible reason for this decline. Ardagh [1982] also suggests that the growing market for weekly news magazines may have been influential.

As the previous section suggested, press concentration has been an important feature of the industry in recent years. Freiberg goes as far as to claim that "most surviving newspapers owe their continued existence to their inclusion in a press group, a system which allows unprofitable dailies to be supported by the more profitable periodical publications of the group" [1981: 25].

The group with the most influence is Hersant, who own 25% of the market [Media moguls take on Europe 1992]. Robert Hersant, head of the family business, has gradually acquired control of a wide range of titles, including *Le Figaro* and *France-Soir*, two of the papers used in this study. The Hachette publishing empire

is also a powerful player in the industry, and a third company, Havas, owns a wide range of regional papers.

While this phenomenon is not peculiar to France, the aims of this study demand that some consideration must be given to the notion of owner influence on newspaper content. When a powerful industrial force virtually rescues a title from folding (as Hersant, in particular, has done), it is not unreasonable to suggest that they may insist that their influence be evident in more ways than through a simple financial impact. The description of individual titles below will examine this idea with respect to each paper.

The last issue that must be touched on in this edition, however, is the rather nebulous one of French journalistic style, particularly as the suggestions made by some commentators on the issue may have a direct bearing on the type of EU information made available to the French public.

Ardagh claims that "few French editors put the same insistence on factual accuracy or balanced judgements, or instil these virtues into their staff" [1982: 601]. He goes on to suggest that reporting, particularly of foreign news stories, is "cavalier, taking refuge in easy clichés...rather than trying to assess the real situation [1982: 601].

Fortin, in a similar, though perhaps less harsh argument, quotes Alfred Grosser as saying of the French press "the mistakes and inaccuracies perpetrated by journalists are legion, due to the inadequacy of training and lack of specialization in France [1986: 490], and later, "Not only is the press ill-informed, it frequently has no access, and does not want access, to information" [1986: 506].

The implications of such claims are far-reaching and deserve more consideration than the limits of this study can allow. Nevertheless, the notion that journalistic style can recognise national and linguistic boundaries, can differ so greatly between France and the U.K., must be borne in mind.

### 3.1.3 The newspapers

#### Le Figaro

As the oldest Parisien daily, established in 1826, *Le Figaro* has always maintained a certain dignity, representing "the moderate liberalism of the classical right" [Freiberg 1981: 55]. It survived the war years by adopting a strictly apolitical line (and taking advantage of the financial help of Jean Prouvost when this policy of ambiguity failed to attract advertisers). Prouvost, a textile industrialist, eventually bought out the previous owners, but until the late 1960's had no editorial involvement, under the terms of a post-war agreement which kept separate the editorial and financial sides of the paper's management. This agreement ended in 1969 and, despite the opposition of journalists, Prouvost made it clear that he wished to have more direct control of the paper.

Facing financial difficulties, Prouvost sold the paper in 1975 to Robert Hersant, who encountered more problems with *Le Figaro's* staff. Many resigned immediately, others followed later as Hersant's style became clear: "On occasions, so it is said, he obliges his staff to twist the facts in support of his views" [Ardagh 1982: 598]. Despite these problems, *Le Figaro* has flourished; while it lost 1% of its circulation between 1989 and 1990 [Guerin 1993], it remains the highest-selling national daily in France.

#### *France-Soir*

*France-Soir*, a 'sensationalist' daily, forms another part of the Hersant empire. In the 1960's the paper had the highest circulation in the country; 1968 saw an average print-run of 1.1 million copies [Freiberg 1981: 75]. It was owned at that time by Hachette, but as sales decreased the company decided to sell. Less than a year after the purchase of *Le Figaro*, and amid much controversy about the 1944 law which forbade any one person from owning several daily newspapers, *France-Soir* was bought by Hersant. Ardagh [1982] suggests that he escaped investigation, or indeed prosecution, through close personal friendships with members of the government.

While the paper does not give much space to the reporting and analysis of political events, it is, nevertheless, (perhaps inevitably, considering its owner) fairly right-



wing. With a readership of around 240,000 [Guerin 1993] it is a popular evening paper. Redfern summarises its potential influence.

It is doubtful whether it has ever wielded much political influence...but, in its pandering to the lower instincts of its readers, it probably has a stultifying effect on their minds.

[1983: 210]

### *Le Monde*

Unlike most of France's other national newspapers, *Le Monde* "generally regarded both at home and abroad as one of the world's greatest newspapers" [Ardagh 1982: 599], remains resolutely independent of any large press group.

It began just after the war, with the same equipment and much of the same journalistic team as a pre-war paper, *Le Temps*. The first editor, Beuve-Mery, was not afraid of taking an unpopular line: his anti-U.S. editorials in the 1950's faced much official criticism and might have led to him losing the job, but for the strong support offered by both journalists and readers.

The structure of the paper was changed at this time to allow the journalists' association (*societe de redacteurs*) and other employees to hold shares in the company. (It is noteworthy that these shares are not transferable to an individual's inheritors, but to their successor at the paper [Freiberg 1981: 861]. The 1980's have seen further changes with reader ownership altering the structure again [Capella 1987].

While these moves keep the paper free from the influence of big business, Freiberg does stress that *Le Monde* is not unwilling to take sides; it may give space to signed articles which embrace opposing viewpoints, but "the paper itself takes a stance; it is decided upon by the editor-in-chief" [1981: 87]. Its circulation of 375,000 [Guerin 1993] gives substance to its continued popularity, despite its sometimes unapproachable (few illustrations and dense text) visual style. In terms of political alignment, *Le Monde* is broadly supportive of the Left, yet not beholden to any single party.

## 3.2 THE PRESS IN BRITAIN.

The newspaper of opinion is a mirage long pursued by English journalism but only briefly achieved  
[Smith 1974: 15]

### 3.2.1 Brief post-war history

Unlike in France, the British press is dominated by London-based national papers. Almost twice as many Britons as French read a newspaper every day [Ardagh 1982] and a large majority choose one of the eleven national titles currently available.

The lack of a regional press, similar in relative size and importance to its French counterpart, may to a certain extent be due to Britain's smaller geographical area; distribution is simply easier in a smaller country. Of greater importance, however, is the general reduction in number of newspapers throughout this century. Between 1921 and 1937 thirty titles disappeared; by 1975 another seventeen had gone [Murdock 1978: 134]. This phenomenon can be attributed to two factors: a growing dependence on advertising and increased concentration of press ownership.

With new choices of media becoming available, the custom of advertisers was at a premium in the years following the end of the war. Newspaper publishers soon began to realise the potential value of making public their circulation figures and, more importantly, analysing in socio-economic terms the type of reader that their paper was attracting. A stark example of this kind of application of market research can be seen in the case of the *Daily Herald*. Despite circulation figures of over 4 million, the paper was, nevertheless, forced to close, the low spending power of its readers proving unattractive to advertisers. The broadsheets, however, selling less than 500,000 copies a day, manage to survive; the high economic status of their readers ensures continued advertising revenue.

The process of press concentration, already examined in its French context, was equally swift in the U.K.. Smaller papers, both regional and national, were taken over by fast-growing enterprises; by the late 1980's a large number of both national and local papers were controlled by just two men: Murdoch and Maxwell.

Smith identifies a recognition that this might happen as early as the late 1940's, with anxiety in the newspaper industry "that ownership of the major part of the Press would devolve upon a tiny group of men, several of them highly politically motivated" [1974: 25]. The Royal Commissions published on the press since the war, however, while admitting that increased concentration would not be a good thing, have done little to stem the wave of amalgamations that have taken place.

### 3.2.2 The present situation

In their study of the impact on the industry of the daily paper *Today*, Goodhart and Wintour perceived 1986 to be a revolutionary year for the press in Britain:

In the course of just one week at the end of January, Eddie Shah successfully concluded the first dummy run of his new colour daily, *Today*, Robert Maxwell...told advertisers they could expect cuts of up to half in his paper's advertising rates...and most dramatic of all, Rupert Murdoch's News International produced its four titles...from behind barbed wire at a new printing plant in Wapping while, in effect, locking out 5,000 members of the traditional print unions.

[Goodhart 1986: xi]

The radical changes brought about in the mid 1980's have indeed altered the British press considerably, not least in removing a large part of it from its traditional home in Fleet Street. The strength of printing unions meant that newspaper publishing continued for a long time to use outdated production methods. However, political decisions curtailing union power have since led to the introduction of new computer-based systems, colour printing and sleeker, decentralised distribution networks. The inevitable loss of jobs was opposed by unions, but newspaper proprietors were again helped by the Conservative government, who rapidly implemented new laws on labour strikes.

While this transition may be indicative of the outlook of those who now control much of the press, of more interest to this study are the style and political standpoint of the papers themselves. According to commentators, the outlook is bleak for those who value the notion of a balanced press and expect the whole political spectrum to be represented by the titles available.

Murdoch describes "the increasing conformity of the British quality press, in style and substance" [1978: 147] and goes on to comment on the work of Seymour-Ure, who "has shown how paratisanship in the press has declined since 1945 [1978: 147]. Nevertheless, a more recent article [Miller 1990] suggests that newspapers, whatever their actual content, are still *perceived by readers* as being partisan.

The most important events within the press in the last year have been the price wars between the leading broadsheets. Murdoch's decision to dramatically reduce the price of *The Times* in September 1993, and the subsequent increase in sales, have had far-reaching implications for other papers. *The Daily Telegraph*, the market-leader, has finally challenged *The Times* on its own terms by introducing price cuts, while *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, neither profitable enough or backed by wealthy enough owners to contemplate similar measures, must simply wait hopefully for the battle to end.

The outcome is not yet clear, but, while an executive from *The Times'* parent company, News International, denies that the paper is "out to kill its rivals" [Ruddock 1994], it seems that the future for a diverse British press does not look promising.

### 3.2.3 The newspapers

#### *The Daily Telegraph*

Launched in 1855 as *The Daily Telegraph and Courier*, the paper was owned for most of this century by a single family, the Berrys. Lord Camrose, the second of three brothers from a relatively modest South Wales background, took control just before the Second World War; the role of editor-in-chief was eventually passed to his son Michael, Lord Hartwell, in 1954 on Camrose's death.

From the beginning of his reign to the paper's take-over in 1985, Hartwell's position was one of staunch conservatism; his book on party politics, published in the late 1940's, declared "Socialism is inferior to Capitalism" [Hart-Davies 1990: 192], while William Deedes, a long-serving editor, had at one time been a Conservative member of parliament. Despite this bias, the *Telegraph* has not been without its supporters. Porter claims that "the paper is by far and away the most informative

of the national dailies...the news content is extensive and on the whole less biased than the other conservative papers" [1984: 190].

Questionable financial management led to serious problems for the *Telegraph* in the mid 1980's; Hartnell and his family were temporarily saved by investment from the Canadian Conrad Black, but just a few months later more money was needed and Black ended up with absolute control of the paper. In the words of Stephen Glover, an ex-*Telegraph* journalist, "the old regime was finished" [1993: 17].

Since then, *The Daily Telegraph* has continued to be the highest-selling broadsheet, although the actions of Rupert Murdoch at *The Times* (see 3.2.2) have led to sales dropping below the million mark. Its current editor-in-chief, Max Hastings, retains the paper's "middle-of-the-road conservatism" [Ruddock 1994: 9].

### ***The Evening Standard***

*The Evening Standard*, London's only remaining evening newspaper, like *The Daily Telegraph* remained in the control of one family for many years. In 1923 its owner, Sir Edward Hulton, fell ill and decided to sell his chain of newspapers. They were bought, in somewhat suspicious circumstances, by his neighbour Lord Beaverbrook, who was acting on behalf of one the biggest press barons of the time, Lord Rothermere. Beaverbrook kept 51% of *The Evening Standard* as his commission and later bought up the remainder, adding the paper to his growing stable of *The Daily Express* and *The Sunday Express*.

