

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of International Studies
Department of European Studies

PhD Thesis

2022

Eliška Ullrichová

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Institute of International Studies
Department of European Studies

**Issue Definitions in the Agenda-Setting of the
European Union**

PhD thesis

Author: Mgr. Eliška Ullrichová

Study program: Area Studies

Supervisor: Mgr. et Mgr. Eliška Tomalová, PhD

Advisor: Prof. Paolo Roberto Graziano

Year of the defense: 2022

Declaration

I hereby declare that this PhD thesis is my own work and that I have used only the listed literature and resources. The submitted thesis has not been used to obtain any other academic title. I hereby give my permission for this PhD thesis to be made available in the CU database and for it to be used for study and scientific purposes in compliance with copyright law.

In Prague on October 17, 2022

Eliška Ullrichová

References

ULLRICHOVÁ, Eliška. Issue Definitions in the Agenda-Setting of the European Union. PhD thesis (PhD). Prague, 2022, 213 pages. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of International Studies. Department of European Studies. Supervisor Eliška Tomalová, PhD.

Length of the thesis: 284 313 characters

Abstract

Agenda-setting dynamics are widely acknowledged as a combination of issue definitions and venues. Although venues have been receiving significant scholarly attention, the concept of issue definition is poorly developed and lacks operationalization. This PhD thesis therefore offers an analytical framework for issue definition encompassing three attributes (substance, salience, and framing), drawing on the interdisciplinary agenda-setting literature and interconnecting the debate of issue definitions with issue hierarchization. The proposed framework aims to contribute to the punctuated equilibrium theory by identifying what issues are defined through negative feedback (self-corrective mechanisms) and what issues are through positive feedback (shifts). The agenda of the European Council from 2014 to 2022 (the last two constellations of the European Union) is analyzed by applying the qualitative methodological approach. The findings show that the effect of positive feedback determines primary issues, i.e., the most salient issues on the agenda, and that negative feedback is connected to issues at all positions within the issue hierarchization, i.e., the negative feedback also generates primary issues. The research exposes that the feedback determining issue definitions influences which issues are on the agenda and how they are discussed.

Abstrakt

Dynamika nastolování agendy je dána definicemi diskutovaných témat a institucionální lokalitou debaty. Na rozdíl od lokalit, akademická literatura konceptuálně nerozpracovává témata a jejich definice a tím daný pojem postrádá operacionalizaci, tak jako celá teorie ‘punctuated equilibrium’, z níž vychází. Dizertace proto navrhuje analytický rámec, který vychází z interdisciplinární akademické literatury a zaštiťuje hlavní znaky definující témata na agendách – (1) obsah, (2) důležitost, (3) rámování. Mimo znaky určující formu diskutovaných témat, výzkum klade důraz na pozice jednotlivých témat na konkrétní agendě. Cílem dizertační práce je přispět k operacionalizaci teorie a zodpovědět otázku: jaká témata jsou definována pomocí pozitivní (zásadní změnou) a negativní (drobnými úpravami) zpětné vazby v rámci nastolování politické agendy? Práce se zaměřuje na agendu Evropské rady od roku 2014 do 2022 a aplikuje kvalitativní metodologickým přístup speciálně upravený pro odhalení znaků v definicích témat a jejich hierarchizaci na agendě. Výzkum ukázal, že zatímco pozitivní zpětná vazba vždy formuje nejdůležitější (primární) téma, negativní zpětná

vazba může formovat veškerá témata na agendě, včetně těch na vrcholu agendy. Práce taktéž odhalila obecná schémata, jakými obě verze zpětné vazbě utváří jednotlivá témata.

Keywords

Agenda-setting, issue definitions, issue hierarchization, punctuated equilibrium theory, positive and negative feedback, European Council agenda

Klíčová slova

Nastolování agendy, definovaná témata, hierarchizace témat, teorie punctuated equilibrium, pozitivní a negativní zpětná vazba, agenda Evropské rady

Název práce

Definování témat v nastolování agendy Evropské unie

Acknowledgement

I gratefully acknowledge the research support from the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research through the Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF), and the support of the Doctoral Studies Centre of the Institute of International Studies (IMS FSV UK).

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Eliška Tomalová for her personal, institutional, and academic support throughout my entire PhD. I am also sincerely thankful to Paolo Graziano (University of Padua) for his valuable feedback, comments, ideas, and encouragement in my academic work. I am also grateful for the academic and personal support from academics, my fellow PhD colleagues, and friends at IMS FSV UK.

My extreme gratitude goes to my family, especially to my parents, for their endless support, and to my husband for his bottomless faith in me, and his patience and infinite support.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	5
SECTION I: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	8
1 MULTIDISCIPLINARY VS INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH	8
2 AGENDA-SETTING: CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, AND THEORIES	10
2.1 Traditional agenda-setting	10
2.2 Issues off an agenda	13
2.3 Horizontal attention dynamics	15
2.4 Attribute agenda-setting	17
2.4.1 Framing	18
2.4.2 Salience.....	19
2.5 Agenda-setting theories	21
2.5.1 Multiple stream framework (MSF)	24
2.5.2 Actor coalition framework (ACF).....	27
2.5.3 Punctuated equilibrium theory (PET).....	29
2.6 Gaps in the agenda-setting literature.....	37
SECTION II: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN	40
3 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK	40
3.1 Issue definition.....	40
3.2 Substance	41
3.3 Salience	41
3.4 Framing	43
3.5 Issue hierarchization	44
3.6 Positive and negative feedback	46
3.7 Hypotheses	47
3.8 Case study: EU agenda-setting	47
4 METHOD AND RESOURCES	51
4.1 Conceptual content analysis: the first level of analysis	51
4.2 The holistic grading method: the second level of analysis	53
4.3 Relational content analysis: the third level of analysis	55
4.4 Resources	56
4.5 Interpretation	58
SECTION III: EMPIRICAL ANALYSES	60
5 ISSUES ON THE EU CO AGENDA	60

5.1	Absent or rarely discussed issues.....	60
5.2	(More) frequently discussed issues.....	62
5.3	Specific features of major topics.....	66
6	ISSUE HIERARCHIZATION ON THE EU CO AGENDA.....	67
6.1	Rarely discussed issues.....	68
6.2	(More) frequently discussed issues.....	69
6.2.1	<i>Highly dynamic issues</i>	70
6.2.2	<i>Stable primary issues</i>	71
6.2.3	<i>Issues avoiding either primary or tertiary position</i>	72
6.2.4	<i>Stable tertiary issues</i>	73
7	ISSUE FRAMING ON THE EU CO AGENDA.....	75
7.1	Health.....	76
7.2	Migration.....	78
7.3	Defense and crime.....	80
7.4	Economics and the Single Market.....	83
7.5	EU governance.....	86
7.6	Environment.....	88
7.7	Digitalization.....	89
7.8	Energy.....	90
7.9	External relations.....	91
7.10	Common patterns across issues.....	93
8	CROSS-LEVELLED INTERPRETATION OF THE ISSUE DEFINITIONS.....	95
8.1	Highly dynamic issues.....	96
8.1.1	<i>Digitalization</i>	96
8.1.2	<i>Defense and crime</i>	98
8.1.3	<i>Economics and the Single Market</i>	99
8.1.4	<i>EU governance</i>	100
8.1.5	<i>Positive and/or negative feedback driven</i>	100
8.2	Stable primary issues.....	101
8.2.1	<i>Migration</i>	101
8.2.2	<i>Health</i>	102
8.2.3	<i>Positive and/or negative feedback</i>	104
8.3	Issues avoiding primary/tertiary positions.....	104
8.3.1	<i>Energy</i>	104
8.3.2	<i>Environment</i>	106
8.3.3	<i>Positive and/or negative feedback</i>	107

8.4 Stable tertiary issue: External relations.....	108
8.5 Agenda-setting dynamics: Issue hierarchization and feedback	109
9 DISCUSSION	113
CONCLUSION	117
BIBLIOGRAPHY	120
Primary resources	120
Secondary resources	124
LIST OF FIGURES.....	134
Figure 1: Issue hierarchization of <i>law and crime</i> and <i>defense</i> on the EUCO agenda.....	70
Figure 2: Issue hierarchization of <i>migration</i> on the EUCO agenda.....	71
Figure 3: Issue hierarchization of <i>environment</i> on the EUCO agenda	72
Figure 4: Issue hierarchization of <i>energy</i> and <i>banking, finances, and internal trade</i> on EUCO agenda	73
LIST OF TABLES.....	134
Table 1: Number of occurrences of CAPIC major issues on the EUCO agenda.....	66
Table 2: Adjusted major issues on the EUCO agenda.....	94
LIST OF APPENDICES	134
Appendix 1: CAPIC (Comparative Agendas Project Issue Code)	135
Appendix 2: Values of sub-attributes of salience	146
Appendix 3: Rubric for holistic grading	146
Appendix 4: Rubric expressed in relation to values of sub-attributes	147
Appendix 5: The first level of analysis (substance).....	148
Appendix 6: The second level of the analysis (salience).....	183
Appendix 7: The third level of the analysis (framing).....	190

Introduction

This PhD thesis aims to contribute to the agenda-setting debate by developing the concept of issue definitions. The agenda-setting literature investigates how issues capture the time and attention of policy-makers, the media, and the public. The more attention an issue attracts, the more important it is believed to be. Since agenda-setting involves a wide range of stakeholders, there are distinct areas of academic study, which each analyze different types of agendas, and thus different forms of agenda-setting dynamics. Therefore, it is possible to identify debates (that are linked to a greater or lesser degree) dealing with agenda-setting dynamics in policy, media, and public agendas. Although this PhD research considers primarily political agenda-setting, its contribution is generally applicable to agenda-setting dynamics.

Academics agree that there are two stages in the agenda-setting process: (1) choosing *which* issues are put on the agenda and (2) *how* these issues are discussed. Nonetheless, the field is dominated by quantitative approaches that fail to capture the second aspect. Therefore, the core of the agenda-setting literature remains reductive, and predominantly deals only with the first dimension. Besides this, the literature does not offer a set framework for the analysis of how issues on the agenda are discussed, i.e., how they are defined and developed over time. Although issue definitions are believed to be one of the two determinants of the agenda-setting dynamics, the concept is poorly defined, lacks operationalization, and is approached unsystematically by researchers. Moreover, research on the second level of agenda-setting is highly fragmented into separate fields that have failed to communicate with one another, generating a chaotic and heterogenous debate.

Given the gaps in the academic literature, the objective of this PhD research is to introduce an analytical framework for issue definition that encompasses attributes influencing the performance of the issue on the agenda. An interdisciplinary approach to issue definition is proposed to overcome gaps across disciplines and to systematize the debate on issue definitions, respectively, for the second stage of agenda-setting dynamics. The research is embedded in the punctuation equilibrium theory (PET), which assumes that issue definition and venues are drivers of agenda-setting dynamics. Though venues have been thoroughly elucidated, issue definition lacks good conceptualization. It can be argued that ignorance of the fundamental aspects of the basic theoretical assumption undermines the entire theory. Having said that, the following research question needs to be answered: which issues are

defined and developed on the agenda gradually (negative feedback) and which ones through punctuations (positive feedback)? The answer to the research question will reveal how issues on the agenda are defined, and how they develop in the medium-term, which is a critical and missing piece of knowledge for agenda-setting dynamics.

The analytical framework uses an interdisciplinary approach to take into consideration all attributes of an issue, thus revealing the issue performance on the agenda and its complexities. Issue definition is, therefore, considered to be a combination of three dominant attributes: (1) substance, (2) salience, and (3) framing. Salience and framing are determined by sub-attributes. In the case of salience, three sub-attributes were identified: (1) place, (2) space, and (3) urgency. Framing has four possible sub-attributes: (1) perspective, (2) a problem-solution nexus, (3) appeal, and (4) tone.

The proposed framework interconnects the discussions over which issues are included on the agenda (substance), how important they are perceived to be (salience), and how they are discussed (framing). The positioning of an issue on the agenda is thus an integral part of issue definition, and is determined by one of its attribute: salience. Therefore, the analytical framework encompasses the concept of issue hierarchization, which proposes that an agenda is formed by primary, secondary, and tertiary issues. While primary issues occupy the most salient positions on the agenda, the secondary ones are less salient than the primary, but more salient than tertiary issues, and the 'tertiary' category denominates the least salient issues. The combination of these three elements aims to reveal the link between issue definition and agenda-setting dynamics.

In this respect, the two hypotheses are tested. The first one claims that the issues that are defined by a dramatic shift (positive feedback) are the primary issues, i.e., the most salient issues on the agenda. The second hypothesis asserts that issues defined and developed gradually might be found in all agenda positions. In other words, primary, secondary, and tertiary issues might be defined by negative feedback. The hypotheses are tested on the agenda of the European Union; more concretely of the European Council from December 2014 to March 2022, encompassing the last two political compositions of the European Union. The agenda of the European Council was chosen for the analysis as it is a high political agenda of the EU with significant formal and informal agenda-setting power.

In contrast to the majority of the literature, this work uses a qualitative approach to fill the methodological gap that is a principal source of the deficient operationalization of the

concept of issue definition, and more generally, of PET. The methodology of this thesis consists of a three-levelled content analysis, applying distinct qualitative methods that are designed to adequately investigate all three dominant attributes (substance, salience, and framing) of the analytical framework. The first level of the methodology consists of conceptual content analysis, the most appropriate tool for capturing the substance. Second, the holistic grading method, an innovative approach in content analysis, is used to examine the salience of issues on the agenda. Third, the framing attribute is determined by relational content analysis. The three-levelled qualitative methodology applied to the European Council Conclusions from December 2014 to March 2022 allows the identification of all relevant aspects that need to be considered in the dynamics of issue definition and development within the agenda-setting process.

This thesis consists of three sections: (1) literature review and theoretical framework, (2) analytical framework and research design and (3) empirical analyses. The first part provides a literature overview across disciplines dealing with agenda-setting. It also discusses three widely acknowledged agenda-setting theories: the multiple stream framework (MSF), the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), and the punctuated equilibrium theory (PET). In addition, the first section outlines the theoretical framework of this PhD research. The second part outlines the analytical framework for issue definition and settles the research design. It also describes the adopted methodological approach and elucidates primary resources. The third section presents the findings in five empirical chapters. The first three chapters present the findings of each level of the analysis, i.e., for every dominant attribute. The following chapter interprets these results in a crossed-levelled analysis generating an empirical discussion. The third section concludes with a chapter discussing and situating the empirical findings into the theoretical debate and academic literature.

Section I: Literature review and theoretical framework

1 Multidisciplinary vs Interdisciplinary approach

Despite increasing global interest and research into agenda-setting, the discussion is still dominated by US scholars, who have developed the main theoretical approaches such as mobilization of bias, the MSF, the ACF, and the PET (see more below). These frameworks have been applied not only in public policy agenda-setting but also in media and political communication (Zhu *et al.*, 1993; Edwards and Wood, 1999; Soroka, 2002; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2004; Walgrave, Soroka and Nuytemans, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010; Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2016).

Given the development of the agenda-setting literature, the current debate is highly fragmented into various disciplines, including studies of public policy, foreign affairs, journalism, media, and political communication. Despite the shared foundations in communication studies, the debates have separated from one another. The multiple disciplines do not communicate between each other, which makes the agenda-setting debate chaotic. This ambiguity has consequently led to parallel debates and the use of different labels for similar concepts and elements of the agenda-setting process. Multidisciplinarity, which is characterized by disciplines operating simultaneously with different purposes and without direct relations among them (Gatto Chimendes *et al.*, 2017), does not offer a complex approach to agenda-setting but a rather confused and disorganized body of literature.

The multidisciplinary status quo of the agenda-setting scholarship is even more surprising once one realizes that many studies analyze the relationship between the media, the public, and policy agenda and agenda-setting. Because such studies have intersecting objectives from multiple fields, one would expect a more interdisciplinary approach in agenda-setting research. According to Maheu (cited in Gatto Chimendes *et al.*, 2017, p. 1), interdisciplinarity is supposed to be applied where two or more disciplines share research objectives. In this situation, a collaborative approach to knowledge is required to understand the subject matter of a study fully. Consequently, the use of an interdisciplinary approach is highly desirable for the agenda-setting debate, yet it has rarely been employed (Wolfe, Jones and Baumgartner, 2013). Therefore, this research uses an interdisciplinary approach that aims to incorporate public and foreign policy, communication, media studies, and public

administration. In order to do so, it is necessary to provide an overview of the essential agenda-setting concepts, questions, and problems around which the multidisciplinary academic debate is organized.

First, the role of agenda-setting in the political and communication process needs to be discussed. Second, though agenda-setting is a widely acknowledged and overused concept, it is poorly defined, with a wide range of varying definitions. Therefore, it is imperative to elucidate a comprehensive definition of agenda-setting that is applicable across disciplines in order to better understand the debate and its complexities. Additionally, a well-defined conceptualization of agenda-setting could subsequently lead to the the identification and investigation of related concepts and research interests. Third, a series of sub-questions are answered: What is framing? What is salience, and how is it measured? Framing and salience are considered to be dominant attributes of an issue, and determine attention given to a particular problem on an agenda. Hence, they are an indispensable part of the agenda-setting process and debate. Nonetheless, the understanding of these concepts is highly variable, much like the methods academics have used to understand them.

Although the three questions asked above might be seen as fundamental, multidisciplinary answers to these questions available in the academic literature tend to further disconnect already separate debates rather than generate the complex body of agenda-setting literature mutually benefiting from gained knowledge across fields. Given the multidisciplinary understanding of elementary agenda-setting concepts, the agenda-setting literature might then include misunderstandings and misconceptualization of specific findings. Therefore, these questions – What is the role of agenda-setting in the political and communication process? How is agenda-setting defined? What is framing? What is salience, and how is it measured? – are more than relevant for the interdisciplinary approach adopted by this research. The first section of this thesis thus aims to shed light on critical misunderstandings and arguments split across fields, find the intersection points of the debate, and propose an interdisciplinary approach.

2 Agenda-setting: concepts, definitions, and theories

Although the term agenda-setting might seem unambiguous, this is not always the case. This chapter outlines four possible understandings of the agenda-setting process. First, the so-called first level of agenda-setting is discussed, which refers to traditional agenda-setting debates, i.e., analyses interested in what issues get on the agenda. Second to be discussed is how agenda-setting dynamics are not driven only by those issues that manage to get on the agenda, but also those that are omitted from it. Nevertheless, the second phase of agenda-setting is oftentimes underestimated. The third section of the chapter presents agenda-setting as a process of issue positioning on the agenda, i.e., horizontal attention dynamics. The final chapter of this section looks at the second level of agenda-setting, which is also known as ‘attribute agenda-setting’. In particular, the last two categories have strong potential for interdisciplinary investigation stemming from studies of public policy, mass media, and public administration.

2.1 Traditional agenda-setting

This section defines traditional agenda-setting and identifies the main academics operating within the traditional agenda-setting approach. Since the first level of agenda-setting is determined by the type of agenda, which is itself a subject of a study, it is appropriate here to present three essential agenda variations pinpointed by the literature. The three types of categorization are based on (1) the types of involved agenda-setters, (2) the proximity to decision-making, and (3) the venue to which an agenda is linked.

Agenda-setting is generally understood as “the introduction of new issues on the agenda” (Tallberg, 2004, p. 18). Consequently, this stage of the policy-making process consists of “issues that decision-makers devote attention to: the issues they talk about, think about, write about and take into consideration” (Princen, 2009, p. 1). Analyzing what issues are on the agenda to know what government actions are at stake is a traditional approach of agenda-setting (Baumgartner and Jones, 2020).

The traditional agenda-setting literature is based on the assumption that issues or policy entrepreneurs advocating particular issues must compete for attention to get an issue onto an agenda (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 1). This endless competition has been given various names in the academic literature. Wood and Peake (1998) designate the contest among issues for the attention of policy entrepreneurs as the economy of attention, Ullrichova (2022)

proposes the first level of economy of attention, and McCombs (1992) labels the approach interested in what issues to think about as the first level of agenda-setting.

The identification of issues for inclusion on the agenda initially requires the determination of what kind of agenda is analyzed. There is a consensus in the academic literature that an agenda is a list of items or a set of issues. More precisely, an agenda is perceived as “as a set of issues to which [...] actors are, at any given time, paying serious attention” (Dowding, Hindmoor and Martin, 2016, p. 5). Having said that, agenda variation is an essential part of the first level of agenda-setting because the type of agenda ascertains what kind of issues might be situated on it and which actors are relevant for a particular agenda-setting process.

The literature offers three kinds of agenda categorization. First, the agenda can be characterized based on the actors involved in the agenda-setting process (policy-makers, media professionals, and public representatives), which leads to the variation label of policy, media, or public agenda (McCombs and Zhu, 1995; Dearing and Rogers, 1996; Edwards and Wood, 1999; Soroka, 2002; Kiouisis, Popescu and Mitrook, 2007). The second differentiation is given by how close items on the agenda are to a policy formulation or decision-making (e.g., Birkland, 2017; Cobb and Elder, 1983; Pollack, 1997; Tallberg, 2003). The third classification is made based on the venue, meaning each venue has its agenda (Princen, 2009). All approaches are discussed below in more detail.

The first agenda variation is applied in mass media or public administration studies since, contrary to political agenda-setting, there is no tendency to distinguish different sorts of media or public agendas. Policy, media, and public agenda are also used in research interested in the interaction between two or among all three agenda types (Zhu *et al.*, 1993; Edwards and Wood, 1999; Soroka, 2002; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2004; Walgrave, Soroka and Nuytemans, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010; Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2016).

The division of agendas based on how close they are to decision-making is not limited to one classification. The most comprehensive approach is offered by Birkland (2017) who claims that agendas can be categorized as being in:

- (1) the agenda universe, which contains all possible ideas limited only by cultural, social, or official constraints;

- (2) a systemic agenda, referring to all ideas potentially considered as meriting attention by the political community;
- (3) an institutional agenda as a group of issues discussed and considered by authoritative decision-makers; or
- (4) a decision agenda, which includes items that an authoritative body is very likely to take a political decision over.

Although one might argue that the agenda universe and systemic agendas are synonyms for public and media agendas, Birkland's (2017) classification is oriented towards policy change. An issue's path leads from the agenda universe to a decision-making agenda to provoke a policy reaction. This could be considered a sufficient argument to include the agenda universe and systemic agendas in the agenda variations based on the closeness to decision-making.

Birkland builds on the previous work of his colleagues, especially on Cobb and Elder (1983) and Pollack (1997). Cobb and Elder (1983) introduced the term systemic agenda and put it in opposition to the so-called institutional agenda. The systemic agenda is understood as "[...] all issues that are commonly perceived by members of the political community as meriting public attention and as involving matters within the legitimate jurisdiction of existing governmental authority" (Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 85). The institutional agenda is described as "the list of items explicitly up for the active and serious consideration of authoritative decision-makers" (Cobb and Elder, 1983, pp. 85–86). Cobb and Elder's agenda variation coincides with the formal (institutional) and informal (systemic) agenda differentiation (Pollack, 1997).

The third approach identifies the agenda according to its venue, an indispensable concept to the agenda-setting literature. Venues are defined as "institutional locations where authoritative decisions are made concerning a given issue" (Baumgartner and Jones, 2010, p. 33). The understanding of venues has consequently been developed to arenas "in which certain policy formulation tasks are performed, to inform the design, content and effects of policy-making activities" (Turnpenny *et al.*, 2015, p. 11). A venue might be placed within or outside a government, but it needs to be involved in the policy formulation or policy-making process, e.g., create, inform, design, or bind the policy-making (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Timmermans and Scholten, 2006).

It is believed that each venue has its own agenda that is part of the broader policy (institutional) agenda in a particular political system (Princen, 2009). Since subsystems or venues compound a policy system with their own agendas, the agenda of a particular policy system might be interpreted as an aggregation of all venues' agendas. For example, the EU agenda encompasses the agenda of the European Council, the European Commission, the Council of the EU, and many other venues (Ullrichova, 2022).

Depending on a venue's role within the policy formulation process, some agendas are more likely than others to carry a particular issue to government action (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Princen, 2009). Additionally, venues interact with each other, and it is possible for an issue that is on the agenda of a particular venue to carry over to another venue's agenda. The interplay between venues and their agendas builds on the venue shopping theory (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993), and is called the vertical attention dynamics of agenda-setting (Walgrave and Boydston, 2019).

Traditional agenda-setting is interested in which issues are placed on a particular agenda in order to predict how policy may change. These studies are differentiated by the kind of agenda a researcher is interested in. Traditional agenda-setting might be thus summarized as research into where and by whom particular issues are discussed, as well as predicting what policy change is promoted by whom and why.

2.2 Issues off an agenda

First, this section elaborates why it is important to consider issues that are excluded from the agenda and what the value of understanding this notion is for the agenda-setting debate. Second, the applicability of this approach is discussed. Third, the chapter provides an overview of how scholars deal with inaccessible data in order to at least partially explain the widely acknowledged importance of omitted issues for agenda-setting dynamics.

As the previous chapter shows, a significant part of the agenda-setting literature deals with issues on the agenda. Nonetheless, agenda-setting dynamics are not limited to the issues actors think about and discuss. The issues that are not discussed represent a no less critical element of the communication process when trying to understand it in its complex entirety. The notion is not innovative in the agenda-setting literature since it dates back to the 1960s, leaning on the concept of the mobilization of bias by Schnattschneider (1960). He claimed that:

“All forms of political organization have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because an organization is the mobilization of bias. Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out” (1960, p. 71).

Similarly, Bachrach and Baratz (1962) assert that the dynamics of non-decision-making (also called the second face of power) are just as significant for understanding the policy process as decision-making. Although agenda-setting scholars widely acknowledge the importance of issues off the agenda and the dynamics of non-decision making, the lion’s share of literature deals with issues that receive political attention, rather than those that do not. This is caused by problematic practical aspect; how do we study issues off the agenda? Despite these practical difficulties, scholars have tried to at least partly incorporate the non-decision-making element into their research (Tallberg, 2003, 2004; Princen, 2009; van der Veer and Haverland, 2019). Although they cannot interpret the absence of issues on the agenda, researchers can study issues that were once on the agenda but are not anymore. Tallberg (2004) talks about agenda-exclusion, which is an active impediment to a topic staying on or getting onto an agenda. There are distinct techniques for hindering the inclusion of an issue on an agenda. Firstly, an item might not be recognized as a problem for action; thus it would not provoke any reaction by the involved actors. Secondly, agenda-setters may prioritize another issue (or another definition of the same issue) and thus exclude the initial matter from the discussion. Finally, opponents of an issue might introduce a solution they know will not appeal to enough supporters and thus will not lead to action.

Elimination from an agenda also includes the process of depoliticization, which encompasses strategies leading to a decreased level of conflict, and thus a reduction of the attention paid by policy entrepreneurs towards an issue (van der Veer and Haverland, 2019). Likewise, conflict extradition is a notion that opposes conflict expansion, where certain actors are eliminated from the discussion in order to avoid a particular issue (Princen, 2009).

The aspect of issue elimination is present mainly in the agenda-setting literature that is focused on strategies of policy entrepreneurs. Alongside strategies promoting an item on the agenda (the first level of agenda-setting), scholars tend to engage with tactics for impeding the inclusion of an issue on an agenda and the eradication of particular problems from agendas. The idea is to find out why and what actors tend to eliminate what kind of issues from an agenda in question to have a complete picture of agenda-setting dynamics, as proposed by Schnattschneider (1960) and Bachrach and Baratz (1962).

2.3 Horizontal attention dynamics

Firstly, the notion of horizontal attention dynamics is contextualized within the theoretical background and its relevance to the general agenda-setting literature is explained. Next, since the debate over horizontal attention dynamics is predominantly occupied by the identification of the most important issue on the agenda at a given moment, this chapter argues why this approach is insufficient for revealing the full dynamics of the policy-making process. In order to fill this gap in the academic debate, it is proposed to determine positions of all issues placed on the agenda rather than only concentrating on the most important problem. Finally, the limitations of the suggested approach are discussed.

Alongside the binary on/off dynamics of agenda-setting, scholars acknowledge that the position of an issue on an agenda also plays a role. The higher the position on an agenda an issue has, the more attention it receives and, in terms of political agenda-setting, the higher the probability for government action over an issue is (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). In other words, the degree of attention policy-makers devote to a matter is no less critical (Princen, 2009) than whether they discuss a problem or not, which is the traditional focus of the agenda-setting literature. The assumption that the higher the degree of attention that is dedicated to an issue, the higher position on the agenda an issue will have might follow.

Since being at the top of an agenda increases the probability of getting an issue to the formulation or decision-making stages of policy-making, issues are constantly competing to be at the top of an agenda. The literature offers two categories for this type of competition among issues: (1) horizontal attention dynamics as an opposition to vertical process when issues move from venue to venue within the structure of a policy system (Breeman and Timmermans, 2019) and (2) the second level of economy of attention (Ullrichova, 2022). Ullrichova (2022) asserts that an issue first needs to overcome cognitive and institutional

frictions to get onto the agenda, and then subsequently strive to occupy the top position among other items already placed on the agenda.

Academics widely acknowledge the horizontal attention dynamics of agenda-setting since a significant number of studies identifies the most important problem (MIP) or a primary issue (e.g., Zhu *et al.*, 1993; Wood and Peake, 1998; Abbe *et al.*, 2003; Takeshita, 2006; Kiouisis, Popescu and Mitrook, 2007; Min, Ghanem and Evatt, 2007). The MIP and the primary issue are terms that are used interchangeably to refer to the most frequently discussed problem for a concrete time period in a coded dataset when the time dedicated to the discussion of a problem is perceived as a sign of its urgency (Wood and Peake, 1998; Min, Ghanem and Evatt, 2007). In other words, an issue that attracts the most attention is situated at the top of an agenda, and thus the degree of received attention determines the position of all issues on an agenda (Ullrichova, 2022).

Nevertheless, as suggested by some researchers, a fruitful approach may be to look at the agenda from a more complex perspective and identify the positions of all issues on the agenda at a particular moment rather than only to determine the most important one (Dearing and Rogers, 1996; Ullrichova, 2022). There have been several attempts to differentiate between issues according to their position on the agenda: (1) major and minor items (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), (2) core and non-core issues (Alexandrova, Carammia and Timmermans, 2012; Alexandrova, 2016), and (3) primary and secondary issues (Ullrichova, 2022).

Major and minor items are identified according to how salient they are and how much attention they receive (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). However, major and minor issues are not set concepts and remain highly arbitrary. Core and non-core issues are primarily distinguished based on how receptive venues are to them. However, since it is believed that a core issue has privileged access to a venue's agenda (Alexandrova, Carammia and Timmermans, 2012; Alexandrova, 2016) and by extension also to the top spot of the agenda, the differentiation can be included in this debate. The notion of primary and secondary issues is, however, the most developed framework for issue hierarchization on agendas.

Primary issues are defined "as those problems that attract the most attention from policy-makers in a specific time given the occupied place on the agenda, space devoted to them, and the issue framing" (Ullrichova, 2022, p. 12). Secondary issues occupy less salient

positions on the agenda determined by place, space, and framing.¹ Moreover, secondary issues are perceived as relative to primary ones, given the hierarchical composition and the changeable degree of pressure on an agenda (Ullrichova, 2022).

In addition, Ullrichova (2022) showed that it is misleading to search for only one MIP, as many academics do, because more than one primary issue can be identified in some cases. Along with conclusions about horizontal attention dynamics, the study revealed three categories of attitudinal dynamics of issues on the agenda. First, some problems tend to occupy the primary position and do not drop to a secondary one. The second category consists of items continuously reside in secondary positions and only exceptionally become primary issues. This group is called ‘stable issues’. Last but not least, some items change their position from primary to secondary and *vice versa* on a regular basis; this category is the most dynamic one (Ullrichova, 2022).

The concept of issue hierarchization encompassing primary and secondary issues reveals interesting dynamics of agenda-setting that should not be ignored when seeking to understand the agenda-setting process in all its complexity. However, the concept fails to engage with the literature on attribute agenda-setting, which is visible in the poor theoretical anchoring of issue framing in the defining of the primary and secondary issues. Besides, the common denominator of all the above-discussed issue differentiations is the absence of suitable definitions of salience, and of importance, which is used as an essential variable for the identification of an issue’s position on the agenda.

Since framing and salience could be perceived as attributes of an issue, the following chapter further elaborates both concepts. As the dominant discussion over framing and salience is embedded in media and communication studies, the ignorance of the theoretical debate over these concepts in the horizontal attention dynamics of agenda-setting illustrates the deficit in engagement among academic fields.

2.4 Attribute agenda-setting

Agenda-setting dynamics are believed to stem from a combination of venues and issue definitions (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Based on that proposition, issues placed on the agenda are not only empirical information, but also contain other aspects: attributes that need to be taken into consideration. The second level of agenda-setting, also called attribute

¹ See more about issue framing in chapter 2.4, which is dedicated to attribute agenda-setting.

agenda-setting, is hence interested not only in *what to think about* but also in *how to think about* issues on the agenda (McCombs, 1992), thus going a step beyond the traditional agenda-setting literature. Some scholars understand attribute agenda-setting as a refined version of agenda-setting (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2007), while others see it as a natural extension of the original concept (Weaver, McCombs and Shaw, 2004).

The essential question of the second level of agenda-setting is what ‘attribute’ means. Attributes refer to “[a] set of rules for making and understanding a message” (Bateson, 1972, p. 142), including qualities such as frame, place, size, substance, tone, and valence (Maher, 2008). Depending on the motives and principles of a communicator (in the case of media agenda-setting) or policy entrepreneur (in the case of political agenda-setting), some attributes might be included while others are excluded (e.g., Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974).

There are two attributes, framing² and salience, that provoke extensive academic debate and highly influence the position of an issue regardless of what kind of agenda an issue is situated in. Since both concepts transcend the borders of various disciplines, they are model examples of multidisciplinary debates that fail to communicate with each other. The aim of the following two sections of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature across disciplines that deals with the framing and salience.

2.4.1 Framing

On the one hand, a frame is seen as one of many attributes an issue (an object) might possess. The connection between attributes (frames, attention, place, or size) and objects can hence be illustrated with the grammatical analogy of adjectives (attributes) and nouns (objects). On the other hand, a frame is seen as central to an issue, meaning that it predominantly constructs its nature (Maher, 2008). In this respect, the frame is considered to be the dominant attribute of an object under consideration (McCombs, 2005).

In order to understand why a frame might be perceived as an overall quality that defines an issue, the concept requires further elaboration. Issue framing is “a natural cognitive process [...] to narrow the field of perception to make reality more manageable for interpretation and for use as a guide to action” (Rochefort and Donnelly, 2013, p. 192). Similarly, Noakes and Johnston (2005, p. 2) state: “framing functions in much the same way as a frame around

² The literature uses the terms frame, framing, and issue framing interchangeably. This PhD thesis follows this set practice.

a picture: attention gets focused on what is relevant and important and away from extraneous items in the field of view.” In other words, framing is a term embedded in sociology and cognitive psychology reflecting that individuals have to interpret what is happening around them due to the complexity of the world being beyond one’s capacity to fully understand it (Goffman, 1974). Thus, framing is perceived as a necessary tool for reducing the complexity of occurrences that humans are surrounded by (Gans, 1979).

Concerning agenda-setting, framing is seen as a selective information process. It might be considered a tool to “make sense of the world” (Rochefort and Donnelly, 2013, p. 192), to politicize or depoliticize a problem (Bunea, 2020), an “instrument of manipulation in the politics” (Daviter, 2007, p. 656), or as a “weapon of advocacy and consensus” (Weiss, 1989, p. 17).

As a result, frames are at the heart of political conflict and policy-making (Daviter, 2007). They play a crucial role in so-called conflict expansion, i.e., “the greater the size of the audience to which an issue can be enlarged, the greater the likelihood that it will attain systemic agenda standing and thus access to a formal agenda” (Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 110). Frames might implicitly incorporate the problem-solution nexus, and therefore promote a particular method for policy-making (Stone, 1989; Entman, 1993; Princen, 2009), emphasize one perspective of a problem over another (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005), aim to make an issue appealing in order to attract more attention (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Kingdon, 2003; Princen, 2009; Rochefort and Donnelly, 2013), and to make an issue more attractive to a concrete venue by recounting a compelling story about it (Princen, 2009).

As academics from mass media and communication studies remind, framing is not a process limited only to agenda-setters, but it encompasses both macro- just as micro-level communication practice. As macro-constructs, the frames are considered to be modes of presentation of a particular piece of information by agenda-setters; in mass media studies, they are mostly classified as communicators. Micro-level framing refers to the fact that receivers use and perceive the information communicated to them individually (Entman, 1993).

2.4.2 Salience

As the previous section discussing horizontal attention dynamics has shown, many scholars identify the most important problem (MIP) on a particular agenda at a given time. The MIP concept and generally all classifications of issue hierarchization include salience. Strictly

speaking, the more salient an issue is, the more attention is dedicated to it, and therefore the higher position on an agenda the issue has. As a result, salience can also be perceived as an attribute determining an object's position in the environment. In the language of agenda-setting, an issue's position on an agenda is affected by its salience.

Nonetheless, salience has many meanings as the concept appears across fields dealing (not only) with agenda-setting. As a result, the concept has been used interchangeably with interest (e.g., Hill, 1985), importance (e.g., Hill, 1985; Schuman, Ludwig and Krosnick, 1986; Edelman, 1993; Wood and Peake, 1998), conspicuousness (e.g., Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, 1982; Augustinos and Walker, 1995), relevance (Carter, 1965; Princen, 2009), awareness (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974), and urgency (Ullrichova, 2022). See Evatt (1997) or Min, Ghanem and Evatt (2007) for an extensive overview.

The agenda-setting literature often refers to the concept of salience in a two-fold way. Researchers mostly use it as a synonym for accessibility or as perceived importance. The latter is a traditional dependent variable for agenda-setting research (Takeshita, 2006). Indeed, these two features are commonly combined; to illustrate, Young (1992, p. 189) describes a salience as “the importance that a respondent attaches to some issue or problem asked about or the extent to which an issue is ‘top of mind’ to respondents”. Another example is Roessler and Eichhorn's (1999) work with salience as a combination of awareness and importance. The first element is seen as accessible responses to a problem (accessibility). The second aspect is perceived with respect to stable judgement related to the belief system of a particular person. Salience might also be distinguished according to the subject, i.e., to whom a problem is the most salient. In this respect, whereas a social frame of reference examines problems important to society, a personal frame reflects those issues that are salient to an individual (Evatt and Ghanem, 2001; Min, Ghanem and Evatt, 2007).

As Augustinos, Walker and Donaghue (2014) proposed, salience can be described as a degree to which an issue stands out from the crowd, which is in the line of salience as an attribute. Nonetheless, the interdisciplinary literature proposes the discernment of two dimensions of salience: internal and external. While the internal element means the implicit qualities of an issue, the external aspect refers to an object's position within an environment. In concurrence, Kioussis (2004) offers a theoretical reassessment of salience based on its internal and external dimensions. He argues that salience is compounded by visibility (external) and valence (internal). Visibility is understood as the combination of attention

given, which is measured by the frequency of an issue's appearance on the agenda, and of the prominence, which is determined by the position of an issue in analyzed documents. The valence signifies the tone with which an issue is formulated. Kiouisis distinguishes three kinds of valence: positive, negative, and neutral. Additionally, he argues that the external component of the concept is dominant, and accounts for the variance of issues on the agenda (Kiouisis, 2004).

The interdisciplinary overview of the academic literature shows that salience is used to replace many attributes determining an issue, such as tone, urgency, valence, relevance, and many others. Therefore, an approach that clarifies what exactly salience in attribute agenda-setting refers to is essential to avoid a modest theoretical anchoring of salience, which is a critical concept to identify the most important issue on the agenda and consequently to determine a hierarchy of issues on the agenda across research areas. This would also lead to a more robust theoretical foundation for terms such as 'primary issue' and 'most important problem', which currently lack a clear definition since there is not a consensus on what 'primary' or 'the most important' actually stand for.

2.5 Agenda-setting theories

As indicated above, the agenda-setting debate is highly multidisciplinary, meaning there is a good variety of approaches available to study and measure it. This sub-chapter thus discusses the three prevailing theories in agenda-setting in the political process, including their weak and strong points, essential concepts, methodology, and application. The frameworks are reviewed chronologically according to their development: the multiple stream framework (MSF), the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), and punctuated equilibrium theory (PET). However, all of them have been revised by their authors, which might cause confusion in terms of the dates of referenced literature. The PET is discussed more extensively compared to the MSF and the ACF because it is the most dominant theory in the policy agenda-setting literature. In addition, this PhD thesis uses the PET. The final section of the chapter is devoted to how the research builds on PET and what added value the research has for this theory.

All three frameworks³ discussed below were created as a critical response to the shortcomings of approaches coming from communication studies, particularly from media (lately mass media) studies, where the agenda-setting debate originally stems from. Since media agenda-setting cannot be studied in isolation of its interaction with the public and policy agenda, the debate naturally pervaded political communication, public administration, and public policy studies. The first part of this sub-chapter discusses these points of intersection. In this respect, the section is dedicated to the communication model by Harold Lasswell (1956) that was the predecessor of a well-known and widely quoted public policy cycle. Although the public policy cycle has faced much criticism, as the chapter discusses, it has systematized the debate of the entire policy process and instigated the formation of various agenda-setting frameworks, including the MSF, ACF, and PET.

Communication studies encompasses two dominant theoretical approaches: learning and cognitive theories. Whereas the former analyses how individuals respond to the presentation of reality by the media, the latter consists of the particularities of information processing, which determines the perception of reality. Nonetheless, both approaches deal with agenda-setting processes (Lutz, Schneider and Vorderer, 2020).

Learning theories are interested in what issues are on the media agenda to analyze the public's reaction to discussed topics. Agenda-setting is also a critical indicator for studying the information process, thereby knowing whether issues are organized inside or outside of it. This is a principal reason why agenda-setting theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) and the agenda-setting model (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2007) belong among 'evergreen' theories of communication studies alongside social learning, social cognitive theory, cultivation theory and others (Lutz, Schneider and Vorderer, 2020).

Analyses of the communication process are not exclusive to media studies, and can be found in many fields such as public policy, public administration, political communication, foreign policy etc. Public policy studies are worth mentioning even in the context of mass media studies because the media can be considered agenda-setters in the policy-making process (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Cobb and Elder, 1983). The media are believed to have a significant impact, especially in the early stage of the policy process (agenda-setting) rather than the other way around (Soroka *et al.*, 2013).

³ This PhD thesis uses the term framework and theory interchangeably, following the practice of policy agenda-setting where MSF, ACF, and PET are believed to be approaches of an equivalent level.

Besides, given the impact of the media on the public agenda (Soroka *et al.*, 2013), the media agenda can be perceived as an intermediary of issues resonated in the public debate process to politics (Wood and Peake, 1998), or even as a tool to put pressure on politicians (Downs, 1972). Consequently, the reciprocal influence of media, public, and policy agendas has been recognized (Lutz, Schneider and Vorderer, 2020). The relationship has become a prevalent subject of study (Zhu *et al.*, 1993; Edwards and Wood, 1999; Soroka, 2002; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2004; Walgrave, Soroka and Nuytemans, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010; Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2016). Given the interconnection between mass media, communication, and public policy studies, frameworks developed in the latter research areas have been applied not only in public policy agenda-setting but also in media and political communication (Zhu *et al.*, 1993; Edwards and Wood, 1999; Soroka, 2002; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2004; Walgrave, Soroka and Nuytemans, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010; Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2016).

Since communication is an integral part of media and policy studies, the model introduced by Harold Lasswell (1956), consisting of a seven stage communication process, has been used in both fields. Public policy researchers (e.g., Jenkins, 1978; May and Wildavsky, 1979; Brewer and DeLeon, 1983) elaborated on Lasswell's model and developed an alternative; Lasswell's seven stages of the communication process – (1) intelligence, (2) promotion, (3) prescription, (4) invocation, (5) application, (6) termination, and (7) appraisal – were modified into a five stage policy process: (1) agenda-setting, (2) policy formulation, (3) decision-making, (4) implementation, and (5) evaluation.

The systematic decomposition of the complex policy-making process into five stages has comprehensibly separated agenda-setting from other policy-making stages, thereby facilitating focused academic research and analysis of it. Naturally, fragmentation benefits all five phases of the policy-making process in a similar respect; the complex phenomena require division into separate sections to be analyzed effectively. Only then can the process be understood in its complex entirety. Conversely, this has also become the principal criticism. In real conditions, the identified five stages overlap, and the policy process has neither clear-cut divisions between phases nor an unambiguous beginning and end. Therefore, the public policy cycle has been criticized for being a strongly theoretical model. Since aspects of constant reformulation, learning, and policy changes belong indispensably to politics, the model does not seem to respond to the practical side of the policy-making

processes (Lejano, 2013). Interestingly, the defragmentation into five policy-making stages seems to simultaneously be both the biggest weakness and the most significant added value of the model.

