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„COVID-19 Related Press Releases by the European
Parliament and the European Court of Auditors: the
Discourse Historical Approach“

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Hvala vam!

In Te, Domine, speravi!

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1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has become a major global crisis in contemporary society. Work habits and lifestyle patterns changed seemingly overnight; and the threats created not only by the virus itself, but also by the measures imposed to protect health. They resulted in serious economic and financial consequences. Ergo, national governments as well as the European Union had to operate in crisis mode. They also had to adjust their communications to the ever-evolving circumstances created by the pandemic. In their communications, they had to not only position themselves within the new situation, but also in keeping with the expectations of their stakeholders. As a result, this meant that EU institutions also had to establish themselves and their roles within this new context. In this study, I analyze several texts through which two EU institutions, the European Parliament (EP) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA), present themselves to the public in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, namely their press releases.

As applied in this study, a text is a written means by which an author conveys a message he or she wants to communicate with others. The message is communicated both by the text's content as well as its linguistic form. Relevant to the text's meaning is not just what is written, but also how it is written. There is "the inter-related nature of textual form and textual content, such that texts written or laid out in different ways mean different things" (Richardson 2007: 46). And, while the same content can be expressed in different forms, not every form will have the same meaning and convey the same message. Even those texts which aim to represent the facts in an objective and informative manner have an author who decided on the way to write it. As Widdowson (2007: 6) explains it: "[w]hether simple or complex, all texts are uses of language which are produced with the intention to refer to something for some purpose".

In their press releases, organizations can present themselves exactly the way they want to be presented (compared to newspaper articles, where they are being portrayed by somebody else); so in this thesis I will answer the following questions: How is the EP (and its members) being presented in EP press releases? How is the ECA (and its members) being presented in ECA press releases? How is the EU being presented? And, finally, how is the Covid-19 pandemic being presented? The "how's" refer to both what kind of image is being created and message sent, as well as by which linguistic means.

The thesis has the following structure: It opens with background information on the topic, where I introduce the institutions, their work and the methodology they use for press releases to communicate with the public. I also present the genre of press releases and touch upon the

Covid-19 pandemic context. Then I introduce the theoretical framework within which I conduct the analysis: the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA). Next, I follow with a section wherein I explain the methodology and illustrate which linguistic aspects I will examine and why certain linguistic choices are relevant. Prior to the analysis, I first explain how I chose the 12 press releases (6 from both the ECA and EP). I then conduct the analysis: first of the EP press releases, followed by the ECA's. This analysis tracks the DHA framework: I separately address the nomination, predication, perspectivization, intensification and mitigation strategies employed in the selected press releases. After the DHA analysis, I conduct a brief corpus analysis of the press releases, using corpus analysis software AntConc. I use the keyword list and word list features, as well as searching for words in their contexts features. In the Discussion section, I consider the results and how they relate to my initial questions and interest in determining how these two institutions, the ECA and EP, communicated through their press releases with the wider public during the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, I close my thesis by drawing my conclusions.

2. Background and theoretical foundations

2.1. EP & ECA, Covid-19 Pandemic

The EP and ECA are two European Union (EU) institutions, and they differ in many aspects. Figure 1. shows the relationship between EP, ECA and other relevant EU institutions as well as their main tasks. The EP, together with the Council of the, passes the laws suggested by the European Commission. It also shares authority over the budget with the Council (Pinder 2011: 41-42, Corner 2014: 80-84). Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) work in plenary sessions and also in committees. The committees are established at each EU convocation; and in the committees, MEPs discuss “the legislative proposals that Parliament may vote on during plenary sessions” (Staab 2011: 67). There are more than twenty committees and each MEP is a member of several of them. Plenary sessions, the most visible activity of the EP, usually take place one week per month and include debates, speeches, question period and votes on legislation (cf. Staab 2011: 67). In plenary sessions, unlike in

the committees, all MEPs vote and all have the possibility to participate in the discussion.

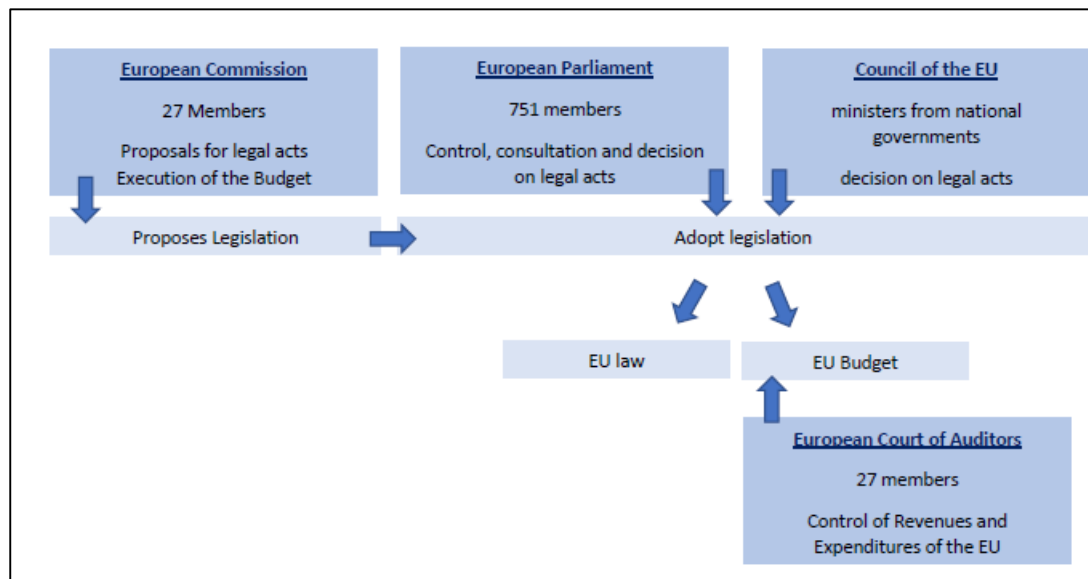


Figure 1. EU institutions

The ECA is one of the smaller and lesser known EU institutions. Its task is to control and safeguard EU's finances. "As the EU's external auditor, also called the 'guardian of EU's finances', it is to carry out the audit of the EU finances and expected to contribute to improving EU financial management and report on the use of public funds" (Wille and Bovens 2020: 3). The ECA consists of members, one from each member state, and the audit staff, i.e. auditors, who conduct the audits.

EU institutions are not organized in a strictly hierarchical way. Some institutions have more legislative or budgetary power in terms of decision-making (for example, the EP), but those which do not have such power (such as the ECA) are not under direct control of the governing and decision-making institutions. My decision to analyze ECA and EP press releases, and not other institutions, is twofold. First of all, I want to compare press releases of institutions that have entirely different functions in the EU. Secondly, I am well acquainted with how the EP as well as the ECA function. Therefore, analyzing press releases of these two institutions is a logical choice.

A seriously specific challenge for EU institutions (as well as for the rest of the world) has been the COVID-19 pandemic. In December 2019, China recorded the first case of the Covid-19 virus. By the end of January 2020, the EU implemented an IPCR (integrated political crisis response mechanism) regarding information sharing mode. Within the EU, COVID-19 cases had increased significantly by February. It was now obvious not only to the EU, but to the

world, that the Covid-19 virus was spreading rapidly, widely, and it was deadly. Most EU nations implements variations of “lockdown” measures for their citizens. Significant reductions in what had previously been considered “regular” or “normal” activities affected nearly all areas of society, including national economies. The EU began recovery plans immediately. (WHO 2020a, WHO2020b). Not surprisingly, on March, 11, 2022, the Covid-19 virus was officially declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization. This thesis analyzes the press releases from that period, when the EU already was trying to ensure help and recovery for the EU member states and their citizens. As time has passed, more has become known about the virus itself, and the consequences (including economic ones) are now clearer (European Council 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be an epic challenge for all of the EU member states, as well as the whole Europe. Taking into account the myriad of challenges associated with the pandemic, EU institutions needed to portray themselves in this new context. They not only had to situate themselves in the context of the pandemic, but also do so concretely, and make decisions which would yield visible results. I will address precisely this type of press release in this thesis - ECA and EP press releases related to Covid-19 pandemic - in order to analyze how these two institutions linguistically created themselves, the EU, the pandemic, and the relationships between these entities.

2.2. Press releases as a genre

Press releases are official statements an organization issues to the press providing information on a particular matter. They are also one of the fundamental tools used in public relations. They are used “to feature newsworthy facts and opinions for the use of reporters and editorialists” (Heath 2005: xxvii). One of the most prominent features of press releases is that “they are told only to be retold” (Jacobs 1999: 1). Public relations professionals write press releases and send them to reporters. After reading a press release, journalists or reporters write a subsequent related news piece – if they find the provided information newsworthy. The purpose of press releases is not just to inform journalists and reporters, but also “to pique the interest of a journalist or publication” (Roos 2007) so that they publish an article based on the provided information. Therefore, press releases are written so journalists and reporters will be inspired and able to write a related news article and publish it, thus informing the wider public.

2.2.1. Communication scheme of press releases

The communicative situation of press releases involves more participants on both sides of the communicative channel – both on the sender’s and receiver’s end. To explain how a piece of information is shared through press releases, it helps to examine the participant roles as

Levinson (1988) describes them based on Goffman's notion of footing (e.g. Goffman 1981). Traditionally, communication models or schemes consist of three elements: speaker, hearer, and something spoken about. However, there are many communicative situations in which such division is not useful as they do not capture the reality of a given situation (Levinson 1988: 165). Goffman (1981: 124 - 159) offers a solution to this problem by deconstructing these two elements into smaller, analytically coherent ones. He separates the notion of hearer "into a set of categories for different kinds of recipient, collectively termed *participation framework* [...] while the notion of speaker should be decomposed in a similar way into a set of categories he termed *production format*" (Levinson 1988: 168-169). These categories proposed by Goffman are further developed by Levinson (1988: 169) as is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Goffman's participation roles (Levinson 1988: 169)

Production format --> production roles		
	1 animator	The sounding box
	2 author	The agent who scripts the lines
	3 principal	The party to whose position the words attest
Participation framework --> reception roles		
A: ratified		
	1 addressed recipient	The one to whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom, incidentally, he expects to turn over his speaking role
	2 unaddressed recipient	The rest of the 'official hearers', who may or may not be listening
B: unratiſed		
	1 over-hearers	Inadvertent, non-official listeners
	2 eavesdroppers	Engineered, non-official followers of talk

As Levinson (1988: 169-168) points out, this scheme is not flawless. To begin, he (1988: 169), first of all, replaces some of the Goffman's terminology with clearer and less misleading terms. Thus, he renames 'production format' as 'production roles', since this category includes different roles that producers of communication messages carry out. He also changes 'participation framework' to 'reception roles', and retains 'participation' to cover both types of participation in a communicative situation, both during the production and reception. 'Reception roles', therefore, encompass different roles participants who receive communicative messages can have. Levinson (1988: 169-179) identifies three further elements in Goffman's model need improvement. First, he notices that the distinctions offered by Goffman are still not sufficient and are, thus, empirically inadequate. Secondly, Goffman does

not sufficiently explain the categories “to make the application of the terms at all clear” (Levinson 1988: 169). Finally, the categories fit only one type of event, namely conversation. Any other communicative situation would require new categories. Levinson (1988) then recommended corrections to these “important analytical errors” (Levinson 1988: 170).

Levinson (1988)’s further development of the model focuses mainly on different production and reception roles. As shown in Table 2 below, he identifies five basic categories and at least six derived categories. Basic categories are source and speaker on the production end of the communication chain, target and addressee on the reception end of the communication channel, and participant. The difference between source and speaker is that message originates on the informational/illocutionary level at the source, while speaker is the just utterer of that message. Analogously, the message is destined for the target, but its proximate destination is the addressee. Finally, the participant is any other party with a ratified channel-link to any of the other parties. Levinson develops further categories by combining the basic ones. There are producers, recipients, author, relayers, goal, intermediary, etc., as explained in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Basic and derived categories of participant in communication (Levinson 1988: 170)

Basic categories		
	source	Informational/illocutionary origin of message
	target	Informational/illocutionary destination of message
	speaker	utterer
	addressee	Proximate destination
	participant	A party with a ratified channel-link to other parties
Derived categories		
	producers	Sources or speakers
	recipients	Addressees or targets
	author	Source and speaker
	relayer	Speaker who is not the source
	goal	An addressee who is the target
	intermediary	An addressee who is not the target

Having identified main categories of production and reception roles, Levinson (1988: 171-174) then further “break[s] down the basic concepts into defining features”, which makes it possible to “re-assemble them to make the more complex categories” (1988: 171). Defining features of reception roles are address, recipient, participant, and channel-link. The feature of address is assigned to the recipients who have been picked out by means of a feature of address. The

recipient is the one for whom the message is intended. Therefore, an intermediary does not have the feature of recipientship. The feature of the participant is assigned to those who have “what Goffman calls a ‘ratified role’ in the proceedings and presupposes channel-linkage” (Levinson 1988: 174). Recipients of a message who are not supposed to actually receive the message, such as overhearers and eavesdroppers, do not have the feature of participant. Finally, having a channel link means being able to receive the message. All those who hear or read a message have a link to the channel. The only participant without the channel link is the ultimate destination, the target who is not present in the communication.

In production roles, the four features are participant, transmission, motive, and form. The feature of participant has the same meaning as in the reception roles. Producers who have a ‘ratified’ role in the proceedings all have this feature. The property of transmission is that of actual utterers or actual transmitters. Desire to communicate is in Levinson’s categorization called motive, while form refers to devising the format of the message. For example, the role of spokesman is defined as having the features of participation and transmission, because that person has a ratified role in the proceedings and is the actual utterer. He or she also devises the format of the message so this role also has the feature of form. At the same time, the desire to communicate is not his or hers. These defining features are outlined in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

Table 3: Reception roles (Levinson 1988: 172)

Participant Role	Address	Recipient	Participant	Channel-link
Participant reception roles				
Interlocutor	+	+	+	+
Indirect target	-	+	+	+
Intermediary	+	-	+	+
Audience	-	-	+	+
Non participant reception roles				
Overhearer	-	-	-	+
Targeted overhearer	-	+	-	+
Ultimate destination	-	+	-	-

Table 4: Production roles (Levinson 1988: 173)

Participant role	Participant	Transmission	Motive	Form
Author	+	+	+	+
‘Ghostee’	+	+	+	-
Spokesman	+	+	-	+
Relayer	+	+	-	-
Deviser	+	-	+	+
Sponsor	+	-	+	-
‘Ghostor’	+	-	-	+
Non-participant producer roles				
Ultimate source	-	-	+	+
Principal	-	-	+	-
Formulator	-	-	-	+

Applying this scheme of participation roles in a communicative situation to press releases, and particularly to the case of ECA and EP press releases, the following can be argued. Press releases are written by public relations professionals on behalf of the organization for which they work. Their ultimate audience is a wider public, but the message reaches the wider public through intermediaries: the journalists and reporters who read a press release. Journalists and reporters, then, communicate the original message written by the organization to the wider

public. Consequently, there are four participants: organization, press release writers, journalists, and the wider public. In terms of Goffman's participation roles (see Table 1 above), the organization which publishes the press releases – ECA or EP – is the principal; the party to whose position the words attest. Public relations professionals who write the press releases are authors; the agents who script the lines. They could also, arguably, be the animator; the sounding box in spoken conversation because publishing their words could be seen as equivalent to speaking out those words. On the other end of the communication channel, there are the journalists and the wider public. Goffman's framework is not quite applicable to press releases as he differentiates between addressed recipient and unaddressed recipient. Addressed recipient is the one to whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom, incidentally, he expects to turn over his speaking role. Unaddressed recipients are all the other 'official hearers', who may or may not be listening. As previously covered, the first recipient of press releases are journalists, but they are addressed solely to disseminate the message to a wider public. This wider public is also a recipient of the press releases, but their role is not described in Goffman's scheme.

Applying Levinson (1988)'s elaboration of Goffman's framework, different roles of participants in the communication through press releases can be better identified. Already Levinson's basic categories (see Table 2 above) provide a needed differentiation between two recipients of press releases. Organizations write press releases so they can share news with the wider public, which means the wider public is the target, i.e. the informational or illocutionary destination of message; whereas the organization, EP or ECA, is the source, informational or illocutionary origin of message. Press release writers are the speakers, or utterers: they produce the actual words in the communication. Journalists are the addressees, the proximate destinations of the message. By looking at Levinson's derived categories (see Table 2), the following categorization is possible. Both organizations, ECA and EP, and their press release writers are producers, while journalists and wider public are their intended recipients. None of the participants are authors because the source and speaker are separated. Similarly, there are no participants who would be the goal because the addressee is not the target in these communicative situations. Press release writers are relayers, speakers who are not the source. Journalists are intermediaries, addressees who are not the target. Therefore, Levinson (1988)'s basic and derived categories of participants in communication provide a solid framework to define different participants in the production and reception of press releases. His defining features of reception and production roles should further identify participants' different roles.

Levinson's defining features of participants in communication (see Table 3 and Table 4) can be applied to ECA and EP press releases as follows. The wider public is the ultimate destination. They are the recipient, but are not addressed; they do not have a channel-linkage nor do they have a 'ratified role'. Press releases are intended to be read by journalists, while the wider public are the recipient of that message in an indirect way. Journalists have the opposite defining features which, thus, assigns them Levinson's role of an intermediary. They are addressed, are a participant with a ratified role, and also have a channel-link; but, they are not the ultimate recipient. The situation is analogous in the production roles. Press release writers have the role of a spokesman. They participate in the communication as actual transmitters or utterers and they also devise the format of the message. However, they do not have the motive to communicate. ECA and EP have exactly the opposite features from press release writers. Their motive to communicate is the reason press releases are written and published, but they do not include the rest of the defining features of a participant's role. Instead, this aligns them with the role of a principal. Identifying the defining features of the four participants in the production and reception of press releases makes the communicative situation more transparent and provides each participant their clearly defined role.

