# Project “Media Performance and Democracy”

## Working package 3: Quality comparison of political coverage in Germany, Austria and Switzerland

## Method description

Andreas Riedl & Miriam Steiner

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### Content

## Sampling

For the analysis, we collected a sample of domestic political news. Our broad definition of domestic political news coverage included articles on national politics, articles on regional politics and foreign affairs (the latter two only when referring to national politics) and on issues of societal interest that could be negotiated in national political institutions (e.g. employment conditions in the health sector, unemployment statistics and food pollution caused by new pesticides).

The sample includes articles from newspapers and news magazines or online articles as well as TV and radio news reports. In addition, the sample is concentrated neither on specific areas or sections of the media outlet (e.g. front page or specific sections within a newspaper). Only the topic of the respective article was relevant for the decision of whether to include it in the sample or not. However, specific types of news coverage without journalistic content (e.g. tables of content, teasers on the front page, topic overviews, letters to the editor or information on events) were not included in the sample.

*Table 1: Sampling periods according to parliamentary activity*

| | Germany | Austria | Switzerland |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sampling period 1 | | | |
| Days when parliament was in session | 04/06-08/06;<br>11/06-15/06;<br>29/06 | 11/06-14/06;<br>29/06;<br>05/07 | 28/05-01/06;<br>04/06-08/06;<br>11/06-15/06 |
| Days when parliament was not in session | 26/05-27/05 (weekend);<br>28/05-01/06;<br>02/06-03/06 (weekend);<br>09/06-10/06 (weekend);<br>30/06-01/07 (weekend);<br>02/07-05/07 | 26/05-27/05 (weekend);<br>28/05-01/06;<br>02/06-03/06 (weekend);<br>04/06-08/06;<br>09/06-10/06 (weekend);<br>15/06;<br>30/06-01/07 (weekend);<br>02/07-04/07 | 26/05-27/05 (weekend);<br>02/06-03/06 (weekend);<br>09/06-10/06 (weekend);<br>29/06;<br>30/06-01/07 (weekend);<br>02/07-05/07 |
| Day of referendum | | | 10/06 |
| Sampling period 2 | | | |
| Days when parliament was in session | 24/09-28/09 | 26/09-27/09;<br>24/10-25/10 | 17/09-21/09;<br>24/09-28/09 |
| Days when parliament was not in session | 17/09-21/09;<br>22/09-23/09 (weekend);<br>29/09-30/09 (weekend);<br>01/10-05/10;<br>06/10-07/10 (weekend);<br>22/10-26/10;<br>27/10-28/10 (weekend) | 17/09-21/09;<br>22/09-23/09 (weekend);<br>24/09-25/09;<br>28/09;<br>29/09-30/09 (weekend);<br>01/10-05/10;<br>06/10-07/10 (weekend);<br>22/10-23/10;<br>26/10;<br>27/10-28/10 (weekend) | 22/09-23/09 (weekend);<br>29/09-30/09 (weekend);<br>01/10-05/10;<br>06/10-07/10 (weekend);<br>22/10-26/10;<br>27/10-28/10 (weekend) |
| Day of referendum | | | 23/09 |

The sample was collected during eight weeks in 2018 – four weeks each (1) from the end of May to the beginning of July (26 May to 15 June and 29 June to 5 July) and (2) from mid-September to the end of October (17 September to 7 October and 22 October to 28 October). These periods

included weeks when parliament was in session and when it was not (see Table 1) for all countries. No national elections were held during the investigation periods. However, the investigation period includes two referenda in Switzerland.

The sample consists of a broad range of different media outlets (see Table 2) that includes different genres (newspapers and news magazines, online media, TV newscasts and radio newscasts), different types of media (e.g. quality and tabloid media, commercial and public service media, national and regional media) and different political orientations (including left-wing and right-wing media). Hereby, the selected media outlets are those with the greatest reach within the respective category. A random sample was taken from each outlet. To ensure high generalisability for the results, the sampling error was at most 5%. For several outlets, the complete relevant coverage within the sampling period was included.

Sampling was done in a three-step process. First, we identified potentially relevant articles in all articles published during the period of investigation by means of a technical pre-filtering,[1] using a search string.[2] This search string was structured as similar as possible for all countries. It contained the names (abbreviations) of the most important political parties (CDU, SPD, etc.) as well as of some

[1] This step was applied to all media for which the text was available digitally, otherwise the second step was started.