Despite the rejection of the deconstruction of the policy process into five separate stages, these phases are widely used terms in policy process studies, and agenda-setting is not an exception. How is agenda-setting understood in public policy research? The wave of alternative frameworks (MSF, ACF, PET) appeared, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, as a critical reaction to the public policy cycle. In contrast to the public policy cycle, the alternative theories assume that a policy change is an outcome of the agenda-setting process. To put it differently, agenda-setting is viewed as the inception of a policy change and a filter of probability for government action over an issue (Baumgartner and Jones, 2020). If an issue is not put on an agenda, there is no debate over it, which excludes any possibility of a change occurring. Nonetheless, this does not exclude the fact that policy-making is a non-linear process where policy redesigning, reformulation, and revision are constantly present.

Before the detailed description of the three theories, it is worth mentioning that, though these frameworks originated in public policy, their application has gone beyond the scope of the discipline. These alternative theories have been applied extensively in mass media studies (Zhu *et al.*, 1993; Edwards and Wood, 1999; Soroka, 2002; Walgrave and Vliegthart, 2010), and to a certain extent also in foreign policy (e.g., Edwards and Wood, 1999; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2004; Mazarr, 2007). This is a rare instance of interdisciplinary communication in the context of the agenda-setting debate. However, the direction of the inspiration is one-way, i.e., from public policy to mass media and communication studies, not *vice versa*.⁴

2.5.1 Multiple stream framework (MSF)

The MSF proposed by John Kingdon (1995) draws upon the garbage can model of organizational choice (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972) designed for agenda-setting and policy formulation. According to the MSF, policy-making is divided into three separate streams: (1) the problem stream, (2) the policy or solution stream, and (3) the politics stream. The former encompasses information about real-world challenges, problems, and questions requiring actions. The policy or solution stream represents politicians, lobbyists, experts, and

⁴ Except for the development of agenda-setting in public policy research derived from communication and mass media studies. Since being established, the field has been developed more or less in isolation.

other actors proposing policies and strategies for finding a policy or, more generally, a solution to a specific problem (Kingdon, 2003). In this respect, value acceptability, technical feasibility, and resource adequacy of a solution/policy are considered (Jones *et al.*, 2016). The third stream contains the influence of public opinion, the impact of elections on political representation and legislation, and administrative changes in political activities. All categories are dynamic, independent of development at other levels, and essential for policy formulation (Kingdon, 2003).

In the case that a problem is recognized (the first stream), the policy/solution stream proposes a potential response (the second stream), and if the political configuration is in favor of a political change (the third stream), a window of opportunity appears. The window of opportunity, also called a policy window, thus represents an opportune moment for a policy change. Once the convergence of all streams (coupling) occurs, it is believed that policy entrepreneurs (the stakeholders promoting an issue) are likely to mobilize resources to find and implement solutions to the acknowledged issue (Kingdon, 2003). Not only does a policy entrepreneur take advantage of a window of opportunity, but the actor also searches for ways to couple the three streams in order to create this kind of policy window and thus make policy-makers act (Green-Pedersen, 2015). Nonetheless, a policy change does not come automatically once a policy window emerges. The role of policy entrepreneurs is essential in the momentum of the coupling of all three streams to obtain a policy change. The agency of a policy entrepreneur is based on (1) the coupling logics used for merging all three streams in a policy window, (2) their access to decision-making level(s) and actors, and (3) the strategies employed to reach a goal (Jones *et al.*, 2016).

As shown above, the MSF is centralized around policy formulation. Nonetheless, Kingdon's framework also discussed how problems get into the problem stream, i.e. agenda-setting. He asserts that problems might be (1) self-evident and thus get on the policy agenda, (2) pushed through indicators, (3) initiated by feedback, but mostly (4) attract political attention through focusing events.

Firstly, the indicators consist of routine monitoring activities or individual studies conducted at a given time. According to Kingdon, the indicators might assess the scale and salience of an item or indicate changes in a problem, thereby initiating a policy action (Kingdon, 2003). Second, feedback acquires either a formal or informal form. Formal feedback consists of systematic monitoring or evaluation of policy activities and their consequences. Informal

feedback is composed of complaints or bureaucratic experience. All sorts of feedback can identify a problem and has the potential to bring it on the agenda (Kingdon, 2003).

Third, focusing events are classified into three categories: (1) a crisis or a disaster, (2) a powerful symbol, or (3) the personal experience of a policy-maker (Kingdon, 1995). A focusing event can work as a warning, or lead to the acknowledgement of a problem and a call for a solution. The latter happens mainly in the case of aggregated events, for example multiple bridge collapses within a short time period, which would suggest a profound problem with bridge construction that needs to be addressed immediately. Concerning the two last types of focusing event, Kingdon (2003, pp. 97-98) believes that:

“In general, [...] a symbol acts (much as personal experiences) as reinforcement for something already taking place and as something that rather powerfully focuses attention, rather than as a prime mover in agenda-setting. Symbols catch on and have important focusing effects because they capture in a nutshell some sort of reality that people already sense in a vaguer, more diffuse way.”

Having said that, personal experience and symbols standing for a policy event, proposal, or problem work instead as a catalyst referring to an already pre-existing perception of a problem. Albeit crises or disasters might also focus on attention that already exists “in the back of minds”, they can also function as an initial driver for the agenda-setting, which is the uniqueness of this type of focusing event (Kingdon, 2003). Despite Kingdon’s definition of three kinds of focusing events, many researchers use the term ‘focusing event’ as a synonym for ‘crisis’ or ‘disaster’ (Princen, 2009; Chaqués-Bonafont, Baumgartner, and Palau, 2015). Since this approach causes confusion in the academic debates, researchers have also used concepts such as exogenous events (e.g., Wood and Peake, 1998) or external events (e.g., McCombs and Zhu, 1995; Baumgartner and Jones, 2002; Alexandrova, 2016) to delineate occurrences that originate outside of politics but have an impact on the policy-making processes.

Contrarily to the fragmentation of the policy process, Kingdon depicts policy-making as unpredictable, and tries to approach it comprehensively. This irregularity is why the MSF incorporates both the agenda-setting and policy formulation stages of the policy-making process. However, the attempted more complex approach alludes to the desire for greater research applicability, which is especially the case in the policy formulation phase of the MSF. The shortcomings, such as the identification of variables in the agenda-setting stage,

are also a problematic part of the approach (Mucciaroni, 2013; Green-Pedersen, 2015). Consequently, it is not surprising that Kingdon's framework is rarely applied in its entirety, i.e., by employing its five major concepts: the three streams, policy entrepreneurs, and policy windows. Since the MSF has been facing difficulties in terms of applicability, it lacks further operationalization and development (Jones *et al.*, 2016). This leads to the fact that MSF is "rather cited than tested" (Mucciaroni, 2013).

Concerning the methodological approach within the MSF, qualitative studies predominantly prevailed (Jones *et al.*, 2016; Heikkila and Cairney, 2014). Since Kingdon failed to offer a methodological approach to capture all three streams, or even to determine the drivers of agenda-setting (indicators, feedback, and/or focusing events), researchers tend to study one stream or a particular set of concepts. In cases where all three streams are simultaneously the subject of study, they tend to be analyzed superficially rather than in depth (Jones *et al.*, 2016).

Interestingly, despite the practical application of the entire MSF facing difficulties in terms of applicability, individual concepts from the framework have become an essential and integral part of the agenda-setting literature. Researchers build on and refer to them even if the MSF is not used in their work. The terms 'window of opportunity' or 'policy window', 'focusing events', and 'policy entrepreneurs' belong to the shared terminology in the public policy field and other disciplines, such as communication studies, and foreign policy. For example, focusing events have been a source of rich academic debate, and have been subjected to numerous reformulations (e.g., Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988; Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Lawrence, 2000; Birkland, 2006; Birkland and DeYoung, 2013). This has led to the distraction of concepts from the initial framework and their distinct redefinition. In any case, concepts developed by Kingdon have fundamentally enriched the research and are inseparably connected to agenda-setting debates.

2.5.2 Actor coalition framework (ACF)

Paul Sabatier (1988) introduced the ACF as a critical reaction to the MSF. According to Sabatier, Kingdon neglected the role of policy actors in his model. Therefore, he developed the alternative framework based on the presumption that a policy change is driven by policy subsystems rather than any specific institution level or coupling of streams. Because a policy subsystem is perceived as an authority encompassing all stakeholders that influence policy and politics in a specific geographic area with respect to a particular policy issue, agency is

seen as the main force for a policy change. The unit might gather actors vertically, through various levels of authority, or horizontally, from across jurisdictions or issues (Pierce *et al.*, 2017).

Sabatier introduces the term ‘advocacy coalitions’, which are understood to be an aggregation of public and private actors from all government and non-government levels who share a set of fundamental beliefs, including policy goals within a particular subsystem, and coordinate their activities aimed at influencing the policy process. Substantially synchronized actions characterize these coalitions. Since multiple advocacy coalitions operate within a policy subsystem, Sabatier claims that, in most policy communities, there are between two and four essential formations of this kind (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Nonetheless, advocacy coalitions are not the only formation in a policy system; so-called policy brokers operate among coalitions, serving primarily as mediators of a conflict between different advocacy coalitions. To fulfil its role, a policy broker needs to be sufficiently knowledgeable about the nature of an issue at the heart of a conflict, have authority, and be trusted by the advocacy coalitions taking part in the conflict (Weible and Sabatier, 2007).

A shared belief system influences issues that a group of policy actors advocate for. The advocacy coalitions “seek to translate their beliefs into public policies (programs)” (Sabatier, 1988, p. 142). Sabatier understands the belief system as a hierarchy, at the peak of which deep core beliefs are placed. The values related to individual, social, and cultural identity are placed in the category of deep core beliefs. They refer to fundamental normative ideas that are highly resistant to change and span distinct policy subsystems (Weible and Sabatier, 2007).

The policy core beliefs are considered to be embedded in the entire policy subsystem, i.e., normative empirical beliefs. The beliefs on the second level are seen as relatively resistant to change but more flexible than the deep core ones. The most pliable category is represented by so-called secondary beliefs, i.e., empirical assumptions and policy preferences that differ per unit within a subsystem. The latter category is supposed to be a driver of competition among advocacy coalitions in a subsystem (Weible and Sabatier, 2007). The secondary beliefs might be changed, which is associated with an alternative definition of a problem, solution, or the application of new strategies in order to achieve a defined goal of the

coalition. The reconsideration of beliefs is called policy-oriented learning (Pierce *et al.*, 2017).

According to the ACF, a policy change is a function of three variables: (1) competition among advocacy coalitions within a policy subsystem as discussed above, (2) external changes to a particular subsystem, and (3) relatively stable parameters of a subsystem in question (Sabatier, 1988). The external changes as the second variable of Sabatier's framework comprise shifts in socioeconomic conditions, public opinions, or governing coalitions, and effects from other subsystems (Sabatier, 1991). The third component of a policy change is characterized by disturbances in the relatively stable parameters of a subsystem such as cultural values, social structures, constitutional settings, the distribution of resources etc. These constraints limit the feasible alternatives to problems and what solutions can be considered, as well as what strategies are available to advocacy coalitions to achieve their goals (Sabatier, 1988).

Sabatier's model has faced similar criticisms as the MSF but for different reasons. Its applicability has been identified as one of its main weaknesses, particularly due to the necessity of interviewing members of advocacy coalitions. Questioning actors embedded in policy-making is a sensitive issue since one might ask to what extent gained information is authentic to real beliefs, interests, and goals that drive coalitions' activities (Weible and Sabatier, 2007). As interviews remain the dominant method in the ACF, this critical remark has not been truly addressed (Pierce *et al.*, 2017).

Besides, Sabatier's model lacks applicability in subsystems without precise formation or with advocacy coalitions that are not formed around beliefs, which is a common feature of politics (Weible and Sabatier, 2007). Despite the criticism of the ACF, the term advocacy coalition(s) has been extensively used, and has become a shared concept of the agenda-setting discussion, similarly to the previously mentioned concepts related to the MSF.

2.5.3 Punctuated equilibrium theory (PET)

In the 1990s, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) introduced a theoretical approach that challenges incrementalism as a driver of policy processes leading to policy change. In any case, incrementalism and the PET share the same roots. Both approaches are derived from the concept of bounded rationality, i.e., that policy-making is conditioned by the choice of relevant actors due to their limited capacities and resources (Simon, 1985), with time and

human capacity among the principal cognitive limitations of information processing. As Zhu (1992, p. 829) states: “[...] the scarce resources force the decision-making body, as a whole, to prioritize the issue brought to the policy agenda, which by its definition is a zero-sum game” because “human information processing is a zero-sum game” (Zhu, 1992, p. 828).

Nevertheless, along with stakeholders’ cognitive constraints, the capacity is also limited by institutional frictions (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Chaqués-Bonafont, Baumgartner and Palau, 2015). These are associated with restraints imposed by rules and procedures wherein the policy process is embedded. Institutional frictions can be classified as decision, transaction, or information costs. Decision costs refer to those decisions that must be taken to reach a political agreement. Transaction costs are related to enforcement and compliance once a decision is made. Information costs are connected with the price of getting a piece of information and gathering knowledge about an issue (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Chaqués-Bonafont, Baumgartner and Palau, 2015). Whereas information costs are believed to be similar throughout policy systems, the same does not apply to decision and transaction costs, which are assumed to vary in every institutional setting (Chaqués-Bonafont and Palau, 2011).

Given cognitive and institutional constraints, Herbert Simon (1957, 1985) distinguishes between serial and parallel processing. Since individual capacities are limited, humans handle information in a serial manner; addressing one item after another. As a result, policymakers also tend to discuss and decide about issues serially. However, organizations are more flexible; they are capable of parallel processing, i.e., handling more issues simultaneously. Policy subsystems could therefore be seen as mechanisms that enable individuals to overcome cognitive constraints and substitute serial processing with parallel processing in a policy system (Baumgartner, Jones and Mortensen, 2018). Otherwise, as Simon (1977, p. 157) points out, “the environment makes parallel demands on the system, but the system can respond only serially”.

One might view serial processing as a causal reason for why policy change comes incrementally, i.e., through slight shifts in the policy attention (Lindblom, 1959; Hayes, 1992). Incrementalism in the policy process dominated the study of policy change from the late 1950s to the early 1990s. Incremental development is perceived as an “evaluative processes [...] employing a trial-and-error approach, and tending towards problem remediation rather than positive goal attainment” (Howlett and Migone, 2011, p. 55).

Peter Hall (1993) broadened the incrementalist approach by classifying policy changes into three types. First, he identified first-order changes as those of a small scale that are required following the adjustment of existing policies or policy instruments; first-order policy changes occur frequently. Second-order changes were defined as those that appear when a prevailing type of policy instrument within an established regime is altered; this type is considered a medium-scale and incremental change. Third-order policy change were labelled as consisting of shifting policy goals leading to a policy reformulation; this phenomenon is called a paradigmatic change based on Kuhn's (1962) notion of paradigm shift.

Analogously to Hall, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) objected to the incrementalist trend in studying policy processes. They claim that a policy change results from two periods: stability and change. The equilibrium, i.e., stable period, is when a policy system is relatively static over an extended timeframe, despite the effect of external forces. However, from time to time, the equilibrium is disrupted by punctuation. This short period of dramatic change is not necessarily caused by a large-scale event, but primarily by a slow and steady accumulation of tiny changes (Baumgartner, Jones and Mortensen, 2018).

The term punctuated equilibrium was developed by palaeontologists Niles Eldredge and Stephen Gould (1972) as a reaction to the theory of organismal evolution by Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace, later known as the Darwinist theory. Eldredge and Gould challenged the assumption of gradual transformation of species over a long-term period with a new model of evolutionary change. Based on their research on fossils, they argued that fossils mostly appear abruptly, persist relatively unchanged, and then become extinct all of a sudden. The palaeontologists named this evolutionary pattern 'punctuated equilibrium' (Prindle, 2012).

The notion of punctuated equilibrium in political sciences builds on Eldredge and Gould's arguments. Also, it follows a similar logic to the avalanche effect, sand landslides, or the nature of earthquakes (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). To give an articulated example, it is one amongst the countless grains in the pile that finally tilts the balance in another direction, but it does not mean that the last grain that caused the slide is the genuine source of it. The aggregation of all the grains generates the landslide; sometimes tiny, sometimes large. This stick-slip dynamic is a part of the logic of punctuated equilibrium in political sciences (Jones and Baumgartner, 2012). Jones and Baumgartner (2005, p. 117) assert that "change may not

occur until some level of friction is overcome, at which point a ‘jump’ in a policy commitment may occur.”

To be precise, the PET does not entirely reject incrementalism as a part of the policy process, but Baumgartner and Jones claim that it is only one side of the coin. Two forces, stability and change, drive the policy process. Stable stages are characterized by negative feedback, which refers to “self-corrective mechanisms to keep the system on an even keel” (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005, p. 6). Negative feedback is a counter-balancing effect to external forces to maintain the homeostatic environment in the policy system. Although negative feedback aims to keep an equilibrium between the steady outputs and external pressures, incremental and small changes are unavoidable (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002).

When the equilibrium in a policy system is unsustainable, usually resulting from a high level of external pressure, a dramatic change caused by positive feedback can occur. The positive feedback comprises either cascading, i.e., a cumulation of an alternative behavior or opinion to an issue, or attention shifting. The latter situation might happen “even without changing [...] minds on the underlying dimensions of choice. They [decision-makers] simply give greater weight to a dimension they had previously been ignoring” (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002, p. 24). On the one hand, attention shifting rarely happens in the case that an issue is determined by one attribute whose development is rather driven by negative feedback. On the other hand, multi-dimensional or complex issues are more prone to positive feedback once a new attribute becomes more salient than it was previously.

Consequently, the issue might lead to a substantial change on the agenda, and thus in the entire policy process (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002). The allusion between the type of feedback and the one/multi-dimensional issue shows promise for further elaboration and operationalization of the PET. However, it is currently inadequate and confusing. First, clarification of what an attribute and a dimension refer to is critical. Second, issue definition composed of one attribute and by more dimensions would also require further research and explanation. Only after following these two steps can the relationship between types of issues and feedback be established.

Moreover, once positive feedback seems to reach its peak and punctuation is imminent, the issue in question is forced onto the macropolitical agenda (Baumgartner, Jones and Mortensen, 2018). Indeed, the positive feedback process does happen on the macropolitical agenda, where even a tiny change in issue definition and stakeholders’ objectives might

cause significant policy shifts (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002). Does it mean that the positive feedback might only occur on the micropolitical agenda? Once there is a macropolitical agenda, can we assume the existence of a micropolitical agenda? How are they defined? What are the differences between these two, and how do they influence the type of feedback? Researchers have so far failed to develop this part of the theoretical framework.

The shift in a policy commitment appears once a so-called policy monopoly, “a monopoly on political understanding concerning the policy of interest, and an institutional arrangement that reinforces that understanding” (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, p. 6), is destabilized. The position of policy monopolies is based on two forces: (1) agenda-setting and (2) issue definition (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Baumgartner, Jones and Mortensen, 2018). Agenda-setting dynamics are therefore believed to encompass a combination of venues where policy monopolies operate, and issue definitions around which policy monopolies are organized (Princen, 2009; Baumgartner, Jones and Mortensen, 2018).

As a result, policy entrepreneurs search for an appropriate venue to advocate for their issues to be included on an agenda, and subsequently incorporated into a policy-making process; so-called venue shopping (Baumgartner and Jones, 2010). There is a wide range of venue types throughout governance levels (Turnpenny *et al.*, 2015), and it is up to a policy entrepreneur to search for one that is receptive to a particular issue and its definition (Princen, 2007; Grugel and Iusmen, 2013; Haverland, de Ruiter and Van de Walle, 2018). The responsiveness of venues is embedded in the composition, task, and institutional authority. A policy entrepreneur thus aims to find the ‘right venue’, and elevates an issue on its agenda (Princen, 2009). Depending on the venue’s role within the agenda-setting part or elsewhere in the policy process, some agendas are more able than others to get a particular issue to the level of government action. By the same token, venues interact with each other. Therefore, an issue on a specific venue’s agenda might get onto another agenda. The interplay between venues and their agendas is called vertical attention dynamics of agenda-setting (Walgrave and Boydston, 2019).

The issues discussed in politics are defined through their policy images, which are always a combination of two components: (1) substance and (2) tone. By substance, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) understand empirical information around which a policy monopoly is organized. The emotional appeals, the so-called tone, relate to the empirical information that a policy monopoly identifies with (Baumgartner, Jones and Mortensen, 2018). However, the

notion of tone as part of policy images is not further developed. It is unclear what kind of values the tone might acquire.

In the context of negative and positive feedback, the authors of the PET talk about one- and multi-dimensional issues. Sometimes, they also interchange a dimension with an attribute. However, since the PET does not explain what the terms dimension or attribute stand for, one might argue there is a critical theoretical gap in Baumgartner and Jones' framework. On the same note, the difference between a policy image and an issue definition in the PET is not clarified. Where the literature does talk about the substance and the tone, it refers to the concept of policy image. Nonetheless, if the theory talks about policy image in the context of the entire framework, 'policy image' and 'issue definition' are seemingly used interchangeably, which creates confusion.

Agenda diversity is supposed to be a crucial tool for measuring the distribution of attention (especially political attention) over issues, thereby understanding agenda dynamics (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Alexandrova *et al.*, 2014; Boydston, Bevan and Thomas, 2014; Baumgartner, Breunig and Grossman, 2019). Contrarily to the MSF and the ACF, the PET offers a methodological approach that measures agenda diversity, i.e., "the degree to which attention on an agenda is distributed across items" (Boydston, Bevan and Thomas, 2014, p. 174). Since it is an essential variable in agenda-setting research, the literature proposes several ways to measure it; to identify the most appropriate indicator Boydston, Bevan and Thomas (2014) analyzed the four most commonly used approaches: the inverse Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), Shannon's H Information Entropy, and their respective normalized versions. They concluded that Shannon's H Index and its normalized form capture changes in attention diversity more appropriately thanks to the higher sensitivity, especially when the degree of diversification reaches the maximum or minimum margins.

The entropy score differs depending on whether Shannon's H Index or its normalized version is applied in the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP), the methodological approach of the PET. The scale of Shannon's H Information Entropy can have a range either from 0 to 1 if the normalized form is used, or from 0 to $\ln(N)$. N refers to the number of potential items on the analyzed agenda, and \ln is the natural log of the proportion of attention an issue on the agenda receives (Boydston, Bevan and Thomas, 2014). While a lower entropy score indicates that attention is focused on a small number of issues, a higher rate means that policy attention is distributed more equally across items on the agenda (Baumgartner, Breunig and

Grossman, 2019). In other words, Shannon's H Information Entropy Index indicates how many issues are on the agenda at a particular moment in time, and thus how much attention each issue receives at/for that specific moment/period (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Chaqués-Bonafont, Baumgartner and Palau, 2015).

The CAP leans on the entropy index, and has become the dominant quantitative approach at the heart of PET studies. The quantitative method has allowed analysis of the size and diversity of distinct agendas (i.e., how many and what issues are placed on it) and has produced large datasets. The CAP provides a coding textbook that includes 21 major topics such as macroeconomics, health, agriculture, international affairs, and governmental operations with 213 subtopics.⁵ In this respect, massive quantitative monitoring of the policy agenda of various countries, particularly from the Western hemisphere and some subnational and supranational organizations,⁶ has been created (Baumgartner, Breunig and Grossman, 2019).

On one hand, this quantitative approach possesses various advantages; it allows a retrospective reconstruction to capture agenda dynamics, composition, capacity, and attention distributed across issues. In addition, it enables the comparison of venues' agendas through a standardized coding system (Alexandrova *et al.*, 2014). On the other hand, the CAP and Shannon's H Index are not equipped to measure the symbolism and the tone of issues on the agenda. Therefore, the CAP scholarship is criticized for being highly descriptive. Even Jones and Baumgartner (2012) acknowledge that qualitative PET studies are essential for the operationalization of the theory. Moreover, the standardized coding of issues does not detect subtle changes in issue definition, and thus changes in policymaking (Alexandrova *et al.*, 2014; Dowding, Hindmoor and Martin, 2016). Given that the founders of the PET claim that the policy image is determined by empirical information (substance) and emotive appeal (tone), methodological ignorance of tone seems to be a significant shortcoming of the dominant methodological approach in the agenda-setting literature (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, 2020; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005).

⁵ Codes might be slightly modified in order to capture the nature of policymaking of a particular policy system or subsystem. The adopted coding system was used in the study of the European Council by Alexandrova (2019).

⁶ CAP datasets are publically available on the Comparative Agendas Project website (<https://www.comparativeagendas.net/>).

The PET is the dominant theoretical framework, and it offers a widely used methodological approach that provides a prevailing geographical focus on Western countries and institutions within agenda-setting research. Despite being prevalent, the framework has several pivotal theoretical, analytical, and methodological shortcomings:

- (1) deficiencies in the conceptualization of the issue definition,
- (2) operationalization of the positive and negative feedback,
- (3) dominant quantitative methodology embedded in the PET.

The concept of the issue definitions remains ambiguous because:

- (1) It is not clear whether ‘policy image’ and ‘issue definition’ are identical terms.
- (2) Tone is theoretically acknowledged as a component of issue definition, but is omitted analytically and methodologically.
 - a. What values does the tone acquire?
 - b. How is it measured?
- (3) Apparently, the issue can be defined as a one-attribute issue, and/or as a multi-dimensional/complex issue. However, the PET does not explain what the attribute and the dimension stand for.

The notion of one-attribute and multi-dimensional issues and their relationship to positive and negative feedback represents another puzzle in the PET. Additionally, PET researchers recommend the differentiation of agendas where positive and negative feedback occur. Nonetheless, they leave many unclarities concerning macropolitical and micropolitical agendas.

The combination of the shortcomings mentioned above illustrates that the PET literature omits the link between the types of issues placed on the agenda and how they are defined. The theoretical and analytical shortcomings in the PET are echoed in the quantitative methodological approach, which ignores the tone of issues in the coding system. It seems self-evident that broadening of the knowledge base to reveal which issues are defined and developed through positive, and which through negative feedback, will be a stepping-stone to discovering how distinct kinds of issues get on the agenda.

To sum up, there is a need to develop the concept of issue definition (especially with tone as an important component), to operationalize the PET, and to develop the academic discussion in the above-indicated direction. The analytical framework proposed by this research offers an interdisciplinary approach to issue definition in order to address at least some shortcomings of the PET. The offered framework also takes advantage of qualitative methodology as an alternative to the dominant approach in PET studies: the CAP. To suggest the interdisciplinary stance, it is necessary to provide a brief synthesizing overview of what agenda-setting stands for, in order to understand the role of issue definition, especially the tone of it, within the process. Second, interdisciplinary literature that offers similar concepts as the tone of issues placed on the agenda is presented, regardless of the agenda type. The concepts of framing and salience overlap to a certain extent with the PET's notion of tone.

2.6 Gaps in the agenda-setting literature

The chapter on concepts and definitions in agenda-setting has revealed several lacunes in the academic debate. First, the dominant focus of the literature is on the traditional focal point of agenda-setting scholarship, i.e., *what* issues get on the agenda. Second, although scholars widely acknowledge that *how* these issues are discussed is no less important, the so-called second level of agenda-setting is rarely reflected in findings. This is exacerbated by the fact that the prevalent quantitative methodology in the field does not record the attributes of issues on the agenda. Furthermore, there is no consensus on what these attributes are, and they are poorly defined theoretically. Quantitative methodology is especially dominant in the investigation of salience and framing. The agenda-setting scholarship is thus far from being communicative with related disciplines, where it might find inspiration in this context. Finally, agenda-setting researchers extensively identify the most important issue on a particular agenda, but they underestimate the positioning of all other issues on the agenda, so called issue hierarchization.

These conceptual gaps in the agenda-setting literature reveal even more severe blank spaces in the theoretical background of the field. Since agenda-setting dynamics are believed to be a combination of venues and issue definitions where the latter component is seen as a driver for stability and change in the agenda-setting (Baumgartner and Jones, 2020), it is startling that issue definition has not received adequate attention by scholars. Although there is agreement among academics in the field that the agenda-setting process requires consideration of both the empirical information of a particular issue and its emotive appeals

(attributes), the substantial aspect of issues remains more in the research spotlight. Interestingly, though the importance of attributes is recognized in the theoretical debate, it is not translated into findings which undermines the entire academic debate.

The above-described gaps are echoed by the fact that debate about qualities determining how issues are discussed on the agenda is inconsistent. Several attributes, such as place and size, i.e., those quantitatively measurable, are often taken into account, but that is where clarity over attributes ends. What attributes determine which issues get onto an agenda? Is there a list of attributes an issue might acquire? Are there mechanisms for ascertaining which attributes are relevant for a particular issue? All of these questions remain unanswered.

The only denominator tracked in the attribute agenda-setting literature is that, along with substance, researchers tend to refer to framing and salience as determinants for issue definition. Framing is seen as an essential tool for reducing the world's complexity, given the cognitive constraints of agenda-setters. Salience is used to identify the issue at the top of the agenda, i.e., the most important problem (MIP). Nonetheless, both concepts are parsimonious in terms of theoretical anchoring, not to mention their methodological deficiencies. The inability of the CAP to capture emotive appeals in data is a critical shortcoming of the dominant quantitative methodology applied in PET studies and beyond. The urgent challenge of the agenda-setting discipline is thus to find a methodology that will meet the theoretical assumptions of the field.

The unsatisfactory theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approach towards salience and framing consequently influences the identification of the MIP and the hierarchy of all issues on an agenda. The disunified and poorly developed understanding of the concept also impedes the comparison of issue hierarchization and MIPs across studies, agendas, and periods. Furthermore, these shortcomings impede the search connections between positive and negative feedback and issue hierarchization. In other words, the development of the concept of issue definition with respect to horizontal attention dynamics and attribute agenda-setting is essential for shedding light on agenda-setting dynamics, particularly what issues get on the agenda through positive and negative feedback and how they influence the stability-change dynamics of agenda-setting.

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned theoretical, conceptual, and methodological gaps in the literature, this PhD thesis aims to answer the question: Which issues on an agenda are defined and developed by negative feedback, and which by positive feedback? In order to

address this research question, the identification of the determinants of issue definitions is essential. Since the agenda-setting literature does not offer a robust nor adequate framework for investigating issue definitions, this research develops the concept based on three attributes: (1) substance, (2) salience, and (3) framing; these attributes determine an issue's position, either primary, secondary, or tertiary, on the policy agenda. The framework proposes to link the positioning of issues on an agenda with how the issues are defined, i.e., through negative or positive feedback.

The objective is to reveal any connection between issue definition and stability-change dynamics of agenda-setting, and hence to fill a gap in the PET and, more generally, in the agenda-setting literature. The qualitative approach, more precisely a combination of three types of content analysis, including a holistic grading method, is applied. The holistic grading method, an innovative approach to content analysis that builds on a pedagogical assessment technique widely used in large-scale exams (White, 1985), allows the identification of the overall quality of analyzed documents, and the capture of subtle changes in issue definitions.

Section II: Analytical framework and research design

3 Analytical framework

This PhD research is situated in the PET to elucidate concept of issue definition, as well as explore how it interacts with with positive and negative feedback. As Baumgartner and Jones (1993, p. 16) claim, “issue definition [...] is the driving force in both stability and instability” but, as discussed in the previous chapters, the concept is vaguely defined. Besides, its emotive aspects are barely considered in the methodology associated with the PET or even in the broader literature.

This research thus develops issue definition and offers an interdisciplinary approach to the concept, combining knowledge from different agenda-setting approaches: the first level of agenda-setting, horizontal attention dynamics, and attribute agenda-setting. Additionally, it identifies substance, framing, and salience as the three dominant attributes of an issue, the definition of which is based on knowledge from research disciplines such as public policy, mass media, and communication studies. The issue attributes allow the identification of the issue’s position within the hierarchy of an agenda.

The incorporation of content analysis is proposed, including a holistic grading method, an innovative approach that originates from pedagogy that is believed to be able to recognize subtle changes in issue meaning and capture it within its complexities. The research thus deviates from the prevailing methodological approach within the PET since it has failed to capture qualitative elements of issues on the agenda. The combination of the further developed issue definition and qualitative methodology exposes the link between the position of an issue within the hierarchy of an agenda and the type of feedback that drives a particular issue. Therefore, this approach shows promise for revealing patterns in how issues are defined and developed from a medium or long-term perspective.

3.1 Issue definition

The framework is centralized around the assumption that issue definition is the essential concept linked to stability and instability in the policy process that enables the destabilization of a policy monopoly (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Since issue definition is thought to be a driver of a policy change or a guardian of stability, its study is necessary for fully understanding agenda-setting dynamics. Given its poor theoretical development and the

critical role of the concept in policy processes, the proposed framework aims to make issue definition a robust notion that can advance the field of agenda-setting scholarship.

Leaning on the reviewed literature, issue definition is understood as a combination of three attributes: (1) substance, (2) salience, and (3) framing. These qualities of an issue are seen as dominant attributes that might incorporate sub-attributes. This section defines dominant attributes one by one in more detail, including their sub-attributes (if relevant). Then, the chapter interlinks the debate around issue hierarchization with issue definition. Identifying the positions of all issues on an agenda is understood as a missing puzzle piece in the PET because it connects issue definitions with feedback, which is a determinant of issue definitions and a driver of their location on the agenda. In this context, the already introduced framework of issue hierarchization (Ullrichova, 2022) is refined for the research purpose, but also for the broader agenda-setting debate. The chapter also clarifies the role of feedback in the analytical framework, and presents the hypotheses. Finally, this part concludes by explaining why EU agenda-setting is the case chosen for this research into issue definitions and their role in agenda-setting dynamics.

3.2 Substance

Substance refers to empirical information, just as in Baumgartner and Jones' policy image compounded by the substance and the tone. Substance thus encompasses the same topics as proposed by the CAP coding textbooks, i.e., 21 major topics that include macroeconomics, health, agriculture, international affairs, and governmental operations, with 213 subtopics. Since major topics are perceived as a category for classification rather than the informative content of an issue, sub-topics are believed to be more guiding in terms of substance.

3.3 Salience

The salience attribute interlinks the use of the concept from media studies, in particular the approach by Kioussis (2004) and the public policy field inspired especially by Ullrichova (2022). Kioussis (2004) defined salience as external (visibility) and internal (valence) dimensions. Attention and prominence comprise visibility. Kioussis (2004, p. 74) understands attention as “externally based because issues are salient with respect to the total lengths of space allotted to them in the entire media or in an entire media text.” Having said that, attention is measured by a volume dedicated to an item, i.e., space and time allocated to a particular issue. Prominence is also driven externally because an object is “salient with

respect to its location within media texts (i.e., within a cluster of other stories, articles, advertisements, etc.)” (Kiousis, 2004, p. 75). On the one hand, prominence is detected through the analysis of placement, size, pictures, pull quotes, and esthetic elements. On the other hand, valence is determined by the internal qualities of an issue, more precisely by so-called affective attributes. The emotional features of an issue can be classified as neutral, positive, or negative, and they shape the tone of an object’s story (Kiousis, 2004).

Interestingly, Kiousis uses terms of valenced and non-valenced issues. Whereas the valenced stories are those with positive or negative scores, the non-valenced issues are identified as neutral objects. He also asserts that the external dimension is a dominant driver of salience as it accounts for more than 50 % of the variance. In comparison, the internal dimension determines less than 30 % of the variance of issues on a media agenda. Kiousis (2004, pp. 75–76) concludes that

[...] the salience of an object is simultaneously determined by its position within an environment (external) and by its implicit qualities or properties (internal). Thus I assert that media salience is a multidimensional construct.

Ullrichova (2022) does not refer to salience the same way that Kiousis does. She actually incorporates the salience aspect in the definition of primary and secondary issues, thereby intending to analyze the issue hierarchization of the agenda. She understands primary issues “as problems that attract the most attention from policymakers in a specific time given the occupied place on the agenda, space devoted to them, and the issue framing” (Ullrichova, 2022, p. 12). Secondary issues occupy less salient positions on the agenda, determined by place, space, and framing. Ullrichova (2022) measures place as an issue’s position indicated in the minutes from analyzed meetings. Space dedicated to an issue discussion is measured based on the length of record in minutes. By framing, she understands whether an issue incorporates an element of urgency or not.

Interestingly, there are intersection points in the work of both scholars. Both authors view space as an essential criterion for the time that relevant actors dedicate to an issue. Scholars also share the conviction that the place of an issue articulates the prominence of an issue. On one hand, Kiousis (2004) also includes valence. In the context of the PET, valence might be considered as tone that acquires positive, negative, or neutral value. On the other hand, Ullrichova (2022) considers urgency disguised as framing as a relevant quality affecting an issue’s position on an agenda.

Leaning on the above-described concepts, the refined framework sees salience as a combination of three sub-attributes: (1) place, (2) space, and (3) urgency. By place, the position of the issue is understood with respect to the whole analyzed document because, as previous research suggests, the order of how issues are discussed or arranged in the text reflects their position on the entire agenda. Space refers to the time allotted to a particular issue. Urgency as a sub-attribute defines whether an issue is perceived as a pressing problem requiring prompt action by relevant actors.

3.4 Framing

Framing is widely acknowledged as a fundamental issue attribute in agenda-setting, and this research is no exception. Issue framing is seen as a mechanism for reducing the complexity of an issue. To a certain extent, it is possible to describe framing as a function of how to work with substance, emphasizing particular aspects of the empirical information.

As framing can acquire distinct forms and take advantage of various ways of selecting information, the approach can be differentiated into four types of framing sub-attribute, namely: (1) problem-solution nexus, (2) perspective, (3) appeal, and (4) tone. Contrarily to the salience attribute, it is not indispensable for an issue to possess all framing sub-attributes.

An issue on an agenda does not necessarily refer only to the problematization of the empirical information, but it can already include a possible reaction or solution to the problem. If this is the case, the issue framing is partly formed by a problem-solution nexus. Perspective indicates whether the issue framing emphasizes a piece of detailed empirical information and eliminates other possible interpretations. These two framing sub-attributes fundamentally shape an issue's empirical information, i.e., create a dimension of an issue. Whether an issue encompasses one or more distinct problem-solution nexuses or perspectives that go beyond the topical scope of a dominant substance,⁷ the issue is perceived as a multi-dimensional issue.

Appeal reflects the relationship of an issue with the venue in whose agenda it is situated. The aim of the appeal sub-attribute is to make an issue attractive to actors operating at a specific venue, thus making it more likely to be placed on that venue's agenda. The fourth framing

⁷ In this research, substance is defined by the first level of coding as per the CAP coding system.

sub-attribute, tone, indicates whether an issue is discussed with a positive, negative, or neutral connotation.

As the literature suggests, the issues on the agenda are not composed only of austere empirical information, but various attributes define them. These variables must be considered if agenda-setting dynamics are to be understood in their full complexity. In this respect, the concept of issue definition is revised. The proposed concept encompasses three dominant attributes (substance, salience, and framing) that determine the nature of each issue on the agenda. The notion builds on the interdisciplinary agenda-setting discussion, including fields such as mass media, public policy, communication, or public administration studies.

3.5 Issue hierarchization

The idea of this PhD thesis is to incorporate the above-defined concept of issue definition, especially the salience attribute, into the framework of issue hierarchization. Previous research (Ullrichova, 2022) has already been mentioned in the context of horizontal agenda-setting and the salience attribute. Its fundamental concept, issue hierarchization, is refined herein, including covering primary and secondary issues as its components. This is expected to make the notion of the issue hierarchization more solid and relevant for the general agenda-setting debate.

Issue hierarchization was developed to encapsulate agenda-setting dynamics with respect to the positions of all issues on an agenda at a given moment in time. The concept leans on the notion that the most salient issues, so-called primary issues, attract the most policy attention at a specific time, and thus occupy the highest positions on an agenda. The position of an issue is viewed as a function of place, space, and framing. Place is defined as the placement of an issue on an agenda indicated in the minutes of a particular meeting; space dedicated to an issue discussion is measured based on the length of the record of it in the minutes; and framing is interchangeable with issue urgency. The higher the place an issue possesses, the more space in the minutes it occupies, the more urgently it is framed, and the higher the position on the agenda an issue will likely have (Ullrichova, 2022).

In order to differentiate between issues in high positions and those in low ones, the term secondary issues was introduced. Secondary issues are considered an integral part of an agenda. However, they occupy lower places, less space is devoted to their discussion, and

they are framed in a less salient way than primary issues. Given the hierarchical composition of the agenda, the group of secondary issues is relative to the primary ones (Ullrichova, 2022).

The introduced framework has one critical theoretical weakness, though. It refers to salience and urgency without clear definitions, and uses these terms interchangeably. This ambiguity leads to confusion about whether salience is a function of place, space, and urgency (or urgent framing), or whether salience is one of the criteria for determining issue position. Although such ambiguity is not novel in the agenda-setting literature, the idea of this research is to refine the issue hierarchization framework so that it systematizes the debate rather than propagating the parsimonious theoretical background.

This research thus suggests incorporating salience (as defined earlier) into issue hierarchization. Consequently, the primary issues are perceived as the most salient issues on the agenda, where salience is a combination of place, space, and urgency. In this context, salience is seen as one of three dominant issue attributes determining an issue's position on an agenda. Place, space, and urgency are understood as salience sub-attributes, as described in the previous section of the chapter. Integrating issue hierarchization into the analytical framework is essential for understanding what issues are defined and developed from a medium-term or long-term perspective. As the PET suggests, positive feedback produces the most important (primary) issues through a dramatic change in the agenda. Issue hierarchization is an essential part of the analytical framework for identifying patterns between issue definitions, including the development of issue definition with a medium-to-long-term perspective and the probability of policy change in the further policy-making process.

Given that the scope of salience among the identified secondary issues significantly varies,⁸ the analysis herein also proposes broadening the framework to include another category, so-called tertiary issues. While primary issues occupy the most salient positions on an agenda, secondary issues are less salient than primary but more salient than tertiary issues. The tertiary category denominates the least salient issues.

⁸ The high variance in the degree of salience among secondary issues is acceptable once it concerns different time periods. However, it should not occur among secondary issues situated on the agenda at one moment in time.

The framework of issue hierarchization allows not only the classification of an issue's position in an agenda hierarchy, but also provides an innovative approach for looking at a political issue. Issue hierarchization allows scholars to identify the attributes that define an issue, including the empirical information, the salience, and the affective attribute: the framing. Developing the analytical framework of issue hierarchization is key to revealing how issues are defined and how their definitions develop over time.

3.6 Positive and negative feedback

Primary issues are believed to be the result of a dramatic change or shift in the agenda, i.e., punctuation driven by positive feedback, since the most important issues on the agenda are in the most promising position to initiate a policy change. Nonetheless, Baumgartner and Jones (2002) identify two kinds of positive feedback: (1) cascading and (2) attention shifting (as previously detailed in section 2.3). Does one form of positive feedback occur more frequently than the other? Do both types produce a primary issue? Can positive feedback be found as a driver of a secondary or even tertiary issue, or does it generate only primary issues?

Not only do unclarities gather around the relationship between issue definition and hierarchization and positive feedback, but the role of negative feedback is also uncertain. Is negative feedback excluded as being a potential driver of a primary issue? Do gradual changes in issue definitions apply only to secondary and tertiary issues? Finally, the boundaries between positive and negative feedback are ambiguous, as well. Do specific issues tend to be determined by positive or negative feedback? Can an issue be driven by both types of feedback over a medium-term or a long-term period?

It would be too ambitious to answer all of the questions asked above. However, they serve as a stepping-stone for the formulation of the hypotheses to answer the research question: What issue definitions on a policy agenda are determined and developed incrementally (by negative feedback), and what issue definitions are formed via punctuations (by positive feedback)? To answer these questions, the analytical framework incorporates Baumgartner and Jones' understanding of types of feedback in agenda-setting. Positive feedback takes two forms: (1) cascading and (2) attention shifting. While the former is perceived as the manifestation of an alternative attitude to an issue amassing over time, the latter is seen as a shift of attention to a so far unheeded problem (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002). Negative feedback is understood as 'self-corrective mechanisms' (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005) that

maintain the stability of the policy agenda through small changes in issue definitions (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002).

3.7 Hypotheses

Issue definition allows specification of issue position on an agenda within the hierarchy of that agenda. Since primary issues are believed to be more prone to policy change, the link between issue definitions and hierarchization sheds light on whether the way an issue is defined has an impact on its position. The offered framework demonstrates the potential of an issue definition to trigger policy change or the tendency to maintain the stability of the policy monopoly. Whereas the first situation is expected to happen once an issue is defined through the positive feedback, either through attention shifting or cascading, the second case is supposed to occur when an issue follows the incremental pattern, i.e., negative feedback. Based on this argumentation, the following hypotheses were formulated.

H1: Issues defined by positive feedback are the most salient issues on an agenda; they are labeled primary issues.

H2: Issues defined by negative feedback can be placed in all positions on an agenda, i.e., primary, secondary, and tertiary.

The hypotheses are tested on EU agenda-setting because it is an exemplary case of agenda-setting as an indicator for analyzing policy-making dynamics and understanding the European integration process in general (Alexandrova *et al.*, 2014; Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014; Ullrichova, 2022).

3.8 Case study: EU agenda-setting

This research uses the case study of EU agenda-setting to answer the research question of which issue definitions on the agenda develop incrementally (negative feedback), and which through punctuations (positive feedback). Indeed, the dynamics of issue definition are drivers of the entire policy-making process. As Baumgartner and Jones (2020) assert, agenda-setting dynamics are a combination of venues and issue definition. Hence, the venue of the study must first be defined. Firstly, the chapter addresses why the PhD thesis studies the agenda-setting dynamics of the European Union. It explains why the research has chosen the European Council agenda as an appropriate venue to analyze the development of issue definitions.

