



ORIGINAL PAPER

Learning from the Negotiations and Strategic Management of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF): a Media Profile and Discourse Analysis on EU Governance and Inter-Institutional Relations

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Abstract:

Learning from global strategic management rules and procedures at EU level proves to be a cornerstone of policy management analysis. Purpose and scope of study: The analysis is focused on dealing with the strategic planning and public management of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020 at EU level. Research objectives: The analysis is triggered on the following directions: (1) presenting the legal preparation, procedures and negotiation of the EU MFF for 2014-2020, (2) analysing the media coverage of EU preparations for the multiannual strategic planning, (3) examining the media coverage of policy scopes and priorities regarding finances, (4) parsing media discussions on policy and programs design and management, (5) the review of media discourse on the performance of EU policy management. Research methodology: The research methodology is designed under the guidance of a content analysis based on mainstream media coverage of articles throughout 2013. The study employs the identification of relevant articles in the online editions of European media, the analysis of distribution and frequency of articles around meaningful themes, framing analysis and indication of bias in connected articles.

Keywords: *media monitoring, image analysis, discourse analysis, Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), strategic planning, public management, inter-institutional relations.*

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) budgetary matters are generally laid down in its primary law (the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU). The “general principles” regulating budgetary procedures and the efficiency of planning are enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TfEU, Article 310). In Title II Financial Provisions Chapter 2, the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TfEU) establishes the premises for the strategic planning and public management of the European Union Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The subsequent contribution aims at offering an outlook on the EU budgetary policy analysis by rendering a special focus on its strategic financial management on a multiannual basis. The study is structured into the subsequent sections: (1) a first part designed to offer a perspective over the legal basis regulating budgetary matters, in general, and the financial regulation concerning the rules and principles guarding European Union Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in particular; (2) secondly, a section aimed at discussing the role and perspectives of the European institutions in negotiating the European Union Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the evolution of discussions and the challenges in reaching a compromise; (3) thirdly, a section focused on reviewing the literature on the negotiations of the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2014-2020; (4) further, the study draws the lines of the content analysis methodology deployed, the prerequisites of the media monitoring process; (5) a section of data analysis and discussions presents aspects related to selected articles quantitative and qualitative analyses; (6) the study ends by drawing its concluding remarks and projecting the lessons learned for strategically projecting the following EU Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021-2027.

Relevant legal basis for the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

The Multiannual Financial Framework is laid down in the EU primary law within Articles 312-324 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TfEU) which regulates the following budgetary principles: (1) the principle of managing the budget from EU’s resources (TfEU, Article 311); (2) administering the annual expenditures (commitment appropriations and payment appropriations) within a Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) unanimously decided by Council with the agreement of the European Parliament, a framework which was established at minimum 5 years (TfEU, Article 312) and which currently lasts 7 years; the program of the budgetary procedures (TfEU, Articles 313-316); normative regulations for entry into force and audit as well as attributing the institutional mandate competences (TfEU, Articles 317-319).

For the period 2014-2020 the European Union Multiannual Financial Framework was decided through an interinstitutional agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission which further cover the “principle of budgetary discipline”, “principle of cooperation in budgetary matters” and the “principle of sound financial management” (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, European Commission, Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013). As regards the Treaty on European Union, it also deals with the EU's common foreign and security policy budget.

The EU’s decision to substantiate the system of own resources (Council Decision of 26 May 2014 on the system of own resources of the European Union, 2014/335/EU) was of utmost importance for the reform of the budgetary system (Stenbæk and Jensen, 2016: 615-635). Regulating the objectives of “strict budgetary discipline”, “simplicity”,

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“transparency” and “equity”, EU’s innovatory budgetary system of own resources is a mix of “customs duties, value added tax (VAT) and gross national income (GNI)-based contributions” unanimously adopted by Council which also decides on the “correction mechanisms” and “rebates” (Council Decision 2014/335/EU). Other legislative acts contributing to the regulation this system are Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 609/2014 on traditional, VAT and GNI-based own resources (Council of the European Union, 2014b: 39-52); Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 608/2014 laying down implementing measures for the system of own resources (Council of the European Union, 2014a: 29-38); Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1287/2003 on the harmonisation of gross national income at market prices (Council of the European Union, 2003: 1-3). Following a series of negotiations with the European Parliament, at the end of 2013, the Council adopted the Regulation No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (Council of the European Union, 2013). The regulation covers the rules of implementation and control mechanisms and recognizes the “flexibility” to re-allocate the yearly unused funds within the multiannual financial framework through a compulsory mid-term review as was the case with the European Commission’s proposal in 2015 (European Commission, 2015).

