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## **Alternative European Values in European Headlines: Competitiveness, Privatization, Solidarity, Socialization, Welfare State**

### Abstract

For 8 countries (the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Italy, Poland) the headlines of 2 nation-wide newspapers are analyzed. Original European values are confronted with other values. One question is how prominent the macroeconomic, or nation-related, use of the originally microeconomic notion of “competitiveness” was from 2006 to 2015. In sum, the macroeconomic use of “competitiveness” in relation to the total occurrences of “competitiveness” seems small on the European level. But noteworthy exceptions are the three Mediterranean/Romantic countries, where in some years the nation-related uses make more than over 50%. However, it is also typical that in no country does “solidarity” play a bigger role than “competitiveness”. Another question is how words for “privatization” were connoted from mid-2015 to mid-2016. The result is that uses of “privatization” in positive contexts are comparatively rare except for France and Italy. In contrast, “socialization” is comparatively rare with negative contexts. Finally, the connotation of “welfare state” is checked for 2010 to 2015. The result is that only in most countries “welfare state” is mostly used with neutral connotation.

### Sommaire

Pour 8 états (la Grande-Bretagne, les Pays Bas, l’Allemagne, l’Autriche, la France, l’Espagne, l’Italie, la Pologne) les titres de 2 journaux nationaux sont analysés. De valeurs originales de l’Europe sont confrontées avec d’autres valeurs. Une recherche est la prépondérance de “compétitivité”, à l’origine microéconomique, dans le sens macroéconomique ou bien national de 2006 à 2015: les occurrences macroéconomiques de “compétitivité” en relation avec tous les occurrences de “compétitivité” sont faibles sur le plan européen. Mais il y a des exceptions notables dans les pays méditerranéens/romans où il y a des ans dans lesquels le sens national est présent dans plus de 50% des cas. Cependant, il est aussi typique qu’il n’y a pas de pays où “solidarité” joue un rôle plus grand que “compétitivité”. Un autre sujet est la connotation des mots pour “privatisation” de mi-2015 à mi-2016: l’usage de “privatisation” avec les contextes positifs est relativement rare. En revanche, “socialisation” est rare avec des contextes négatifs. Finalement, la connotation d’“état-providence” est analysé pour 2010 jusqu’à 2015: dans la plupart des pays, “état-providence” est plus fréquemment utilisé avec des contextes négatifs.

### Zusammenfassung

Für 8 Staaten (Großbritannien, Niederlande, Deutschland, Österreich, Frankreich, Spanien, Italien, Polen) werden die Überschriften von 2 landesweiten Zeitungen analysiert. Ursprüngliche europäische Werte werden mit anderen Werten verglichen. Eine Frage ist, wie prominent die volkswirtschaftliche Verwendung des ursprünglich betriebswirtschaftlichen Begriffs “Wettbewerbsfähigkeit” von 2006 bis 2015 war: in europäischer Hinsicht war die volkswirtschaftliche Verwendung mit Blick auf die Gesamtzahl der Treffer relativ gering. Aber die mediterranen/romanischen Länder bilden eine herausragende Ausnahme, da es dort Jahre gibt, in denen die volkswirtschaftliche Verwendung über 50% der Fälle ausmacht. Jedoch ist auch typisch, dass in keinem Land “Solidarität” häufiger vorkommt als “Wettbewerbsfähigkeit”. Ein anderes Thema ist die Konnotation von Wörtern für “Privatisierung” von Mitte 2015 bis Mitte 2016: die Verwendung von “Privatisierung” mit positiven Kontexten ist selten. Im Gegenzug ist der Gebrauch von “Sozialisierung” mit negativen Kontexten selten. Schließlich wird die Konnotation von “Wohlfahrtsstaat” für den Zeitraum 2010 bis 2015 analysiert: in der Mehrheit der Fälle wird “Wohlfahrtsstaat” mit negativen Kontexten verwendet.

