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Representation of the European Union in the press for EU residents on Costa del Sol

La representación de la Unión Europea en la prensa para residentes comunitarios de la Costa del Sol

Abstract

This research addresses the image and concept of Europe as reflected in the main media for EU residents published on the Costa del Sol. To this purpose, a series of pieces published between 2016 and 2018 treating this issue were selected from five media for British, German, and Swedish residents, as they are representative of the largest populations and the three most used languages in the media in the area. The results show a clear Europeanist vocation in the press for EU residents on the Costa del Sol, although they are critical of certain aspects of the European Union (EU). Furthermore, analysis of the sections, topics and sources studied allows us to confirm their interest in everything related to Europe in the amount of information they publish, although this does not always occupy the most relevant space and is usually linked more to institutional issues of the EU than to the notion of Europe as a common cultural space.

Resumen

La presente investigación aborda la imagen y el concepto de Europa que reflejan los principales medios de comunicación para residentes comunitarios que se editan en la Costa del Sol. Con este fin se han seleccionado una serie de piezas publicadas entre 2016 y 2018 que tratan esta cuestión, procedentes de cinco medios para residentes británicos, alemanes y suecos, por ser representativos de las poblaciones más numerosas y de los tres idiomas más utilizados en los medios de la zona. Los resultados muestran una clara vocación europeísta en la prensa para residentes comunitarios en la Costa del Sol, sin que por ello dejen de manifestarse críticos con determinados aspectos de la Unión Europea (UE). Además, el análisis de las secciones, temas y fuentes estudiados nos permite constatar el interés que tienen por todo lo relacionado con Europa en la cantidad de informaciones que publican, aunque éstas no siempre ocupen el espacio más relevante, y que suelen estar más vinculadas a las cuestiones institucionales de la UE que a la noción de Europa como espacio cultural común.

Keywords

Press; Media; Foreign residents; European Union (EU); Spain; Costa del Sol

Palabras clave

Prensa; Medios de comunicación; Residentes extranjeros; Unión Europea (UE); España; Costa del Sol

1. Introduction

In recent years Europeanism and the European Union (EU) itself as a supranational institution have been facing one of their most critical moments, with a low level of popularity and dissatisfaction among citizens, in which both Brexit and migration policies have obviously played a major role. According to the 2021 Eurobarometer[1], the figures reveal a certain dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in the EU. The majority of respondents (53%) said they had a positive image of the EU, compared to 27% who had a neutral image and 19% who had a negative image. However, opinions varied from country to country, with Belgium having the worst image of the EU with 39% expressing a negative opinion in this regard, similar to Austria and the Czech Republic both with 41%. Portugal was the country with the best view of the EU with 82%. Spain sat in an intermediate position, with 47% saying they had a partially positive view, 31% neutral and only 4% had a negative view.

This research aims to explore the idea of Europe projected through a very particular type of communicative product, i.e. the press aimed at EU residents living on the Costa del Sol. Its target audience are European citizens who live in another EU country and who have a very particular media consumption, shaped by their threefold access to the media: those of their country of origin, those of their place of residence, and all the media produced by and for these foreign communities in their own language. This media profile has been analysed on the Costa del Sol by Juan Antonio García Galindo (García Galindo, 2004, 2009, 2011) and by Laura López Romero (López Romero, 2009, 2016), as well as by the two of them together (López Romero & García Galindo, 2018) in their various studies on European populations on the Costa del Sol and the Portuguese Algarve. Yet, not only communication studies have focused on the media behaviours of European citizens in this region of Andalusia, as political science has also delved into the profile of this type of migrant citizens (Janoschka & Durán, 2013; Durán, 2012).

In our research, therefore, we started by analysing news items on Europe in five media of three different nationalities (British, German and Swedish) between 2016 and 2018 in order to investigate how these publications aimed at foreign residents positioned themselves in relation to the European Union.

The main contribution of this study lies in the disaffection that news about the EU arouses in European Community residents on the Costa del Sol, which tends to have a macro focus that distances the concerns of this population group from this type of information. In this way, the configuration of the image of Europe by these media is presented in a cold way that is far from the real situation and this is especially apparent with the whole Brexit process, in which the response of these media has been against the departure but which in turn portrays the European Union as a bureaucratic entity that does little to improve the lives of its citizens.