Managing the institutional design of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is a multi-tasking set of operations dependent on three dimensions: (1) the logistical factor (including budgetary constraints), (2) organizational culture (values, norms, rules, image, communication), and (3) organizational structure (Georgescu, 2018: 196-209).

Background and evolution of European Union interinstitutional negotiations

Key Actors in the Negotiation of the Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020): between austerity and solidarity

The Negotiation of the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2014-2020 ran throughout 2013, starting with European Council agreement of capping the multiannual budget to 960 billion euros. The Council of the European Union Presidency in Office increased negotiations with Member States at the crossing between “austerity” and “solidarity” (European Commission, 2011) to cover the principle of “flexibility”, although the clipping could not be removed. In the summer of 2013, talks appeared to lead to an agreement regarding the MFF, however, discussions over 2014 budget challenged the reach of a compromise, which was acquired later, on 12 November. The MFF entered into force at 1 January 2014.

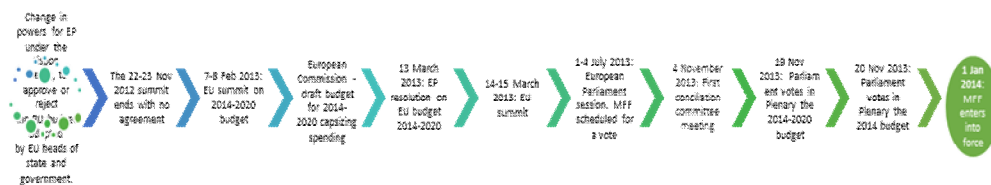


Figure 1. Interinstitutional relations on negotiating the MFF for the period 2014-2020

Source: The authors (media coverage).

Negotiating the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2014-2020: a literature review

Throughout the literature, the variables determining an agreement over the European Union Multiannual Financial Framework have been identified along three dimensions: (1) the logistical factor (including budgetary constraints), (2) organizational culture (values, norms, rules, image, communication), and (3) organizational structure (Georgescu, 2008: 117-122). This was even more relevant in the light of the largest enlargement of the European Union in 2004 when researchers drew attention on the possible challenges to reach an agreement due to “financial pressures” raised by the new post-enlargement EU organization structure (Georgiou and Psycharis, 2004). The nature of the European Union organizational structure stands at the basis of the complexity in the negotiation process of the EU structural and cohesion policies, along with the old and new Member States’ differences in national sensibilities and preoccupations.

Following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty (2009), the EU institutions and rules of procedure changed. The literature focused on these changes and the effects they determined on key aspects of EU policy-making. Researchers were especially aiming at determining the nature of changes in the interinstitutional relations and subsequent effects for key European policy areas in the light of the Lisbon Treaty provisions.

As soon as negotiations started for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) through the consultations of the European Commission (2011), it was expected that they would be finalized by December 2012. However, studies showed interest in the manner in which the two European budget principles of “European solidarity” and “European added value” would have been combined into a coherent and unitary conceptual framework capable of reaching cross-national consensus (Becker, 2012: 116-129).

Further studies were concentrated on the organizational structure and institutional reforms brought by the Lisbon Treaty and the efforts to counter those changes. Special attention was laid on the advantages gained by the Council in the series of annual budgetary procedures, on the role played by the European Parliament in the budgetary negotiations and its use of all legal and political resources (i.e. veto right) to balance interinstitutional negotiations and strike an agreement on key financial policies, especially on long-term expenditures (Benedetto, 2017: 633-652; Benedetto, 2019: 329-345).