Lord Beaverbrook served in Churchill's war cabinet, and although he faced fierce criticism from his own party for his part in the Conservative's downfall in the first post-war election, he was decidedly right-wing. Just after the war, the editor of *The Evening Standard*, Sydney Elliott, resigned, realising that "the days of some freedom of expression for Socialists in the Beaverbrook press were over" [Driberg 1956: 299].

The control of Express Newspapers passed to Beaverbrook's son, Sir Max Aitken, who in 1977 sold the company to a partnership, Brookes and Matthews, neither of whom had any experience in the newspaper industry and thus decided to treat their role as a straightforward, profit-making venture. Matthews, like his predecessor, was a life-long supporter of the Conservative party, although his paper, in tabloid tradition, did not give much space to political analysis. In 1985 the group was taken

over by United Newspapers; its current circulation stands at 466,000 [Greenslade 1994: 16].

### *The Independent*

As a very recent arrival on the British press scene, it is generally acknowledged that *The Independent* has done well to establish a fairly solid readership and retain it; recent events, however, have made the reliability of that readership appear questionable.

The paper first appeared in October 1986, the invention of three *Daily Telegraph* journalists, who had anticipated the financial problems of that paper. Andreas Whittam Smith, City editor at the *Telegraph*, became editor of the new title and is credited with its initial conception. In the first issue he stated the paper's aims

We are free to make up our mind on policy issues... We will both praise and criticise without reference to a party line.

[Kettle 1986:21]

He was able to make much of the paper's freedom from proprietorial influence, as the money to fund the venture came, not from a single wealthy industrialist, but from a large number of financial institutions. Within two years, *The Independent* was regularly selling 400,000 copies [Hart-Davies 1990: 420] and attracted much praise.

The genuine political independence of the paper is rare and valued, since it makes its 'line' less predictable than others.

[MacLennan 1993: 8]

The paper has, nevertheless, also had its detractors. Kettle's critique points out that "a paper with leaders has to have an editorial line" [1986: 21] and suggests that great confusion exists on the paper as to what its attitude on many issues should be. Stephen Glover, one of the three original co-founders, who left the paper in 1991, has said of his former colleagues

For them independence means never saying that one political party is better than another, even if they believe that it is

[1993: 302]

The past year has been a bad one for this sought after independence; in severe financial straits the paper was forced to accept a buy-out offer from Newspaper Publishing, the owners of *The Daily Mirror*. As the price war between the broadsheets continues, the future of *The Independent* looks increasingly uncertain.

## CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF EU ARTICLES

### 4.1 AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

In general terms, the aims of this study were to compare both the volume and the quality of European Union-related information in the national press of Britain and France. Three newspapers from each country (the selection of which is discussed below) were used as representative vehicles, and two week-long time periods chosen to offer the possibility of further comparison within the scope of a single title.

Data was collected through the identification and analysis of individual articles, with particular emphasis on location in paper, allotted space, illustration, headline size and subject matter. This 'hard' data provided a quantitative background picture which set in context further qualitative analysis of a sample of articles.

A number of hypotheses were proposed and it was anticipated that the collated information from surveyed articles would serve to support or refute these suggestions. Specifically, these hypotheses were:

- that the first time period (*before* the European elections) would yield a substantially larger volume of EU-related articles than the second (*after* the elections)
- that there would be an identifiable difference in editorial space given to EU-related articles between the British newspapers and the French newspapers
- that this difference would also be visible between the three selected newspapers of a single country
- that differences would be visible in terms of percentage of articles illustrated, mean headline size and distribution of articles by section of newspaper, particularly in comparing 'serious' newspapers with 'popular' newspapers
- that illustration, headline size and distribution by section would prove to be points of relative similarity between the paired titles; ie. *The Daily*



*Telegraph with Le Figaro, The Evening Standard with France-Soir and The Independent with Le Monde*

- that in terms of subject matter, nationality of newspaper would be a more significant differential than type of newspaper
- that the nationality of newspaper would also prove to be the deciding factor in any detectable bias for or against the European Union

## **4.2 SCOPE OF STUDY**

A thorough analysis of the public's access to information on the European Union would clearly involve research into many different communication media. We are made aware of EU issues through a number of outlets: television, radio, magazines, specialist publications related to individual interests, material produced by different organisations and so on. An analysis of each of these media would require different survey methods and considerably more time than was available here. This particular study, then, focused on a single medium, the press, and within this area a representative sample of newspaper titles from just two of the EU's twelve member states.

### **4.2.1 Why these countries**

The original idea for this piece of research developed through an interest in the remarkable differences which are apparent in the newspapers of Great Britain, particularly in terms of selection (and implicitly rejection) of issues and the varying styles in which similar information is disseminated to readers. Indeed, an interesting study could be made by concentrating solely on the British press and widening the range of included titles. Yet, as the chosen subject matter, the European Union, related to wider issues than are contained within Britain's national boundaries, it was felt that comparison with the press of at least one other member country would be particularly relevant. France was chosen for this comparison, partly through ease of access to the raw materials, the newspapers, but more importantly because it represents a group of member states whose actual membership of the EU is very different in nature to that of Britain and a smaller group of other countries.

Chapter Two has shown that France, as one of the original six members has, notwithstanding short periods of scepticism under de Gaulle, enjoyed a long and fully integrated history within the Union. This constant feature of the country's political organisation must undoubtedly have affected the attitudes of both the press and the public to their European partners and to EU issues. Britain's membership history, however, dating from a later period and undergoing much change in terms of political support, will have fostered very different attitudes within *its* press and public. It is with these differences constantly in mind that the results of the analysis will be examined.

#### 4.2.2 Why these newspapers

In order to give credibility to the series of comparisons demanded by this kind of study, it was thought necessary, as far as possible, to match each British newspaper with a French one of similar nature. Chapter Three has shown that the press structures of the two countries differ fundamentally: London papers dominate the British market, while regional papers in France are far more important in terms of circulation figures. Nevertheless, while these differences should not be ignored, it is possible to create a series of loose pairings.

*The Daily Telegraph* was perhaps the easiest to match. A number of commentators [Ardagh 1982, Redfern 1983] agree that *Le Figaro* is the closest equivalent; both are 'serious' newspapers, with a traditional, conservative outlook and, of their country's 'serious' titles, both have the highest circulation.

The similarities between *The Independent* and *Le Monde* are not as immediately clear. The former is a relatively new title, keen to proclaim its independence from any political party, yet still struggling to find its true niche in the market. *Le Monde* is a well-established and well-respected paper, slightly to the left in political terms, but allowing opposing viewpoints to be aired on its pages. Both papers, however, are heavyweight, news-oriented organs. Neither allow what might be described as trivia, such as horoscopes or comic-strips and, most importantly, both carry a recognisably larger than average volume of foreign news, a factor which was thought to be particularly relevant in this context.

In contrast to these four titles, *The Evening Standard* and *France-Soir* can be classified as 'popular' newspapers. While neither can claim to achieve such levels of

non-seriousness as the British tabloids (indeed, a true French equivalent to these tabloids is difficult to identify), both give much space to sport and other non-news sections. The fact that *The Evening Standard* is effectively a regional paper, while *France-Soir*, though based in Paris, is sold throughout the country, was thought to be of less importance than the fact that both are evening newspapers.

#### 4.2.3 Why these time periods

The approach of the European elections seemed a perfect time to carry out this study, for it was anticipated that coverage of European Union issues, even if only those related directly to the parliamentary elections, would be particularly high in all newspapers. The fact that both countries were participating in the elections, albeit three days apart, gave the study a stronger comparative base. The difference in actual polling day (Britain voted on Thursday June 9th and France on Sunday June 12th) suggested that coverage of that particular week would not be suitable; the British titles might be expected to carry significantly more EU-related material on the day immediately following their elections. The preceding week, Monday May 30th to Friday June 3rd, was eventually designated as the first survey period, for while the Monday was a Bank Holiday in Britain and *The Evening Standard* was not published, the lists of French candidates had not been published until Saturday May 28th. It was felt that the papers of both countries began this week with a similar amount of potential information to convey.

The second survey period, Monday June 20th to Friday June 24th, was chosen partly to continue this inter-country comparison, but primarily to create the right environment for a comparison within the scope of a single paper. Two weeks after the elections, it was anticipated that news relating to the results would already have been covered; the potential interest lay in whether, without the wider theme of those elections, newspapers still selected EU-related issues with which to fill their pages. The danger, of course, was the possibility that some of the newspapers would identify a surfeit of EU articles in recent weeks and concentrate entirely on other matters, leaving little data to formulate comparisons. Happily, however, the summit of the European Council was scheduled to take place at the end of this week, with the important task of deciding on a new Commission president. It was expected that most, if not all of the papers would regard these as events significant enough for inclusion.

### 4.3 METHODOLOGY OF QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The gatekeeping theory of communication, which was outlined in the first chapter of this study, made it clear that the articles actually published on the pages of a newspaper are a single element in a much longer and more complex process of information dissemination. The examination of any part of this chain of communication should ideally involve an understanding, or at least a recognition of the other issues in the chain.

It is relevant here to bear in mind on the one hand what influence the industrial and social organisation of the news institutions have on the process of news gathering and selection, and on the other, what influence reader expectations have on news presentation, and further, what wider influence newspapers have on the shaping of society's beliefs. These themes will be touched on again in the discussion of survey results. In this context, however, it was simply the articles themselves which were examined.

#### 4.3.1 The sample data

From 30-5-94 to 3-6-94 and from 20-6-94 to 24-6-94 the following newspapers were purchased and surveyed:

<i>Le Figaro</i>	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>
<i>France-Soir</i>	<i>The Evening Standard</i>
<i>Le Monde</i>	<i>The Independent</i>

Monday May 30th was a British bank holiday and *The Evening Standard* was not published, a fact which is taken into consideration in the analysis of results. The final sample, then, consisted of 59 newspapers, nine editions of *The Evening Standard* and 10 each of the other five titles.

#### 4.3.2 Identification of articles

Each newspaper was scanned for any articles whose content could be classified as relating to the European Union. As a general guideline, mention of the EU in either the headline or the first paragraph merited inclusion in the study, although naturally

there were some exceptions to this rule. The French newspapers, for example, carried a number of articles about the state's financial investigation of businessman Bernard Tapie, who happened to be standing as a candidate in the European elections. It could perhaps be argued that any mention of Tapie's candidature, alongside details of his alleged wrongdoings, would adversely influence the electorate. We are not directly concerned here, however, with influence on voting patterns; for the purposes of this study, articles which only mentioned in passing Tapie's role in the coming elections were not included, for they did not relate specifically to EU issues. Generally, it was clear from the first few sentences whether an article could be classified according to the 10 subject categories described below.

Items were first listed with the minimum of information needed for identification at a later date, and then data on each article was recorded according to the layout of the survey instrument (Appendix 1).

#### **4.3.3 Data collection**

A pilot study, carried out using a single edition of each of the six newspapers on Wednesday May 11th, helped to clarify what kind of information should be collected to support or refute the suggested hypotheses.

##### **Identification**

The first part of the survey was concerned only with location of information: which newspaper, the day and date, the page and the headline. These details were thought to be necessary, partly as a system of verification and partly because it was anticipated that only a sample of articles would be used in the qualitative analysis. It was important to be able to note easily that samples of all newspapers and both weeks were included.

##### **Illustration**

An article was classified as being illustrated if it included either a photograph, a line drawing or a cartoon, which related to the main theme of the article's content. In almost all cases the frames and column lines on the page made it clear which article the illustration was designed to accompany. An important exception here was

where a newspaper included a logo or symbol, signifying that all articles on the page were encompassed by a single theme; for example, *Le Figaro* headed a page of articles about the European Parliamentary elections with a small representation of the EU flag. This was not included as an illustration.