In any case, it is fundamental to be acquainted with the specificities of EU studies. First, EU agenda-setting is characterized by high vertical and horizontal fragmentation of venues. Second, the process might be described as a positive-sum rather than a zero-sum game. Third, the receptiveness of an issue to an EU venue is characterized by its Europeanness. Fourth, EU political discussions are considered less responsive to the media and public than other policy agendas. All of these (four) features of EU agenda-setting are discussed in detail in this chapter. At the end of the chapter, arguments that justify the analysis of EU agenda-setting are presented.

Agenda-setting in EU policy-making is believed to be an illustrative case, where setting the agenda indicates features of the political system and serves as an expressive ‘tracer liquid’ for studying policy-making through the circulation of issues (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014). In other words, analyzing agenda-setting processes facilitates understanding the European integration process and policy-making, in which the issues and their definitions are understood as crucial indicators for revealing its dynamics (Alexandrova et al., 2014; Alexandrova and Carammia, 2018). Besides, as the EU agenda is apparently less responsive to media and public discussion issues, it is an ideal case for studying the policy agenda while ignoring its interaction with media and public agendas. The EU case also potentially offers insight into appeal, i.e., searching for so-called Europeanness. Appeal otherwise might be a precarious framing sub-attribute for the analysis. Since Europeanness is believed to be a fundamental aspect of an issue’s attractiveness for EU agenda-setters and venues, it helps to make the research solid.

The EU is considered a complex structure with many venues (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993) that are fragmented vertically and horizontally (Daviter, 2007). Therefore, interaction between EU venues, so-called vertical attention dynamics (Breeman and Timmermans, 2019), is a prevalent subject of analysis (Bocquillon and Dobbels, 2014; Thaler, 2016; Alexandrova, 2017). The complicated venue structure of EU policy-making is susceptible to horizontal and vertical blockage. Horizontal blockage occurs when stakeholders supporting different issue definitions are mobilized, i.e., counter-mobilization. Vertical blockage occurs when stakeholders “are reluctant to allow the EU to play a role in this area beyond that of a platform for exchanging views” (Princen, 2009, p. 154). In other words, issues eliminated from EU agenda-setting represent a significant element for consideration (Tallberg, 2004; Princen, 2009; Bátorá, 2017).

Given the fragmentation and openness of the structure, EU agenda-setting is a complex process that occurs on various levels that interact with one another. As a result, EU agenda-setting is sometimes described as a positive-sum rather than the traditional zero-sum game. If an issue disappears from the agenda of an EU venue, it does not necessarily mean that it is entirely off the EU agenda. Commonly, an issue is delegated to a different level of EU policy-making; thus, it is transferred from one agenda to another (Alexandrova, Carammia and Timmermans, 2012). An issue might be raised to the EU agenda from below (e.g., from the agenda of a Directorate-General (DG) to the European Commission) or delegated from above (Princen and Rhinard, 2006). Therefore, it is possible to speak about delegation from a macro- to the micro-level of policy-making and vice versa (Alexandrova, Carammia and Timmermans, 2012). One can understand that this aspect might correspond to the notions of the macro- and micro-political agendas in the PET.

The idea that EU agenda-setting is conducted by an extensive number of venues and their agendas is supported, for example, by studies that deal with the comitology system of the European Commission (Princen and Rhinard, 2006; Blom-Hansen, 2008; Grugel and Iusmen, 2013). Researchers illustrate the interaction and competition between these venues, particularly Directorates-Generals. Venues as actors promote distinct issue definitions to ensure their place on the EU agenda (Blom-Hansen, 2008; Grugel and Iusmen, 2013; Haverland, de Ruiter and Van de Walle, 2018).

Since the European Union has limited authority regarding what issues can be handled at the EU level, the issue has to be appropriate for this platform (Princen, 2007). In this respect, the Europeanness of an issue is essential for elevating it to the EU agenda. Making an item more European is critical for an agenda-setting strategy to succeed (Princen, 2009; Alexandrova and Carammia, 2018). The EU is integrally connected to the creation of the Single Market, therefore one of the most effective and common strategies of making an issue appealing to the EU is to connect a problem to one of the classic EU policies, e.g., the Single Market, the Common Agriculture Policy, etc. (Princen, 2011; Alexandrova, 2016). This means that a story should be constructed around an issue to justify why it is European in scope and deserves to be handled on the EU level and not in a different policy system (Princen, 2011).

Contrarily to national political agendas, the EU agenda is supposed to be less responsive to media and public debates. Given the democratic deficit of the EU and the absence of EU

media operating in the market, the EU agenda is not in the spotlight of other types of agenda. This generates less pressure on the EU agenda and affects factors that influence the agenda-setting within the EU (Princen, 2009; Alexandrova and Carammia, 2018; Haverland, de Ruiter and Van de Walle, 2018). Issues from the EU agenda find their way into media and public discussions through different channels, primarily through the agendas of the national governments of EU Member States (Haverland, de Ruiter and Van de Walle, 2018). This implies that the pressure from media and public discussion leans on national policy agendas, and only then is it transmitted to the EU level. Nonetheless, this still means that contact between the EU and media and public agendas is indirect. As a result, researchers have identified topics that have been placed on the EU agenda that are entirely outside of the public interest of European citizens. Interestingly, Alexandrova, Rasmussen, and Toshkov (2016) assert that, for example, foreign affairs and defense policies that are discussed on the EU level are outside of the sphere of influence of the public opinion of individual EU Member States.

Following on from the idea that the EU agenda is the aggregation of agendas of EU venues (Ullrichova, 2022), this PhD thesis analyzes the agenda of the European Council. Firstly, since the research is interested in studying negative and positive feedback, and the latter is expected to take place primarily on the macro-political agenda (Baumgartner, Jones and Mortensen, 2018), the EU macro-political agenda, that is to say the agenda of the European Council, is studied.

Second, the role of the European Council in the EU agenda-setting process sets the basis of the strategic guidelines for EU actions, and thus defines the main EU agenda. Additionally, it is considered to be a gatekeeper for national interests, and the highest informal agenda-setter in terms of its ability to get an issue onto the agenda of any other EU body (Alexandrova and Timmermans, 2013; Alexandrova et al., 2014; Alexandrova, 2015; Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2016; Carammia, Princen and Timmermans, 2016; Thaler, 2016; Alexandrova and Carammia, 2018). The agenda of the European Council is one of the closest agendas to the decision-making point of EU policy-making, with significant formal and informal agenda-setting powers. Besides, supposing that the European Council (EUCO) agenda impacts the agendas of all other EU venues (Alexandrova, 2016; Alexandrova and Carammia, 2018), it seems to be an ideal case study for analyzing EU

agenda-setting dynamics with a focus on the influence of positive and negative feedback on issue definitions and hierarchization.

4 Method and resources

This research applies a three-level qualitative content analysis to identify the dominant attributes – substance, salience, and framing – that define issues on the agenda in question. Since every attribute acquires specific values, a particular type of content analysis is used to appraise each attribute, given its peculiar features. Substance is analyzed by means of conceptual content analysis, salience is measured by the holistic grading technique (an innovative approach to content analysis), and relational content analysis is used for the identification of the framing and its sub-attributes. The methods used are discussed in detail per each level of the research in separate sections below.

4.1 Conceptual content analysis: the first level of analysis

The first stage of the analysis identifies the first attribute of issues on the agenda: the substance. For this purpose, qualitative conceptual content analysis is used. The first stage of the research is the manifest analysis; the analysis searches for information that is available in the resources. To identify what was said, or in the case of this research, which issues are placed on the policy agenda of the European Union, deductive reasoning of conceptual content analysis is applied (Bengtsson, 2016).

The deductive approach requires predetermined subjects or codes that a researcher looks for in the text. In this respect, the first level of the analysis leans on the codes already defined by the coding textbook of the CAP methodology, the so-called Comparative Agendas Project Issue Codes (CAPIC). This PhD research uses a version of the CAPIC that was slightly modified for EU agenda-setting to reflect the specificities of EU policies, and which encompasses 21 major topics:⁹ (1) macroeconomics; (2) civil rights, minority issues, and civil liberties; (3) health; (4) agriculture and fisheries; (5) labor and employment; (6) education; (7) environment; (8) energy; (9) migration;¹⁰ (10) transportation; (12) law and

⁹ Please note that numbers 11 and 22 do not stand for any major topics even in the original coding textbook. In order to be consistent with the original numeration and more comparable with other studies using the CAPIC textbook, this research retains the original numeration.

¹⁰ The original CAPIC system uses the code immigration, but it was modified to migration for the purpose of this research since the language of the European Union, in this case of the European Council, is instead linked to general issues of migration encompassing more elements than only immigration. Interestingly, sub-

crime; (13) social policy; (14) regional and urban policy and planning; (15) banking, finances, and internal trade; (16) defence; (17) space, science, technology, and communication, (18) foreign trade; (19) international affairs and foreign aid; (20) EU governance and government operation, (21) public lands, water management, and territorial issues; (23) culture and media¹¹ (Alexandrova *et al.*, 2014).

Sub-topics specify each CAPIC major topic.¹² The assignment of sub-topics can be done in three ways. Firstly, the coding system of each major topic consists of several sub-topics such as inflation, prices, interests (101); unemployment rate (102); monetary supply (103); budget and debts (104), and others, in the case of the macroeconomics as the superior category. Every major topic also has the general sub-topic (X00)¹³, which is coded in two situations. Either once the issue is indeed of a general character, or if the substance is composed of various sub-topics and it is not possible to recognize which one is the dominant one. Each major topic might also be accompanied with the sub-topic ‘others’ (X99).¹⁴ This sub-topic is assigned when the issue substance corresponds with no other sub-categories or any of their combinations, or to the general one.

The CAPIC also incorporates so-called dummy variables that can be applied to all major topics if relevant. The codes refer to the EU Member States (EUMS), International Country Codes (ICC), the Cohesion Policy (COHSPOL), Enlargement (ENL), and Foreign Policy (FP), and they reflect what kind of meeting is coded (informal/formal/extraordinary/meeting at the level of the Head of State or Government). For this research, the latter code category is modified because only meetings at the level of the Head of State or Government are considered. It is also necessary to pinpoint that this analysis does not include the ICC or EUMS code for when a particular state organizes the meeting from which a document is coded because it is not found relevant for this research. The same approach applies for the dummy variables. The complete code system embedded in the EU Policy Agendas Project Codebook (Alexandrova *et al.*, 2015) used for the conceptual content analysis of this PhD thesis is available in Appendix 1.

topics of the original immigration code also contain other aspects of migration rather than being concentrated only on immigration. Therefore, it seems more relevant for this analysis to use the term migration.

¹¹

¹² The number of sub-topics per major topic varies from six – public lands, water management, and territorial issues (21) – to 21 – EU governance and government operations (20).

¹³ (100) for the first major topic, (200) for the second major topic, (300) for the third major topic, etc.

¹⁴ (199) for the first major topic, (299) for the second major topic, (399) for the third major topic, etc.

Using the CAP coding system has at least two fundamental advantages. First, though the CAPIC uses quantitative methods and this thesis uses a qualitative approach, data from different studies using the same coding textbook are comparable to a certain extent. Second, the CAPIC is a verified and solid system that ensures well-defined categories for the classification of issues. Hence, it is a good starting point for the conceptual content analysis.

The first level of this analysis identifies major issues for the EU agenda, sub-topics and also sub-sub-topics. The former two refer to the practice of CAP coding. Since major topics are perceived as a category for classification rather than informative content of an issue, sub-topics are considered to be more of a guiding measure than major topics. For this work, the latter serves as an element of an operationalization of the third level of analysis. In other words, a particular perspective or problem-solution nexus, i.e., sub-attributes of framing, are to a certain extent similar to sub-sub-topic(s) of a specific issue. The sub-sub-topics identification verifies the dimensions determined in the third analysis. Besides, it must be pointed out that a major issue can be coded several times on the agenda at once if the agenda refers to it with several pseudonyms.¹⁵

4.2 The holistic grading method: the second level of analysis

The second level of the analysis uses a holistic grading technique in order to identify the second attribute of issue definition, i.e., the salience. Holistic grading is an innovative content analysis method originating from a pedagogical assessment technique widely used in large-scale exams (White, 1985).

The holistic grading method identifies the general qualities of an analyzed document and combines two elements: a rubric and anchors. The former serves as criteria for the text evaluation that are associated with grades. The latter refers to text sections relating to the designed rubric criteria. They work as a sign of criteria the text relates the most. Each text then receives an appropriate grade (Hawkins, 2009).

The rubric of this research consists of three categories: (1) primary issue, (2) secondary issue, and (3) tertiary issue. While a primary issue is considered the most salient one on an agenda at a given moment, a secondary issue is viewed as less salient than the primary issue, but more salient than a tertiary issue. A tertiary issue is understood as the least salient issue on

¹⁵ As has often been the case for international affairs and foreign aid (19) as the reader will see in the empirical chapter, in particular in section 6.3.

an agenda. Every category of the rubric results from a combination of the sub-attributes of salience: place, space, and urgency (see Annexes 2 and 3). Annex 4 sheds light on which combinations refer to which grades, and thus to what type of issue.

The first two sub-attributes acquire values from 1 to 3. In terms of place, 1 refers to the first third of positions on the agenda and 3 to the last third. If there are only three issues on the agenda, the value of 1 is given to the first and 3 to the last. If only two issues are on the agenda, only 1 and 2 are used. If the entire discussion is dedicated to one particular issue, its place is classified as the first one. It might also happen that the number of issues situated on the agenda is not divisible by three. In this situation, the central grouping (number 2) is assigned to a larger scope of issues that are neither on the top nor the bottom of the discussion. The variable of place is relative to the entire agenda. Therefore, the holistic grading technique is used, as it enables the comprehensive identification of the quality of the whole document.

Since the space relevant for a particular issue is assessed based on the length of the record in the coding document, number 1 refers to long records, 2 to mid-length ones, and number 3 to short records. The length of the record is measured with respect to the entire analyzed document. Therefore, a long record in one case might be three pages, whereas in another case it may be as short as half a page. Given the potentially confusing variability, a worked example is now presented to clarify how this works: consider a situation where one record is three pages long, another record is two pages long, three records are half a page to a page long, and two other records are only one paragraph of 3 to 6 lines; in this case, the first two records given a score of 1, the three records that are described on half a page to a page are given a score of 2, and the rest receive a score of 3.

The third sub-attribute of salience, urgency, is either present or not present in an issue definition. Therefore, the third attribute will be tagged with 0 (not present) or 1 (present). Urgency is recognized by the presence of particular connotations, such as from phrases like ‘urgent issue’, ‘a matter of urgency’, ‘(high) priority’, ‘crisis’, ‘serious concern’, ‘it requires urgent/swift action/to act immediately’, ‘it is of vital importance’, etc.

To sum up, each issue defined in the first level of the analysis is reviewed in the context of its place, space, and urgency. The issue receives a grade for each sub-attribute in the defined scope (1-3 for the place and the space, 0-1 for the urgency) based on the anchors (position of the record, length of the record, presence/absence of urgent language). The numerical

combination of the three criteria then defined the grade, i.e., the primary/secondary/tertiary position of an issue on the agenda (see Annex 4). Once an entire document is coded, the analysis reveals how many primary, secondary, and tertiary issues the document contains.

4.3 Relational content analysis: the third level of analysis

The third level of this research applies relational content analysis to expose the last dominant attribute of an issue on an agenda. The third dimension of the research is interested in revealing how framing sub-attributes interact with issue definitions (Wilson, 2011), i.e., perspective(s) or appeal emphasized within an issue, i.e., whether the perspective(s) or appeal that are emphasized within an issue are linked to a specific solution, and if they are framed in a positive, negative, or neutral way.

This type of analysis requires an open-minded approach to identify relevant subjects and relationships between meaning units in documents, therefore the inductive reasoning approach is used (Bengtsson, 2016). Each issue identified through the first level of the analysis is coded in terms of all four sub-attributes of the framing: (1) perspective, (2) problem-solution nexus, (3) appeal, and (4) tone. Since the third level of the qualitative content analysis needs a more interpretative approach to the meaning units to understand how a particular issue is discussed on the agenda, it is also possible to refer to it as a latent analysis (Bengtsson, 2016).

The first sub-attribute is linked to a specific emphasis on the informative content within the issue. Since the perspective refers to an emphasis on a specific informative aspect, the task of the third level is to search for whether an issue incorporates a particular informative emphasis, and if so, which one. It should be stressed that the number of perspectives searched for is not limited, since one issue might encompass several of them.

The problem-solution nexus links the empirical information of an issue to a response. The relation between an identified challenge and its possible answer is essential for this sub-attribute. The analysis thus determines whether an issue on an agenda contains a suggestion for a solution. Relational content analysis allows searching for these relationships among subjects in documents.

In order to eliminate the subjectivity of the inductive approach of the third level of the research, sub-sub-topics identified in the conceptual content analysis are employed. Since sub-sub-topics pertain to the empirical information of an issue, they are considered to belong

either to perspectives or to be part of the problem-solution nexus within an issue. The coded sub-sub-topics in the first level serve as a verification for correctly identified framing sub-attributes from the text.

Since the case study is the EU agenda, the searched for appeal is whether the issue is framed as a European issue and is relevant for a particular EU body whose agenda it resides upon and from which it is discussed. In this respect, it is searched for an issue's connection with traditional EU policies such as the Single Market, the Common Agriculture Policy, or justification for why the issue should be discussed within a particular agenda which might refer, e.g., to a commitment of the EU.

Lastly, the research seeks to recognise the tone with which an issue that is presented. Tone can be qualified as negative (-1), neutral (0), or positive (1). If the tone cannot be recognized, a neutral connotation is assigned. This means that a tone value is given to each issue placed on an agenda, which is not necessarily the case for other framing sub-attributes. An issue could therefore be defined then through only a certain subset of framing sub-attributes and not all of them.

4.4 Resources

Following the idea that the EU agenda is the aggregation of agendas of EU venues (Ullrichova, 2022), this thesis analyzes the agenda of the European Council. The research covers the European Council Conclusions issued from December 2014 to March 2022, with reference to the two latest constellations of the European Union represented by Jean-Claude Juncker and Ursula von der Leyen's compositions of the European Commission. During this period, the European Council was chaired by Donald Tusk (December 2014 – November 2019) and Charles Michel (December 2019 – March 2022).

Based on the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the European Council meets regularly four times a year. If the outcome of a formal meeting is an agreement on a joint approach, the European Council Conclusions (EUCO Conclusions) are published. In cases where no official conclusions are reached, the Council issues a report in the form of remarks or conclusions by the President of the European Council. Alongside EUCO Conclusions, formal meetings can also have different outcomes, such as joint statements, guidelines, declarations, or procedures. The European Council also convenes for

special meetings, the outputs of which can be in of all the aforementioned formats (General Secretariat of the Council, 2016).

The members of the European Council also meet informally, and the President of the European Council usually summarizes the outcomes of informal discussions as remarks. Occasional outputs are made in the form of statements or declarations. As a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the European Council has also incorporated videoconferences into the meeting culture. The content of the online debates is usually recapitulated in the conclusions or the remarks by the President of the European Council. Videoconferences are categorized as formal meetings unless explicitly stated otherwise.

All of the above-discussed outcomes of European Council meetings were considered in this research. This includes 79 documents, of which 64 were outcomes of formal meetings and 15 were outcomes of informal ones. The outputs of the formal meetings in the studied period encompass 39 EUCO Conclusions, 16 remarks or conclusions provided by the President of the European Council, four joint statements, three sets of guidelines, one declaration, and one procedure. The informal meetings were recorded through 12 remarks of the President of the European Council, two statements, and one declaration. Out of 79 negotiations of the European Council, 13 were held online.

The analyzed documents are available online in the public register of Council documents.¹⁶ All primary resources were identified through this register via the meeting calendar of the European Council in order to incorporate all meetings from December 2014 to March 2022. It also needs to be stressed that the research takes into consideration summits and meetings at the level of Heads of State or Government, not on the level of preparatory bodies. This data selection is in the line with the assumption that the EUCO agenda reflects the agendas of its preparatory venues.

This PhD thesis uses 79 primary resources that are analyzed by means of three different types of qualitative content analysis. It examines each resource three times, thereby providing complex findings for those 79 resources, employing distinct methods to capture the EUCO agenda in its full complexity. This is also the reason why outputs from both formal and informal meetings of the European Council are included in the analysis.

¹⁶ The register of the European Union is available here: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/>.

4.5 Interpretation

The three-leveled analysis allows the identification of all dominant attributes of issues on an agenda in order to obtain a complex depiction of issue definitions. The three levels use different types of qualitative content analysis depending on the nature of each attribute to ensure that no dominant attribute is excluded from the study. Additionally, this enables the correlation of attributes within an issue definition, and the potential observation of specific patterns, i.e., revealing whether there is a tendency to prioritize a specific issue substance, or whether a particular issue definition tends to more regularly occupy specific positions. Moreover, the studied 8-year-long period facilitated the tracking of how an issue definition was developing, and hence gave good insight into the impact of either positive or negative feedback on issue definitions, and more generally on the agenda-setting dynamics.

The empirical section of this thesis discusses all three levels of the analysis separately. The last empirical chapter correlates the findings from all levels in order to understand the issue definitions in their full complexity, and links them with hierarchization and feedback. The first empirical chapter presents the outcome of the contextual content analysis and reveals what major topics with sub-topics got onto the EUCO agenda in the analyzed period. In this respect, topics are divided into groups depending on the frequency of their presence on the EUCO agenda: absent, rarely discussed, and (more) frequently discussed. Concerning the frequently discussed issues, the range of frequency varies, which needs to be taken into consideration, as well.¹⁷

The second empirical part presents the salience of issues in the context of the entire period and identifies patterns of their attitude on the EUCO agenda. Since the rarely discussed issues on the EUCO agenda do not provide enough data for observation of long-term tendencies, and hence for the development of their definitions on the agenda, their investigation was done separately from those frequently situated on the EUCO agenda. Issues that occurred on the agenda frequently exhibited four types of attitude with respect to the degree of the salience: (1) highly dynamic, (2) stable primary, (3) those avoiding being primary or tertiary, and (4) stable tertiary issues.

The third empirical part of the chapter looks deeper into the framing of issues in order to understand the development of this part of issue definition. The outcome revealed that some

¹⁷ This is the reason why the last group of issues included (more).

major issues could be merged into one topic, given their framing. Therefore, a few major categories of issues identified by the conceptual content analysis were modified. This step shows the importance of qualitative research for a detailed understanding of issue definitions and their dynamics on the agenda. The following chapter discusses every major topic separately, and presents its all framing sub-attributes. This section also investigates issue framing development, including shifts, to indicate whether an issue is driven by negative and/or positive feedback.

The last section of the findings proposes a cross-leveled interpretation with the intention of revealing the agenda-setting dynamics and issue definitions in their full complexity. The chapter identifies two issues per type of issue attitude on the agenda determined on the second level of the analysis, and discusses their substance, salience, and framing together. Every section also includes a concluding part that correlates the issue definition and its development with negative and/or positive feedback.

Section III: Empirical analyses

5 Issues on the EUCO agenda

The first empirical chapter of the PhD thesis introduces the findings of the first level of the analysis, i.e., what issues were situated on the agenda of the European Council between December 2014 to March 2022. First though, it is important to mention what issues did not manage to get on the EUCO agenda. Second, issues that were sporadically elevated to the agenda are discussed, including education (6), social policy (13), civil rights, minority issues, and civil liberties (2), labor and employment (5), public lands, water management, and territorial issues (21), and foreign trade (18). The third section of the chapter presents issues that were situated on the agenda more frequently. It starts with issues that were less often debated, and finishes with those issues that are seemingly an inseparable part of the EUCO agenda given that policy-makers draw attention to them at almost every single meeting. The first empirical section also outlines what sub-topics are correlated to their respective major topics. It also needs to be stressed that if an issue is associated with more than one sub-topic, it is assigned to a major topic.¹⁸ Additionally, the chapter indicates the position of major topics on the EUCO agenda in the context of issue hierarchization. The intention is to reveal whether some or all major topics show a tendency for a particular attitude within agenda-setting dynamics. Third, it is essential to discuss the specificities of major topics on the EUCO agenda.

5.1 Absent or rarely discussed issues

The first level of this analysis identified 292 issues¹⁹ (meaning major topics based on the CAPIC coding scheme) that had appeared on the agenda of the European Council between December 2014 to March 2022. Interestingly, of the 21 major topics, four were not found on the EUCO agenda: *agriculture and fisheries* (4); *transportation* (10); *regional and urban policy and planning* (14); and *culture and media* (23).

¹⁸ This practice follows the CAP approach, which proceeds identically. See Appendix 1 for a detailed explanation.

¹⁹ Major issues were identified that could not be connected only to one major code since their content was cross-topical without a dominant major topic. If this occurred, the issue was assigned with both codes. A major issue assigned with two codes was then counted twice for the final number of issues identified on the EUCO agenda between December 2014 and March 2022. The reason for this approach was to avoid the alienation of any major issue from its performance in agenda-setting dynamics.

Six other major issues were detected five or less times, meaning they form less than 2 % of all issues on the agenda. The major topic of *education* (6) appeared on the EUCO agenda only once. This happened on the occasion of the informal meeting of the European Council in November 2017, when EU Heads of State and Government discussed the importance of inclusiveness in education, in particular of international experience through the Erasmus+ framework to understand and get known European cultures (Council of the EU, 11/2017).

Social policy (13) got onto the EUCO agenda twice as part of informal debates (Council of the EU, 11/2017, 5/2021a). In both cases, the issue was discussed as a general commitment to building a more social Europe in order to ensure more equality and solidarity for EU citizens. The issue on the EUCO agenda in May 2021 refers to the document from November 2017, where it was mentioned for the first time in the analyzed period.

Major topic number 2 – *civil rights, minority issues, and civil liberties* – appeared on the EUCO agenda three times. Interestingly, in December 2018, the issue was coded as two separate major topics in the minutes of the same meeting, but with different sub-topics. It was coded once in the context of the citizens’ dialogues (200), and once referring to the fight against antisemitism, racism, and xenophobia (201) (European Council, 12/2018b). The citizens’ dialogues were then reiterated on the EUCO agenda the following year (European Council, 12/2019a).

Labor and employment (5) were also mentioned on three occasions. This is the only major issue that was never identified separately, always having been shared with another major code. It appeared twice with *macroeconomics* (1) (Council of the EU 4/2020, 5/2021b) and once with *foreign trade* (18) (European Council, 4/2017). In the former situation, it discussed either employment policy in general terms (500) (Council of the EU 4/2020) or ensuring employment security (501) (Council of the EU, 5/2021b). In the latter case, it concerned seasonal and migrant workers (529) within the relationship between the EU and the United Kingdom after its exit from the EU (European Council, 4/2017).

Public lands, water management, and territorial issues (21) was also a rarely discussed issue on the agenda. The members of the European Council debated it four times throughout the year 2018, but not before or since (European Council 3/2018b, 6/2018b, 12/2018a; Council of the EU 9/2018). On three occasions it was discussed as a shared item with *international affairs and foreign aid* (19) and/or with *EU governance and government operations* (20) (European Council 6/2018b, 12/2018a; Council of the EU 9/2018). In all of these cases, it

was accompanied by the sub-issue of dependencies and territorial issues (2105). Contextualizing the debate around this issue could be helpful here; this issue was present from when the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom after its exit from the EU was on the table. The timeline of its appearance on the EUCO agenda is also concurrent.

Foreign trade (18) is the last of the major issues that occupied the EUCO agenda with less than 2 % of policy attention within the analyzed period. It is worth mentioning that it was always linked to trade agreements and cooperation (1802) with various countries or regions (European Council 3/2017, 4/2017, 12/2019a, 10/2021).

5.2 (More) frequently discussed issues

Energy (8) became a major issue on the agenda in question on seven occasions. Mostly, it appeared as a general sub-topic (800) (European Council, 3/2015, 12/2015, 3/2022; Council of the EU, 3/2016, 3/2022) or under the code of other (899) (European Council 11/2018, 10/2021). Interestingly, the former situation occurred once energy was identified as a shared issue; with *international affairs and foreign aid* (19) (European Council, 11/2018) and *macroeconomics* (1) (European Council, 10/2021). The details on the framing of the *energy* issue on the EUCO agenda are discussed in the following sections by means of the third analysis and framing sub-attributes.

The 17th major topic – *space, science, technology, and communication* – was elevated to the EUCO agenda seven times. In 2015, it was identified for the first time in the analyzed period together with macroeconomics. In this instance, it was assigned with the sub-topic of telephone and telecommunication (1706) (European Council 6/2015). Since then, it has been coded separately and always with the general sub-issue (1700), where the topic of the digital agenda is also found (European Council 6/2017b, 10/2017a, 3/2018a, 10/2021; Council of the EU, 9/2017, 5/2021a).

Banking, finances, and internal trade (15) were elevated 11 times as a major topic. Most often, the item was linked with the Single Market sub-issue (1530) (European Council, 12/2015, 10/2016, 12/2016, 3/2018a, 12/2018b, 3/2021, 3/2022; Council of the EU, 3/2022), sometimes with the competitive policy (1540) (European Council, 6/2018a, 10/2020a), and once it encompassed a combination of distinct sub-issues (1500) (European Council, 10/2016).

The seventh major issue on the CAPIC – *environment* – occurred on the agenda in question 12 times. In the majority of cases, the debate over the environment concerned the global warming sub-issue (731) (European Council, 6/2017b, 12/2017a, 3/2018a, 12/2018b, 3/2019b, 6/2019, 10/2019b, 10/2020b) or general environmental matters (700) (European Council, 12/2018b, 12/2019a, 12/2020, 5/2021; Council of the EU, 5/2021a). It is also worth mentioning that, in the analyzed timeframe, this major topic was first identified on the EUCO agenda in June 2017, not earlier.

Law and crime were identified on 16 occasions. This major topic was dominated by the sub-topic of domestic security concerns (1227), where domestic threats are understood as those that appear within EU borders (Council of the EU, 2/2015, 3/2020b, 10/2020, 11/2020, 12/2020, 2/2021b, 6/2021; European Council, 12/2015, 6/2017, 3/2018a, 12/2018b, 3/2019b, 6/2019, 12/2021). This sub-topic was associated with its superior one in all cases except for one situation when it was substituted with the general matter (1200) (European Council, 10/2018). Additionally, the 12th major topic was identified as a shared item in four cases. Once with the *health* major issue (3) (Council of the EU, 3/2020b) and in the other cases with *defense* (16) (European Council, 6/2017, 10/2018; Council of the EU, 3/2020b, 12/2020).

The third CAPIC major topic – *health* – first appeared on the EUCO agenda in March 2020 and not earlier. From then, it was regularly discussed on the level of the European Council, which is supported by the fact that between March 2020 and December 2021, it appeared 20 times on the agenda in question. As for the sub-topics, it generally covered a combination of CAPIC sub-categories (300) (Council of the EU, 3/2020a, 3/2020b, 10/2020, 11/2020, 1/2021, 2/2021a, 3/2021, 5/2021a; European Council, 3/2020, 10/2020a, 10/2020b, 12/2020, 2/2021, 3/2021, 5/2021, 6/2021, 10/2021, 12/2021). It also occasionally appeared as a shared topic. It occurred once with *law and crime* (12) (Council of the EU, 3/2020b) and once with *international affairs and foreign aid* (19) as major topics (Council of the EU, 2/2021a).

Macroeconomics (1) was detected as a major topic 21 times during the analyzed period. It appeared on the agenda of the first and the last coded document. It was also discussed every single year in the defined period. Although it was oftentimes associated with the general sub-topic (100) (European Council, 12/2014, 10/2015, 12/2015, 2/2016, 3/2017, 6/2017b, 3/2019b, 6/2019; Council of the EU, 2/2015, 3/2016, 6/2016), there were also cases linked with concrete sub-categories, such as the concurrence with monetary supply and particular

EU economic bodies (104) (European Council, 3/2015, 6/2015, 6/2018a, 6/2021; Council of the EU, 3/2017, 4/2020, 3/2021, 5/2021b) and industrial policy (108) (European Council, 12/2016, 3/2021). There were a few occasions when *macroeconomics* was determined as a shared major issue with *labor and employment* (twice) (European Council, 4/2020; Council of the EU, 5/2021b) or *space, science, technology, and communication* (once) (European Council, 6/2015).

Defense (16) was identified as a major topic in 22 situations spread out over the duration of the entire period of observation. The predominant combination of sub-topics resulted in general defense categorization (1600) (European Council, 6/2015, 12/2016, 3/2017, 6/2017b, 12/2017a, 6/2018a, 10/2018, 12/2018b, 12/2020, 2/2021, 12/2021, 3/2022; Council of the EU, 9/2018, 3/2022) and the remarkable number of cases was linked with the other code (1699) (European Council, 10/2019a, 10/2019b, 12/2019a, 3/2020; Council of the EU, 4/2020, 8/2020). Defense alliances and security assistance (1602), as well as military capabilities (Council of the EU, 2/2021b) and coordination of armed service (1604) (European Council, 10/2017a) were both assigned once. It might not be surprising that the *defense* major topic was identified several times as a shared issue along with *law and crime* (three times) (European Council, 6/2017b, 10/2018, 12/2020) and with *international affairs and foreign aid* (once) (European Council, 10/2019a).

Migration (9) came onto the EUCO agenda in April 2015 and stayed an integral part of it for the entire study period, with 23 references as a major topic. Except for two occurrences, it was always connected with a combination of sub-topics, and therefore associated with the general code (900) (Council of the EU, 4/2015a, 4/2015b, 9/2015b, 3/2016, 9/2018; European Council, 6/2015, 10/2015, 12/2015, 2/2016, 6/2016a, 10/2016, 12/2016, 3/2017, 6/2017b, 10/2017a, 6/2018a, 10/2018, 12/2018b, 6/2021, 10/2021, 12/2021). The two exceptions in terms of sub-topics appeared in September 2015, when border control (950) dominated (Council of the EU, 9/2023a), and later, in February 2017, when illegal immigration and repatriation (933) shaped the discussion on the level of the European Council (Council of the EU, 2/2017). It is worth noting that the ninth major topic was identified only once as a shared issue, namely with *international affairs and foreign aid* (European Council, 12/2021).

Two major topics dominated the EUCO agenda in the 2014-2022 period regarding the number of occurrences in discussions. *EU governance and government operations* (20) were

elevated to the studied agenda 53 times, and *international affairs and foreign aid* (19) even in 81 cases. Furthermore, the 19th and 20th major topics even shared a place on the agenda on three occasions (European Council, 4/2019, 10/2019a, 12/2019b). Interestingly, in December 2018, they were identified as a major topic sharing three codes: *EU governance and government operations*, *international affairs and foreign aid*, and *public lands, water management, and territorial issues* (European Council, 12/2018a). The shared issue with three major topics occurred only a single time in the analyzed timeframe.

EU governance and government operations were associated with various sub-topics, meaning that it was oftentimes linked with the general term (2000), namely in 26 cases out of 53 (Council of the EU, 9/2016, 9/2017, 11/2017, 2/2018, 5/2019, 2/2020, 4/2020, 6/2020, 11/2020; European Council, 3/2017, 12/2017a, 6/2018a, 12/2018b, 6/2019, 7/2019, 10/2019a, 10/2019b, 12/2019a, 12/2019b, 7/2020, 12/2020, 3/2022). In addition, sub-codes such as relations among EU Member States and EU bodies (2040) (European Council, 6/2015, 10/2015, 12/2015, 2/2016, 6/2016a, 6/2016b, 4/2017; Council of the EU, 6/2016) and EU Treaties and their reform (2033) (European Council, 4/2017, 6/2017a, 10/2017b; 12/2017b, 12/2018a, 4/2019, 12/2019b; Council of the EU, 11/2017) were assigned to the 20th major topic quite frequently (both in 10 cases). The rare associations appeared with nominations and appointments (2005) (European Council, 3/2017, 7/2019), EU institutions and their relations (2032) (Council of the EU, 2/2018, 5/2019), and relations between EU and regional governments (2041) (European Council, 12/2016).

International affairs and foreign aid took a landslide lead on the number of occasions when members of the European Council discussed the topic. Based on the previous major topics, it is not surprising that even this major topic was in most cases associated with the general/combination sub-topic (1900) which happened in 52 situations (European Council, 12/2014, 3/2015, 12/2015, 6/2016a, 10/2016, 12/2016, 3/2017, 10/2017a, 12/2017a, 3/2018a, 6/2018a, 6/2018b, 10/2018, 11/2018, 12/2018a, 12/2018b, 3/2019a, 4/2019, 6/2019, 10/2019a, 12/2019a, 12/2019b, 10/2020a, 10/2020b, 12/2020, 2/2021, 3/2021, 5/2021, 6/2021, 10/2021, 12/2021, 3/2022; Council of the EU, 2/2017, 2/2018, 9/2018, 4/2020, 6/2020, 2/2021a, 2/2021b, 3/2021, 5/2021a, 2/2022, 3/2022). The second most dominant sub-topic was the category of other (1999) (Council of the EU, 2/2015, 3/2017, 2/2018, 6/2020, 8/2020, 10/2020, 2/2021a, 2/2022, 3/2022; European Council, 10/2015, 3/2018a, 3/2018b, 10/2019b, 2/2021, 5/2021, 6/2021, 2/2022, 3/2022). A few occasions

were linked to foreign aid (1901) (European Council, 12/2019a), international finance and development (1906) (European Council, 2/2016), international organizations (1926) (European Council, 10/2019b), international terrorism (1927) (Council of the EU, 8/2020), or EU enlargement (1980) (European Council, 6/2019, 10/2019b, 3/2020).

Table 1: Number of occurrences of CAPIC major issues on the EUCO agenda

CAPIC number	CAPIC major issue	Occurrence
1	Macroeconomics	21
2	Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties	3
3	Health	20
4	Agriculture	0
5	Labor and employment	3
6	Education	1
7	Environment	12
8	Energy	7
9	Migration	23
10	Transportation	0
12	Law and Crime	16
13	Social Policy	2
14	Regional and Urban Policy and Planning	0
15	Banking, Finances, and Internal Trade	15
16	Defense	22
17	Space, Science, Technology, and Communications	7
18	Foreign Trade	5
19	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	81
20	EU Governance and Government Operations	53
21	Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues	4
23	Culture and Media	0

5.3 Specific features of major topics

Apart from issues off and on the EUCO agenda, there are two specific features on the level of major topics that should be mentioned. They refer to the structure of analyzed documents, especially through two terms: ‘external relations’ and ‘other items’. The minutes from meetings of members of the European Council, and in particular EUCO Conclusions are usually structured as headlines of a particular issue, which afterwards are described in more detail. On the one hand, this format simplifies the identification of major topics on the

agenda. On the other hand, it might be precarious, mainly if the headline format is avoided in some cases.

An alternative format of the structure was an omnipresent obstacle to the identification of foreign affairs. A few EUCO Conclusions used the headline of ‘external relations’, under which specific international affairs were enumerated. Consequently, the first level of analysis coded it as one issue with the corresponding number of a major topic.²⁰ Besides, the EUCO Conclusions sometimes omitted the umbrella term for the group of external affairs, and listed them separately with individual and concrete headlines. If this occurred, every problem of this kind on the agenda was associated with an appropriate major topic.

Likewise, the headline ‘other items’ is used in EUCO Conclusions to encompass distinctive items under one term. However, since this headline usually labels highly diverse issues, it was impossible to assign one major topic to them, just as in the case of external relations. Therefore, these ‘other’ issues each received their own code of a relevant major topic.

This chapter serves as an introduction to the empirical part of the PhD thesis. It described the first level of the analysis that identified which major topics with sub-topics can be found on the agenda of the European Council. As the first empirical chapter indicated, a few major topics were oftentimes classified as shared issues. This effect appeared in the case of 11 out of 16 major topics identified on the EUCO agenda. Thus, deeper analysis is required to examine this phenomenon in the following sections. Moreover, sub-topics assigned to issues on the agenda were frequently a combination of a larger number of these categories. The aggregation of various sub-topics into one is not necessarily a desirable outcome in terms of research. Consequently, the identification of sub-sub-topics in the third level of the qualitative content analysis becomes increasingly important for revealing how issues are defined and how issue definitions develop over time.

6 Issue hierarchization on the EUCO agenda

The second empirical chapter leans on the second level of the analysis, which reveals the issue hierarchization of issues identified in the first level of the research. The following section examines whether some patterns of attitude on the agenda of the European Council regarding issue hierarchization might be observable. First, the chapter searches for

²⁰ In most cases, the major topic referred to international affairs and foreign aid (19), but it is not a rule. Moreover, the sub-topic also needs to be associated, which differs case by case.

similarities in issue performance among those issues that were rarely discussed on the level of the European Council. The second section discusses those issues that were present on the meeting agendas frequently. The latter part is then divided into four sub-sections according to the identified patterns of issue attitude:

- 1) highly dynamic issues;
- 2) stable primary issues;
- 3) issues that are likely to avoid either primary or tertiary positions;
- 4) stable tertiary issues.

6.1 Rarely discussed issues

Though it is difficult to find a trend in the performance of issues that were only on the EUCO agenda five or less times during the examined timeline, the following section of the second empirical chapter discusses whether there it is still possible to observe any similarities in the attitude of all six issues, i.e., *education; social policy; civil rights, minority issues, and civil liberties; labor and employment; public lands, water management, and territorial issues; and foreign trade.*

The issues of *education; social policy; civil rights, minority issues, and civil liberties; and foreign trade* were always identified as secondary or tertiary issues, but they never managed to get to the top of the EUCO agenda. Interestingly, this is not the case for *labor and employment* and *public lands, water management, and territorial issues*. These two issues were, on the contrary, identified as the most salient issues on the agenda in most cases. Therefore, it might be interesting to look in more depth at these two topics to see if there are any particularities that might explain their specific behavior in contrast to other occasionally discussed issues on the EUCO agenda.

The *labor and employment* issue is the only one that was always coded as a shared one. Interestingly, where the issue was allotted with *macroeconomics*, it was classified as the primary one. However, it fell to the secondary position where it was associated with *foreign trade*. In other words, it seems that the macroeconomics element contributed the degree of salience needed for *labor and employment* to be elevated to the top of the agenda.

Public lands, water management, and territorial issues appeared in the negotiation between the EU and the United Kingdom about their future relations after the British withdrawal from

the EU. Interestingly, this major topic was predominantly classified as a primary issue. It was considered to be a tertiary issue on a single occasion. As indicated in the previous chapter, this major topic was always linked to the sub-topic of dependencies and territorial issues. The third level of the analysis offers even more details in this respect; consequently, it can be used here to explain issue performance within an agenda hierarchy.

The discussion concerned the territorial dispute over the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and the status of Gibraltar. The criteria for issue hierarchization reveal that the documents always dedicated much space to this issue (a long record). Apart from one occasion, it always occupied first place in the minutes. As a result, except for its tertiary status in September 2018, the territorial issue was classified as the most salient. As this issue was elevated onto the EUCO agenda in March 2018 and dropped off it after December 2018, it seems it was a salient issue of a short-term period that was exceptionally handled on the level of the European Council. This might explain its unique performance among the group of issues that were rarely situated on the EUCO agenda and that usually remained in secondary or tertiary position.

The issue hierarchization also discovered another feature for this group of issues. Interestingly, if issues did not share their identification with *macroeconomics*, just as *labor and employment* in two occasions, they were never identified as urgent issues. Even the territorial situation within the Brexit negotiations was never recognized with the urgent connotation. It thus implies that those issues are not discussed with urgent language. This also supports the previous finding, i.e., that these issues tend to belong among the least or moderately salient problems.

6.2 (More) frequently discussed issues

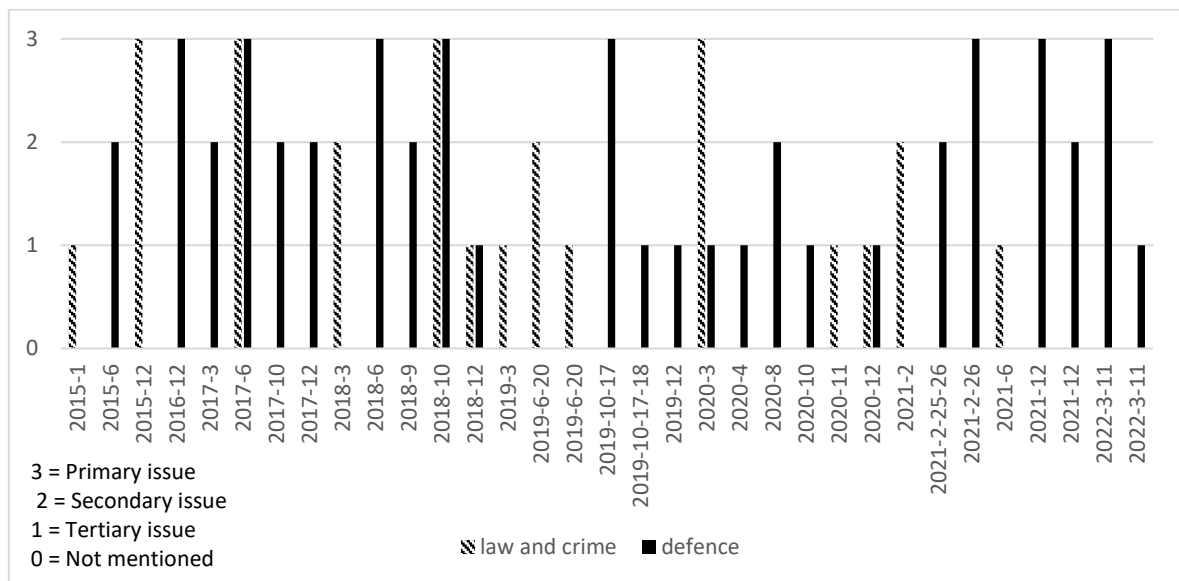
The performance of issues that are present more frequently on the EUCO agenda can be divided across three models: (1) highly dynamic issues, (2) stable primary issues, (3) issues avoiding one of the extreme positions, i.e., primary or tertiary, and (4) stable tertiary issues. The highly dynamic attitude applies to the biggest group of issues. The second type of performance is applicable to two issues. Three issues avoid primary or tertiary positions and oscillate between the remaining ones. The last kind of attitude relates to only one issue on the EUCO agenda: *external relations*.