Researches even provided evidence for changes to European Commission administrative organization and budgeting procedures towards more centralization detected under the unprecedented pressures during negotiations on the 2014–2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (Goetz and Patz, 2016: 1038-1056). Moreover, studies supplied explanations for the 2013 Cohesion policy reform (highlighting procedures undergone in a manner opposing the usual path-dependency and incremental changes) by modeling the connections of (1) EU multilevel governance, (2) institutionalized policy-making and (3) policy windows (European Commission’s first agenda power and decision power of Council reunited Member States) (Becker, 2019: 147-168). Earlier studies were keen on contributing to the historical-institutionalist framework, within path dependency explanations the intricacies in the continuity or change of European budgetary institutions (Ackrill and Kay, 2006: 113-133). More on that matter, when facing organizational or institutional change, studies have shown that reform resistance can be treated as a dependent variable influenced by: 1) normative loopholes, 2) political-economic barriers and 3) anti-reforms support (Heinemann, Mohl & Osterloh, 2010).

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This is in line with studies showing that the structure and volume of Cohesion Policy funds were influenced by precedent and politico-economic constraints in the sense that inequalities persisted in the EU as income and aid were directly-related (Dunford and Perrons, 2012: 895-922). Moreover, it was shown that the allocation of the European Structural Funds through the Cohesion Policy follows a “principal-agent” logic with the EU deploying a set of different “conditionalities” to increase the efficiency of Member States action (Bachtler and Ferry, 2015: 1258-1273; Siminică, Crăciun, Ogarcă, Băndoi, Tănasie, 2015: 481-488).

Moreover, researches praised the adoption of the European Union Financial Regulation in search of solid assessments on its consequences over EU budget execution by accentuating its primary targets of “flexibility and simplification” (Sabău-Popa and Mara, 2015: 1590 – 1597). For the European 2007-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework researchers focused on its social and economic consequences by emerging into a discussion on the possibilities to tackle unemployment and increase revenues. By modelling the accessibility of EU funds, researchers concluded on the effects of the EU institutionalized funding scheme across macro-European regions in terms of employment and labour force migration (Monsalve, Zafrilla, Cadarso and García-Alaminos, 2019: 285-304; Barbu, Florea, Ogarcă, Barbu, 2018: 373-387). The discussion on “social needs” in relation to “institutional governance” has granted a special attention to the conceptualization and “framing human values” within EU legal documentation (Olimid, 2018: 120-133; Olimid, Georgescu, 2017: 42-56).

Seminal researches centered on institutional analyses have pursued the discussions on the withdrawal of European Funds under the New European Regional Policy 2014-2020 (Cardenete and Delgado, 2015: 451-454), the Cohesion Policy for the period 2014–2020 (Nosek, 2017: 2157-2174; Avdikos and Chardas, 2016: 97-117) the role for national and regional institutions in the negotiations and the implications for the Common Agriculture Policy 2014–2020 (Kölling, 2015: 71-89).

A special strand of research covered the role of the European Council within the inter-institutional relations besides the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. It was shown that although the reunion of chiefs of states and governments does not possess legislative powers, nor is it invested by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) to decide regarding its Multiannual Financial Framework, it played an important role in the adoption of the MFF 2014-2020; one research concluded to raising awareness on the need to eliminate uncertainties on the legal competences of each EU institution (the European Parliament’s post-Lisbon powers and role enjoyed a special attention in this sense) and coin their roles as regards the MFF (Crowe, 2016: 69 – 92). Furthermore, the need to acquire more flexibility to counter the change in power structure as regards the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2011), even through the use of veto right, was analyzed to account for states’ behavior in the negotiating process and explain the results over budget capsizing (Benedetto, 2013: 345-369).

Moreover, studies wished to determine through decision theory the direction deployed by each state – whether accepting or pursuing compensations, or being forced to accept the conditionality of the financial crisis effects (seen as an window of opportunity) on the cohesion policy and agricultural policy – on the road towards the European Council agreement which outlined the reduction of budget appropriations for the whole 2014-2020 period (Stenbæk and Jensen, 2016: 615-635). Also, studies sought to determine the outcome for European integration through MFF negotiations from the

leadership during European Council summits: between federalism and intergovernmental approaches (Tömmel, 2017: 175-189). At the end of the 2014-2020 financial programming period, studies have displayed the lessons learned from the institutional approaches in reaching a beneficial compromise for the future of European government, policy and politics between federalism and intergovernmentalism (Mayer, 2020: 63–68).