[2] **Germany**: (CDU OR CSU OR SPD OR FDP OR AfD OR grüne* OR Linkspartei OR Koalition OR GroKo OR *Bundes*) OR ((*minister* OR Landesamt* OR Landtag* OR Landrat* OR *senat* OR *kreistag* OR Stadtrat* OR Gemeinderat* OR *regierung* OR Frontex OR Europol OR EZB OR Zentralbank OR Europarat* OR europäisch* OR UNO OR UN- OR OSZE OR G7 OR G20 OR OECD OR NATO OR Terror* OR Konsul* OR Diplomat* OR Opposition* OR *fraktion* OR *abgeordnete* OR *ausschu* OR *bürger OR *demonstra* OR *bewegung* OR Kirche OR Islam* OR jüdisch* OR Zentralrat OR *Stiftung* OR *verband* OR *Bund OR Bündnis* OR *konferenz* OR *initiative OR Zentralstelle OR *schutzorganisation* OR *hilfsorganisation* OR *rechtsorganisation* OR *bürgermeister* OR Magistrat* OR *kanzler* OR *präsident* OR *gewerkschaft*) AND deutsch*) OR ((Kommission* OR *gerichtshof* OR *parlament*) AND (EU OR EU-) AND deutsch*); **Austria**: ÖVP OR FPÖ OR SPÖ OR NEOS OR „Liste Pilz“ OR Nationalrat* OR Kultusgemeinde OR Caritas OR Diakonie OR ((„die Grünen“ OR „der Grünen“ OR „den Grünen“ OR Bundesrat* OR *kanzler* OR *präsident* OR *minister* OR *regierung* OR *parlament* OR *klubob* OR *gerichtshof* OR *partei* OR Landtag* OR Landeshaupt* OR Landesrat* OR *senat* OR Stadtrat* OR Gemeinderat* OR Magistrat* OR Frontex OR Europol OR EZB OR Zentralbank OR Europarat* OR europäisch* OR UNO OR „UN-“ OR OSZE OR G7 OR G20 OR OECD OR NATO OR Terror* OR Botschaft* OR Diplomat* OR Opposition* OR *abgeordnete* OR Untersuchungsausschu* OR Kirche OR Islam* OR jüdisch* OR *kammer* OR Gewerkschaft* OR Industriellenvereinigung OR Nationalbank OR *bürgerinitiative* OR *abstimmung* OR Volksbegehren* OR *demonstra* OR Amnesty OR Greenpeace OR „Global 2000“ OR „Ärzte ohne Grenzen“ OR antifaschis* OR identitär* OR faschis*) AND österr*) OR ((Kommission* OR *gerichtshof* OR *parlament*) AND („EU“ OR „EU-“) AND österr*); **Switzerland**: SVP OR JSVP OR FDP OR Jungfreisinnig* OR CVP OR CSP OR JCVP OR SP OR Juso* OR Grüne* OR grünliberale* OR evp OR bdp OR pda OR Lega OR Bund* AND NOT Bundesk* AND NOT bundesl* AND NOT Bundestrainer OR Ständerat* OR kantons* OR kantone* OR (regierung* AND schweiz*) OR Staatsrat* OR staatssekretariat* OR staatsrätin* OR Präsident* OR departement* OR Kommission* OR behörde* OR eidgenössisch* OR abstimmung* OR referendum* OR initiative* OR volk* OR gesetz* OR bevölkerung* OR (Frontex OR Europol OR ezb OR Zentralbank OR Europarat* OR europäisch* OR uno OR osze OR G7 OR G20 OR oecd OR nato AND schweiz*) OR Terror* OR Diplomat* OR fraktion* OR parlament* OR komission* OR bürger OR demonstra* OR bewegung* OR Kirche OR Islam* OR jüdisch* OR Zentralrat OR Stiftung* OR *verband* OR Bündnis* OR *konferenz* AND NOT Pressekonferenz* OR Zentralstelle OR schutzorganisation* OR hilfsorganisation* OR rechtsorganisation* OR präsident* OR *gewerkschaft* OR schweiz* OR gerichtshof

international organisations and associations (UN, G7, etc.) and political terms (e.g. parliament, demonstration, citizen and trade union). Apart from party abbreviations, most of these political terms were not exclusively linked to national politics. For these terms, the words 'German', 'Austrian' or 'Swiss' also had to appear within the text. Furthermore, many political terms (e.g. demonstration or citizen) may also appear within non-political coverage. Here, there was a trade-off between many false positive hits (i.e., articles that were identified but that turned out not to be relevant) and a procedure that could not find many relevant articles. We preferred the first variant in order to find as many relevant articles as possible and not to focus the sample too much on party politics or institutionalised politics. For this reason, a second step was necessary in which the final decision on relevance was performed by human coders. These coders decided on the actual relevance of the identified articles based on the articles' heading and lead or, if there was no lead, heading and first paragraph. In the case of audio-visual material, coders referred to the introduction by the moderator or, if this did not exist, the first 20 seconds. Third, a random sample was drawn from these relevant articles for each media outlet. The number of articles to be included in the sample was calculated separately for each media outlet, based on the total number of relevant articles and the sampling error. For some media, the number of relevant articles was estimated (e.g. based on an artificial week from the period of investigation), so that the second step of filtering was carried out in random order, as long as the calculated sample size was reached.

### Collection of material

In most cases, the material was available via databases (e.g. Factiva). In these cases, an interface to the database that we used for coding (in Austria, coding was entered in an SPSS data set) was set up so that only pre-filtered articles entered our database. In other cases, particularly in the case of audio-visual material, the material was provided to researchers by the media themselves or was freely available for download. These entries were then transferred into our database manually or by the use of Excel lists.

The relevant Facebook posts, in contrast, were stored via an API interface (e.g. by means of the tool Facepager [Jünger & Keyling, 2019]), which can access the posts' IDs. The IDs enabled us to access the Facebook posts in the browser. To avoid as much loss of data as possible, we retrieved the IDs at least every day during the period under investigation. However, since the respective programs, for example Facepager, cannot output the text of the linked article, the technical pre-filtering described above was impossible. Therefore, the human coders decided on the relevance of all Facebook posts based on the linked articles or the beginnings of the videos that were embedded in the Facebook post. The different items, including the ID of the Facebook post and the URL of the linked article, were then also transferred to our database via Excel lists.

## Coding

Prior to the actual coding process, two pre-tests were carried out on potential sample material to test the codebook's usability and to make final adjustments. The actual coding work was carried out between December 2018 and July 2020. Fourteen students conducted the data collection in Germany, eight in Austria and six in Switzerland. Some of these students had a graduate degree; some did not. The coders were trained repeatedly on the basis of numerous examples by one of the project members in each country, and problems occurring during coding were discussed in weekly sessions. The three trainers were in frequent contact to ensure the comparability of training and specific coding decisions. The coding was based on unformatted texts that did not take the original layout into account. In the case of TV and radio broadcasts, in Austria the coding was done solely on the basis of transcripts, while in Germany and Switzerland selected media (Germany: WDR Aktuell Der Tag, tagesschau, RTL Aktuell; Switzerland: Tagesschau, Rundschau, Rendez-Vous) were coded on the basis of video or audio files. Facebook posts, which were analysed only in Germany and Switzerland, were coded based on the original material in a web browser.

