

# EU identity frame (European/Global Public Sphere)

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**AUTHOR**

Dennis Lichtenstein

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**KEYWORDS**

*EU identity, identity frame, EU, European Union, comparative research, international*

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**BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

The variable “EU identity frame” is used to analyze the content of collective European identity as it is constructed in media discourses. An EU frame establishes an understanding of the EU as a certain kind of community (e.g., political community, common market, community with political values). Identity frames are indicated by statements on general objectives, norms and/or historic aspects of the EU. For example, the frame that addresses the EU as a currency union is characterized by the objective to be economically strong and competitive and to uphold the norm of fiscal stability. The variable is usually combined with the coding of the evaluation of an identity frame as support for the EU as a specific kind of community or its rejection. Since one media piece can entail several EU identity frames, addressed by different speakers, EU identity frames have been taken as the coding unit in content analyses.

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**FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

The variable “EU identity frame” is used in comparative research on the construction of collective European identity in media outlets (Lichtenstein, 2016; Lichtenstein & Eilders, 2015, 2019). Identity is understood as a sense of belonging and togetherness. It is analyzed in the context of conflicts and crises within the EU, when identity should provide a basis for the legitimacy of EU governance and transnational solidarity. Differences

in the framing of European identity between countries indicate conflicts that are related to different political and economic objectives or a different understanding of European values and culture. In contrast, a shared understanding of European identity between countries provides orientation for political decisions. In its theoretical foundation, the coding of EU frames has some parallels to the coding of thematic frames on conflict events in research on horizontal transnationalization of the public sphere.

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**REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The framing of European identity can also be analyzed with surveys in media effect studies.

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**EXAMPLE STUDY:**

Lichtenstein & Eilders (2019)

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**INFORMATION ON LICHTENSTEIN & EILDERS, 2019**

**Authors:** Dennis Lichtenstein, Christiane Eilders

**Research question/research interest:** Conflicts in the framing of European identity between countries during the Euro crisis

**Object of analysis:** Weekly quality papers from Germany, France, and the UK

**Timeframe of analysis:** 2011–2014

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**INFORMATION ABOUT VARIABLE**

**Variable name/definition:** EU Frame

„Grundlegend für diese Variable ist die Frage, was Europa ist oder sein soll. Hier wird erhoben, welche Idee von Europa in einer Aussage aktualisiert wird. Diese Idee kann direkt vom Sprecher ausgedrückt werden und zwar entweder durch ein direktes oder indirektes Zitat oder durch die Beschreibung einer aktiven Handlung des Sprechers, die Qualitäten einer Meinungsäu-



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ßerung aufweist. Außerdem kann eine Europa-idee durch das Verhältnis zwischen Europa und einem BZO (Bezugsobjekt) aufgezeigt werden. Hier zeigt sich die Konsistenz des BZO zu der Europaidee: Die Beziehung zwischen dem BZO und der Europaidee kann in einem konformen oder in einem konflikthaften Verhältnis stehen. Z.B. ist die Aussage, „die Türkei passt nicht zum europäischen Wertgefüge“ auf die Idee von Europa als Wertgemeinschaft bezogen und nur in diesem Verständnis wird hier ein konflikthaftes Verhältnis zur Türkei behauptet.“ (Lichte nstein, 2014)

This variable is related to the question of what Europe is or should be according to a speaker's

statement. This idea of Europe can be expressed directly by the speaker, either by a direct or indirect quotation, or by the description of an active action of the speaker that has qualities of an expression of opinion. An idea of Europe can be expressed through the relationship between Europe and a BZO (reference object). Here the consistency of the BZO to the idea of Europe is evident: the relationship between the BZO and the idea of Europe can be either conformist or conflictual. For example, the statement that „Turkey does not fit to the European values“ refers to Europe as a community of values, and it is only in this understanding that a conflictual relationship with Turkey is asserted here.

EU frames	Coded EU sub frames
Political integration: EU as a federation	Strongly politically integrated community Community with a common constitution
Political integration: EU as a confederation	Loosely connected community of sovereign nation states Community of states with equal power
Market regulations: EU as an authority for market regulations	Market intervention by the EU Community with a common economic, finance and tax law Economic solidarity between states with strong and weak economies European social policy
Market regulations: EU as a free market	EU as a market in competition with other big players EU as a free trade area with competition and labor migration
Finance policy: Economic growth	Investments for economic growth in the EU and in crisis countries Financial solidarity
Finance policy: Finance stability	Financial stability in the Euro zone Austerity politics to foster budget discipline in EU countries
Common political values	Democracy as a European value Peace as a European value Solidarity with other EU countries Rule of law
Currency Union	Euro zone as an economically strong and competitive currency union Fiscal stability in the Eurozone

EU frames	Coded EU sub frames
Cultural community	Common European history and mythology EU countries connected by religion Education and arts Diversity of cultures in Europa and encounters with people from different European cultures
Community with a common foreign policy	Common engagement and interests in foreign policy Common military and defense policy
EU as a geographic entity	Legitimate EU borders equals the borders of the European continent

**Level of analysis:** EU frame

**Scale level:** Nominal

**Reliability:** Krippendorff's Alpha = .75

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#### REFERENCES

Lichtenstein, D. & Eilders, C. (2019). Lost in uncertainty. How the Euro crisis affected European identity constructions in national media discourses. *International Communication Gazette*, 81(6-8), 602-622.