Purpose and scope of media research

The analysis is focused on dealing with the European online media coverage throughout 2013 on the strategic planning and public management of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020 at EU level.

Research objectives

The analysis is triggered on the following directions: (1) analysing the media coverage of EU preparations and negotiations for the multiannual strategic planning, (2) examining the media coverage of policy scopes and priorities regarding finances, (3) parsing media discussions on policy and programs design and management, and (4) the review of media discourse on the performance of EU financial management.

Research questions

In order to pursue the previous objectives, we have launched the following research questions: Q1. How did the media cover EU institutions preparations and negotiations for the multiannual strategic planning? Q2. How did the media rank European policy scopes and priorities regarding finances? Q3. How did the media cover European institutions negotiations on funding programs design and management? and Q4. How did the media present the performance of EU leadership concerning financial management?

Research methodology

The research methodology was designed under the guidance of a content analysis based on mainstream media coverage of articles throughout 2013. The study employed the identification of relevant articles in the online editions of European media, the analysis of distribution and frequency of articles around meaningful themes, framing analysis and indication of bias in connected articles. Consequently, the paper used media content analysis as research methodology. The paper thus discusses the results of a media analysis aimed at identifying the general themes, trends and patterns in the media coverage of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) design and efforts to reach an agreement, while contouring a portrayal of the systemic changes and challenges in the field. The analysis is thus centered on identifying the articles' general themes and orientations, while at the same time on finding evidence of media bias towards certain issues in the EU strategic financial management and budgetary procedures. The research aims at analyzing the manner in which international/European mainstream media relates to the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and strategic management policies.

The analysis followed the monitoring of electronic editions of three international news sources which covered the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) throughout 2013 specifically addressing and pinpointing European Union institutions strategic management for the period 2014-2020. A total of 54 articles were selected and thoroughly analyzed. The analysis was founded on measuring both the quantity and

quality of media coverage of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and institutional strategic management issues, extended interpretation of the coverage within the overall academia discussion of a reform of institutional design/institution building and public policy-making/policy-implementation in the light of new institutionalism theories and methodology.

Data analysis and discussions

This section fulfills the following objectives: (1) presenting and discussing the results of media monitoring in terms of qualitative analysis on the statistical distribution of selected articles per online news sources during monitoring period, (2) showing the thematic distribution in selected articles during monitoring period, and (3) presenting the results of the qualitative analysis on news framing.

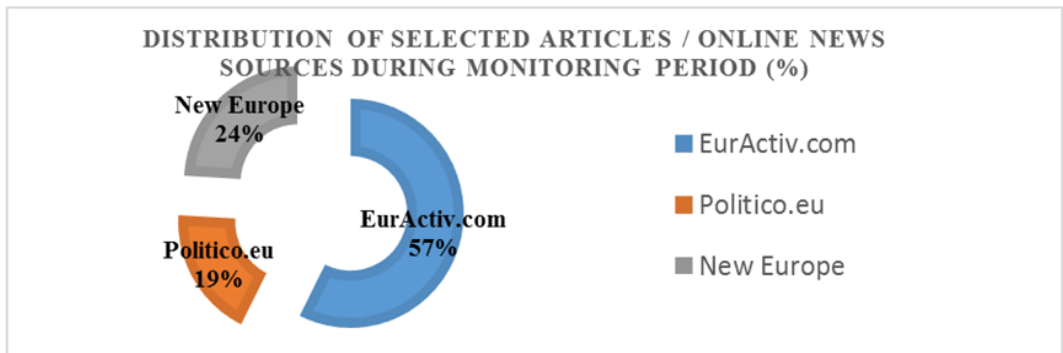


Figure 2. Distribution of selected articles / online news sources during monitoring period (%)

Source: The authors.