*Table 2: Media outlets, sample sizes and sampling errors*

| | Germany | | | Austria | | | Switzerland | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category | Outlet | N | Sampling Error | Outlet | N | Sampling Error | Outlet | N | Sampling Error |
| Press | | | | | | | | | |
| National daily newspaper | Süddeutsche | 576 | 3% | Die Presse | 396 | 3% | Tages-Anzeiger | 254 | 5% |
| | Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung | 619 | 3% | Der Standard | 362 | 3/5% | Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ) | 266 | 5% |
| Tabloid daily newspaper | BILD | 264 | 3% | Kronen Zeitung | 446 | 3/5% | Blick | 154 | 5% |
| Free daily newspaper | --- | --- | --- | Heute | 241 | 3% | 20 minuten | 152 | 5% |
| | --- | --- | --- | Osterreich | 537 | 3/5% | --- | --- | --- |
| Regional daily newspaper | Rheinische Post | 256 | 5% | Kleine Zeitung | 467 | 3/5% | Aargauer Zeitung | 185 | 5% |
| National weekly newspaper | Die ZEIT | 117 | population | --- | --- | --- | SonntagsZeitung | 62 | 5% |
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | NZZ am Sonntag | 95 | 5% |
| Tabloid weekly newspaper | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | SonntagsBlick | 71 | 5% |
| National news magazine | Spiegel | 149 | population | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Newspaper left-leaning (daily or weekly) | taz | 282 | 5% | --- | --- | --- | WOZ Die Wochenzeitung | 54 | 5% |
| Newspaper right-leaning (daily or weekly) | Junge Freiheit | 180 | population | --- | --- | --- | Weltwoche | 67 | 5% |
| TV | | | | | | | | | |
| Public service TV news program | Tagesschau (ARD) | 193 | population | Zeit im Bild | 234 | population/3% | Tagesschau (SRF) | 95 | 5% |
| | --- | --- | --- | ZIB 2 | 135 | population/3% | Rundschau (SRF) | 14 | population |
| | --- | --- | --- | ZIB 20 | 65 | population | --- | --- | --- |
| | --- | --- | --- | ZIB Magazin | 7 | population | --- | --- | --- |
| | --- | --- | --- | ZIB Flash | 66 | population | --- | --- | --- |
| Commercial TV news program | RTL Aktuell | 183 | population | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Radio | | | | | | | | | |
| Public service radio newscast (nationwide or regional) | WDR Aktuell Der Tag | 161 | 5% | Ö3 Frühjournal | 28 | 3%/population | Rendez-Vous | 68 | 5% |
| | --- | --- | --- | O3 Journal um fünf | 53 | 3%/population | | | |
| Online | | | | | | | | | |
| National daily newspaper | faz.net | 491 | 3% | derstandard.at | 390 | 3% | nzz.ch | 278 | 5% |
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | tagesanzeiger.ch | 179 | 5% |
| Tabloid daily newspaper | bild.de | 441 | population | krone.at | 426 | 3% | blick.ch | 170 | 5% |
| Free daily newspaper | --- | --- | --- | oe24.at | 446 | 5% | 20minuten.ch | 152 | 5% |
| National news magazine | spiegel.de | 594 | 3% | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Public service news site | tagesschau.de | 487 | 3% | orf.at | 537 | 3/5% | srf.ch/info | 205 | 5% |
| Email-provider with news | t-online.de | 286 | 5% | gmx.at | 71 | 3% | bluewin.ch | 155 | 5% |
| Online pure player | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | watson.ch | 125 | 5% |
| Facebook | | | | | | | | | |
| National daily newspaper | faz@Facebook | 480 | population | --- | --- | --- | nzz@Facebook | 113 | 5% |
| Tabloid daily newspaper | bild@Facebook | 146 | population | --- | --- | --- | blick@Facebook | 90 | 5% |
| Public service | tagesschau@Facebook | 254 | population | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| National news magazine | spiegel@Facebook | 320 | population | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Free daily newspaper | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 20minuten@Facebook | 39 | population |

Note: Sampling errors in Austria differ for the same outlets because two separate samples were drawn for the two sampling periods

## Measures

First, some formal variables were technically collected in Germany and Switzerland by a database solution, but manually coded in Austria: the ***date*** of the article, the ***news outlet*** and ***article length*** ( number of characters of the transcript). In the case of audio-visual material, the technical scraping in Germany and Switzerland extracted the article length in seconds. These values were recoded into the (approximate) number of characters based on the ratio calculated with the help of a subsample, where both values were available. Two other formal variables were manually coded in all three countries. The first is the ***article type***. Based on a respective classification by the medium itself, the appearance in a certain section and/or a note in one of the headings, coders needed to decide which kind of news product they were confronted with; in case none of these aspects was present or unambiguous, they decided based on article type specifics, as for example a typical journalistic style. They could choose between *news/report* in case of a predominantly factual article, which focused on 'W-questions', *reportage/feature/portraits* in case of longer articles with a subjective perspective and/or a dramaturgical style, *commentary/column/editorial* in case of articles with a journalistic voice, which were most likely flagged as such, and *interviews* in case mutual questions and answers were clearly present. The last formal variable is ***authorship***. Based on information and mentions by the medium, coders needed to classify who was journalistically responsible for the article. They could choose between *editorial staff member(s)/freelance journalist(s) working for the medium* (with full or abbreviated name), *correspondent(s)*, *editorial department* (without indication of specific author[s]), *guest author(s)* (e.g., politicians, experts, celebrities or journalists, in case it was explicitly mentioned that they usually write for another medium), *news agency(/ies)*, *news agency(/ies)* and journalist(s)/editorial staff (e.g., in the case of edited agency material) as well as *other* (e.g. press services, online platforms, research networks etc.) and *no* authorship. In the case of news agencies, the codebook offered a list with the most common agencies in the three countries.

Beyond these formal variables, the codebook contained 29 variables. It operated with four different coding units, which varied among the variables. The first coding unit is the ***beginning of the article***. In the case of print and online articles, this included all headings and the lead of the article or, when there was no lead, the first paragraph. In the case of audio-visual material, it included either the introduction by the moderator or, if not existing, the first 20 seconds. In the case of transcripts of audio-visual material, it included either the moderator's introduction or the first paragraph. The decision for using this coding unit was based on efficiency but, based on existing research, also reflects that users usually do not read the entire article.