2. The Costa del Sol (Malaga, Andalusia) – a media and cultural mosaic of nationalities

Since the 1960s, the Costa del Sol, in the south of Spain, has been a unique laboratory for the sociological, political and cultural study of the process of European integration. Coinciding in time, the beginning and development of the process of European political integration took place at the same time as the construction of the mosaic model of society that the Costa del Sol is today, like other places in Spain that emerged from autarchy thanks to Franco's development policies, which had tourism as one of their fundamental pillars. With the passing of time, in the 21st century, the Costa del Sol has become a multicultural geographical space, with foreign communities settled in its territory, mostly from European countries. Simultaneously, the European Union is a tangible reality as a political superstructure that integrates 27 European countries that share in the management of the institutions with which it has been endowed. At the time of writing, however, the European Union is witnessing its first major crisis caused by two far-reaching factors: on the one hand, the United Kingdom's exit from the political union, which took place on 31 January 2020; and, on the other, the recent pandemic caused by Covid-19, which is sweeping the entire planet and has already generated extremely serious economic consequences that may have a negative impact on the political stability of the European project.

This study, however, has focused on the years 2016 to 2018, when Brexit was already part of the European and international political debate, and we had already emerged from the global economic recession of 2008. A different situation, despite its proximity in time, which was used to delimit our research project in time, and in which we can find data of enormous interest to understand the socio-communicative model of the space of diversity that is the Costa del Sol and its surroundings today, as a European microcosm.

The process of European integration is also forged through the relations established between European communities of different origins within a single territory. The cultural leap that daily contact with other cultures represents for the native population is very significant, and is relevant to our study. Although the media's concern about Europe and its political project is often inclined towards the macro-agenda, neglecting other informative aspects that are more related to civil society, the mere existence of these media and their very role as a source of information gives shape to this multiculturalism. Nevertheless, we

believe that the existence of a plethora of specialised publications aimed at the social life of residents, which is very broad due to their economic weight, constitutes an ecosystem of its own. In this study, however, we have analysed the general information press which is aimed equally at both residents and tourists. We are talking about specialised or general information publications edited by the resident communities themselves or by companies, generally foreign companies established in the area and aimed at those residents. In our case, the main objective of our study is to understand the communicative ecosystem that has arisen around European Community residents, the territorial implantation of these publications and their importance so as to be able to assess their contribution to the construction of the political identity of the European Union. The south of Spain and Portugal, united by their geographical continuity and the absence of any borders between them, have numerous coastal and second-line coastal towns with a very high population from other European countries who settle there for different reasons (climate, good communications, social, economic and health infrastructures, etc.), seeking a quality of life different from that of their countries of origin. However, this is not a new phenomenon, but rather a historical phenomenon that has affected several generations and has been shaping local multicultural societies, with varying degrees of integration, which have given rise to a true European microcosm in this area.

This space of diversity, by its very composition, generates a dialectic relationship among all the elements of the same system, as well as a greater cultural permeability than in other parts of the Iberian Peninsula that is characterised by its greater demographic endogamy. At the same time, the communicative ecosystem resulting from this greater social complexity (in the sense of diversity) allows for the existence of flows of information and communication that respond to the multiplicity of interests of these resident communities and their dual relationship with both the host country and their country of origin (García Galindo & López Romero, 2018; García Galindo & Cuartero, 2018; García Galindo, Novas Martín & López Romero, 2020; García Galindo, Cuartero, Meléndez Malavé & Hernández Carrillo, 2021). It is not surprising, therefore, that they have a public opinion of their own, which does not always coincide among all the resident communities, but with which there is a common denominator derived from their own relocation and daily contact (shared or not) with their new environment. A very significant example is the opinion of the majority of British residents against Brexit.

Studies on the idea of Europe and European identity in the media have generally focused on the national media as vehicles of the political union project itself, due, in our opinion, to the difficulties that the European Union has undergone in its process of construction. On comparing samples from Spain, France and the United Kingdom, Menéndez Alarcón, for example, pointed out that negative news about the EU is more predominant in the mainstream media of these countries and this leads to a negative view of the project (2010: 411-412); other studies of a similar nature have also found that the national media project a negative view of the EU (Norris, 2002). In the case of studies on media discourses in the UK prior to Brexit, they have pointed out how the media portray the UK as a marginalised member in its relations with the EU, evidencing the strong Eurosceptic discourse of the British media (Hawkins, 2012: 573-574). And in the aftermath of Brexit a great number of studies have been conducted to analyse the role of the media (Gavin, 2018), social media (Gorodnichenko, Pham & Talavera, 2018; Bossetta, Segesten & Trenz, 2017) and hate speech (Watson, 2018) on the UK's separation from Europe. This has reinforced the idea that the role of the media in legitimising the European project is undeniable (Hurrelmann, Gora & Wagner, 2013: 531).