## Volume

Articles were measured in square centimetres rather than the traditional column inches, as column widths varied so greatly, both between different papers and within a single paper. The item as a whole was measured to include headline space and illustration, and then a second measurement was taken of the text alone. It was thought that the difference between the two would be particularly interesting with regard to the 'popular' newspapers, *France-Soir* and *The Evening Standard*, which tend to use headlines of a much larger size; while an initial figure of total volume would suggest a great commitment to EU-themes, the volume of actual text and therefore of information conveyed, might be significantly smaller.

## Article Type

Each item was classified according to a list of 10 categories, each relating to either the form of the actual item (eg. letter, cartoon) or the section of the newspaper in which they were placed (eg. diary, business). These 10 categories were:

- |                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 - news         | 6 - editorial            |
| 2 - foreign news | 7 - letter               |
| 3 - political    | 8 - business / financial |
| 4 - feature      | 9 - cartoon              |
| 5 - diary        | 10 - miscellaneous       |

Raymond Williams [1966] identifies numbers 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 as standard categories often used by journalists. The other four types were included here after the results of the pilot study suggested that further differentiation be made between what would otherwise have constituted a large number of straight 'news' items. Diary items were easy to identify, invariably in a column or section clearly headed 'Diary'. Similarly, the business, foreign news and political articles were readily identifiable, as the papers tended to entitle a whole page or pages with these headings. Where a whole page was headed 'European Elections', these articles were

classified as political, while pages headed 'Europe', as distinct from 'Foreign News' were classified as 'news'.

It is important to note that these distinctions refer only to the section of paper, not to article content; a front page political analysis, therefore, would be classified as straight 'news'.

## **Subject**

The most problematic element of the survey came in trying to classify articles according to the subject they covered. Following an analysis of the pilot study, 10 categories were created:

- 1 - EU elections with regard to home country
- 2 - EU elections with regard to other countries
- 3 - EU elections with regard to home and other countries
- 4 - EU institutions
- 5 - EU and home country
- 6 - Agriculture
- 7 - Industry
- 8 - Business / Economy
- 9 - The future of the EU
- 10 - Miscellaneous

Most articles, in fact, clearly belonged to a single group and were easily assigned as such. Where problems arose, however, it was necessary to take a decision and ensure that all similar items were classified in the same way. This was particularly true with the numerous articles in Week 2 of the survey, which discussed the forthcoming election of a new president of the European Commission. While these could have been assigned to sections 4 or 9, a decision was taken early on to classify them all as section 4, and restrict category 9 to articles discussing the future of the European Union in a broader, longer-term context. This brief example shows that, in some instances, pure objectivity was difficult to obtain; the fact that a single coder was recording information from all articles, however, helped to retain consistency throughout the collection of data.

## 4.4 METHODOLOGY OF QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The decision to include an element of qualitative analysis in the study was taken with the assumption that any conclusions drawn from the results of the work would have greater validity if the analysis contained two different approaches. In fact, as this brief description of the methodology used will show, the scale of the study was such that only a tiny sample of articles could be used, while time limits meant that the analysis was, to a large extent, subjective. Nevertheless, while the results cannot claim to be based on any tried scientific method, they do at least show one person's *impression* of the underlying message or bias in each of the items examined.

### 4.4.1 Selection of articles

As the aim of this part of the analysis was to detect a positive or negative feeling towards the European Union, it was felt that a clearer comparison between the newspapers could be made if all selected articles covered similar themes. This ruled out most of the items from Week 1, as they dealt mainly with their own country's role in the European elections. The major themes of Week 2, the summit and the search for Delors' successor, appeared to be more promising; the issues, theoretically, were equally relevant to both French and British newspaper readers. Ideally, the selection should have involved editorials from each title, for only then is the newspaper overtly stating its position and voicing an opinion. This proved impossible, however; neither *France-Soir*, *Le Monde* or *The Daily Telegraph* had included editorials on the EU in this time period. By default, then, straight 'news' items were chosen. With an attempt to find items on a similar subject, only six articles were finally analysed, one from each newspaper:

(Bracketed numbers refer to original French text: Appendix 2)

<i>Le Figaro</i>	23-6-94	Corfu: a summit of transition for the twelve (1)
<i>France-Soir</i>	24-6-94	...while Europe seeks solutions (2)
<i>Le Monde</i>	20-6-94	Difficult succession at Brussels (3)
<i>Telegraph</i>	22-6-94	Why this man must be stopped
<i>Standard</i>	21-6-94	Hard slog at summit in the sun
<i>Independent</i>	24-6-94	Corfu summitteers ready to fudge key EU decision



The items were of very different lengths, but as the objective was to ascertain positive or negative bias within each article, it was decided that this did not constitute too much of a problem.

#### 4.4.2 Analysis

Traditional methods of content analysis involve dissecting elements of text (vocabulary, syntax or style) and assigning codes to these elements in order to deduce the latent meaning or message which is being conveyed within the actual content. Codes or other forms of measurement are established before looking at the items in question, to make the study as objective and systematic as possible.

An initial attempt at analysis here, then, was made by the construction of two lists of positive and negative words; the occurrence of these words in each article was to be recorded and a final tally would show a bias in either direction. It soon became clear, however, that in addition to the obvious problem of finding direct translations for English and French words, the language and phrases used even within the three newspapers of one country, differed too greatly for such a method to be effective.

A second approach was then tried, using words which were present in the article, specifically adjectives. It was anticipated that choice of adjective would give an indication of the writer's (and thus the newspaper's) attitude to the subject matter. Again, however, problems were encountered, for this method does not allow for the difference an adjective's context can make on its intended meaning. A simple example can be found in the article selected from *The Independent*. The adjective 'effective' was recorded and listed as positive, yet in the context of the actual article, the word was used in a negative way: "It is hardly very effective and not always very pretty".

Finally, then, recognising the very real limitations that such a method has in any objective, scientific sense, the articles were examined for positive or negative phrases, and two lists compiled for each item. All phrases in which bias was seen to be implied were included; the results are discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The results of the analyses, expressed mainly in the form of bar charts and pie charts for easy comparison, are divided into five sections: the volume of EU-related information, the position of articles in the paper, visual impact of articles, subject matter and bias. An explanation of the data accompanies each chart or set of charts, but, while reference may be made within each section to the proposed hypotheses (see 4.1), these will not be discussed fully until the following chapter.

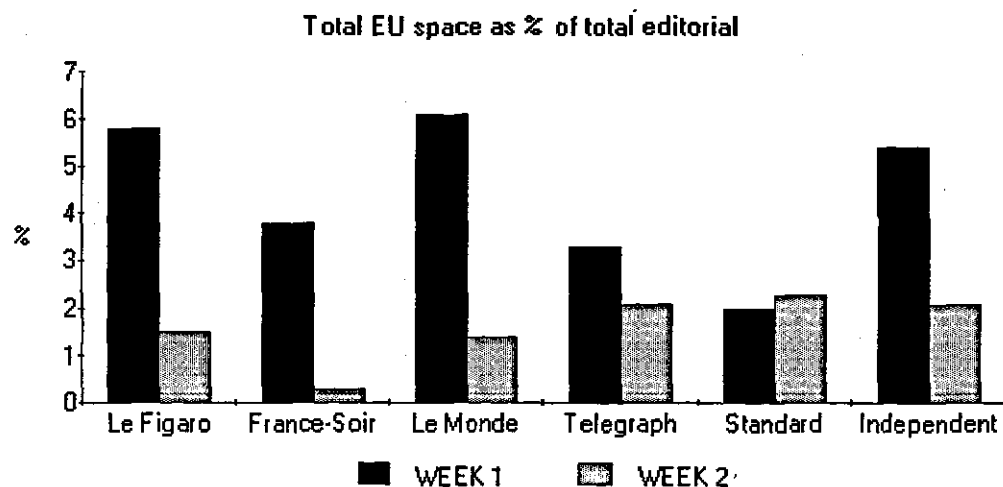
### 5.2 VOLUME OF EU-RELATED INFORMATION

Table 1: Total number of EU articles

	Week 1	Week 2
<i>Le Figaro</i>	66	23
<i>France-Soir</i>	23	2
<i>Le Monde</i>	48	10
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	36	24
<i>Evening Standard</i>	13	19
<i>The Independent</i>	57	27

The information which can be gleaned from Table 1 is, in fact, fairly limited in value; an article in this context can be anything from a full page spread to a single paragraph tucked into a bottom corner. Nevertheless, it can be seen here that expectations of a greater volume of EU-related articles in Week One of the study, were generally correct, particularly in two of the French papers, *France-Soir* and *Le Monde*, where the number of articles in Week Two was dramatically reduced. The one exception is *The Evening Standard*, which demonstrated the least interest in the week preceding the European elections and yet, as Chart 1 will show, boosted its coverage considerably, when it came to discussing the main issues of Week Two, the summit and the election of a new Commission president.

Chart 1

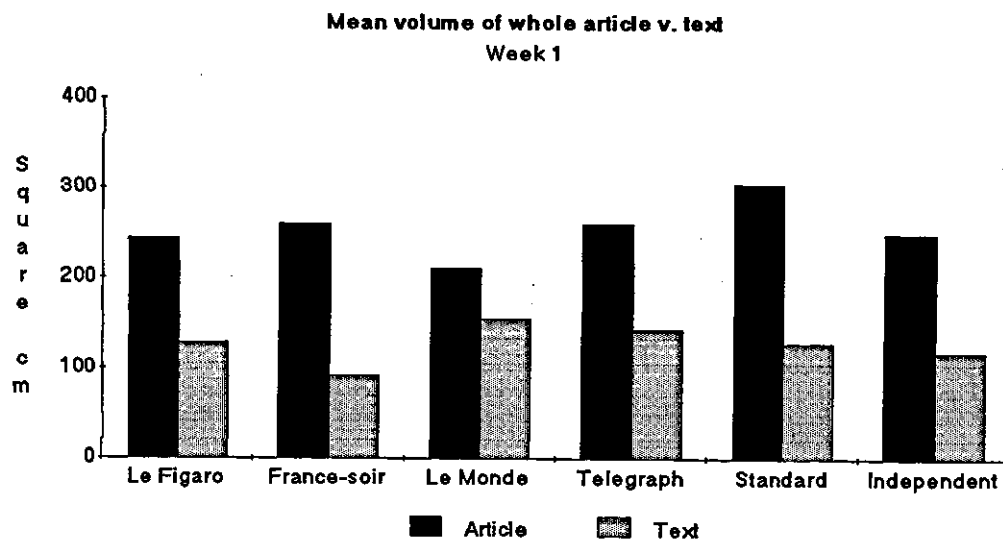


It was felt that a chart comparing coverage solely in terms of square cm. would not be a true comparison, for no account would be taken of the size of each newspaper. (Of the six titles, average length ranged from 70 pages [*The Evening Standard*] to 22 pages [*France-Soir*]). Chart 1, then, expresses EU coverage as a percentage of the total editorial space in each paper. Following Williams [1966], editorial space was taken to constitute all which was not advertising and for the purposes of this study, was calculated by the random selection and subsequent measurement of three editions of each title.

In Week One, not surprisingly, it is the 'serious' papers which allotted most space to EU issues, although *The Daily Telegraph* does not conform to this pattern, falling behind even *France-Soir* in its coverage. Partly perhaps due to this last point, the French papers show considerably more interest than the British for this time period.