On the level of the *beginning of the article*, we captured two variables: The ***societal level*** indicates on which level the dominant framing of the articles comes into effect. Thus, it is

predominantly interested in the effects and consequences of circumstances. *The macro level* was coded when society as a whole, its subsystems or structures and institutions, was addressed. *The meso-level* was coded when a single or a few organisations (e.g. parties or companies) were concerned. Micro level was coded when a single or a few persons were at the centre of the article, but further differentiated: *Micro level related to roles* was coded when individuals were portrayed as representors of higher entities (e.g. organisations, institutions or functional systems), and this functional role was particularly stressed. *Micro level unrelated to roles* was coded when persons were portrayed detached from their role but focused on them as private individuals or in relation to their private circumstances. *Micro level anonymous* was coded when persons were at the centre of attention who were not publicly known, as for example citizens, or not identifiable, as for example the 'victim' or the 'offender'. The second variable coded on the level of the *beginning of the article* was the ***main topic*** of the article. Here, the codebook operated with a list of 31 topics.[3]

The second coding unit was the ***whole article***. In the case of print and online articles, this included all headings, lead and text corpus. In the case of audio-visual material, it included both the introduction by the moderator and the report itself as well as a possible closing by the moderator. On the level of the whole article, ten variables were coded. A first group out of five variables was coded in relation to the *main topic*. The first of those variables is the ***area of geographical reference***. On the one hand, it indicated which geographical region the article refers to; on the other hand, it indicated for which geographical region the main topic is relevant. If multiple areas were addressed, coders should decide which region was addressed by the majority of the article. In the case of binational topics that included one's own country, the respective other country and not one's own country was coded. The codebook offered a list of 88 areas,[4] which included local, regional and national as well as supranational codes.

[3] 'Constitution of the political system', 'Political Parties', 'Politicians as persons', 'Politicians as private individuals', 'Political culture', 'Domestic security', 'Foreign Affairs', 'Military', 'EU policies', 'Development policies and humanitarian affairs', 'Economic policies', 'Transport and infrastructure policies', 'Energy policies', 'Tax, finance and fiscal policies', 'Labour market and employment policies', 'Health policies', 'Pension policies', 'Family Policies', 'Migration Policies', 'Poverty Policies', 'Urban and regional planning', 'Sports Policies', 'Legal Policies', 'Equality Policies', 'Cultural Policies', 'Media policies', 'Education Policies', 'Science policies', 'Religious Policies', 'Agricultural and environmental policies', 'Other'.

[4] 'Europe', 'The EU', 'Austria', 'Burgenland', 'Carinthia', 'Lower Austria', 'Upper Austria', 'Salzburg', 'Styria', 'Tyrol', 'Vorarlberg', 'Vienna', 'Switzerland', ' Lake Geneva Region', 'Vaud', 'Valais', 'Geneva', 'Espace Mittelland', 'Berne', 'Fribourg', 'Solothurn', 'Neuchâtel', 'Jura', 'Northwestern Switzerland', 'Basel City', 'Basel-Country', 'Aargau', 'Zurich', 'Eastern Switzerland', 'Glarus', 'Schaffhausen', 'Appenzell Outer Rhodes', 'Appenzell Inner Rhodes', 'St. Gallen', 'Grisons', 'Thurgau', 'Central Switzerland', 'Lucerne', 'Uri', 'Schwyz', 'Obwald', 'Nidwald', 'Zug', 'Ticino', 'Germany', 'Northern Germany', 'Bremen', 'Hamburg', 'Lower Saxony', 'Schleswig-Holstein', 'Eastern Germany', 'Berlin', 'Brandenburg', 'Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania', 'Saxony-Anhalt', 'Saxony', 'Thuringia', 'Southern Germany', 'Baden-Wuerttemberg', 'Bavaria', 'Western Germany', 'Hesse', 'North Rhine-Westphalia', 'Rhineland-Palatinate', 'Saarland', 'Northern Europe/Scandinavia', 'Eastern Europe', 'Russia', 'Southern Europe', 'Italy', 'Western Europe', 'France', 'Great Britain/United Kingdom', 'America', 'North America', 'USA', 'Canada', 'Central America, South America, Latin America, Caribbean', 'Africa', 'Asia', 'Japan',

Four other variables in relation to the *main topic* were coded, which indicated the extent to which it is located within a larger causal framework. They were inspired by Entman's (1993) influential definition of framing[5] (cf. Jandura & Friedrich, 2014). The first variable is ***context.*** A given context is indicated by the fact that the topic is placed in longer-term processes or superordinate circumstances, thereby highlighting its significance. This is often done through forms of comparison. These include temporal comparisons, geographical comparisons or comparisons with other topics or references to other topic areas. The second variable is the appearance of ***evaluations*** in terms of evaluations of different actors addressing the main topic. Actors did not need to articulate these evaluations in direct quotes; it was also possible that journalists contrast actors' evaluations in indirect ways. The third variable is the presence of ***reasons*** for the reported circumstances. This variable indicated whether the main topic of the article was related to possible concrete reasons and causes or merely represented current events. Possible causes for facts or events could be short-term causes or longer-term developments, but also the concerns and (strategic) motives of actors. The fourth variable measured whether the article offered ***consequences and/or solutions***. These were understood as effects of an event as well as the consequences of decisions. Concrete solutions or proposed concrete actions also fell into this category. However, nonspecific demands and appeals were not considered here. It did not matter for the coding whether the consequences were made visible or whether the absence of consequences or solutions was explicitly discussed. It was also irrelevant whether consequences were addressed as facts or whether possible consequences or solutions were discussed. In contrast, mere speculations were not coded.

In all four cases, the respective construct could be coded as *not* present, in case no indication for it was found at all, as *basically* present, in case there were few indications and coders, overall, had the impression of being generally informed about the respective aspect, and *comprehensively* present, in case there were several indications and coders had the impression of being broadly informed about the aspect. A higher code could be given both in case there were several occasions of an aspect (e.g. several reasons), but also in case one aspect was presented extensively (e.g. a large argumentation for a specific context).

Still at the level of the coding unit of the *whole article*, five other variables were coded, which addressed the stylistic dimension of the article. The first is the degree of ***emotionality*** of the article.

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'People's Republic of China', 'Turkey', 'Australia and Oceania', 'Oceans and the regions of neighbouring countries', 'Other/general', 'The earth/world/global', 'Not in the list'.

[5] "To frame is *to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52 – italics in original).