2.2.2. Features of a press release

Public relations specialists have been writing press releases since the early 1900s and their purpose has always been to "ensure that the media ha[ve] accurate information" (Werner n.d.). The way press releases are formed and structured should ensure the information is reported accurately, but they also should grab journalists' attention and offer them a relevant story, not just an accurate one. Additionally, they should have a clear and captivating headline, include the date and location, and the "Five Ws" should be answered in the first paragraph: *Who* is the story about? *What* is happening? *Where and When* is it taking place? And, most critically, *Why* is it important? The remainder of the text should be dedicated to additional essential information and relevant content explaining why the story is significant. A press release also may include relevant and colorful quotes. In addition, the sending organization should always include its contact information as well as that of the author of the release. While not always needed or necessary, a brief summary of the organization's mission may be appropriate for inclusion with the release. Notably, the press release should not contain industry jargon and should be forthright and unbiased in order to allow for honest coverage. It also should be newsworthy and objective, and not purely promotional. The suggested length of a press release is 200-400 words. Including videos and photos is not mandatory, but they can make a press

release more user-friendly (Werner n.d., Kowal 2016) and may be more apt to capture journalists' attention. Well-written press releases can be very effective “in generating subsequent media coverage in the print and broadcast media” (Franklin et al. 2009: 165). Press releases are, thus, an organization's way to be heard and seen in the news. A well-written press release, the one that includes all the necessary information and is written/packaged in a way that allows for an easy reporting is more likely to be picked up and published by journalists. This, ultimately, is the goal the press releases writers are attempting to achieve.

2.3. Discourse analysis: The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA)

One way of analyzing how press releases are written is through discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a research method for analyzing texts in relation to the context in which they are produced. Texts are defined by their intention, reference, and purpose (Widdowson 2007: 6). The intention and purpose are mirrored in the choice of linguistic construction, i.e. in language choices. The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) is a way to conduct discourse analysis that, in addition to analyzing the language itself, incorporates “theory, methods, methodology and empirically based research practices that yield concrete social applications” (Reisigl 2017: 48). It has at least three interconnected aspects: text or discourse immanent critique, the socio-diagnostic critique, and prognostic technique (Zagar 2020:4). DHA was developed by Ruth Wodak, who focused her research on the issues of social injustice, prejudice, and discrimination. Thus, in DHA, language is not treated in isolation, but in relation to the context in which it is produced and consumed (Reisigl & Wodak 2009: 90). DHA offers the possibility to analyze how language is used for specific purpose in specific content.

Reisigl (2008) uses DHA to analyze political discourse. As he explains, such an approach “is more function- and persuasion-oriented” and it “establishes a trans-disciplinary conjunction of disciplines, and integrates argumentation theory as well as other components of rhetoric” (Reisigl 2008: 99). DHA is appropriate for analyzing political discourse precisely because of its strong interdisciplinary orientation. Press releases are one of the eight political fields identified by Reisigl (2008: 98). They belong to the field of formation of public attitudes, as well as those of opinions and will (Wodak 2009: 41). Additionally, “[i]n a broader sense, every genre of political rhetoric has the goal of advertising political position and maintaining power” (Reisigl 2008: 98). Keeping this in mind, DHA, a function- and persuasion-oriented approach, should enable the identification of linguistic means employed in the creation of ECA and EP press releases and, thus, give the answers to my research questions.

The DHA approach, as created as used by Wodak and Reisigl (e.g. Wodak & Reisigl 2009, Wodak 2015), consists of answering five questions:

1. How are social actors – either individual persons or groups – linguistically constructed by being named (nomination)?
2. What positive or negative traits, qualities and features are attributed to the linguistically constructed social actors (predication)
3. Through what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify or delegitimize claims containing specific nominations and predications (for example claims of discrimination of others)?
4. From what perspective or point of view are these nominations, predications and argumentations expressed (perspectivation)?
5. Are the respective utterances (nominations, predications, argumentations) articulated overtly, are they intensified or are they mitigated (mitigation versus intensification)?

Answers to these five questions determine the five linguistic strategies used by the authors: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification or mitigation. Nomination refers to the way social actors are linguistically constructed. Particular focus is given to the creation of in-groups and out-groups, as well as to marked linguistic choices such as metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches (Wodak 2009: 40-42). Predication is concerned with how these social actors are linguistically specified and characterized. There can frequently be evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits, and they can linguistically be implicit or explicit. Predication can also be achieved through reference with specific connotation and denotation, attributes, allusions, evocations, and presuppositions, among other linguistic tools (Wodak 2009: 42; Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 54, Richardson 2007: 52).

When analyzing argumentation, DHA is concerned with topoi, or “reservoirs of generalized key ideas from which specific statements or arguments can be generated” (Richardson 2004: 320). A topos is simply a rhetorical notion referring to “content related warrants which connect premises with conclusions” (Wodak 2001:75). Topoi can be explicit or tacit and they justify the transition from argument to the conclusion (Wodak 2009: 42). There are various type of topoi and different authors provide different lists and explanations (for example Zagar 2010). One such list is provided by Wodak (2015: 11). She lists 9 topoi: topos of burdening, reality, numbers, history, authority, threat, definition, justice, and urgency. Topos of threat, for

example, is that “if specific dangers or threats are identified, one should do something about them”, and topos of urgency states that “decisions or actions need to be drawn/found/done very quickly because of an external, important, and unchangeable event beyond one’s reach and responsibility” (Wodak 2015: 11). On the other hand, there are fallacies, or erroneous reasoning. They can mislead the reader (or listener) and their purpose is to weaken certain arguments and correspond to the position being presented.

The fourth discursive strategy in DHA is perspectivization or framing, which is about the speakers' position or point of view in the text. Finally, the last discursive strategy in DHA is intensification or mitigation, as in each text there are strategies to “qualify and modify the epistemic status of a proposition by intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of utterance” (Wodak 2009: 42). In a DHA analysis, the objective is to analyze these five discursive strategies. Depending on the specific text and on the research question, the analysis will not provide the same attention to all five strategies. It is important to adapt the analytical tools to the situation; i.e. to what is being analyzed.

2.4 Textual design: linguistic choices

By conducting a DHA analysis, my goal is to determine “how stretches of language [...] become meaningful and unified” (Cook 1989: ix) in a given context, to analyze how information is linguistically organized and presented. Accordingly, in the following sections I will present first an overview of different linguistic aspects which I will examine in the texts.

2.4.1. Lexis: lexical choices, cohesion, word choice and meaning

Lexical cohesion refers to how lexical elements refer to each other and, thus, link different parts of the text. Usually, these words belong to a certain semantic field which is related to the text's topic. Semantic field is, therefore, principally determined by the topic of the text. However, lexical choices and the semantic field to which they belong, can also be influenced by the way authors decide to present the topic. Different predications of the same topic will use lexical choices from different semantic fields. In other words, lexical choices are not determined exclusively by the topic, but also by the way in which the topic is presented. On the level of lexis, a discourse analyst usually identifies certain patterns in the word choice. Particularly significant are those with evaluative meaning (Hunston 2004: 157), systematic choices with either significantly negative, or positive semantic load.

Lexical choices are also closely related to DHA nomination strategies. As Richardson (2007: 49-5) explains, “the way people are named [...] can have significant impact on the way in which they are viewed”. He continues explaining that we all have a range of characteristics and roles, even identities, and they all describe us equally accurately. However, they do not describe us with the same meaning. Authors of texts decide to which of these identities (and to what characteristics) of a person (or institution) they are going to refer to, not only in the way they describe that entity, but also the way they refer to them. The role of word choice can be seen in Clark's (1992) analysis of the *Sun* tabloid newspaper reports on incidents of sexual violence. As Clark explains, in such articles, one participant always is to blame, while the other is always the victim. The Table 5 summarizes Richardson (2007:51)’ explanation and exemplification of such nomination strategies. It shows the guilty participant is referred to with words that suggest inhumanity and low morale, while the victim is portrayed with words evoking purity and innocence. With such choices, authors lead our perception of the story and manipulate our stance towards it.

Table 5: Naming guilty participants and victims (Richardson 2007: 51)

Guilty participant	verb	victim
Maniac, monster, fiend, sex fiend	attack	Bride, school girl, mother of three, daughters
A lolita, an unmarried mum, a divorcee, busty -, shapely -, blonde -	Lead the man on, invited the attack	Family man, hubby

2.4.2. Presuppositions, connotations, inferences, and implicatures

Some meanings are not explicit, they are not communicated by what the word denotes. Rather, they are implicit, indirect, suggested, and evoked. Authors can choose to communicate something implicitly by presuppositions, connotations, and implicatures. A presupposition is an “implicit claim embedded within the explicit meaning of a text or utterance” (Richardson 2007: 63). Similarly, connotation is about meaning associated with a word that cannot be found in a dictionary, while implicature refers to what is implied by saying something. On the other hand, inference is a conclusion that can be drawn from what is said. These four strategies are important because, as Widdowson (2007: 69) explains, language always provides “the resource for alternative wording: there will always be different grammatical structures and different

lexical items available for referring to the ‘same’ thing”. However, these different options may include some additional meanings that allow for the expression of attitude, personal evaluation or point of view.

It is important to keep in mind that positive/negative characterizations can be achieved on the semantic level, either through denotation or connotation, as well as and on the syntactic and morphosyntactic levels through grammatical choices. Transitivity is at the interface of lexical and syntactic levels and Martin et al. (1997: 102) defines it as “a resource of construing our experience in terms of configurations of a process, participants and circumstances”. Therefore, presuppositions, connotations, inferences and implicatures can be found both in lexical as well as in grammatical choices.

2.4.3. Modality

Modality refers to linguistic encoding of “meanings such as degrees of certainty and commitment or alternatively vagueness and lack of commitment” (Stubbs 1996: 202). Some of the markers of modality are modal verbs and modal adverbials (such as *can*, *might*, *must* and *perhaps*, *certainly*). On the other hand, a speaker can express the strongest form of affinity and commitment by using unmodalized declaratives and thus fully support “the truth value inherent in the assertion” (Mautner 2008: 42). Modality is important because it is another tool for the authors to express their “attitude towards, or opinion about, the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence” (Simpson 1993: 47).

2.4.4. Verb forms, transitivity, semantic roles

As part of a sentence that expresses action, verbs play a central role in conveying meaning. The choice of verbs and their forms can influence the meaning similarly to small differences in lexical choices as explained above. This includes verb forms and tenses, which not only carry a certain aspect of meaning in themselves, but also changing them in a text can alter the understanding of the message that is being conveyed (Cook 1989: 15). Analyzing what is achieved by certain choices and changes can reveal potentially hidden meaning. Similarly, certain aspects of meaning can be expressed by the choice of verbal voice. A different message can be conveyed based on the choice of verb, its transitivity and the semantic roles it assigns to different participants. The following section is, therefore, dedicated to discussing these concepts.

Voice is a grammatical category used for differentiating mainly between two ways of presenting an action (expressed by a verb) in relation to the subject of the sentence and doer of

the action in that sentence. In active voice the doer of an action is also the sentence subject, whereas in passive voice subject is the affected-entity and whether the doer is expressed explicitly in the sentence is (in English) optional (Strauss, Feiz & Xiang 2018: 265). Analysis should reveal what has been achieved with the particular choice of voice. As Widdowson (2004: 120) explains it, “a text is only a text at all if one infers intentionality and so recognizes its discourse implications”. To illustrate this, I will take an example from Widdowson (2004: 121). The examples given in (1) differ in voice.

- (1) a. Industrial premises and shops were closing.
- b. Industrial premises and shops were being closed.

The sentence in a. is in active voice, and the sentence in b. is in passive voice. In this particular case, this contrast could be created because of the specific properties of the verb, so it should be kept in mind that it could not be imitated with just any verb. In the sentence in a., the one in active voice, the action of closing is carried out by the industrial premises and shops themselves. On the other hand, in b., the premises were being closed *by someone else*. The passive version encodes causation, but also involves another entity, which is implied, and points to the fact that closing was done (maybe even imposed) by someone else. Therefore, just by changing the voice, it is possible to imply a variety of different ideas. However, one should be careful not to assigning meaning to using passive and omitting the agent that the sentence does not actually realizes.

Verbs can also be grouped based on the type of meaning they evoke, i.e. based on the verb conceptualization. It is possible to identify three groups of verbs depending on “the robust scopes of meanings that verbs evoke” (Strauss, Feiz and Xiang 2018:143): dynamic, stative, and linking (copular) verbs. Dynamic verbs evoke meaning related to movement, activity or process, specificity of actions, motion, and reporting. In contrast, stative verbs express stable and unchanging states and evoke existence, states of cognition, preference, and emotion, as well as stable and unchanging physical states. Finally, linking verbs, also called copular verbs, are used to link the subject to a noun phrase, an adjective, or a prepositional phrase. The main difference between dynamic verbs on the one side and linking and stative verbs on the other is that the former evoke dynamic meaning, as their name suggests. So the same entity can be presented as active or passive depending on the type of verbs it is associated with. (Strauss, Feiz and Xiang 2018: 144-148)

Transitivity is verbal aspect that is at the interface of the lexical and syntactic levels, and it can be defined as “a resource of construing our experience in terms of configurations of a process, participants and circumstances” (Martin et al. 1997: 102). Explained simply, transitivity is about who does what to whom and what happens without this intervention from the actors (Mautner 2008: 41). The same event can be reported with different verbs with different transitivity and thus communicate different messages. Mautner (2008: 41) shows this with the difference in the following examples: *The immigrant left*, *The immigrant was deported* and *Immigration officials deported the immigrant*. These examples refer to “one and same event, but clearly different constructions of reality” (Mautner 2008: 41).

When asking the question of how an event is presented in terms of who does what to whom, another linguistic conceptualization can give useful insight: that of semantic roles. The core idea is envisioning the sentence as a scene or part of an event, and not as a sequence of grammatically interconnected units. In this scene, different parts of the sentence carry out different roles – semantic or theta-roles. They are determined by the semantic meaning of the main verb. While the list of these semantic roles is virtually infinite, in continuation, below is a brief overview of the semantic roles that are relevant for my later analysis. An Agent is the instigator of the action. A Patient is the entity to whom something (what the Agent is doing) is happening. A similar role is that of an Experiencer, the role that receives a sensory or emotional input. An *apple* is a patient in *Julia ate an apple* (or *An apple was eaten by Julia*), but *Mary* is an Experiencer in *Mary saw the present* (Berruto & Cerruti 2011: 151-153; Trask and Stockwell 2007:251-252; Matthews 2007:407). Already this short list shows the possible complexity of semantic roles. Its purpose is to provide useful information to complement the analysis in answering the research questions of this paper. When it comes to semantic roles as well as transitivity, the authors have a choice between verbs which can express superficially the same meaning, but require different participants. Assigning different roles to participants is precisely this choice and can make a difference in the meaning being conveyed.

2.4.5. Syntax and information structure

Information can be packaged differently on the sentence (or phrase or clause) level using the same words: it is about how the information is structured. In an utterance, we express propositional information and there are different ways of distributing that propositional information. “In terms of textual structure, the first piece of information [...] is said to be the theme, and the rest of the utterance is the rheme” (Widdowson 2007: 41). Different ordering

of the information in an utterance can thematize a different part of the propositional information. As Widdowson (2007: 41-42) explains, there are several ways to do it. One of them is to change the voice of the sentence or changing the order of constituents, as is shown in the following examples:

- 1) a. The police (T) dispersed the demonstrators (R).
b. The demonstrators (T) were dispersed by the police (R).
- 2) a. The police (T) dispersed the demonstrators early in the day (R).
b. Early in the day (T), the police dispersed the demonstrators (R).
c. What the police did (T) was to disperse the demonstrators (early in the day) (R).

The above examples demonstrate several ways to thematize different parts of the information being communicated. However, the interesting question is, of course, why? What motivates the speakers to thematize (or to not thematize) a certain part of the utterance? The theme can be considered given (already known), and rheme can be seen as providing new information. It can also act as a topic, about which the speaker wants to provide a comment in rheme. So certain aspect of meaning can be foregrounded with the choice of information structure.

2.5. Corpus research

A collection of texts can also be analyzed as a corpus – electronically with software such as AntConc. AntConc and similar programs offer different possibilities for analyzing frequencies of words as well as for looking up words in contexts. As Mautner (2008:37) explains it, corpus analysis “also has significant potential for applications in qualitative discourse analysis”. Programs for corpus analysis usually include features like wordlists, keywords, concordances, collocations, and clusters. Not all are equally relevant to all research. Therefore, the rest of this section is dedicated to the introduction of AntConc features specifically used in this study. One of the basic, but extremely useful features is wordlist. Like its name suggests, it is a list of words in the corpus together with their frequencies. Most programs have the option of sorting the words alphabetically or by their frequency. A keyword list is also a type of frequency list, but relative to another corpus. This list displays words which have higher or lower frequencies than in a reference corpus. Without problematizing the question of representativeness of a corpus, when drawing conclusions based on keyword lists, it is important to keep in mind of what kind of language is the reference corpus representative. A word will always have a higher or lower frequency than in the reference corpus, and not in abstraction. Finally, the option of searching for

keyword in context offers the possibility of looking up all tokens and their immediate context. This feature is particularly useful in small corpora because it enables further qualitative analysis within the generated list.

3. Analysis

In this section I conduct the analysis and present its results. The section consists of three smaller subsections and two larger ones. It begins with the theoretical background for the selection of chosen press releases, continues with the description of the selection and of the context in which these press releases were written and published. Then follows the larger subsection, analysis of each of twelve chosen press releases and finally a brief corpus analysis of all the press releases.

3.1. Selection of press releases

This research is a qualitative project and a top-down approach was applied when selecting the press releases for the analysis. A top-down approach means starting from the universe of possible texts and, through progressive application for selection criteria, narrows it down to a specialized, topic-oriented corpus (Baker 2006: 26-9; Mautner 2008: 35-36). In this process, researchers run the risk of cherry-picking texts that support their thesis, their personal views, or what they are looking for. The goal is to create a corpus as large and as encompassing as possible so it is representative of the desired type of texts. At the same time, however, it should be small enough to be manageable.