European policies have, over time, facilitated the path towards integration at the economic level, while at the political, social and cultural level, member states' policies have often shown resistance to EU cohesion. Moreover, the EU seems to have lost a considerable amount of prestige in recent years (Barbé, 2012: 107-108).

Communication and culture policies in the European Union, despite the directives that have followed one after the other, are an example of this national resistance to the establishment of common policies. In 2004, Nobre Correia drew attention to the fragmentation of the European Union's media system, without which, he argued, neither a civil society nor a solid European identity can be conceived. This same consideration had long led Núñez Encabo to defend, both in his political and academic activity, the need to continue to support the media as the backbone of the European cultural and civic project. For Núñez Encabo, "the formation of cultural identity is closely linked to the role played by the media in the dissemination of culture and the protection of the fundamental rights of the citizens of the Union" (1999: 43).

The same author argues that the relations between communication and culture, conceived in a broad sense, help to reinforce the concept of European citizenship and to strengthen the multiculturalism on which the political model of the European Union is based. "Europe", wrote Núñez Encabo, "is considered to be a mosaic of cultures that have to coexist on the basis of interculturality" (2005: 61).

These same features are those that characterise the territory under study, the Costa del Sol, as a unity in diversity, as a European multicultural space structured around a linguistically plural media system.

Respect for cultural diversity, which is at the basis of democratic societies, and freedom of expression and creation are the glue that holds together the relationships of day-to-day coexistence, which are shown through the local media and the media of the communities of EU residents who live there.

A laboratory for comparative analysis

The cultural and communicative microcosm of the Costa del Sol and its hinterland in Malaga (and even Granada and Cadiz) together with that of other Spanish regions (Costa Brava, Costa Blanca, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, etc.) have created a multinational scenario with an ample representation of British, Nordic, French, German, Italian, Dutch, etc. citizens, who are not just passing through but have made this their home in the world, from where they observe and participate in it. This scenario is, due to its characteristics, a privileged setting for research and for trying to analyse the perception of the European Union through the press of EU residents. In 1994, Díaz Nosty highlighted the absence of a European discourse in the Spanish media due to the predominance of local values. Years later, the same author insisted on the media deficit that distanced Spain from Europe (2005). These aspects have undoubtedly influenced the social perception of the European Union among Spanish citizens.

In 2014, Sojka and Vázquez, focusing on the study of perceptions of European identity among the elite classes and public opinion in Spain and Portugal, concluded that, among other things, "national and European identity are clearly complementary and that, therefore, a stronger link to the country of origin ultimately reinforces a stronger link to Europe both in the public opinion and among the elite classes in Spain and Portugal" (2014: 105). This complementarity ratified the conclusions of other authors who in previous years had analysed the issue of European identity from the perspective of public opinion (García Faroldi, 2008; Otero Felipe, 2008). Given that Spain and Portugal are two countries that have maintained an unquestionably pro-European vocation in recent years, both because of their relatively recent incorporation and because of the aid they have received from European institutions, it was not surprising that one of the notable results was the Euro-optimism of Iberian public opinion. This has undoubtedly facilitated the integration of European residents in these two countries.

The situation in 2021 is not the same, due to the events that have taken place and which we noted at the beginning of this introduction. The European Union is today witnessing a twofold internal and external crisis, due to growing Euroscepticism and the economic crisis resulting from the pandemic we are experiencing (Habermas, 2013; Bertoli, Brücker & Fernández-Huertas, 2016; Zamponi & Bosi, 2019). In this new context, European citizens, in any of the member countries, and inside and outside their place of origin, face the challenge of regaining confidence in their institutions, but for this to happen, these institutions must first adopt measures to strengthen Europe's political and social cohesion.

3. Aims and methodology

The objectives of this research are based on the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the notion of Europe projected by the press of EU residents in southern Spain today?

RQ2: What is the stance taken by these media aimed at foreigners regarding the European Union?

RQ3: What is the stance taken by these media, especially the British media, on Brexit?