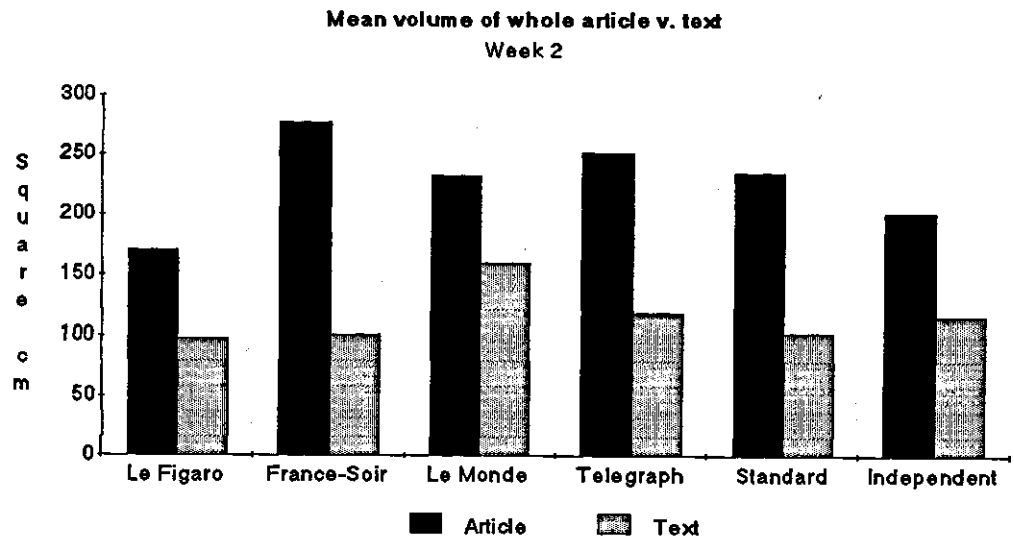
The picture changes dramatically, however, in Week Two, when without exception, the British papers give a greater percentage of space to the EU; *The Evening Standard* outstrips even the British broadsheets.

Chart 2



Average figures for both the whole article (i.e. including headlines and illustrations) and actual text were calculated with the measurements of all items in the study. The smallest discrepancy between the two figures is, predictably, in those items taken from *Le Monde*, a paper which never uses photographs and rarely uses other forms of illustration. The widest differences, also fairly predictably, can be seen in the two 'popular' papers, *France-Soir* and *The Evening Standard*. Interestingly, while the articles from the latter together constituted the smallest percentage of space given to EU issues, their average length was greater than those of any other paper.

Chart 3



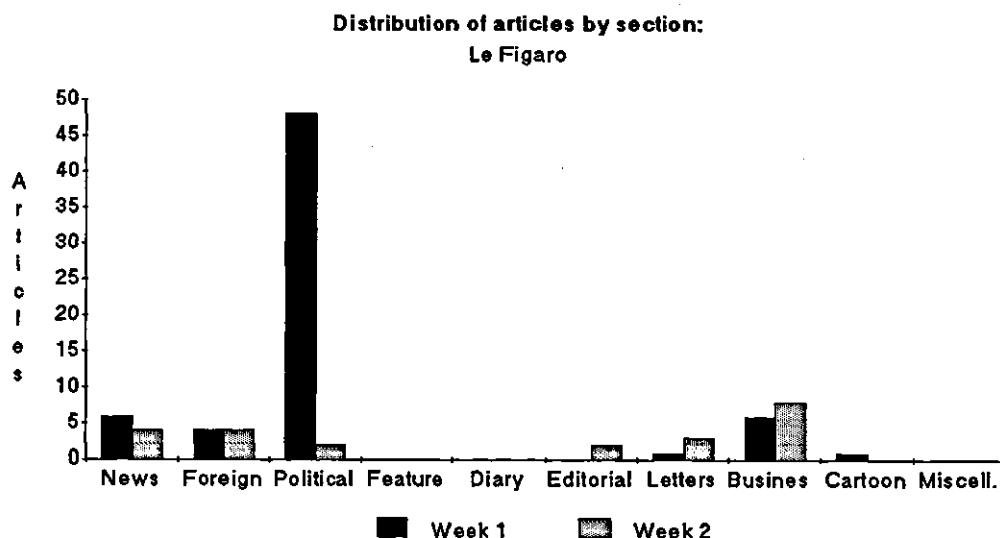
Taken in conjunction with the previous chart, this illustration of mean volume in Week Two follows a similar pattern: again , the two figures are closest in the articles of *Le Monde* and again the widest discrepancies are to be found with the two 'popular' papers. Remarkably, it is again one of the 'popular' papers, this time *France-Soir*, which allots the largest mean volume to a whole article (although the significance of this fact lessens when it is noted that this sample comprised only two articles).

Perhaps the most interesting point which Charts 2 and 3 both illustrate is that such differences in volume between whole article and actual text exist at all. Even a paper like *Le Monde*, using no photographs, still gives around 30% of an average article's space to headline and white surround.

### 5.3 POSITION IN PAPER

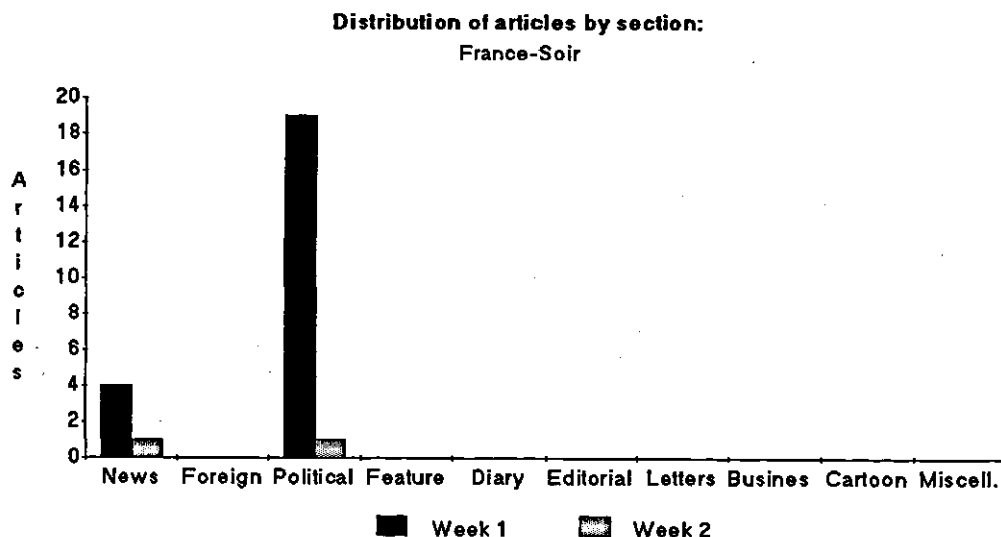
Expressed in simple terms of number of articles, this series of charts is intended to indicate the emphasis which each newspaper places on EU issues. Any conclusions which can be drawn here would be enhanced by examination of the papers' selected subject matter (see 5.5), for clearly the two measurements are interconnected; a high score here in the political section, for example, would suggest that issues of a political nature had been prioritised in editorial decision-making.

Chart 4



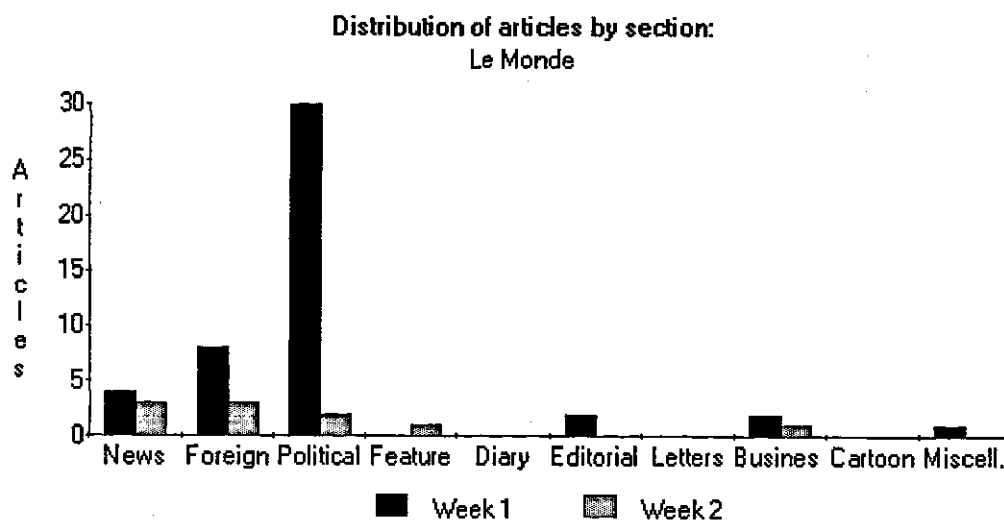
*Le Figaro's* chart shows that in Week One this was indeed the case: with the date of the elections nearing, the vast majority of EU-related articles were to be found in the political section of the paper (and, it can be fairly safely assumed, were concerned with the forthcoming elections). Six items were found on the news pages (generally at the front of a newspaper and therefore perceived as relatively important) and an equal number were in the business section, reflecting the importance that *Le Figaro* places on this sector of their readership. The results from Week Two reiterate this last point, with more than a third of that period's 23 items found in the business section. The remainder are fairly evenly spread with the interesting introduction of two editorials, a section which chose not to broach EU issues at all in Week One.

Chart 5



The results of the first time period continue a pattern which is evident in all of the French papers; that is, most EU articles are on the political pages. Surprisingly here, however, items were only found in one other section of *France-Soir*, the news pages, a phenomenon also apparent in Week Two. In drawing conclusions from this limited use of different sections of the paper, it must of course be remembered that individual newspapers specialise in certain areas; the business section of *France-Soir* is relatively small compared to that of *Le Figaro*, while its sports coverage is far greater. Nevertheless, these results cannot be ignored and will be referred to further in Chapter 6.

Chart 6



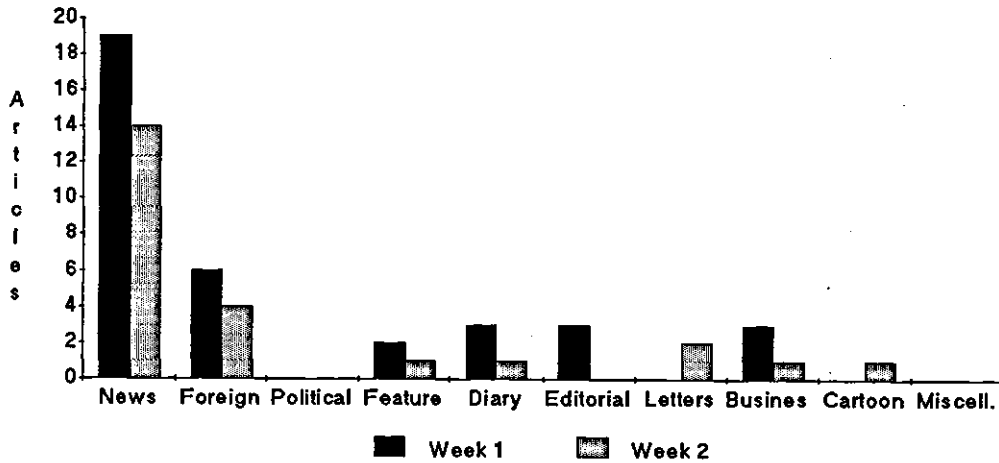
Again, the political section features highly in the week before the elections, incorporating almost two-thirds of all articles. The foreign news pages are also relatively high-scoring; in Week One they yielded twice the number of items than the straight news section, suggesting that the EU as an institution is perceived here predominantly as a body exterior to national concerns.

A more balanced spread can be seen in Week Two, with the sole appearance in the French newspapers of an article which could be classified as a feature. Despite the cartoon being the only form of illustration employed by *Le Monde*, none of those published in either of the two weeks of the study relates to the EU.