Applying this knowledge, the texts analyzed in this paper were chosen with the following criteria and selection process. The first criterion stipulated that the analyzed texts be Covid-19 pandemic-related press releases published by the EU institutions. To narrow it down, two institutions were chosen: the EP and ECA. Due to the Covid-19 situation, the time frame for the publication of these press releases was pre-determined: it encompassed the start of the pandemic until I initiated this analysis in June 2021. By that date, the ECA had published six press releases which fulfilled those criteria. Using the same criteria, the EP, on the other hand, had published far too many releases for a balanced analysis, so I needed to apply an additional criterion. Since ECA is responsible for auditing the EU's financial decisions, to match the topics, only those EP press releases that were COVID-19 *and* finance related were taken into consideration. This narrowed down the selection to 15 press releases. While analyzing 21 documents is certainly manageable, I decided to further narrow it down for two reasons: to be able to complete a more in-depth analysis; and, also, to try to present a more balanced selection.

Therefore, I further reduced the selection of EP press releases by excluding those announcing future events, as well as any press releases reporting plenary decisions. Using these stricter criteria, I found a total of twelve press releases to analyze, six from each institution, as can be seen in Table 6 below. All of the press releases are in Appendix I.

Table 6: Analyzed press releases

Code	Institution	Title	Date
PR.EP.01	European Parliament	Parliament mobilized to channel EU funds to those affected by Coronavirus	12-03-2020
PR.EP.02	European Parliament	More ambition needed for EU recovery instruments, says majority of MEPs	21-04-2020
PR.EP.03	European Parliament	MEPs call for concrete details and novel tools to address the economic crisis	27-04-2020
PR.EP.04	European Parliament	COVID-19: MEPs urge quick action to prevent “huge recession”	19-05-2020
PR.EP.05	European Parliament	COVID-19: first go-ahead given to the new Recovery and Resilience Facility	09-11-2020
PR.EP.06	European Parliament	EU Budget 2021 deal: supporting the recovery	04-12-2020
PR.ECA.01	European Court of Auditors	Mitigating the COVID-19 outbreak using EU structural funds requires a balance between more flexibility and accountability, say Auditors	15-04-2020
PR.ECA.02	European Court of Auditors	EU’s public health and economic response to COVID-19 to be reviewed by Auditors	28-05-2020
PR.ECA.03	European Court of Auditors	COVID-19 crisis risks widening the economic gap between EU countries	09-12-2020

PR.ECA.04	European Court of Auditors	The EU's initial response to COVID-19: learning lessons to improve European cooperation in public health	18-01-2021
PR.ECA.05	European Court of Auditors	EU Auditors to focus on Covid-related action in 2021	28-01-2021
PR.ECA.06	European Court of Auditors	EU auditors probe the protection of air passenger rights during COVID-19 crisis	03-03-2021

The ECA press releases are all approximately of the same length, around two pages long. They also have the identical layout. In the upper left corner is the ECA logo, and in the upper right corner is indication of language of the document (EN). Below that is the indication of the document type “Press Release”, the place (Luxembourg) and the date. In the next row is the title of the press release in bold and also in a font size larger than the rest of the document. Below that is a summary of the press release written in bold and it is followed by the text of the press release. There are four to five different types of information communicated by these six press releases, and they are closely related to ECA publications. In other words, the ECA uses press releases to inform the public of the documents they publish and are available on their websites. These documents are essentially the institution's principal work. It publishes opinions, audits and previews, as well as documents containing its own strategies and programs. At the end of the first page of five press releases, there is the following sentence, “The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors [type of document/publication]. The full [type of document/publication] is available at eca.europa.eu”. The only document that does not have those two sentences is PR.ECA.02. Instead, at the end of that press release there is the following sentence, “The ECA's revised 2020 work programme is available on its website eca.europa.eu”. This press release informs its readers that the “European Court of Auditors (ECA) has revised its 2020 work programme today to shift the focus of its work towards COVID-19 related aspects” (PR.ECA.02, page 1). At the bottom of the first page of all the press releases, there is contact information for the ECA press division, their addresses and social media handles. The press releases conclude with the press contact for the publication communicated in the press release. Four out of the six press releases include a “Background information” section before the “Contacts” section and one

also has a “Notes to editors” section. The first two press releases (PR.ECA.01 and PR.ECA.02) have a box entitled “ECA measures taken in view of the COVID-19 pandemic”. The earlier release places it at the very beginning, just below the ECA logo, and the second has it at the end of the document. They are both published in the first half of 2020, while the other four are published either at the end of 2020 (in December, PR.ECA.03) or in 2021. An example of the ECA press releases can be seen below in Figure 2 and Figure 3.



EUROPEAN
COURT
OF AUDITORS

EN

Press Release
Luxembourg, 18 January 2021

The EU’s initial response to COVID-19: learning lessons to improve European cooperation in public health

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has reviewed the EU’s initial response to the COVID-19 crisis and draws attention to certain challenges faced by the EU in its support for Member States’ public health actions. These include setting an appropriate framework for cross-border health threats, facilitating provision of appropriate supplies in a crisis and supporting the development of vaccines.

The EU’s public health competences are limited. It mainly supports the coordination of Member State actions (through the Health Security Committee), facilitates procurement of medical equipment (by creating joint procurement framework contracts), and gathers information/assesses risks (through the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control - ECDC). Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU took further action to address urgent issues, facilitating the supply of medical equipment and information exchange between Member States, as well as promoting testing, treatment and vaccine research. It allocated 3 % of its annual budget by 30 June 2020 to support public health related measures.

“It was a challenge for the EU to rapidly complement the measures taken within its formal remit and support the public health response to the COVID-19 crisis,” said Joëlle Elvinger, the ECA member responsible for the review. “It is too soon to audit ongoing actions or assess the impact of COVID-19 related public health EU initiatives, but these experiences can provide lessons for any future reform of the EU’s competences in this field”.

In a [2016 audit report](#), the auditors had already flagged weaknesses in the use of the EU’s 2013 legal framework for dealing with serious cross-border health threats. Some issues, such as preparedness planning have proved to be persistent.

It was challenging for the ECDC to manage the timeliness, quality and completeness of information received from Member States, and the different surveillance and testing strategies used by the Member States makes comparisons and assessments difficult. The ECDC has cautioned that considerable work still needs to be done to establish and strengthen robust population-based surveillance of COVID-19.

A key test for Member States in addressing the pandemic was ensuring the supply of sufficient

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors’ review. The full review is available at eca.europa.eu.

ECA Press
12, rue Alcide De Gasperi – L-1615 Luxembourg
E: press@eca.europa.eu @EUAuditors eca.europa.eu

Figure 2: Example of an ECA press release – PR.ECA.04, first page

medical equipment. The European Commission took a range of measures to help Member States meet this challenge. These measures included introducing an export authorisation scheme, starting an EU-financed strategic stockpile of medical and personal protective equipment and setting up an online “matchmaking” tool for medical equipment purchases. The Commission also launched joint procurement framework contracts for medical equipment. However, the Member States procured the vast majority of their medical supplies through national procurement pathways.

The EU budget supported a range of actions including COVID-19 research and vaccine advance purchase agreements. By mid-2020, the EU specifically allocated €4.5 billion to public-health related measures and expanded the range of spending eligible for cohesion funding to cover COVID-19 related public health spending. The use of these funds was at an early stage at 30 June 2020.

€547 million from the EU budget were allocated by June 2020 for research on the development of COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines. In the first half of 2020, the Commission also allocated €1.5 billion to fund advance purchase agreements with a range of COVID-19 vaccine developers. To mitigate the inherent risk linked to vaccine development, the Commission’s strategy focused on investing in a range of vaccine technologies and companies. The strategy included funding research on vaccine hesitancy as well as fighting disinformation, which could harm the success of mass immunisation campaigns.

Background information

Public health is primarily a national competence. The COVID-19 pandemic has tested the relatively limited powers assigned to the Union by the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU and the 2013 legal framework for cross-border health threats (Decision 1082/2013). This review does not intend to conclude on the outcomes and impact of the actions taken by June 2020, especially as at the time of writing these are still evolving.

The ECA recently published its [review of the EU economic response to the COVID-19 crisis](#); ECA’s 2021 work programme includes an audit on the health-related actions and vaccine procurement.

The ECA’s review No 01/2021 “*The EU’s initial contribution to the public health response to COVID-19*” is available on eca.europa.eu.

Press contact: Claudia Spiti - claudia.spiti@eca.europa.eu - M: (+352) 691553547

Figure 3. Example of an ECA press release – PR.ECA.04, second page

The EP Press releases have easily-detectable, different parts, some of which are found in all of the press releases, while others are optional. There is also a certain degree of freedom in sequencing/ordering these different parts. As a result of this freedom, there is no structure pattern applicable to all of them. Those parts found in every press release can be considered obligatory. For example, they all have a header and a footer. The header on the first page contains an indication of the document type (“Press release”), the date and time of publication,

and the internal code of the document. The header of subsequent pages contains only a “Press Release” indication. In the footer of all the documents, there is an indication of the document's language (“EN”) and the contact information for the EP press service. The text of the EP press releases opens with a title. It can be followed by a subtitle, bullet points, or a photo - it can be any combination of two or more of these, or it can be just one. The body of the press release consists of several paragraphs, and is preceded by a heading. Quotes are also used frequently in the EP press releases. Most of the press releases conclude with “Further information” and “Contacts” sections which can be preceded by “Next step(s)” section and/or “Background” section. It is common to find links in the text. Their size varies, they can be from two to five pages long. An example of EP press releases can be seen below in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

Press release

13-03-2020 - 15:15
20200313PR74903



Parliament mobilised to channel EU funds to those affected by Coronavirus pandemic

- All measures to fight the COVID-19 outbreak and its effects are a priority for the European Parliament as co-legislator and budget authority
- REGI Committee to start working on proposed measures to provide support for regions and communities which are hit the hardest



EP mobilised to channel EU funds to those affected by Coronavirus pandemic

EN

Press Service, Directorate General for Communication
European Parliament - Spokesperson: Joanne Gault
Press switchboard number (32-2) 28 30000

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Figure 4. Example of an EP press release – PR.EP.01, first page

The Regional Development Committee is ready to find the most efficient way possible to allow the Corona Response Investment Initiative to be adopted and swiftly implemented.

EP Regional Development Committee Chair, Younous Omarjee (GUE/NGL, FR) said: "Europe must show solidarity right now. Cohesion policy is intrinsically linked to solidarity and now more than ever, it must rise to the challenge, so that it is implemented as efficiently as possible. The Regional Development Committee will do its utmost to ensure that money is made available where it is most needed."

Next steps

Amending EU funding rules falls under the co-decision procedure, so both Parliament and Council will need to adopt it. The Regional Development Committee bureau and coordinators will discuss the procedure and announce next steps to be taken as soon as possible. The committee will aim to conclude its examination of the proposal as quickly as possible.

The adoption of the amendment will allow the funding to be channelled towards affected areas and sectors.

Background

On 10 March, the European Commission announced it would bring out a "Corona Response Investment Initiative" directed at health care systems, SMEs, labour markets and other vulnerable parts of the EU member states' economies. A legislative proposal to amend the Common Provisions Regulation, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund regulations were published on 13 March.

Commission proposed to direct EUR 37 billion under the cohesion policy to the fight against the Coronavirus crisis, by means of relinquishing this year its obligation to request the return of pre-financing for the structural funds. This amounts to about EUR 8 billion from the EU budget, which Member States will be able to use to supplement EUR 29 billion of structural funding across the EU. In addition, the Commission proposed to extend the scope of the EU Solidarity Fund by also including a public health crisis within its scope, in view of mobilising it if needed for the hardest hit Member States.

Figure 5. Example of an EP press release – PR.EP.01, second page

The two EU institutions, the ECA and EP, use press releases for the same purpose: to explain and share with the public what they do. For ECA, this means informing the public when they have published a document. The EP uses press releases to inform the public regarding its various activities. In its earlier press releases, the ECA included a "Covid-19 box", which included information not particularly relevant to the topic itself. Instead, the box informs readers of the measures the ECA have taken in its day-to-day work in the context of pandemic. The EP does not explicitly include this information; but, almost as a side note, shows the implemented measures visually. Furthermore, the EP has press releases with a more elaborate structure. While the ECA press releases consist of several sequential paragraphs, the EP structures information into easily divisible segments and in a manner which makes the information easy to understand: use of bullet points, headings, and clear, separated sections. In other words, the ECA's press releases are much more unified and presented in fewer, albeit

longer paragraphs. This means the ECA's press releases need to be read in their entire to completely grasp the information. On the other hand, the EP's press releases divide the information into separate, individual pieces that are more easily understood without requiring an in depth reading to get the core idea.

3.2. Analysis of EP press releases

3.2.1. Press release contents

PR.EP.01 is the first financial and Covid-19 related EP press release. It is regarding Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) deciding to designate money to help countries suffering financial difficulties due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This EP release has the following structure. The title is followed by two bullet points which provide two central pieces of information – further elaborating what has already been expressed, in a very condensed manner, in the title. These two points are followed by a captioned photograph. The second page contains a long, detailed headline that rephrases the title, while the subsequent paragraphs cover the ER Regional Development Committee Chair's report, including what funds will be provided to those in need. PR.EP.02 details the MEPs meeting with the Eurogroup president. It summarizes the meeting, reporting on the main topics that were discussed: mitigating the economic crisis caused by COVID-19, ideas on the existing proposals, calls for bolder instruments, and the imbalances likely to be created due to the crisis.

PR.EP.03 provides an overview of the EP meeting with two Commissioners concerning *planned measures to tackle the looming economic crisis due to COVID-19* (PR.EP.03: 3-4). It consists of a title, a lead, and five paragraphs, three of which have headings. It is written in a very colloquial tone. The EP is referred to as MEPs. Next, PR.EP.04 reports an EP webinar that MEPs held for journalists. Topic of the webinar was the EU's long-term budget and its response to the crisis. It starts with a title followed by a lead and nine paragraphs, majority of which are MEP quotes. PR.EP.05 reports the EP adopting the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which is an instrument designed to assist EU countries tackling the effects of Covid-19. A title is followed by bullet points, followed by the lead. The rest of the text consists of six paragraphs, three of which are preceded by headings.

PR.EP.06 is about the negotiations that took place between the EP and the EU Council. It can be divided into two parts. The first summarizes the meeting and negotiations, while the second consists of MEP's quotes. It begins with the title, followed by three bullet points that provide three main pieces of information. Those are followed by a short lead, giving the reader a very

concise summary of the event as well as the outcome. It continues with brief paragraphs, some preceded by headings. This information covers the area wherein the MEPs negotiated financing amounts, how much they requested, and the final agreement between the MEPs and the Council.

3.2.2. Nomination

The nomination strategies EP press release authors employ are rather straightforward. In the majority of the cases, different entities are being referred to by their official names or the official abbreviation of these names. This means the possibility for assigning a certain meaning through connotation or allusion in the nomination strategy is minimal, which, in turn, adds to the sense of objectivity of the text. This is not to say that the texts are objective and not impartial. Rather, they succeed in appearing as such – which is, as it may be recalled from the section 2.2.2., the way press releases should be written. The texts, therefore, do not appear impartial and biased, but rather as objective reports of certain piece of information.

The European Parliament is referred to by different names: *Parliament* (PR.EP.01: 1, 15; PR.EP.04: 37, 41), *European Parliament* (PR.EP.01: 3-4), and *co-legislator and budget authority* (PR.EP.01: 4). The use of *Parliament* and *European Parliament* seems to be interchangeable, given that *Parliament*, in this context, implies *European*. However, by using just *Parliament*, a certain degree of importance is given to this specific institution: there is no other parliament this could be about, and if it were about another parliament, then it would have been specified. More interesting is the explicit nomination of the EP as *co-legislators and budget authority*. It is one of the rare cases in which a name with evaluative meaning is chosen over the neutral official name. By naming them an *authority*, the author implicitly explains why that is relevant and explains what they are able to do in this respect. This choice also creates a hierarchy, positioning the EP at the top. Authors also use the name *MEPs* (PR.EP.02: 2, 4, 5, 13, 20, 28; PR.EP.04: 1, 3, 6). Referring to them as *MEPs* (and not simply *Parliament* or *European Parliament*) indicates plurality and the heterogeneous individuality of the members. This is further highlighted by the adverbs *some* (PR.EP.02: 20, 28) and *majority* (PR.EP.02: 2). The choice between referring to the institution or to the MEPs is usually consistent throughout the press releases. Different nomination choices foreground different aspects of the EP. This can be seen in the following examples. In the sentence *MEPs [...] reiterated Parliament's position on the recovery plan as adopted in the recent plenary session* (PR.EP.04: 6-8), by using *Parliament*, the authors foreground the fact that this is the officially adopted

position of the institution. It is very possible that not all MEPs voted in favor of adopting this position, so calling it the *MEPs position* would have been slightly misleading. In the sentence *Parliament will hear Commission President* (PR.EP.04: 9), it easily could have been the *MEPs*; because, ultimately, it will be MEPs who will hear her.

The Pandemic is referred to as: *Coronavirus pandemic* (PR.EP.01: 2), *COVID-19 outbreak* (PR.EP.01: 3), *COVID-19* (PR.EP.02: 03), *Coronavirus* (PR.EP.02: 7), *such a big crisis* (PR.EP.02: 25), *looming economic crisis due to COVID-19* (PR.EP.03: 4), *the fallout from COVID-19* (PR.EP.03: 29, PR.EP.06: 6), *the crisis* (PR.EP.04: 3), *COVID-19* (PR.EP.04: 13, PR.EP.05: 1, PR.EP.06: 27), *the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic* (PR.EP.05: 7). It should be noted that the pandemic and the virus are not being referred to very frequently in the selected press releases. The pandemic and the crisis it caused are always an underlying context of these press releases, but they are rarely being mentioned explicitly.