The methodology applied to understand the way the European Union is represented in the media for European residents consisted in performing a content analysis following the guidelines in terms of corpus design, selection of categories and other criteria of authors who can be considered classics but who are still fully valid when it comes to this technique, namely, Bardin (1986), Krippendorff (1990), Wimmer and Dominick (1996), Gaitán Moya and Piñuel Raigada (1998), and the work by Díaz Nosty (1991, 1993, 1995, 1997) on content analysis and the European Union.

Because this research is part of a larger study which implements a media census, questionnaires and focus groups to analyse the media for foreigners on the Costa del Sol (Spain) and the Algarve (Portugal), we now have an accurate snapshot of the number of media existing on the Costa del Sol. The results obtained from these preliminary studies have already been published, demonstrating the validity of the use of this type of variables (García Galindo, Novas Martín & Romero López, 2020; Torkington, Perdigao & López Romero, 2020; Cuartero, Vicente Domínguez & Báez de Aguilar González, 2020; García Galindo et al., 2021).

The media census carried out previously provided us with an extensive map that justifies the choice of the selected media. This census analysed all the media on the Costa del Sol and Algarve from January 2016 to 2018 and found 130 media (112 on the Costa del Sol and 18 in the Algarve). Among these, British media on the Costa del Sol represent 63% (total of 71), counting bilingual media, German media represent 5.3% (total of six) and Swedish media represent 4.4% (total of five).

Hence, the five main titles (with the largest circulation and most impact in each language) of the three main nationalities were selected, namely, British, German and Swedish. In the case of British publications, however, three different ones were selected due to their unique weight in the area[2]:

The Olive Press. British

Launched in 2006, The Olive Press is, despite being the most recent, one of the most firmly established newspapers. Its area of influence reaches as far as Alicante and Murcia.

Euro Weekly News. British

It has been in circulation since 1999 and appears on a weekly basis.

Costa del Sol News. British

A weekly newspaper that was launched in 1996.

Sydkusten. Swedish

One of the longest running Swedish magazines on the Costa del Sol. It was founded in 1992 and currently appears quarterly.

Costa del Sol Nachrichten. German

A German newspaper that first appeared in 1996. It is published weekly and belongs to the Rotativos del Mediterráneo group, which also publishes other periodicals on the Costa Blanca, such as *Costa Blanca Nachrichten*.

All of these mastheads have a long history, and they were also played a vital role in carrying out the compilation of items with the EU as the leading figure. The period of analysis was from 1 January 2016 to 1 January 2018. This period represents one of the most complex moments for the European Union due to the exit of the United Kingdom and represents an excellent time span to be able to answer the questions posed. The six months before Brexit were chosen so that information could also be collected on the whole post-referendum process, which is of great significance for this research.

At the same time, a content analysis sheet was designed to describe the characteristics of the corpus units and to cross-check them with variables related to the content they offered on the European Union. The following elements from this sheet were analysed:

Sheet 1: Sheet for analysing the selected items

Elements	Characteristics
Journalistic genres	Opinion / Information
Does it appear on the front page?	Yes / No
Section	Opinion, National, International, Culture, Society, Politics, Sports, Environment, Property, Economics (Finance, business, etc.), General news, others
Is this information about Brexit?	Yes / No
What is the focus of this information about Brexit?	For / Against / Neutral
Does this information deal with other types of exits from Europe?	Yes / No
Approach or vision of the European Union	For / Against / Neutral
Does it take a critical stance on the EU?	Yes / No
Topic	Education, Healthcare, European Legislation, Environment, Foreigners, Economics, Migration, Politics, Brexit, Practical information / service journalism, others

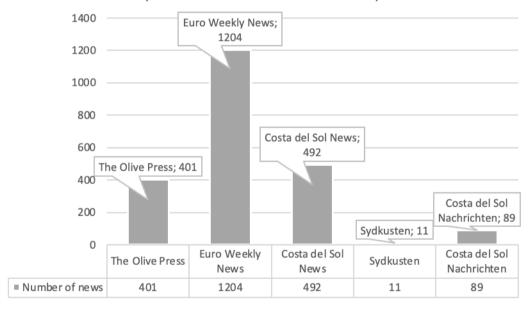| Elements	Characteristics
Sources	Official, Associations, NGOs and other groups, Personal, Documentaries, Expert, no source
Authorship	Agency, Correspondent, Staff writer, Contributor, Readers' opinion, Unsigned

Source: Own elaboration.

For the media representation of the European Union in the media for European residents, searches were carried out to track items in which the following keywords appeared: Europe, European Union, Gibraltar, Brexit, integration of residents and European summits.