**Chart 7**

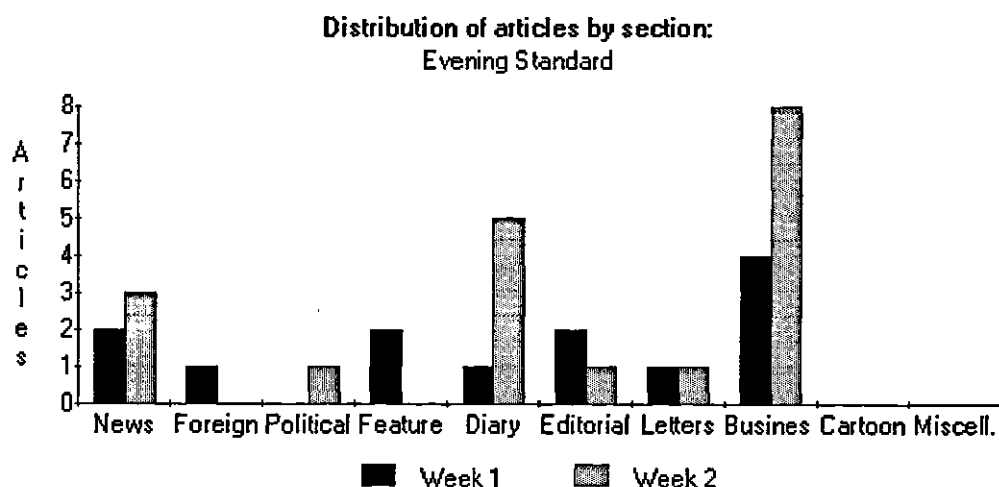
**Distribution of articles by section:  
Daily Telegraph**



In sharp contrast to the three French titles, the majority of Week One articles in *The Daily Telegraph* were situated on the news pages of the paper, which generally, as has already been indicated, form the first part of any edition. The foreign section housed six articles, prompting the question of which EU issues were perceived as 'home' news and which as 'foreign'. Diary items appeared here for the first time in the survey, and three editorials were given over to EU themes.

Week Two follows a proportionately similar pattern, with the addition of two letters and also a cartoon. Editorials, however, were absent in the second week, despite the overall interest being taken by the British media in John Major's role in the selection of a new Commission president.

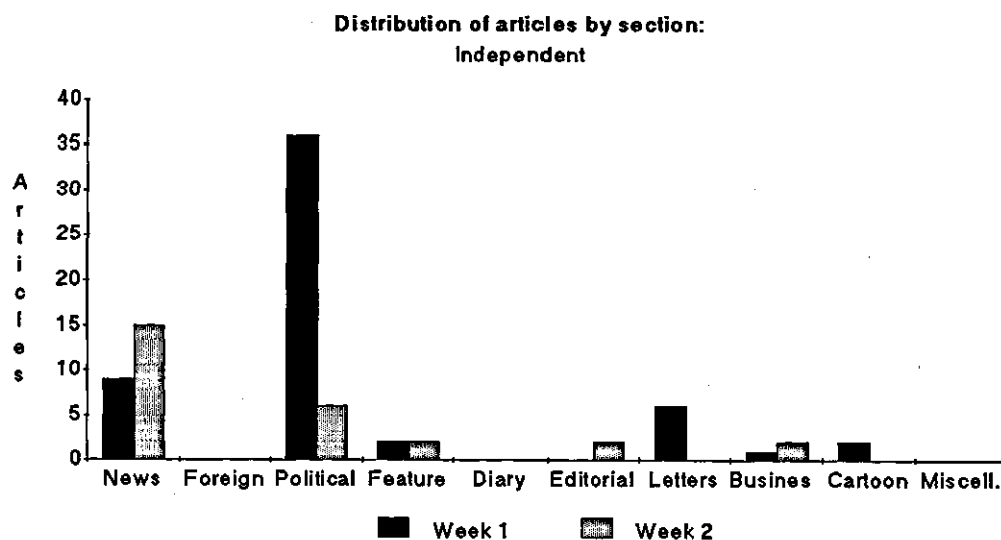
Chart 8



As a clear reflection of its 'city' readership, the section in which *The Evening Standard* placed the majority of its EU-related articles, throughout the whole survey, was the business section. Week One, with the smallest number of items of all six newspapers, found no articles at all on the political pages, just one in foreign news and two in the main news section. Two feature articles were included, however, a proportionately higher number than any other title.

Most interesting of the second week's results is the presence of five items, more than a quarter of the total, on the paper's diary page. Diary items, generally, tend to be of a lighter, more personalised nature than straight news; the following chapter will examine whether this reflects, on the part of *The Evening Standard*, a more frivolous attitude towards the EU.

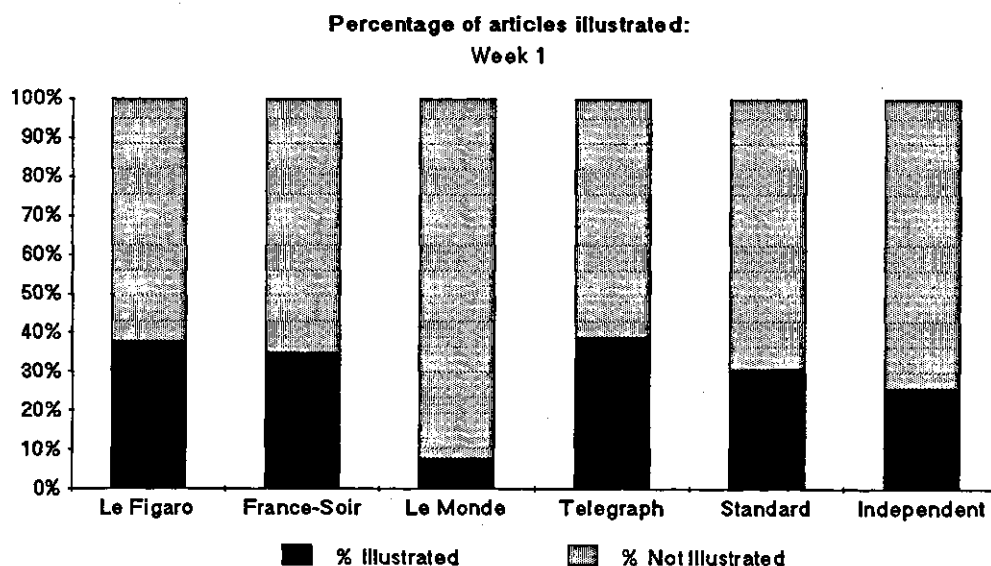
Chart 9



*The Independent's* results bear a similarity to those of *Le Monde*, with high scoring in the political section, relatively few articles on the business pages, and a smattering across the other categories. One major difference, however (and in this aspect, *The Independent* is alone of the six pages), is the complete absence of EU articles classified as foreign news. While the paper does indeed allot space to 'international' news (usually three or four pages per edition), many articles on the EU were housed on the 'Europe' pages, a differentiation thought to be sufficiently significant to classify these as general news. This becomes more apparent in Week Two, when the political pages yielded just six articles. The other noticeable feature of *The Independent's* results is the inclusion of six readers' letters, twice as many as any other paper.

## 5.4 VISUAL IMPACT

Chart 10



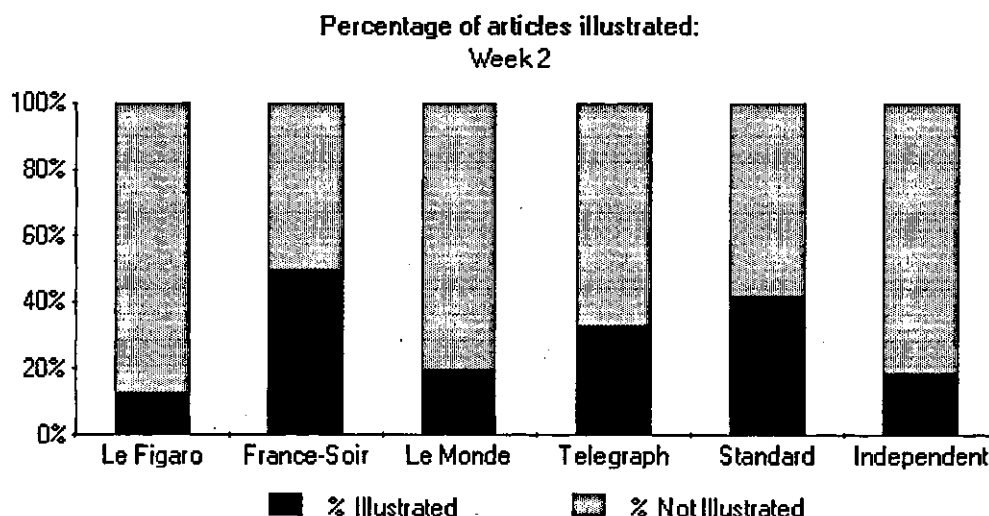
It must first be noted here that, while they were included to complete the picture, the results for *Le Monde* are in fact relatively meaningless; as has already been indicated, the paper never uses photographs.

Prior to the survey, it was assumed that the two 'popular' papers, *France-Soir* and *The Evening Standard* would produce the highest number of illustrated articles; indeed, the results of Charts 2 and 3 would appear to support this theory, with these two papers showing the greatest discrepancy between the size of a whole article and the volume of actual text.

Yet, as this chart illustrates, it is two of the 'serious' papers, *Le Figaro* and *The Daily Telegraph*, which score most highly, perhaps suggesting that the type of photograph suitable to illustrate EU items (usually pictures of politicians or officials) are more appropriate to the less sensationalist pages of these two papers.

Of interest also in this chart is the relationship visible between the three 'pairs' of newspapers. While *Le Monde's* percentage score is clearly much lower than the others, it nevertheless mirrors *The Independent's* rating as the lowest score of the three British papers. Similarities can also be seen between the other two pairs.

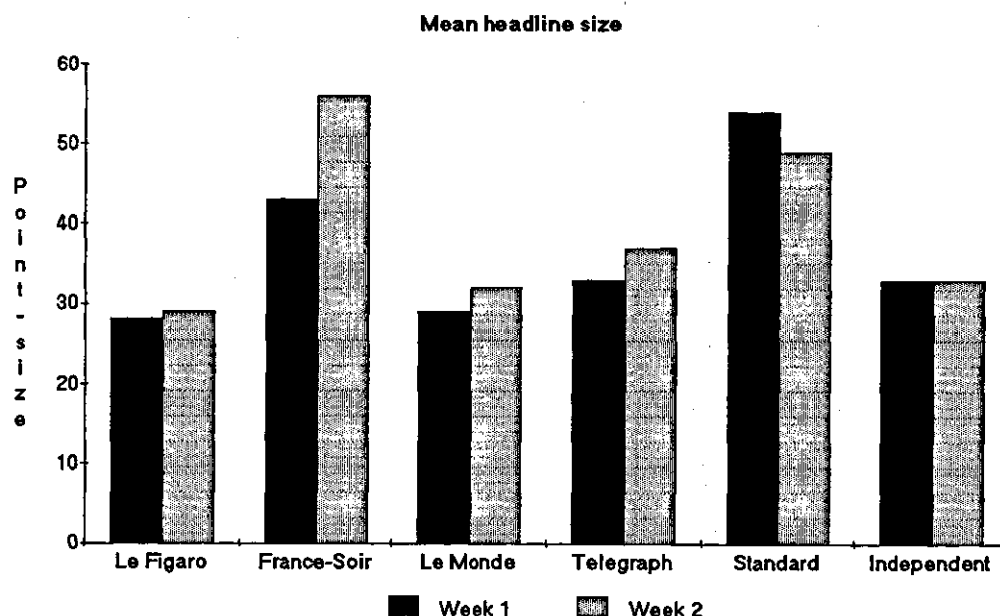
Chart 11



The second week of the survey produced a conformity to the expected pattern, with *France-Soir* and *The Evening Standard* both illustrating around half of their EU-related articles. *The Independent* and *Le Monde* are again relatively low, reflecting the importance of text for each of the two papers.