Possible indicators for emotionality were: Emotional terms/affective vocabulary/description of emotions, pictorial representation/metaphors with affective appeal, use of superlatives and exaggerations, attributive nicknames, expressive word order, shorthanded sentence structure/ellipses, direct addressing and involvement of the recipient, for example through 'we' constructions or by using the imperative as well as present tense for past events. The degree of emotionality was mainly determined by the emotional level of the stylistic presentation. The coding was, thus, primarily oriented to the sum of the emotional stylistic elements used and to the share of the article that was presented in a more emotional way. However, the strengths of the emotional elements were also important. Thus, the use of particularly drastic stylistic elements reinforced the overall emotional impression. Based on these definitions, *emotionality* was measured on a bipolar five-point scale from 1 *emotional* over 2 *rather emotional*, 3 *ambivalent*, 4 *rather rational-dispassionate* to 5 *rational-dispassionate*.

The second variable addressing the stylistic dimension is the degree of ***personal characteristics*** of politicians. It was therefore only coded when politicians were mentioned in the article, though not necessarily appearing as actors by the definition of this study (see coding unit *actors*). Such personal characteristics could either be aspects connected to politicians' professional role (e.g. rhetorical skills and trustworthiness) or private aspects (e.g. appearance, talent as a singer or driver). *Personal characteristics* could be coded as *not* present, as *occasionally/marginally* present or as *integral part at the centre* of the article.

The third stylistic variable is the ***impartiality*** of news coverage. As a journalistic voice is a constitutive feature of the genre *commentary/column/editorial*, it was not coded for these articles. Specifically, it was coded whether the article contained opinions or evaluations of the author versus whether a topic or event was reported in a distanced and impartial manner. Relevant for the coding was the share of the article that was reported on in a distanced, impartial or neutral manner versus the share of the article that was presented in a personal way. Also relevant for the coding was the intensity of the opinions and evaluations, that is, whether subjective evaluations were only subtly present and very weak or whether they were in the foreground and very strong. If opinions and evaluations of other actors (including other journalists) were reported or compared in an article, these were not taken into account here, but solely the way in which the journalist him- or herself dealt with them (i.e., whether they were evaluated by the journalist). Based on these definitions, *impartiality* was measured on a bipolar five-point scale from 1 *explicitly personal* over 2 *rather personal*, 3 *ambivalent*, 4 *rather impartial-detached* to 5 *impartial-detached*.

The fourth variable addressing the articles' stylistic dimension is the degree of ***incivility***. Uncivil statements are characterised by the fact that arguments and disputes are not made on a factual level. Uncivil statements are aimed directly at actors (persons, groups and institutions) who are attacked or who are accused of something. The aim of uncivil statements is to deny actors and their positions the right to participate in the discourse, to exclude them from the discourse or generally not to acknowledge their positions. Thus, in this respect, uncivil criticism differs from general hard criticism (in the matter) by the characteristic of generalisation. In this respect, uncivil statements need to be distinguished from emotional statements. Civil statements can be made in both emotional and dispassionate language. In the same way, emotionally expressed criticism is not automatically uncivil. Possible indicators for *incivility* are: personal attacks (i.e., unsubstantiated attacks against persons, often in the form of degrading and insulting attributes, and rejection of speakers without addressing their position), discrediting insinuations (i.e., statements and the actions of other actors are suspected of being motivated by fraudulent, illegitimate or at least questionable goals), excluding moralisations (i.e., other actors are not recognised as discourse partners/the right to express positions of other persons or groups is denied or intentional exclusions are made), as well as discriminatory images of the enemy and group-related stereotypes (i.e., explicit, generalised attributions of negative characteristics to all strangers, especially to other nationalities, religions, ethnic groups, social minorities or persons or groups belonging to them for the purpose of devaluation and exclusion). At that stage, the extent to which the article contains uncivil statements was coded. In this regard, it was, first, irrelevant whether the uncivil statements came from the journalist of the article him- or herself or from third parties whose statements were quoted or reported. It was also, second, irrelevant whether uncivil statements were quoted directly (or appear in the original version), quoted indirectly or reported analogously. Third, at this point it is irrelevant whether the incivility of the statements is thematised by the journalist (see variable *correction of incivility*). What mattered here was the mere existence of uncivil statements. *Incivility* could be coded as *not* present, as *occasionally/marginally* present or as *an integral part/at the centre* of the article.

The fifth and last stylistic variable measures – insofar as incivility was found – the (possible) ***correction of incivility***. It indicates whether the journalist leaves these statements uncommented or whether he or she corrects them or thematises the incivility of the statement. It is coded how often the journalist corrects uncivil statements or what share of the occurring uncivil statements he or she corrects. The *correction of incivility* could be coded as *not* present, as *partially* present or *fully* present.

The third coding unit addresses the ***actors*** of an article. Two variables belong to this coding unit. The first refers to the ***categorisation of the actors*** in terms of their political position or their societal role. The second refers to the ***political party*** the actor belongs to (in the case of politicians).

A total of **up to three actors per article** could be coded. An actor was defined as an individual person (e.g. politician or citizen) or collective (e.g. political party, non-government organisation [NGO], association or group of people) who expresses an opinion or evaluative statement on the main topic of the article as coded within the respective topic variable. Opinions or evaluative statements hereby included evaluations/judgements, arguments, points of view or demands/proposals as well as estimations/forecasts. People or groups who were only mentioned within the article or merely state facts (e.g. 'the law comes into force on July 1') were not coded as actors. However, actions that express an opinion (e.g. 'the government votes for the law') were considered as an opinion. The author of the article was not considered as an actor (unless it was a guest author who is known as a public figure, e.g. a politician) even if he or she expressed his or her opinion. If there were more than three actors, then it is important which of the three actors was mentioned first (regardless of where in the article their evaluative statements appeared). If a person was mentioned both as an individual (e.g. a minister expressed opposition to the law) and as part of a collective (e.g. the government expressed opposition to the law, including the minister) in an article, it was important whether the individual person (minister) or the collective (the government) was mentioned first. If the collective was coded as one actor and several individuals who belonged to this collective and who had a likeminded opinion also appeared within the article, these individuals were not coded as additional actors since they were not seen as 'new' actors. If, however, different individuals who belonged to the same collective but expressed different opinions in the article, or if the collective and individual actors expressed different opinions in the article, all of these different actors were coded.