This research has certain limitations that have to do with nationalities and it is clear that it would be very useful to apply this same analysis to the rest of the European communities on the Costa del Sol in order to compare the results, but not all of them have their own written media.

4. Results

The first phase of our work consisted in identifying those news items that had to do with the European Union variables. It is clear that the large difference in the number of related news items in each newspaper was mainly due to the greater volume of items on Brexit in the British media, which led us, in the case of the Swedish and German newspapers, to first carry out a statistical count of the topics addressed in their articles in order to finally select those that were directly related to the EU and dealt with relevant aspects. In the case of the information found in the British newspapers, given the importance of Brexit and its impact on the British population, the decision was made to analyse all of the resulting sample.
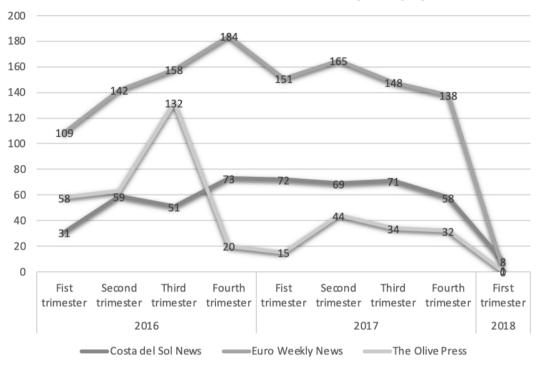
Graph 1: Total number of items found in the analysis

	The Olive Press	Euro Weekly News	Costa del Sol News	Sydkusten	Costa del Sol Nachrichten
■ Number of news	401	1204	492	11	89

Source: Own elaboration.

With the logical limitations of the different frequency and news density of each media outlet, as well as the special incidence of the Brexit issue in British publications, we found that the European Union was a recurring topic of interest for media outlets aimed at EU residents. The medium that devotes by far the most items to the topic is *Euro Weekly News*, with over 1,200, while the other British newspapers show similar figures of around 400 items. If we look at the flow of information over time, the peaks occur as of the second half of 2016, the date immediately after the referendum that resulted in a 'yes' to Brexit in June of that year. There are also a notable number of items in the first half of 2017, coinciding with Theresa May's call for the application of article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, which establishes the mechanisms for the exit of a member country. In any case, as we will see below, not all the news items on the EU are related to Brexit, although they are the most numerous. The results also show the

different coverage carried out by the three main British media, showing that *Euro Weekly News* is the one that publishes the most information on the European Union and Brexit, maintaining media coverage throughout 2016 and 2017.

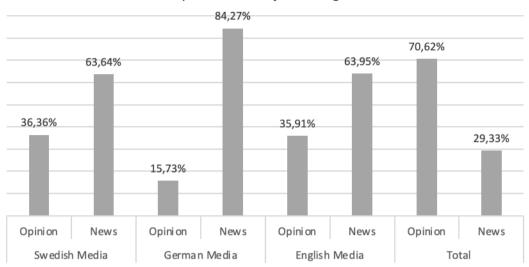**Graph 2: Evolution of the number of news items in the English-language media**

In order to obtain a more approximate idea of the importance given to news items about the European Union, a fundamental aspect in the hierarchy of information is whether or not they appear on the front page: in this case, the overall data reveal that it was not frequently considered an opening topic, with only 1.89% of items on the European Union as front page headlines. Normally, the front pages of these media tend to be focused on local and service issues, so that only during the final referendum poll did it make the front page. International news is not usually placed in this space.

By nationality, given, as indicated above, the lesser interest in these issues in the Swedish media, it is not surprising that in none of the cases do items on the European Union appear as front page news. The rest of the media show a similar incidence to that of the overall data, which, in any case, is also scarce.

The distribution of information in these media in the different sections is also an aspect that can demonstrate the importance of the media's representation of the EU. These media tend to reproduce the usual pattern of sections in the press (national, international, opinion, society, sports and services), and the sections with the most items on the European Union are Opinion, National, Economy and General News. EU issues being included among domestic news is significant, as is their incorporation within the economic affairs section. This shows us that news at the European level has an impact at the domestic level, and that news of a macroeconomic nature less related to social and citizens' issues is the focus of most of the journalistic attention.