The one surprise here is the score of *Le Figaro*; at 10% it is even lower than *Le Monde*, despite giving approximately the same percentage of its total editorial space to EU themes. A closer examination of these themes in the following section may indicate reasons to explain why illustration was deemed inappropriate in *Le Figaro* for this time period.

Chart 12



In computing these figures, the headline measurements of all items for each paper were collated and a single average measurement was then calculated.

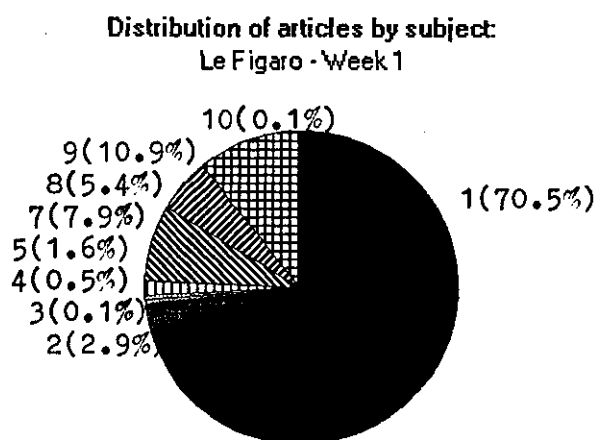
It was anticipated that the two 'popular' papers would consistently produce the largest headlines, and indeed this proved to be the case in both periods of the survey.

Among the other four titles very little difference can be seen, although, apart from *The Independent* which remained with exactly the same score, there is a noticeable increase in headline size in the second week for all the 'serious' papers.

## 5.5 SUBJECT MATTER

The information shown in this series of twelve charts is expressed as a percentage of all editorial space given over to EU articles. The category labels 1 - 10 refer to the ten themes described in section 4.3 of the study.

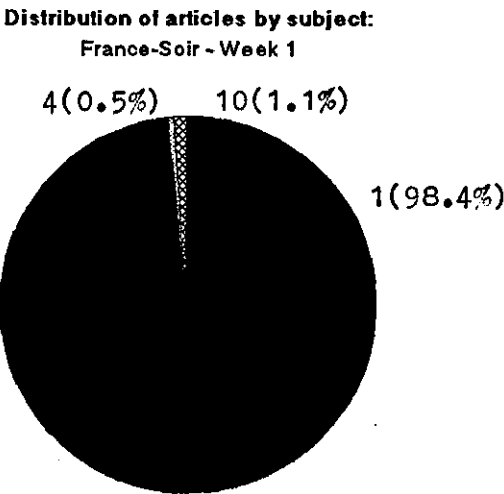
Chart 13



As might have been predicted, an analysis of articles in the first week of the survey shows a large majority were concerned with aspects of the forthcoming elections; that is, categories one, two and three. Within this area, it was the first category, the EU elections with regard to the newspaper's own country, to which most articles could be ascribed. Given the probable interests of a newspaper's readership, this is perhaps not surprising; the analysis becomes more interesting when examining how much space a paper gave to the elections with regard to other countries. *Le Figaro* clearly did not place much importance on this aspect of the elections; only 2.9% of space pertained to potential results, political figures or the electorate's views in France's eleven co-member states.

The future of the EU rated relatively highly in the first week and, fairly predictably given the paper's emphasis on business, the categories relating to industry and the economy produced a sizeable number of items. The only area on which *Le Figaro* did not touch at all, was agriculture, a fact which is echoed by a similar absence of material in both of the other French papers.

Chart 14



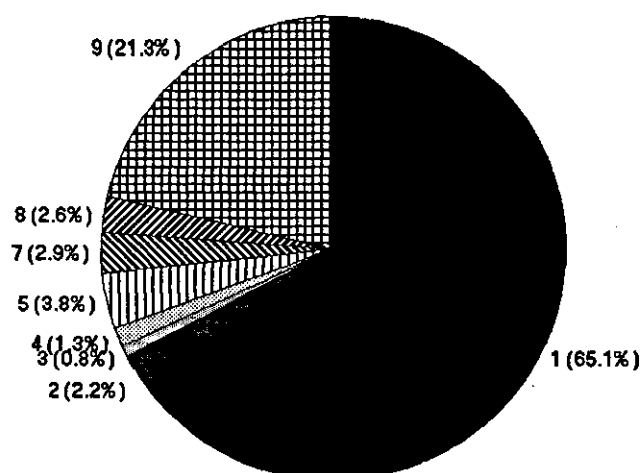
The limited range of EU-related subjects on which *France-Soir* chose to report was implied earlier by the results of Chart 5, which showed similar limits in the sections of the paper in which these results were found.

The first category is again the most popular; with a massive 98.4% of EU space given over to it, *France-Soir* shows proportionately more interest in the elections in its own country than any other paper. The effect of the elections on other countries, however, is simply not mentioned. Indeed, apart from a small percentage of items which could only be classified as miscellaneous, the only other subject on which *France-Soir* published information was the institutions of the Union, an item which took up 0.5% of EU-related space.



Chart 15

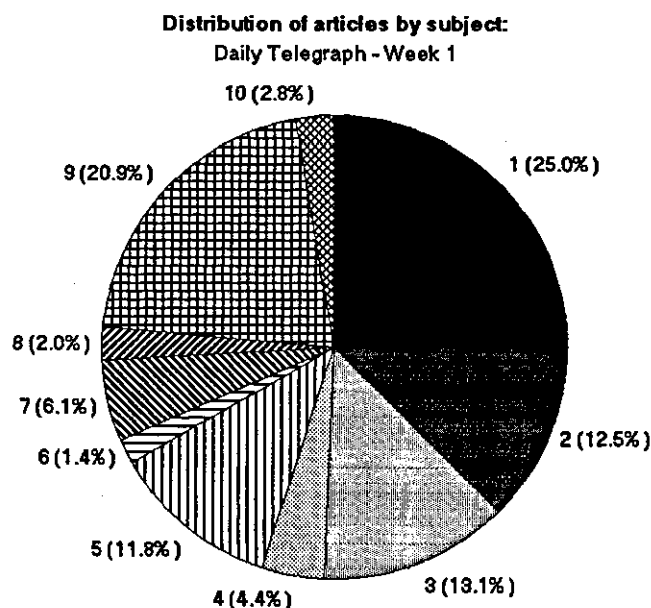
Distribution of articles by subject:  
Le Monde - Week 1



With the exception of agriculture, all of the main themes were represented in the pages of *Le Monde*. The paper showed a similar level of interest in other member states' election experiences as *Le Figaro*, with a total of 3% of space given over to related themes. Articles on industry and business were apparent, although the space which they covered did not amount to more than 3% in either case.

The highest-scoring category (discounting the predictably high showing for the EU elections in France) was that concerning the future of the Union. As was explained in the description of methodology (section 4.3) this category was restricted to articles which dealt with the EU's future in a long-term context (in contrast to category 4, which was later to include items on, for example, the forthcoming election of a new Commission president). The particularly high percentage of space which *Le Monde* allotted to this theme is a reflection perhaps of the newspaper's emphasis on discussion and broad, political analysis.

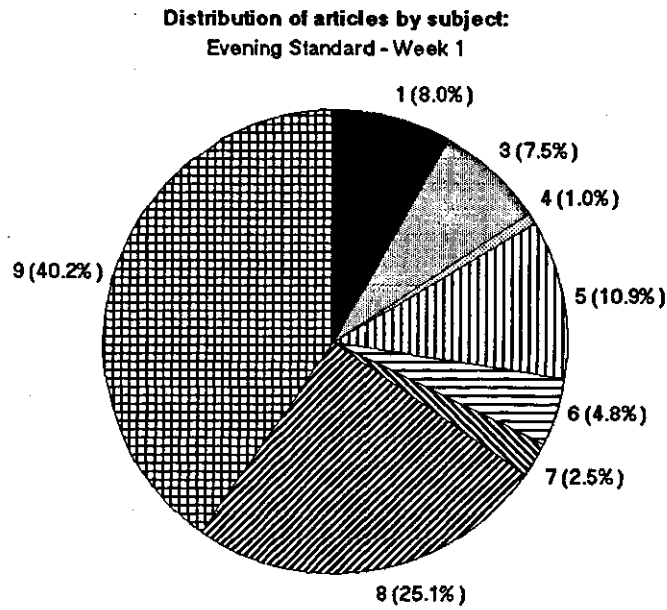
Chart 16



A single glance at this chart shows a very different picture from the three which precede it. Most striking of all is the considerably smaller percentage of EU-related space given over to category 1, the elections and the paper's own country, in this case Great Britain. An equal amount of space, a quarter of all available, is shared by the two themes which, either in entirety or combined with references to Britain, are concerned with the EU elections in other European countries.

Despite this seemingly non-nationalist stance, however, it must be noted that category 5, absent or relatively insignificant in the French papers, takes up more than 10% of space in *The Daily Telegraph*. Articles classified here were concerned with the EU and the paper's own country (that is, as in section 1, without the element of the elections) and as such, when joined with those in the first category, give a more accurate portrayal of the *Telegraph's* emphasis on Britain. All other subjects are represented here; agriculture makes its first appearance in the survey and, as with *Le Monde*, a substantial amount of space is allotted to articles relating to the future of the European Union.

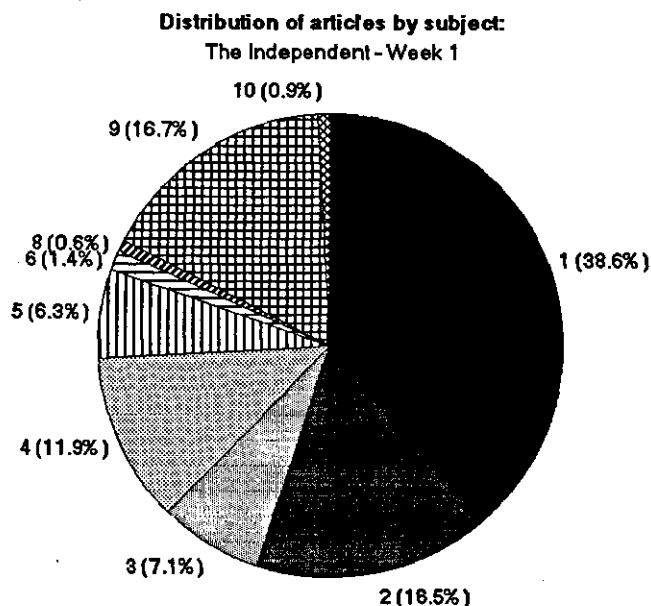
Chart 17



Distribution across the ten bands changes again in an analysis of *The Evening Standard's* articles. Only 15% related to the elections, the smallest figure in the survey for this time period. The largest segment is that concerning the EU's future; articles which may well have been inspired by the approaching elections, but chose instead to discuss the Union in a broader context.

Articles which made up a quarter of the *Standard's* EU-related space were classified as being about business and the economy, a fact which could have been anticipated, given the paper's 'city' readership.