3.2.3. Predication

3.2.3.1. Lexical choices

One of the main tools for predication strategy is lexical choices. The above section on nomination strategies revealed quite neutral choices that create a sense of objectivity. However, lexical choices in predication are not always as neutral and objective. For example, in the title of PR.EP.01 there are some significant lexical choices: *Parliament mobilized to channel EU funds to those affected by Coronavirus pandemic* (PR.EP.01). The word *mobilise* has strong conceptualizing connection to war, to mobilizing troops. Even though the act of mobilizing can be used in other contexts, it is very likely that many readers will associate this wording with a war-like situation. Furthermore, it is not the EP mobilizing troops, but rather, Parliament is the entity that is mobilized. While in a war, a government mobilizes troops that then fight, here it infers EP fighting. The very first sentence creates an image of the situation evoking war, and the Parliament who is fighting. Its actual quest is to provide European money to countries that are affected by the pandemic. Interestingly, the title states “to those”, not specifying to whom the pronoun is referring. This vagueness allows for different interpretations and is rather inclusive. It may be countries, nations, organizations, etc. The implication is that virtually anyone can receive money from the EU. Throughout the rest of the text, this press release frequently recurs to the semantic field of war or fight in characterizing the situation: *to fight the COVID-19 outbreak* (PR.EP.01: 3), *countries which are hit the hardest* (PR.EP.01: 6), *to*

the fight against the Coronavirus crisis (PR.EP.01: 27-28). So, the pandemic is presented as a serious concern attacking us and a critical matter we and the Parliament need to fight.

The EP and the EU are presented as entities with power and money. It is their duty to help the countries in need as soon as possible and both appear avid to do so. For example, the already quoted nomination (*as co-legislator and budget authority* (PR.EP.01: 4)) explicitly puts the EP in a position of power: the EP creates laws and decides how money is spent by the EU. The EP also is characterized as an important social actor, making decisions and providing rescue to countries in need. *Ready to find* (PR.EP.01: 7) creates a different image than, for example, *wants to find* or *is looking for the most efficient way*. Being ready implies a state of readiness which is much more grounded and realistic than just wishful thinking. This choice is affirmative and reassuring, not only in the content, but also in the verb form. It implies a very high level of certainty. The EP is also portrayed as dedicated to solving the problem promptly and using only exemplary standards of quality. The measures *are a priority* (PR.EP.01: 3), the committee *is ready to find* (PR.EP.01: 7), *swiftly implemented* (PR.EP.01: 9), *Europe must show solidarity right now* (PR.EP.01: 9-10), *now more than ever* (10-11). So, the power and potency of the EP is also expressed through modality: *it must rise to the challenge* (PR.EP.01: 11). The use of first-person pronouns is directly linked to portraying the MEPs as understanding, compassionate and caring: *We realise that EU countries have limited abilities* (PR.EP.04: 42). Their determination and certainty are further highlighted by the use of a modality that expresses a high level of certainty: *The recovery fund must not be created at the expense of...* (PR.EP.04: 47-48).

Just like MEPS van Overtveldt and Larrouiturou in their quotes, MEP Chastel (PR.EP.06) also uses adjectives and adverbs to draw a rather positive image of the EP (*the united position of the EP* (PR.EP.06: 54), *a very good political agreement* (PR.EP.06: 54)), and to characterize the situation as unfavorable (*despite a difficult context of crisis*). Unlike some of his colleagues, Chastel does not mention the Council of the European Union. However, by referring to “a difficult context of crisis”, it may be argued that Chastel is alluding to national governments not wanting to give up money, as Larrouiturou explained in the previous quote. All those positive characteristics are syntactically linked to the EP: *a very good political agreement* was reached *thanks to the united position of the EP*. Furthermore, Chastel thematizes the *united position of the EP* and thus highlights it. He puts focus on the fact that the EP is to thank for the agreement. Also, the proposition choice is significant: the agreement was reached *despite*

a difficult context of crisis, and not, for example, *in* or *during* the crisis. By choosing the preposition *despite*, he presents the crisis not just as temporal context, but also as an obstacle, that the EP has overcome. Thus, the EP is characterized as successful because it achieved something despite an obstacle.

3.2.3.2. Sentence structure and verb forms

In the first sentence of PR.EP.01 (*All measures...authority* (PR.EP.01: 3-4)) there is an unusually long subject (a complex noun phrase) followed by a copulative verb. This subject is also in the position of theme. These choices highlight in multiple ways the most important piece of information: *All measures to fight the COVID-19 outbreak and its effects* (PR.EP.01: 3). Having a simple and short copulative verb *are* (PR.EP.01: 3) make it easy to go from the subject to the rest of the sentence so that the communication is very clear: *measures are a priority*. The copulative verb *to be* is used again in the subtitle/heading (PR.EP.01: 7-8) where the *Committee is ready*. This structure, paired with the lexical choice of the adverb ‘ready’ puts focus on the Committee, so also on the EP as well. It also thematizes the EP (from the information-structure point of view): taken as a whole, the sentence is about the Committee. The rest of the sentence consist of several implicit sub-clauses. This eliminates the explicit naming of the subject – the subject is implicit – which creates, to a certain extent, a potentially ambiguous structure. Such a sentence (PR.EP.01: 7-8) subtly implies it is the Committee that will *allow the Corona Response Investment Initiative to be adopted and swiftly implemented*.

3.2.3.3. Agency (semantics)

The MEPs are often given the agency in sentences where they achieve something: *MEPs have fought and obtained* (PR.EP.06: 5), *MEPS succeeded* (PR.EP.06: 12), *Parliament obtained* (PR.EP.06: 24-25). On the other hand, subjects such as *reinforcements* or similar inanimate entities are also quite frequent: *The Rights and Values programme will receive* (PR.EP.06: 20), *The reinforcements obtained by the EP [...] aim at contributing* (PR.EP.06: 17-18), *The preliminary figures are* (PR.EP.06: 9), *Other reinforcements for 2021 reflect* (PR.EP.06: 24), *The reinforcements (...) aim at contributing from the outset to reaching the target of 30%* (PR.EP.06: 17-19). This can appear to be in contrast with sentences that stress the MEPs' agency (*MEPs have fought for and obtained* (PR.EP.06: 5)), but also reduces the risk of sounding too promotional and not objective enough. Furthermore, there are also sentences which seem to deliberately avoid expressing the agent of the action as expressed by the verb: *The rights and values programme will receive* (PR.EP.06: 20), *An independent Union body aiming to fight crimes against the Union budget will benefit from an extra €7.3 million*

(PR.EP.06: 21-22), *Have been increased* (PR.EP.06: 29). It is unclear whether this is done in order to avoid giving credit to another institution or simply to avoid excessively naming the Parliament.

The MEPs are presented as active participants, who care about Europe and who are interested in ensuring the improvement of the situation. In many sentences, they are assigned the semantic function of the Agent. The chosen lexical choices, especially verbs and accompanying adverbs, often paint a very dynamic picture: *called for* (PR.EP.02: 5), *quick to present* (PR.EP.02: 13), *took the floor* (PR.EP.02: 18), *warned* (PR.EP.02: 33). Reported speech, instead of direct quotes, further creates a sense of action or the aforementioned dynamicity. In these sentence constructions, the MEPs are agents: *with Markus Ferber (EPP, DE) asking* (PR.EP.02: 13), *Jonás Fernández (S&D, ES) however pointed out that* (PR.EP.02: 15-16), *Stéphanie Yon-Courtin (Renew Europe, FR) put forward the idea* (PR.EP.02: 21-22). Even if they are just *saying* something (*José Gusmão (GUE/NGL, PT) said that* (23)), linguistically they carry out the semantic role of an agent, which is more dynamic than merely using their name followed by their quote without any verb.

In the following sentence, there are several aspects to be analyzed: *Commission proposed to direct EUR 37 billion under the cohesion policy to the fight against the Coronavirus crisis, by means of relinquishing this year its obligation to request the return of prefinancing for the structural funds.* (PR.EP.01: 27-29). First of all, the Commission's agency includes two verbs: to announce and to propose. These are verbs which imply final decisions and not ongoing work in their conceptualization. Even though this can seem irrelevant, Parliament and the MEPs are frequently assigned verbs that express more agency, more work, more action. Next, the Commission proposed to direct money *to the fight*, while elsewhere the EP does something *to fight*. This phrasing, this particular difference between the use of verb and noun, suggests the EP's greater, more direct involvement in the process of fighting the crisis, while simultaneously the Commission is distanced from it. The Commission provides money, but is not involved in the actual act of fighting. Finally, *by means of (...) for the structural funds* is a very particular way of implying the Commission has the right, or obligation, to collect the money from the member states, but it decided not to do so this year in order to redirect this money to the fight against the pandemic. What the Commission is doing is, to a certain extent, down-toned by this complex and unusual structure.

Frequently, the Agent is not stated explicitly in sentences. This is often the case when an initiative or amendment should be adopted. From the text it is unclear who is supposed to adopt it. This is exemplified in the following sentence: *The Regional Development Committee is ready to find the most efficient way possible to allow the Corona Response Investment Initiative to be adopted and swiftly implemented* (PR.EP.01: 7-8). In the first clause, agency is given to the Committee (the verb is copulative, and the adjective *ready* implies the agency, but in the next part, *to find* without doubt has the Committee as the Agent). The second clause is an implicit sub-clause and whether *to allow* is linked to *the most efficient way* or the Committee is not entirely straightforward. Also the last sub-clause, *to be adopted and swiftly implemented*, avoids stating explicitly who should adopt and implement it. Similarly, in the sentence *The adoption of the amendment will allow the funding to be channeled towards affected areas and sectors* (PR.EP.01: 19-20), expressing the agent is avoided by using a noun, instead of the verb.

3.2.3.4. Transitivity, semantic roles, passive constructions, impersonal style with no agent

That the MEPs are active is expressed not only through lexical choices, but also through transitivity and semantic role choices. The MEPs are frequently given the semantic role of the Agent, and syntax can be adjusted to minimize the agency of other social actors. For example, in *Parliament will hear Commission President von der Leyen present ...* (PR.EP.04: 9). President von der Leyen's event is presented as the EP's agency and agency is, therefore, actually taken away from her, at least in the syntax. It is obvious that she is the one *presenting*, but her agency is syntactically minimized. Then there are verbal choices such as *let's raise taxes* (PR.EP.04: 45), are very dynamic; also, using present progressive instead of past simple makes the text as well as the MEPs seem more active: *EP is asking for a €2 trillion plan* (PR.EP.04: 34). There are many direct quotes, but reporting verbs are still carefully chosen to characterize the MEPs appropriately: they *insisted* (PR.EP.04: 26), *underlined* (PR.EP.04: 19), *highlighted* (PR.EP.04: 36, 40).

Very interesting is the choice of passive voice in *we might be confronted with* (PR.EP.04: 17), as if to avoid linking the EP's activity, even in a grammatical way, to confronting something bad. However, there is little or no assigning of the responsibility, or rather, it is not explicitly stated who should carry out the task that needs to be done. For example, who should *ensure that the EU does all it can do* (28)? These impersonal sentences can usually be found where there is a critique or a negative comment being expressed: *More was needed* (PR.EP.03: 7) – but it is not said from whom; *The ideas [...] did not seem credible or useful* (PR.EP.03: 22) – someone had to propose these ideas, but it is not stated explicitly who. *Divergences that risk*

being crated (PR.EP.03: 8) – something or someone has to cause its creation, but it is not expressed who or what. So impersonal sentences often are used where something should be done, but the text does not state explicitly who should do it. This is achieved through implicit relative clauses, passive sentences without agents, or also by using nouns, instead of verbs: *MEPs urge quick action to prevent ‘huge recession’* (PR.EP.04: 1-2), *The recovery fund must be set up* (PR.EP.04: 4), *The recovery fund is needed immediately* (PR.EP.04: 20), *The recovery fund must be anchored* (PR.EP.04: 26-27), *The three main priorities now are to repair the internal market* (PR.EP.04: 29), *There is a comparative advantage in collecting certain types of revenue* (PR.EP.04: 43-44), *The recovery fund must not be created* (PR.EP.04: 47-48).

3.2.3.5. Foregrounding EP / EU and MEPs

In PR.EP.05 something differs from other press releases. In it, instead of countries hit by the pandemic, it is foregrounded quite strongly that *funds [are] available only to member states that respect the rule of law* (PR.EP.05: 4). This particular sentence, first of all, presupposes that there are some countries which do not respect the rule of law. By not giving them money, the EU is punishing them. However, with this linguistic choice, the authors avoided stating explicitly that some countries would not receive the money, that the EP/EU would not grant money to some countries and, thus, avoided possible negative depiction. The same is valid for *the RFF should be only made available to member states committed to respecting the rule of law and the European Union’s fundamental values* (PR.EP.05: 15-16). Furthermore, the second sentence is in passive and the first one is elliptical, i.e., lacks a verb. In this manner, the authors avoid stating explicitly that the EP will not give money to the countries who do not play by its rules; nevertheless, it is clearly implied. However, by not overtly stating the point, by simply not assigning the agency to anyone, the authors avoid characterizing a certain entity (EP) negatively. Whereas the EP and MEPS are frequently foregrounded, in cases like these, the authors seem to deliberately avoid foregrounding them.

The MEPs are, for example, in PR.EP.05 depicted as those eagerly fighting to ensure maximum funding for member states. They are frequently Agents of positively connoted sentences; they are shown to care. *MEPs adopted [...] an instrument designed to help EU countries tackling the effects and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic* (PR.EP.05: 6-7), *To be able to start the talks without delay* (PR.EP.05: 13). Frequently, in this press release MEPs want (PR.EP.05: 12, 22, 27) something. What they want, however, is not something for themselves, but for the member states. They want additional funds *to be available to finance national measures designed to alleviate the economic and social consequences of the pandemic* (PR.EP.05: 27-

29). Here it is also significant that the sentence is about what the MEPs want. The theme of the sentence is *they* and the whole syntactic structure is constructed so as to convey what the EP wants, to put focus on them. In addition, in the implicit clause, there is yet again an impersonal agency expressed through a copulative verb. More money, however, will not be made available by itself, somebody has to make it available. But, with the chosen structure, the authors avoided naming this entity. Regardless of the reason for this omission, the focus remains on the EP. There is a similar example: they want *for EU governments to be able to request up to 20% pre-financing for their recovery and resilience plans instead of proposed 10%* (PR.EP.05: 30-32). It is not stated explicitly who *proposed 10%* and, by this omission, no one is blamed or shown as not as good. At the same time, the EP is portrayed as better than this unknown entity.



Figure 6: PR.EP.02 – introductory photograph and caption

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3.2.3.6. Inferences

Frequently, predication is achieved by leading the reader to logical conclusion and not by stating something overtly. There is an overall positive image of the EP and a sense of hope for the better future – ensured by the MEPs, together with their insisting on quality: *More measures were needed to help the hardest hit regions and countries* (PR.EP.03: 11-12), *The ideas on the table did not seem credible or useful* (PR.EP.03: 22), *A few MEPs underlined the need [...] to ensure that the EU does all that it can to ensure that [...] are tackled more effectively* (PR.EP.03: 27-28).

3.2.3.7. Making no promises: lexis & modality

Press releases are worded carefully to avoid making any promises. For example, the Committee *will do its utmost to ensure* (PR.EP.01: 12) is different from ‘will ensure’. In the text, the promise is that they will *try* to ensure, but they do not promise to actually do so. However, by using positive, reassuring words and syntax structures, this probability, with no inherent certainty, is hidden. What is foregrounded is the work the EP puts into ensuring positive results. The EP makes it possible, but the actual realization (in this case, using the money) depends on

the member countries: “*The adoption of the amendment will allow the funding to be channeled towards affected areas and sectors*” (PR.EP.01). It does not say the funding will be channeled, but that the adoption (something that the EP and Council do) will make it possible.

Modality, therefore, together with lexical choices, is used to create subtle differences between different institutions. For example, the Committee is *ready to find* (PR.EP.01: 7), *will aim to conclude* (PR.EP.01: 18) while the *Commission proposed to direct EUR 37 billion*. Even though it is common to use the verb ‘to propose’ in such situations, it is impossible to ignore it when it comes to the EP. There is a somewhat higher level of certainty, even though nothing is entirely fixed, nor strictly promised.

3.2.3.8. Covert critique

In PR.EP.06, in the “Next steps” section, the Council is again presented as the problematic party in the negotiations, but rather covertly: *In the absence of an agreement in Council [...] Parliament and Council have not formalized their deal* (PR.EP.06: 64-66). The negative characterization is alluded to: by avoiding negations and by the use of a noun phrase, which eliminates any agency. *In the absence of an agreement in Council* is a rather neutral way of saying: *Because the Council would not accept an agreement*. It is not stated, it is simply implied. This negative characterization is further created by the adverb “once” (once the MFF is adopted, Commission will propose the substance of the agreement as second draft budget (PR.EP.06: 66-67). Unlike other adverbs that express the same semantic meaning, once implies, at least in this context, that a certain amount of time has passed and will pass before adoption of the MFF. This negative characterization is further down-toned by using passive and by not mentioning the two institutions in the second sentence. Another reason for not mentioning the two institutions again is probably to avoid unnecessary repetition, but the effect is the same. The focus moves from the absence of an agreement and Parliament and Council, to the MMF and Commission.

MEP Larrouiturou, in his quote in PR.EP.06, also juxtaposes the EP’s work to that of the Council’s. He labels the EP more positively and the Council/member states rather negatively. When speaking about the Parliament, he avoids direct accusation: *Faced with governments that were unwilling to give up one cent, Parliament did its utmost and obtained additional increases*. The negative traits Larrouiturou assigns to the Council are expressed in a relative sentence and through a copulative verb so he mitigated the accusation he alludes to: ‘*Council does not want to give up one cent for additional funding of important and needed increases*’.