6.2.1 Highly dynamic issues

The largest group of issues with similar attitudes on the agenda in question is characterized by a highly dynamic degree of salience, i.e., by frequent changes in their positions within the hierarchy of issues. The five major issues from the first level of the analysis are designated as highly dynamic; they are *macroeconomics*; *law and crime*; *defense*; *space, science, technology, and communication*; and *EU governance and government operations*.

It is worth noting that there is no tendency for a gradual increase or decrease in the degree of salience among highly dynamic issues. Salience seems to grow and diminish individually, as demonstrated in Figure 1 for the two issues *law and crime*, and *defense*. Similarly, just as the overall grade for the position of issues is subject to change, the same is observable in each criterion defining the issue hierarchization.

Figure 1: Issue hierarchization of *law and crime* and *defense* on the EUCO agenda

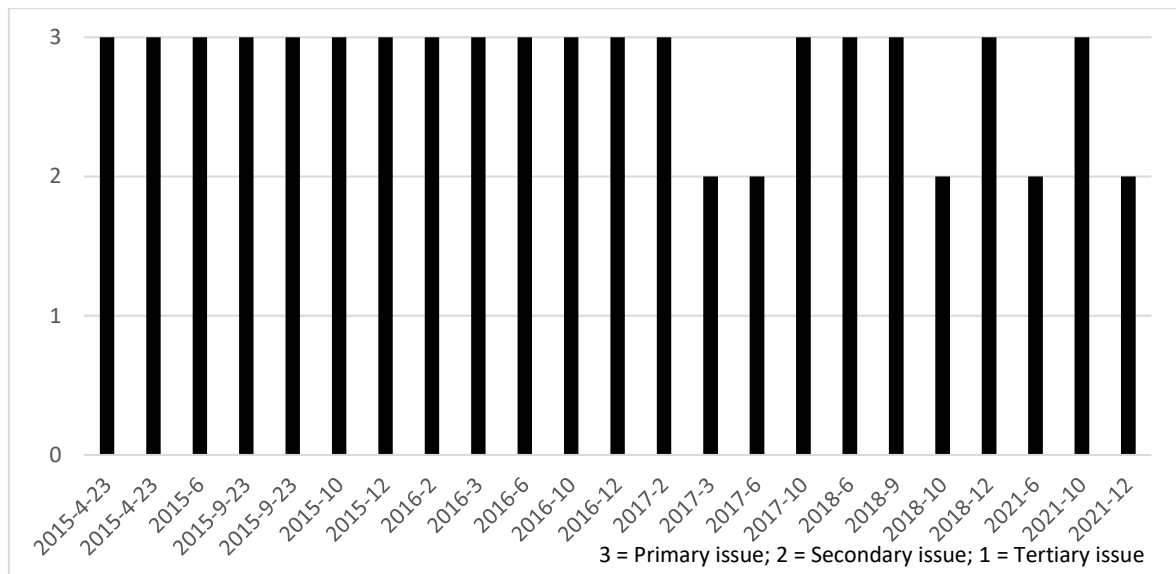


6.2.2 Stable primary issues

The EUCO agenda encompasses highly salient problems that, if they are discussed, are mainly situated at the top of the agenda. These types of issue might thus be denominated as ‘stable primary issues’. This research has revealed two issues that comply with this attitude on the EUCO agenda: *health* and *migration*.

In the examined period, health appeared on the EUCO agenda for the first time in March 2020. Out of 19 references, the issue was classified as primary in 14 cases. It dropped to the second position four times, and it was identified as a tertiary issue once. This indicates that there is a high degree of salience connected to the *health* issue in the discussion among the members of the European Council. The *migration* issue followed the same pattern since it was detected at the top of the agenda hierarchy 18 times out of 23 references. Concerning the remaining five situations, migration was always classified as a secondary issue. It never fell into the tertiary position (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Issue hierarchization of *migration* on the EUCO agenda



Both issues tended to hold the primary position, especially early after their elevation to the agenda. This is illustrated by the case of *migration*, which maintained its position at the top of the agenda between April 2015 (the first reference in the defined timeline) and February 2017. Only after then was it sometimes labeled as a secondary issue. A similar slight diminution in salience is also observable in place and space as determinants of issue hierarchization. Though the first references in resources were associated with the highest level of salience per each criterion, it was progressively reduced. Additionally, it is

interesting to see the development of urgency as the last salience sub-attribute whose value was often positive, even at the end of the examined period.

Arguably, this trend of decreasing salience among stable primary issues indicates that they are only steady for a limited period. Consequently, their degree of salience gradually decreases; hence, issues tend to appear in lower positions on the agenda than did previously. Nonetheless, this assumption would need more research in order to be confirmed.

6.2.3 Issues avoiding either primary or tertiary position

The combination of the first and second levels of qualitative content analysis revealed a group of issues that either tend to avoid the primary position and alternate between secondary and tertiary ones, or rarely drop to the bottom of the agenda and somewhat fluctuate between primary and secondary issues. The former type of issue performance can be seen for the *environment* issue (see Figure 3), and the latter is visible for *energy*, and *banking, finances, and internal trade* (see Figure 4). However, this does not mean that issues in these categories will never be found in the positions they otherwise avoid; in all three aforementioned cases, issues were found in the those positions once within the examined timeline.

Figure 3: Issue hierarchization of *environment* on the EUCO agenda

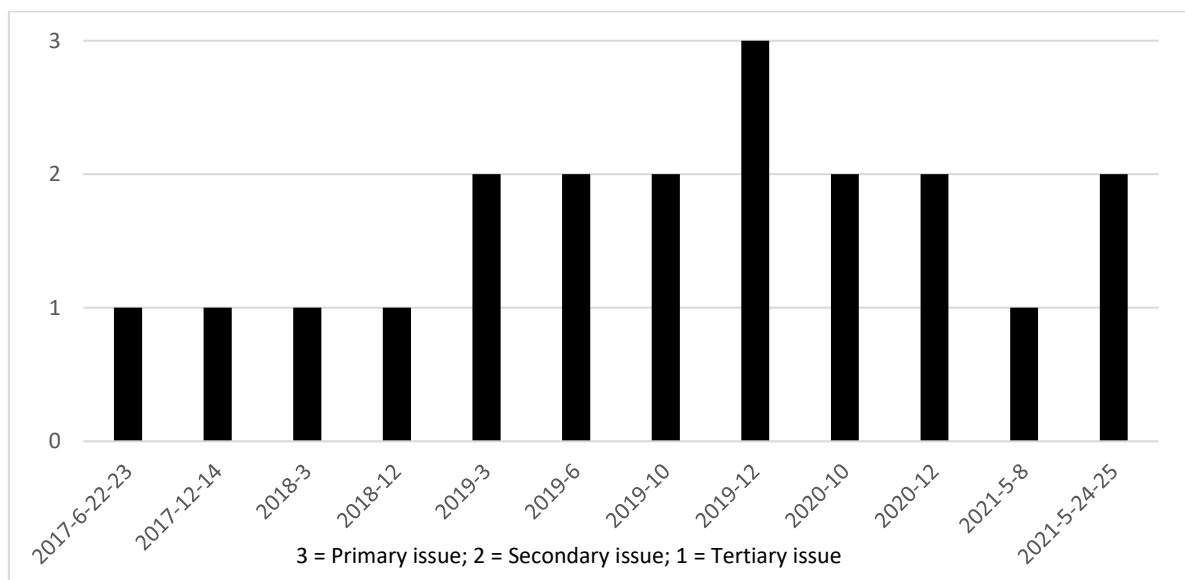
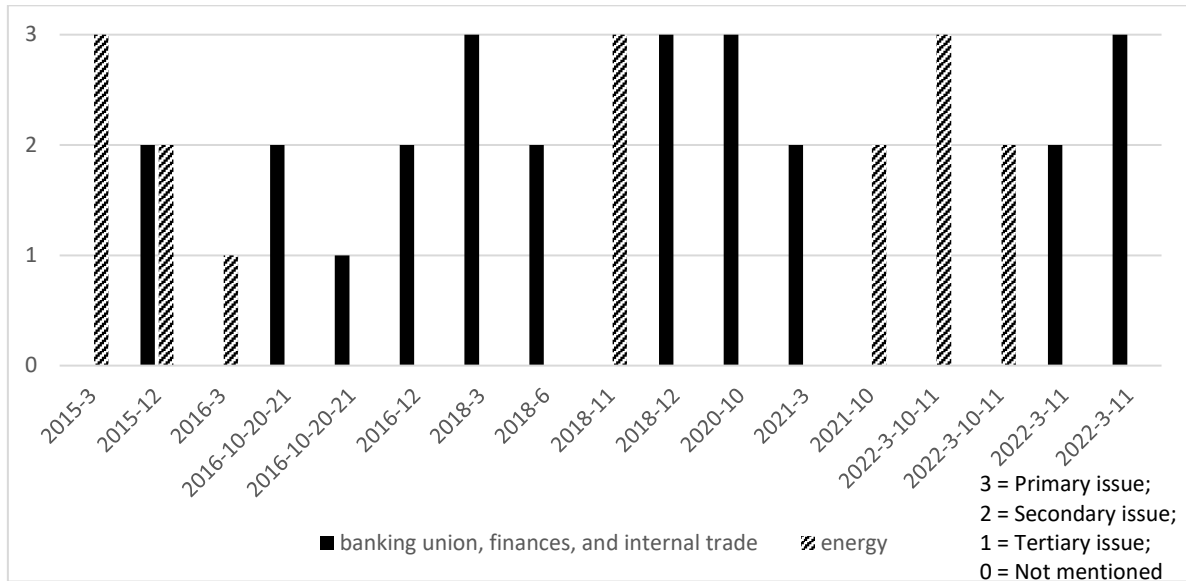


Figure 4: Issue hierarchization of *energy* and *banking, finances, and internal trade* on EUCO agenda



Once issue hierarchization is disaggregated per each determinant, the *environment* issue was mainly associated with the place number 2 or 3; that is it having been mentioned in a medium-length or short record. Unusually, it received a positive value for urgency only once. The *energy* issue and the *banking, finances, and internal trade* issue were logically assigned with 1 or 2 values for the place, having had medium-length to long records. Like the *environment* issue, the urgent connotation was usually not present as a sub-attribute.

6.2.4 Stable tertiary issues

*International affairs and foreign aid*²¹ unveiled a unique attitude on the agenda of the European Council. Though it was by far the most frequently discussed issue, thus becoming an indivisible part of the discussion on the EUCO agenda, it rarely became the most salient issue. In other words, *international affairs and foreign aid* were classified as a primary issue in less than 23 % of cases. The exact percentage is valid for its identification as a secondary issue. This means that the most common major topic on the EUCO agenda was simultaneously the least salient in the majority of occurrences (more than 54 %).

When one closely examines the individual salience sub-issue, it can be observed that the reference to *external relations* is usually the last one in the resources (place). There is not

²¹ For the purpose of this thesis, international affairs, foreign affairs, or external relations substitute the 19th major topic from the CAPIC scheme since issues identified with this code are usually named as external relations in primary resources.

such a clear-cut explanation for space, though; its value indeed fluctuated significantly. The same applies to the last sub-attribute of salience, urgency.

Since the performance of *external relations* differs from other findings, it seems appropriate to tackle whether the research approach was representative with respect to this issue sample. The EUCO Conclusions usually address individual international affairs under the umbrella term of external relations. As already mentioned, if this situation occurred,²² the research coded the issue as one major topic and not as separate items with their own code.

One might argue that this approach disadvantages the issue in question, among others on the agenda. It seems necessary to subject this assumption to critical assessment, particularly once it concerns issues whose performance was classified as unique. Had the analytical approach of this research proceeded conversely, it would have first identified more major topics of international affairs in the examined period. Moreover, it would have influenced space as one of the determinants for issue hierarchization. Since the same range for space would have needed to be divided among more issues of foreign affairs, the records would also have needed to be classified as shorter than they initially were. This means that a reversed approach to *external relations* would lead to the classification of a higher number of foreign affairs as major topics on the EUCO agenda. Furthermore, it would support that *external relations* are mostly identified as tertiary issues. Having said that, the approach chosen for this research eliminates potential discrepancies in its findings rather than supports them.

The second empirical chapter of the PhD thesis showed that the performance of issues on the EUCO agenda evinced similar features, which led to the identification of four patterns of issue attitude: (1) highly dynamic, (2) stable primary, (3) avoiding being tertiary or primary, and (4) stable tertiary. Given the modest appearance of rarely discussed issues on the EUCO agenda, they were not included in the stage of identification of a particular style of attitude because it might have distorted the findings of this level of the analysis. However, despite their occasional presence on the agenda, it is possible to see the same patterns in their behavior. They serve as an optimal operationalization for the four identified styles of issue attitude within the issue hierarchization.

²² This phenomenon occurred in 15 documents out of the entire dataset of 79 primary resources.

7 Issue framing on the EUCO agenda

This chapter discusses the results of the relational content analysis of each major topic identified in the first level of the research. The analysis follows the development of an issue definition, and identifies shifts in an issue framing. Every sub-section investigates all framing sub-attributes relevant to the issue, starting with perspectives and problem-solution nexuses, then appeal and tone. If a specific perspective or problem-solution connection is associated with a particular appeal or tone, it is explicitly mentioned. Otherwise, dominant framing sub-attributes that define the issue on the EUCO agenda are searched for.

It also needs to be highlighted that the third level of analysis reveals that certain major topics of the CAPIC scheme overlap. The first level of the analysis associated a few major topics with a sub-topic that, at the same time, coincides with a perspective within another major topic. An illustrative example is how *foreign trade* always deals with trade disputes and agreements. Since the sub-issue of *international affairs and foreign aid* concerns international cooperation that might also encompass foreign trade, these major topics were merged. The same applies to the *law and crime* topic, which appeared to be a perspective of the *defense* issue as it always related to the security concerns of the EU territory. Instead of classifying *defense* separately from *law and crime*, the research hereafter has merged them into one major issue of *defense and crime*. Similarly, *public lands, water management, and territorial issues* were incorporated into *EU governance and governmental operations*, given that the former topic always related to territorial problems within the EU-UK negotiations after the UK referendum about leaving the EU.

Likewise, several economic topics – *macroeconomics; labor and employment; and banking, finances, and internal trade* – were merged into one economic issue named ‘economics and the Single Market’. This is based on the fact that the Single Market falling under internal trade figured in the macroeconomic elements as a way to boost economic growth. Besides, the employment policy was a perspective of growth rather than a separate major topic.

Two topics were rarely placed on the EUCO agenda, yet at the same time, the third level of the analysis did not situate them as a perspective of another major issue. *Education* was mentioned once in the analyzed period, and was framed in the context of the Erasmus+ mobility, the benefits of learning about different European cultures, and thus knowing more about each other. The topic’s appeal was related to the importance of education, especially

the experience within the Erasmus+ mobility, for the future of Europe (Council of the EU, 11/2017).

Civil rights, minority issues, and civil liberties were linked from two perspectives. Firstly, an emphasis was put on the importance of the dialogue with citizens (European Council, 12/2018b; 12/2019a). Secondly, the debate stressed the necessity to fight against xenophobia and antisemitism in Europe (European Council, 12/2018). All other major topics, including those that were merged from initial codes, are discussed in separated sections of this chapter.

7.1 Health

The *health* issue was elevated to the EUCO agenda in March 2020 with the COVID-19 outbreak (Council of the EU, 3/2020a). In the studied timeline, it was always discussed in the context of the pandemic. Because the COVID-19 pandemic developed dynamically, so did the framing of the *health* issue on the EUCO agenda. Therefore, the changing perspectives and problem-solution nexuses need to be discussed. This section thus looks at shifts and development, especially of these two framing sub-attributes. Since the third level of the analysis did not find similar deviation in appeal and tone, they are discussed in the general context of the health issue.

Initially, EC members focused on how to limit the spread of the disease. The early discussions of the European Council over the COVID-19 outbreak centered on the provision of medical equipment, research promotion, potential socio-economic consequences, and repatriation of EU citizens. The EU approach to the COVID-19 outbreak comprised solutions, such as coordination mechanisms between the EU Member States and research funding. There were other problem-solution nexuses within the debate, such as transparent and fact-based communication as an answer to disinformation, traveling restrictions, and multilateral cooperation in order to limit the transmission of COVID-19 (Council of the EU, 3/2020a, 3/2020b; European Council, 3/2020, 10/2020).

The economic perspective was essential in the first meetings dealing with health as a primary issue, including the call for a recovery plan (Council of the EU, 3/2020a, 3/2020b; European Council, 3/2020). However, the economic focus disappeared just after March 2020. The only aspect that might be classified as an economic element in the *health* issue after March 2020 was a repetitive remark about ensuring a well-functioning Single Market despite the travel

restriction into and within the EU (European Council, 2/2021, 12/2021; Council of the EU, 3/2021). To understand the limitation of the economic element, a holistic perspective needs to be taken towards the agenda in question. The recovery fund became a major individual topic on the EUCO agenda,²³ emphasizing job protection and social support mechanisms (Council of the EU, 4/2020). The recovery fund, Next Generation EU, also encompassed green and digital transformation of the EU economy (European Council, 7/2020, 6/2021).

The framing of the *health* topic concentrated on problem-solution narratives, where the spread of COVID-19 within the European Union was understood as the problem. The solutions included coordinating the development and distribution of vaccines, applying restrictions, particularly in cross-border traveling, and using medical science. The vaccination as a solution was a dominant framing sub-attribute throughout the observed period. From February 2021, the European Council started calling for the acceleration of the production and distribution of vaccines, as well as for a standardized approach for vaccination or testing certificates in order to reduce the occurrence of new variants (Council of the EU, 2/2021a, 3/2021, 5/2021a; European Council, 2/2021, 3/2021, 5/2021, 6/2021, 10/2021, 12/2021). At the same time, the need for international cooperation and solidarity with third countries, especially in the context of the distribution of vaccines, complemented the toolbox of solutions (Council of the EU, 2/2021a, 5/2021a; European Council, 2/2021, 3/2021, 5/2021, 10/2021, 12/2021).

As a result of COVID-19 mutations throughout 2021, new perspectives were associated with the discussion over *health* on the EC level (Council of the EU, 1/2021, 3/2021; European Council, 2/2021, 5/2021, 6/2021, 12/2021). Firstly, the European Council began to stress the importance of global cooperation and a coordinated response to current and future health threats (European Council, 2/2021, 5/2021, 12/2021). Secondly, the focus on the prevention of, and resilience to potential future health crises in the EU supplemented the debate over COVID-19 (European Council, 2/2021, 6/2021, 10/2021).

The *health* issue had a relatively strong appeal regarding Europeanness within the entire period. *Health* was associated with solidarity, and fit the narrative of the unprecedented crisis that called for standing and working together. This reference to Europeanness permeated the

²³ The recovery fund was coded as a shared issue of macroeconomics and labor and employment in April 2020, and subsequently as the Next Generation EU (NGEU) under EU governance and government operation, since it was associated with the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the EU.

debate during the entire studied period (Council of the EU, 3/2020b, 10/2020, 2/2021a, 3/2021; European Council, 3/2020, 10/2020a, 10/2020b, 2/2021, 10/2021).

Concerning the tone as one of the observed sub-attributes of the issue framing, negative tone was related to the *health* issue relatively often, referring to the spread of the virus and as an unprecedented crisis that raised serious concerns (European Council, 3/2020, 10/2020b, 2/2021, 12/2021). Although the *health* issue was contextualized within the crisis outbreak and its management, the negative tone was not always linked to the debate. The positive connotation was associated once the European Council valued the progress in developing and distributing vaccines (European Council, 12/2020, 3/2021, 5/2021, 6/2021). As the positive tone assigned to the COVID-19 issue on the EUCO agenda showed, it would be misleading to associate negative connotations with topics that deal with a crisis by definition.

The investigation of the *health* framing revealed the interesting development of the issue on the agenda over 15 months. Firstly, the problem-solution nexus that emphasized the necessary steps for limiting COVID-19 transmission within EU borders dominated the issue framing on the EUCO agenda. Additionally, there was a strong focus on the economic perspective that was quickly appropriated for a separate issue on the agenda. Within a few months, the vaccination policy crystallized as the predominant solution to the health crisis, and its progress was always evaluated positively. Alongside the new disease variants in early 2021, the vaccination distribution within and outside EU borders and the global response to the pandemic took the lead in the framing. In late 2021, the European Council also paid attention to the resilience and preparedness of the EU for future health crises, learning from the COVID-19 outbreak. The *health* framing was strongly linked to solidarity and to the call for a common EU approach.

7.2 Migration

The agenda of the European Council incorporated the *migration* issue in terms of migration flows, starting in 2015. The perspective of irregular or illegal migration predominantly shaped the debate from April 2015 to December 2021. In order to answer the massive migration wave to Europe, the European Council called for cooperation with countries of origin and transit, a return policy, an asylum policy, and extended border controls as principal remedies for this challenge. Although the EU approach to tackling the migration crisis went through several phases, the above ideas shaped issue on the EUCO agenda in the research timeline.

In the examined period, the *migration* issue was discussed only once without the context of the migration crisis, which was primarily caused by the situation in Syria and the Middle East at the time. In March 2022 it occurred due to the flow of refugees from Ukraine as a consequence of the military invasion of the Russian Federation. The initial dominant perspective of illegal migration changed to the flow of war refugees that required EU assistance. The European Union offered temporary protection to all war refugees from Ukraine (European Council, 3/2022), i.e., the shift in framing thus introduced responses that had not been associated with the *migration* issue previously.

Until the end of 2021, the prevailing framing sub-attributes were border controls and cooperation with states of origin, and transit of migratory flow, especially with Turkey (Council of the EU, 4/2015a, 4/2015b, 9/2015, 3/2016; European Council, 6/2015, 12/2015). The agreement between the EU and Turkey even got to the EUCO agenda as a fundamental resolution to the migration crisis (European Council, 2/2016, 6/2017b). The cooperation gradually extended to other countries, especially with changes and development of migratory routes to Europe. As a result, the European Council took particular interest in cooperation with regions such as the Western Balkans and Libya (Council of the EU, 3/2016; European Council, 6/2016a, 3/2017). Humanitarian assistance, financial and material support, and eradication of human trafficking and smuggling were the essential pillars of the collaboration (Council of the EU, 4/2015b, 9/2015b, 3/2016, 2/2017; 9/2018; European Council, 6/2018a, 10/2018, 12/2018b).

Interestingly, in late 2016, members of the European Council started distinguishing the external and internal dimensions of the migration crisis. Whereas the former encompassed border controls, vigilance over migratory routes, and cooperation with affected regions, the latter consisted of resettlement within EU borders, the reform of the Common Asylum policy, and the return directive (European Council, 10/2016, 12/2016, 3/2017). Later, the internal dimension was framed as the common EU approach in migration policy (European Council, 6/2017b, 10/2017a, 6/2018a, 10/2018, 12/2018b), which was extended to the call for an external migration policy in late 2021 (European Council, 12/2021).

The *migration* issue was associated with two appeals throughout the defined timeline. Firstly, the actions of the EU were seen as necessary to prevent further loss of life due to human trafficking and smuggling on the migratory routes (Council of the EU, 4/2015b; European Council, 6/2018a, 6/2021). The second narrative called for solidarity and

responsibility in the European Union (Council of the EU, 4/2015b, 9/2015a, 9/2015b; European Council, 6/2015, 3/2017). These two strands of thinking ran through the *migration* issue from April 2015 to December 2021.

Concerning the last framing sub-attribute, the migration issue was generally associated with either a negative or a neutral tone. Only two documents were identified that gave a positive tone to the issue (European Council, 10/2017a; Council of the EU, 9/2018). This occurred only thanks to the statement that migratory flows were reduced, progress on the asylum policy reform was registered, and the re-application of instruments that had successfully functioned, such as border controls.

To sum up, the dominant perspective of irregular migration transcended the framing of the *migration* issue from April 2015 to December 2021. This emphasis was linked to two principal solutions: the control of EU external borders and cooperation with countries of origin of migration flow, and transit of migrants and refugees. The only framing change of the *migration* issue on the EUCO agenda occurred in early 2022, when the problem was associated with a different region: Ukraine. Then the perspective of guaranteeing temporary protection to all war refugees superseded the discourse.

7.3 Defense and crime

The European Council pays attention to *defense*, especially in terms of ensuring and strengthening the internal security and defense of the European Union. In this context, the *defense* issue gets onto the EUCO agenda when a threat to EU peace and stability occurs, or might occur soon. The debate over *defense* is thus shaped by the type of peril that is topical at the time in question.

During the analyzed period, a range of threats was developing. Terrorism was the most common discussed danger to be faced (Council of the EU, 2/2015; European Council 12/2015, 3/2017, 6/2017b, 10/2018, 12/2020). European Council members also expressed concerns about the EU's security related to unrest in neighboring regions (European Council, 3/2017, 10/2019b, 12/2019a; Council of the EU, 8/2020), as threats endangering the EU originated not only within EU borders but also outside of them. The *defense* issue was thus highly connected with external relations. The scope of threats gradually extended to hybrid, cyber, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear-related threats, and activities of hostile intelligence services. The emphasis was especially on cybersecurity and hybrid threats

(European Council, 6/2017b, 6/2018a, 10/2018, 6/2019, 2/2021; Council of the EU, 9/2018, 2/2021b). Additionally, the warning of disinformation as one of the fast-emerging hybrid challenges was often discussed with particular focus (European Council, 10/2018, 12/2018b, 3/2019b, 6/2019, 3/2022).

Since strengthening EU security and resilience to a broad scope of threats dominated the framing of *defense* on the EUCO agenda, there was also a strong focus on protecting the EU's physical and digital space. The European Council accented the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as an essential defense alliance, and emphasized fostering EU military and civilian cooperation. The instruments for the latter solution consisted of strengthening military and civilian capabilities, boosting investments in the defense industry, research, and innovation, and developing civil protection mechanisms (European Council, 6/2015, 12/2016, 6/2017b, 6/2018a, 12/2018b, 12/2020, 12/2021, 3/2022; Council of the EU, 2/2021b, 3/2022). The deepening of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was oftentimes mentioned as one of the essential instruments for more integrated EU collaboration (European Council, 6/2017b, 10/2017a, 12/2017a).

Nonetheless, distinct threats require different responses. Since the European Council put a specific emphasis on counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, and disinformation, the application of a concrete toolbox to deal with these threats was an integral part of the agenda (European Council, 12/2015, 6/2017b, 6/2018a, 10/2018, 12/2018b, 3/2019b, 6/2019, 2/2021; Council of the EU, 9/2018). Noteworthy topics given attention by the EU include the control of external borders, higher coordination between police and judicial services, data sharing, the digital service act, science, and research for avoiding terrorist attacks. Along with the development of cyber diplomacy and increasing cooperation with the private sector, with greater transparency, and a code of practice on disinformation, the element of digitalization is visible in this strategic approach.

Since the debate over *defense* revolved around security concerns within EU borders, it seems essential to discuss the *law and crime* issue here, because one of its sub-topics deals with these kinds of threats. This is the reason *defense* along with *law and crime* often shared an item on the agenda (European Council, 6/2017b, 10/2018, 12/2020). This research showed that the major topic of *law and crime* was assigned with the sub-topic of domestic security

concerns and terrorism.²⁴ Therefore, the stress on EU resilience to various types of threats, including the problem-solution nexuses as mentioned earlier, also applies to this issue.

If it is accepted that these sub-attributes belong under the discussion of *defense*, it would mean that the major issue of *law and crime* would not be classified as a part of the EUCO agenda. However, before reaching this conclusion, the third level of this analysis must be looked at holistically to see how the framing sub-attributes of other issues on the agenda refer to the *law and crime* topic. Firstly, several issues on the EUCO agenda were also framed as a danger to be faced, e.g., the COVID-19 outbreak (European Council, 3/2020; Council of the EU, 3/2020b), climate change (European Council, 10/2019b), and the earthquake in Croatia (European Council, 3/2020). Secondly, the perspective of *law and crime* was significantly present in the framing of migration, where the fight against human trafficking and smuggling played an influential role (Council of the EU, 4/2015a, 4/2015b, 3/2016, 9/2018; European Council, 12/2015, 2/2016, 10/2017a, 6/2018, 10/2018, 12/2018b). In both cases, the sub-topics of *law and crime* defined other issues on the agenda through a relevant sub-attribute. Therefore, it should not be viewed as an individual issue in the discussion but rather as a perspective on a different problem. The *migration* and *defense* issues are illustrations of this phenomenon.

The shift in *defense* happened in March 2022, when its framing was significantly connected to foreign affairs, especially to the military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in late February 2022. Since this occurred at the very end of the analyzed timeframe, it is not easy to interpret the shift. Nonetheless, it cannot be overlooked. The change appeared in the problem-solution nexus, which stressed the necessity of the European Union to ensure its security autonomously. This statement was accompanied by the application of several defense instruments and the call for an increase in defense expenditure, which was elevated to the EUCO agenda for the first time in the observed period (Council of the EU, 3/2022; European Council, 3/2022).

The only recognized appeal in the *defense* framing referred to the call to ensure peace and stability (European Council, 12/2015, 3/2017, 12/2021), and solidarity. The latter penetrated the issue once an EU Member State was the victim of a terrorist attack, for example France and Austria, in the second half of 2020. In the same case, the condemnation, i.e., a negative

²⁴ Of the 16 cases where *law and crime* was identified as a major topic on the EUCO agenda between 2014 to 2022, the sub-topic of domestic security concerns and security was not associated with it only once.

tone, accompanied the definition of the *defense* issue (Council of the EU, 10/2020, 11/2020; European Council, 12/2020). Since the debate over *defense* was predominantly connected to the presence of peril, a negative connotation was oftentimes distinguished (European Council, 10/2019b, 3/2020, 6/2021; Council of the EU, 4/2020, 8/2020, 10/2020). Positive language was noted only in case of progress on a policy, or for joint communications in the defense field (European Council, 6/2018a).

The *defense* issue appeared on the EUCO agenda, as a consequence of the importance of ensuring security, stability, and the resilience of the EU towards emerging threats of a distinct nature. Ideas for actions to guarantee these objectives considered the closer cooperation of EU military and civilian capabilities, deeper integration with structures of NATO, investments in the defense industry, and the application of relevant toolboxes to security concerns. This kind of *defense* framing prevailed until late February 2022, when the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine and caused a shift in the debate. The European Council then strongly emphasized the need for autonomous defense capabilities for the EU and the need to increase defense expenditure. Additionally, the discussion of the *defense* framing revealed that *law and crime* should be perceived as a perspective sub-attribute rather than a major topic. For example, in the case of the *defense* issue, law and crime were linked to domestic security concerns, and *defense* served as an umbrella topic.

7.4 Economics and the Single Market

The utterly principal perspective of the *economics and Single Market* issue was ensuring or boosting economic growth and jobs. The debate within the European Council addressed a wide range of solutions for how to preserve or improve economic conditions via structural reforms, investments, the creation of a predictable business environment, the application of economic instruments, international trade cooperation, responsible fiscal policies, and protection against tax fraud and money-laundering. Given the thin border between the three major topics²⁵ from the CAPIC scheme on the EUCO agenda whose framings were shaped around growth, jobs, and competitiveness, it seems logical to incorporate all three of them into one major issue called ‘economics and the Single Market’.

²⁵ *Macroeconomics* (1); *labor and employment* (5); and *banking, finances, and internal trade* (15).

‘Growth’ is omnipresent in debates dealing with economics. Nonetheless, in the context of the establishment of the Recovery Fund,²⁶ the term ‘sustainable growth’, appeared as an innovative reference in economic topics, including green and digital transformation (Council of the EU, 4/2020). A year later, the connection of economic growth with the green and digital transition even culminated in a new economic paradigm of the European model (European Council, 3/2021).

The completion of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) was sometimes used as a perspective on the economic issue, and as one of the drivers to produce growth and jobs. In more detail, the well-functioning Single Market, Digital Single Market, Energy Union, Capital Markets Union, and Banking Union encompassed the elements representing the completed EMU (European Council, 12/2014, 10/2015, 12/2015, 6/2016a, 3/2019b; Council of the EU, 2/2015, 3/2016, 9/2017).

In addition, topics such as VAT, price drops or increases, and taxation policies were occasionally noticed as perspectives within the economic issue on the EUCO agenda (Council of the EU, 3/2016; European Council, 6/2018a, 10/2021). An interesting moment to mention is the perspective of the reform of the global tax framework that was raised in 2021 (European Council, 6/2021) and of the high energy prices caused by the Russian military invasion of Ukraine (Council of the EU, 3/2022; European Council, 3/2020).

As indicated, the Single Market with related components such as the Digital Single Market, the Energy Union, and the Capital Markets Union was present in the problem-solution nexus in the definition of economics. Likewise, the competitiveness of the EU economy went hand in hand with growth and jobs, which means that there is a thin border between the two initial CAPIC major issues on the EUCO agenda; they are *macroeconomics*, which is supposed to encompass economic growth, and the topics of *banking, finances, and internal trade*, where competitiveness and the Single Market belong among sub-topics. Consequently, the major topic of *banking, finances, and internal trade* is discussed in the same chapter as *macroeconomics*. Similarly, the major topic of labor and employment was coded as a shared item in all three cases that appeared on the EUCO agenda. In two out of the three situations,²⁷

²⁶ Consequently, the Recovery Fund was denominated as Next Generation EU (NGEU).

²⁷ The *labor and employment* issue is thus not discussed as a separate major issue in the section of the PhD thesis that presents the results of the third level of the analysis, but rather as a part of either *macroeconomics and the Single Market* or as a part of *external relations* (see the relevant section of this chapter).

the perspective of job protection prevailed over the issue definition (Council of the EU, 4/2020, 5/2021b).

As the competitiveness of the EU economy is closely interconnected with economic growth, one might not be surprised that similar solutions apply to both problems, namely the well-functioning and deep Single Market, investments, and the green and digital transitions. Although competitiveness was an important focus within this issue on the EUCO agenda, the Single Market was far more dominant. The Single Market was used in two framing sub-attributes depending on the context. Either it was perceived as a driver and solution to growth, the creation of jobs, and the competitiveness of the EU economy (European Council, 10/2016, 6/2017b, 3/2018a, 12/2018b, 3/2019b, 10/2020a, 3/2022), or it was viewed as a perspective of its own (European Council, 12/2014, 6/2016a, 10/2016, 12/2016; Council of the EU, 3/2021).

In the latter case, the Single Market was oftentimes seen as incomplete, and thus requiring of further actions in the Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union, Energy Union, and Banking Union. Since October 2020, the Single Market was also framed as a driver for the recovery policy after the COVID-19 crisis. In this context, the COVID-19 outbreak and related anti-pandemic measures were found as a potential obstacle to a well-functioning Single Market. Therefore, the call for more robust mechanisms of internal trade followed. The proposal to address this weakness of the key EU economic instruments was to invest in innovation and technology (European Council, 3/2020, 2/2021, 12/2021; Council of the EU, 3/2021, 6/2021).

Since the economy and relevant policies are at the heart of European integration, the issue appears to be appealing for the European Council agenda by definition. The attractive element of economics defined through perspectives of growth, jobs, competitiveness, and the Single Market seems to already be implicitly incorporated into the framing. Therefore, attractiveness was already understood as a part of the issue definition per se. In terms of tone, growth, jobs, competitiveness, and the Single Market were usually elevated with a neutral connotation. Where progress in a particular policy was recognized, a positive tone was observable (Council of the EU, 3/2017; European Council, 6/2021). The single negatively accented discussion dealt with the high increase in energy prices (European Council, 10/2021).

To sum up, given the thin line between discussed issues and their interconnection through the problem-solution nexus, it seems relevant to merge the three major topics of the CAPIC scheme dealing with the economy of the EU, i.e., *macroeconomics; labor and employment; and banking, finances, and internal trade*, into one issue: *economics and the Single Market*. Two fundamental perspectives of economics were identified on the EUCO agenda: (1) growth, jobs, and competitiveness,²⁸ and (2) the Single Market. Interestingly, it is not rare that these two separated sub-attributes are modified into one problem-solution nexus where the Single Market is a driver of economic growth and, simultaneously, the remedy to competitiveness and job creation.

7.5 EU governance

From 2014 to 2022, the major issue of *EU governance and governmental operations* was shaped by three principal perspectives: (1) the negotiation of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and their mutual future relationship, (2) the next institutional cycle, including budgetary discussions, and (3) the future of Europe. It is worth underlining that a sub-attribute in the form of the problem-solution nexus was almost eliminated within this issue framing. Furthermore, as the first level analysis showed, the major topic of *public lands, water management, and territorial issues* merely concerned the negotiations within the future relations between the UK and EU Member States after its withdrawal. Given this outcome and UK's exit of the EU substantiating one of the fundamental perspectives within *EU governance and governmental operations*, territorial disputes are discussed as a part of the 20th major topic.

As one might expect, the negotiation of the British withdrawal from the EU started developing from the referendum announcement and its outcome (European Council, 6/2015, 10/2015, 12/2015, 6/2016a; Council of the EU, 6/2016), through the establishment of the guidelines and principles of the mutual negotiation (European Council, 6/2016b, 4/2017; Council of the EU, 9/2016), the transition period, and the withdrawal agreement (European Council, 6/2017a, 10/2017b, 12/2017b, 3/2018b, 6/2018b, 12/2018a, 3/2019a, 4/2019, 10/2019a, 12/2019b; Council of the EU, 11/2017, 9/2018) to the agreement of the future EU-UK relationship (European Council, 2/2016, 12/2017b, 3/2018b, 6/2018b, 12/2018a,

²⁸ The perspective of growth, jobs, and competitiveness was not always present with all three elements, but if the issue definition did not refer to the complete combination, at least two aspects were usually identified on the EUCO agenda.

10/2019a, 12/2019b; Council of the EU, 9/2018). Although the participation of the United Kingdom in the economic integration formed part of the discussion, more significant emphasis was put on citizens' rights and territorial aspects. In this respect, the tone of the issue on the agenda is eloquent. Members of the European Council expressed their satisfaction with the agreement over citizens' rights, and thus this part of the debate was accented positively, however, progress over territorial aspects raised concerns reflected through the negative tone. Interestingly, since both topics were discussed at the same meetings, the final tone of the issue was neutral, since they cancelled each other out (European Council, 10/2017b, 6/2018b; Council of the EU, 11/2017). Concerning the appeal to the EUCO agenda, it was implicitly incorporated within the issue definition, given the fact that the withdrawal of a Member State is a matter of EU Treaties, more concretely of Article 50 of the TFEU.

The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union also influenced the second dominant perspective of the *EU governance* topic. Along with traditional nominations and appointments of candidates to office, the discussion was extended to the constellation of EU institutions after British exit of the EU (European Council, 3/2017, 6-7/2019; Council of the EU, 2/2018, 5/2019). Additionally, the relocation of EU institutions based in the UK (namely the European Medicines Agency and the European Banking Authority) needed to be integrated into the EUCO agenda (European Council, 6/2017a). Likewise, it complicated the agreement over the EU budget (Council of the EU, 11/2017, 2/2020, 6/2020; European Council, 6/2018a, 12/2018b, 6/2019, 10/2019b, 12/2019a). In addition to the Brexit narrative, the Multi-Annual Financial Framework was also influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for a recovery policy. The NGEU thus became part of this issue in June 2020 (Council of the EU, 6/2020, 11/2020; European Council, 7/2020, 12/2020). This perspective was primarily associated with a positive tone, especially with the emerging consensus over the recovery fund (Council of the EU, 6/2020, 11/2020).

The visions of the members of the European Council for the future of Europe were the last dominant perspective for this major topic. They pervaded the entire examined period, stressing social and economic dimensions (Council of the EU, 3/2017, 9/2017; European Council, 12/2017a), Europe without the UK (Council of the EU, 9/2016), and a youth-friendly Europe (Council of the EU, 9/2016; Council of the EU, 5/2021a). These narratives appealed to the notion of EU unity and of building a common future together.

EU governance and governmental operations were framed through three dominant perspectives: (1) the UK-EU negotiation over the British withdrawal from the EU, (2) the EU institutional settings, and (3) the future of Europe. Surprisingly, the sub-attributes of the perspective substantially outbalanced the problem-solution nexus in this issue framing on the EUCO agenda. Although the appeal of the entire topic seems to be incorporated by definition, the third perspective used the language of EU unity, and the common future it espoused underlined its attractiveness even more. In comparison to other issues on the EUCO agenda, *EU governance* was assigned a positive tone relatively often, in particular when progress on the British withdrawal agreement was achieved or if consensus over the MFF and NGEU was reached (European Council, 6/2016b, 12/2016, 12/2018b, 6/2019, 12/2019a; Council of the EU, 3/2017, 6/2020, 11/2020, 12/2020).

7.6 Environment

Three dominant perspectives determine the framing of *environment* on the EUCO agenda. First, members of the European Council referred to the EU climate commitments and objectives. Second, international reports and summits concerning climate change held in a respective timeline were part of the EUCO agenda in the given period. Third, the formulation of the EU climate policy was outlined.

The EU commitment to climate objectives and sustainable goals was first related to the ratification of the Paris Agreement (European Council, 6/2017b). Nonetheless, references to the Paris Agreement penetrated more or less all mentions of the environmental topic on the EUCO agenda in the form of the appeal to the EU commitments in the document (European Council, 12/2017a, 3/2018a, 10/2018, 12/2018b, 12/2019a, 6/2019, 10/2020b). The assurance of EU climate ambitions was associated with conferences, summits, and reports dealing with climate change, such as the One Planet Summit (European Council, 12/2017a), the publication of the ICPP report (European Council, 10/2018), the COP summits (European Council, 10/2018; 12/2019a; 10/2021), and the UN Climate Action Summit (European Council, 10/2019b).

Gradually, members of the European Council started to discuss the EU long-term strategy to meet climate objectives, in particular becoming climate neutral by 2050. Climate neutrality was situated on the dilemma side of the problem-solution nexus (European Council, 12/2018b, 6/2019, 12/2019a). The proposed responses included its interconnection with energy security and energy policy (European Council, 3/2015, 12/2015, 12/2019;

Council of the EU, 3/2016),²⁹ climate law (European Council, 12/2020, 5/2021), climate diplomacy (European Council, 10/2020b), climate ambition in international trade agreements (European Council, 12/2020), protection of biodiversity (European Council, 12/2020), and green and digital transition as a part of the sustainable transformation of the EU economy (e.g., European Council, 12/2018b, 10/2019b, 7/2020).

Compared to other major topics, the environment framing was associated with many narratives to make the issue attractive to the EU agenda. References to the EU commitment in international treaties were omnipresent (European Council, 12/2015, 12/2017a, 10/2018, 12/2018b, 12/2019a, 6/2019, 10/2020b). Moreover, the climate transformation was framed as an opportunity to create jobs in the EU and as having the potential to ensure sustainable growth and competitiveness on the EU and global level (European Council, 12/2019a; 12/2020, 5/2021; Council of the EU, 2/2021a). Based on these appeals, it seems natural that the tone was distinguished as positive or neutral. The only case when the environment topic was accented negatively occurred while the results of the ICPP report, being generally pessimistic, were discussed (European Council, 10/2018).

7.7 Digitalization

The major topic of *space, science, technology, and communication* appeared on the EUCO agenda only in the context of the digital agenda. Therefore, the third level of the analysis specified this major issue as *digitalization* for the purpose of this PhD thesis. On the level of the major topics, the digital agenda was first identified on the EUCO agenda as a shared item with economics. Digital technologies were touted as a solution to foster the economic growth and development of the Single Market (European Council, 6/2015, 12/2015, 6/2016a, 3/2017, 6/2017, 10/2017a, 3/2018a, 6/2018a, 3/2019b, 10/2020a; Council of the EU, 3/2016) and as a response to various threats in the European digital space (European Council, 6/2017, 10/2017a, 3/2018a, 10/2021).