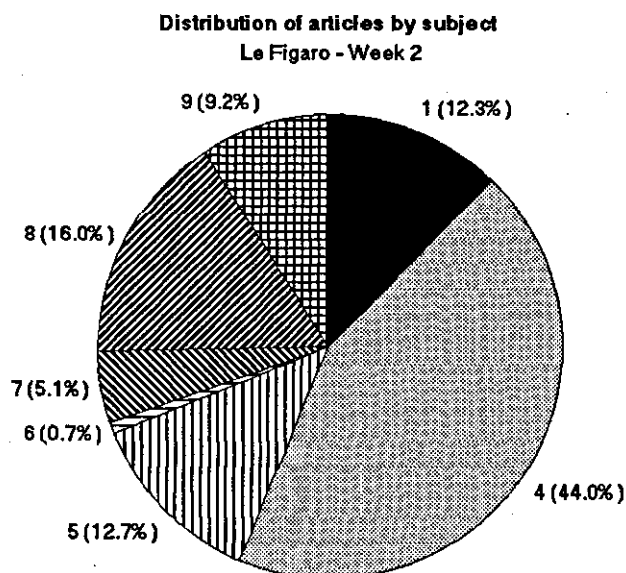
Chart 18



The spread of items in *The Independent* for this time period is fairly similar to the other surveyed British broadsheet, *The Daily Telegraph*, although slightly more emphasis is placed on the elections here.

Interestingly, *The Independent* allotted more space than any other paper to articles concerning the EU elections in other countries. Industry does not figure at all in this chart and the scoring for the business / economy category, in contrast to that of *The Evening Standard*, is minimal. With certain parallels to *Le Monde*, articles on the future of the EU formed a fairly large proportion of the whole.

Chart 19



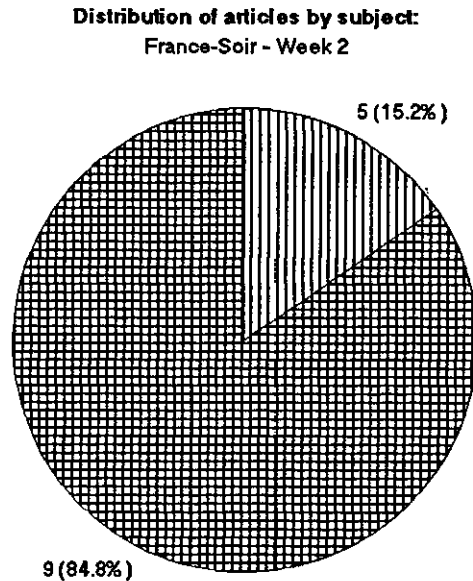
It was anticipated, prior to the survey, that categories 1, 2 and 3 would be considerably diminished in this second time period; indeed, it was thought that any mention of the elections two weeks after the electorate of both countries had gone to the polls would be noteworthy.

At 12%, the space that *Le Figaro* gave to this theme in Week Two was the largest of the six papers, and can in part be explained by the presence of readers' letters on the subject, a section of the paper which, virtually by definition, refers to events which have already passed.

Rather less surprising in this chart is the large proportion of space given over to discussion or reporting on EU institutions. With the summit of the European Council taking place at the end of Week Two and the pending decision on a new Commission president, category 4 was expected to score highly in this time period.

The size of the business / economy category supports the suggestion made in the comments on chart 13, that this subject is one on which *Le Figaro* places great emphasis.

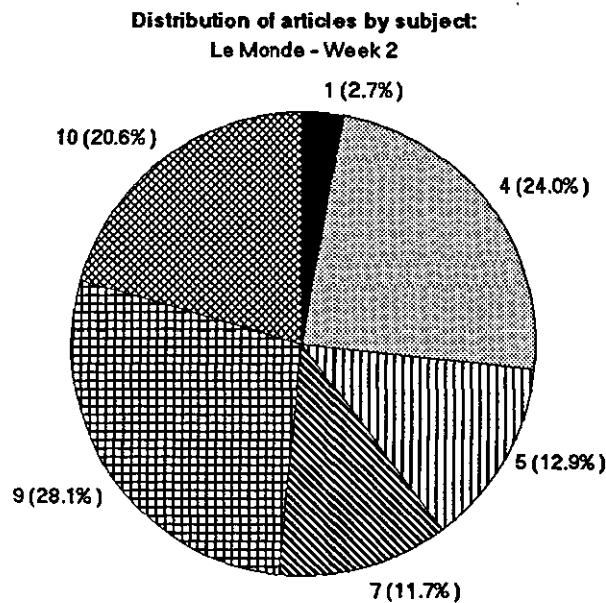
Chart 20



The limitation in choice of theme which was evident in this paper's chart for the first week of the study is apparent again here. It must be remembered, however, that only two EU-related articles were found in *France-Soir* in this period, so in fact this is the maximum number of categories to which those articles could have been ascribed.

Interestingly, it is on the broader aspects of the EU's future that the larger of these two articles chose to concentrate, rather than specific reports on the summit and the new president. Perhaps more predictably, given *France-Soir's* lack of interest in other member states, which was clear in Chart 14, the second of these two articles focuses on French relations with the EU.

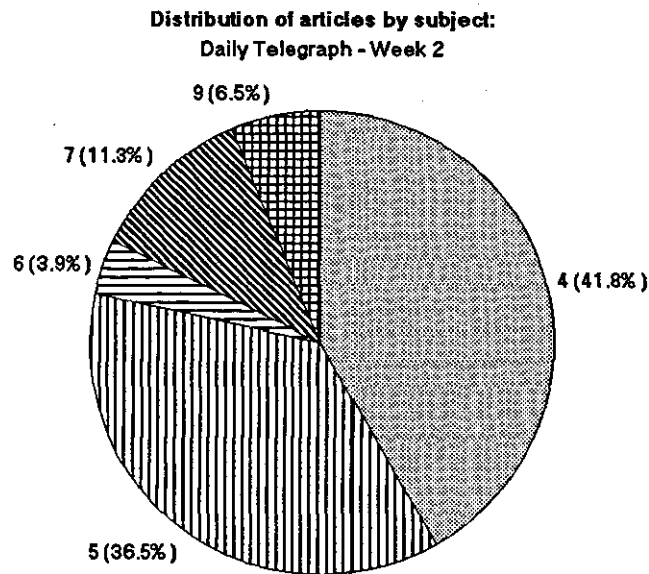
Chart 21



Brief mention is made here of the elections, but the largest segments belong to discussion of EU institutions and analysis of the Union's future. A fairly large proportion of space is given over to industry, a theme not present in such proportions in either of the other French newspapers.

Uniquely amongst the three French titles (although later to be echoed by *The Independent*) a substantial portion of *Le Monde's* EU-related articles had to be classified as miscellaneous; their subject matter varied widely, but could not be slotted into any of the predetermined categories.

Chart 22

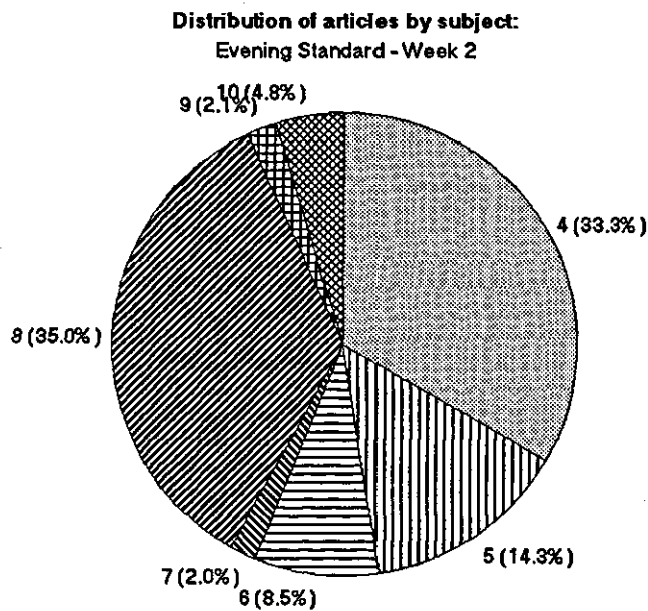


While the largest percentage of *The Daily Telegraph's* items belong predictably to that category dealing with EU institutions, an almost equally large amount of space was given to the EU with direct relation to Great Britain. This is a substantially larger proportion than any of the other papers gave to category 5 and, it could be argued, is a clear reflection of *The Daily Telegraph's* traditional conservative roots.

Agriculture is again evident and is given more than twice the proportion of space than in Week One. Articles on the future of the EU, however, comprise only 6.5% of the total.



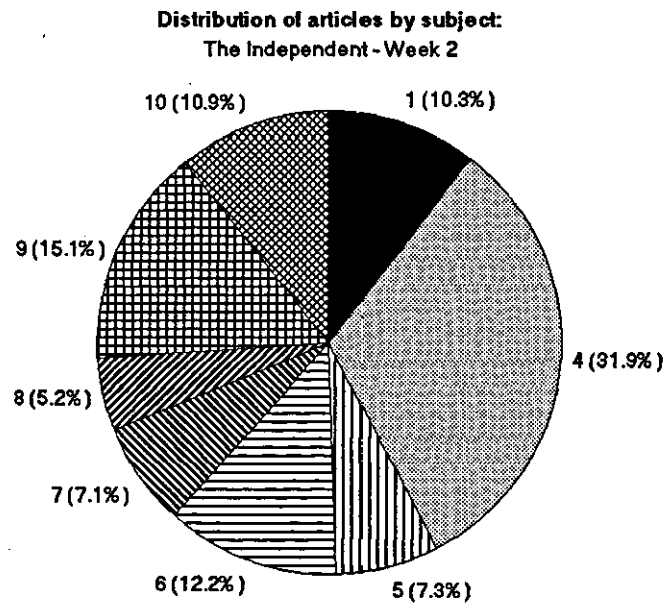
Chart 23



Most noticeable in *The Evening Standard's* results for this time period is the significantly large proportion of space given to the subject of business and economy. The importance of this area for the paper was suggested by the results of Week One, but here it forms the largest percentage of all categories, more substantial even than the space taken by articles on EU institutions.

The future of the EU is barely mentioned here, but agriculture, notably, forms a fairly sizeable portion of the space.

Chart 24



Of all the papers, *The Independent's* results show the most even spread across the categories, with just over 10% of space allotted to the election of two weeks earlier. The largest proportion of space, predictably, is that concerned with EU institutions, but all other main themes are fairly well represented.

Agriculture comprises a sizeable 12% and, taken in conjunction with the results of the other papers, suggests that agricultural news in that week was directly related to British interests. Apart from specific issues such as this, however, the relatively small amount of space given to the EU and Britain (category 5) implies that *The Independent* is perhaps not as concerned as the other titles with prioritising information about its own country.

The 10% of items classified as miscellaneous echo similar results in *Le Monde*, and perhaps suggest a broader attitude to potential EU-related information in these two newspapers.

## 5.6 BIAS

As the description of methodology (4.4.2) implied, the validity of the results in this part of the analysis is limited. The lists of phrases which follow were extracted from the six selected articles on a purely subjective bias: the positive or negative impression that was made on the one person examining them. However, once this point is accepted, the interest value of the lists can be recognised.