In general terms, despite the importance of the Opinion section, the overall data show an approach that was oriented more towards offering news (70.62%) than opinion (29.33%). This pattern is repeated if we look at each media outlet individually, with the German publication dedicating the least number of opinion pieces to the EU, with 15.73% compared to 84.27% belonging to informative genres.

Graph 3: Presence of journalistic genres

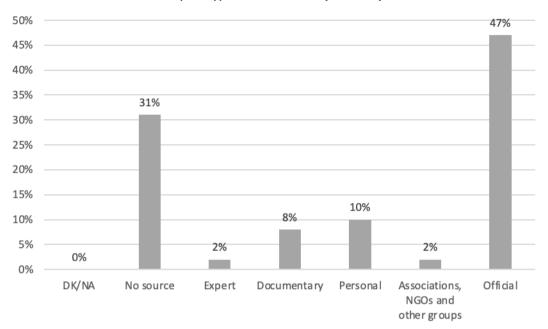|	Opinion	News	Opinion	News	Opinion	News	Opinion	News
	36,36%	63,64%	15,73%	84,27%	35,91%	63,95%	70,62%	29,33%
	Swedish Media		German Media		English Media		Total	

Source: Own elaboration.

With regard to the subject matter of the items, the highest percentage corresponds to Brexit, as would be expected, with 26.93%, and reaching 36.12% if we are talking exclusively about the British media. The most common news topic related to the European Union is politics, with 16.49% of all the items, followed by issues related to European legislation with 10.86%. Next, we find 8.25% of the total number of articles dealing with issues related to the economy, followed in a significant way by items on migration with 6.5%. We believe it is appropriate to recall at this point that the aspects related to the movement of the population, especially from outside the European Union and its controversial role in the waves of immigrants and refugees in recent months, or the incidence of hate speech towards the migrant population in the Brexit campaign, explain to a large extent the news coverage on this subject. Not only do the three British media agree on this, but also the German media. The only one that departs from the general trends here is the Swedish publication *Sydkusten*, the pages of which focus more on civil society and personal experiences, although it does not fail to address the aforementioned issues.

On the other hand, a fundamental aspect in assessing the nature of the news on the European Union and its solidity and rigour is undoubtedly that relating to both the authorship and the sources used in its production.

As can be seen in the graph, in the sources cited, among all the items analysed, there is a predominance of those of an official nature (47.36%), including the European Union itself and different national and local bodies and authorities. At the same time, it is revealing that the second place is occupied by items that do not cite a single source, which suggests a deficit of informative quality that is a burden for the press in general, but significantly so in this type of media, often produced by generally scarce and less professional staff (García Galindo & López Romero, 2018).

However, we note that these media also make a certain effort to rely on personal sources (9.5%) and documentary sources (8.41%), which enrich information that is often excessively linked to journalism based on press releases and communiqués from interested sources. The scarce recourse to expert sources and those from the associative and civil sphere (little more than 1% in both cases) also hints at a lack of information on the European Union which, as in the analysis of the sections or themes, is difficult to approach from a citizen's perspective, from the life experience of the individuals who live in the countries of the EU.
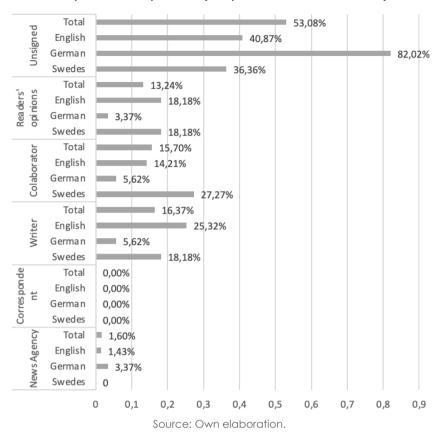
Graph 4: Types of sources used (total data)

Source: Own elaboration.

With respect to the authorship of the items, they also serve to outline a profile of the news on the European Union and of these media for EU residents in general, since more than half of them appear unsigned (53.08%), sometimes consisting of very brief news items. This again reinforces the argument that the scarcity of the workforce and its lower degree of professionalisation may be at the root of both the limited range of sources used and the omission of authorship in them. Normally, these two aspects tend to be seen in the case of media of a more "amateur" nature that try to get the information across with the means at their disposal. Moreover, in the case of *Costa del Sol Nachristen* this figure rises to 82%, showing that the quality of information in some of these media has certain shortcomings from the point of view of the minimum requirements for media credibility.