Playing a role in the problem-solution nexus to sustain economic growth seemed to be a stepping-stone for digitalization to get onto the EUCO agenda as an independent major issue. Moreover, in June 2017, members of the European Council expressed the need for a holistic European digital vision, including e-government and the digital potential for facing

²⁹ See more about the mutual reinforcement of the EU climate and energy policies in section 8.8, which is dedicated to the energy issue.

emerging challenges (European Council, 6/2017b). The digital agenda was thus seen as an adequate response to the risks and opportunities of the modern age. Artificial Intelligence, European identity, data protection instruments, and other digital mechanisms were understood as a relevant toolbox for strengthening EU resilience, with an emphasis on preparedness for cyber-security threats (European Council, 6/2017b, 2/2021, 10/2021; Council of the EU, 9/2017, 11/2020).

The appeal of *digitalization* was strongly associated with growth and the creation of jobs. The acknowledgment of the digital potential for economic opportunities strongly influenced its framing. In this respect, the digital and climate transition were sometimes discussed hand in hand (Council of the EU, 5/2021b; European Council, 10/2021). Alongside the promise of being able to face emerging challenges such as hybrid or cyber threats, the strategic strengths of digitalization in addressing problems of the modern era seemed to ensure its position on the EUCO agenda. Interestingly, despite the potential of digitalization to address the critical challenges of the given period, the issue was accented in an entirely neutral manner.

7.8 Energy

The *energy* issue on the EUCO agenda was shaped through one dominant perspective and two fundamental problem-solution nexuses around the critical focus of the discussion concerning the establishment of the Energy Union. Firstly, the Energy Union was perceived as one of essential steps for tackling climate change and fulfilling EU climate ambitions. This interconnection and reinforcement of the elements between EU energy and climate policies were omnipresent in the framing of the energy issue throughout the examined period (European Council, 3/2015, 12/2015, 12/2019a, 12/2020, 3/2022; Council of the EU, 3/2016, 3/2022). Second, members of the European Council were persuaded that the Energy Union was a strategic approach to ensure energy efficiency and security. In order to do so, the EU was supposed to invest in research and development in the energy industry, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by promoting more renewable resources in practice (Council of the EU, 3/2016, 3/2022; European Council, 3/2022).

In March 2022, the second problem-solution nexus presented went even further. The discussion about energy security and efficiency shifted to explicit energy dependencies through diversification of energy supplies and routes, including reducing the use of fossil fuels, developing the hydrogen market, optimized gas, and electricity networks, and

increasing the share of renewables (Council of the EU, 3/2022, European Council, 3/2022). The stress on the reduction of the energy dependencies of the European Union appeared in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and was followed by sanctions from the EU against the aggressor.

Given the omnipresent framing of the climate policy and climate change, the Energy Union was pulled onto the EUCO agenda through the EU green commitments in the area, such as reducing the production of greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the share of renewables (European Council, 3/2015, 12/2015, 3/2022; Council of the EU, 3/2022). In 2022, there was a fundamental appeal for independence and autonomy within the EU energy policy. As for the tone, no reference to the *energy* issue was identified as either a positive or negative message.

7.9 External relations

During 2014-2022, *external relations* was the issue that drew the most policy attention from an aggregated standpoint, despite it not being classified as the most salient. How then, were *external relations* framed? This research revealed an emphasis on two principal perspectives: (1) the EU stance on the internal situation of another state or international relations and (2) the international cooperation of the EU with third countries/institutions; two problem-solution connections were also identified: (1) EU growth and competitiveness-international cooperation, and (2) global challenges-international cooperation.

Firstly, European Council members expressed their opinion on events and political developments in the EU's neighborhood. More concretely, the stance of the European Council referred especially to a condemnation of aggression (e.g., Council of the EU, 1/2015, 8/2020; European Council, 3/2015, 10/2019b), atrocities (European Council, 10/2016, 12/2016, 6/2021), and violence against the international arrangements (Council of the EU, 2/2015, 6/2020; European Council, 10/2017a, 6/2020, 3/2022), and concerns related to instability (European Council, 2/2016; 6/2016a; Council of the EU, 3/2017; 8/2020), disagreement with political practices incompatible with democratic principles (Council of the EU, 8/2020; European Council, 5/2021, 6/2021) in a particular state (European Council, 2/2016; 12/2017a), or region (Council of the EU, 2/2018, 3/2018a), or in the context of relations between certain countries (Council of the EU, 2/2015, 4/2020; European Council, 3/2019a, 6/2019).

Generally, these references were framed with a negative tone. There were a few exceptions when the European Council evaluated positive developments within a country or in interstate relations. This occurred, for example, on the occasion of the peaceful power transfer in the Republic of Moldova (European Council, 6/2019), and for the nomination of the new government in Ukraine with its determination to pursue political and economic reforms (European Council, 12/2014). Concerning bilateral relations, the agreement between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia over the name issue was classified among the positively assessed perspectives (European Council, 6/2018a).

The instability element was seen not only as a perspective, but also as a problematic aspect of international affairs that required a remedy. International cooperation with a particular country or region, alternatively accompanied with humanitarian and financial assistance, were understood as possible ways to calm the situation (European Council, 3/2017, 6/2019, 12/2020). The idea behind this attitude was not only to stabilize a neighboring region, but also to prevent threats and tensions with direct consequences on EU territory (European Council, 2/2016, 3/2018a, 6/2019; Council of the EU, 2/2018).

The second emphasis in the issue framing was put on the areas of international cooperation with a specific country or region. This is in line with the references to summits and agreements with the states in question (e.g., European Council, 10/2016; 10/2018, 3/2019a, 6/2019, 12/2019a, 3/2021, 5/2021, 12/2021; Council of the EU, 5/2021a). The scope of countries encompassed in this type of debate included (but was not limited to) EU-UK and US relationships (European Council, 3/2021, 5/2021), cooperation with Turkey (e.g., European Council, 12/2020; 3/2021), Morocco (European Council, 6/2019), Africa and the African Union (e.g., European Council, 6/2019, 12/2019a, 10/2020b), India (Council of the EU, 5/2021a), China (European Council, 3/2019b; 10/2020a), and the League of Arab States (European Council, 10/2018, 12/2018b).

International cooperation involved various areas where relations might be established or deepened. The element of trade was prominent. The idea behind it being that fostering international trade with the third organizations is a driver for economic growth on both sides (Council of the EU, 3/2017; European Council, 4/2017, 10/2021), and helps to deepen relations between the EU and the other interested parties (Council of the EU, 3/2017; European Council, 4/2017). Furthermore, since the major topic of *foreign trade* on the EUCO agenda was associated in all cases with the sub-topic of trade disputes and agreements

under the umbrella of international cooperation (Council of the EU, 3/2017; European Council, 4/2017, 12/2019a, 10/2021), it can be entirely incorporated into the definition of *external relations*.

International cooperation contained another problem-solution nexus. In 2020, multilateral cooperation started to be seen as a necessary response to global challenges such as health crises, climate change, etc. This problem-solution sub-attribute was accompanied by appeals such as the EU commitment to solidarity in the international context, responsibility for future generations, and the need for international cooperation and global governance to ensure security within and outside EU borders (European Council, 10/2020a, 10/2021, 12/2021; Council of the EU, 2/2021a). The framing of *external relations* to ensure European security, prevent threats to peace in Europe, and promote solidarity and responsibility permeated the issue throughout the analyzed period.

Concerning the tone, its negative or positive values were rather associated with the first mentioned perspective, i.e., expressions of the European Council's attitude toward international events and the political course of certain countries. Otherwise, the reference held a neutral connotation in EC documents.

7.10 Common patterns across issues

The third level of the analysis showed that perspectives and problem-solution nexuses belong to those framing sub-attributes that are essential for issue framing, in contrast to appeal and tone. The latter two sub-attributes can be perceived as additional elements to the perspective and/or problem-solution nexus that predominantly determined the issue framing and thus its definition. Tone is sub-optimal for analyzing official policy documents such as minutes from EC meetings at the level of Heads of State and/or government since, in most cases, neutral language is applied. However, this claim might not apply to media agenda-setting or non-official documents.

The framing sub-attributes also revealed that various major topics overlap with one another. As a result, certain topics defined in the first level of the analysis were subsequently identified rather as a part of the framing of another major issue, as in the case of *law and crime* with *defense*; *public lands, water management, and territorial issues* with *EU governance and governmental operations*; *macroeconomics, labor and employment* with *banking, finances, and internal trade*; and *external relations* with *foreign trade*.

Table 2: Adjusted major issues on the EUCO agenda

Initial CAPIC numbers of major issues	Adjusted major issues on the EUCO agenda	Occurrence ³⁰
1+5+15	Economics and the Single Market	33
2	Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties	3
3	Health	20
4	Agriculture	0
6	Education	1
7	Environment	12
8	Energy	7
9	Migration	23
10	Transportation	0
12+16	Defense and law	35
13	Social Policy	2
14	Regional and Urban Policy and Planning	0
17	Space, Science, Technology, and Communications	7
18+19	External relations	86
20+21	EU Governance	56
23	Culture and Media	0

By the same token, the problem-solution nexus affirmed the interconnection and mutual reinforcement of individual issues on the EUCO agenda being either on the side of the problematization or the response. *Digitalization, environment, and energy* demonstrate this phenomenon. While the EU energy, digital, and climate policies seemed to reinforce the goals of one another, the green, energy, and digital transformation of the EU economy were believed to go hand in hand with the deepening of the Single Market. Likewise, they were thought to have good potential for growth, the creation of jobs, and competitiveness.

Furthermore, a shift across issues was noticeable in March 2022, following Russian military aggression towards Ukraine. A significant change in issue framing was observable in *migration, defense, and energy* issues. Surprisingly, a similar change did not occur in *external relations*, where one might perhaps reasonably expect it the most. The explanation

³⁰ If merged major issues appeared as a shared item of these initial CAPIC major issues, the agglomerated occurrence of the merged major issue is counted once. This is why the sum of the occurrences of initial CAPIC major topics is not applicable to merged major issues.

for this effect could be that the condemnation of aggression of one state towards another had been part of the narrative of external relations even before the war in Ukraine in 2022. However, given the closeness of the conflict to EU borders, the shift was visible in other issues that were affected by the Russian aggression.

8 Cross-levelled interpretation of the issue definitions

The final empirical chapter is divided into five sub-sections following the issue hierarchization identified in the second level of the analysis. All recognized issues are discussed in view of their complex attitude and the development of issue definitions in agenda-setting. This includes the types of feedback determining issue definitions on the agenda in the observed period. The first section investigates the group of highly dynamic issues, i.e., *digitalization*, *defense and crime*, *economics and the Single Market*, and *EU governance*. The second part concerns the stable primary issues of *migration* and *health*. The subsequent sub-chapter examines the attitude and development of those issues that tend to avoid either the most or the least salient position on the agenda, namely *energy* and *environment*.³¹ The fourth section deals with *external relations*, which was solely identified as a stable tertiary issue.

Furthermore, the chapter concludes with common features across issues within agenda-setting dynamics, including their performance on the agenda and the development of their definitions over eight years. Based on the cross-levelled analysis through all issue definitions, this research has found that, first, stable primary issues are not only the most salient issues on their own, but also that their sub-attributes push other issues to the top of the agenda. Second, some issues get onto the agenda gradually through the definition of other issues that are already on the agenda. Additionally, the dimension, perspective, and/or problem-solution nexus of this particular topic might develop further, and hence affect definitions of others. Through this strategy, they shape the policy debate inconspicuously. In other words, the dimensions of the forms of perspective and problem-solution nexus are, to a certain extent, hidden under the umbrella of a different major topic. However, the dimensions have the potential to become a separate issue on the agenda in the future. Third, some issues occurred as separate ones with variable degrees of salience, and in parallel

³¹ Since the third level of analysis merged several major topics into one that was named based on the most common attributes, potentially even sub-attributes, the groups based on issue performance on the agenda were re-evaluated.

shaped the definition of other issues on the agenda through framing sub-attributes. Fourth, a few issues that did not follow any of the above-described patterns of agenda-setting were recognized.

Lastly, concerning the impact of feedback on issue definitions, the chapter discusses what groups of issues were defined by what kind of feedback to confirm or disprove the hypotheses. The research outputs allege that, whereas positive feedback generates only primary issues, negative feedback defines all kinds of issues regardless of their degree of salience within the issue hierarchization.

8.1 Highly dynamic issues

8.1.1 Digitalization

The digital agenda appeared as an independent issue on the EUCO agenda in June 2017 (European Council, 6/2017b). However, the digital perspective had been present in the discussions of the European Council even earlier, namely within the economic issue aimed at boosting economic growth, competitiveness, and the Single Market. This is illustrated by the fact that, before getting onto the agenda as a separate issue, it shared the item with economics (European Council, 6/2015). The digital perspective emphasized the role of the Digital Single Market³² as a component of the Single Market, allowing its full implementation to drive growth and competitiveness (European Council, 12/2014, 12/2015, 10/2016, 12/2016, 3/2017; Council of the EU, 3/2016).

Once *digitalization* got onto the EUCO agenda as an individual issue and not as either a shared item or an emphasis within another issue, it offered a complex perspective rather than merely the role of the Digital Single Market in the EU economy. The idea was that “a holistic approach to digital is necessary to face up to the challenges of and use the opportunities flowing from the 4th industrial revolution” (European Council, 6/2017b, p. 12). In other words, the Digital Single Market was supposed to be implemented within all of its components such as economic, social, cultural, governmental, research etc. The digital revolution was perceived as a fundamental response to risks, particularly cyber-related threats, but also as a chance to benefit from opportunities in the modern era (European Council, 6/2017b; Council of the EU, 9/2017). Interestingly, the more detailed the digital

³² Only in March 2017 was the term digital agenda applied instead of Digital Single Market. Nevertheless, the role of digitalization in the Single Market remained identical.

vision for Europe was, the more salient a position the issue had. Nonetheless, in March 2018, it again dropped into a tertiary position when the perspective of protecting data and privacy defined the issue (European Council, 3/2018a).

While *digitalization* occupied the agenda as a separate item, it disappeared from the framing of economic issues. In December 2018, the digital agenda returned to the framing of the Single Market and economic growth, but with more detailed references than before. Since then, the digital perspective has explicitly mentioned particular elements of the Digital Single Market, such as Artificial Intelligence, data economy, 5G, and the digital taxation policy (e.g., European Council, 12/2018b, 3/2019b, 10/2020a). The *digitalization* issue evolved considerably during the early years of the analyzed period, when the Digital Single Market usually defined the economic issues along with other instruments, such as the Energy Union, the Banking Union, and the Capital Markets Union (European Council, 12/2015, 12/2016; Council of the EU, 3/2016, 3/2017). Since December 2018, the digital transformation has also been defined by the green transition to ensure growth and competitiveness (e.g., European Council, 12/2018b, 10/2020; Council of the EU, 3/2020, 6/2020). The digital and the green transformation also represented the core of the post-COVID-19 recovery plan (Council of the EU, 3/2020, 6/2020; 5/2021b; European Council, 5/2021, 6/2021). These elements were labelled as ‘two fundamental pillars for our new European model, for our new European paradigm’ (Council of the EU, 3/2021).

The digital perspective appeared first in the examined timeline in other fields; *defense*, *health*, and *external relations*. Fighting terrorism and other security threats through digital tools such as the Digital Service Act (Council of the EU, 11/2020; European Council, 12/2020), applying big data and digital technologies in health care to ensure EU health resilience (European Council, 2/2021), and digitalization as one of the sectors for international cooperation shaped the discussion of these topics on the EUCO agenda (European Council, 3/2021, 12/2021).

Arguably, the development of the digital perspectives within various issue definitions on the EUCO agenda resulted in the digital agenda being perceived as an appropriate toolbox to ensure EU resilience to health and other security threats, and facilitate the green transition (European Council, 5/2021, 10/2021). Additionally, along with the Russian military aggression toward Ukraine, there were appeals for the digitalization of the Single Market to

be implemented for a more robust and resilient economy in the EU (European Council, 3/2022).

The digital issue developed on the EUCO agenda from the very first to the very last investigated resource. At first, *digitalization* represented a perspective of the Digital Single Market within economic issues (e.g., European Council, 12/2014, 6/2015, 12/2015, 6/2016a; Council of the EU, 3/2016). Then, it gained its own position on the EUCO agenda in the form of a holistic approach to the EU digital agenda, emphasizing not only its contribution to EU competitiveness, but also its contribution to resilience towards fast-emerging challenges and preparedness for new opportunities (e.g., European Council, 9/2017b, 10/2017, 3/2018a; Council of the EU, 9/2017, 5/2021a). Consequently, economic issues broadened their emphasis to include more digital instruments such as 5G, Artificial Intelligence, and digital taxation rather than only focusing on the Digital Single Market as they had done in the early years of the examined period (European Council, 6/2019, 12/2020, 2/2021, 10/2021).

The digital and green transformation later came to represent the fundamental aspects of a new approach towards the growth and competitiveness of the EU economy (e.g., European Council, 10/2020a; Council of the EU, 5/2021b). The digital element also occurred in other major topics on the EUCO agenda, such as *health* (e.g., European Council, 2/2021), *defense* (e.g., Council of the EU, 11/2020, 10/2021), and *external relations* (e.g., European Council, 3/2021; Council of the EU, 2/2022). Apparently, the described development of digital perspectives within other issues influenced its framing in 2021 as a separate major topic on the EUCO agenda, which saw the digital agenda as a toolbox to ensure resilience to distinct types of threats, and in other fields to facilitate the green transition of the EU economy.

8.1.2 Defense and crime

Apart from being a separate issue on the agenda indicating the necessity to ensure EU security and peace against distinct threats, *defense and crime* oftentimes appeared in the framing of distinct issues on the EUCO agenda, including *health*, *migration*, *external relations*, and *EU governance*. The most common perspective referring to *defense and crime* was associated with *migration* in the context of the necessity to ensure EU security in the face of irregular migration either through international cooperation (European Council, 3/2018a, 6/2019, 6/2021) or peace-keeping operations in relevant regions (European Council, 10/2015). Also, the need to stop people-smuggling as a part of the migration flow

was a significant feature of the entire debate over migration from 2015 to 2021 (e.g., European Council, 12/2015, 10/2017a, 6/2018a, 6/2021).

The COVID-19 outbreak caused a re-focusing in *defense and crime*. The pandemic was accompanied by various hybrid threats, particularly those connected with disinformation. The fight against the spread of false and unfounded news was at the core of the EU approach to COVID-19 (European Council, 3/2020, 10/2021).

An interesting finding with the *defense and crime* issue is that in eight out of 11 occurrences when *defense and crime* was recognized as a primary issue, it was assigned with a positive urgency value (European Council, 12/2015, 12/2016, 6/2017b, 10/2018, 10/2019b, 12/2021, 3/2022; Council of the EU, 3/2020b). This pattern is unique amongst the issues on the EUCO agenda.

8.1.3 Economics and the Single Market

The economic focus was relatively frequently present on the EUCO agenda as a perspective or as a part of the problem-solution nexus within other issues. The latter possibility is related to the mobilization of financial instruments and the role of the European Investment Bank (EIB) in handling the migration crisis (European Council, 2/2016, 6/2016, 12/2016; Council of the EU, 3/2016) and EU climate objectives (European Council, 12/2019a). The general economic narrative substantiated either the well-functioning Single Market, protection of jobs, or the guarantee of growth during times of crisis (Council of the EU, 3/2020a, 3/2020b, 10/2020, 3/2021, 5/2021b; European Council, 3/2020, 10/2020a, 12/2021). The emphasis on the Single Market as a fundamental element of the EU economy also shaped the framing of other issues, such as *EU governance* focusing on the EU-UK negotiation over their future relationship (e.g., European Council, 12/2017a) or digitalization (e.g., European Council, 10/2017a).

Since economics adheres to distinct degrees of salience, and thus positions within the issue hierarchization, the issues framed owing to the economic narrative did not evince any particular sign of different behavior. No link was found between a particular framing or salience sub-attribute. The economic issue thus confirmed its highly dynamic position without identifying a specific trend within agenda-setting dynamics on the EUCO agenda.

8.1.4 EU governance

EU governance and government operations were classified as a perspective of a different issue on the EUCO agenda only twice, for *migration* and *health* (European Council, 6/2018a; Council of the EU, 3/2020a). In both cases, the emphasis was far from being an essential determinant of the issue framing. *EU governance* thus seems to be an isolated issue in terms of mutual penetration of framing sub-attributes, as demonstrated in the case of *digitalization*.

Nonetheless, the issue revealed an interesting link between its perspectives identified in the relational content analysis and the degree of salience determined owing to the holistic grading method. There were three dominant perspectives identified within its framing: (1) the negotiation of the withdrawal agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union, (2) the future of Europe, and (3) the EU institutional setting. Interestingly, the EU-UK discussions pushed EU governance among the primary issues on the agenda. Out of 22 cases where *EU governance* was found to be the most salient issue, the EU-UK's negotiations about British exit of the EU shaped the issue framing 14 times.³³ The same perspective was identified once in *EU governance* as a tertiary issue, and four times as a secondary issue.

Except for the informal meeting in September 2016 (Council of the EU, 9/2016), the remaining primary issue of *EU governance* was associated with the institutional setting, in particular dealing with budgetary issues (European Council, 2/2016, 6/2016a, 6/2016b, 4/2017, 6/2017a, 10/2017b, 12/2017b, 6/2018b, 12/2018a, 3/2019a, 4/2019, 6-7/2019, 10/2019a, 7/2020, 12/2020; Council of the EU, 6/2016, 2/2020, 4/2020, 6/2020, 11/2020). Nonetheless, the perspective of the EU institutional setting alternated among all positions on the agenda.

8.1.5 Positive and/or negative feedback driven

The group of highly dynamic issues exhibited several patterns of development of issue definitions. Either they developed through a dimension within other issues before getting onto the EUCO agenda as a discrete issue (e.g., *digitalization*), or they were separate issues that simultaneously formed another dimension of other issues on the agenda (e.g., *economics and the Single Market*, and *defense and crime*). *EU governance* evinced an exceptional behavior in being an isolated issue without impacting other issue definitions on the agenda.

³³ Including the announcement of the results of the UK referendum.

In other words, the issues that changed their position within the EUCO agenda hierarchy intensively were defined and developed incrementally, i.e., by negative feedback. The gradual development of issue definitions acquired several types, though.

First, the issues were defined more or less similarly during the entire analyzed period, as illustrated by economics and the Single Market and also by *defense and crime*. Although the economic issues acquired new sub-attributes, such as the element of sustainability, the main focus on growth, jobs, and competitiveness remained a dominant dimension of the issue definition during the entire observed period. The same pattern applies to *digitalization*. Though the range of threats that the EU needed to consider vastly broadened, the threat-solutions narrative determined the issue for the entire timeline.

Second, *digitalization* showed a gradual yet significant development from a segment of the pool of digital topics to an independent issue influencing the definitions of other issues such as the *environment* and *defense*. Nonetheless, the issue developed naturally step by step through snowballing new threats, which is why it is considered to be driven by negative feedback.

Third, apart from the EU-UK negotiation due to British withdrawal from the European Union, *EU governance* was defined by phenomena regularly appearing in EU politics, such as budgetary negotiations, nominations, appointments, etc. The association of this issue with the political constellation of EU politics seems critical for its definition and development.

8.2 Stable primary issues

8.2.1 Migration

Until *migration* got onto the EUCO agenda as a separate issue, the perspectives that concerned *migration* did not appear within the framing of other issues. This changed after April 2015, when *migration* appeared on the EUCO agenda for the first time (Council of the EU, 4/2015a, 4/2015b). Nonetheless, it must be said that *migration* got onto the EUCO agenda relatively early in the examined period. This assumption thus needs to be interpreted with caution.

Not only was *migration* classified as a stable primary issue, but in seven of nine cases where a migration focus was identified within other issue framings – those of *defense*, *EU governance*, *external relations*, and *health* – issues with a sub-attribute of *migration* were

also classified as primary (Council of the EU, 9/2016, 3/2022; European Council, 12/2016, 6/2017b, 3/2020, 12/2021, 3/2022). This suggests that perspectives related to an issue that tends to maintain a primary position increase the salience degree of the issue that incorporates this perspective.

In more detail, the *migration* dimension rose to the primary position of the *defense* issue when external border control, which belongs under the label of *migration* in the coding system, was found as a solution to ensuring EU security and fighting against security threats (European Council, 12/2015, 12/2016, 6/2017a; Council of the EU, 9/2018). Likewise, the control of EU borders and the prevention of irregular migration were seen as an adequate response to avoid a similar crisis in the future of the European Union (Council of the EU, 9/2016). *External relations* referred to *migration* as a reason for international cooperation (European Council, 3/2018a).

Interestingly, the issue of *external relations* concerned a diametrically different perspective over *migration*, which had never been seen before on the EUCO agenda, i.e., temporary protection for all war refugees. Until the outbreak of the open war in Ukraine in February 2022, *migration* and its perspectives were wholly shaped through the irregular migration narrative. The shift occurred in February and March of 2022 (Council of the EU, 3/2022; European Council, 3/2022).

8.2.2 Health

Similarly to the milestone of the *migration* issue, the perspective incorporating the health element was not recognized within the EC discussion before the COVID-19 outbreak. Nonetheless, apart from two shared items (Council of the EU, 3/2020b, 2/2021), the health perspective³⁴ was identified within *economics and the Single Market* (e.g., Council of the EU, 4/2020, 3/2021), *environment* (e.g., European Council, 12/2020), *EU governance* (e.g., Council of the EU, 4/2020, 7/2020, 12/2020), and *external relations* (e.g., Council of the EU, 2/2021a, 3/2021, 5/2021a). The health focus always referred to the COVID-19 outbreak. For example, the economic issues mobilized instruments, strategies, and new approaches in economic transition to ensure a well-functioning Single Market, growth, and

³⁴ The health perspective was always identified through the dummy variable COVID-19, no other emphasis did not play the role in framing other issues on the EUCO agenda.

competitiveness even during anti-pandemic restrictions (e.g., Council of the EU, 10/2020, 3/2021, 5/2021a, 5/2021b; European Council, 6/2021).

Concerning *EU governance*, COVID-19 influenced the direction of the budgetary discussion, initiating the establishment of the special recovery fund NGEU (European Council, 4/2020, 7/2020, 12/2020; Council of the EU, 6/2020). As for *external relations*, the pandemic translated into broadening areas of bilateral or international cooperation (10/2020; 3/2021). As already discussed in the previous chapter, the perspectives of health and foreign affairs exchanged their position on these two issues, since international cooperation represented one of the above-identified solutions to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Apart from *external relations*, the COVID-19 perspective pushed issues framed that way to the top of the agenda, similarly to the migration perspective. Since the issue of *external relations* seems to behave specifically within agenda-setting dynamics, it could be said that a perspective referring to a stable primary issue tends to elevate all items to primary positions except for stable tertiary issues.

The *health* issue dropped to a tertiary position only once (European Council, 10/2020a), and it was recognized as a secondary issue four times (Council of the EU, 2/2021a; European Council, 2/2021, 6/2021, 10/2021). Is there a pattern that explains the reducing degree of issue salience? One explication might be that COVID-19 initiated many meetings, including special video conferences. This led to several EC meetings per month where the issue was discussed. For example, in October 2020, three negotiations of the European Council were held. *Health* was situated on the agenda of all three meetings, twice as a primary issue and once as a tertiary issue. In May 2021, out of three meetings during this month, COVID-19 was situated on the agenda of two meetings, once as primary issue and once as secondary issue.

An interesting situation occurred in February 2021; two EC meetings took place, and the health issue discussions significantly occupied the policy-makers attention. The agendas of both meetings encompassed the health issue twice in two positions, both primary and secondary. However, this model did not repeat either in June or October 2021, when COVID-19 was also classified as a secondary issue.

8.2.3 Positive and/or negative feedback

Given that neither the *migration* nor the *health* issue appeared on the EUCO agenda before the migration crisis in 2015 and the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020,³⁵ respectively, these stable primary issues got onto the agenda through positive feedback and a shift produced by external events. Once on the agenda, both issues maintained more or less stable definitions that developed in a gradual way, tackling the COVID-19 pandemic through various restrictions and vaccination in the case of the *health*, and finding a solution to irregular *migration*.

In other words, although stable primary issues were initially driven by positive feedback, once on the agenda, they developed through negative feedback. Having said that, the *migration* definition dramatically changed in February 2022 with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Until that moment, the *migration* issue was determined by the narrative of irregular migration requiring adequate solutions to be addressed. In February 2022, *migration* experienced a shift from irregular and illegal migration to the flow of war refugees that required protection. Strictly speaking, *migration* was defined by positive feedback when it got onto the EUCO agenda in April 2015. Subsequently, the definition of the *migration* issue on the EUCO agenda followed negative feedback patterns. However, with the Russian incursion into Ukraine, the *migration* issue was redefined through positive feedback once again.

Furthermore, primary stable issues significantly influenced the issue definitions of other issues, e.g., *economics and the Single Market* and *defense* were both determined by the forces of negative feedback. Importantly, neither *migration* nor *health* managed to change the nature of the development of issue definitions from negative to positive feedback, though issues defined with the *migration* or *health* dimension were lifted to the primary position of the agenda.

8.3 Issues avoiding primary/tertiary positions

8.3.1 Energy

The *energy* issue is highly connected with the establishment and development of the Energy Union, as explicitly stated in March 2015 when it was first coded as a separate issue on the

³⁵ Since the research timeframe is 8 years, it is necessary to be cautious in the interpretation of the findings. See more details in this respect in the 9.5 section.

agenda in the analyzed timeframe (European Council, 3/2015). The Energy Union is defined by its close connection to the climate policy as the climate goals arguably reinforce energy efficiency and security (e.g., European Council, 3/2015; Council of the EU, 3/2016). The Paris Agreement was, for example, seen as a relevant occasion for reviewing the Energy Union (European Council, 10/2016).³⁶

From October 2016 to December 2020, the Energy Union did not appear on the EUCO agenda as an individual item;³⁷ however, it was not completely excluded from discussions. Firstly, the perspective of the Energy Union was strongly included within the context of the Single Market, and generally in debates dealing with the EU economy. The Energy Union was also perceived as a fundamental instrument for achieving a well-functioning Single Market, and thus ensuring EU economic growth, jobs, and competitiveness (e.g., European Council, 10/2016, 12/2016, 6/2017b, 3/2018a, 3/2019b). The relevance of the *energy* issue culminated in October 2021, when the shared secondary item of energy and economy topics was found on the EUCO agenda (European Council, 10/2021).

Secondly, while the Energy Union incorporated the perspective of the climate policy within its framing, the *environment* issue also included the energy policy and security as a part of the climate policy. The climate and energy policies of the European Union were genuinely seen as mutually reinforcing each other. Interestingly, the *energy* issue was situated on the EUCO agenda in the first years of the analysis, after which it appeared either as a shared item (European Council, 11/2018, 10/2021), or as a perspective within economic (European Council, 10/2016, 12/2016, 6/2017b, 3/2018a, 3/2019b) or environmental issues (European Council, 12/2019a, 12/2020). It is thought-provoking that most issues that encompassed the energy perspective also acquired a primary or secondary level of salience, which correlates with the tendency of the *energy* issue to stick to primary or secondary positions on the agenda. The *environment* issue indeed succeeded in becoming the most salient problem on the EUCO agenda only once in the examined period (European Council, 12/2015a), i.e., when energy security was a part of the EU policy leading to climate neutrality.

³⁶ In October 2016, the issues of *energy* and *environment* were placed under the umbrella term of ‘other global and climate issues’, which is the reason why the first and second levels of analysis did not include them in the previous interpretation of results. See more in the chapter concerning the first level of the research analysis.

³⁷ The energy issue was identified as a major topic on the EUCO agenda between October 2016 and December 2020 only once, and was in the context of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from Euratom in November 2018. Since, in this case, the definition of the energy issue deviated from long-term dynamics within the issue definition, it is excluded from the development of the energy issue on the EUCO agenda.

The *energy* issue was detected as a discrete issue on the agenda after six years,³⁸ due to the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. The Russian aggression led to the call for reducing energy dependencies through various steps, those related to climate policy included. Thus, the crisis has driven the perspective and issue within the definition of energy and climate issues (Council of the EU, 3/2022; European Council, 3/2022).

8.3.2 Environment

The *environment* issue first rose to the EUCO agenda as part of EU climate objectives related to the Paris agreement (European Council, 6/2017b, 3/2018a).³⁹ The climate perspective also played an important role in the framing of the Energy Union. The energy policy is perceived as both a reaction and a solution to meet climate goals, which include increasing the share of renewable energy, optimizing energy efficiency, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (European Council, 3/2015, 12/2015).

In 2019, the *environment* issue focused on the potential of the green transformation for the growth and competitiveness of the EU economy. Interestingly, this issue definition correlates with the increasing salience of the *environment* issue on the EUCO agenda. By 2019, it was always identified as a tertiary issue (European Council, 6/2017b, 12/2017a, 3/2018a, 12/2018b), and since 2019 it rose to a secondary position (European Council, 3/2019b, 6/2019, 10/2019b, 10/2020b, 12/2020, 5/2021; Council of the EU, 5/2021b), except for in one of eight cases (European Council, 12/2019a).

In parallel with the economic perspective in the *environment* issue, the climate perspective was present in the economic issue. The green economy and green transition have become an integral part of the Single Market, competitiveness, and recovery plan after the COVID-19 pandemic in order to ensure sustainable growth (e.g., European Council, 12/2018b, 3/2020, 10/2020, 3/2021, 6/2021; Council of the EU, 5/2021b). The NGEU merged the green and digital transition as an opportunity to promote the growth and competitiveness of the EU economy, whose interconnection remained on the EUCO agenda until the end of 2021. It even represented the new EU economy paradigm (European Council, 3/2021). This

³⁸ Between March 2016 and March 2022, the *energy* issue got onto the agenda either in the form of the framing of sub-attributes within other issues, or as a shared item with *external relations* (European Council, 11/2018) or *economics and the Single Market* (European Council, 10/2021).

³⁹ Initially, the Paris agreement appeared as a perspective of ‘other global and climate items’ in October 2016 (European Council, 10/2016).

connection even transformed the situation when the independent digital issue incorporated the climate perspective within its framing (European Council, 10/2021).

Alongside the above-described development, the climate perspective also appeared in international cooperations with the United Kingdom (European Council, 3/2018b), the United States of America (European Council, 3/2021), the African Union (Council of the EU, 2/2022), and Turkey (European Council, 6/2021) as one of the possible areas for cooperation.

The *environment* issue went through an interesting development on the EUCO agenda. First, the climate perspective defined the *energy* issue on the EUCO agenda. Second, the *environment* issue was related to the climate goals associated with the Paris Agreement. Third, the green transition entered the framing of the EU economy as one of the dominant perspectives for boosting growth and competitiveness, culminating in the new economic paradigm. To sum up, the combination of energy, climate, and digital policies seems to be mutually reinforcing; therefore, energy, climate, and digital perspectives were present in the framing and definition of the *energy*, *environment*, and *digitalization* issues on the EUCO agenda.

8.3.3 Positive and/or negative feedback

This research revealed that issues that avoid either primary or tertiary positions tend to be defined by negative feedback. *Energy* and *environment* on the EUCO agenda shared the same features of the issue definition as highly dynamics issues. They either followed the dominant framing that was developing in a non-dramatic way (*energy*), or evolved through a snowballing effect (*environment*).

The definition of the energy issue by the Energy Union remained stable, even though the face of the Energy Union was modified by external pressure and events such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The *environment* issue evolved from the EU commitment to the Paris agreement, i.e. to the formula for EU climate neutrality. However, since *environment* sub-attributes were part of other issues on the agenda, it is classified as a snowballing aspect of negative feedback rather than a shift, which would be considered positive feedback.

8.4 Stable tertiary issue: External relations

External relations, as the most common issue on the EUCO agenda, was part of the discussion as a separate item and within the framing of other issues. The international element was identified in five prevailing perspectives and problems-solutions nexuses. On the one hand, two types – foreign aid and international trade cooperation – were suggested as a solution to certain problems. The first one was to prevent the irregular flow of migration to the European Union, defining the *migration* issue (Council of the EU, 4/2015a, 4/2015b, 9/2015a, 9/2015b, 3/2016; European Council, 6/2015, 10/2016, 10/2017a, 10/2021). International trade cooperation was perceived as a part of the strategy to boost economic growth (e.g., Council of the EU, 3/2017; European Council, 3/2017, 6/2018a, 10/2021).

On the other hand, two perspectives of foreign affairs transcend the nature of issues. Firstly, various problems discussed on the EUCO agenda were, after a certain time, classified as a challenge that required an international, or even global reaction. In the examined period, this applied to *migration* (European Council, 6/2016a; Council of the EU, 9/2018), *health* (European Council, 2/2021, 3/2021, 5/2021, 10/2021, 12/2021), and *climate change* (European Council, 12/2019a, 10/2021). Secondly, international cooperation with specific regions and countries was seen as an appropriate instrument to tackle threats to EU security such as terrorism, migration, and others (e.g., European Council, 6/2015, 6/2018a; Council of the EU, 3/2016).

The last perspective relating to *external relations* appeared within the EU-UK withdrawal negotiations once the future relationship was being established. Given the fact that after British exit of the EU the United Kingdom would not be an EU Member State, the change in the nature of relations was reflected by the perspective of international cooperation (European Council, 12/2017b, 3/2018b, 11/2018, 12/2018a; Council of the EU, 9/2018).

Since *external relations* tended to belong among tertiary issues, it seems necessary to reflect upon the 19 situations that dealt with an exceptional substance or framing to explain their attitude within the issue hierarchization when it reached the top of the EUCO agenda. In six cases, *external relations* were perceived as primary because of the aggression of the Russian Federation towards Ukraine (Council of the EU, 2/2015, 2/2022, 3/2022; European Council, 3/2015, 12/2021, 2/2022, 3/2022). A similar phenomenon repeated with the Turkish escalation in neighboring regions (Council of the EU, 2/2018; European Council, 10/2019b). The escalation in Belarus towards its citizens elevated *external relations* to the top of the

EUCO agenda, as well (Council of the EU, 8/2020). The remaining situations when *external relations* were classified as primary issues referred either to the EU-UK relationship after Brexit (European Council, 6/2018b, 11/2018, 12/2018a, 4/2019) or strategic cooperation with certain countries, such as Turkey and India (European Council, 3/2021; Council of the EU, 5/2021a). Interestingly, the perspective of stable primary issues shaped the framing of the strategic partnership with Turkey and India. In the former case, it encompasses the migration aspect, the latter example dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to find any pattern in the attitude of external relations on the EUCO agenda, given that similar framings can be found within issues in secondary and tertiary positions. The only potential difference seems to be that the closer the conflict is to the EU border and the more negative its effect is for EU internal security, the higher it is placed on the EUCO agenda. As a result, *external relations* seem more responsive to external pressure than other issues. Although they are classified as stable tertiary issues, their position is highly influenced by external events, particularly conflicts. It seems that the closer a conflict is to EU borders, the greater the emphasis put on it is, within the definition of *external relations*. Nonetheless, the direction of *external relations* is maintained; only the scope of events it reacts to is broadened, and the intensity of reactions changes. In other words, even *external relations* are defined by negative rather than positive feedback.

8.5 Agenda-setting dynamics: Issue hierarchization and feedback

The issues that tend to be the most salient in the long-term appear on the agenda as a reaction to a critical situation, such as for the COVID-19 outbreak and the intense migration flow to the EU. Interestingly, these issues were not seen on the agenda before the respective critical event, not even as a framing sub-attribute of another item. In order to get onto the agenda, these stable primary issues were driven by positive feedback. Nonetheless, once on the agenda, they developed through negative feedback sticking to the dominant perspective, problem-solution nexus, or by a combination of both, which develops gradually over time rather than dramatically, as is the case with positive feedback.

Once a stable primary issue gets onto the agenda, it is likely to shape the entire agenda hierarchy because they possess the potential to influence the other issue definitions through new sub-attributes. In other words, they introduce new dimensions into agenda-setting dynamics. The framing of other issues is thus apt to be highly influenced by the presence of a stable primary issue. Furthermore, framing that encompasses a focus on a stable primary

issue impacts the salience of the initial item. The framing affected by the most salient problem tends to propel the issue towards the top of the agenda.

In order to confirm or disprove the first hypothesis, which correlates issues defined by positive feedback with the primary position, all issues determined by positive feedback need to be discussed in the context of issue hierarchization. Apart from *health* and *migration*, the analysis identified another issue determined by positive feedback in the examined period: *external relations* in relation with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Interestingly, in this case, it would be misleading to speak about the shift in the framing of an issue because the condemnation of the Russian aggression and the call for de-escalation of the violent activities in Ukraine defined the framing of *external relations* even before February 2022. However, a shift was revealed by the research related to the salience attribute of *external relations*.

External relations generally covered a wide range of regions, and though the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was the most dominant framing element from February 2022, it was not the only one. Consequently, there were still other issues of *external relations* that occupied secondary and (mostly) tertiary positions on the EUCO agenda. This specific aspect of the EUCO agenda should not hide the fact that positive feedback is behind the shift in a definition that lifts *external relations* to the top of an agenda regardless of whether a dramatic change in an issue definition concerned its framing or salience attribute. Having all this in mind, the findings approved the first hypothesis, i.e., that the issues defined by positive feedback are among the most salient issues on the agenda, i.e., they are considered primary issues.

In contrast to stable primary issues, some items are not elevated to the agenda as individual issues without affecting the framing of another item that is already on the agenda. This phenomenon was illustrated by the ascension of *digitalization* and *environment* to the EUCO agenda. Having emphasis within another issue also determines the framing of an issue per se once elevated as a separate problem to be discussed. Interestingly, once the substance evolved from a sub-attribute to an independent issue on the agenda, it disappeared from the framing sub-attributes of other items (at least) for a time. Nonetheless, the further development of the definition of the initial issue might be described as a boomerang effect, because a substance of this kind then starts shaping the debate on other issues. At the same time, the issue remains on the same agenda as the separate one. Strictly speaking, these kinds of issues developed through negative feedback, more concretely by a snowballing effect,

i.e., from being an aspect to becoming the more general and holistic substance of a separate issue on the agenda. Interestingly, the issues defined by a snowballing effect did not show any particular features of the issue attitude in terms of the hierarchization, i.e., they occupied all three possible positions without any common tendency.

The research also revealed issues commonly discussed as major topics that are simultaneously part of definitions of other issues on the agenda. In the case of the EUCO agenda, the issues of *economics and the Single Market*, *defense and crime*, and *external relations* belong in this category. Interestingly, these issues also worked as an appeal for EU security, growth, a well-functioning Single Market, and international solidarity within other discussed topics, which is a unique feature in the analyzed agenda-setting dynamics. Concerning their development on the EUCO agenda, they were associated with all positions within the issue hierarchization.

Consequently, there were two other issues – *EU governance* and *energy* – whose attitude was exceptional to a certain extent. Although EU governance was a frequent substance of EC discussions, it turned out that this issue did not possess any influence over other issue definitions. *EU governance* was not observed to frame sub-attributes to any other topics on the EUCO agenda. The *energy* issue behaved inversely to the *EU governance* issue, i.e., it played a significant role through framing sub-attributes, especially in perspectives and problem-solution nexuses. Nevertheless, energy was not such an ordinary matter for separate discussion, just as for *EU governance*, *economics and the Single Market*, *defense and crime*, and *external relations*.

In all the above-described cases, negative feedback determined the issue definitions. No particular pattern related to the issue attitude within the issue hierarchization was observed; negative feedback defines primary, secondary, and tertiary issues. Having said that, the second hypothesis was confirmed. In other words, negative feedback is not a determinant for an issue position on the policy agenda. It can hence be a driver for a primary, secondary, or tertiary issue without bias.

Furthermore, the research findings also revealed that issue definitions on the EUCO agenda are not isolated from one another. Apart from one exception, they influence one another through sub-attributes, especially framing ones. The examination of issue definitions thus exposed that an issue asserts its influence over an agenda not only through being on the agenda in a particular position, but also via its impact on other issue definitions. In this

respect, the most common pattern in agenda-setting dynamics was mutual influence through framing attributes, especially through perspectives, problem-solution nexuses, and appeals. Interestingly, stable primary issues could assert their effect through a combination of framing and salience attributes, since an issue defined with the assistance of a sub-attribute of a stable primary issue was simultaneously promoted to the top of the agenda.

9 Discussion

Baumgartner and Jones differentiate positive and negative feedback as two forces behind the stability and change dynamics of the policy-making process. On the one hand, negative feedback is perceived as a source of stable stages substantiated by self-corrective mechanisms and incremental changes in issue definitions on the agenda. On the other hand, positive feedback refers to a dramatic change that happens when a system can no longer equilibrate the external pressure, and thus a shift appears on the agenda. Baumgartner and Jones assert that positive feedback exhibits two modes of change: cascading and attention shifting.

Since agenda-setting dynamics are based on a combination of venues and issue definitions, shifts and self-corrective mechanisms naturally translate into the composition of issue definitions on the agenda. This analysis of issue definitions and their development on the agenda has revealed how negative and positive feedback influence the agenda composition, issue definitions, and issue positions. Examining the development and performance of issue definitions within the issue hierarchization on the agenda showed more detailed feedback patterns by which the agenda-setting dynamics are driven.