By the specific ordering of information within the paragraph, he also suggests that the Council does not want to give money for health, climate and employment. First, Larrouiturou states that these three points/elements?? are the EP's priority (PR.EP.06: 42), the EP wants to obtain additional funding for them, and lastly that governments are *unwilling to give up one cent*. The last point implies, of course, that the member states do not want to provide the necessary funding. He again hides a negative piece of information in a passive sentence: *it was the maximum that could be obtained* (PR.EP.06: 46-57), not explicitly stating how much was obtained from and by whom. Larrouiturou previously made that answer very clear. In addition, had it been phrased in active voice, it would have implied that perhaps someone else could obtain more, but the EP could have obtained only so much. Phrased in this manner, using passive voice, suggests that no one else could have obtained more. Therefore, by speaking positively of the EP's work and commenting on a difficult situation, Larrouiturou indirectly criticizes and creates a negative image of the Council. At the same time, in relation to the almost villain-like Council, the EP appears as the champion for European citizen's rights.

3.2.3.9. Predication of member states

The EU's member states are constructed as in need of help and somewhat passive. They rarely have the semantic role of the Agent, and when they do, they are dealing with problems. For example, the MEPs discuss designing recovery bonds *to bring the more reticent member states on board* (PR.EP.02: 22-23), the countries are *indebted* (PR.EP.02: 17), *could not afford to borrow more* (PR.EP.02: 17-18), and *called for additional instruments* (PR.EP.02: 15). Furthermore, the existing measures *would leave those countries most hit by the Coronavirus heavily indebted and increase economic divergence in the Eurozone* (PR.EP.02: 7-8). Important in the last sentence is the presupposition put forward by the use of *increase*: it presupposes that economic divergences in the Eurozone already exist. Member states are passive victims to the pandemic, almost in desperate need for assistance. Texts are frequently syntactically structured to present only the EU as taking action, and the member states as receiving the results of this action. Furthermore, member states are the victims, *hit the hardest* (PR.EP.01: 6), and assistance is being provided to them (PR.EP.01: 5-6)— they are not even receiving it. Transitivity, passive voice, and verb conceptualization characterize member states as passive.

3.2.3.10. Predication of the situation (COVID-19 Pandemic)

The representation of the severity of the pandemic varies among the selected press releases. Earlier press releases seem to create a much more dangerous perception of it than later ones.

Already in PR.EP.03, there is no more evoking of war and the pandemic is no longer being fought. For example, the economic crisis is being *addressed* (PR.EP.03: 1) and *tackled* (PR.EP.03: 4), which are lexical choices with neutral connotations. Also, there is the *fallout from COVID-19* (29). It is not something COVID-19 is ‘doing’ (in *Covid-19 outbreak Covid-19 is breaking out*), but rather what ‘has happened’ related to Covid-19. However, the situation is far from good. There are still lexical choices such as *the looming economic crisis* (PR.EP.03: 4), while regions and countries are still being described as *hit* (PR.EP.03: 12) by the pandemic/crisis. Additionally, the crisis is described using phrases that intensify the depiction of the seriousness of the situation, such as *now more than ever* (PR.EP.03: 27) suggesting that this is a time of special circumstances.

However, it would be wrong to assume COVID-19 is no longer perceived as a threat in the later press releases. It is still seen as dangerous, and its monetary consequences are an additional serious problem. COVID-19 is defined as *still a major health crisis*. The forecasted situation is presented as even worse: *quick action to prevent ‘huge recession’* (PR.EP.04: 1-2), *to prevent major recession* (PR.EP.04: 4), *It is transforming into a huge recession* (PR.EP.04: 14-15), *a new financial hurricane*” (PR.EP.04: 17). There is also a sense of urgency created by lexical choices: *MEPs urge quick action* (1), *as soon as possible* (PR.EP.04: 4), *demanding quick action* (PR.EP.04: 13), *In the coming days and weeks* (PR.EP.04: 15), *if we don’t stop the recession as soon as possible* (PR.EP.04: 16). This need for urgency implies that the situation may worsen very quickly. At the same time, especially when linking this coming situation to the EU itself, we can observe down-toning of potential issues: *The current economic situation might be getting out of hand* (PR.EP.04: 12-13). Not only do they use *might*, which implies lower level of certainty, but *getting out of hand* is a euphemism compared to *huge recession*. Also, in *the EU economy will face a 7.5% GDP decrease* (PR.EP.04: 33) the negative predication is missing from the verb, *to face* does not really have negative connotation, and *decrease* is at the conclusion of the sentence.

Depending on the topic of a press release, there can be a seeming reluctance to depict the pandemic's status as difficult or problematic. For example, PR.EP.05 is focused on the EU measures and EU policies and priorities far more than on the severity of the pandemic. In fact, in *EU countries tackling the effects and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic* (PR.EP.05: 7) the verb used is *to tackle*, which is considerably less frightening than war-like lexical choices in some of the previous press releases. However, there still remains a slightly suggested

urgency, similar to earlier press releases: *Without delay* (PR.EP.05: 13), *So that they can react faster and do more* (PR.EP.05: 32).

3.2.4. Perspectivization

Frequently, but not always, the selected press releases create a very favorable image of the EU in general, but particularly of both the EP and MEPs. For example, in PR.EP.06 the more positive image being created is that of the EP; whereas, a positive characterization of the EU is simply alluded to and expressed less explicitly. For example, the EU is linked to *supporting the recovery* (PR.EP.06: 1) and *EU programmes creating jobs* (PR.EP.06: 5). At the same time, the EP's positive characterization is expressed more directly. The EP and MEPs are presented almost as super-heroes in a battle: *MEPs have fought and obtained* (PR.EP.06: 5), *MEPs succeeded in reinforcing, on top of the Commission's original budget proposal, programmes they considered key to boosting growth and jobs*" (PR.EP.06: 12-13). Important to notice in this latter sentence is the implied idea that the EP is superior to the Commission because it wanted to give more money to the member states. Furthermore, saying *reflecting widely agreed European Union priorities* (PR.EP.06: 13-14) highlights the quality of the EP (they want money not for some random project, but EU priorities), but also suggests that the Commission did not include this priority-areas in its *original budget proposal* (PR.EP.06: 12), again implying the EP is better than other institutions.

Frequently, as has been already commented on above, these press releases state that something needs to be done. However, these same releases fail to overtly state 'who' should take the necessary action. By doing so, the authors of these press releases avoid implicit creation of a hierarchy in which the EP would have the power to assign tasks and give orders. Some of the examples are: *MEPs called for stronger measures to be put forward* (PR.EP.02: 5-6), but it is unclear who is supposed to actually initiate the necessary action. *Mr Centeno agreed that more ambition should be sought after* (PR.EP.02: 9), but it is not clear who is responsible; *he recommended against exploring instruments* (PR.EP.02: 10-11), but the text does not specify who would explore these instruments; *the proposals currently on the table only provided for liquidity* (PR.EP.02: 14-15); *economic imbalances [...] will be created* (PR.EP.02: 28), *recovery efforts [...] will increase these imbalances* (PR.EP.02: 29-30), *if the EU recovery funds were to take time to be in place* (PR.EP.02: 33). These are all possible critiques, but

to 'call names', is avoided as well as to declare who is responsible for these actions. There is no overt nomination of social actors. This is accomplished by using passive voice without

agent, gerunds, and by giving linguistic agency to inanimate entities, such as recovery efforts and recovery funds.

In PR.EP.04, for example, the EP positions itself differently than in other previous press releases. The EP is not presented primarily as one of the institutions, but rather as the representative of citizens of the member states. In other press releases, member states were portrayed as a separate entity needing help from the EU. Here, the MEPs and member states form a 'we'. For example, *we might be confronted with [...] a new financial hurricane* (PR.EP.04: 16-17) - there is a we that includes all, and not the EP on one side and member states on the other. This creation of community is further expressed in declaring one of the priorities is to *increase the EU's resilience* (PR.EP.04: 30-31).

MEP Fernandes provides a different notion of EU member states. In his quote (PR.EP.04: 18-25), he states that *member states do not say to what extent they want to cut cohesion or agriculture funding. They want to keep their envelopes. They all want to increase research funding.* (PR.EP.04: 22-23). His statement is clarified in the Background Section: *The Council has not yet been able to agree on a position* (PR.EP.04: 59). The Council of the European Union, or simply the Council, and the EP share decision-making power, especially in the areas of budget approval and law-making. Members of the Council are not fixed; they are ministers from the member states. Depending on the type of laws or policies being discussed, each member state will send the corresponding minister. So when Fernandes says that *member states do not say what they want to cut...* (PR.EP.04: 22-23), he is referring to member states ministers, who, as we find out in the Background Section, cannot agree on what they think about the Commission's proposal for the next long-term Budget of the EU.

Several selected press releases include quotes by various MEPs who frequently use first person pronouns. This is particularly the case when reassuring their audience of their responsibility: *We realise that [...] it is transforming...* (PR.EP.04: 14), *We have to work out* (PR.EP.04: 15), *If we don't stop the recession [...] we might be confronted with what I define as a new financial hurricane* (PR.EP.04: 16-17), *We therefore need the means to honour these commitments* (PR.EP.04: 24-25), *We think that there is a comparative advantage* (PR.EP.04: 43). Using first-person pronouns, the EP, MEPs, and the entire institution appear more approachable and closer to the readers. This is further achieved by more colloquial language. In his quote, Johan van Overtveldt (ECR, BE) prioritizes EU citizens: *a swift agreement in the interest of European citizens* (PR.EP.06: 32), *these extra investments [...] all answer to real needs and are in line*

with the expectations of the EU citizens (PR.EP.06: 35-37). By doing so, he creates an image of the EP that cares about its citizens and works to ensure the best possible conditions. This is achieved linguistically primarily through lexical choices (explicit statements) and semantic roles: it is the EP's agency, what EP did and does, that *answers to real needs* (PR.EP.06: 36). The fact they obtained more funding than originally foreseen is highlighted by the syntactic and information structure, as well as through cohesion devices. In the sentence *With the top-ups for some of the future-looking programmes agreed in the multi-annual framework just weeks ago* (PR.EP.06: 33-34) van Overtveldt thematizes the prepositional phrase that has the semantic role of Instrument – how they *obtained budget increases* mostly because what appears to be the Instrument carries a very similar message; i.e., semantic content: they obtained more money– they obtained more money. There is, also, the repetition of words with similar semantic meaning: *top-ups* (PR.EP.06: 33), *increases* (PR.EP.06 34), *extra (investments)* (PR.EP.06: 35), that further highlights the fact that they secured more money. Interestingly, it is unclear who *we* in *we obtained budget increases* refers to: the EP or EP and the Commission.

Metaphors and informal headings also characterize EP in a more indirect way, so it is better to refer to it as positioning than predicating. By employing such informal language, the EP presents itself as a not so distant entity. Using more colloquial, everyday language makes the EP and MEPs appear more approachable to the reader. However, not all EP press releases include such language. Some of the examples include: *Divergences on the horizon* (PR.EP.03: 10) and *take the EU down the road of mutualising debt* (PR.EP.03: 21). This language makes the press release more vivid and more alive in the (mental) space, i.e. less abstract. Rather colloquial phrases, such as *the devil is in the detail* (PR.EP.03: 13), *finding the middle ground* (PR.EP.03: 19), *no stone unturned* (PR.EP.03: 26) are an antipode to the seriousness of decisions being made. However, similar to employing metaphors, using colloquial language helps present the EP and MEPs as less abstract and distant, as well as closer to the people. Particularly interesting are metaphors that are related to moving in a certain way or direction: *A step in the right direction* (PR.EP.04: 19), *it goes in the right way – the Parliament's way* (PR.EP.04: 36-37), *leave the door open* (PR.EP.04: 38). These examples all suggest that the situation and EU are moving on from its current place or situation. In addition, they also imply that there is a possibility to change the circumstances as well as the situation itself. This sense of motion in the right direction is made more vivid and present through the use of metaphors.

3.2.5. Intensification, mitigation

As previously discussed, the press release authors create a sense of urgency, importance, and seriousness principally through the semantic field of urgency, by the use of superlatives, and by using words which denote absolute concepts and inclusivity. For example: *all measures* (PR.EP.01: 3), *priority* (PR.EP.01: 3), *hit the hardest* (PR.EP.01: 6), *the most efficient way possible* (PR.EP.01: 7), *now more than ever* (PR.EP.01: 10-11), *as efficiently as possible* (PR.EP.01: 11), *where it is most needed* (PR.EP.01: 13), *next steps to be taken as soon as possible* (PR.EP.01: 17), *as quickly as possible* (PR.EP.01: 18). There is also an unavoidable sense of unity in solidarity and helping. The entire first page of PR.EP.01 (the title and the bullet points) are about the EP and an EP Committee doing something for others, i.e., for EU countries and their people. This is further reinforced by the quote in which MEP Omarjee repeatedly mentions *solidarity* (PR.EP.01: 10). He also uses the first-person plural pronoun *we* and thus creates a sense of unity.

The MEPs are also worried and care about helping the EU's citizens. They understand there is a need for a quick reaction: *MEPs urge quick action to prevent...* (PR.EP.04: 1), *Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR, BE), Chair of the Committee on Budgets, warned that...* (PR.EP.04: 12), *he demanded quick action* (PR.EP.04: 13), *We have to work out how to reconcile solidarity with responsibility* (PR.EP.04: 15), *If we don't stop the recession as soon as possible* (PR.EP.04: 16), *Let's [...] help pay the interest on this long-term debt* (PR.EP.04: 46). Certain lexical choices can also be paired with verb forms that express high degrees of certainty as in: *MEPs urged that the recovery fund must be set up as soon as possible* (PR.EP.04: 3-4).

On the other hand, some negative aspects are toned-down in the press releases and presented in the more positive way. For example, in *EU countries have limited abilities to increase their direct contribution to the EU* (PR.EP.04: 42-43), *to have limited abilities* is a just a nice way of saying that some EU countries lack the ability to participate or contribute. Negative, or possibly negative aspects are systematically toned-down through what can be seen as indirect critique (indirect in the sense of indirect speech acts) and euphemisms. In *Some MEPs outlined the danger of the economic imbalances* (PR.EP.02: 28) this can be noted in several choices. First of all, the chosen verb is *to outline*, which is neutral. It has a negative connotation paired with *danger*, but the verb which carries the action in the sentence, remains neutral. Furthermore, *the economic imbalances* can be seen as a euphemism for more unpleasant lexical choices. Similarly, *MEPs were quick to present diverging views* (PR.EP.02: 13) is selected

instead of *MEPs disagreed*. So linguistically and lexically more neutral choices are chosen to report not entirely pleasant news. At the same time, they are portrayed positively, because they react quickly. Similarly, in the following sentence the critique is there, but implied, not explicitly stated. *MEPs called for stronger measures to be put forward, arguing that the ones currently on the table consisted mostly of loans which would leave those countries most hit by the Coronavirus heavily indebted* (PR.EP.02: 5-7). This sentence does not state explicitly a judgment or a verdict. Readers can infer that the existing measures are not good, or at least not good enough and not appropriate, but the text does not voice this explicitly. All it states are the consequences of the existing measures.

Furthermore, when it comes to expressing negative evaluations, not only are they hidden behind indirect critique, but the authors seem to skillfully avoid naming any entities who could be seen as called out for these (possible) problems. Already in the title, any possible creation of confrontation seems to be carefully avoided. In the title, *More ambition* (PR.EP.02: 1) sounds better than saying that there is not enough ambition. Also, it is a passive elliptical structure. There is no conjugated verb (*needed* is a past participle). It is left out who should have or show more ambition – so even though it is a critique, it is not directed at anyone explicitly.

3.3. Analysis of ECA press releases

3.3.1. Press release contents

ECA press release PR.ECA.01 is focused on the ECA's opinion regarding the European Commission's proposal to temporarily relax spending rules for the European structural and investment funds in an effort to help mitigate the effects of the pandemic in member states. The press release consists of the title which announces the topic, a lead that gives the audience the most important facts in a concise and clear manner, and give paragraphs in which the authors elaborate on the information previously provided in a more concise manner. In PR.ECA.02, the ECA announces that changes have been introduced in its 2020 work program, the aim of which is to include aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic into its audits. The title is followed by a longer lead that conveys the most important information: the ECA has decided to change its working program, introduce new topics, and discontinue some of the ongoing ones in order to incorporate changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Another two paragraph follow, one providing the context of the change and explaining what happened and why these changes are necessary; and, the other is a quote from the ECA president, Mr. Lehne.

Next, the authors use two bullet points to elaborate on the two key areas encompassed in the audits: the public health response to COVID-19 and the economic response. The press release concludes with general information on the purpose of the upcoming/future reviews. In PR.ECA.03 the ECA announces publication of a review 6/20 concerning the EU's economic policy response to the Covid-19 crisis. It consists of a title, a longer lead and four paragraphs. The lead offers a very concise summary of the review. In the body, the first paragraph is dedicated to the summary of the relevant situation in EU member states. It is followed by a quote from the ECA member responsible for the review regarding member states' measures. The press release then continues with the EU's reaction to the crisis and concludes with an overview of the measures that are yet to be implemented. In PR.ECA.04, the ECA announces its review of the EU economic response to the COVID-19 crisis. It consists of a title, a longer lead, and seven paragraphs. It concentrates mostly on the Commission, sometimes referring to the EU as a whole. With PR.ECA.05, the ECA announces its audit plans for the year 2021. The press release consists of a title, a longer lead followed by a list of strategic areas, and four paragraphs of text. The purpose of PR.ECA.06 is to announce that ECA "has launched an audit to assess whether the European Commission has been safeguarding effectively the rights of citizens who travelled by plane or booked flights during the corona virus crisis" (PR.ECA.06: 3-5). It starts with a title followed by a lead in which the authors explain that the audit has just been launched. The rest of the text consists of 5 paragraphs contextualizing the audit and thus giving reasons for why precisely this audit will be conducted.

3.3.2. Nomination

The ECA is the most prominent social actor in all of the press releases. It is referred to in the following ways: *The European Court of Auditors (ECA)* (PR.ECA.02: 3; PR.ECA.03: 4-5)), a pronoun *it* (PR.ECA.02: 4), *the EU's external auditor* (PR.ECA.02: 6), *the ECA* (PR.ECA.02: 13). Auditors are being referred to as *the auditors* (PR.ECA.02: 15; PR.ECA.03), *they* (PR.ECA.02: 16; PR.ECA.03), *our auditors* (PR.ECA.02: 20). There is an obvious perspectivization in the use of *our auditors* (PR.ECA.02: 15) as well as creation of an 'us'.