The distribution of selected articles per online news sources during monitoring period shows that the majority of the articles selected were published by EurActiv.com (57%), while in New Europe and Politico.eu the percentage was 24% and 19%, respectively. The articles were selected from the electronic archives of the online publications by searching with online keywords query *EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020*. The search was limited to 2013, also, the irrelevant results were eliminated from the final research list.

Thematic distribution in selected articles during monitoring period

The thematic distribution in selected articles during monitoring period reveals the following situation: the theme concerning budgetary responsibilities and challenges for the EU Council presidency has appeared in 3 articles; the nature of discussions, arguments and procedural legal and political instruments used in the “tough” negotiations between EP and Council is the most used theme, common for 16 articles; introducing financial discipline measures which capsized the budget was the theme used in 6 articles; reforming the European public sector was the main theme for 3 articles; supporting international development goals was to be found in 7 articles; investing in environment/ renewable energy policy was the theme identified in 4 articles; the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform deal was the key interest for 3 articles; balancing the European Monetary Union (EMU) as a prerequisite to discouraging

national extremism was the main concern for one of the articles; while the challenges in funding Erasmus+ and the Horizon2020 programs constituted the theme for one article.

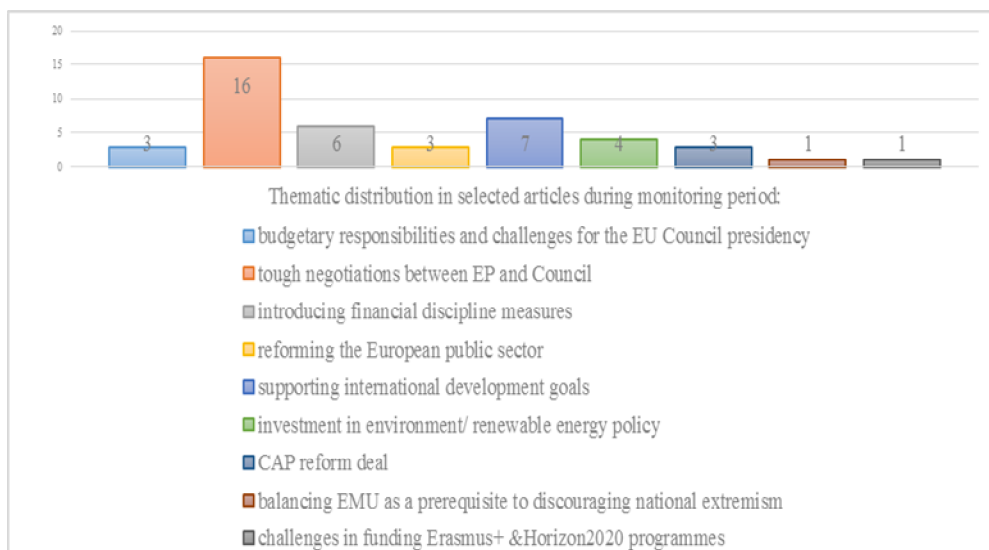


Figure 3. Thematic distribution in selected articles during monitoring period

Source: The authors.

Overall, media coverage was relatively pointing towards the pressures in inter-institutional relations and intense negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union as we will show in the subsequent section containing the results of a news framing analysis.

News framing analysis

The current section of the contribution reports on news framing analysis results. Using the generic news framing theory (De Vreese, 2005) we have identified the journalistic frames used in monitoring articles and thus accomplished to draw a profile of the media coverage on MFF negotiations throughout 2013: (1) the “economy” frame; (2) the “conflict” frame, and (3) the “moral values” frame.

Institutionalizing “flexibility” and the availability of the “economy frame”

The articles framed with “economy” usually “translate” the economic implication of a policy. The term “flexibility” which could be best described as “making best use of every euro” registered 62 mentions throughout the articles (“Parliament gives final approval to EU long-term budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Nov 20, 2013); “flexibility to move money between subject areas and between years” with the Parliament accepting the limitation at 960 billion euros, but demanding more flexibility (“Deal struck on long-term budget”, *Politico.eu*, 6/19/13); the relation to the concept of “European added value” (“Getting added value from EU development aid”, *EurActiv.com*, Jun 14, 2013; “The EU’s 2014-2020 budget in figures”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 12, 2013), comparing the budget to “forging a deal” (“EU leaders agree budget cuts, MEPs brace for strife”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 8, 2013; “France holds out for a large EU regional budget slice”, *EurActiv.com*, Jan 16, 2013).