## 1. Introductory Remarks

Within EuroLinguistics, Europragmatics is still the field that has least been investigated. One of the topics with strong societal relevance is to see whether there is common European political thinking expressed in common political rhetoric. A prominent place of political rhetoric are newspaper

headlines, which are normally scanned by all readers, even if they might skip the actual article then. Due to this position, headlines in nationally spread newspapers have an enormous manipulative power, may it be used consciously or subconsciously. Although there are some studies on the headline style of single languages or two languages, there seem to be no Eurolinguistic analyses. This mini-study contributes to filling this void.

As already mentioned on prior occasions, Eurolinguistics as the discipline that searches for common features of European languages should deal with at least a representative selection of countries. For our topic all geo-cultural zones should be respected (cf., e.g., Grzega 2013: 2ff., 27ff.). Therefore, the following countries were selected: United Kingdom (UK), the Netherlands (NL), Germany (DE), Austria (AT), France (FR), Spain (ES), Italy (IT) and Poland (PL). For each country, two quality newspapers of large, nation-wide circulation were selected, if possible one from the left-progressive spectrum, one from the right-conservative spectrum. These newspapers were:

- UK: *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*
- NL: *De Telegraaf*, *De Volkskrant*
- DE: *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Die Welt*
- AT: *Die Presse*, *Der Standard*
- FR: *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*
- ES: *El Mundo*, *El País*
- IT: *La stampa*, *Corriere della Sera*<sup>1</sup>
- PL: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Gazeta Prawna*<sup>2</sup>

## 2. “Competitiveness” vs. “Solidarity”

One original goal of the European Union manifested in Article 3 (3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) is “solidarity among Member States”; and Article 3 (5) TEU lists “solidarity and mutual respect among peoples” as values. However, some may get the feeling that over the years the notion of competitiveness has become much more prominent, or central, than solidarity. Competitiveness is originally a notion from business administration and has been transferred to the level of nations since discussions on the Lisbon Strategy in 2000. That this transfer from microeconomics to macroeconomics is highly problematic, even illogical, often goes unnoticed: In which respect shall states become more competitive than other states? If nations are competitors, who are their customers? If competing companies strive for a better position by downsizing staff, it was the state that traditionally took care of the unemployed, but who shall adopt this traditional role of the state if the states are supposed to play the same role as businesses? Despite the problematic adaptation of business-administration notions to nations, or states, the notion of competitiveness seems to have become more and more relevant, viewing the titles of some programs of various European parliaments and administrations. In 2012, France announced its *Pacte national pour la croissance, la compétitivité et l’emploi* ‘national pact for growth, competitiveness and employment’; in 2013, the German ministry of finances published its report *Wettbewerbsfähigkeit – Schlüssel für Wachstum und Beschäftigung in Deutschland und Europa* ‘competitiveness – key to growth and employment in Germany and Europe’; in 2014, the Spanish government concluded a *Plan de medidas para el crecimiento, la competitividad y la eficiencia* ‘plan of measures for growth, competitiveness and efficiency’.

<sup>1</sup> Of the three nationally spread quality newspapers *La repubblica*, *La stampa*, and *Corriere della sera*, none is clearly conservative, but the latter one is currently the least left-oriented.

<sup>2</sup> For *Gazeta prawna* I used their online archive; for all other newspaper the LexisNexis databank.

It is interesting that, originally, both terms were associated with “togetherness”. The designation for ‘solidarity’ seems to go back to developments in the 18th-century France, from where it spread all over Europe (cf., e.g., Bloch/Wartburg s.v. *solidaire*, DELI s.v. *solidarietà*, OED s.v. *solidarity*, Paul s.v. *Solidarität*). If we take a look at European words for ‘competitiveness’, the relationship of two dealers in the same business field seems to have changed its connotations. The strong aggressive nature seems to have replaced an earlier neutrality or notion of peaceful coexistence. In the Romanic languages (Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, Romanian) as well as in English, we have words going back to Neo-Lat. *competitio*, with the element *com-~con-* ‘with, together’. In French, the word *compétitivité* is first attested for 1759, probably as a loan from English (cf. Bloch/Wartburg s.v. *compétition*). Whether the notion of competitiveness was very present in other languages can be doubted, as most of them have adopted and adapted the German word *Konkurrenz* ‘competition’ (itself from Latin); here, too, the element *con-* is visible, but this is not transparent to the average speakers of the adopting languages. In German, there was first the verb *konkurrieren* ‘run together’, from which the meaning ‘compete’ developed in the second half of the 18th century; from the verb a noun *Konkurrenz* ‘competition’ was coined, which was then also used in the sense of ‘rival company’; the noun *Konkurrent* was first attested in the works of Goethe (1749-1832) (cf. DW s.v. *konkurrieren*). Other individual paths are trodden in Hungarian, Irish and Finnish.