Each of the coded actors was then ***categorised*** in terms of his or her ***political position*** or ***societal role.*** The categorisation[6] was carried out in great detail and allowed, for example, the separation of individual government ministers or different types of NGOs (see detailed lists in the codebook). A separate list was drawn up for each country (due to differences in the names of offices and functions, division of ministries or other details based on differences in the political system), but the structure of the lists is always the same. The decisive factor for the categorisation was what was mentioned in the text. A politician can, for example, act in his or her role as a minister, but also as a member of a political party. A basic distinction was made between the *political sphere* and the *social sphere*.

The political sphere distinguishes a) *different geographical levels*, that is, between *national politics* (e.g. prime minister or chancellor, different members of the national parliament, administration units or authorities at the national level), *regional politics* (political actors at the level of the federal state [GER, AT: 'Bundesland', CH: 'Kanton']), *local politics* (e.g. mayor, district chief executive, local government or municipal council), *foreign politics* (e.g. prime minister or government

[6] Based on 146 (Germany)/137 (Austria)/128 (Switzerland) different codes

of other countries), politics at the level of the *European Union* and *international* organisations and alliances (e.g. NATO, UN, International Court of Justice). Within some of these geographical levels (mainly national, regional and local level), the codebook further differentiates *executive* (e.g. government), *legislative* (e.g. parliament) and *judicial* (e.g. courts) *branches*. Within the political sphere, apart from the described categorisation, *political parties and their members* were separately coded.

The societal sphere includes a) *interest groups and NGOs*, b) *the economy* (e.g. companies and stock market), c) *churches and religious groups/actors* (e.g. Catholic Church and Judaism), d) *media and journalism* in general (not the author of the article), e) *public institutions and buildings* (e.g. kindergartens, schools, universities, museums and theatres), f) *experts* (including scientists) and *the public* (including the public, individual 'ordinary' citizens and citizens' groups, but also celebrities and non-political public figures, such as musicians, sportsmen/-women or novelists). *NGOs and interest groups* can be further categorised according to different areas of life. The list of NGOs and interest groups therefore includes 1) *social and socio-political interest groups* (e.g. human rights or aid organisations, environmental organisations), 2) *interest groups in the context of social security* (e.g. charity organisations, associations for tenants' protection), 3) *interest groups in the context of the economy or working environment* (e.g. Chamber of Commerce and Industry, trade unions, farmers' associations), 4) *interest groups in the context of leisure time* (e.g. regarding sports or hobbies) and 5) *interest groups in the context of culture and education* (including journalism and science).

The second variable serves to code the membership of the respective actor in a ***political party***. Party membership is only coded if it is mentioned in the text (also for non-political persons) or if it is a politician (that is, a person with a political function, e.g. holding a political office or being the member of a party in a parliament). If a political person has no party affiliation (e.g. an independent regional mayor), the code 'no party affiliation' was chosen. To specify the political party, each country has its own list, each of which contains the most important parties on the national level.[7] For individual foreign politicians (from the perspective of the respective country), the code 'foreign' is chosen, provided there is a party affiliation.

[7] These include a) *conservative parties* (e.g. CDU/CSU [GER], ÖVP [AT], CVP [CH]), b) *social democratic parties* (e.g. SPD [GER], SPÖ [AT], SP [CH]), c) *green parties* (e.g. Grüne [GER, AT], GPS, GLP [both: CH]), d) *liberal parties* (e.g. FDP [GER, CH], NEOS [AT]), e) *right-wing populist parties* (e.g. AfD [GER], FPÖ [AT], SVP [CH]) and f) *left-wing parties* (e.g., Die Linke [GER], KPÖ [AT]).

The fourth coding unit refers to the respective ***actor's evaluative statements*** concerning the main topic within the whole article. Coders described the evaluative statements of each coded actor with the help of three value frames that can be expressed along the three main ***axes of conflict*** (so-called cleavages). Each variable refers to one of these cleavages.

The aim of these three variables was to code the basic value frames from which the main topic was evaluated within the evaluative statement(s) of the respective actor or which guiding principle was expressed in it (i.e., what is important in politics/what is the evaluative standard for 'good politics'?). Hereby, each of the three cleavages represented an axis with two opposing poles: 1) *Market Liberalism vs. Welfare State Orientation*, 2) *Libertarianism vs. Authoritarianism* and 3) *Demarcation vs. Integration.* Coders determined whether or to what extent these three basic conflicts were evident in the statement(s) of an actor concerning the main topic. Based on the statements, coders decided for each cleavage whether and if the answer was yes, how it appeared in the statements. This was measured using a three-level scale in which the respective opposing poles (= Code 1 and Code 3) represent the extremes. If the statements were *ambivalent* (balanced position of the actor), the middle value (Code 2) of the scale was coded. If the actor contradicted a value frame in their statement (e.g. the actor evaluated a pure market orientation as negative), the opposite pole of the conflict axis (here: welfare state orientation) was coded. If a cleavage was not reflected in the statement at all, code 0 (*no reference to the axis of conflict*) was assigned. The political position of an actor could be expressed along more than one cleavage. Accordingly, these statements should be assigned to more than one axis of conflict. Thus, for example, the advocacy of international trade agreements such as TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) can be assigned to *market liberalism* as well as to *integration* at the same time. A reference to an axis of conflict should only be coded if it was clearly identifiable in the actor's statement(s). In the case of a collective actor (e.g. a political party), all statements of the associated individual actors (here, different members of the party who expressed their opinions analogously to the party line) were considered for coding.

The first axis of conflict refers to ***Market Liberalism vs. Welfare State Orientation****.* The guiding principle of the *market liberalism* perspective is economic success. Accordingly, policies are assessed according to their ability to improve the conditions of business activities and, thus, market growth. Consequently, for example, reducing taxes is evaluated positively whereas market regulation, in contrast, is rejected. Furthermore, from this point of view, individual efforts, which are seen as the reason for success, should be rewarded (achievement orientation). In contrast, the perspective of *welfare state orientation* seeks to achieve the participation of all members of society in economic welfare, social and cultural life. Policy measures are evaluated against their ability to guarantee the welfare of all members of society with regard to social security, the environment, access to education

and so on. Consequently, restrictive regulations of private business activities and policy measures are seen as positive since they compensate for individuals' economic disadvantages.