These press releases refer to the European Union mainly as *the EU* (PR.ECA.02: 6, 7, 9 12, 23). Then there are *member states* (PR.ECA.02: 9; PR.ECA.03: 3, 9, 11, 16, 24, 33), who can also be more specified as EU's member states as in *EU and its Member States* (PR.ECA.02: 12-13, 23), as well as *EU countries* (PR.ECA.03: 1). When referring to the current situation (the pandemic), the authors make the following lexical choices: *Have dealt with the effects of*

the pandemic (PR.ECA.02: 9), *this and future crisis* (PR.ECA.02: 11), *The COVID-19 pandemic* (PR.ECA.02: 12), *These challenges* (PR.ECA.02: 14), *Changed and changing circumstances* (PR.ECA.02: 16), *Operating in crisis mode* (PR.ECA.02: 19), *Tackling the crisis* (26). These are all names or nomination strategies which allude to the hardship and problems associated with the Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying crisis.

3.3.3. Predication

3.3.3.1. Auditors, ECA, and their work

The work of the ECA auditors is presented as service to society, the EU, and its member states. This is achieved on the syntactic level, for example, through infinitive clauses: *the ECA has revised its programme to ensure that its work in 2020 responds to these challenges* (PR.ECA.02: 14-15), *they adjusted the approach and timeline to take account of changed and changing circumstances* (PR.ECA.02: 15-16). In his quote, ECA President Mr. Lehene uses the personal pronoun *we*, which makes the ECA and its auditors appear more personal and humane. Expressions such as *understand* (*we understand their current constraints* (PR.ECA.02: 19-20), *our auditors will take every care not to overburden them* (PR.ECA.02: 20), *we want to ensure that our audits and reviews will contribute to public discussion* (PR.ECA.02: 22-23)) show a human side of the organization, presents the auditors and the ECA as humane, and further reinforces this image of ECA actually serving the EU and the public, and not (just) being a judge of EU's monetary actions.

The imperative of some press releases seems to be to show their audience that they (auditors, ECA) are understanding. Most likely, this is because audits can easily be seen as critiques and it may seem unfair to criticize EU and member states in the midst of difficult times. By repeatedly implying they have understanding, they avoid being seen as enemies to the EU and Member States. This characterization of ECA as having understanding is done in several ways. One is, clearly, the already mentioned presentation of the current situation, where the authors repeatedly and in different ways state the difficulty of it. They also say it explicitly, as in *We understand their current constraints* (PR.ECA.02: 19). Furthermore, by making an assertion *The EU's response is already under the spotlight...* (28-29) they are not just stating the obvious, but also asserting that they are aware of it. And by saying that the *review of the economic response will focus on measures and challenges* they further emphasize their good intentions. Another example is one of the last sentences in PR.ECA.02 release: *They will mainly draw on publicly available documentation and help to identify specific issues requiring further, more*

detailed work, and will serve a preparation for such audits (PR.ECA.02: 42-44). Including words such as *help* and *serve* creates the image of the auditors whose job is serving and helping the public and the EU. On the other side, this focus on the purposefulness, usefulness, placing so much emphasis on protecting themselves against being seen as enemies also suggest that they have, or see themselves as having, a lot of influence. It implies that they believe their words are relevant and powerful.

A positive image of auditors is also achieved through simpler and more straightforward choices, such as active voice and assigning them the semantic role of Agent: *The auditors have selected these areas* (PR.ECA.05: 21). In addition, adverbs such as *further* implies that they have already *develop[ed] their audit* (PR.ECA.05: 29) and are now motivated to do even more, while *another* suggests there are several, if not many, *areas of focus* (PR.ECA.05: 36). Verb choices are also relevant. For example, the press release states the auditors will be *contributing more to combating fraud in EU spending and revenue collection* (PR.ECA.05: 35). The verb *combating* implies action or fighting; however, this may be a bit exaggerated, given that their involvement in any combat is more in the logistics than actual combat. Furthermore, the adverb *more* presupposes that they have already been fighting.

EU President Lehne's quote in PR.ECA.05 is very solemn, contains formulaic language, and resembles a speech delivered on the occasion of a group of people embarking on an adventure that will bring about considerable changes. This is primarily achieved by lexical and syntactic choices: *marks the start* (PR.ECA.05: 23), *strategy that will guide our work*" (PR.ECA.05: 23), *our work as the EU's independent external auditor*. There is also the presupposition the ECA is reliable as well as relevant to citizens who count on it: *EU citizens can continue counting on us* (PR.ECA.05: 24-25). There are also superlatives, such as *key issues* (PR.ECA.05: 25), *where we can add most value* (PR.ECA.05: 26). They contribute to the image of auditors doing something important and useful.

Predication of ECA and auditors can also be achieved by the use of dynamic verbs. For example, in the first paragraph of PR.ECA.06, in each of the sentences the verb is dynamic, the sentence is in active voice, and the Agent and subject are either *The European Court of Auditors (ECA)* (PR.ECA.06: 3), or *The auditors* (PR.ECA.06: 5), also referred to as *they* (PR.ECA.06: 7, 8). With these choices, the authors created an image of active and diligent ECA and auditors.

Sequencing of information is also important. For example, in PR.ECA.06 airline passengers are defined as victims of selfish and greedy airlines; and, later the EU auditors appear as their saviors. In addition, such an impression is also achieved through lexical, syntactical, and information structure choices. The ECA is *supporting* (PR.ECA.06: 32) passengers, and the situation is one of *crisis* (PR.ECA.06: 33). The authors also present the ECA, through an infinitive sub-clause, as the ones *restor[ing] trust in aviation*. Therefore, since it is not entirely unambiguous who is the subject and/or Agent of the verb, the ECA can easily be connected to it.

3.3.3.2. EU and its institutions

The EU is presented in a positive light through connotation, presupposition, and implication: *The EU reacted by rapidly deploying flexible economic coordination* (PR.ECA.03: 24). Not to be overlooked are crucial lexical choices that intensify what is being communicated by content, such as *rapidly* and *flexible*. The ECA is presented almost as a heroic savior: *This allowed Member States to cushion the emerging economic crisis* (PR.ECA.03: 24-25). In the sentence: *The EU also mobilized available funds and created new safety nets* (PR.ECA.03: 26-27), by using parataxis (coordination) the authors create a sense of abundance as to everything the EU is doing.

A positive image of the EU is also created through use of affirmative sentences even in cases in which negative information is being shared. For example, *The EU's public health competences are limited* (PR.ECA.04: 8). This means the EU does not have a lot of nor enough competences, but expressing it this way would paint a negative image. Also, saying *limited* sounds better and leaves a more positive image than describing something as *weak*, *few*, *not substantial*. Also, syntactically, this sentence is about the competences, not the EU itself so the weaker characterization is technically about the consequences. In the following sentence, the subject and the agent is *it*, referring to the EU. The verbs to which the EU is agent have a positive connotation: *supports*, *facilitates*, *gathers information*. This positive image is reinforced by the use of other adjectives and adverbs as in the following sentence: *the EU took further action to address urgent issues*. *Further action* implies or presupposes that the EU was taking action prior to the pandemic, and now is even more involved. Including *urgent* highlights the fact the EU wants to solve the problem as soon as possible.

The ECA's positive image is further supported through the use of adverbs and adjectives. For instance, the adjective *already* in *the auditors have already flagged weaknesses in the use of*

the EU's 2013 legal framework for dealing with serious cross-border health threats (PR.ECA.04: 21-22) shows the ECA was aware of the problems early in the crisis (and shared this knowledge with others). However, there seemingly is no gloating over this fact. In the following sentence, *Some issues, such as preparedness planning, have proved to be persistent* (PR.ECA.04: 23-24) the ECA is implying they were right in their assessment. However, by choosing to make the sentence about the issues – in essence making *some issues* the agent, theme, and subject of the sentence, and not including any other entity – the focus is drawn to the problem and not the fact the ECA was right four years earlier.

PR.ECA.04 provides a very positive image of the European Commission as well. It is linguistic agent in sentences with verbs with positive connotations which implies that its activity results in positive solutions. For example, *The European Commission took a range of measures to help Member States meet this challenge* (PR.ECA.04: 30-31). Quantifier *a range of* implies not only an amount that definitely is not small, but also diversification. The infinitive sentence enables the Commission to be the Agent to two verbs – taking measures and helping. Finally, the entire sentence also is very positive because *meet this challenge* appears almost as euphemisms. In the sentence *the Commission also launched joint procurement framework contracts for medical equipment*, the adverb *also* highlights that Commission is doing more than one thing. This is another sentence in which the Commission is the agent, which leaves the impression of a very active institution, invested in helping and doing good. The critique comes only at the end and in a very indirect way, through implication or presupposition. It says “*the Member States procured the vast majority of their medical supplies through national procurement pathways*”. The reader, of course, infers that the Commission did not procure it, but since it is not stated overtly the Commission is not being accused. The press release focuses on who did what, not on who failed to do anything.

3.3.3.3. Covid-19 Pandemic situation

The Covid-19 situation is depicted as a serious threat and a challenge. *The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges for the EU and its Member States, and across a broad range of policy areas* (PR.ECA.02: 12-13). This is virtually a neutral statement of the (then) current pandemic situation, but at the same time, it serves as a justification for the EU and Member States not to deliver perfect results, as well as motivation for the audits to be conducted. In *changed and changing circumstances* (PR.ECA.02: 16), repeating the same lexeme, *change*, in two different forms (both are used as adjectives derived from verbs) which

highlights what is being said: that the times are changing, which implies insecurity and impossibility to make absolute promises. Finally, in *COVID-19, with its grave economic and social consequences* (PR.ECA.02: 27) the choice of adjective further stresses the seriousness of the situation.

The situation, or the context, in some press releases is also characterized as problematic, and being relevant, having influence and power. This is achieved by lexical choices, such as the verb *require* in *The current situation requires the urgent mobilization. Urgent mobilization*, both the noun and the adjective, explicitly depict the situation as rather serious. The same is achieved by the adverb *necessary* in *this short term reaction proposed by the Commission is necessary* (PR.ECA.01: 19). There is also intensification that further stresses the seriousness of the situation and the scope of the problem, *all available financial means* (PR.ECA.01: 16), but at the same time *to address the effects* (PR.ECA.01: 16-17) is a way to counterbalance the panic that the previous lexical choices may have caused as it is quite a neutral way to describe the reaction.

In some of the selected press releases, the COVID-19 pandemic is characterized mainly by lexical choices. It caused a *crisis* (PR.ECA.06: 22), as well as *fight* and *struggle* (*In the fight to save struggling airlines* (PR.ECA.06: 13), *to keep their struggling transport industry afloat* (PR.ECA.06: 20-21)). The seriousness of the situation is reinforced by adjectives such as *major* defining *major travel disruptions* (PR.ECA.06: 16) and *uncoordinated* and *emergency* (*uncoordinated emergency measures* (PR.ECA.06: 17-18)). The choice of the nouns *bans*, *border closures*, and *quarantine requirements* all contribute even further to the creation of an image of the situation that is very serious and difficult. All these words belong to the semantic field of war or combat. EU Member States are immersed in this almost war-like crisis and are experiencing difficulties. Yet again, the authors of the text make use of the lexical choices to construct them as social actors in the given situation. Introducing measures is an *emergency* (PR.ECA.06: 20), their transport industry is *struggling* (PR.ECA.06: 20). They resorted to granting *unprecedented amounts of state aid* (PR.ECA.06: 21).

3.3.3.4. Member States

EU Member States are presented in neither a very positive nor negative manner. Rather, they appear in need of help and without much power. This is achieved, for example, by the sentence construction and conceptualization of the event in *This would allow Member States to request* (PR.ECA.01: 11-12). Not only is *this* (essentially the new measures, the proposal) the theme,

subject and agent of the sentence, *this* is also more powerful than using Member States because it *allows* member states to request, thus making them appear lower in a hierarchy. Furthermore, Member States can *request* presupposes that somebody has to approve or deny this request. This creates a sense of hierarchy, in which Member States have less power and are dependent on measures or directly on the EU. Pertaining to *In addition, they could more easily transfer funds between their programmes and regions and decide themselves where they want to target them.* (13-15) not only is there a *could* that subtly highlights it is not guaranteed the Member States will receive support (*allow, request*), but what is implied is there is room for improvement, and that countries cannot improve on their own, but also need the Commission's measures to do so.

In order not to offend them, Member States are also presented in a careful way. *Differing capacities to support their economies* (6) is a nice way of saying that some countries are poorer than others. They are also shown as caring. For example, by using an infinitive clause in the following sentence *to support* can be linked to both measures and the Member States. *Member States adopted a wide range of fiscal measures to support their economies* (PR.ECA.03: 11-12). Negative information is presented after a positive piece of information, as in the following sentence: *The Member States' crisis response measures saved jobs and businesses - but inevitably led to rising budget deficits* (PR.ECA.03: 19-20). By doing this, the critique is mitigated because it comes after an affirmative piece of information.

3.3.3.5. Critique

As mentioned above, authors frequently balance a critique by providing a plethora of reaffirming information before introducing a negative point. This is done in case of the Commission's proposal. *The Commission's proposal is part of the EU's response to COVID-19 crisis* is not explicitly positive, but it does imply a positive characterization of the EU and the Commission. It suggests the EU and the Commission are engaged in helping mitigate the effects of the pandemic, which is a positive portrayal. Furthermore, this proposal *is part of the EU's response* implies that (much) more is being done. The ordering of information in a sentence also contributes to this positive image of the Commission and a mild critique of its proposal. In *While EU support needs to be available to Member States as soon as possible, relaxing the procedures in place entails risks, according to a new opinion from the European Court of Auditors (ECA)* (PR.ECA.01: 6-8), the reader first receives positive information. By making the 'EU support' the subject, the authors put the focus on the EU, and make the

sentence -- as well as the positive image created by it -- about the EU. The sentence is about EU support being available and not about the Member States using this support. Furthermore, the mild critique comes after the positive characterization with previously explained, non-aggressive lexical choices. It then is followed by a clause that justifies this slightly negative characterization. It implies an analysis has been made based on professional research, and informed predictions reached this conclusion.

Mild and indirect critique is also achieved by the same modality: The ECA suggests something that *should* be done: *the right balance should be set* (PR.ECA.01: 19), *this proposal should not lead to substantial compromises* (PR.ECA.01: 20). Also, the auditors *highlight* (PR.ECA.01: 22) that needed information *would not be readily available* (PR.ECA.01: 23) – in this sentence the auditors deliberately decrease the level of certainty of this assertion and thus mitigate the potential aggressiveness of an accusation. In addition, the authors use a passive construction without a subject-agent, which even further decreases the focus from those who are criticized. They also say that *The Commission will have to monitor* and by using the future tense, this appears less as an order, and more as a statement.

Examining all of the selected EU press release texts, positive facts frequently prevail over negative ones. For example, in PR.ECA.03, almost two thirds of the second paragraph, almost two thirds of the release are dedicated to positive facts about the measures taken by the Member States. In the fourth paragraph, only the last sentence is not about the praise of the EU. And even that sentence contains an implied, but not an overtly expressed critique. *However, there had been no large payouts by the end of August 2020* (PR.ECA.03: 27-28). First of all, the use of a noun and not naming the agent of these payouts leaves the EU out of the direct critique. Lastly, this is again a factual statement, not an evaluative sentence. The reason this faint praise does not sound promotional is twofold. These positive factual statements are presented as facts, with objective language, and not as opinions or subjective praise. In addition, they are not specific references to the ECA, the author of the press releases. Instead, the releases are referring to others: the EU, the Commission, etc. For that reason, all the praise helps mitigate the critique without making the press releases look promotional and, thus, unprofessional and unreliable.

3.3.3.6. No promises

In the ECA press releases, there are some cases of hedging. In one instance, where ECA President, Mr Klaus-Heiner Lehne is quoted, he seems to leave room for the possibility of not

delivering the ECA's best work and ensuring –in advance – they not be criticized for it. First of all, the statement *The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges for the EU and its Member States, and across a broad range of policy areas* (PR.ECA.02: 12-13) not only serves as contextualization, but by mentioning challenges for both the EU and its Member States, the authors also suggest the possibility of failing to achieve the best results. Furthermore, their work will respond to these challenges *as far as possible and in a flexible manner* (PR.ECA.02: 14). There is no complete certainty of the results; they are already implying limitations. By highlighting that the auditors have *re-scoped their ongoing tasks – where appropriate* (PR.ECA.02: 14-15) the text leaves almost the impression of an excuse.

The same can be said for PR.ECA.05 in which the authors are avoiding making any fixed promises in announcing the ECA's plans. For example, *the EU auditors will aim to contribute* (PR.ECA.05: 5), *they will continue striving to provide citizens with...* (PR.ECA.05: 7-8), *they plan to publish* (PR.ECA.05: 11). There is very little certainty in these statements. But, they are also stressing the ECA's strengths and communicating their quality. They do it, for example, with lexical choices: be it verbs, adverbs or nouns. The key verb here is *to continue* because it presupposes that whatever follows has been done up until the present. Paired lexical choices with positive connotation, the image that the ECA provides of itself is quite positive. For example, they mention their *strong audit assurance* (PR.ECA.05: 7), and state that they are *improving the accountability and transparency of EU action* (PR.ECA.05: 7-8). They also say they do so in *the areas that matter most* (PR.ECA.05: 8).