With this, I come back to our original issue: Is the term related to “against-ness” stronger than the one for “together-ness”? We can also ask this: Has competitiveness become a goal of the EU stronger than the ones laid in the EU Treaty? Has business-thinking reached nation-thinking? How do the media shape our minds here? According to Lakoff’s findings (e.g. 2002, 2004), the more we mention something the more prominent and accepted it becomes in our thinking. Let us compare the terms for ‘competitiveness’ as a macroeconomic term to those for ‘solidarity’ in the headlines of European newspapers. In these newspapers, headlines were analyzed for the occurrences of “competitiveness” (en. *competitiveness*, nl. *concurrentiepositie/concurrentievermogen*, de. *Wettbewerbsfähigkeit*, fr. *compétitivité*, es. *competitividad*, it. *competitività*, pl. *konkurencyjność* [and its inflected forms]), and “solidarity” (en. *solidarity*, nl. *solidariteit*, de. *Solidarität*, fr. *solidarité*, es. *solidaridad*, it. *solidarietà*, pl. *solidarność* [and its inflected forms]) with reference to the characterization of nations, or states. So proper names such as *Solidarność*, the name of the Polish workers’ movement, were excluded. The period chosen is from 2006 to 2015, so ten years altogether.

The following table first lists the numbers of hits of “competitiveness” after the slash; the number before the slash indicates the macroeconomic use of “competitiveness”, i.e. with reference to the level of nations. If the total number of occurrences of “competitiveness” is less than 10, this is seen as neglectable; the boxes are left blank in these instances. In light gray are those boxes where the macroeconomic hits of “competitiveness” are from 33% to 50%; in medium gray are those boxes where the macroeconomic hits are from 50% to 66%; in dark gray are those boxes where the macroeconomic hits are over 66%.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
UK										9/17 (53%)
NL										
DE	4/13 (31%)	5/10 (50%)	5/10 (50%)				12/15 (80%)	10/11 (91%)		
AT										
FR	20/55 (36%)	20/41 (50%)	5/14 (36%)	7/18 (39%)	16/37 (43%)	35/62 (56%)	88/164 (54%)	31/111 (28%)	21/48 (44%)	10/42 (24%)
ES	32/59 (54%)	11/37 (30%)	5/39 (13%)	16/46 (35%)	16/34 (47%)	27/73 (37%)	14/38 (36%)	17/28 (61%)	8/14 (57%)	
IT				8/11 (73%)	16/35 (46%)	4/30 (13%)	15/43 (35%)	16/32 (50%)	26/42 (62%)	6/17 (35%)
PL										

Table 1: Microeconomic and Macroeconomic Uses of “Competitiveness”

I have already suggested elsewhere (Grzego 2013: 37ff.) that it may be useful to see a feature as typically European when it characterizes at least two thirds of the selected nations. This means that the feature should be present in 6 of the 8 nations. In this sense, we can state the following:

- It is typical for European quality newspaper headlines for the years 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2015 that the macroeconomic use of “competitiveness” in relation to the total occurrences of “competitiveness” is small.
- In general, the macroeconomic use of “competitiveness” in headlines is typically neglectable (i.e. under 10) from 2006 to 2009, 2011, 2014, and 2015.

What we can see is a certain geo-cultural split. The nation-related usage of “competitiveness” is particularly prominent in the Mediterranean countries: there are at least 10 hits in at least half of the years. In the northern semi-circle of the UK, the Netherlands and Poland, the macroeconomic use is neglectable. Among the Germanophone countries, there is a little difference. In Austria, the numbers of “competitiveness” is generally neglectable in headlines. In Germany, it is a bit more prominent. In 2012 and 2013, if the word was used, it was mostly in the macroeconomic context.