This analysis has also shown that agenda-setting dynamics exhibit two forms of attention shifting: (1) substantial shifts and (2) paradigmatic or dimensional shifts. The former refers to situations when a previously ignored issue draws policy attention and moves onto the agenda, just as happened in 2020 with health after the COVID-19 outbreak. The latter shift, which can be described as either paradigmatic or dimensional, does not bring a new issue to the agenda; rather, it describes a metamorphosis in the perception of an issue already placed on the agenda. The pivot in dimension is empirically illustrated by the *migration* issue from irregular migration related to the migration crisis as an external event shifting to the flow of war refugees requiring assistance after the Russian incursion into Ukraine.

The ramification of the role of positive feedback in agenda-setting dynamics is that issues defined through attention shifting become primary issues. This confirms the first hypothesis, i.e., positive feedback generates primary issues with a higher potential for a policy change as compared to secondary and tertiary issues. Nonetheless, the findings go even further. The research indicated that issues determined by positive feedback in one moment perform as stable primary issues in the medium-to-long-term. This principle is valid, even though the issues defined by substantial or dimensional shifts are determined very suddenly.

Consequently, speaking from a medium-term perspective, these issues are determined by negative feedback.

Interestingly, the research did not observe the cascading effect in the definition of issues on the agenda as the PET suggests. However, it does not neglect the accumulation of pressure outside the policy-making as a source of a dramatic shift. Nevertheless, the cascading effect seems to be a format of how forces generate punctuation, rather than a discrete type of issue definition and development.

Negative feedback is a source of stability in policy-making. What kind of self-corrective mechanisms are part of negative feedback? The mechanisms of negative feedback translate into issue definitions in three ways: through (1) snowballing, (2) deepening, and (3) expanding.

A snowballing effect is a frequent form of negative feedback when an issue is first defined by a niche dimension related to its substance, and then gradually snowballs into other dimensions. As a result, the issue incrementally incorporates additional framing sub-attributes to become a more generally defined issue. The snowballing effect needs to be considered even for those issues that are originally only one-dimensional – in the form of a perspective or a problem-solution nexus – under a different substance, and later evolve into separate issues. In order to identify the development from a sub-attribute to a separate issue, the qualitative approach is more than appropriate since it recognizes subtle changes in issue definitions compared to the dominant quantitative methodology in the field.

A deepening effect is a form of negative feedback that does not change the perspective of an issue definition, but does explore and embellish the proposed perspective. The deepening might encompass merging a problem with new solutions or adding new aspects while staying in line with the proposed dimension. The development of economics on the EUCO agenda is an excellent illustration of the deepening effect; the perspective of ensuring growth, jobs, and competitiveness was developed through the addition of new elements that might assure the demarcated goal, such as the digital agenda, sustainable growth, or the Banking Union. Nonetheless, the dimension of growth, jobs, and competitiveness remained the same. Only approaches to ensuring a healthy economy evolved and got deeper into the topic.

The expanding aspect of negative feedback reflects the situation that occurs once an issue, apart from being placed on the agenda as a separate item, penetrates its substantial dimensions into other issues on the agenda. This element of negative feedback generates so-

called multi-dimensional issues. Since the dimension refers either to a perspective or a problem-solution nexus attribute, the expanding effect happens. However, the research showed that the expanding aspect might go even further once an issue substance becomes an appeal sub-attribute, helping an issue definition to be elevated onto the agenda, or even up to its top. The findings also indicated that types of negative feedback are not isolated from one another. One issue might be defined through one negative feedback element or by their combination. The most common coalescences are deepening with expanding,⁴⁰ and snowballing with expanding.⁴¹

Issues defined through negative feedback can hold all three positions on the agenda, i.e., an issue with any degree of salience might be driven by negative feedback. Moreover, negative feedback is a much more common driving force for agenda-setting dynamics than positive feedback. This outcome confirms the concept of the punctuated equilibrium, i.e., long periods of stability interrupted by short and dramatic shifts. Furthermore, even issues defined through the positive feedback – substantial or paradigmatic shift – develop through negative feedback in the medium-term, as was illustrated by *migration* and *health* on the EUCO agenda.

Alongside the link between issue definitions and feedback, the proposed concept of issue definition per se needs to be discussed. This PhD research refined the concept proposed by Baumgartner and Jones, who understand issue definition as a combination of substance and tone. This research offered a more complex contextualization leaning on an interdisciplinary approach. The issue definition is composed of three dominant attributes: (1) substance, (2) salience, and (3) framing. The salience consists of (1) place, (2) space, and (3) urgency. The framing is determined by four sub-attributes: (1) perspective, (2) problem-solution nexus, (3) appeal, and (4) tone.

The designed concept of issue definition allowed, first, the revealing of patterns of how issues on the agenda perform within the agenda hierarchy, and thus which issues are more likely to initiate a policy action. Second, the complex analysis of issue definitions enabled the identification of how they develop, and thus what kinds of feedback drive them. Whereas the substance attribute serves as an umbrella attribute for issue definition, framing is a pivotal

⁴⁰ Examples of the deepening-expanding combination of issue definitions from this PhD research include *economics and the Single Market*, *migration*, and *health*.

⁴¹ Examples of the snowballing-expanding combination of issue definitions from this PhD research include *digitalization*, *environment*, and *energy*.

aspect in identifying subtle changes in issue development. The salience attribute expresses how important policy-makers consider an issue to be at a particular time, and thus how probable a policy action over an issue is. The study argues that if one (or more) of these dominant attributes is overlooked, the subsequent understanding of the agenda-setting dynamics is not absolute.

Third, tone was found as the least guiding sub-attribute for agenda-setting dynamics, which is surprising given Baumgartner and Jones' emphasis on it. In this respect, it needs to be underlined that sub-attributes' role in agenda-setting dynamics might differ per research area. Therefore, it would be valuable if the expanded concept is tested not only in policy research, but also in media, and public agenda-setting research.

This PhD research found that, whereas positive feedback generates primary issues, negative feedback does not produce a particular type of issue given its position within an agenda hierarchy. The research also shed light on how negative and positive feedback determine issue definitions. Positive feedback acquires two forms: (1) substantial and (2) dimensional (also called paradigmatic) shift. Three self-correcting mechanisms substantiate the negative feedback: (1) snowballing, (2) deepening, and (3) expanding. The knowledge of how issues are defined and developed on the agenda is a crucial finding, revealing a vital aspect of agenda-setting dynamics, and contributing to the literature on policy entrepreneurs, lobbying, framing strategies, and many more.

Conclusion

This PhD thesis offers an analytical framework for issue definition, a pivotal notion for agenda-setting dynamics. Although issue definition is acknowledged as one of the two fundamental drivers of agenda-setting dynamics, the concept has been underdeveloped in the academic literature. The proposed framework allowed the answering of the research question, i.e., what issues are defined by negative feedback, i.e., incrementally by self-corrective mechanisms, and what issues are defined by positive feedback, i.e., by a dramatic shift. The answer to the research question is essential for agenda-setting dynamics because the drivers of issue definitions serve as indicators for the development of agenda-setting, and thus the policy-making process.

This research has shown that once positive feedback defines an issue, it becomes the most important issue on the agenda – a primary issue. If negative feedback defines the issue, there is no guarantee that an issue will get to the top of the agenda. In other words, whereas an issue defined through positive feedback becomes primary, there is no link between negative feedback and a particular position in the issue hierarchization. However, issues are rarely defined by positive feedback. Indeed, even if a substantial and/or paradigmatic shift happens in one moment, it is followed by a period of incremental development of an issue definition. This trend was observed in so-called stable primary issues. The outputs thus confirm the assumption of the PET that agenda-setting dynamics are driven chiefly by negative, and rarely by positive feedback. However, if positive feedback occurs, it has a fundamental impact on the entirety of the agenda-setting dynamics, including other issue definitions.

The findings disclosed not only what issues are defined by what kind of feedback, but also how a particular type of feedback influences the issue definition on the agenda. Whereas the PET identifies attention shifting and cascading as two versions of positive feedback, this PhD research asserts that cascading is a form of external pressure rather than a kind of positive feedback. Concerning attention shifting, the findings imply two models – substantial and paradigmatic shift. While the former places a new issue on the agenda, the latter refers to a metamorphosis in how an issue is defined compared to its antecedent form. Nonetheless, a paradigmatic shift does not add a new issue per se to the agenda.

As for negative feedback, three patterns of how an issue definition is developed have been found: (1) snowballing, (2) deepening, and (3) expanding. The first mode represents the process when an issue is first determined by a niche dimension that gradually proliferates to

an issue defined in general terms. The deepening effect refers to situations when an issue is discussed in more and more detail. The expansion of an issue definition means that its dimension is present in other issue definitions on the agenda. The expanding effect thus generates multi-dimensional issues.

As shown above, the findings revealed that positive feedback essentially alters issue definitions and impacts the composition of the entire agenda. Despite significant consequences of shifts on the agenda, issues are rarely defined by positive feedback and, if so, only for a short time. Negative feedback depicts issues on the agenda from a medium-term or long-term perspective. It also drives the development of issue definitions whose fundamental lines were previously determined by positive feedback. The identification of models of issue definitions and their development on the policy agenda affirms that issue definitions stimulate agenda-setting dynamics.

The introduced analytical framework used an interdisciplinary approach that revealed intriguing behaviours of issue definitions on the agenda, combining substance, salience, and framing as issue attributes. It uncovered how issues are defined, and how their definitions and development influence agenda-setting. Combining the analytical framework with qualitative methodology proved effective for studying agenda-setting dynamics.

The PhD research has limitations, which are described here. First, only a medium-term period could be examined due to time constraints caused by the allocation of only one researcher to the demanding methodology consisting of three levels of the analysis. Studying a long-term period and applying this to different agendas would be welcome to validate the findings. Second, the identification of tone and appeal was to a certain extent precarious. Therefore, these two framing sub-attributes deserve more theoretical attention in the future, and potentially the development of a toolbox to aid in their recognition in resources. Moreover, tone is generally difficult to find when official policy documents are the subject of analysis.

Since the redesigned concept of issue definition is embedded in an interdisciplinary agenda-setting literature, it is easily applicable not only to policy agendas, but also to media and public agendas. The application of the framework to different types of agenda would be beneficial for its operationalization. Additional interesting further research would be to analyze patterns of issue definitions and their development on media and public agendas to see whether modes of issue performance differ per type of agenda, or whether similarities

across distinct agendas and venues could be found. Furthermore, apart from horizontal attention dynamics, vertical attention dynamics is an exciting prospect for analysis through the lens of issue definitions. Can the patterns revealed in horizontal attention dynamics be translated into vertical attention dynamics? How does negative and positive feedback influence issue definitions in distinct venues? Do issue definitions in one venue influence other issue definitions in a different venue but in the same policy system? If so, how? The formulated questions open paths for further research that would enrich and advance the agenda-setting scholarship.

Bibliography

Primary resources

European Council (12/2014). *European Council Meeting (18 December 2014) - Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 237/14.

Council of the EU (2/2015). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk ahead of the Informal Meeting of Heads of State or Government*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 54/15.

European Council (3/2015). *European Council Meeting (19 and 20 March 2015)- Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 11/15.

Council of the EU (4/2015a). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk Following the Special European Council meeting on Migratory Pressures in the Mediterranean*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 207/15.

Council of the EU (4/2015b). *Special meeting of the European Council – Statement*. Brussels: Press Release 204/15.

European Council (6/2015). *European Council Meeting (25 and 26 June 2015) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 22/15.

Council of the EU (9/2015a). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the Informal Meeting of Heads of State or Government*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 675/15.

Council of the EU (9/2015b). *Informal Meeting of EU Heads of State or Government on Migration*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 673/15.

European Council (10/2015). *European Council Meeting (25 October 2015) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 26/15.

European Council (12/2015). *European Council Meeting (17 and 18 December 2015) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 28/15.

European Council (2/2016). *European Council Meeting (18 and 19 February 2016) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 1/16.

Council of the EU (3/2016). *European Council Conclusions, 17-18 March 2016*. Brussels: Press Release 143/16.

Council of the EU (6/2016). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the Informal Meeting of 27 EU Heads of State or Government*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 396/16.

European Council (6/2016a). *European Council Meeting (28 June 2016) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 26/16.

European Council (6/2016b). *Informal Meeting (29 June 2016) – Statement*. Brussels.

Council of the EU (9/2016). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the Bratislava Summit*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 518/16.

European Council (10/2016). *European Council Meeting (20 and 21 October 2016) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 31/16.

European Council (12/2016). *European Council Meeting (15 December 2016) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 34/16.

Council of the EU (2/2017). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the Informal Summit in Malta*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 39/17.

Council of the EU (3/2017). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk on the European Council Meeting of 9 March 2017*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 124/17.

European Council (3/2017). *Conclusions by the President of the European Council*. Brussels.

European Council (4/2017). *Special Meeting of the European Council (Art. 50) (29 April 2017) – Guidelines*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20004/17.

European Council (6/2017a). *Procedure leading up to a decision on the relocation of the European Medicines Agency and the European Banking Authority in the context of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Union*. Brussels.

European Council (6/2017b). *European Council Meeting (22 and 23 June 2017) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 8/17.

Council of the EU (9/2017). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the Tallinn Digital Summit*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 537/17.

European Council (10/2017a). *European Council Meeting (19 October 2017) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 14/17.

European Council (10/2017b). *European Council (Art. 50) Meeting (20 October 2017) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20014/17.

Council of the EU (11/2017). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the Informal Meeting of EU Heads of State of Government in Gothenburg*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 668/17.

European Council (12/2017a). *European Council Meeting (14 December 2017) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 19/1//17.

European Council (12/2017b). *European Council (Art. 50) Meeting (15 December 2017) – Guidelines*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20011/17.

Council of the EU (2/2018). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk Following the Informal Meeting of the 27 Heads of State or Government on 23 February 2018*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 82/18.

European Council (3/2018a). *European Council Meeting (22 March 2018) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 1/18.

European Council (3/2018b). *European Council (Art. 50) (23 March 2018) – Guidelines*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20001/18.

European Council (6/2018a). *European Council Meeting (28 June 2018) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 9/18.

European Council (6/2018b). *European Council (Art. 50) Meeting (29 June 2018) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20006/18.

Council of the EU (9/2018). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the Salzburg Informal Summit*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 519/18.

European Council (10/2018). *European Council Meeting (18 October 2018) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 13/18.

European Council (11/2018). *Special Meeting of the European Council (Art. 50) (25 November 2018) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20015/18.

European Council (12/2018a). *Special Meeting of the European Council (Art. 50) (13 December 2018) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20022/18.

European Council (12/2018b). *European Council Meeting (13 and 14 December 2018) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 17/18.

European Council (3/2019a). *Special Meeting of the European Council (Art. 50) (21 March 2019) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20004/19.

European Council (3/2019b). *European Council Meeting (21 and 22 March 2019) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 1/19.

European Council (4/2019). *Special Meeting of the European Council (Art. 50) (10 April 2019) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20015/19.

Council of the EU (5/2019). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk at the Press Conference of the Informal Summit in Sibiu*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 341/19.

European Council (6/2019). *European Council Meeting (20 June 2019) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 9/19.

European Council (7/2019). *Special Meeting of the European Council (30 June, 1 and 2 July 2019) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 18/19.

European Council (10/2019a). *Special Meeting of the European Council (Art. 50) (17 October 2019) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20018/19.

European Council (10/2019b). *European Council Meeting (17 and 18 October 2019) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 23/19.

European Council (12/2019a). *European Council Meeting (12 December 2019) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 29/19.

European Council (12/2019b). *European Council (Art. 50) Meeting (13 December 2019) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO XT 20027/19.

Council of the EU (2/2020). *Remarks by President Charles Michel after the Special Meeting of the European Council on 20-21 February 2020*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 100/20.

Council of the EU (3/2020a). *Conclusions by the President of the European Council Following the Video Conference on COVID-19*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 138/20.

Council of the EU (3/2020b). *Conclusions by the President of the European Council Following the Video Conference with Members of the European Council on COVID-19*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 164/20.

European Council (3/2020). *Joint Statement of the Members of the European Council*. Brussels.

Council of the EU (4/2020). *Conclusions by the President of the European Council Following the Video Conference with Members of the European Council, 23 April 2020*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 251/20.

Council of the EU (6/2020). *Conclusions by the President Charles Michel Following the Video Conference of the Members of the European Council, 19 June 2020*. Brussels: Statements and Remarks 415/20.

European Council (7/2020). *Special Meeting of the European Council (17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 July 2020) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 10/20.

Council of the EU (8/2020). *Conclusions by the President of the European Council Following the Video Conference of the Members of the European Council on 19 August 2020*. Brussels: Conclusions 542/20.

European Council (10/2020a). *Special Meeting of the European Council (1 and 2 October 2020) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 13/20.

European Council (10/2020b). *Special Meeting of the European Council (15 and 16 October 2020) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 15/20.

Council of the EU (10/2020). *Remarks by President Charles Michel after the Video Conference of the Members of the European Council on 29 October 2020*. Brussels: Statement and Remarks 734/20.

Council of the EU (11/2020). *Remarks by President Charles Michel after the Video Conference of the Members of the European Council on 19 November 2020*. Brussels: Statement and Remarks 799/20.

European Council (12/2020). *European Council Meeting (10 and 11 December 2020) – Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 22/20.

Council of the EU (1/2021). *Oral Conclusions drawn by President Charles Michel Following the Video Conference of the Members of the European Council on 21 January 2021*. Brussels: Statement and Remarks 34/21.

European Council (2/2021). *Statement of the Members of the European Council*. Brussels: SN 2/21.

Council of the EU (2/2021a). *Remarks by President Charles Michel Following the Video Conference of the Members of the European Council*. Brussels: Statement and Remarks 137/21.

Council of the EU (2/2021b). *Remarks by President Charles Michel Following the Second Session of the Video Conference of the Members of the European Council*. Brussels: Statement and Remarks 143/21.

Council of the EU (3/2021). *Remarks by President Charles Michel Following the Video Conference of the Members of the European Council of 25 March 2021*. Brussels: Statement and Remarks 238/21.

European Council (3/2021). *Statement of the Members of the European Council*. Brussels: SN 18/21.

Council of the EU (5/2021a). *Remarks by President Charles Michel after the Informal Meeting of the Members of the European Council and the EU-India Leaders' Meeting in Porto*. Brussels: Statement and Remarks 345/21.

Council of the EU (5/2021b). *The Porto Declaration*. Brussels: 338/21.

European Council (5/2021). *Special Meeting of the European Council (24 and 25 May 2021) - Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 5/21.

European Council (6/2021). *European Council Meeting (24 and 25 June 2021) - Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 7/21.

European Council (10/2021). *European Council Meeting (21 and 22 October 2021) - Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 17/21.

European Council (12/2021). *European Council Meeting (16 December 2021) - Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 22/21.

Council of the EU (2/2022). *Remarks by President Charles Michel Following the Informal Meeting of the Members of the European Council*. Brussels: Statement and Remarks 120/22.

European Council (2/2022). *Special Meeting of the European Council (24 February 2022) - Conclusions*. Brussels: EUCO 18/22.

European Council (3/2022). *Informal Meeting of the Heads of State or Government: Versailles Declaration*. Versailles.

Council of the EU (3/2022). *Remarks by President Charles Michel at the Press Conference Following the Informal Meeting of the Heads of State or Government in Versailles*. Brussels: Statement and Remarks 260/22.

Secondary resources

Abbe, O.G. *et al.* (2003). 'Agenda Setting in Congressional Elections: The Impact of Issues and Campaigns on Voting Behavior'. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56(4), pp. 419–430. doi: 10.1177/106591290305600404.

Alexandrova, P. *et al.* (2014). 'Measuring the European Council Agenda: Introducing a New Approach and Dataset'. *European Union Politics*, 15(1), pp. 152–167. doi: 10.1177/1465116513509124.

Alexandrova, P. (2015). 'Upsetting the Agenda: The Clout of External Focusing Events in the European Council'. *Journal of Public Policy*, 35(3), pp. 505–530. doi: 10.1017/S0143814X15000197.

Alexandrova, P. (2016). 'Explaining Political Attention Allocation with the Help of Issue Character: Evidence from the European Council'. *European Political Science Review*, 8(3), pp. 405–425. doi:10.1017/S1755773915000107.

Alexandrova, P. (2017). 'Institutional Issue Proclivity in the EU: The European Council vs the Commission'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 24(5), pp. 755–774. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2016.1215342.

Alexandrova, O. (2019) 'The EU Policy Agendas Project' in Baumgartner, F.R., Breunig, C. and Grossman, E. (eds.) *Comparative Policy Agendas: Theory, Tools, Data*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 191-199.

Alexandrova, P. and Carammia, M. (2018). 'Agenda Setting in the European Union' in Zahariadis, N. and Buonanno, L. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of European Public Policy*. New York: Routledge, pp. 288-298.

Alexandrova, P., Carammia, M. and Timmermans, A. (2012). 'Policy Punctuations and Issue Diversity on the European Council Agenda'. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(1), pp. 69–88. doi: 10.1111/j.1541-0072.2011.00434.x.

Alexandrova, P., Rasmussen, A. and Toshkov, D. (2016). 'Agenda Responsiveness in the European Council: Public Priorities, Policy Problems and Political Attention'. *West European Politics*, 39(4), pp. 605–627. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2015.1104995.

Alexandrova, P. and Timmermans, A. (2013). 'National Interest versus the Common Good: The Presidency in European Council Agenda Setting'. *European Journal of Political Research*, 52(3), pp. 316–338. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6765.2012.02074.x.

Augoustinos, M., Walker, I. and Donaghue, N. (eds.) (2014). *Social Cognition: An Integrated Introduction*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Augustinos, M. and Walker, I. (2014). 'Social Schemas' in Augoustinos, M., Walker, I. and Donaghue, N. (eds.) *Social Cognition: An Integrated Introduction*. London: Sage Publications Ltd., pp. 33–56.

Bachrach, P. and Baratz, M.S. (1962). 'Two Faces of Power'. *The American Political Science Review*, 56(4), pp. 947–952. doi: 10.2307/1952796.

Bateson, G. (1972). 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy' in Innis, R. (ed.) *Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 131–144.

Bátora, J. (2017). 'Reinvigorating the Rotating Presidency: Slovakia and Agenda-Setting in the EU's External Relations'. *Global Affairs*, 3(3), pp. 251–263. doi: 10.1080/23340460.2017.1410721.

Baumgartner, F. and Jones, B. (1993). *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Baumgartner, F.R., Breunig, C. and Grossman, E. (eds.) (2019). *Comparative Policy Agendas: Theory, Tools, Data*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baumgartner, F.R. and Jones, B.D. (2002). 'Positive and Negative Feedback in Politics' in Baumgartner, F.R. and Jones, B.D. (eds.) *Policy Dynamics*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, pp. 3–28.

Baumgartner, F.R. and Jones, B.D. (2010). *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Baumgartner, F.R. and Jones, B.D. (2020). *The Politics of Information: Problem Definition and the Course of Public Policy in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Baumgartner, F.R., Jones, B.D. and Mortensen, P.B. (2018). 'Punctuated Equilibrium Theory: Explaining Stability and Change in Public Policymaking' in Weible, C.M. and Sabatier, P.A. (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process*. New York: Routledge, pp. 55–101.

Bengtsson, M. (2016). 'How to Plan and Perform a Qualitative Study Using Content Analysis'. *NursingPlus Open*, 2, pp. 8–14. doi: 10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001.

- Birkland, T.A. (2006). *Lessons of Disaster: Policy Change After Catastrophic Events*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Birkland, T.A. (2017). 'Agenda Setting in Public Policy' in Fischer, F. and Miller, G.J. (eds.) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*. New York: Routledge, pp. 89–104.
- Birkland, T.A. and DeYoung, S.E. (2013). 'Focusing Events and Policy Windows' in Araral, E. et al. (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy*. New York: Routledge, pp. 193–206.
- Blom-Hansen, J. (2008). 'The Origins of the EU Comitology System: A Case of Informal Agenda-Setting by the Commission'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15(2), pp. 208–226. doi: 10.1080/13501760701817716.
- Bocquillon, P. and Dobbels, M. (2014). 'An Elephant on the 13th Floor of the Berlaymont? European Council and Commission Relations in Legislative Agenda Setting'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(1), pp. 20–38. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2013.834548.
- Boydston, A.E., Bevan, S. and Thomas, H.F. (2014). 'The Importance of Attention Diversity and How to Measure It'. *Policy Studies Journal*, 42(2), pp. 173–196. doi: 10.1111/psj.12055.
- Breeman, G. and Timmermans, A. (2019). 'Horizontal and Vertical Attention Dynamics'. Baumgartner, F.R., Breunig, C. and Grossman, E. (eds.) *Comparative Policy Agendas: Theory, Tools, Data*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 334–358.
- Brewer, G.D. and DeLeon, P. (1983). *The Foundations of Policy Analysis*. Homewood: Dorsey Press.
- Bunea, A. (2020). 'Understanding the European Commission's Use of Politicisation in the Negotiation of Interinstitutional Agreements: The Role of Consultations and Issue Framing'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(3), pp. 439–459. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2020.1712461.
- Carammia, M., Princen, S. and Timmermans, A. (2016). 'From Summitry to EU Government: An Agenda Formation Perspective on the European Council: From Summitry to EU Government'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(4), pp. 809–825. doi: 10.1111/jcms.12346.
- Carter, R.F. (1965). 'Communication and Affective Relations'. *Journalism Quarterly*, 42(2), pp. 203–212. doi: 10.1177/107769906504200204.
- Chaqués-Bonafont, L. and Palau, A.M. (2011). 'Assessing the Responsiveness of Spanish Policymakers to the Priorities of their Citizens'. *West European Politics*, 34(4), pp. 706–730. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2011.572388.
- Chaqués-Bonafont, L.C., Baumgartner, F.R. and Palau, A. (2015). *Agenda Dynamics in Spain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cobb, R.W. and Elder, C.D. (1983). *2nd Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Cohen, M.D., March, J.G. and Olsen, J.P. (1972). 'A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17(1), pp. 1–25. doi: 10.2307/2392088 10.2307/2392088.
- Daviter, F. (2007). 'Policy Framing in the European Union'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14(4), pp. 654–666. doi:10.1080/13501760701314474.
- Dearing, J.W. and Rogers, E.M. (1996). *Agenda-Setting*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Dowding, K., Hindmoor, A. and Martin, A. (2016). 'The Comparative Policy Agendas Project: Theory, Measurement and Findings'. *Journal of Public Policy*, 36(1), pp. 3–25. doi: 10.1017/S0143814X15000124.
- Downs, A. (1972). 'Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue-Attention Cycle'. *The Public Interest*, 28, pp. 38-50.
- Edelstein, A.S. (1993). 'Thinking about the Criterion Variable in Agenda-Setting Research'. *Journal of communication*, 43(2), pp. 85–99.
- Edwards, G.C. and Wood, B.D. (1999). 'Who Influences whom? The President, Congress, and the Media'. *American Political Science Review*, 93(2), pp. 327–344. doi: 10.2307/2585399.
- Entman, R.M. (1993). 'Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm' in McQuail, D. (ed.) *McQuail's Reader in Mass Communication Theory*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 390-397.
- Eshbaugh-Soha, M. and Peake, J.S. (2004). 'Presidential Influence over the Systemic Agenda'. *Congress & the Presidency: A Journal of Capital Studies*, 31(2), pp. 181–201. doi: 10.1080/07343460409507704.
- Evatt, D.L.S. and Ghanem, S. (2001). 'A Salience Scale to Enhance Interpretation of Public Opinion'. *World Association for Public Opinion Research*. Rome.
- Evatt, D.L.S. (1997). *The Influence of Emotion-Evoking Content of News on Issue Salience*. The University of Texas at Austin. Dissertation.
- Gans, H.J. (1979). 'Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time'. New York: Pantheon.
- Gatto Chimendes, V.C. *et al.* (2017). 'The Use of Multidisciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity to Develop the Critical and Scientific Spirit in the Student'. *International Journal of Advanced Engineering Research and Science*, 4(12), pp. 1–6. doi: 10.22161/ijaers.4.12.1.
- General Secretariat of the Council (2016). 'Council's Rules of Procedure and Comments on Council's Rules of Procedure'. Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/publications/council-rules-procedure-comments/>.

- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Cambridge, MA, US: Harvard University Press.
- Gould, S.J. and Eldredge, N. (1972). 'Punctuated Equilibria: An Alternative to Phyletic Gradualism' in Shopf, T.J.M. (ed.) *Models in Paleobiology*. San Francisco: Freeman, Cooper and Company, pp. 82-115.
- Green-Pedersen, C. (2015). 'Agenda Setting, Public Policy'. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2(1), pp. 357–361. doi:10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.75001-X.
- Green-Pedersen, C. and Mortensen, P.B. (2010). 'Who Sets the Agenda and Who Responds to It in the Danish Parliament? A New Model of Issue Competition and Agenda-Setting'. *European Journal of Political Research*, 49(2), pp. 257–281. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.01897.x.
- Green-Pedersen, C. and Walgrave, S. (2014). 'Political Agenda Setting: An Approach to Studying Political Systems' in Green-Pedersen, C. and Walgrave, S., *Agenda Setting, Policies, and Political Systems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1–16.
- Grugel, J. and Iusmen, I. (2013). 'The European Commission as Guardian Angel: The Challenges of Agenda-Setting for Children's Rights'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(1), pp. 77–94. doi:10.1080/13501763.2012.693416.
- Hall, P.A. (1993). 'Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain'. *Comparative Politics*, 25(3), pp. 275–296. doi: 10.2307/422246.
- Haverland, M., de Ruiter, M. and Van de Walle, S. (2018). 'Agenda-Setting by the European Commission. Seeking Public Opinion?'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(3), pp. 327–345. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2016.1249014.
- Hawkins, K.A. (2009). 'Is Chávez Populist?: Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective'. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(8), pp. 1040-1067. doi: 10.1177/0010414009331721.
- Hayes, M.T. (1992). *Incrementalism and Public Policy*. New York: Longman.
- Heikkila, T. and Cairney, P. (2018). 'A Comparison of Theories of the Policy Process' in Weible, C.M. and Sabatier, P.A. (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process*. New York: Routledge, pp. 363–389.
- Hilgartner, S. and Bosk, C.L. (1988). 'The Rise and Fall of Social Problems: A Public Arenas Model'. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(1), pp. 53–78.
- Hill, D.B. (1985). 'Viewer Characteristics and Agenda Setting by Television News'. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 49(3), pp. 340–350. doi: 10.1086/268932.
- Howlett, M. and Migone, A. (2011). 'Charles Lindblom Is Alive and Well and Living in Punctuated Equilibrium Land'. *Policy and Society*, 30(1), pp. 53–62. doi: 10.1016/j.polsoc.2010.12.006.

- Iyengar, S., Peters, M.D. and Kinder, D.R. (1982). 'Experimental Demonstrations of the "not-so-minimal" Consequences of Television News Programs'. *American Political Science Review*, 76(4), pp. 848–858. doi: 10.2307/1962976.
- Jenkins, W.I. (1978). *Policy Analysis: A Political and Organisational Perspective*. London: M. Robertson.
- Jones, B.D. and Baumgartner, F.R. (2005). *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jones, B.D. and Baumgartner, F.R. (2012). 'From There to Here: Punctuated Equilibrium to the General Punctuation Thesis to a Theory of Government Information Processing'. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(1), pp. 1–20. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2011.00431.x.
- Jones, M.D. et al. (2016). 'A River Runs Through It: A Multiple Streams Meta-Review'. *Policy Studies Journal*, 44(1), pp. 13–36. doi:10.1111/psj.12115.
- Kingdon, J.W. (2003). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York: Longman.
- Kingdon, J.W. (1995). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Little, Brown Boston.
- Kiousis, S. (2004). 'Explicating Media Salience: A Factor Analysis of New York Times Issue Coverage during the 2000 US Presidential Election'. *Journal of Communication*, 54(1), pp. 71–87. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02614.x.
- Kiousis, S., Popescu, C. and Mitrook, M. (2007). 'Understanding Influence on Corporate Reputation: An Examination of Public Relations Efforts, Media Coverage, Public Opinion, and Financial Performance From an Agenda-Building and Agenda-Setting Perspective'. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19(2), pp. 147–165. doi: 10.1080/10627260701290661.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lasswell, H.D. (1956). *The Decision Process: Seven Categories of Functional Analysis*. College Park, Maryland: University of Maryland Press.
- Lawrence, R.G. (2000). *The Politics of Force: Media and the Construction of Police Brutality*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Lejano, R. (2013). *Frameworks for Policy Analysis: Merging Text and Context*. New York: Routledge.
- Lindblom, C. (1959). 'The Science of Muddling Through'. *Public Administration Review*, 19(2), pp. 79–88. doi: 10.2307/973677.
- Lutz, S., Schneider, F.M. and Vorderer, P. (2020). 'On the Downside of Mobile Communication: An Experimental Study about the Influence of Setting-Inconsistent Pressure on Employees' Emotional Well-Being'. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 105. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2019.106216.

- Maher, T.M. (2008). 'Framing: An Emerging Paradigm or a Phase of Agenda Setting?' in Reese, S.D., Gandy, O.H., Jr. and Grant, A.E. (eds). *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 84–93.
- May, J.V. and Wildavsky, A.B. (1979). *The Policy Cycle*. Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.
- Mazarr, M.J. (2007). 'The Iraq War and Agenda Setting'. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 3(1), pp. 1–23. doi: 10.1111/j.1743-8594.2007.00039.x.
- McCombs, M.E. (2005). 'A Look at Agenda-Setting: Past, Present and Future'. *Journalism Studies*, 6(4), pp. 543–557. doi:10.1080/14616700500250438.
- McCombs, M.E. and Shaw, D. (1972). 'The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media'. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), pp. 176–187. doi:10.1086/267990.
- McCombs, M.E. and Zhu, J.-H. (1995). 'Capacity, Diversity, and Volatility of the Public Agenda: Trends from 1954 to 1994'. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 59(4), pp. 495–525. doi: 10.1086/269491.
- McCombs, M.E. (1992). 'Explorers and Surveyors: Expanding Strategies for Agenda-Setting Research'. *Journalism Quarterly*, 69(4), pp. 813–824. doi: 10.1177/107769909206900402.
- Min, Y., Ghanem, S.I. and Evatt, D. (2007). 'Using a Split-ballot Survey to Explore the Robustness of the 'MIP' Question in Agenda-Setting Research: A Methodological Study'. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 19(2), pp. 221–236. doi: 10.1093/ijpor/edm003.
- Mucciaroni, G. (2013). 'The Garbage Can Model and the Study of the Policy-making Process' in Araral, E. et al. (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy*. New York: Routledge, pp. 338–346.
- Noakes, J.A. and Johnston, H. (2005). 'Frames of Protest: A Road Map to a Perspective' in Johnston, H. and Noakes, J.A. (eds.) *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp. 1–29.
- Pierce, J.J. et al. (2017). 'There and Back Again: A Tale of the Advocacy Coalition Framework'. *Policy Studies Journal*, 45(S1), pp. S13–S46. doi:10.1111/psj.12197.
- Pollack, M.A. (1997). 'Delegation, Agency, and Agenda Setting in the European Community'. *International Organization*, 51(1), pp. 99–134.
- Princen, S. (2007). 'Agenda-setting in the European Union: A Theoretical Exploration and Agenda for Research'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14(1), pp. 21–38. doi:10.1080/13501760601071539.
- Princen, S. (2009). *Agenda-Setting in the European Union*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Princen, S. (2011). 'Agenda-Setting Strategies in EU Policy Processes'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 18(7), pp. 927–943. doi:10.1080/13501763.2011.599960.
- Princen, S. and Rhinard, M. (2006). 'Crashing and Creeping: Agenda-Setting Dynamics in the European Union'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(7), pp. 1119–1132. doi: 10.1080/13501760600924233.
- Prindle, D.F. (2012). 'Importing Concepts from Biology into Political Science: The Case of Punctuated Equilibrium'. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(1), pp. 21–43. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2011.00432.x.
- Rochefort, D.A. and Donnelly, K.P. (2013). 'Agenda-Setting and Political Discourse: Major Analytical Frameworks and their Application', in Araral, E. *et al.* (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy*. New York: Routledge, pp. 207–221.
- Roessler, P. and Eichhorn, W. (1999). 'Agenda Setting', in Brosius, H.-B. and Holtz-Bacha, C. (eds.) *The German Communication Yearbook*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, pp. 277–304.
- Sabatier, P.A. (1988). 'An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Change and the Role of Policy-Oriented Learning Therein'. *Policy Sciences*, 24(2), pp. 129–168.
- Sabatier, P.A. (1991). 'Toward Better Theories of the Policy Process'. *Political Science & Politics*, 24(2), pp. 147–156.
- Sabatier, P.A. and Jenkins-Smith, H.C. (1993). *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Schnattschneider, E.E. (1960). *The Semi-Sovereign People*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston.
- Schuman, H., Ludwig, J. and Krosnick, J.A. (1986). 'The Perceived Threat of Nuclear War, Salience, and Open Questions'. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 50(4), pp. 519–536. doi: 10.1086/269001.
- Simon, H.A. (1957). *Models of Man: Social and Rational*. New York: Wiley.
- Simon, H.A. (1977). 'The Logic of Heuristic Decision Making' in Simon, H.A. *Models of Discovery*. Dordrecht and Boston: D. Riedel Publishing Company, pp. 154–175.
- Simon, H.A. (1985). 'Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science'. *The American Political Science Review*, 79(2), pp. 293–304. doi:10.2307/1956650.
- Soroka, S.N. *et al.* (2013). 'Mass Media and Policymaking', Araral, E. *et al.* (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy*. New York: Routledge, pp. 204-214.
- Soroka, S.N. (2002). 'Issue Attributes and Agenda-Setting by Media, the Public, and Policymakers in Canada'. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 14(3), pp. 264–285. doi:10.1093/ijpor/14.3.264.

- Stone, D.A. (1989). 'Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas'. *Political Science Quarterly*, 104(2), pp. 281–300. doi: 10.2307/2151585.
- Takeshita, T. (2006). 'Current Critical Problems in Agenda-Setting Research'. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 18(3), pp. 275–296. doi: 10.1093/ijpor/edh104.
- Tallberg, J. (2003). 'The Agenda-Shaping Powers of the EU Council Presidency'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 10(1), pp. 1–19. doi: 10.1080/1350176032000046903.
- Tallberg, J. (2004). 'The Agenda-Shaping Powers of the Council Presidency' in Elgström, O. (ed.) *European Union Council Presidencies*. London: Routledge, pp. 18-37.
- Tewksbury, D. and Scheufele, D.A. (2007). 'Framing, Agenda Setting, & Priming: Agendas for Theory and Research'. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), pp. 9–20. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00337.x.
- Thaler, P. (2016). 'The European Commission and the European Council: Coordinated Agenda Setting in European Energy Policy'. *Journal of European Integration*, 38(5), pp. 571–585. doi:10.1080/07036337.2016.1178252.
- Timmermans, A. and Scholten, P. (2006). 'The Political Flow of Wisdom: Science Institutions as Policy Venues in The Netherlands'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(7), pp. 1104–1118. doi: 10.1080/13501760600924209.
- Turnpenny, J.R. *et al.* (2015). 'The Tools of Policy Formulation: An Introduction' in Jordan, A.J. and Turnpenny J.R. (eds.) *The Tools of Policy Formulation: Actors, Capacities, Venues and Effect*. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, pp. 3-29.
- Tversky, A. and Kahneman, D. (1974). 'Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases: Biases in Judgments Reveal Some Heuristics of Thinking under Uncertainty'. *Science*, 185(4157), pp. 1124–1131. doi: 10.1126/science.185.4157.1124.
- Ullrichova, E. (2022). 'Issue Hierarchization in Agenda-Setting: The Case of the European Council Agenda'. *Journal of Common Market Studies* [online], n/a(n/a), pp. 1–16. doi: 10.1111/jcms.13361.
- van der Veer, R.A. and Haverland, M. (2019). 'The Politics of (De-)Politicization and Venue Choice: A Scoping Review and Research Agenda on EU Financial Regulation and Economic Governance'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(9), pp. 1395–1416. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2018.1523220.
- Walgrave, S. and Boydston, A.E. (2019). 'The Comparative Agendas Project: The Evolving Research Interests and Designs of the CAP Scholarly Community' in Baumgartner, F.R., Breunig, C. and Grossman, E. (eds.) *Comparative Policy Agendas: Theory, Tools, Data*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 35-48.
- Walgrave, S., Soroka, S.N. and Nuytemans, M. (2008). 'The Mass Media's Political Agenda-Setting Power: A Longitudinal Analysis of Media, Parliament, and Government in

Belgium (1993 to 2000)'. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(6), pp. 814–836. doi: 10.1177/0010414006299098.

Walgrave, S. and Vliegenthart, R. (2010). 'Why Are Policy Agendas Punctuated? Friction and Cascading in Parliament and Mass Media in Belgium'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17(8), pp. 1147–1170. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2010.513562.

Weaver, D., McCombs, M.E. and Shaw, D.L. (2004). 'Agenda-Setting Research: Issues, Attributes, and Influences' in Kaid, L.L. (ed.) *Handbook of Political Communication Research*. Mahwah, NY and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 257–280.

Weible and Sabatier (2007). 'A Guide to the Advocacy Coalition Framework', in Fischer, F. and Miller, G.J. (eds.) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*. New York: Routledge *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*. Boca Raton: CRC/Taylor & Francis, pp. 123–136.

Weiss, J.A. (1989). 'The Powers of Problem Definition: The Case of Government Paperwork'. *Policy Sciences*, 22(2), pp. 97–121.

White, E.M. (1985). *Teaching and Assessing Writing: Recent Advances in Understanding, Evaluating, and Improving Student Performance*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Wilson, V. (2011). 'Research Methods: Content Analysis'. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 6(4), pp. 177–179. doi: 10.18438/B86P6S.

Wolfe, M., Jones, B.D. and Baumgartner, F.R. (2013). 'A Failure to Communicate: Agenda Setting in Media and Policy Studies'. *Political Communication*, 30(2), pp. 175–192. doi: 10.1080/10584609.2012.737419.

Wood, B.D. and Peake, J.S. (1998). 'The Dynamics of Foreign Policy Agenda Setting'. *The American Political Science Review*, 92(1), pp. 173–184. doi: 10.2307/2585936.

Young, M.L. (1992). *Dictionary of Polling: The Language of Contemporary Opinion Research*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Zhu, J.-H. (1992). 'Issue Competition and Attention Distraction: A Zero-Sum Theory of Agenda-Setting'. *Journalism Quarterly*, 69(4), pp. 825–836. doi:10.1177/107769909206900403.

Zhu, J.-H. *et al.* (1993). 'Public Issue Priority Formation: Media Agenda-Setting and Social Interaction'. *Journal of Communication*, 43(1), pp. 8–29. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01246.x.

List of figures

Figure 1: Issue hierarchization of <i>law and crime</i> and <i>defense</i> on the EUCO agenda.....	70
Figure 2: Issue hierarchization of <i>migration</i> on the EUCO agenda.....	71
Figure 3: Issue hierarchization of <i>environment</i> on the EUCO agenda	72
Figure 4: Issue hierarchization of <i>energy</i> and <i>banking, finances, and internal trade</i> on EUCO agenda	73

List of tables

Table 1: Number of occurrences of CAPIC major issues on the EUCO agenda.....	66
Table 2: Adjusted major issues on the EUCO agenda.....	94

List of Appendices

Annex 1: CAPIC (Comparative Agendas Project Issue Code).....	135
Annex 2: Values of sub-attributes of salience	146
Annex 3: Rubric for holistic grading	146
Annex 4: Rubric expressed in relation to values of sub-attributes	147
Annex 5: The first level of analysis (substance).....	148
Annex 6: The second level of the analysis (salience).....	183
Annex 7: The third level of the analysis (framing).....	190

Appendix 1: CAPIC (Comparative Agendas Project Issue Code)

A list of notes and/or examples is provided for some subtopics which appear harder to code. The CAPIC variable captures no reference to tone and directionality. The full European Union Policy Agendas Project Codebook is available on on the [EU Policy Agendas Project website](#).

1 Macroeconomics

100 General

NOTE: When sustainable development is the main topic of a sentence, it should be coded as either 100 or 700 depending on the emphasis (more on economic development or more on the environment and sustainability). When the emphasis is not clear a code 700 should be assigned.

NOTE: When the concept “aging population” is mentioned very generally or in connection with the economy it should be coded as 100.

NOTE: The EMU when mentioned generally should be coded here. Stage 2 of the EMU is also coded here, whereas Stage 1 is 1530 and Stage 3 is 104.

101 Inflation, Prices, and Interest Rates

103 Unemployment Rate

104 Monetary Supply, European Monetary System ECB, EIB, and the Treasury

NOTE: General talk about Stage 3 of the Economic and Monetary Union are coded here.

105 Budget and Debt

NOTE: General references to budget implementation should be coded here. EXAMPLES: Stability and Growth Pact, “two-pack”

107 Taxation, Tax policy, and Tax Reform

108 Industrial Policy

NOTE: General references to productivity of the economy to be coded here (whereas international competitiveness of the EU economy should be coded 1806).