The number of articles signed by editors and contributors is quite a bit further away, balanced at around 15% and, a little lower, those consisting of the readers' opinions (13.24%), a figure that speaks to us more about the interest in incorporating the voice of the public, who are the target audience of both these media and the European Union policies they report on. Specifically, since the beginning of 2016, the English-language media have been reflecting a very high level of public concern about Brexit, especially about how leaving the United Kingdom would affect expats, and whether this would mean them returning to their country or whether they would be able to stay in Spain.
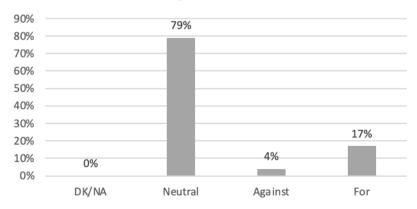
Graph 5: Authorship of items (comparison between nationalities)

Unsigned	Total	53,08%
	English	40,87%
	German	82,02%
	Swedes	36,36%
Readers' opinions	Total	13,24%
	English	18,18%
	German	3,37%
	Swedes	18,18%
Colaborator	Total	15,70%
	English	14,21%
	German	5,62%
	Swedes	27,27%
Writer	Total	16,37%
	English	25,32%
	German	5,62%
	Swedes	18,18%
Corresponde nt	Total	0,00%
	English	0,00%
	German	0,00%
	Swedes	0,00%
News Agency	Total	1,60%
	English	1,43%
	German	3,37%
	Swedes	0

Source: Own elaboration.

Now that we know the general characteristics of the information in the corpus, we can approach one of the essential objectives of this research by turning more specifically to the content on the European Union in the articles studied.

Given that we were interested in getting closer to the vision of the Union that they portrayed, the items were classified according to the perspective of the European Union that they conveyed. Thus, despite the predominance of a neutral approach, the media studied were more in favour (16.90%) than critical of the European Union (4.37%). In fact, in the Swedish magazine, no item was found that reflected a tendency against it, and in the rest of the media by nationality, despite the British being the most critical, the defence of the Union prevails.

Graph 6: Positioning of news on the European Union

Source: Own elaboration.

In this same regard, the search for hints of a critical stance towards the European Union in the items selected helps us to break down this data. That is to say, even though some of the items are defend the European Union, in some of them we can glimpse the reprobation of certain controversial actions or policies. Thus, only 8.93% of the items analysed reflect this type of stance, their frequency doubling in the case of the British media, with 16.69% of the articles showing some kind of critical stance towards the EU's policies. In any case, it is logical that these publications reflect debates on the European Union model that have been present in the public opinion in recent months.
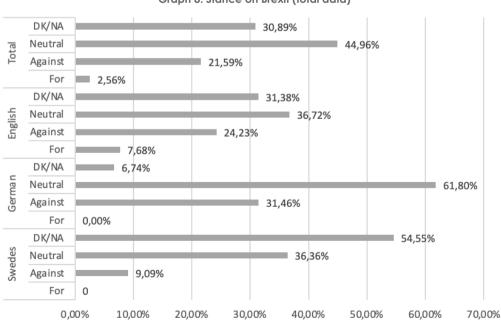
As for the specific approach to Brexit, given its prominence in the news during this period, we were interested in finding out how many items on the European Union mentioned the process of the United Kingdom leaving the EU. In general terms, 41.97% of the total number of articles make some reference to Brexit, rising to 67.29% of the items in the British media.

Graph 7: News items analysed that deal with Brexit

Source: Own elaboration.

On analysing these reports, which focused specifically on Brexit, we find that neutrality or the absence of a strong stance predominates, but what makes up the most significant data are the few positions in favour of Brexit (2.56%) compared to those openly against it (21.59%).

Graph 8: Stance on Brexit (total data)

Source: Own elaboration.

The British media as a whole does attract more pro-Brexit information, but no more than 7.68% of the total, compared to 24.23% explicitly against it. In any case, Brexit takes up so much attention that the lack of interest in other possible exits from the European Union is overwhelming, with only 5.08% of items dealing with this issue.

5. Discussion

As regards the main objective of finding out whether Europe is the subject of information in these media for foreign residents, we can affirm that it is an issue that is frequently dealt with in their pages, especially in the British media studied and in a particularly outstanding way in the publication *Euro Weekly News*. In any case, despite its constant presence over the period studied, it is not an issue that is presented on the front page as a particularly important and interesting piece of news. In this line, the press for residents coincides with other types of press, since, as Rubén Rivas de Roca pointed out, "the EU is not an important topic in the European press, [...] In certain key historical processes, the press has proved incapable of constructing a European identity" (Rivas de Roca, 2018: 4). Marta Hernández Ruiz (2018: 128) also put it as follows: "The way in which the media report on the EU favours the perception of a national 'us' as opposed to a European 'them', undermining the creation of a European public opinion".