We will now compare the occurrences of “competitiveness” to those of “solidarity” on the national level (other forms of solidarity, such as those between human groups within or between countries are excluded here). The figures for “competitiveness” are presented left of the double colon, those for “solidarity” on the right side of the double colon. Underneath is another table that gives the statistical values  $\chi^2$  and p; the statistical value “degree of freedom” is always 1. Numbers are only given if the p-value is below 0.05; then differences can be seen as statistically significant. If “competitiveness” is statistically more frequent, this is highlighted through a gray background; if “solidarity” is statistically more frequent, this is highlighted through boldprint. Boxes where neither competitiveness nor solidarity reach a two-digit number are again seen as neglectable and therefore left blank.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
UK										9::16
NL										
DE	<b>4::15</b>						12::10	10::5		<b>3::18</b>
AT										<b>3::11</b>
FR	20::3	20::4			16::17	35::17	88::7	31::7	21::1	10::8
ES	32::6	11::4		16::5	16::4	27::5	14::5	17::4		
IT					12::4		15::10	16::12	26::2	
PL		<b>3::14</b>								

Table 2: Occurrences of “Competitiveness” and “Solidarity”

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
UK										
NL										
DE	<b>6.368; 0.0116</b>									<b>10.714; 0.0011</b>
AT										<b>4.571; 0.325</b>
FR	12.565; 0.0004	10.667; 0.0011				6.231; 0.0126	69.063; 0.0001	15.158; 0.0001	18.182; 0.0010	
ES	7.789; 0.0001			5.762; 0.0164	7.200; 0.0073	15.125; 0.0001	4.263; 0.0389	8.048; 0.0046		
IT					4.000; 0.0455				20.571; 0.0001	
PL		<b>7.118; 0.0076</b>								

Table 3: Statistics “Competitiveness/Solidarity”

Again, something shall be seen as typically European if it covers more than two thirds of the countries selected. In these sense, the most typical thing is that the two notions are not very prominent elements in European headlines. It can also be stated that “solidarity” is still rarer than “competitiveness”: “solidarity” is invisible in European headline in the sense that the frequency is less than ten in two-thirds of the countries in all years except 2015, while “competitiveness” is only invisible in European headline in 2006-2009, 2011, 2015-2015 (not 2010, 2012, 2013). The picture may of course be different for the articles. Again, however, we note a geographical split. Particularly in Spain, but also in France, “competitiveness” is, over the years, more frequent than “solidarity”. Despite some outliers, in no country does “solidarity” play a continuously bigger role than “competitiveness” in the rhetoric of headlines. In the Romanic-Mediterranean countries Spain, France, and Italy, it can be noted that if something is statistically more prominent in a year’s headlines, it is “competitiveness”: twice in Italy, six years in France and even seven years in Spain.

### 3. “Privatization” vs. “Solidarization”

The conceptual pair of “privatization” and “collectivization, municipalization, socialization, nationalization” can be seen in a similar vein. Under the spell of financial markets and neoliberal assumptions (cf., e.g., Stiglitz 2002 for a summary of the consequences of neoliberal politics), accompanied by the widely used image of a “lean state” (cf. Grzego 2016), many public goods have been privatized in many EU countries. This includes, amongst others, the areas of energy, sewage,

telecommunication and local/regional public transport. A large international study (Brandt et al. 2009) has shown that the privatization waves in European countries have led to a decline of the quality of life for the general public: access to these goods is less easy and quality development is impeded. A particularly telling example is that of the German railway system. While still run by the state, German rail was a symbol for German punctuality, after the privatization process it has become a symbol of unpunctuality. Let us now have look at word-forms for “privatization” (en. *privatisation*, nl. *privatisatie*, de. *Privatisierung*, fr. *privatisation*, es. *privatización*, it. *privatizzazione*, pl. *prywatyzacja*) and corresponding verb forms (e.g. en. *privatize*, *privatized*, *privatise*, *privatised*, de. *privatisieren*, *privatisiert*, etc) and see in which connotational contexts they are used in the headlines of left-oriented, progressive and right-oriented, conservative newspapers from different European countries. Are the contexts positive, negative or neutral? By neutral I mean those contexts that either (a) are non-evaluative or (b) are evaluative, but it is unclear whether it is meant positively or negatively, (c) include both positively and negatively evaluative elements (with no clear connotational consequence *privatization*). We will analyze the period from 7 July 2015 to 7 July 2016.