110 Price Control and Stabilization

120 VAT

199 Other

2 Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties

200 General

NOTE: EU/ European Citizenship in the general sense (i.e. as a civic right) to be coded here.

NOTE: References to the rule of law should be coded here.

NOTE: Discrimination on the labour market should be coded under 2: 200 or the specific subtopic under 200 referring to the particular discriminated group.

201 Ethnic Minority and Racial Group Discrimination

NOTE: The topic of xenophobia should be coded here.

202 Gender and Sexual Orientation Discrimination

204 Age Discrimination

205 Handicap or Disease Discrimination

- 206 Voting Rights and Issues
- 207 Freedom of Speech
NOTE: Freedom of assembly and expression should be coded here.
- 208 Right to Privacy and Access to Government Information
- 212 Freedom of Religion
NOTE: This topic 2 category is on rights, so keep it general on religious matters.
- 213 Democracy and Democratisation
- 299 Other

3 Health

- 300 General
- 301 Comprehensive Health Care Reform
- 302 Insurance Reform, Availability, and Cost
- 320 Medical Ethical Issues
- 321 Regulation of Drug Industry, Medical Devices, and Clinical Labs
- 322 Facilities Construction, Regulation, and Payments
- 323 Provider and Insurer Payment and Regulation
(Including Other or Multiple Benefits)
- 324 Medical Liability, Fraud and Abuse
- 325 Health Manpower and Training
- 327 Waiting Lists
- 331 Prevention, Communicable Diseases and Health Promotion
- 332 Infants and Children
- 333 Mental Health and Mental Retardation
- 334 Long-Term Care, Home Health, Terminally Ill, and Rehabilitation Services
- 341 Tobacco Abuse, Treatment, and Education
NOTE: Excise duties on tobacco to be coded here. Tax issues should be coded as much as possible under specific policy topics.
- 342 Alcohol Abuse and Treatment
NOTE: Excise duties on alcohol to be coded here. Tax issues should be coded as much as possible under specific policy topics.
- 343 Controlled and Illegal Drug Abuse, Treatment, and Education
- 398 Research and Development
- 399 Other

4 Agriculture and Fisheries

400 General

401 International Agricultural Trade

NOTE: International fisheries agreements (fishing in the waters of another country or high seas) should be coded 1902.

402 Agricultural Subsidies

403 Food Inspection and Safety

404 Agricultural Marketing, Research, and Promotion

NOTE: This code refers to sales and advertising, not to scientific research. The latter should be coded 498.

406 Animal Welfare in Agriculture

NOTE: Animal welfare outside of agriculture (such as the protection of laboratory animals) goes under 709.

407 Environmental Issues in Agriculture

408 Fisheries and Fishing

NOTE: International fisheries agreements (fishing in the waters of another country or high seas) should be coded 1902.

410 Animal Disease

411 Crop Disease

412 Common Organisation of Agricultural Markets

498 Agricultural Research and Development

499 Other

5 Labor and Employment

500 General

NOTE: General references to human capital or human resources should be coded here.

501 Worker Safety and Protection

502 Employment Training and Workforce Development

503 Employee Benefits

504 Employee Relations and Labour Unions

NOTE: References to the tripartite conference, tripartite agreements and negotiations, as well as the social partners should be coded here.

505 Working Conditions

506 Youth Employment and Child Labour

509 Pension Related Issues

529 Seasonal and Migrant Workers (EU citizens)

599 Other

6 Education

600 General

NOTE: General references to life-long learning should be coded here.

601 Higher Education

602 Elementary and Secondary Education

603 Education of Underprivileged Students

604 Vocational Education

606 Special Education for Disabled Students

607 Educational Excellence

NOTE: Includes public libraries and literacy issues.

698 Research and Development

699 Other

7 Environment

700 General

NOTE: When sustainable development is the main topic of a sentence, it should be coded as either 100 or 700 depending on the emphasis (more on economic development or more on the environment and sustainability). When the emphasis is not clear code 700 should be assigned.

701 Drinking Water Safety, Water Pollution and Conservation, and Water Supply

703 Waste Disposal

707 Recycling

708 Indoor Environmental Hazards

709 Forest, Species and Biodiversity Protection

711 Land and Water Conservation

712 Environmental Technological Risks

722 Transport of Hazardous Waste

723 Radioactive Waste and Regulation of Dangerous Chemicals

724 Pesticides

730 Air and Noise Pollution

731 Global Warming

798 Research and Development

799 Other

8 Energy

800 General

NOTE: General references to Trans-European Networks should be coded here. However, when a specific class of network is mentioned, it should be coded correspondingly: under 800 for energy, 1000 for transportation and 1700 telecommunications (or a respective sub- topic).

NOTE: General references to the topic “energy security” should be coded 800 and not be confused with security as a defence concept.

- 801 Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Regulatory Issues
- 802 Electricity and Hydroelectricity
- 803 Natural Gas and Oil 805 Coal
- 806 Alternative and Renewable Energy
- 807 Energy Conservation (including Energy Efficiency)
- 898 Research and Development
- 899 Other

9 Migration

- 900 General
- 929 Immigrant workers
- 931 Refugees and Asylum Issues
- 932 Acquisition of Nationality
- 933 Illegal Immigration and Repatriation
- 940 Entry of Immigrants
- 941 Integration of Immigrants
- 950 Border Control
- 999 Other

10 Transportation

- 1000 General
- 1001 Mass and Public Transportation and Safety
- 1002 Road and Highway Construction, Transportation, Maintenance, and Safety
- 1003 Airports, Airlines, Air Traffic Control and Safety
- 1005 Railroad Transportation and Safety
- 1007 Maritime Issues, Transport and Safety
- 1010 Public Works (Infrastructure Development)

NOTE: Applies to combined infrastructure development (across more than one subtopic under 10). When infrastructure for specific type of transportation is discussed, code with the respective subtopic under 10.

- 1098 Research and Development
- 1099 Other

12 Law and Crime

1200 General

1201 Government Departments and Agencies Dealing With Law and Crime
(Includes Executive Agencies, Police, Fire and Weapons Control)

NOTE: General references to police and judicial cooperation should be coded here.

1203 Illegal Drug Production, Trafficking, and Control

1204 Court Administration

1205 Prisons

1206 Juvenile Crime and the Juvenile Justice System

1207 Child Abuse and Child Pornography

1208 Family Issues (Including Family Law and Domestic Abuse)

1211 Riots and Crime Prevention

1212 Organized Crime

1213 White Collar Crime

1227 Domestic Security Concerns Related to Terrorism

NOTE: This code is for domestic terrorism-related issues only. International terrorism is coded 1927.

1230 Prostitution and Human Trafficking

1240 Criminal Code

1241 Civil Code

1299 Other

13 Social Policy

1300 General

1302 Poverty and Assistance for Low-Income Families

1303 Elderly Issues, Elderly Assistance Programs and State Pensions

1304 Assistance to the Disabled and Handicapped

1305 Social Services and Volunteer Associations

1306 Assistance to the Youth

1308 Parental Leave and Child Care

1310 Social Benefits for Widows and Widowers

1399 Other

14 Regional and Urban Policy and Planning

- 1400 General
- 1401 Housing and Community Development
- 1403 Urban Economic Development and General Urban Issues
- 1404 Rural Housing and Farming Housing Assistance Programs
- 1405 Rural Economic Development
- 1406 Low and Middle Income Housing Programs and Needs
- 1408 Elderly and Handicapped Housing
- 1409 Housing Assistance for Homeless and Homeless Issues
- 1420 Cohesion Policy and Structural Funds
- 1499 Other

15 Banking, Finance, and Internal Trade

- 1500 General
- 1501 Banking System and Financial Institution Regulation
- 1502 Financial Market Regulation
- 1505 Insurance Regulation
- 1507 Debt and Bankruptcy
- 1521 Small Business Issues
- NOTE: Recognition of professional qualifications should be coded here.
- 1522 Intellectual Property Rights and Patents 1524 Tourism
- 1525 Consumer Protection
- 1526 Sports and Gambling Regulation

1530 Creation of the Common/Single/Internal Market

NOTE: Subtopic 1530 should only be used for general discussions about and measures to promote the creation of a Single Market. The creation of a Common Market for specific products should go under the relevant subtopic (e.g. single market in pharmaceuticals under 321, common market in milk under 412, etc.).

NOTE: General references to the free movement of goods, capital and services within the EU should be coded here. Movements of workers should be coded 529.

NOTE: Stage 1 of EMU should be coded here.

1540 Competition policy

NOTE: The EU competition policy deals with ensuring fair competition (i.e. rivalry between companies as a driving force of the market) in order to enhance economic growth. In particular, the policy deals with rule on mergers, takeovers, cartels (to be coded here) and the use of state aid (to be coded 1541). References to the competitiveness of the European economy should not be mistaken with competition policy (they are to be coded 1806).

1541 State Aid (Preferential Public Assistance)

NOTE: Refers to aid from national governments to domestic enterprises or industries. Whenever the EU is providing aid this is part of the Cohesion and Regional Funds or the Agricultural Policy and

should not be coded as state aid.

1542 Corporate Governance

1595 Harmonization of Technical Requirements

NOTE: This subtopic is meant for the regulation of specific products such as paint, pressure valves. In short all the technical requirements to harmonize the Internal Market.

1598 Research and Development

1599 Other

NOTE: E-business coded here

16 Defense

1600 General

NOTE: General points about peace and security should be coded as 1600.

NOTE: Petersbergs tasks should be coded here when mentioned generally.

1601 European Defense Industry and Defense Equipment Markets

1602 Defense Alliances and Security Assistance

NOTE: This code is for external alliances (such as NATO) and assistance to third countries. Peace keeping operations as well as civilian/police missions should be coded here. While general matters of alliance go here, specific cases of military operations and missions must be coded under 1619.

1603 Military Intelligence, Intelligence Services, and Espionage

1604 Military Capabilities and Coordination of Armed Services within the EU

1605 Arms Control and Nuclear Non-Proliferation

1606 Military Aid and Weapons Sales to Other Countries

1608 Military Manpower and Personnel

NOTE: Includes veterans Issues.

1610 Military Procurement and Weapons System Acquisitions and Evaluation

1611 Military Installations, Construction, and Land Transfers

1612 Reserve Forces and Reserve Affairs

1614 Military Nuclear and Hazardous Waste Disposal, Military Environmental
Compliance

1615 Civil Defense (War Related)

NOTE: Refers to defence of the population managed by civilians. Overall protection of the civilian population in violent conflicts should be coded 1619.

1616 Civilian Personnel in the Army and the Defense Industry

1617 Oversight of Defense Contracts and Contractors

1619 Direct War Related Issues and Military Operations

NOTE: This code is to be used for specific cases of military operations and missions. General matters of alliance go under 1602, which also includes peace-keeping operations.

1620 Relief of Claims against the Military

1698 Research and Development

1699 Other

17 Space, Science, Technology, and Communications

1700 General

NOTE: The Digital Agenda of the EU should be coded here unless a reference is made to a specific aspect of it which corresponds to a subtopic.

1701 Space Agencies (ESA)

1704 Commercial Use of Space, Satellites

1705 Science Technology Transfer, International Scientific Cooperation

NOTE: 1705 is for transfer and cooperation with third countries, not among EU member states.

1706 Telephone and Telecommunication Regulation

NOTE: Includes infrastructure for high speed internet and other forms of telecommunications. Digital economy and Digital Single Market should be coded here.

1707 Newspaper, Publishing, and Broadcast Industry Regulation (TV, Cable, Radio)

NOTE: This code refers to regulatory and technological aspects of media. Media contents should be coded 2303 (for written press), 2304 (for radio and television) or 2300 (for media in general).

1708 Weather Forecasting and Related Issues, Oceanography

1709 Computer Industry and Computer Security

NOTE: Internet should be coded here.

1798 Research and Development

1799 Other

18 Foreign Trade

NOTE: all subtopics under major topic 18 relate to external trade, i.e. trade with states outside the EU. Internal trade (i.e. among EU member states) goes into major topic 15 or subtopics in other major topic categories if specific products are at stake.

1800 General

1802 Trade Negotiations, Disputes, and Agreements

NOTE: Topics referring to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other trade-related organisation should be coded as 1802 and not 1926.

NOTE: International trade agreements in agriculture should be coded 401.

1803 Export Promotion and Regulation

NOTE: International agricultural exports should be coded 401.

1804 International Private Business Investment and Corporate Development

1806 Productivity and Competitiveness of EU Business, EU Balance of Payments

NOTE: References to the competitiveness of the EU economy should be coded here.

1807 Tariff and Import Restrictions, Import Regulation

NOTE: International agricultural imports should be coded 401.

1808 Exchange Rates and Related Issues

1899 Other

19 International Affairs and Foreign Aid

1900 General

NOTE: Independence and sovereignty of countries outside the EU should be coded here.

NOTE: When the main topic in a sentence is Association Agreements, the sentence should be assigned code 1900.

NOTE: The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) should be coded 1900 when mentioned generally.

1901 Foreign Aid

(Including financial aid, technical assistance, development cooperation, humanitarian aid)

NOTE: Refers only to aid provided by governments or the EU.

NOTE: Pre-accession financial instruments, such as PHARE, should be coded 1901.

1902 International Resources Exploitation and Resources Agreement

1905 Developing Countries Issues (except financial issues)

1906 International Finance and Economic Development

1925 Human Rights

1926 International Organizations Other Than Finance

NOTE: Topics referring to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other trade-related organisations should not be coded here but under 1802.

NOTE: Topics based on the resolutions of the United Nations should be coded here.

1927 International Terrorism and Hijacking

NOTE: This code is for international terrorism only. Domestic security concerns related to terrorism are coded 1227.

1929 EU Diplomats, EU External Service, Delegations and Offices, EU Citizens Abroad, Foreign Diplomats in the EU, Passports

1980 EU Enlargement

NOTE: Adoption of the *acquis communautaire* by states applying for EU-membership should be coded here.

1999 Other

20 EU Governance and Government Operations

NOTE: Wherever “government” is used in major topic 20, the EU institutions are meant, not member state governments and their institutions.

2000 General

(includes budget requests and appropriations for multiple departments and agencies)

NOTE: General references to the future of the Union are coded here.

2002 Government Efficiency and Bureaucratic Oversight

NOTE: Good governance should be coded here.

2003 Postal Service Issues

NOTE: In an EU context, subtopic 2003 will mainly be about liberalization of postal markets.

2004 Government Employee Benefits, Civil Service Issues

2005 Nominations and Appointments

2006 Currency, Commemorative Coins, Medals, Royal Mint

NOTE: Currency refers only to the making of coins and bills, not the monetary issues related to these. The introduction of the Euro should go to under 104 but the making of the euro under 2006.

2007 Government Procurement, Procurement Fraud and Contractor Management

2008 Government Property Management

2009 Organization of Tax and Customs Administration

NOTE: In the absence of an EU tax or customs organization, 2009 is (also) about the organization of tax and customs collection by the member states (but, sometimes, on behalf of the EU).

2010 Fraud and Scandals in the EU Institutions

2012 Regulation of Political Life and Governmental Ethics

NOTE: General references to democratic deficit of the EU in terms of legitimacy and citizen involvement in the political process should be coded here.

2013 Statistics and Eurostat

2015 Relief of Claims against the EU

2018 Domestic Disaster Relief and Civil Protection

2030 Public Holidays

2032 Institutions and Institutional Relationships

2033 EU Treaties and Treaty Reform

2040 Relations EU-Member State Governments

NOTE: When mentioned generally subsidiarity should be coded here.

NOTE: Transposition of Community law should be coded as 2040 and should be distinguished from adoption of the *acquis communautaire* by candidate countries, which is 1980.

2041 Relations EU-Regional Governments 2042 Relations EU-Local Authorities

2099 Other

21 Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues

2100 General

2101 National Parks, Memorials, Historic Sites, and Recreation

2103 Natural Resources, Public Lands, and Forest Management

2104 Water Resources Development and Research

NOTE: This also includes land reclamation and protection against water (subsidies to build dams etc.). Both water as a natural resource and water to be managed from infrastructure and safety reasons are included here.

2105 Dependencies and Territorial Issues

2199 Other

23 Culture and Media

NOTE: Media here refers to issues related to contents (i.e. the cultural aspect of media) and not to regulatory or technological issues.

2300 General

2301 Audio-Visual and Performing arts

2302 Books

2303 Written press

NOTE: Technological and regulatory aspects of press should be coded 1707.

2304 Radio and television

NOTE: Technological and regulatory aspects of radio and television should be coded 1707.

2310 Museums, heritage, historical monuments and archives

2311 Protection and promotion of European culture

2399 Other

Appendix 2: Values of sub-attributes of salience

Value	Place	Time	Urgency
0			not urgent
1	1st third of positions	long record	urgent
2	2nd third of positions	middle-long record	
3	3rd third of positions	short record	

Appendix 3: Rubric for holistic grading

Grade 1: Primary issue

The primary issue is the most salient issue on the agenda in the given moment in time.

Grade 2: Secondary issue

The secondary issue is less salient issue than primary but more salient than tertiary one in the given moment in time.

Grade 3: Tertiary issue

The tertiary issue is at least salient issue on the agenda in a given moment in time. tertiary category denominates the least salient issues.

Appendix 4: Rubric expressed in relation to values of sub-attributes

Grades	Place	Time	Urgency
1	1	1	1
	1	1	0
	1	2	1
	2	1	1
	1	3	1
	3	1	1
2	2	2	1
	2	2	0
	2	1	1
	1	2	0
	3	2	1
	2	3	1
3	3	3	1
	3	3	0
	3	2	0
	2	3	0
	1	3	0
	3	1	0

Appendix 5: The first level of analysis (substance)

Year	Monté	Day	In/formal	Document type	Special	Video	Major topic	Subtopic	Sub-sub-topics	Meaning unit
2014	12	18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	1	100	108	Fostering investment to boost European market
									104	Setting up new funds and supplies, EIB activities
									1530	Supporting mechanisms within SSM
									1706	Promoting Digital Single Market
									1802	Strengthening multilateral trading system
									107	Fight against tax violence and aggressive tax planning
									100	Smooth functioning of the EMU
							19	1900	1900+1901	General independency, EU will provide financial support
2015	2	12	informal	Remarks	0	0	19	1999	1999	Agression towards suvereing state
							12	1227	1227	Discussion on fighting agains terrorism
							1	100	100	Future of EMU
2015	3	19-20	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	8	800		Establishing the Energy Union encompassing strategy to climate change, energy security , energy efficiency, energy research and development
									104	Reforms to boost the economic growth in the EU
									104	The role of EFSI and EIB in the structural reforms and investments
								104 + 1802	TTIP as role in EU market growth and job offers	

							19	1900 1900	1900+1980 1900	Ongoing with the ENP Association Agreements, cooperation
									1999+1901 1900 1999	Restrictive measures against Russi, condemnation of Russian agression, financial support of the Ukraine International security and peace
2015	4	23	formal	Remarks	Special	0	9	900	933 + 1230 1901 931+933	Irregular migration, preventing human trafficking Financial aid Refugees protection, Repartiation
2015	4	23	formal	Statement	special	0	9	900	950 1230 933+1230 933 931	Border control Fightening with human trafficking Fightening with illegal immigration, human trafficking Illegal immigration and repatriation Asylum policy
2015	6	25-26	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9 16 1+17	900 1600 1706	950+933 940+933+1999 1604 1900+1698 1604 1602 104 1706	Management of EU's borders to prevent illegal migration Relation/resettlement, repatriation, cooperation with developping countries Funding of military capabilities CSDF (1900) Funding military research and technology Foster EU military cooperation Defence alliance and security partnership Application of EFSI Digital technologies for internal market development and to foster economic growth

							20	2040	2040	UK referendum
2015	9	23	informal	Remarks	0	0	9	950	950	Strengthening EU external borders Financial aid to the region affected by the migration wave
2015	9	23	informal	Statement	0	0	9	900	1901	Financial support in order to manage the migration flow
									950	Strengthening EU external borders
									933	Financial mechanisms to regulate irregular migration
									931	Financial mechanism to support Asylum policy
2015	10	16	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9	900	933	Dealing with irregular and illegal immigration
									950	Strengthening the protection of the EU's external borders
									933	Repatriation
									1602	Discussing the possibility of peace-keeping operations
							1	100	100	Completion of EMU
							20	2040	2040	UK referendum
							19	1999	1999	Independent report on downing of the MH17
2015	12	17-18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9	900	933+950	Strategy to tackle with irregular migration and external border control
									1230	Fighting against smuggling and human trafficking
									940	Reallocation mechanism of immigrants within the EU
							12	1227	1227	Strengthening EU mechanisms for fighting terrorism (1227)

									1201	Ensuring cooperation among relevant agencies to fight terrorism	
									950	Controlling external borders (950)	
									1999	Cooperation with countries where terrorists come from (1999)	
							1	100	100	Completion of EMU (100)	
							15	1530	1530	Completion of Single Market	
									1706	Digital Single Market as the part of the integration of single market	
									104 + 1802	TTIP as role in EU market growth and job offers	
							8	800	800 + 731	Energy union as a reaction to climate policy	
									807 + 806	Energy efficiency as a part of the Energy Union, renewables	
									898	Energy research and development part of the Energy Union	
							20	2040	2040	UK referendum	
							16	1602	1602	Discussion on peace in Syria and EU active engagement	
2016	2	18-19	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	20	2040	2040	Areas where consensus to be found in case the UK leaves the EU	
							9	900	933+950	Iregulation migration and control of external border of the EU	
									950+1602	NATO assistance with border controls EU-Turkey treaty to steady migration flow and to fight against human trafficking	
									933+1230	931	asylum seekers from Syria

									931+940	Identification of mechanisms of asylum seekers
									1926	Cooperation with international organization in migration issues
									104 + 999	EIB role in migration issue
									931	Reform the EU asylum policy
							19	1906	1901 + 1999	Instability in Syria
							1	100	100	Economic policy of the EU
2016	3	18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9	900	950	Control of EU borders (950)
									933	Handling irregular migration with the assistance with EU-Turkey treaty
									940	Reallocation mechanism of immigrants within the EU
									1999	Instability in Jordan and Lebanon
									1900	Cooperation with Western Balkans as a prevention
									104 + 999	The role of EIB in migration issue
									933, 1230	Prevention of alternative routes for irregular migration and for space for trafficking operations
							1	100	100	Endorse the Annual Growth Survey priorities
									100+1706	Completion of EMU, including delivery of DSM
									110	Prices drops in CAP
									120	Action plan on VAT
							8	800	800	Submission of the package on EU energy security by the Commission
									731	Climate change, GGEs in energy policy of the EU

2016	6	28	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9	900	933	Dealing with irregular and illegal immigration
									950	Protection of the EU borders
									104 + 999	EIB role in migration issue
									1999+999	Migration as a global challenge
							1	100	1530	Completion of the Single Market
									1706	DSM as a part of the Single Market
									1709	Computer industry and internet innovation as a part of the Single Market
									104 + 1530	Monetary supply to the completion of the single market
								1802	1802	Trade negotiations
									108	Investment plans for Europe and relevant tools
								104	100	Completion of EMU
									107	Tax policy instruments to fights against money-laundering
									107, 1212	Completion of EMU
									402	Subsidies in agriculture sectors, especially dairy and pigmeat
							19	402	1906	Instability in Syria
									1999	Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy
									1900	EU-NATO cooperation discussion
								1602	1602	UK referendum
							20	2040	2040	UK referendum results
2016	6	29	informal	Remarks	0	0	20	2040	2040	UK referendum results
2016	6	29	informal	Statement	0	0	20	2040	2040	UK referendum results
2016	9	16	informal	Remarks	0	0	20	2000	2000	Future of Europe without the UK
									933+950	Irregular migration and external border controls

									1227	Internal security and fight against terrorism
									1600	Strengthening security and defence
									1530	Economic opportunities through single market
									2000	Future for the youth
2016	10	20-21	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9	900	950	Protection of the EU borders
									933	Prevention of the illegal migration
									933, 931	Acceleration of return policies and speed asylum procedures
									940	Acceleration of reallocation of refugees in the EU
							15	1500	1901	Financial investment to countries of origin of migration flow
									1500	To create robust EU trade policy
									1521	SMEs support as a part of robust trade policy
									1802+1500	International trade as a part of the EU trade policy
							15	731	731	Ratification of Paris agreement
								1530	1530	Completion of the Single Market, including DSM and Energy Union
								108	108	EFSI
								506	506	Importance of youth employment
							19	1927	1999	Condemnation of atrocities by Syrian regimes and their allies
								1900	1926	Cooperation with the UN in humanitarian initiatives
								1900	1900	Cooperation with Russia
2016	12	15	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9	900	933	New mechanisms to fight against illegal migration

							16	1600	104 + 999 EIB role in migration issue 931 + 950 Call for resources in terms of asylum policy and border controls 931 Asylum policy 940 Resettlement and relocation policies 1600 Internal security 1227+1212 Security in terms of terrorism issues and organized crime 950 Border control 1602 Cooperation with NATO 1604 Reinforcing of the EU security cooperation 1698 Research and Development in defence 108 Investments in EU defence 108 EFSI 1530+800+ Completion of the Single Market, including Energy Union and DSM 1706 506 Tools to boost the youth employment 1501 Completion of the banking union 2041 Reunification of Cyprus 1900+1802 Integrity of Ukraine, Association agreements, Free trade agreement 1927 1927 Condemnation of atrocities by Syrian regimes and their allies
2017	2	2	informal	Remarks	0	0	9	933	933 To stem irregular migration 1900 1900 Bilateral cooperation between Libya and Italy in terms of migration
2017	3	910	formal	Conclusions by President	0	0	1	100	100+104+ 103+104 Economic growth as a function of euro area, low unemployment rate, improving investments

									1530	Economic growth as a function of well-functioning single market
									1700	Digital agenda as a part of integrated single market
									1802	International trade treaties as a part of economic growth
									1501	Completion of the banking union as a part of the economic growth
							16	1600	1600	Protection of security and peace in the EU
									1227	Fighting with terrorism threats
							9	900	933	Implement measures from Malta informal meeting (irregular migration)
									940	Solidary in redistribution of migrants in Europe
									931	Reform the EU asylum policy
							19	1900	1999	Instability in the Western Balkans
									1980	EU-oriented reforms in the region
							20	2005	2005	European Public Prosecutor's Office
							20	2005	2005	Election of the President of the European Council
2017	3	9	formal	Remarks	0	0	20	2000	2000	Future of the EU
							1		104	Recovery of the EU economy with particular strategies
							18	1802	1802	International trade treaties as a part of economic growth
							19	1999	1999	Instability in the Western Balkans and European perspective over the region
							20	2000	2000+2033	Future of the EU at the occasion of 60th anniversary of Treaty of Rome

2017	4	29	formal	Guidelines	special	0	20	2033	2033	Guidelines following the article 50 application
							20	2040	200	Citizenship of UK citizens
							20	2033	2040	Core principles of the negotiation
							5+18	529	2033	Application of Treaties to the UK
								1802	529	Free movement of people between the EU and the UK
									1802	Trade negotiations between the EU and the UK
									100	UK in the single market by the withdrawal
									1802	Bilateral agreement between the UK and Ireland and Cyprus
									2033	Legal certainty and equal treatment over the process
							18	1802	1802	Future trade arrangement between the EU and the UK
							20	2040	2040	Position of the UK until the withdrawal
							20	2040	2040	Endorsement of the arrangement
2017	6	22	formal	Procedure	special		20	2033	2033+2031	Relocation of EMA and EBA due to the Article 50 application.
2017	6	22-23	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	12+16	1227+1600	1227+1600	Fight against the terrorism to ensure the internal security
									1698	Reserach and development to deal with the terrorism
									950+1600	Mechanisms to protect EU borders and internal security
									1600	Strenghtening external security
									1927	Dealing with international terrorrism and threats

									1601	Mobilization of defence industry and capacities
									1600	Strengthening th EU security and defence
									1602	EU security and defence ensured by missions
							7	731	731	Climate goals, Paris agreement commitments
							1	100	104	Ensuring economic growth
									1530	Well-functioning the single market
									1530+800+	Energy Union and DSM as a part of well-functioning single market
									1706	Well-functioning single market
									108	EFSI
									1802	International trade as a part of the EU economic growth
									900+950+	Comprehensive EU approach towards the migration including border control, prevention of the illegal migration, and EU asylum policy
							9	900	933+931	EU asylum policy
									1700+1706+	Creation digital vision for Europe, including DSM, R+D, e-government, strategy to meet cyber-security challenges
							17	1700	1798	strategy to meet cyber-security challenges
2017	9	29	formal	Remarks	special	0	17	2000	2000	Event for the future of the Europe
								1700	1700	Digital vision for Europe
									20	Leaders' vision their future work for Europe
									104	Deepen EMU, including the banking union
									104, 1501	Deepen EMU, including the banking union
									2000	Unity of the EU

								2000	2000+1600+900+500	Solutions to European problems - security, migration, unemployment
2017	10	19	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9	900	950	Border control
									1230	Handle with human trafficking and smuggling
									999	Data and information sharing to tackle migration problems
									933	Using relevant tools to tackle irregular migration
									1901	Financial support to tackle migration problems in respective regions
							17	1700	931	EU asylum policy
									1700	Europe needs to go digital
									1799	E-government as an essential part of the digital Europe
									1706	DSM as essential part of the digital Europe and communication networks call for common approach in
									1799	cybersecurity, hybrid threats, including online terrorism
									500	Education and training in digital age
									1798	Research and Development in digital area
									107	Effective and fair taxation system in the digital environment
									1530	Completion of the single market as a part of digital vision for Europe
							16	1604	1604	PESCO, coordination of defence capacities
									107	Investment in defence
							19	1900	1900	Debate over Turkey

								1999	1999	Instable situation in Korean peninsula
2017	10	20	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0 article 50	0	20	2033	2033 200 2105	Application of Article 50 Progress on negotiation about the citizens' rights Stagnation on the UK-Ireland border issue
2017	11	17	informal	Remarks	0	0	13 6 20 20	1300 600 2000 2033	1300 600 2000 2033+200+ 2105	Social dimension of EU policies Getting known better EU cultures through education abroad Multiannual budget discussion Article 50 debates including progress in citizens' rights and stagnation on UK- Ireland borders
2017	12	14	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	16 20 7 19	1600 2000 731 1900	1602 1601 1602 1604 1615+1600 2000 1300 600 731 1900	PESCO as an instrument in the field of EU security and defence Financial instruments to boost Defence industry Financial instruments to military operations, cooperation with NATO Instruments to cover capacity building in defence Strengthening civilian capacities under CSDP framework Future of the Europe Social dimension of EU policies Education as a key for the competitive Europe Fight against the climate change Two-state solution as an EU solution to Israel issues

2017	12	15	formal	Guidelines	0 article 50	0	20	2033 1530 1900 1802 1900	2033 1530 1900 1802 1900	The first phase of the Article 50 application UK's participation in the single market and custom union during the transition period UK-EU partnership discussion after the withdrawal UK's non-participation in the single market and custom union after the withdrawal UK-EU partnership cooperation in various areas after the withdrawal
2018	2	23	informal	Remarks	0	0	20 20 19 19 19	2000 2031 1900 1999 1999	2000 2032 1900 1999 1999	Post 2020-budget discussion in the context of the Brexit Discussion about EU institutions, EP constellation after the Brexit Future relationship between the EU and UK Condemnation of Turkey's activities in the Eastern Mediterranean Call to stop violence caused by Syria and Russia
2018	3	22	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	15 7	1530 1300 731	1530+1706+800 1802 2000 1300 731	Completion of the Single Market including DSM, Energy union etc. International trade agreements as a part of the EU competitiveness Policy priority areas in the Annual Growth Survey Social dimension of EU policies EU commitment to Paris agreement

							17	1700	1700+1706+1789	Digital Europe including DSM, R&D, AI
							19	1900	1999+1980+1600+900	EU perspective on the region and cooperation in security and migration
							12	1227	1227	Condemnation of the attack in Salisbury
								1227	1227	EU resilience in facing threats - cyber, hybrid, counter-intelligence
							19	1999	1999	Condemnation of Turkey's activities in the Eastern Mediterranean
2018	3	23	formal	Guidelines	0 article 50	0	21	2105	2105	Territorial issue with Irish border and Gibraltar
							19	1900	1900	Future relationship between the EU and UK
								700+731	700+731	Future relations between the EU and the UK should include climate change and sustainable development aspect
								1000	1000	Future relations between the EU and the UK should include
								600	600	Future relations between the EU and the UK should include research and innovation, education, culture
							18	1802	1802	Future trade relations between the EU and UK
2018	6	28	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9	900	950	Protection of the EU's external border
								950+933	950+933	Protection of the EU's external border to stop the illegal migration
								1230	1230	Fight against smugglers
								933+950+931	933+950+931	International cooperation with critical regions
								1230	1230	Fight against smugglers

									940 Relocation policy
									1901 Funding for regions with migration issues
									1905 Funding for developping regions
									2000 Flexibility instruments to address the migration in MFF
									931 Dublin regulation reform
						16	1600	1600+1601+1602+1604	Strenghtening EU defence and security via several instruments
								1615	Including civilian misions and capacities
								1605	EU resilience to hybrid, chemical, nuclear and other threats
								1699	EU resilience to cyber-related threats and application relevant tools
								1603	EU resilience to threats from intelligence services
						1	104	104	Economic growth of the EU
								107	Fair taxation policy
								120	VAT policy
								1802	International trade cooperation as part of the economic growth policy
						15	1540	1540	EU competition policies
								1706	DSM as part of the competition policies
								1598	Research and innovation in EU finances and business
								1999	Arrangement of Greece and Macedonia on the name of Macedonia
						19	1900	1980+1900	Conclusions on enlargement and stabilisation, association process
						19	1900	1999+1926	MH17 drowning down, UN resolution

							20	2000	2000	MFF for 2021-27 period
2018	6	29	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0 article 50	0	19+21	2105 2105 1900	2105 2105 1900	Territorial issue related to Gibraltar Territorial issue with Irish border Future relationship between the EU and UK
2018	9	20	informal	Remarks	0	0	9 16 19+20+21	900 1600	933+950+ 1900+1230 1600+950+ 1227+1999 1615 2105 1900 2000	Tackling migration challenges - illegal immigration, border control, cooperation with third countries and human trafficking Ensure internal security, external border control and fight against cyber crime Civil Protection Mechanism Territorial issue with Irish border Future relationship between the EU and UK Further negotiation under Article 50
2018	10	18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	9	900	933+1900 1230 950+931+933	Comprehensive EU approach towards migration including prevention of illegal migration, strengthening cooperation with third countries, ... fight against human trafficking, control of external borders, revision of EU asylum policy and return policy
							12+16		1227 1227+1699 1227+1212+1927 1603	EU deterrence and resilience towards threats of various kinds, including cyber and hybrid EU cybersecurity Fight against terrorism Data sharing as one of the defence instrument

							19	1901	1615	Crisis management capacities and coherence
								1900	1901	Investment in Africa
								700	1900	The first summit between EU28 and League of Arab states
								731	700	EU's commitment to the sustainable development
								731	731	Note about the ICPP special report
								731	731	Preparation for COP24
2018	11	25	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special article 50	0	8+19	899	899	Withdrawal of the UK from Euroatom
								1900	1900	Future relationship between the EU and UK
2018	12	13	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special article 50	0	19+20+21	2033	2033	Ratification of the withdrawal document
								1900	1900	Future relationship between the EU and UK
								2105	2105	Territorial issue with Irish border
2018	12	13-14	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	20	2000	2000	MFF preparatoin
							15	1530	1530	Single market as an ensurance for the competitiveness
									1706+1709+1599	DSM and AI as a part of the single market, green economy
							9	900	900	Comprehensive EU approach toward migration
									950+1230	Control of external borders, fight against human trafficking
									933+931	Return policy, asylum policy
							19	1900	1900	The first summit between EU28 and League of Arab states

								1999	1999	Condemnation of Russian practice in Ukraine (Crimea, Kerch Straits and Azov Sea)
							7	1802 731/700	1802 731+700	EU-Japan Economic Partnership Meeting EU's climate goals
							16	1600	1600+1601+ 1602+1615	Ensuring internal security through several defence and civil aspects
							12	1227	1227	Protection against several threats such as hybrid ones and disinformation
							2	201	201	Fight against racism and xenophobia
							2	200	200	Citizens' Dialogue
2019	3	21	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special article 50	0	20	2033	2033	Situation related to the ratification of the withdrawal agreement between the EU and the UK
2019	3	21+22	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	1	100	104+1540+ 100+108+ 1700 800, 107 108	Foster economic growth and jobs through investments and reforms in order to ensure EU's global competitiveness through EMU, single market, industrial policies, digital agenda and in energy union and fair taxation policy industrial policies to ensure EU's competitiveness in the EU level
									1799 1798 1802	AI and data security R&D in relevant areas International trade treaties as a part of economic growth

							7	731	731	EU's commitment to the Paris agreement
									1540	Climate neutrality in the line with the EU competitiveness
									1540	EU's climate goals are opportunities for the EU competitive industry
							19	1900	1900	EU-China summit
								1999	1999	Continuous condemnation of Russian illegal annexation in Ukraine
								1901	1901	Humanitarian assistance to respective countries after the tropical cyclon
							12	1227	1227	EU's resilience to disinformation and hybrid threats
2019	4	10	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special article 50	0	19+20	2033	2033	Situation related to the ratification of the withdrawal agreement between the EU and the UK
								1900	1900	Future relationship between the EU and UK
2019	5	9	Informal	Remarks	0	0	20	2032	2032	EP elections
							20	2000	2000	EU priorities
							20	2032	2032	Nomination of new EU leadership
							19	1999	1999	Condemnation of Turkish activities in the exklusive economic zone of Cyprus
2019	6	20	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	20	2000	2000 + Annex	Next institutional cycle: strategic agenda
							20	2000	2000	MFF
							7	731	731	EU's commitment to Paris agreement
									800+799	EU's long strategy to meet the commitment Paris agreement, climate neutral transition
									799	Funding for climate commitment

							12	1227	1227+1799	EU's resilience to disinformation, AI, data sharing
									1227	EU's approach to hybrid and cyber-attacks
							19	1900	1900	10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership
								1999	1999	Peaceful transfer of power in Republic of Moldova
								1999	1999	EU-Africa strategic partnership
								1999	1999	Stability in Mediterranean region, especially Libya
								1999	1999	Relations with Morocco
								1999	1999	EU's call to change the Russian approach to Ukraine
								1926	1926	MH17 drowning down, UN resolution
								1600	1600	Condemnation of Turkey's activities in the Eastern Mediterranean
							19	1980	1980	Conclusions on enlargement and stabilisation
							1	100	100	Country-specific recommendation for the European Semester
2019	06+07	30-2	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special	0	20	2005	2005	Appointment of the President of the European Council
								2005	2005	Appointment of the President of the Euro summit
								2005	2005	Consideration of the candidate for the President of the European Commission
								2005	2005	Consideration of the candidate for High Representative of the Union FASP
								2005	2005	Consideration of the candidate for President of the ECB

2019	10	17	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special article 50	0	19+20	2033	2033	Invitation to the EU institution to ensure enter into force of the withdrawal agreement
								1900	1900	Future relationship between the EU and UK
								2000	2000	Expressing the gratitude to Michel Barnier for his effort in UK-EU negotiations
2019	10	17-18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	20	2000	2000	MFF
							20	2000+2005	2000	Discussion between EU institutions on the strategic agenda
									2005	Appointment of the President of the ECB
							7	731	731	Outcome of the UN Climate Action Summit 2019
									1227+1999	Climate change as an existential threats
									1599+799	Green transition
							19	1980	1980	Enlargement discussion in the EU-Western Balkans
							16+19	1999	1600+1999	Condemnation of Turkey's activities in North East Syria
							16	1699	1699	Condemnation of Turkey's activities in Cyprus
							19	1926	1926	MH17 drowning down, UN resolution
2019	12	12	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	7	700	731	EU's objective in the context of the Paris agreement
									1599+799	Transition to climate neutrality
									104+799	Funding from EIB in climate action and sustainability
									800	Energy security as part of the climate neutrality

									1540 731 1999 20 20 20 2 19 18 16 19	2000 2000 2000 200 1900 1802 1699 1901	Climate neutrality as an answer to competitiveness COP25 Climate challenge requires international engagement MFF Conference on the Future of Europe Strategic agenda Citizens' Dialogue EU-Africa strategic partnership Support to international order setting with a concern of the paralysis of the WTO Condemnation of Turkey's activities in Cyprus Financial aid to Albania after the earthquake
2019	12	13	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0 article 50	0	19+20	2033 1900 2033	2033 1900 2033	2033 1900 2033	Calls for the timely ratification and effective implementation Future relationship between the EU and UK Discussing further political directions within EU institution
2020	2	21	formal	Remarks	special	0	20	2000	2000	2000	No agreement over the EU budget
2020	3	10	formal	Conclusions by President	0	video	3	300	2032 399 399 398 500+1300	2032 399 399 398 500+1300	Call for cooperation among EU institutions Working together to ensure citizen's health and apply adequate measures Provision of medical equipment Promotion research Tackling socio-economic consequences

2020	3	26	formal	Statement	0	video	3	399	399 950 950+1530 1227 399 398 398+104 500, 1300 500+1300 104 501, 1300 104, 1540 108 1999 399 104, 399 19 12 16	399 950 950+1530 1227 399 398 398+104 500+1300 104 501, 1300 104, 1540 108 1999 399 399, 104 1980 1227 1699	Limiting the spread of the virus External border control Temporary internal border controls, well-functioning single market Prevent disinformation over COVID Provision of the medical equipment Promotion research Financial support for R&D Tackling socio-economic consequences Financing support Prevention of social and employment problems EIB support in private bussiness Foreign direct investment International cooperation on how to tackle COVID Citizens stranded in third countries, repatriation Recovery plan for the EU economy after COVID Endorsment of Conclusions on Enlargment Earthquake in Croatia, expression of solidarity Concerns over the situation on EU external borders
2020	3	17	formal	Conclusions by President	0	video	3 + 12	300+1227	1227 399 399 398 500+1300	Tackling COVID-outbreak Limiting the spread of the virus Provision of medical equipment Promotion research Tackling socio-economic consequences	

									399	Citizens stranded in third countries, repatriation
2020	4	23	formal	Conclusions by President	0	video	20 1+5	2000 500	2000 500	Future priorities for EU actions Safety nets for workers and business 100 Establishing the recovery fund 1699 Condemnation of Turkey's activities in Cyprus 1900 Conference with the Western Balkans
2020	6	19	formal	Remarks	0	video	20	2000	2000	MFF Recovery fund
							19	1900	1900	Agreement on relationship between the EU and the UK
							19	1999	1999	Possibility to sanctions in the context of Minsk agreements
2020	7	17-21	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special	0	20 20	2000 2000	2000 2000 2000	Next Generation EU = Recovery Fund MFF+Annex Transition
									2032	Next steps in the legal process in terms of MFF and NGEU
2020	8	19	formal	Conclusions by President	0	video	19	1999	1999	Concerns about the situation and elections in Belarus
							16	1699	1699	Concerns about situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and over Turkish activities
							19	1927	1927	Fights against the terrorism in Mali
2020	10	01+02	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special	0	3 15	398+399 1540	398+399 1540	Development and distribution of vaccine Competitive policy of the EU
									1530+1540	Single market as an ensurance for the competitiveness

									108 Industrial policy 1700 Digital transformation as a part of the recovery policy 1799 5G, cybersecurity, AI as a part of digital transformation, digital taxation 1699+1900 Concerns about situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and over Turkish activities 1926 UNSC resolution as a response to Cyprus problem with Turkey 1802 Economic partnership between the EU and China 1900 Cooperation between the EU and China to address global challenges 1925 Human rights situation in China 1999 Concerns about the situation and elections in Belarus 1999 Conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh 1999 Alexei Navalny affair
2020	10	15-16	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	3 19 7 19	300 1900 731 1900	300 EU approach in COVID 1900 Future relationship between the EU and UK 731 Climate change objectives to meet goals of the Paris agreement 1900 Relations with Africa 1802 Trade relations with Africa 1999 Peace, security and stability in Africa 1999 Strategic discussion with the Southern Neighbourhood 1999 Concerns about activities Belarus

									1926 1999, 1926	Urgency to respect the UNSC resolution over Turkish activities MH17 drowning down, UN resolution
2020	10	30	formal	Remarks	0	video	12 3 19	1227 300 1999	1227 300 104 1999	Condemnation of terrorist attack in France EU approach in COVID - vaccination Recovery of the EU economy Condemnation of Turkish activities in the Eastern Mediterranean
2020	11	19	formal	Remarks	0	video	20 12 3	2000 1227 300	2000 1227 300	MFF Condemnation of terrorist attack in France and Austria EU COVID approach - testing, vaccines, lifting measures
2020	12	10+11	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	20 3 7 12+16 19 19	2000 300 700+731 1227+1600 1900 1900	2000 300 700+731 1802 1227+1600 1900 1999+1699 1900 1901 1926	MFF/NGEU EU COVID approach - vaccines Climate change goals Climate clause as a part of EU trade agreements with the third parties The European Council firmly condemns the recent terrorist attacks across Europe. EU-US relationship Turkish activities against the EU, Cyprus Strategic relationship between the EU and Turkey Financial aid in the context with the immigration flow UNSC resolutions over Turkish activities in the Eastern region