(Bracketed figures refer to original French text: Appendix 2)

### *Le Figaro*

#### Positive

- important, international decisions(4)
- the post is a lot more inviting than in 1994(5)
- the European Union continues to hold a real attraction to those outside it(6)
- France is hoping for fast, concrete decisions(7)

#### Negative

- the usual survey of the future of the European Union(8)
- no-one is expecting great things of the summit(9)
- shunned by its own citizens(10)
- reservations of some countries(11)

### *France-Soir*

#### Positive

- the worst of the economic crisis is over(12)
- we have to bear in mind technical difficulties(13)
- urging us to forge ahead(14)
- almost part of a family whose only wish is to get bigger(15)

#### Negative

- the mists of Maastricht, where [Europe] almost lost its way(16)
- the agenda won't be that different from previous ones(17)
- eleven tasks..which have been a little disappointing, in as much as they fall short of what had been hoped for(18)

### ***Le Monde***

#### **Positive**

- the importance which the present holder has given the post(19)
- the recognition of a majority, for the essential advances which have been made(20)

#### **Negative**

- the resentment of the 'Eurosceptics' who have made the Commission the object of their hatred(21)
- Paris reproaches him for a failed Union presidency in 1991(22)

### ***The Daily Telegraph***

#### **Positive**

- this next EC presidency will put the stamp on Europe for a generation
- the President of the Commission has a crucial role to play

#### **Negative**

- in his hideous concrete-and-glass fastness, Our Man in Brussels
- alarming acquiescence by Ministers
- M. Dehaene is the worst of the four available contenders
- the 'compromise' deal that gave Britain next to nothing
- led the assault on Britain's social policies
- an open admission that the EC is not a community run by 12, but a club run by two

### ***The Evening Standard***

#### **Positive**

- ambitious plans to kickstart the European economy
- plans to put many of Europe's 19 million unemployed to work

#### **Negative**

- a depressing reminder
- a Brussels bureaucracy under siege
- a package of grand policies that are going nowhere fast
- six lengthy reports will be tabled... before, for the third summit in a row, they are nudged inconclusively

- onto the next...meeting
- ominous signs that the single market is cracking at the edges
- Worse still for Brussels, one of the big achievements at Corfu will be an anti red-tape offensive against the Commission
- few ideas about who will foot the ...cost

### ***The Independent***

#### **Positive**

- a key part of the EU's decision-making machinery
- sense of legitimacy
- concrete benefits of integration
- greater prosperity
- Mr Delors leaves the post vastly enhanced
- meeting of the leaders...still have such importance...still matter

#### **Negative**

- ready to fudge key EU decisions
- least democratic processes
- parading of national status
- an often hamfisted way
- hardly very effective
- not always very pretty
- ill-fitting system
- an undemocratic process
- behind closed doors
- the European Parliament...is not held in high esteem
- EU's authority ...gravely weakened
- integration has flagged
- not a particularly effective way to run a railroad, let alone a Trans European Network

In searching for evidence of bias, it is immediately clear that all three British newspapers included a heavier weighting of negative phrases, while the French articles appear to be more balanced. This difference in results may, of course, be partly due to the problems of a non-native speaker identifying implied messages in the French language. Nevertheless, on a very simple level, the results are interesting, for the key differentiation in approach to the material seems to be

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

### 6.1 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

As the next section will deal in detail with the specific hypotheses which were outlined earlier, the observations included here consist only of impressions gained from examining the EU-related output of the six newspapers throughout the study.

Perhaps most obvious of all is the fact that, despite the change of name in early 1994, one of the papers, the conservative *Daily Telegraph*, continues to refer to the European Union as the European Community. Clearly this must have been an editorial decision, probably made in the pursuit of consistency and ease of understanding, but when most other media channels, including the other five newspapers studied here, have adapted to the change, readers of *The Daily Telegraph* must feel slightly confused.

During the election period, neither of the two 'popular' papers, *The Evening Standard* and *France-Soir*, created special sections to cover election news. Similarly, *The Daily Telegraph's* EU-related articles were slotted into either the 'news' or 'foreign news' pages. *Le Figaro*, however, regularly devoted a page of its political section to the theme, with a clear subheading to show that the subject encompassed the whole page. Both *Le Monde* and *The Independent* consistently used one or two pages to fill specially created sections on EU-related topics.

*The Independent* was the only paper to continue this pattern into the second time period. While its 'Europe' pages are not solely concerned with activities within the countries of the EU, they do house all EU-related news and are distinct from the paper's 'Home' and 'International' news sections.

In general terms, all of the newspapers tended, where possible, to gear their stories on the European Union to the political situation in their own country, a fact which many will interpret as entirely reasonable.

## 6.2 THE HYPOTHESES

The suppositions made in section 4.1 as to the outcome of the article analyses are reproduced below; information gathered from those analyses is used to support or refute each one.

**That the first time period (*before* the European elections) would yield a substantially larger volume of EU-related articles than the second (*after* the elections).**

It was a logical assumption that the major issue of European Parliamentary elections would persuade newspapers to allot more space to related themes than they would at other times. In fact, apart from the strange results of *The Evening Standard* (Table 1) this was the case with all the newspapers. What is perhaps more surprising is that such *wide* differences were apparent between the two time periods. The main issues in Week 2 would, after all, have an equally long-lasting effect on the European Union. One suggestion to explain this is that the summit and the election of a new Commission president could not be related as easily as the elections to the newspaper's home country and that country's political situation.

**That there would be an identifiable difference in editorial space given to EU-related articles between the British newspapers and the French newspapers.**

Having completed the study, the general impression received was that this hypothesis would be proved wrong; there had not appeared to be much difference between the papers of the two countries. Yet, if the results of Chart 1 are examined, it can be seen that differences, although negligible in some cases, *are* identifiable. Interestingly, the time period reverses the picture: while in Week 1 it is the French papers which commit most space to the EU, Week 2 sees the British papers overtaking them. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that John Major's role at the summit was crucial; although he did not place a veto on Dehaene, the favourite candidate for the presidency, until the day after the study ended, the event was anticipated and in some cases encouraged by the English papers.

**That this difference (in allotted editorial space) would also be visible between the three selected newspapers of a single country.**

In Week 1 of the study, results show a clear pattern conforming to this suggestion; the 'popular' papers gave a smaller percentage of space to EU-related topics than any of the four 'serious' papers. It can also be seen that the more conservative of these 'serious' papers gave less space than the other two, although only marginally so in the French case. Week 2, however, upsets this supposition: *The Evening Standard* showed more interest than any other title, and in each country, the two 'serious' papers gave an almost identical percentage of space. No definite assumptions, then, can be made on the results which would be gained from analysing coverage in other time periods.

**That differences would be visible in terms of percentage of articles illustrated, mean headline size and distribution of articles by section, particularly in comparing 'serious' newspapers with 'popular' newspapers.**

Taking each of these points separately, the pattern of illustration in articles surveyed does not conform entirely to expectations. While the second week's results do show a higher score for the two 'popular' papers, as might have been assumed beforehand, the analysis of articles in Week 1 shows a completely different picture: both *Le Figaro* and *The Daily Telegraph* illustrated a greater percentage of EU-related articles and *The Independent* is not that far behind.

Differences in headline size are more straightforward to analyse. In this case, whether a newspaper was 'serious' or 'popular' *did* suggest how it would score in this area, with the latter consistently using a larger point size.

The third supposition here was proved completely wrong. Differences are indeed visible, but appear at first to be quite random. If any parallels can be drawn, they are not between, for example, *France-Soir* and *The Evening Standard*, but between the newspapers of one country. This suggests that, despite looking so different when compared side by side, the three French papers in fact have more in common with each other, in terms of layout, than with the British titles.



**That illustration, headline size and distribution by section would prove to be points of relative similarity between the paired titles: ie. *The Daily Telegraph* with *Le Figaro*, *The Evening Standard* with *France-Soir* and *The Independent* with *Le Monde*.**

These hypotheses echo, to a large extent, those which preceded it, although specific relationships are being examined in more depth here. In terms of illustration, similarities *can* be seen between the pairs. *Le Monde's* results are, of course, relatively insignificant (see 5.4), but there is a definite pattern in favour of this hypothesis with the other two pairs.

Headline size is not such a clear indication of these relationships, although in relative terms, parallels can be drawn between the pairs. Interestingly, all the British papers scored more highly than their French equivalents in this area.

As was suggested above, a comparison of the way papers distributed articles by section, shows clearer boundaries along national lines than by type of newspaper. *Le Monde* and *The Independent* are the only pair in which a resemblance can be observed, although even here the pattern is not that similar. It could be suggested that expectations of readers dictate to some extent where articles should be placed. In the French papers, for example, the vast majority of EU-related items were on the political pages. The British papers, however, show no such conformity; distribution by section is clearly a decision individual to each title.

**That in terms of subject matter, nationality of newspaper would be a more significant differential than type of newspaper.**

The results for Week 1 (Charts 13-18) give some support for this hypothesis, for all the French papers gave significantly more space to the subject of the EU elections in relation to their own country than any of the British titles. Similarly, subjects such as agriculture are covered in some depth by the three British papers, but only touched on by a single French title, *Le Monde*. This clear pattern did not, however, continue into the second week. While a few similarities can be observed, on the whole a variety of subjects were selected for representation. It seems as if the dominating factor of a single important theme, such as the elections, is necessary before evidence can be seen of a high degree of conformity.

**that the nationality of a newspaper would also prove to be the deciding factor in any detectable bias for or against the European Union**

Having recognised and accepted the limitations of the qualitative part of the study, the results are in fact very interesting. Without exception, the three French articles show an even balance between positive and negative phrases, while all three British articles show a greater propensity towards the negative side. Clearly, it is far too great an assumption to surmise from this tiny sample that British newspapers are therefore anti-European Union and French newspapers have a neutral attitude. It is, nevertheless, interesting to see that, in reports on similar subject matter, the papers should fall into two such obvious groups along national lines.

### **6.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The original objectives of this study were twofold: to discover to what extent newspapers limit the amount and edit the content of EU information, and to discover whether nationals of EU member states have access, through their daily newspapers, to a different quantity and quality of EU information. Comparisons have been made between six different newspapers in an attempt to ascertain patterns in the way EU-related information is represented, and results show striking differences in selection and portrayal of issues and subjectivity of content.

There is clearly wide scope for further study in this area: it would be worthwhile extending the range of newspapers, the time periods studied and the member states in which those newspapers are produced. Equally, the small sample of articles examined for bias, would need to be greatly enlarged before any real conclusions could be drawn on the slant which individual newspapers give to their reports on the European Union.

It was suggested earlier in this chapter that the tendency of the newspapers examined here to adopt a nationalist line in their selection and portrayal of material was reasonable, in that all newspapers express the interests of their readers. While this may be true, is it not also possible that, by perceiving those interests as primarily nationalist, newspapers themselves, or, in fact, the 'gatekeepers' who make these decisions, are defining the public's parameters of opinion and knowledge on the European Union.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX ONE: THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

PAPER: Figaro FSoir LeMonde Telegraph Standard Independent

DAY: Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PAGE: \_\_\_\_\_

HEADLINE: \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION: 1.News 2.Foreign 3.Political 4.Feature 5.Diary  
6.Editorial 7.Letters 8.Business/Financial 9.Cartoon  
10.Miscellaneous

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CM2 (TOTAL): \_\_\_\_\_ CM2 (TEXT): \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## APPENDIX TWO: ORIGINAL FRENCH TEXT

1. Corfou: un sommet de transition pour les Douze
2. ...alors que l'Europe cherche les remedes
3. Difficile succession a Bruxelles
4. les grandes decisions internationales
5. Le poste est beaucoup plus convoite qu'en 1984
6. l'Union europeene continue d'exercer une reellev attraction a l'exterieur
7. La France espere des decisions 'rapides et concretes'
8. le tour d'horizon habituel sur l'avenir de l'Union europeenne
9. personne n'attend monts et merveilles du sommet
10. boudee par les citoyens
11. les reticence de certains pays
12. le plus gros de la crise economique est derriere eux
13. il faut tenir compte de difficultes techniques
14. en exhortant a aller de l'avant
15. presque partie d'une famille qui ne demande qu'a s'agrandir
16. les brumes de Maastricht, ou elle a failli se perdre
17. L'agenda...ne sera pas, en revanche, tres different des precedents
18. onze travaux...qui ont un peu decu dans la mesure ou l'on reste en deca de ce  
que l'on aurait pu esperer
19. l'importance que son actuel titulaire lui aura donnee
20. la reconnaissance de la majorite pour les avancees essentielles
21. le ressentiment des 'eurosceptiques' qui ont fait de la Commission l'objet de leur  
detestation
22. Paris lui reproche une presidence de l'Union ratee en 1991