3.3.3.7. Presuppositions, implications, allusions

In the selected press releases, certain messages are through presuppositions: *adjusted in it has adjusted the scope, approach and timing of a number of ongoing tasks* (PR.ECA.02: 4-5) presupposes occurrence of a new situation in which the previous *scope, approach and timing* did not function as desired. It also characterizes the auditors as alert and responsive, therefore, reliable and trustworthy – and these are all considered desirable characteristics in an auditor. By referring to the ECA as *The EU's external auditor* (PR.ECA.02: 6), the authors highlight its independence in their audits and, thus, present it as even more reliable and serious. By *add[ing] two new reviews to the programme* the authors also imply the willingness of the auditors to take on even more work. The information structure of the whole introductory paragraph of PR.EP.02 is created in such a way as, first, to list all of the novelties and changes that, then, nearly reach a climax in announcing *the aim of both reviews is to contribute to public*

discussion on how the EU and its Member States have dealt with the effects of the pandemic. Such an information structure highlights the auditors' almost noble purpose. Also highlighted here is the implied promise the auditors' work will not be partial and biased. Because they are *the EU's external auditors*, their work will be professional, unbiased and impartial, giving true and reliable information. This professionalism is also explicitly communicated through the choice of adjectives: *The two new reviews will provide an independent, objective and impartial review of the EU's actions and role in tackling the crisis* (PR.ECA.02: 25-26). Future tense *will provide* (PR.ECA.02: 25) communicates certainty and further reinforces what is said through lexical choices. Considering that in other press releases the ECA was careful not to make any direct promises, it can be concluded this certainty has more value and trustworthiness.

3.3.4. Perspectivization

The ECA uses adjectives and modality to establish a certain degree of hierarchy; for example, as portrayed in the in the following sentences: *The two new reviews will provide an independent, objective and impartial review of the EU's actions and role in tackling the crisis* (25-26). Adjectives and certainty of the future tense create a power hierarchy because the authors imply that the ECA is not subordinate to any other institution or country. Or rather, the ECA is given the position of the evaluator of the EU, which arguably gives it more power. While not actual decision-making power, it does give the ECA the right to evaluate and judge the actions of the other EU institutions. Furthermore, by using the metaphor, *safety nets* (PR.ECA.03: 27) the ECA implies even more firmly its role as guardian. At the same time, it reduces the distance between itself and the readers because the metaphor is figurative language and allows for (more) interpretation, thus, making it more informal than formal. Therefore, the ECA positions itself as having the power to pass judgment, but also, at times, not distancing itself from the reader.

3.3.5. Intensification, mitigation

The ECA's work is essentially commenting (criticizing or praising) on how the EU and Member States spend the EU money. Therefore, their publications are expected to contain a substantial amount of critique; but, as the following paragraphs show, this critique is frequently toned-down. In PR.ECA.01, the opinion published by the ECA is essentially a critique of the proposal, but presented in a very mild, mitigated way. Also, the press release authors seem to avoid the risk of critiquing the Commission – they are strictly commenting the proposal. This avoidance of direct critique of the Commission is achieved in several ways. To start with, in

the information structure, the Commission is rarely mentioned in the theme of a sentence, but in its rheme gives evaluative information about the proposal. For example: *Mitigating the COVID-19 outbreak* (PR.ECA.01: 1), *relaxing the procedures in place* (PR.ECA.01: 7). The Commission is rarely explicitly named when it is an Agent in these sentences: *new rules are proposed to transfer ESI funds faster to the Member States* (PR.ECA.01: 10-11), *the proposal does not provide additional clarification* (PR.ECA.01: 21), *reliable information [...] would not be readily available* (PR.ECA.01: 22-23). This mild critique is also achieved by lexical choices: *relaxing the procedures in place entails risk* (PR.ECA.01: 7) does not come off as strong as ‘is dangerous’ or ‘is risky’ or other similar possibilities.

Mitigating a critique is also achieved by prioritizing the positive information in information order within a complex sentence. Furthermore, the critique can be expressed in an implicit clause, thus omitting explicit nomination of the subject being criticized: *May serve to widen the economic gap* (PR.ECA.03: 6-7). In addition, the authors seem to deliberately choose lexis with a positive connotation: *serve* (PR.ECA.03: 6), *widen* (PR.ECA.03: 7), *Member States support their economies* (PR.ECA.03: 12), even when their use in the sentence is not necessarily positive. *The Member States’ crisis response measures saved jobs and businesses but inevitably led to rising budget deficits* (PR.ECA.03: 19-20). *save* has a positive connotation, while *lead* is more neutral. Even *rising* may evoke positive connotations, and only when paired with words such as *budget deficit* does it acquire a negative connotation.

When mentioning the ECDC (European Center for Disease Prevention and Control), the authors avoid any direct critique or openly negative assessment. This is, yet again, achieved mostly by the use of neutral or slightly negative words, such as talking about *challenges* and not *difficulties* or *problems*: *It was challenging for the ECDC to manage...* (PR.ECA.04: 24). Another point that contributes to this minimal critique and maximally positive image, despite the existing problems and difficulties, are affirmative sentences. If the sentence was *the ECDC could not manage very well*, this would have implied the ECDC’s incompetency. The same is valid for *the ECDC has cautioned that considerable work still needs to be done* (PR.ECA.04: 26-27). It leaves a much better impression if the sentence is affirmative. Also, making the ECDC the agent in the sentence, where the verb is *to caution*, suggests responsibility. So, what is implied is that the ECDC is aware of the challenges – which is a positive result. Furthermore, *considerable work still needs to be done* could have been written as, *a lot of work has not been*

done yet. But, by choosing the affirmative construction and *considerable* instead of an adjective that would imply large quantities, the negative characterization is minimized.

Frequently found are sentences such as: *the auditors also see the risk* (PR.ECA.03: 5), *the auditors note risk and challenges relating to the implementation and the coordination of these measures* (PR.ECA.03: 9-10). By using verbs of perception, they make a critique or a warning less direct. By using relative sentences, the authors also avoid directly characterizing the situation – they do not say that the implementation and the coordination of the measures are risky, but rather that the risk and challenges are connected to it. The two essentially imply the same message, but the chosen way is less direct and less aggressive. It is the auditor's perception that is being offered. Press releases refer to their impressions, rather than giving facts about the situation. As a matter of fact, passing judgment is rarely explicit or direct. The auditors' findings are presented as facts. For example, in the sentence *these national fiscal measures will considerably increase countries' budget deficits and public debt levels* there is nothing that explicitly has evaluative judgment. They are not explicitly saying this is bad or negative. The reader infers it. The sentence is preceded by the adverb *however* which indicates what follows has the opposite meaning, possibly negative. Also, increases in the budget's deficit and public deficit levels are, without a doubt, negative and bad for the countries. However, these words taken separately do not have an inherent negative value. So, the ECA is not saying *this is bad, you have a problem*; but, the reader is led to that conclusion. Another example is the sentence *We see a risk that this will curtail the economic convergence* (20). There is a verb of perception that is in the main clause, and the negative information is in the sub-clause. Also, what they actually say could have been presented more negatively. Accordingly, even if this cannot be seen as positive information, it seems to be delivered as neutrally as possible. They are talking about an economic convergence that might be curtailed, where *economic convergence* is something positive. So, they are expressing the possibility of something positive not happening, and not about something negative happening, which would be more directly negative. Another sentence is: *The auditors warn, however, that there is no guarantee these measures will boost sustainable growth and increase convergence between Member States* (PR.ECA.03: 31-33). In this sentence, the toning down of the certainty of this statement is double: first with the verb *warn* because it signals right away that this is not a fact, but a warning and thus at least partially subjective. Second of all, the auditors warn *that there is no guarantee*. They are not saying *The measures will not or may not boost sustainable growth*. By using the phrase *there is no guarantee* this possibility is even further toned down.

In PR.ECA.04, the critique is minimized and indirect, maybe even more so than in other press releases. Problems or issues are mostly referred to by some milder term, such as *challenges* (PR.ECA.04: 4) and *weaknesses* (PR.ECA.04: 21). *Learning lessons to improve European cooperation in public health* (PR.ECA.04: 1-2) presupposes, or at least implies, that some steps have been taken, but were not really very successful. *Draws attention to certain challenges faced by the EU* (PR.ECA.04: 4) is again a mitigated negative view. First of all, *to draw attention to something* does not necessarily mean that *something* is a problem. There is a hint there might be a problem, but it is definitely not said explicitly. Next, it draws attention to *certain challenges*. The problem is expressed as a noun. Furthermore, a *challenge* is much better and less severe than *a problem* or *an issue*. A challenge is something that makes you have to work a bit harder to overcome, whereas a problem or an issue complicate the situation substantially more. Finally, in *challenges faced by the EU*, the EU is mentioned in a passive construction, as in an adjective phrase that defines ‘challenges’, so the EU’s involvement is linguistically minimal. Moreover, the authors could have said *challenges that the EU is facing*, but this would draw attention to the fact that EU is, in fact, facing challenges. The way the sentence is structured, this concern is not highlighted, and the main focus is on the challenges. The sentence continues with: *in its support for Member States’ public health actions* (PR.ECA.04: 4-5). So even if the EU is briefly negatively characterized (it is facing challenges), this is annulled quickly by a verb with a positive connotation *support*. So, the challenges they are facing are there because they are supporting the Member States, which is very positive.

There is a slight negative depiction of the airlines in PR.ECA.06. This depiction is, however, implied and suggested and not stated overtly. Here, as in other press releases, critique is mostly expressed in the form of a fact that then leads the reader to the conclusion. In this case, this is achieved by the order in which different information is given to the reader. First, the press release says the Member States have granted the airlines *unprecedented amounts of state aid* (PR.ECA.06: 21). From the context, the reader can conclude that *unprecedented*, in this case, means a significant amount. In the next sentence, the amount is provided, but preceded by *up to* (PR.ECA.06: 23) which means two things. The sentence literally means this is the maximum possible amount, and also that the amount could be smaller. But, at the same time, it hints at the amount being rather high. The press release keeps presenting us the information in the form of what the member states gave the airlines – so syntax and a choice of verbs, transitivity, play important roles. Finally, after all the good things the Member States did for the airlines, the

criticism comes after the adverb *however* (PR.ECA.06: 28). Even here, the critique is minimized by the use of passive (*were often pressured by airlines* and not *airlines pressured them*), so the airlines are not the subject in this sentence. The negative evaluation, or negative construction is done mainly through the negative connotation of the verb *pressure* (*passengers whose flights have been cancelled were often pressured by airlines* (PR.ECA.06: 29-30). The message is that countries did so much to help the airlines, but the airlines nevertheless forced passengers to do something they did not want to do and what the Commission explicitly recommended against. So, the airlines are not only forcing passengers into doing something they do not want to, but are also going against the European Commission. This negative aspect is, therefore, mitigated as the reader infers it, rather than reads it explicitly.

The praise, on the other hand, is very direct. For example, in PR.EP.05 Subjects and Agents are very frequently the ECA, auditors or their documents. Lexical choices in the press release have positive connotations. References to the future are expressed with certainty. Finally, there is a sense of addition and abundance created by sentence construction through parataxis and further enhanced by adverbs such as *also* (PR.ECA.05: 27), *further* (PR.ECA.05: 29), *more* (PR.ECA.05: 35). The entire PR.EP.05 appears very vivid and active due to the use of active voice, progressive and future tenses, as well as –ing forms of verbs and dynamic verbs.

3.4. Corpus Analysis

3.4.1 Word lists

The above analyzed press releases were also analyzed as corpora using the computer software Antconc. I grouped them in two corpora: ECA press releases and EP press releases. Word lists are one of the simplest things to do with computer software for a corpus analysis. The one hundred most frequent words in both corpora are listed in Table 7 in Appendix II. In it, I present them grouped not by frequency, but thematically or by function. Already this list tells us something about the corpus, but without the context it can be misleading. For example, *digital* and *climate* in EP press releases are related to the topic. Their frequency is high because there are policies and strategies that involve these two words. Similarly, *opinion* is a type of document published by the ECA. For that reason, chosen words were further analyzed with the option key word in context (KWIC) and Collocate ?? in Ant Conc. However, before that, I compiled two other lists using the words in context feature.

As probably expected, more than a third of the 100 most frequent words are function words, or words that – in this context – carry out a similar function, even if they do not necessarily belong

to the function words class. However, even here some words can be analyzed as significant. In the ECA press releases, this can be said for the adverb *however*. Its frequency signals that ECA press releases often present contrasting ideas. Going back to analyses of ECA press releases, it is possible to recall that the authors frequently introduced some negative, critique-like information only following positive information; and, frequency of precisely this adverb further confirms this strategy of mitigating critique. In the EP press releases, the words that stand out are *further*, *want* and *should*, *could*, *would*. The frequency of *further* can be seen as a stylistic choice, possibly something typical of EP or EU language. However, it is still in the 100 most frequent words and it undoubtedly says something about the content, or rather, how the content is presented. *Further* has several meanings, but they all essentially entail that there will be more of something which is already there, that there will be a greater degree of that something. The frequency of verbs *should*, *could*, and *would* shows that the EP press release authors use verbs which express different modality. It was already possible to conclude this based on the above analysis; and now, the corpus analysis confirms that authors frequently avoid making firm or binding promises, and use modal verbs to achieve that end. *Want*, on the other hand, expresses something different, and its frequency shows that the observation regarding this verb which was made in the above analyses is relevant. Namely, as can be seen in the Table 9 in Appendix II, *want* is usually stating what the MEPs desire. By offering this kind of information, the authors of the press releases still create a favorable image of the EP, or of the MEPs, even if they do not succeed in ensuring the financial means to aid member countries. This linguistic choice highlights what MEPs want to achieve, and not what they have achieved and, thus, creates a favorable image of them, regardless of their success in achieving it. All of the instances of using the verb *want* can be seen in Table 6 in Appendix II. Even though not all instances of *want* express what MEPs want, when it is about the MEPs, such wording implies a request, the one which they have the right to make and expect to get. So even more than just portraying the MEPs in a good light, showing their good will, this verb also gives them a certain degree of power: they have the power to request that something be done.

The next group of frequent words is Covid or pandemic related. This was, of course, expected. Both corpora (EP and ECA) share the following words: *Covid*, *health*, *crisis*, *measures*, *pandemic*. In the EP press releases, another frequent word is *recovery*, which is thematically linked to what the EP is talking about in their press releases. On the other hand, the ECA frequently mentions *vaccine*, *support*, *medical*, *challenges*, *outbreak*, *mitigating* and *risk*. This,

however, should not be interpreted as the EP ignoring these topics. EP press release authors could use a greater lexical/semantic/paradigmatic variation in referring to these concepts. Another possibility is that ECA press releases are more focused on these precise topics, whereas EP press releases include a much wider range of related topics. So, it would be incorrect to conclude that EP excludes these topics. Other aspects that further complicate drawing absolute conclusions about press releases based on the frequency of words and their categorization into groups are the overlaps (words can belong to different categories I created) as well as polysemic words. For example, *funding*, *funds*, and *instruments* can easily be categorized as covid/pandemic related words as well as EU related words. *Climate* and *digital* actually refer to the vocabulary of EU strategies, and *support* could be (but does not have to be) related to helping countries suffering from the covid crisis. However, it is interesting to notice what words are not on that list. For example, the word *support* is on that list, whereas *help* or another (near-)synonym is not. This shows how the authors conceptualize the EP's work. They are *supporting* rather than *helping*. Furthermore, there are words with positive connotation *increase*, *ensure*, *support*, *resilience*, *available*, *long*, etc., but there are no words analogous to these with negative connotation. Some of the words are neutral, such as *response*, *actions*, and *effects*, but the ones with straightforward negative connotation are few (*risks*, *challenges*, *mitigating*, *outbreak*) and not necessarily overly negative in the positive-negative connotation continuum. Below I conduct a key word in context search in AntConc in order to find out more about the vocabulary/lexis/semantic choices.

Finally, a significant portion of the most frequent words is related to the EU in some way. For example, words like *member*, *review*, *reviews*, *audit*, *court*, and *opinion* are related to ECA jargon so it is logical they are frequently found in their press releases. The same can be said for words such as *MEPs*, *committee*, *parliament*, *EP*, *adopted* in the EP press releases. But, as previously stated, these words are expected to have high frequency in this case.

3.4.2 Keyword lists

Keyword lists, as previously explained, provide a list of words that are uncommonly frequent as compared to a certain referent corpus. Choosing a corpus against which to calculate keywords was not simple, because the reference corpus needed to be an exemplary, neutral use of language. However, neutral use of language is non-existent. Keeping in mind that the research question postulated for this thesis concerns EU institutions representing themselves, the EU, and the Covid pandemic in their press releases, I decided the best way to calculate keywords would be against a general corpus of the English language. However, this was not as

simple because every corpus is marked for some reason or another – very frequently geography (for example, British or American English). On the other hand, comparing it against a larger corpus of all EU press releases would possibly fail to signal the characteristics typical of all EU press releases, but not so frequent in other uses of English. Keeping in mind that there is no perfect solution, that no analysis can be absolute, and that it should always be understood and interpreted in relation to the reference corpus, I decided to analyze it against BE06 corpus (a one million word reference corpus of general written British English) developed by Paul Baker, included in AntConc. Furthermore, I also calculated key words against AmE06 corpus (a one million word corpus of published general written American English), also compiled by Paul Baker. There are several reasons for including both AmE06 and BE06. Primarily, I did not want to assume the English of the EU is a variety of British English: it is not. The English of the EU is also not a variety of American English. Nonetheless, informally, both American and British English can be, considered as the two most prominent and influential diatopic varieties of English. The decision was primarily arbitrary, but based on the relevance of these two varieties. Full results are shown in Table 8 in Appendix III, where I present them thematically grouped.

Similar to the frequency list, it is expected the EU-related words will have higher frequency here as well. This is particularly true for the names, bodies, and abbreviations. Another group expected to have a high frequency are the covid-related words such as *coronavirus*, *covid*, *pandemic*, *crisis*, *vaccines*, etc. There are also words that have a higher frequency and are on this list because they are linked to the specific topics covered in the press releases, such as air travel and webinar. Similarly, British English spelling is unusual in American corpus so that is why words such as *travellers* and *realise* appear here. Even though, as I explained above, the EU English is not British English, the EU adopted British spelling. Interesting, but difficult to explain (without making too subjective interpretations) are the frequencies of words such as *will*, *the*, *taken*, *its*, *also*, *to*, *and*, *be*. So, what can be interesting to interpret and comment on are words related to the EU and pandemic, words with positive connotation, and words that are already in the table categorized as the group that should be analyzed in the context. I chose certain words to be further analyzed, the ones that should be the most interesting to analyze.