							19	1900	1900	Strategic relationship between the EU and Southern Neighbourhood
							16+19	1600+1999	1600+1999	Ensuring nuclear safety over the nuclear powerplant Ostrovets
							19	1925	1925	Welcome an adoption of EU global human rights sanctions regime
2021	1	21	formal	Oral Conclusions by President	0	video	3	300	300	EU COVID approach - new variants, vaccination
2021	2	25	formal	Remarks	0	video	3	300	300	EU COVID approach
									300/399	Vaccination
									300/399	Variants
									300/399	Travel restrictions
									300/399	Cerfificates
									300/399+1900	International solidarity
							3+19	300+1900	300/399+1900	Multilateral cooperation over to tackle COVID and other global health threats
							19	1999	1999	Alexei Navalny affair
							19	1999	1999	Condemnation on the attack on a WFP delegation
2021	2	26	formal	Remarks	0	video	16	1602	1602	Defence cooperation with NATO
							12	1227	1227	Cyber threats resilience
							19	1900	1900	Southern partnership
2021	2	25-26	formal	Statement	0	0	3	300	300/399	EU COVID approach
									300/399	Vaccines
									300/399	Travel restrictions
									1530	Ensure function of the single market
									300/399	Cerfificates
									300/399+1900	International solidarity
							3	300	300	EU's health resilience
									331	Prevention, preparedness

							16	1600	<p>398 Research and investment in health areas</p> <p>399+1999 Global response to health threats</p> <p>1600+1227 Strategic agenda: Resilience and preparedness to threats</p> <p>1900 International cooperation</p> <p>1601 Defence capacity development</p> <p>1698 Reserach and development</p> <p>1227 Resilience to cyber, hybrid threats and disinformation</p> <p>1900 Strategic partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood</p> <p>1999 Condemnation on the attack on a WFP delegation</p>
2021	3	25	formal	Remarks	0	video	3	300/399	<p>300/399 EU COVID approach - vaccines</p> <p>300/399 Green digital certificates</p> <p>1900 Partnership between the EU and Turkey</p> <p>1900 Incoming debate about partnership between the EU and Russia</p> <p>104 Economic development and innovation with the help of single market, digital agenda, green transition</p> <p>104 Monetary supplies to economic restructualization</p> <p>104 International role of the euro</p> <p>1900 US-EU relationship</p> <p>1900 COVID as a part of the EU-US relations</p> <p>1900 Climate, digital agenda as part of the EU-US relations</p>

									1900	Facint internal and external threats as a part of the EU-US relations
2021	3	25	formal	Statement	0	video	3	300/399	300/399	EU COVID approach - vaccines
									300/399	Restrictions
									1530	Functioning the single market
									300/399	Preparation of lifting restriction
									300/399	Non-discriminatory digital certificates
									1900, 300/399	Global response to pandemic
							15	1530	1530	Functioning the single market
									1700	Functioning the single market with an emphasis on the digital agenda
									1700+108	Digitalisation in the tax policy
							19	1900	1900	Strategic partnership with Turkey
									1901	Financial aid to address the flow of refugees to Turkey
									1926	EU-Turkey relations in the line with UNSC resolutions
							19	1900	1900	EU-Russia relations
2021	5	8	informal	Remarks	0	0	19	1900	1900	EU-India relations
							3		300+1227	COVID as a challenge to be faced
									300/399	Vaccines, mutations, common approach to certificates
									1802	Trade cooperation between the EU and India
									1925	Human rights aspect in India
							7	700	700	Greener Europe
							17	1700	1700	More digital Europe
							13	1300	1300	More social Europe
2021	5	8	formal	Declaration	special	0		1300	1300	More social Europe
									202+1303	Gender gaps, pensions, equality

							5+1	501	501	Protection of jobs in COVID times
									504	Support of the young employment
								104	104	Recovery of the economy
									2000	MFF, NGEU
									1799+799	Digital and climate transition
2021	5	24-25	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special	0	3	300	300/399	Vaccination
									300/399	EU Digital COVID certificates
									300/399/1999	Global response
							7	700	799	Climate Law
									731	US signature to the Paris agreement
							19	1900	1999	Condemnation of forced landing of airplane and detention of journalists
									1900	Strategic debate on Russia
									1999	Condemnation of the illegal Russian activities in the EU
							19	1900	1999	Agreement on relationship between the EU and the UK
							19	1999	1999	Ceasefire in the Middle East
							19	1999	1999	Condemnation of kidnapping of President and Prime Minister
2021	6	24-25	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	3	300	300/399	COVID situation - vaccination, spread of variants
									300/399	EU Digital COVID certificates
									1900	Commitment to international solidarity
									399	Resilience and preparedness to future crisis
							1	104	104	Economic recovery - NGEU(including green and digital transition)
									1300	Social dimension of the recovery
									108	Global tax reform framework

							9	900	900	Tackle migration challenge (refugees, illegal migration, border controls, human trafficking)
							19	1900	999+1999	Condemnation of political instrumentalization of migration
									1900	Strategic partnership with Turkey
									1901	Financial aid to refugee flow to Turkey
									1926+1600	UNSC resolution in the Cyprus-Turkey conflict
							19	1999	1925	Human rights situation in Turkey
									1999	Call for peace and stability in Lybia
							19	1900	1999	Strategic relationship between the EU and Russia - conditions
							19	1999	1999	Call for release of journalists
							19	1999	1999	Call for transition in Mali and stabilisation in G5 Sahel
							19	1999	1999	Condemnation of atrocities in Ethiopia
							12	1227	1227	Condemnation of cyber activities in the EU
2021	10	21-22	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	3	300	300/399	COVID situation - vaccination, spread of variants
									300/399	Facilitation of the free movement and travelling generally
									399	Resilience and preparedness to future crisis
									1900	Commitment to international solidarity
									1999+300/399	Global response to pandemic
							17	1700	1700	Digital Europe (as solution to many crisis, including cyberthreats)
							1+8	110+899	110+899	Energy prices

							9	900	900	Migration as a challenge of the neighbourhood region
									1901	Financial aid to countries with the refugee flow
									1900	EU-Turkey Statement to be fully implemented on Cyprus
									1927	Hybrid attacks to the EU's borders
									933	Return policies
									999+1999	Condemnation of political instrumentalization of migratoin
									950	Border controls
							18	1802	1802	EU trade policy
							19	1900	1900	Preparation for ASEM summit
										Preparation for Eastern Partnership Summit
								1900	1900	Summit
								731	731	EU ambitious climate policy in COP26
										EU ambitious climate policy in COP15 - biodiversity
										Fight against antisemitism and common security approach to protect Jewish community
								201	201	
2021	12	16	formal	EUCO Conclusions	0	0	3	300	300/399	EU COVID approach to Omicron
									300/399	Vaccination
									1530	Coordinated approach to ensure functioning of free movement and single market
									1900+300/399	International cooperation
									1999+300/399	Global response/prevention to health crisis
										Resilience and preparedness to future crisis
							12	1227	1227	

							16	1600	1600	EU responsibly for its security and peace to face threats		
							9+19	900+1900	1901	Financial aid to the region affected by the migration wave		
									933	Return policy		
									999+1999	Condemnation of political instrumentalization of migration		
							19	1999	999+1999	Condemnation of political instrumentalization of migration		
									950	Border controls, response to hybrid threats		
								1999	1999	Call for de-escalation of tensions in Ukrainian borders		
								1900	1900	EU's strategic partnership iwth Southern Neighbourhood		
								1900	1900	EU-AU strategic cooperation		
								1999	1999	Call for ceasefire in Ethiopia		
2022	2	17	informal	Remarks	0	0	19	1900	1900	EU-AU strategic cooperation		
									19	1999	1999	Call for de-escalation of tensions in Ukrainian borders
2022	2	24	formal	EUCO Conclusions	special	0	19	1999	1999	Condemnation of Russian military aggression against Ukraine		
2022	3	11	informal	Declaration	0	0	19	1999	1999	Condemnation of Russian military aggression against Ukraine		
								1900	1900	Coordinated political, financial, material, humanitarian EU policy		
								1999	1999	Coordinated political response to agressors		
									931	Protection to all war refugees		
									1980	Applications to the EU		

							16	1600	1600 Bolstering EU's defence 1601 Increase defence expenditures Coordination in mission and operations 1604 capacities 1698 Defence reserach and innovation 1927+1227 Protection againts threats
							8	800	800 Reducing the energy dependencies 803 Reduction reliance on fossil fuels 899 Alternative energy sources 806 Renewables resources 807 Improving energy efficiency
							15	1530	1530 Economic resilient single market
							1	108	108 Fostering investment
							20	2000	2000 Act collectively
2022	3	11	informal	Remarks	0	0	19	1999	1999 Sanctions to Russia for its military aggression Financial aid to Ukraine and other support
							19	1900	1901+1900 Applications to the EU Climate transition, Energy prices,
							8	800	800 Reducing the energy dependencies
							16	1600	1600 Bolstering EU's defence
							15	1530	1530 Economic resilient single market

Appendix 6: The second level of the analysis (salience)

Year	Month	Day	In/formal	Document status	Major topic	Place	Space	Urgency	Grade
2014	12	18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	1	1	1	0	1
					19	2	2	0	2
2015	2	12	informal	Remarks	19	1	1	0	1
					12	2	3	0	3
					1	3	2	0	2
2015	3	19-20	formal	EUCO Conclusions	8	1	1	0	1
					1	2	3	0	3
					19	3	1	1	1
2015	4	23	formal	Remarks	9	1	1	1	1
2015	4	23	formal	Statement	9	1	1	1	1
2015	6	25-26	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	1	1	1	1
					16	2	2	1	2
					1 + 17	2	2	1	2
					20	3	3	0	3
2015	9	23	informal	Remarks	9	1	1	0	1
2015	9	23	informal	Statement	9	1	1	1	1
2015	10	16	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	1	1	0	1
					1	2	3	0	3
					20	2	3	0	3
					19	2	3	0	3
2015	12	17-18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	1	1	1	1
					12	1	1	1	1
					1	2	2	0	2
					15	2	2	0	2
					8	2	2	0	2
					20	3	3	0	3
					16	3	2	1	2
2016	2	18-19	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	1	2	0	1
					9	2	1	1	1
					19	2	2	1	2
					1	3	3	3	3
2016	3	18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	1	1	1	1
					1	2	2	0	2
					8	3	3	1	3
2016	6	28	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	1	2	1	1

					1	2	1	0	2
					19	2	2	0	2
					20	3	3	0	3
2016	6	29	informal	Remarks	20	1	1	0	1
2016	6	29	informal	Statement	20	1	1	1	1
2016	9	16	informal	Remarks	20	1	1	0	1
2016	10	20-21	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	1	1	1	1
					15	2	2	0	2
					15	2	3	0	3
					19	3	3	1	3
2016	12	15	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	1	1	0	1
					16	1	1	1	0
					1	2	2	1	2
					15	2	2	0	2
					20	3	3	0	3
19	3	1	0	3					
2017	2	2	informal	Remarks	9	1	2	1	1
					19	2	1	0	2
2017	3	9-10	formal	Conclusions by President	1	1	1	0	1
					16	2	2	0	2
					9	2	2	0	2
					19	2	3	0	3
					20	3	3	0	3
20	3	3	0	3					
2017	3	9	formal	Remarks	20	1	2	0	2
					1	1	2	1	1
					18	2	2	0	2
					19	2	1	0	2
					20	3	3	0	3
2017	4	29	formal	Guidelines	20	1	1	0	1
					20	1	2	0	2
					20	2	1	0	2
					5+18	2	2	0	2
					18	2	2	0	2
					20	3	3	0	3
20	3	3	0	3					
2017	6	22	formal	Procedure	20	1	1	0	1
2017	6	22-23	formal	EUCO Conclusions	12+ 16	1	1	1	1
					7	2	3	0	3
					1	2	2	0	2
					9	3	2	1	2
17	3	3	0	3					

2017	9	29	formal	Remarks	17 20	1 2	2 1	0 0	2 2
2017	10	19	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9 17 16 19	1 2 2 3	1 1 2 3	0 1 0 1	1 1 2 3
2017	10	20	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	1	1	0	1
2017	11	17	informal	Remarks	13 6	1 1	2 2	0 0	2 2
					20 20	2 3	3 1	0 0	3 2
2017	12	14	formal	EUCO Conclusions	16 20 7 19	1 2 3 3	2 1 3 3	0 0 0 0	2 2 3 3
2017	12	15	formal	Guidelines	20	1	1	0	1
2018	2	23	informal	Remarks	20 20 19 19 19	1 2 2 3 3	2 1 2 1 3	0 0 0 1 1	2 2 2 1 3
2018	3	22	formal	EUCO Conclusions	15 7 17 19 12 19	1 2 2 2 3 3	1 3 3 3 2 2	0 0 0 0 1 1	1 3 3 3 2 2
2018	3	23	formal	Guidelines	21	1	1	0	0
2018	6	28	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9 16 1 15 19 19 20	1 1 2 2 3 3 3	1 1 2 2 3 3 3	1 0 0 0 0 0 0	1 1 2 2 3 3 3
2018	6	29	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+21	1	1	0	1
2018	9	20	informal	Remarks	9 16 19+20 +21	1 2 3	1 2 1	0 1 0	1 2 3

2018	10	18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9 12+16 19	1 1 3	2 1 2	0 1 0	2 1 3
2018	11	25	formal	EUCO Conclusions	8+19	1	1	0	1
2018	12	13	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+20+21	1	1	0	1
2018	12	13-14	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20 15 9 19 7 16 12 2 2	1 1 2 3 3 3 3 3 3	3 1 1 2 3 3 2 3 3	0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0	3 1 1 3 3 3 3 3 3
2019	3	21	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	1	1	0	1
2019	3	21-22	formal	EUCO Conclusions	1 7 19 12	1 2 2 3	1 2 2 3	0 0 1 0	1 2 2 3
2019	4	10	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+20	1	1	0	0
2019	5	9	Informal	Remarks	20 20 20 19	1 2 2 3	2 2 1 3	0 0 0 0	2 2 2 3
2019	6	20	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20 20 7 12 19 19 1	1 1 2 2 2 3 3	3 3 2 1 2 3 3	0 0 0 0 0 0 0	3 3 2 2 2 3 3
2019	6-7	30-2	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	1	1	0	1
2019	10	17	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+20	1	1	0	1
2019	10	17-18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20 20 7	1 1 2	3 3 2	0 0 1	3 3 2

					19	3	3	0	3
					16+19	3	1	1	1
					16	3	3	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
2019	12	12	formal	EUCO Conclusions	7	1	1	0	1
					20	2	3	0	3
					20	2	3	0	3
					20	2	3	0	3
					2	3	2	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
					18	3	2	0	3
					16	3	2	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
2019	12	13	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+20	1	1	0	1
2020	2	21	formal	Remarks	20	1	1	0	1
2020	3	10	formal	Conclusions by President	3	1	1	1	1
2020	3	26	formal	Statement	3	1	1	1	1
					19	2	3	0	3
					12	2	3	0	3
					16	3	3	0	3
2020	3	17	formal	Statement	3 + 12	1	1	1	1
2020	4	23	formal	Conclusions by President	20	1	1	0	1
					1+5	2	1	1	1
					16	3	3	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
2020	6	19	formal	Remarks	20	1	1	1	1
					19	2	2	0	2
					19	3	3	0	3
2020	7	17-21	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	1	2	1	1
					20	2	1	1	1
2020	8	19	formal	Conclusions by President	19	1	1	0	1
					16	2	2	0	2
					19	3	3	0	3
2020	10	1-2	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	1	3	0	3
					15	2	1	1	1
					19	3	2	0	3
2020	10	15-16	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	1	3	1	1
					19	1	2	0	2
					7	2	2	0	2

					19	3	1	1	1
2020	10	30	formal	Remarks	12	1	3	0	3
					3	2	1	1	1
					19	3	2	0	0
2020	11	19	formal	Remarks	20	1	2	1	1
					12	2	3	0	3
					3	3	1	1	1
2020	12	10-11	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	1	1	0	1
					3	1	3	1	1
					7	2	1	0	2
					12+16	2	3	0	3
					19	3	1	0	3
2021	1	21	formal	Oral Conclusions by President	3	1	1	1	1
2021	2	25	formal	Remarks	3	1	1	1	1
					3+19	2	2	0	2
					19	3	3	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
2021	2	26	formal	Remarks	16	1	1	0	1
					12	2	2	0	2
					19	3	3	0	3
2021	2	25-26	formal	Statement	3	1	1	1	1
					3	2	2	0	2
					16	2	1	0	2
					19	3	3	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
2021	3	25	formal	Statement	3	1	2	1	1
					19	1	2	1	1
					19	2	3	0	3
					1	2	1	0	2
					19	3	1	0	3
2021	3	25	formal	Remarks	3	1	2	1	1
					15	2	1	0	2
					19	2	1	0	2
					19	3	3	0	3
2021	5	8	informal	Remarks	19	1	1	1	1
					7	2	3	0	3
					17	2	3	0	3
					13	2	3	0	3
2021	5	8	formal	Declaration	5+1	1	1	1	1
2021	5	24-25	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	1	1	0	1
					7	1	2	0	2

					19	2	1	0	2
					19	2	2	0	2
					19	3	1	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
2021	6	24-25	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	1	2	0	2
					1	1	3	0	3
					9	2	2	1	2
					19	2	1	0	2
					19	3	3	0	3
					19	3	1	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
					19	3	3	0	3
					12	3	3	0	3
2021	10	21-22	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	1	2	0	2
					17	1	1	0	1
					1+8	2	2	1	2
					9	2	1	1	1
					18	3	3	0	3
					19	3	2	0	3
2021	12	16	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	1	1	1	1
					12	2	2	1	1
					16	2	2	0	2
					9+19	3	2	1	2
					19	3	1	1	1
2022	2	17	informal	Remarks	19	2	1	0	2
					19	1	2	0	2
2022	2	24	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19	1	1	1	1
2022	3	11	informal	Declaration	19	1	1	1	1
					16	1	1	1	1
					8	2	1	1	1
					15	2	1	0	2
					1	3	2	0	3
					20	3	3	0	3
2022	3	11	informal	Remarks	19	1	3	1	1
					19	1	2	1	1
					8	2	2	0	2
					16	2	3	0	0
					15	3	1	1	1

Appendix 7: The third level of the analysis (framing)

Year	Month	Day	In/formal	Document status	Major topic	Perspective	Problem-solution nexus	Appeal	Tone
2014	12	18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	1	Economic instruments, Single Market, Digital Single Market (DSM), Multi-lateral trading system	Growth and jobs-investments	Economic instruments, Single Market	0
					19	Annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol	Reform for democratization-financial assistance		0
2015	2	12	informal	Remarks	19		Russian aggression-Minsk agreement	European security, threat to peace in Europe	-1
					12	Fight against terrorism			0
					1	EMU		EU instrument	0
2015	3	19-20	formal	EUCO Conclusions	8	Climate policy -mutual reinforcement	Energy security and efficiency-energy union	EU climate objectives	0
					1		Growth and jobs-structural reforms, TTIP		0
					19	ENP, associated agreements Russian aggression against Ukraine	Russian aggression-financial support	International security and peace	0
2015	4	23	formal	Remarks	9	Irregular migration Migrants not refugees	Irregular migration-cooperation with countries of origin and transit, return policy Refugee protection-resettlement		0
2015	4	23	formal	Statement	9	Border controls Fight human trafficking	Irregular migration-cooperation with countries of origin and transit, return policy Refugee protection-asylum policies	Prevent loss of life Solidarity and responsibility	-1

2015	6	25-26	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	Illegal migration	Illegal migration-border control, relocation, return policies, cooperation with countries of origin and transit	Solidarity and responsibility	-1
					16		Strengthen security and defence-investments, development in civilian and military capabilities		0
					1 + 17		Jobs, growth, competitiveness-digital agenda, DSM		0
					20	UK referendum			0
2015	9	23	informal	Remarks	9	Refugees	Refugees-border control, assistance	Responsibility	-1
2015	9	23	informal	Statement	9	Asylum policy	Migration and refugees crisis-financial assistance	Solidarity and responsibility	-1
2015	10	16	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9		Migration and refugees crisis-cooperation with third countries, border control, relocation, return policies	Shared responsibility	-1
					1	EMU			0
					20	UK referendum			0
					19	Downing of the MH17			0
2015	12	17-18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9		Migration and refugees crisis-border control, relocation, return policies, fight to smugglers		-1
					12		Fight terrorism-information sharing, border control, counter-terrorism engagement with third countries		0
					1		Completing EMU-effective economic and fiscal governance, Euro external representation, banking union	EU instruments	0
					15		Growth and jobs-strengthen and deepen Single Market, TTIP Strengthen and deepen Single market-DSM		0
					8	Climate policy -mutual reinforcement		EU commitments	0
					20	UK referendum			0

					16	Peace in Syria		Peace	0
2016	2	18-19	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	EU-UK relations		EU Treaties	0
					9	Reform of the asylum policy	Migration crisis-border control, cooperation with third countries, EU-Turkey agreement		-1
					19	Instability in Syria			0
					1	Eurozone			0
2016	3	18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9		Migration crisis-border control, cooperation with third countries, relocation New possible routes-cooperation with Western Balkans		-1
					1	Completion EMU, VAT, prices drops in CAP	Growth and jobs-investments, structural reforms, responsible fiscal policies Completion EMU-Single Market, DSM, Capital Markets		0
					8	Climate policy-mutual reinforcement	Energy security and efficiency-reducing GGEs and increasing renewable energies	EU climate commitments	0
2016	6	28	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	Migration as global challenge	Illegal migration-Turkey, Western Balkans, border control, cooperation with countries of origin and transit		-1
					1	Single Market	Growth and jobs-completion of Single Market, trade negotiations, EMU, fight against tax fraud and money laundering, support in CAP Completion of Single Market-DSM	EU economy, EU instruments, Single Market	0
					19	Syria: Instability			0
					20	Outcomes of the UK referendum			0
2016	6	29	informal	Remarks	20	No EU-UK negotiation until the formal notification of the withdrawal		Leaving the EU	0

2016	6	29	informal	Statement	20	Article 50 as legal basis for the UK withdrawal			'1
2016	9	16	informal	Remarks	20	EU future without the UK			0
2016	10	20-21	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	External dimension of the migration	Migration crisis-border control, control over migratory routes, relocation, reform of the Common Asylum Policy		0
					15		Growth and job-robust trade policy		0
					15	Single Market strategies Fight youth unemployment		EU economy Single Market	0
					19	Syria and Russia			0
2016	12	15	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	External and internal dimension of the migration	Migration crisis- cooperation with countries of origin and transit (Turkey), border control and asylum support, relocation, resettlement		0
					16	Internal and external security	Internal security-border controls External security-NATO, reinforcement of the cooperation, development of capabilities, investment, research		0
					1	Investments			0
					15	Single Market strategies (Energy Union, DSM, youth employment)			0
					20	Reunification process of Cyprus			1
					19	Integrity of Ukraine and condemnation in Syria			0
2017	2	2	informal	Remarks	9	Irregular migration			-1
					19		Irregular migration-cooperation with Libya through Italy		0
2017	3	910	formal	Conclusions by President	1		Growth and jobs-Single Market, international trade, Banking Union Single market - digital agenda	EU economy Single Market	0
					16		Peace and stability-NATO, fight terrorism	Peace and stability	0

					9	External and internal dimension of the migration	Illegal migration-cooperation with countries of origin and transit Responsability and solidarity-EU asylum policy	Responsability and solidarity	0
					19	Instability in Western Balkans			0
					20	European Public Prosecutor's Office			0
					20	Election of the President of the European Council			0
2017	3	9	formal	Remarks	20	Economic future		EU economy	1
					1		Growth-job creation		1
					18		Growth-international trade agreements		0
					19	Destabilisation in Western Balkans	Stability-European perspective		-1
					20	Future of the EU			0
2017	4	29	formal	Guidelines	20	Movements of British citizens in the EU			0
					20	UK status towards the EU after the withdrawal			0
					20	EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU			0
					5+18	Trade negotiations			0
					18	Future trade arrangement between the EU and the UK			0
					20	Status of the UK until the withdrawal			0
					20	Endorsement of the EU-UK arrangement			0
2017	6	22	formal	Procedure	20	Relocation of the EU institutions from UK	UK withdrawal-relocation of EMA and EBA		0

2017	6	22-23	formal	EUCO Conclusions	12+16	Internal - fight against terrorism External - cyber, hybrid threats, terrorism	Terrorism-detection technology, European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) External security-diplomatic and civil capabilities, NATO, defence industry, PESCO, strenghten rapid response toolbox		0
					7	Paris agreement - commitments		EU commitments	0
					1	Growth	Growth-Single Market, international trade Single market-DSM Capital Markets Union, Energy Union		0
					9	EU comprehensive approach: border control, reform of asylum policy, EU-Turkey agreement, avoid humanitarian crisis in migratory routes	Illegal migration-border control		-1
					17	Holistic approach to digital agenda	Facing challenges and use opportunities of 4th industrial revolution-digital Europe		0
2017	9	29	formal	Remarks	17	Risk and opportunities of digital revolution			0
					20	Future of the EU and challenges	Deepen EMU-Banking union	European unity	0
2017	10	19	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	Border control, progress on asylum policy	Migration crisis-consolidate EU approach EU approach-cooperation with countries of origin and transit, fight against human trafficking, data and information sharing Illegal migration and returns-using all instruments of all relevant policies (development, trade, visa)		1
					17	E-government, DSM, cybersecurity, traning and education, R&D, taxation	Innovation, growth, jobs-digitalisation Terrorism and online crime-digitalisation More integrated Single Market-digitalisation		0
					16		Security-PESCO, investments		1
					19	Korea and Turkey			0

2017	10	20	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	Citizens' rights, border with Ireland			0
2017	11	17	informal	Remarks	13	More equality and solidarity among EU citizens			0
					6	Benefits of Erasmus+			0
					20	Multiannual budget			0
					20	Citizens' rights and stagnation on UK-Ireland borders			0
2017	12	14	formal	EUCO Conclusions	16	PESCO, funding, capacity building and development, EU-NATO, civilian aspect of CSDP			1
					20	Social dimension		Building our common future	0
					7	One Planet Summit		EU commitments	0
					19	Israel	Israel issue-two-state solutions		0
2017	12	15	formal	Guidelines	20	EU-UK transition period and future cooperation			0
2018	2	23	informal	Remarks	20	Budget modernisation		building our common future	0
					20	2019 EP composition			0
					19	Guidelines for EU-UK future relationship			0
					19	Call for halt activities (Turkey)			-1
					19	Call for halt activities (Syria, Russia)			-1
2018	3	22	formal	EUCO Conclusions	15	Single Marke strategies (DSM, Capital Market, Energy Union)	Jobs, growth, competitiveness-Single Market, international trade, European semester, social issues		0
					7	long-term EU strategy on GGEs		EU commitments	0

					17	Digital Europe	Protection of personal data and citizens' privacy-digitalization		0
					19	EU perspective on the region and cooperation in security and migration			0
					12	Condemnation: Salisbury attack			0
					19	EU resilience towards threats			0
2018	3	23	formal	Guidelines	21	Condemnation: Turkey activities			0
					21	Irish border and Gibraltar in EU-UK relations			0
2018	6	28	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	Fight human trafficking	Migration crisis-EU comprehensive approach Illegal migration-border controls, return policy, EU-Turkey agreement, cooperation with country of origin and transit, flexible financial instruments	Prevent tragic loss of life	0
					16	Resilience to hybrid, chemical, biological, radiological, cyber and nuclear-related threats	Bolster defence-investment, capability development, NATO, PESCO, cyberdiplomacy toolbox		1
					1	Taxation, VAT, multilateral trade system	Jobs, growth, competitiveness-reform	EU economy	
					15		Health economy-innovative environment, DSM	EU economy	0
					19	Name issue: Greece-Macedonia			0
					19	MH17 affair			0
					20	MFF for 2021-27 period			0
2018	6	29	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+21	EU-UK future relations: Gibraltar, Ireland			0
2018	9	20	informal	Remarks	9		Illegal migration-strengthening border control and cooperation with third countries, fighting with smugglers		1
					16	fight cyber crime, manipulation and disinformation	Internal security-border controls, civil protection mechanism		0

					19+20 +21	EU-UK future relations: Irish backstop			0
2018	10	18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	9	Comprehensive approach: preventing illegal migration, reform of asylum policy, border controls	Illegal migration-prevention Prevention-strengthening cooperation countries of origin and transit, fight against smugglers		0
					12+16		Internal security-Passenger Name Records, strengthening crisis management capacities Fight terrorism and organized crime-common network and information security, e-evidence Cyber attacks - cybersecurity Disinformation-code of practice on disinformation, transparency		0
					19	sustainable development, 2030 agenda, ICC report	Climate change/ICC report-preparation of EU ambitions for COP24	EU commitment	0
2018	11	25	formal	EUCO Conclusions	8+19	EU-UK future relations: Euroatom			0
2018	12	13	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+20+21	EU-UK future relations: Ratification, Irish backstop			0
2018	12	13-14	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	MFF for 2021-27 period			1
					15	Single Market, digital and green transformation of the EU economy	Citizens' welfare, inclusive growth, job creation-Single Market Investment and global competitiveness-Single Market		0
					9	EU comprehensive approach (external actions: fight against smugglers, cooperation with countries of origin and transit); internal actions (return directive, asylum agency, common european asylum system)	Illegal migration-EU comprehensive approach		0

					19	Arab states (cooperation), Russia (condemnation), Japan (economic cooperation)			0
					7	A Clean Planet for all, outcome of COP24	Climate change-EU long-term strategy		1
					16	NATO, PESCO			0
					12	Disinformation as a hybrid warfare	Fight disinformation-mobilisation of private sector, increasing social resistance		0
					2	Fight racism and xenophobia			0
					2	Citizens' Dialogue			0
2019	3	21	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	Extension for the ratification of the EU-UK withdrawal document, no opening of the withdrawal document			0
2019	3	21-22	formal	EUCO Conclusions	1	EMU, Single Market, digitalisation, Energy Union, trade agreements, AI	Growth and jobs-investment and reforms, connecting all policies and dimensions Global competitiveness-encouraging risk-taking investments in research and innovation		0
					7	Climate neutrality, ensure EU industrial competitiveness	Climate neutrality-long-term EU strategy	EU commitment, green transition as a potential for the economic growth and competitiveness	1
					19	EU-China summit Condemnation: Russian annexation of Crimea EU humanitarian assistance			0
					12	Disinformation (internal and external aspects)	Threats and resilience-code of practice, rapid alert system		0

2019	4	10	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+20	Extension for the ratification of the EU-UK withdrawal document, no opening of the withdrawal document			0
2018	5	9	informal	Remarks	20	EP elections			0
					20	EU priorities			0
					20	Nomination of new EU leadership			0
					19	Condemnation: Turkish activities in Cyprus		respect sovereignty of EU MS	-1
2019	6	20	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	Next institutional cycle: strategic agenda			0
					20	MFF			1
					7	UN Climate Action Summit EU long-term climate strategy	Respect to the energy mix, competitiveness, just and socially balanced transition-EU long-term climate strategy	EU commitment	0
					12	Increase preparedness and resilience	Disinformation-AI, data gathering techniques Hybrid and cyber threats-cooperation with international actors, cyber diplomacy		0
					19	Eastern Partnership, Moldova, Africa, Mediterranean region, Morocco, Russia-Ukraine, MH17 affair, Turkey			0
					19	Conclusions on enlargement			0
					1	Country-specific recommendation for the European Semester			0
2019	06+07	30-2	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	Appointments of candidates for presidents of the European Council, Eurosummit, European Commission, High Representative, ECB			0

2019	10	17	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+20	EU-UK future relations: enforcement of the agreement			0
2019	10	17-18	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	MFF			0
					20	Discussion on the strategic agenda			0
					7	Climate change as an existential threat, enhancing ambitions and actions on the EU and global level Just green transition Oceans	Climate change-enhancing ambitions and actions on the EU and global level	EU commitment	1
					19	Enlargement: Western Balkans			0
					16+19	Condemnation: Turkish activities in Syria			-1
					16	Condemnation: Turkish activities in Cyprus			-1
					19	MH17 affair			0
2019	12	12	formal	EUCO Conclusions	7	Climate neutrality by 2050	Energy security-nuclear energy, climate goals	EU commitment Climate neutrality as an potential for EU economy	1
					20	MFF			0
					20	Future of Europe			1
					20	Strategic agenda			0
					2	Citizens' Dialogue			0
					19	EU-Africa strategic partnership			0
					18		Paralysis of WTO-support to the international setting		0

					16	Condemnation: Turkish activities in Cyprus			0
					19	Financial aid: Earthquake in Albania			0
2019	12	13	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19+20	EU-UK future relations: call for timely ratification and effective implementation			0
2020	2	21	formal	Remarks	20	No agreement over the EU budget due to the changes after the Brexit			-1
2020	3	10	formal	Conclusions by President	3	Limiting the spread of virus Provision of medical equipment Promoting reserach Tackling socio-economic consequences	Spread of virus-science medical advice, coordination mechanisms Medical equipment-initiative to prevent shortage Research-funding Socio-economic consequences-all instruments available	Work together - joint European approach	
2020	3	26	formal	Statement	3	Limiting the spread of virus Provision of medical equipment Promoting reserach Tackling socio-economic consequences	Spread of virus-external and internal border controls, travel restriction Disinformation-transparent, timely-fact based communication Temporary border controls-ensure Single Market Medical equipment-cooperation with industry Research-funding Socio-economic consequences-supportive financing conditions in eurozone, flexibility, Stability and Growth Pact		-1
					19	Endorsment of Conclusions on Enlargment			0
					12	Solidarity expression		Solidarity	-1
					16	Solidarity expression		Solidarity	-1

2020	3	17	formal	Statement	3 + 12	Limiting the spread of virus Provision of medical equipment Promoting reserach Tackling socio-economic consequences Repatriation of EU citizens in third countries	Spread of virus-border management Medical equipement-industry engagement, joint public procurement Research-Advisory Group on COVID-19, information sharing, development of vaccine Socio-economic consequences-adaptation of state aid rules, flexibilities in Stability and Growth Pact, EU budget	Work together	0
2020	4	23	formal	Conclusions by President	20	EU priorities in COVID actions			0
					1+5	Recovery fund as a part of MFF, safety nets	Most affected geographical areas and sectors by COVID-Recovery fund, safety network	Solidarity: <i>We are all in this together.</i>	0
					16	Solidarity expression		Solidarity	-1
					19	Conference: Western Balkans			0
2020	6	19	formal	Remarks	20	MFF			1
					19	EU-UK relations: agreement			0
					19	Sanctions: Minsk agreement			-1
2020	7	17-21	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	NG EU - green and digital priorities			0
					20	MFF			0
2020	8	19	formal	Conclusions by President	19	Belarus: not recognition of elections results, condemnation of violence, sanctions			-1
					16	Need for de-escalation situation in Cyprus		Solidarity	-1
					19	Mali: call for release of prisoners and restoration of the rule of law			0
2020	10	01+02	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	Coordination on development and distribution of COVID vaccines		Stand together	0

					15	Sustainable growth, competitiveness, jobs, prosperity, EU role on the global stage	Growth, promotion of cohesion and convergence, resilience-recovery, green transition, digital transformation, strong and deep single market		0
					19	Turkey, China, Belarus, Nagorno-Karabakh, Alexei Navalny affair			0
2020	10	15-16	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	Using the best available science	Spread of virus-quarantine regulations, tracing and testing strategies, travel restrictions, development and distribution of vaccines		-1
					19	EU-UK future relations			-1
					7	European climate diplomacy	Climate neutrality and commitments-updating EU climate ambitions by 2030	EU commitment	0
					19	EU-Africa relations: trade, peace, security and stability Belarus MH17 affair			0
2020	10	30	formal	Remarks	12	Condemnation: terrorist attack in France		Solidarity	-1
					3	Vaccination strategy (priority groups, logistics, information campaign)	COVID spread-vaccines	Solidarity and cohesion: stronger together, <i>We are united and stand together</i>	0
					19	Condemnation: Turkish activities			-1
2020	11	19	formal	Remarks	20	MFF			1
					12	Condemnation of attacks	Fight ideology of hatred-Digital Services Act	Stay united	0
					3	Testing, vaccines, lifting restrictive measures			0
2020	12	10+11	formal	EUCO Conclusions	20	MFF and NGEU			1

					3	Gradual lifting measures International cooperation for future potential pandemics	Vaccines is not the complete solution to COVID crisis-sharing experiences, plans for future, pursue health resilience		1
					7	Increase of climate and energy policy network Climate law, biodiversity COVID as an opportunity to accelerate the sustainable transformation and modernisation Climate ambition in trade agreements		Sustainable growth Long-term global competitiveness Jobs creation Solidarity	0
					12+16	Solidarity expression to victims of terrorist attacks in Europe	Online dangerous content-digital services act; religious education and training, science and research, strenghten police and judicial cooperation, data sharing	Solidarity	0
					19	EU-US relations Turkish activities			0
2021	1	21	formal	Oral Conclusions by President	3	New COVID variants	Spread of new COVID variants-testing strategies, accelaration and standardization of vaccination, solidarity with third countries in vaccination		0
2021	2	25	formal	Remarks	3	EU common COVID approach: vaccination, testing, restrictions, solidarity			0

					3+19		COVID and other global health threat-multilateral approach	Sustainable growth, long-term global competitiveness, creation of jobs, health and environment benefits to EU citizens	0
					19	Alexei Navalny affair			0
					19	Condemnation: attack on WFP delegation			0
2021	2	26	formal	Remarks	16	NATO			0
					12		Cyber threats-resilience		0
					19	Southern partnership			0
2021	2	25-26	formal	Statement	3	Common approach to vaccination Solidarity with third countries	New COVID variants - restrictions, acceleration the provision of vaccination, global response to pandemic	Ensuring the Single Market Solidarity	-1
					3	Future health resilience	Prevention and resilience-vaccines and critical supplies, support process of developing safe and effective vaccines and medicine, research and innovation, big data and digital technologies in health care Future health threats-global multilateral cooperation	Learning from COVID pandemic	0

					16	Resilience to security threats	Security threats-NATO, increase of defence investment, enhancing civilian and military capabilities and operational engagement, boost R&D Cyber threats-cyber resilience and responsiveness, cybersecurity crisis management framework Hybrid threats-more cooperation with private sector, international actors		0
					19	Tackling global common challenges		Act together	1
					19	Condemnation of terrorist attack		Solidarity	-1
2021	3	25	formal	Statement	3	Improving the situation	Get to normal life after COVID-Green digital certificates, vaccination		1
					19	More stable and predictable relationship with Turkey			0
					19	EU-Russia relations			0
					1	New European economic model: digital and green transition to the economic growth			0
					19	EU-US relations: vaccines, digital and climate actions, threats		Commitment to transatlantic alliance Responsibility for future generation	0
2021	3	25	formal	Remarks	3	EU COVID approach: acceleration of vaccine production and deployment, restrictions, digital certificates, global response	New variants-restrictions Restrictions-ensuring the function of the Single Market	Common approach	1
					15	Single Market, digitalisation	Functioning Single Market-strengthening competitiveness and resilience of EU industry Recovery-digital transformation		0

					19		Stable and secure environment-cooperation with Turkey		-1
					19	Information point: EU-Russia relations			1
2021	5	8	informal	Remarks	19	EU-India relations: COVID as a challenge, human rights, trade		International solidarity, sympathy	1
					7	Greener Europe			0
					17	More digital Europe			0
					13	More social Europe			1
2021	5	8	formal	Declaration	5+1	Jobs protection, young employment as a driver for creativity, dynamics, inclusive green and digital recovery to help Europe of the future	Reducing inequalities-fair wages, tackling poverty Young employment-investment in education	Europe of the future Opportunities to Europeans	
2021	5	24-25	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	Vigilant to emergence and spread of variants	COVID-equal access to vaccination Free movement-EU digital certificates Impact of pandemic-comprehensive global response		1
					7	Climate law			1
					19	US and Paris agreement			1
					19	Condemnation: Russian activities			-1
					19	Implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation agreement into force			1
					19	EU-Israel: commitment to two-state solution, assistance to restart a political process			1
					19	Condemnation: kidnapping in Mali			-1

2021	6	24-25	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	Progress on vaccination, vigilance to possible new COVID variants Future preparedness and resilience	Travelling-EU digital certificates	International solidarity EU commitment	1
					1	Green and digital transformation as a part of NGEU Social dimension Global tax reform			1
					9	Support to refugees and displaced persons in the region Condemnation the migration to be politically instrumentalized	Migration-cooperation with countries of origin and transit, building capacity for migration management, eradicating smuggling and trafficking, reinforcing border control, addressing legal migration while respecting national competences, as well as ensuring return and readmission	Prevent loss, ensure EU borders	-1
					19	Turkey: rule of law and fundamental rights as a key concern	Stable and secure environment-cooperation with Turkey		1
					19	Libya: EU commitment to stabilisation process			-1
					19	Five principles for negotiations and relationship with Russia			-1
					19	Mali: Call for immediate release, end repression of civil society, independent media, call for free and fair elections			-1
					19	Ethiopia: call for implementation of transition chapter, strengthening governance, rule of law, provision of public services			-1
					19	Ethiopia: condemnation of atrocities			-1

					12	Condemnation of recent cyber activities in the EU			-1
2021	10	21-22	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	Vigilance to new COVID variants Preparedness and resilience to future crisis	Vaccine hesitancy-tackling disinformation Future pandemic crisis-global health governance	EU commitment	0
					17	Reinforce resilience and facilitate green transition, AI, European digital identity, commitment to secure cyberspace	Cyber threats-resilience and preparedness, secure cyber space		0
					1+8	Citizens and business vulnerable after COVID	High prices-functioning gas and electricity market, short-term relief to the most vulnerable consumers and EU companies		-1
					9	Action plans for countries of origin and transit Condemnation the migration to be politically instrumentalized	Prevent loss of life and reduce pressure on EU borders-action plans, mobilization of funding, implementation of EU-Turkey agreement		-1
					18	Strategic discussion on the EU trade policy			0
					19	Climate cooperation in external relations (ASEM, Eastern Partnership, COP26, COP15-biodiversity)			0
2021	12	16	formal	EUCO Conclusions	3	Emergence of Omicron variant Coordination	Omicron-vaccination Pandemic-global cooperation based on trust and mutual assistance, global vaccination, start to work on international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response Functioning Single Market and free movement-digital certificates, recommendations on safe travelling		-1
					12	Enhance collective preparedness, response capability, resilience to future crises			0

					16	EU commitment to global rules	Threats-resilience and preparedness, autonomous action, NATO	Global peace and security EU commitment	0
					9+19	Condemnation the migration to be politically instrumentalized EU external migration policy			-1
					19	Ethiopia: call for ceasefire			0
2021	2	17	informal	Remarks	19	EU-AU cooperation: new impetus - digital and climate challenge, security and stability			1
					19	Call for de-escalation: Russian activities closed to Ukrainian borders			-1
2022	2	24	formal	EUCO Conclusions	19	Condemnation: Russian military aggression against Ukraine Respect to Ukrainian integrity, sovereignty, respect international humanitarian law, stop disinformation and cyber-attacks, expression of solidarity, restrictive measures in response			-1
2022	3	11	informal	Declaration	19	Condemnation violation of the international law by Russia and Belarus in Ukraine Call for safety in nuclear Temporary protection to all war refugees Application of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia to the EU	Respect the Ukrainian integrity and sovereignty in the entire territory-cease military action of Russia and Belarus	Solidarity European choice for Ukraine	-1

					16	More responsibility for its security - act autonomously, NATO Preparation to fast-emerging challenges (hybrid, cyber, protection of critical infrastructure, disinformation)	Autonomous security-increase defence expenditures, investments in joint projects and procurement of defence capabilities, invest in capabilities of missions and operations including cybersecurity and space-based connectivity, synergies between civilian, defence, space research and innovation, enhance military mobility		0
					8	Reducing energy dependencies, ensuring energy security, security of supplies Ensure security of supplies at affordable prices	Reducing energy dependencies-reduction of dependency on fossil fuels, diversification of supplies and routes, developing hydrogen market, speed development of renewables, improve interconnection of EU gas and electricity networks, improve energy efficiency, functioning electricity market		0
					15	More resilience, global food security, robust trade policy	Reduce strategic dependencies-critical raw material, semi-conductors, medical supplies and affordable medicines, digital technologies - AI, cloud and 5G deployment, pending digital legislative acts, improve food security		0
					1		Foster investment-simple and predictable environment, ensure quality jobs, promotion of social cohesion, completing Single Market in all dimensions encourage investment project, fiscal policies supporting green and digital objectives		0
					20			Act collectively	0
2022	3	11	informal	Remarks	19	Unprecedented sanctions to Russia and Belarus			0
					19	Financial, humanitarian support, hosting refugees, defence equipment mobilisation to Ukraine		Impetus to European project	0

						Applications of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to the EU			
					8	Energy independence while addressing climate challenge			0
					16	Identify defence areas of action and investments, identify to incorporate industry			0
					15	More robust, resilient and stronger economy	More robust, resilient and stronger-innovation and technology	EU economy	0