The way in which the information on the European Union is categorised provides us with data on how the Union is understood and which specific topics of the system it comprises are of more interest as news material. Hence, the vision we are given is more of a European Union far removed from the individual and collective life experience of EU citizens and more focused on macro issues: the items on the European Union are placed in the Opinion, National, Economy and General News sections, and the most common topics covered are Brexit, political, legislative, economic and migratory issues. Educational questions (which is significant, given the importance of the Erasmus experience), cultural and even health or environmental issues are barely represented.

The sources also tell us of a European Union that is distant, removed from citizens, dominated by official sources and with little representation of organisations and civil society. This conveys a vision of the European Union in which the personal experience of the European feeling and what it entails is overshadowed by its management in the centres of power. There is also a lack of non-institutional expert sources, with the result that alternative visions and proposals to the official current are under-represented.

In this regard, the results of this research are in agreement with those of García Gordillo (2012: 77), who stated that "information on the EU in the media is basically reduced to the Summits of Heads of State, the family photo and the odd anecdote, the Summits of Ministers or specific action by the EP (European Parliament), especially if it affects some aspect of national policy". This means that there is nothing about the day-to-day work of the institution, nor is there anything at all at the level of dissemination to make it known, so that "it is difficult, if not impossible, to create a sense of belonging to a collective that goes beyond the national level".

Having studied the vision of the European Union revealed by the texts analysed, we can speak, in general, of media with a pro-European focus, but critical of the current system. They are explicitly anti-Brexit (and against other possible exits), but aware of the delicate moment the European project is going through, and call for a review of its essential foundations. This is something we can see in times of past crises. We will have to continue to evaluate the role of the media of foreign residents during the pandemic to see whether the health and economic crisis we are experiencing does not further weaken the citizens' cohesion as regards the European project or the political union itself, which, following the United Kingdom's decision to leave, seems to suffer the stigma of fragmentation (cases such as Poland and Hungary now reflect this fragility).

6. Conclusions

There is no doubt that Brexit has dominated most of the news about Europe in the media analysed, especially, for obvious reasons, the British media. The idea of Europe projected by these media has been conditioned to a large extent by the vicissitudes of the whole process of the United Kingdom's disengagement from Europe. However, apart from the role of Brexit in this period, a certain disaffection can be observed in the news about Europe covered by these media, with a critical view even in the items that are in favour of the EU. They focus especially on issues that affect citizens at a macro level, such as bureaucratic changes or legislative aspects. This situation is partly to be expected given the nature of these media as service journalism for the people living on the Costa del Sol. But it is also evident that much of the European cultural heritage that these media can project and achieve is overshadowed.

The view of the European Union conveyed by these media is not much more positive and it comes across as an entity that is very distant from the citizenry, although for the most part these media display a

stance in favour of the Union and against Brexit. The distant view of the European entity shown by these media is mainly based on a perspective of the European Union as a bureaucratic and unresponsive institution. This position is especially apparent in the opinion and contributors' columns of these media.

Undoubtedly, the press of the EU residents on the Spanish Costa del Sol, as elsewhere in Spain and the European Union where this phenomenon is reproduced (Portugal, France, Italy, etc.), fulfils a dual purpose of cohesion and integration both with their immediate environment and with their countries of origin, as well as with the wider context of European political union. Our analysis shows the advantages and difficulties of this journalistic phenomenon as regards its own Europeanness, but also that it is a phenomenon that arises from the communicative needs of citizen groups in a context of diversity and multiculturalism, especially when these communities live outside their country of origin.

7. Specific contribution of each person

Contributions	Authors
Conception and design of the work	Author 1
Documentary search	Author 2 and Author 3
Data collection	Author 3
Critical data analysis and interpretation	Author 1, Author 2 and Author 3
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Author 1, Author 2 and Author 3

8. Acknowledgements

9. Bibliographical references

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Notes

1. European Parliament Portal: https://bit.ly/3k2LNSk

2. The British are the foreign population with the highest number of residents in this area, with 46,451 people according to INE 2019 data.