At the same time, the journalists from *New Europe* covered the need to boost jobs and economic growth (“Rompu: ‘EU budget is an indispensable tool for growth and jobs’”, *New Europe*, Feb 6, 2013 ; “Irish Presidency’s main priorities”, *New Europe*, Feb 15, 2013; “Necessity for EU growth policies”, *New Europe*, Mar 1, 2013).

Politics as a battlefield: employing the “conflict” frame

As regards conflict, we have to mention the expressions “(EU leaders) to grapple with the budget”, “budget in limbo”, EP vote “tantamount to blackmail” (“Parliament gives final approval to EU long-term budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Nov 20, 2013), “budget process into turmoil”, “struggle”, “the political agreement as a rotten deal”, “EU institutions having blocked a more ambitious budget”, (“Parliament gives final approval to EU long-term budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Nov 20, 2013), an effort to turn the European Parliament “happy” (“EU budget passes last hurdles”, *EurActiv.com*, Nov 15, 2013). “The battle has begun” was the metaphor used in one *EurActiv.com* article to coin the inter-institutional dialogue on the MFF (“European Parliament rejects EU long-term budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Mar 14, 2013), “one of the most controversial and long-fought battles” (Parliament approves EU’s 2014-2020 budget, *EurActiv.com*, Nov 19, 2013), the European Parliament as a “unified front” against national sensibilities within a “zero-sum game” (“National egos tame Parliament’s ire over EU budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Mar 12, 2013), to “fight off the decision” (“The EU’s 2014-2020 budget in figures”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 12, 2013), “MEPs brace to strife” (“EU leaders agree budget cuts, MEPs brace for strife”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 8, 2013; “European Parliament may have reignited a long-standing battle” (“MEPs reverse approved budget cuts for 2014”, *EurActiv.com*, Oct 24, 2013), the budget turned into a victim of some of the Member states austerity positions coined as “budget hawks” (“EU budget hawks succeed in €960-billion cap”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 8, 2013; “EU leaders urge European Parliament to approve slashed EU budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 11, 2013; “Blending funds will be the new way to finance EU projects”, *EurActiv.com*, Nov 7, 2013). Actually the zero-sum game was used repeatedly throughout the articles, the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programs being coined as “two of the largest budget gainers” (“EU ministers sign off on budget winners: Erasmus+, Horizon 2020”, *EurActiv.com*, Dec 3, 2013). Further the “rejection” of the Council agreement was coined as “defiant” (“Parliament defies EU leaders with vote against long-term budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Mar 14, 2013).

Moreover, within an opinion paper published in *EurActiv.com* it was pointed out that the “rise of nationalism” and the “spread of discord” as effects of “austerity packages” are alarm signs to the need to reform the European Monetary Union coordinated to a “Social Union” (“Europe’s nationalist demons are not sleeping, they have already woken up”, *EurActiv.com*, Mar 21, 2013).

In the same line of speech, the journalists from *Politico.eu* referred to the EP and Council inter-institutional relations in terms of “intense wrangling” (“MEPs approve EU’s long-term budget”, *Politico.eu*, Nov 19, 2013), chose to coin negotiations as “heated”, while “time is running out” (“Farm ministers move toward MEPs in CAP negotiations”, *Politico.eu*, Sept 24, 2013), while the difficulties in securing a deal appeared under the title “Long-term budget casts a shadow over the presidency” (*Politico.eu*, June 12, 2013).