The statements of each actor were afterwards evaluated according to the axis of conflict ***Libertarianism* vs. *Authoritarianism***. The *libertarian* perspective values respect for individual freedom and self-determination. Policy measures are assessed with regard to the right to individual self-determination. A further guiding aspect is the right to democratic participation. Respect for the human rights of all human beings forms the basis for political commonality with others, and judicial, legal, and security-related policy measures are accordingly evaluated with regard to protecting universal freedom rights. Thus, for example, in the fight against crime, prevention is central. In contrast, the *authoritarian* perspective values respect for order and traditions of decency. Judicial, legal and security-related policy measures should enable the unchallenged enforcement of this order. Furthermore, respect for traditional notions of a decent life are praised: for example, respect for hierarchies and authorities, self-discipline and a sense of duty and traditional ways of life (especially in the family).

The third axis represents the opposing poles between ***Demarcation vs. Integration***. From the perspective of *integration*, problems and conflicts are solved through cooperation and compromise. Accordingly, domestic policies should be based on acceptance of the coexistence of cultures and ethnic groups, enable social progress and be open towards immigration. Democracy and human rights are to be realised irrespective of origin and religion. Furthermore, political measures should contribute to deepening cooperation across borders. In foreign policy, the search for peaceful forms of conflict resolution and international cooperation are maxims of good politics. In contrast, from the perspective of *demarcation*, problems and conflicts are resolved by the people uniting and the nation standing its ground against adversaries. In domestic politics, this means that immigrants should be excluded and a homogenous national identity should be strengthened. In foreign relations, social, economic and political processes should contribute to regaining national sovereignty in decision-making and asserting nationally defined interests and rights against other countries.

### Intercoder-Reliability

Intercoder-reliability was tested both at the national level based on the coding of the national teams and comparatively between the three countries. The national tests were carried out continuously during the coding process to ensure reliability during the whole process and to detect possible problems systematically. For these tests, five articles were randomly selected from each media outlet in the sense of a stratified random sample (Austria: separately for the two time periods under study). A comparative intercoder reliability test between the three countries was carried out twice: at the beginning of the coding process, when the coders had undergone several trainings and

spent several weeks acquiring in-depth national coding experience (March 2019) and at a later phase of the coding process (October 2019 to November 2019). Twelve articles from the national reliability test samples from each country were intentionally selected for each of the two comparative reliability tests (together: n = 72). This intentional selection was intended to maximise the variance of the coded material and to ensure diverse values of the variables would appear in the material, especially in the case of skewed distributions. One to three coders from each country participated in the respective coding.

To calculate the reliability values for the actor coding, the names of the coded actors were – in contrast to the coding of the rest of the study material – noted verbatim. First, the reliability of the actor identification can be calculated only in this way, because in a simple comparison of the actor function, several actors could be meant but could be recorded with the identical code or vice versa. Second, the verbatim agreement serves, in a later step, as a basis for all other actor-related variables (e.g. party) since these variables were calculated on the basis of only those actors who were identified identically by the coders.

For the identification of the actors, their order was not taken into account, as this also has no relevance for the analysis. For this purpose, the data set was restructured in such a way that the order of actors was modified per article and per coder in order to achieve the highest possible agreement between coders. Since the correct assignment of the actor function had not yet been taken into account at this point, consecutive nominal codes were assigned to each actor identified by at least one coder within the intercoder data set in order to ensure the actors identified by name were distinguishable. That means, for example, that in an article without any actors coded, a maximum of one agreement or disagreement was possible (identification that there are no actors); in an article with one actor, two agreements or disagreements were possible (identification of the one existing actor and identification that there are no other actors).

To determine the intercoder reliability, Brennan and Prediger's kappa was calculated (Brennan & Prediger, 1981). This configuration of the common kappa coefficient (cf. von Eye, 2006) is characterised by the fact that it includes the simple probability by chance (based on the number of values of a variable that were coded at least once), but not the actual distribution of these values. Thus, the coefficient reacts less sensitively to skewedly distributed variables, which occur several times in this study. On this basis, satisfactory values were achieved with $\varkappa \geq 0.60$ (see Table 3).