paper, country, orientation	total	negative	neutral	positive	total	negative	neutral	positive
The Guardian, UK, l.	159	100	52	7	178	104	60	14
The Daily Telegraph, UK, r.	19	4	8	7				
Frankfurter Rundsch., DE, l.				0	16	5	7	4
Die Welt, DE, r.								
Der Standard, AT, l.	16	8	5	3	31	10	13	8
Die Presse, AT, r.	15	2	8	5				
De Telegraaf, NL, l.		0		0				
De Volkskrant, NL, r.			0					
Le Monde, FR, l.	12	1	9	2	28	3	13	12
Le Figaro, FR, r.	16	2	4	10				
El país, ES, l.	21	13	6	3	26	15	9	2
El mundo, ES, r.				0				
La stampa, IT, l.				0	61	12	22	27
Corriere della sera, IT, r.	52	4	21	27				
Gazeta wyborcza, PL, l.	0	0	0	0	33	15	14	4
Gazeta prawna, PL, r.	33	15	14	4				

Table 4: Contexts of “Privatization”

Background shading is given where differences are statistically significant (the statistical values presented in the following table are  $\chi^2$  and p; the degree of freedom is always 2; numbers are only given if p is <0.05).

paper, country, orientation	$\chi^2$ ; p	$\chi^2$ ; p
The Guardian, UK, l.	81.623; 0.0001	68.270; 0.0001
The Daily Telegraph, UK, r.		
Frankfurter Rundsch., DE, l.		
Die Welt, DE, r.		
Der Standard, AT, l.		
Die Presse, AT, r.		
De Telegraaf, NL, l.		
De Volkskrant, NL, r.		
Le Monde, FR, l.	9.500; 0.0087	6.500; 0.0388
Le Figaro, FR, r.	6.500; 0.0388	
El país, ES, l.	7.182; 0.0276	9.769; 0.0076
El mundo, ES, r.		
La stampa, IT, l.		
Corriere della sera, IT, r.	16.423; 0.0003	
Gazeta wyborcza, PL, l.		6.727; 0.0346
Gazeta prawna, PL, r.	6.727; 0.0346	

Table 5: Statistics “Privatization”

It comes as no surprise that, if there are statistically significant differences, left-oriented newspapers rather embed words for “privatization” into negative contexts. Sometimes there is not even one positive case (in the German *Frankfurter Rundschau*, the Dutch *Telegraaf*, the Italian *Stampa* and the Polish *Gazeta wyborcza*—in the latter it is even completely absent). But the overall picture of right-oriented newspapers does not show the corresponding expressions in positive headlines either. In the Polish *Gazeta prawna* the negative and neutral contexts are more frequent than negative contexts, in Spain’s *El mundo* the term was even completely absent from positive contexts.

If we look at the figures through a national lens, then we realize that the expression is particularly prominent in the UK, the country that, under Thatcher, was the first to sell large public goods. Of course, the absolute figures are not really comparable since they include different total numbers of articles. Nevertheless, the distance to the country with the second-highest frequency is noteworthy. Interestingly enough, the UK is the country which most strongly puts “privatization” into negative contexts (in 58.4% of all contexts). After that comes Spain with 57.7%. In Poland, about 45% of the hits are surrounded by negative lexical surroundings (which is almost as much as the neutral hits). A positive treatment can be seen in the Italian press (44%). In France, neutral and positive contexts are quite balanced (46% and 43%), which, in turn, means that the negative association of “privatization” is rare in the period analyzed.