Making compromises for successful negotiations: applying the “moral values” frame

The “moral values” frame makes reference to “morality and social prescriptions”. Thus we have to mention recording 27 uses of the concept “struck the compromise on the EU multiannual budget by EU heads of state and government” (“Parliament gives final approval to EU long-term budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Nov 20, 2013; “European Parliament rejects EU long-term budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Mar 14, 2013; “EU leaders agree budget cuts, MEPs brace for strife”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 8, 2013; “Parliament gives final approval to EU long-term budget”, *EurActiv.com*, Nov 20, 2013; “EU 2014-2020 budget agreed. This time for real?”, *EurActiv.com*, Jun 27, 2013; “Parliament will vote on the EU budget twice”, Jul 2, 2013; “EU’s heavy budget file lands on Brussels summit table”, *EurActiv.com*, Jun 26, 2013; “EU leaders were quiet and calculating at summit”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 8, 2013).

At the same time, the journalists from *Politico.eu* informed their readers on European Parliament’s “doubts” over the Council’s agreement deemed as “manipulation”, an “unacceptable proposal” by MEPs (“EU’s heavy budget file lands on Brussels summit table”, *EurActiv.com*, Jun 26, 2013); a MEP resignation from his role in negotiations (“Deal struck on long-term budget”, *Politico.eu*, June 19, 2013; “MEPs cast doubt on budget deal”, *Politico.eu*, June 20, 2013).

EurActiv.com also covered a yearly audit which included strategic European initiatives designed to reach out for the most vulnerable people which concludes on the EU “(...) not delivering on their promises” in terms of poverty reduction policies and (“EU still world’s biggest aid donor but misses own targets”, *EurActiv.com*, Aug 26, 2013). Under the tag “EU Priorities for 2020” the journalists from *EurActiv.com* covered the reach of a compromise on February 8th projecting the image of European Parliament and Council trade-off by using sports metaphors: “strike an agreement”, “struck (...) a deal”, “clamoring success” (“EU leaders agree budget cuts, MEPs brace for strife”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 8, 2013), “extreme sports” (“Lewandowski: Agreeing the budget was ‘extreme sports’”, *EurActiv.com*, Jun 28, 2013), and battle analogies: “on a collision course”, “Parliament (...) prepares to fight off the decision to cut spending” (“EU leaders agree budget cuts, MEPs brace for strife”, *EurActiv.com*, Feb 8, 2013).

EurActiv.com journalists pointed out the delays in reaching a budgetary agreement and stressed out that the European Parliament has won new powers following the Lisbon Treaty and that the Council is “pressing to conclude negotiations” (“EU ministers want budget talks concluded by end of June”, *EurActiv.com*, May 22, 2013).

Meanwhile, the journalists from *New Europe* reacted to institutional restraints in communication (“Vice-President Šefčovič ‘cautiously optimistic’ about the MFF”, *New Europe*, Feb 5, 2013).

Conclusions: lessons learned for future EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027

Following the monetary and financial crisis of 2008-2010, there is no subject that arouses such interest for the politics and policy of the European governance such as budgetary matters. Throughout 2013, media attention in reference to the EU MFF 2014-2020 covered to some degree the following aspects: the complexity and lengthy inter-institutional negotiations as compared to the previous ones throughout 2006 and the increased powers of the European Parliament (EP) under the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), thus coining a possible race between Council and European Parliament. While the

mainstream media articles covering the negotiations during 2013 focused on the changes in inter-institutional relations among European Commission, Members of the European Parliament and Member States government representatives reunited in Council, the academic literature highlighted both the short-term and long-lasting effects of these changes on the evolution of negotiations and conditionality for the 2014-2020 and also future financing of the European Regional Policy, the Cohesion Policy and the Common Agriculture Policy. A strong interest was manifest for the future of the integration process and the lessons learned for addressing the 2021-2027 financial programming period.

Most strikingly this contribution allows us to make a comparative study of academic research interest versus online media coverage. Following some insights into inter-institutional relations among European Commission, European Parliament and Council of the EU, one observes that while the media pursues the negotiations, timeline and trade-offs between European institutions, the scientific journals aim at providing a more nuanced picture mostly historically (neo)institutionalist-driven on the changes and effects of Lisbon Treaty-induced reforms. Institutions and decision-making in the EU still represents a seminal topic for scientific research and produces relevant insights drawn from institutional analysis (historical, discourse analysis, or rational choice).

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