*Table 3: Results of the reliability tests*

| | | | Single-country reliability-tests | | | | | | | | | Comparative reliability-tests | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Germany (n=80) | | | Austria (n=135) | | | Switzerland (n=83) | | | Test 1 (n=36) | | | Test 2 (n=36) | | | Total (n=72) | | |
| Variable | Coding unit | Scale | % | KD's α | BP's ϰ | % | KD's α | BP's ϰ | % | KD's α | BP's ϰ | % | KD's α | BP's ϰ | % | KD's α | BP's ϰ | % | KD's α | BP's ϰ |
| News format | Beginning of article | nominal | 84.4% | 0.69 | 0.79 | 95.0% | 0.72 | 0.93 | 95.2% | 0.87 | 0.94 | 90.7% | 0.71 | 0.88 | 73.9% | 0.48 | 0.65 | 84.7% | 0.63 | 0.80 |
| Authorship | Beginning of article | nominal | 86.8% | 0.78 | 0.85 | 91.7% | 0.90 | 0.90 | 94.9% | 0.90 | 0.94 | 94.2% | 0.87 | 0.93 | 87.5% | 0.78 | 0.85 | 94.0% | 0.89 | 0.93 |
| Societal level | Beginning of article | nominal | 74.7% | 0.51 | 0.68 | 68.6% | 0.46 | 0.61 | 92.3% | 0.69 | 0.88 | 80.8% | 0.62 | 0.76 | 80.6% | 0.65 | 0.74 | 80.7% | 0.64 | 0.76 |
| Main topic | Beginning of article | nominal | 63.2% | 0.60 | 0.62 | 66.9% | 0.64 | 0.66 | 79.2% | 0.79 | 0.78 | 69.7% | 0.68 | 0.68 | 72.2% | 0.68 | 0.70 | 71.3% | 0.69 | 0.70 |
| Area of geographical reference | Whole article | nominal | 82.8% | 0.62 | 0.82 | 75.5% | 0.58 | 0.74 | 91.1% | 0.82 | 0.90 | 81.4% | 0.77 | 0.80 | 73.3% | 0.67 | 0.72 | 72.2% | 0.68 | 0.71 |
| (Context) | Whole article | ordinal | --- | (0.49) | (0.48) | --- | (0.44) | (0.55) | --- | (0.62) | (0.75) | --- | (0.41) | (0.46) | --- | (0.35) | (0.33) | --- | (0.44) | (0.51) |
| (Evaluations) | Whole article | ordinal | --- | (0.52) | (0.47) | --- | (0.54) | (0.61) | --- | (0.64) | (0.63) | --- | (0.64) | (0.63) | --- | (0.42) | (0.47) | --- | (0.62) | (0.66) |
| (Reasons) | Whole article | ordinal | --- | (0.42) | (0.53) | --- | (0.27) | (0.51) | --- | (0.71) | (0.81) | --- | (0.28) | (0.42) | --- | (0.34) | (0.48) | --- | (0.19) | (0.48) |
| (Consequences / solutions) | Whole article | ordinal | --- | (0.37) | (0.42) | --- | (0.36) | (0.62) | --- | (0.54) | (0.68) | --- | (0.20) | (0.32) | --- | (0.20) | (0.26) | --- | (0.15) | (0.41) |
| Discourse-Index | Whole article | ordinal | --- | 0.56 | 0.71 | --- | 0.52 | 0.78 | --- | 0.76 | 0.84 | --- | 0.58 | 0.67 | --- | 0.41 | 0.55 | --- | 0.59 | 0.75 |
| Emotionality | Whole article | ordinal | --- | 0.42 | 0.76 | --- | 0.25 | 0.81 | --- | 0.73 | 0.82 | --- | 0.39 | 0.70 | --- | 0.34 | 0.78 | --- | 0.40 | 0.79 |
| Personal characteristics | Whole article | nominal | 77.0% | 0.41 | 0.69 | 76.0% | 0.40 | 0.68 | 87.0% | 0.68 | 0.83 | 74.4% | 0.47 | 0.66 | 77.5% | 0.37 | 0.70 | 77.8% | 0.41 | 0.70 |
| Impartiality | Whole article | ordinal | --- | 0.60 | 0.80 | --- | 0.30 | 0.88 | --- | 0.71 | 0.87 | --- | 0.56 | 0.76 | --- | 0.46 | 0.66 | --- | 0.29 | 0.80 |
| Incivility | Whole article | nominal | 84.6% | 0.31 | 0.77 | 91.3% | 0.30 | 0.87 | 95.2% | 0.71 | 0.90 | 83.7% | 0.39 | 0.76 | 86.7% | 0.39 | 0.80 | 92.1% | 0.50 | 0.88 |
| Correction of incivility | Whole article | nominal | 82.2% | 0.27 | 0.76 | 90.7% | 0.25 | 0.88 | 94.7% | 0.69 | 0.93 | 81.5% | 0.33 | 0.75 | 83.3% | 0.26 | 0.78 | 87.5% | 0.23 | 0.83 |
| Identification of actors (verbatim) | Actors | nominal | 60.0% | 0.58 | 0.60 | 66.7% | 0.65 | 0.67 | 77.0% | 0.75 | 0.77 | 69.6% | 0.68 | 0.68 | 61.1% | 0.60 | 0.61 | 65.3% | 0.65 | 0.65 |
| Actor: political position/ societal role | Actors | nominal | 73.9% | 0.76 | 0.74 | 73.1% | 0.73 | 0.73 | 87.1% | 0.86 | 0.87 | 74.2% | 0.73 | 0.74 | 69.8% | 0.71 | 0.69 | 72.0% | 0.72 | 0.72 |
| Party | Actors | nominal | 93.4% | 0,92 | 0.93 | 89.0% | 0.86 | 0.88 | 96.2% | 0.94 | 0.96 | 89.7% | 0.88 | 0.89 | 93.2% | 0.94 | 0.93 | 91.4% | 0.90 | 0.91 |
| Conflict 1: Market Liberalism vs. Welfare State Orientation | Statement of actors | nominal | 91.2% | 0.36 | 0.88 | 85.7% | 0.42 | 0.81 | 85.9% | 0.60 | 0.81 | 87.6% | 0.24 | 0.84 | 92.2% | 0.32 | 0.90 | 89.9% | 0.27 | 0.87 |
| Conflict 2: Libertarianism vs. Authoritarianism | Statement of actors | nominal | 92.9% | 0.38 | 0.90 | 77.1% | 0.30 | 0.69 | 86.6% | 0.64 | 0.82 | 78.2% | 0.37 | 0.71 | 77.1% | 0.15 | 0.69 | 77.7% | 0.30 | 0.70 |
| Conflict 3: Demarcation vs. Integration | Statement of actors | nominal | 88,0% | 0.59 | 0.84 | 85.7% | 0.41 | 0.81 | 91.8% | 0.76 | 0.89 | 81.5% | 0.49 | 0.75 | 70.9% | 0.26 | 0.61 | 76.2% | 0.39 | 0.68 |

Note: % = agreement in %, KD's α = Krippendorff's Alpha, BP's ϰ = Brennan & Prediger's Kappa

Exceptions from the satisfactory reliability are the single variables of the ***Discourse Index***, which, treated separately, fall below the threshold of $\varkappa$ = 0.60. However, a cumulative index of all four discourse variables (value range: 0–8) proved to be reliably codable. Such a summary is to be seen as valid because coding training showed that although coders were able to identify the respective discourse component with precision – and apparently also to code its extent in a reliable way – they partially classified them differently within the ***Discourse Index*** (e.g. text elements could be interpreted both as reasons and consequences depending on the definition of the central topic).

Being based on Entman's (1993) influential definition of framing (cf. Jandura & Friedrich, 2014), this index does not follow a reflexive logic, which expects that all components of an index all express the same underlying concept (e.g. Alexander et al., 2012). In contrast, it is based on a formative logic that 'assumes that indicators are defining characteristics of the construct measured by the index' (Lauerer & Hanitzsch, 2019, p. 64). Thus, although the internal consistency (with Cronbach's Alpha = 0.57 is low, we expect this ***Discourse Index*** to represent a construct that is both reliable and valid.

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