The data for “privatization” should then be supplemented by those for “socialization, communalization, municipalization, nationalization”. The hits for the latter, however, are essentially rarer. Not a single case could be found in the Italian and Dutch papers. In Austria 13 headlines contained a form from this designational field, 8 of which were neutral, 3 positive and 1 negative. The British newspapers were again those that most frequently featured the notion in headlines. The figures are shown in the following table.

paper, country, orientation	total	negative	neutral	positive	total	negative	neutral	positive
The Guardian, UK, l.	38	6	16	16	48	11	20	17
The Daily Telegraph, UK, r.	10	5	4	1				

Table 6: Contexts of “Socialization”

The numerical differences are nowhere statistically significant, which speaks for a rather equal distribution of the uses, although we see a tendency in the overall picture that the neutral and positive contexts are more frequent.

*The Guardian* warns particularly not to privatize Channel 4 for the imminent loss of independence and points out the negative consequences of the privatization of the *National Health Service*, such as the growing waiting times for medical treatment (be it sitting in the waiting rooms or for a larger operation). In this context, the papers also warn about TTIP, which would prevent taking back privatization. As a matter of fact, TTIP as a danger for the national health system was also an argument of those supporting the British exit from the EU.

Not only “socialization” can be seen as the opposite of “privatization”, but in the end also the notion of “welfare state”. If we analyze the contexts of this term in newspapers in our countries for a period of six years, namely from 2010 to 2015, then we get the following picture (large figures in black indicate that the differences are statistically significant).

country	total	negative	neutral	positive
UK	66 (100%)	22 (33%)	28 (42%)	16 (24%)
NL	26 (100%)	5 (19%)	18 (69%)	3 (12%)
DE	42 (100%)	16 (38%)	20 (48%)	6 (14%)
AT	42 (100%)	7 (17%)	23 (55%)	12 (29%)
FR	32 (100%)	6 (19%)	23 (72%)	3 (9%)
ES	29 (100%)	8 (28%)	3 (10%)	18 (62%)
IT	40 (100%)	8 (20%)	20 (50%)	12 (30%)
PL	6 (100%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)

Table 7: Contexts of “Welfare State”

As said, only in some countries are the numerical differences statistically significant (the statistical values presented in the following table are  $\chi^2$  and p; the degree of freedom is always 2; numbers are only given if p is <0.05).

country	$\chi^2$ ; p
UK	
NL	15.308; 0.0005
DE	7.420; 0.0244
AT	9.571; 0.0083
FR	21.812; 0.0001
PL	0.000; 1.000
IT	5.600; 0.0608
ES	12.069; 0.0024

Table 8: Statistics “Welfare State”

First, we can observe that the Polish figures are again neglectable. Of the remaining countries, only in Spain did the press use the term with the definitely positive connotation. In the rest of the countries most uses were neutral; the evaluative contexts were, save in Italy, negative, particularly in Germany.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

That a term from financial business administration vocabulary is more frequent than a national value such as solidarity is paralleled by how we measure the performance of countries. We normally do not measure the standard of living, we just measure the flow of money expressed in the Gross National Product (GNP) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). To be fair, it has to be said that the inventor of the Gross Domestic Product, Simon Kuznets himself (1934) stressed that the GNP is not a good general index from an economic point of view. Actually, he had just developed it to see if the US economy was financially strong enough to take part in a global war. Nevertheless, GNP and GDP are now the most frequently seen measurements in the mass newspapers (cf. Grzega 2016). Suggestions to measure the quality of life in a society do exist (such as the Human Development Index, the Happy Planet Index, the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare, the Genuine Progress Indicator, and the Gini Index. Except for the latter, however, which measures financial inequalities in a country, these alternative indexes are hardly read about. Frequency is one aspect of the powerful, manipulative use of language.

Another one is contextualization, or framing. Given that the welfare state was an achievement through which many western and northern European countries reached a high standard of living after World War II (cf., e.g., Esping-Andersen 1990), the term's development toward negative connotation is a striking case of re-framing.

In Lakoff's sense the proponents of neoliberal strategy can be seen as successful. But for people working in Applied Eurolinguistics, it seems appropriate to make others aware of certain developments in the use of language so that the basis for more conscious thinking and re-re-framing and rephrasing can be laid.

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