In Table 8, Appendix II (a table that contains key words grouped thematically), there is a group of words from the ECA's press releases described as EU & pandemic related words. It summarizes how the ECA presents the crisis: it foregrounds the positive role of the EU in the

pandemic. This can be seen by the frequency of words *measures*, *recovery*, and *supporting*. All these words refer to what the EU is doing. The situation (the pandemic) is problematic, but the word with unusually high frequency is *challenges*, and not something that entails much more severe problems. Similarly, one of the words on that list is *mitigating*, and not something stronger or that presupposes the existence of much more serious problems. This confirms the findings in the DHA analysis above: that the focus is not on the severity of the situation, but rather on showing the positive aspects that are brought about by the EU. The PR.EP corpus shows a slightly different situation inasmuch some of the words in the keyword list are *debt*, *hardest*, and *imbalances*. Unlike ECA, EP includes more negative aspects on the current situation in their press releases. These words have higher frequency than in AmE06 and BE06 corpora. This finding, too, was already presented in the DHA analysis section above, and the keyword list confirmed the finding.

Tables 10 – 13, Appendix II contain keywords *boosting*, *increase*, *obtained*, and *accountability* in their contexts. *Boosting*, when looked at in the sentence context, seems to be one of those words preferred by the EP. There is *boosting climate action* (two times), *boosting funds for transport infrastructure*, *boosting growth and jobs* (two times). The frequency might be due to EP's preference for this word, over other (near-)synonyms, i.e. some other semantic concepts could be expressed through various verbs and that is why those verbs do not appear as unusually frequent. But, its frequency still signals what is being conveyed in the press releases: the authors frequently highlight the EU's role in improving EU's situation. The frequency of verb *increase* is most likely the result of the possibility to use this word in different contexts. For example, it can refer to Member States and their ability to increase their contribution, but it can also be about disparities in the single market that could increase, as well as about increasing disparities in the single market or about increasing imbalances. Furthermore, there is also mentioning of increasing research funding and increasing the EU's resilience. So, the verb *increase* can be used to refer to both something positive and something negative. However, this predilection for the word *increase* should not be taken as something irrelevant or coincidental. The word *increase*, regardless of the fact something negative can increase and become more negative, has a slightly positive connotation or at least neutral. In isolation, it certainly does not have negative connotation. By choosing this word so frequently, and by shaping the sentences in such a way as to use precisely this verb, the authors avoid presenting the situation through more negative semantic and syntactic constructions.

Obtained is another verb with a positive connotation and significant presupposition. As table 12, Appendix II shows, it is mostly the MEPs who obtained something. It entails their agency. However, this verb also implies a certain amount of work preceded obtaining it. The fact that this verb is so frequently used suggests it is customary in EP press releases to present the MEPs as working for the Member States. So not only is the agency assigned to them, but also the success; and, at the same time, also serving the EU countries.

Finally, in the ECA press releases, compared to the reference corpora, unusually frequent is the word *accountability*. As table 13, Appendix II shows, the ECA is concerned with the EU's accountability vis-a-vis' the EU countries and citizens. This can be seen as something that belongs to the core purposes of the ECA. They are, after all, guardians of the EU finances and audit how the EU is spending money. However, by highlighting accountability, the authors foreground a different aspect of the audit. Namely, the purpose of the audit is not sole control of the spending, but also to justify this spending to the EU citizens, as it is actually their money. They are, in a way, protecting the money of EU citizens. This aspect has not been identified in the above DHA analyses. It goes hand-in-hand with the ECA's constant stressing of their service – their work is a service to the EU and EU citizens. Therefore, it is information, compared to the DHA findings, but it is aligned with those findings.

3.4.3 Word in context

This brief albeit insightful corpus analysis ends with word in context analysis of *pandemic*, *covid*, *crisis*, *coronavirus*, *outbreak*, and *consequences*. All of the results are shown in Tables 14 - 19 , Appendix II. In addition, Tables 23-27, Appendix II show different collocations of the word *pandemic*. They can be grouped as following: neutral expressions referring to time, neutral verbs and/or nouns, words having connotation between neutral and slightly negative, words characterizing the pandemic as a threat, and words relating the pandemic to economic threat. These results should, however, be completed with expressions following and preceding *Covid-19*, presented in Table 29, Appendix II. Some of the results are expected, while others are not. Particularly interesting is the EP does not have words with negative connotation directly linked to the word *pandemic*. While ECA press releases contain *fight the pandemic*, *combat the pandemic*, and *the adverse effects of the pandemic* (among other uses of *pandemic* in a sentence), the EP seems to use words with milder connotation or more complex expressions such as *as a result of the pandemic*, *tackling the effects and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic*, and *Those affected by Coronavirus pandemic*. However, the idea of *fighting* the pandemic is definitely present in the EP press releases, as Table 28, Appendix II shows. *Covid-*

19 also seems to be mentioned more frequently in ECA press releases than in the EP's press releases, as well as *crisis*. The differences in their uses, however, are not substantial. What these tables also show, especially Tables 29 and 30, is the ECA uses greater lexical variation, while the EP seems to have almost standardized expressions that are repeated in their press releases.

Given the possibility to search for specific words in software like AntConc, I searched for the following words to see whether it would yield some interesting and significant results. Searching for *Coronavirus* yielded only six results, which is considerably less than *COVID-19*. Why the authors continually chose to use *COVID-19* over *Coronavirus* cannot be answered with complete certainty. However, as WHO (WHO, 2019) suggested *COVID-19* as the official name, the question then becomes why use the term *Coronavirus*. The ECA uses *Coronavirus* in PR.ECA.02 and PR.ECA.06. in May 2020 and in March 2021. The EP uses it in PR.EP.01 three times and one time in PR.EP.02, in March and April 2020. The early uses could be explained by the fact that at that time the virus was new and its naming was still not entirely fixed. Nonetheless, the same explanation cannot be applied to choosing it in PR.ECA.06. Moving on, I also searched for *outbreak*. It yielded seven results, shown in Table 18, Appendix II. In six out of these seven results, the collocation is *the COVID-19 outbreak*, so it seems to be an accepted reference terminology. The only result that is different is *outbreak of the pandemic* in one of the ECA's press releases. Finally, in all the selected press releases the pandemic or crisis is frequently being *fought*, *mitigated*, or *tackled*. Tables 20-22, Appendix II show how these words are used in context. Lexeme *fight* is used nine times, *mitigate* also nine times and *tackle* five times. *Fighting* is a rather strong semantic choice and other than *pandemic* and *COVID-19 outbreak*, what is being fought are *climate change*, *crimes*, *disinformation*, and *fraud*. So, even though fighting is frequently evoked in the press releases, it is not that often the pandemic is being fought. *Pandemic*, or *crisis*, or its effects are more frequently being mitigated or tackled. *Fight* is more strongly evoked in the earlier press releases, so it may seem that the authors decided to relate the pandemic to milder, less aggressive verbs and concepts.

4. Discussion

The EP and ECA press releases, to briefly recapitulate, provide information on a particular subject and, given their specific communication model, they have to be persuasive. They have to convince reporters and journalists to retell the press release's story. Press releases are also a unique opportunity for organizations to present themselves. If journalists report their story

based on the information contained in the press releases, the public will get to see the organization's self-created image of them created by themselves, and not by somebody else. So this is an opportunity for the organizations to depict themselves exactly the way they want. An additional advantage is when the wider public reads the story, the official author will not be the organization, but another author – the journalist – who gives a degree of credibility that does not necessarily exist when the organization writes about itself. Praise is always more credible when coming from somebody else. On the other hand, in order to be persuasive, press releases should not sound biased or promotional. Rather, they need to appear objective and informative. Skilled public relations professionals who write press releases should write a press release with a favorable image of their organization without appearing subjective, but still managing to capture journalists' attention while sharing the story their organization wants disseminated to the public. The communication scheme of press releases is rather specific. The ultimate destination of information contained in press releases is the wider public, which is reached through intermediaries: in this case, journalists and editors. Public relations officers who write press releases have the role of spokesmen. They verbalize the message of the EP and ECA, who have the role of principal (see Goffman's participation roles above). Press releases are, therefore, important because they are the way through which the organizations present themselves to the wider public. At the same time, they need to be well written because journalists, who are the immediate recipients, first have to understand and interpret the releases, in order to report them to the public. There is always a risk of misinterpretation or drawing the wrong conclusions, so strong press releases with unambiguous messages are a key to success. As has been demonstrated above and will be discussed below, both the EP and ECA successfully depict themselves and the EU in the context of the pandemic and are consistent in their use of different linguistic means, particularly those related to nomination, predication, intensification, mitigation, and perspectivization. The analysis showed both institutions avoid nomination strategies that would carry too much evaluative meaning and make the text appear biased and subjective. Rather, the authors make use of grammatical choices, such as information structure, choice of verbs, including semantic roles, subjects to verbs, as well as impersonal clauses to create favorable image of themselves.

Starting with nomination, we can recall that the choices have been expected and not surprising. Both institutions used metonymy-personification name *European Parliament* or *EP* and *European Court of Auditors* or *ECA*, as well as the names *MEPs* and *Auditors* or *Member*. The distinction was already explained in the analyses and is that of highlighting different aspects

of the institutions. Collective names foreground unity of the institutions, while names such as *MEPs* and *Auditors* highlight that these institutions actually consist of people, and it is those different individuals who carry out what is reported in press releases. The pandemic is mostly referred to as the *COVID-19 pandemic*, but it is also called the *crisis* or just the *pandemic*. These social actors are characterized through edications. As a rule of thumb, the EP and ECA are characterized positively; and they are, even if only slightly, depicted as superior to other EU institutions. On the other hand, the pandemic is characterized negatively, mostly as a threat or a challenge. Member states, meanwhile, are frequently depicted as passive and in the need of help. Very important to consider are connotations and denotations, as well as adjectives and adverbs, and implicit relative clauses. Argumentation, justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness, is achieved through topoi (formal or more content-related) and fallacies (Wodak 2015: 8). Prominent topoi in the press releases are topos of urgency, threat, authority, reality, and topos of burdening. In particular, this means the underlying thoughts are: decisions should be made and executed as quickly as possible; the COVID-19 pandemic is a real threat and something should be done about it; the EP and ECA, as well as the EU, have authority to make decisions (while member states are passive, without authority, and do not make decisions); what is presented in the press releases is not questioned in any way or even presented as possible to be questioned; and, lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a crisis that is a burden that should be diminished (cf. list of Topoi in Wodak 2015: 11). Intensification frequently serves to highlight the topoi of argumentation. Adverbs and adjectives in majority of cases highlight the need for urgency and the seriousness of the threat and burden.

Moving from the slightly abstract theoretical level to the concrete examples from this analysis, the following can be said. The role of the EP is to pass laws and to decide on the EU budget, together with other EU institutions. Members of the EP are elected by the citizens of the EU and their role is to represent those citizens. In the EP press releases, for example, the EP and MEPs are often foregrounded. Press releases frequently focus on what the EP or MEPs do – and they are almost exclusively doing something beneficiary and helpful for the EU citizens and EU Member States. This highlighting of the EP and MEPs work is done not only on the content level, but also through lexical choices and on the syntactic and semantic level, too. For example, they are regularly the subjects of sentences and carry the semantic role of Agent; whereas, other actors (for example, other institutions) are often omitted or not stated explicitly. Instead of directly naming actors, their work and tasks are frequently expressed in impersonal

constructions, such as subject-less sub-clauses. So, in addition to what is included, it is also relevant to identify what is omitted. The EP uses their press releases to reaffirm their importance and centrality in the EU. Furthermore, the EP often employs intensification strategies to highlight the fact the EP is acting or doing something very quickly, and caring a great deal for its citizens. On the other hand, the ECA could easily be perceived as an unpopular institution, having the role of criticizing what has been done wrong (regarding the way money was spent). In order to avoid such an unfavorable image, the ECA found a way around it. In their press releases, they highlight their role in the EU and present it as a service to the EU and to the wider public. They employ many mitigation strategies and make use of presuppositions, implications, and inferences so the critique and judgment are not stated explicitly, but rather the reader is lead to that conclusion.

Nomination strategy examples can help to clarify the above points further. The ECA's need to justify their critique can also be seen in their nomination strategies: they refer to themselves explicitly as *The EU's external auditor* (PR.ECA.02: 6), which foregrounds their purpose and gives a justification for their critique. On the other hand, the Parliament subtly uses the nomination strategy to assert their power and create a hierarchy. They are frequently referred to as just *the Parliament*. Whereas, all other parliaments would need to be further specified in order to understand which parliament is being referred to, the EP is simply *the Parliament*. Taking into account the context - the fact these are EP press releases - and the authors are referring to the *European Parliament* when using *Parliament*, it can be argued that there is no creation of hierarchy and assertion of power. However, taking into account the communicative situation, I would argue that a certain degree of power assertion, no matter how small, is still contained in calling themselves *the Parliament*, while other parliaments need to be further specified. Therefore, this analysis had to go back and forth between what is there in the texts, and what was the goal and scope of the texts.

Interestingly, the EP and ECA use similar strategies to achieve almost opposite effects: the EP to direct attention to itself and to the MEPs; and, the ECA to hide critique. It is important who is mentioned, what entity is theme or rheme, who is subject and who is omitted subject, and in what order is information given. The EP frequently omits mentioning other subjects and uses such linguistic structures that make the sentence from the grammatical point of view about the EP. The ECA, on the other hand, takes great care not to accuse anyone and that every critique is balanced out by numerous positive aspects about the same topic. This is also the main

difference between the press releases of the two institutions. The EP's press releases are really all about showing how good the EP is, while the ECA's are mostly about the analysis of others (either other EU institutions or those who use the EU's budget). Therefore, the EP's press releases are focused on self-representation. In contrast, the ECA press releases represent the organization so they are not perceived as some strict critic, but to explain their purpose is to audit the EU's spending, and also that they have the needed authority to give their opinion. These aspects, however, are minimal, and the focus is mostly on the analysis of how the EU money is being spent. The only exception is the press release in which the ECA informs the public they have changed their program to make it more compliant to the ongoing situation. I conclude, therefore, that the EP uses its press releases to depict a favorable image of itself, while the ECA uses theirs primarily to present their audit results. The ECA then uses the audit presentations to show they are not a harsh critic, but that they are simply doing their job.

Finally, I added results of a brief corpus analysis to the results of the DHA analysis. Although at first they might appear added on, they do confirm some of the results of the DHA analysis as well as shed light on some important aspects of the EP and ECA press releases I was unable to identify through the DHA procedure. A great number of words on the word lists (most frequent words) were expected: either because they simply have high frequency in the English language, or because they are related to the EU or the topic. For example, words such as *vaccine*, *digital*, and *opinion* are all related to the pandemic situation, EU strategies, and the type of documents. There were, however, some interesting findings, such as *however* being among the 100 most frequent words in the ECA press releases. As I have already explained, I interpreted this frequency to be related to the way the ECA presents critique. Namely, their critique always follows positive information. This, clearly, supports what I have asserted earlier: the ECA is focused on the analysis and the results of their audits rather than on their own image. Similarly, *should*, *could*, and *would* are among 100 frequent words in EP press releases and these frequencies also further support the DHA findings. Namely, the EP press release authors avoid making any promises to certainly do something, and they also avoid telling others what to do. Similarly, for their own characterization is important the frequency of the verb *want*, which is mostly used to refer to what the MEPs want. This wanting is also an expression of authority and power and relevant for their self-depiction. The most frequent words related to Covid-19 revealed what aspect of the pandemic these two organizations mainly focus on: it is almost exclusively about helping and being proactive. In other words, they do not waste time on describing the situation and complaining over the severity of the

situation. Rather, they consider the situation to be known (press releases are, after all, read in real time) and focus on what they are doing to help in this difficult situation. This, too, has been already discovered by doing the DHA analysis. Corpus frequencies further confirmed these findings. Keyword lists show words with frequency higher than in reference corpora. These lists, also, showed some expected results, and some results that revealed some new findings. Words related to the Covid-19 pandemic were expected to have a higher frequency. An interesting result is the EU related words I was not able to note on my own, simply by doing DHA analysis. They, however, do not really show how the EP and ECA present themselves, the EU, and the pandemic in their press releases because they are simply words related to the functioning of the EU, and not to this particular situation and my research question. However, some of the results from the keyword lists confirm the DHA findings. The examples include *mitigating* and *challenges*, which show how the situation is conceptualized. It is not a problem to be solved, but a challenge and something to be mitigated, which is less severe. Altogether, there is a tendency towards optimistic depiction and positive connotation. Finally, looking at words in context enabled me to see how some of the words I found interesting or relevant are used in context. This brief research showed again that the EP is avoiding negative characterization. At the beginning of the pandemic, they did use words related to war as they enabled them to present themselves as heroic and supportive. Later, this war-like depiction is minimized and the focus is on the positive aspects the EP is securing during the pandemic. If we go back to the theory behind press releases and their reception, it appears the public relations professionals avoid negative connotations as much as possible in order to ensure positive reception on the journalists' side; and, subsequently, to eliminate all possibilities journalists would focus on this negative aspect in their texts based on the press release. Therefore, everything appears to be tailored to the particular needs of the press releases and to their specific reception.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to analyze what linguistic strategies were employed to present the EP, ECA, and EU member states during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, also how EP and ECA finance- and pandemic-related press releases portrayed the crisis, as well as what type of image was created for the EP, ECA and EU member states in these press releases. My thesis was a discourse analysis carried out following the Discourse Historical Approach method, and the results were accompanied with findings of a brief corpus analysis. The intent of the analysis was to identify the linguistic composition and organization of the chosen texts, and then to link

those choices to their purpose. At the beginning of the analysis, one of the crucial challenges was identifying the producer and the receiver of the EU press releases. In particular, EU press releases are written by their press officers. However, the actual producers of the messages, those who have the motive to send it are the institutions: EP and ECA. A similar situation can be identified on the other side of the communication channel. The primary audiences for press releases are journalists, editorialists, columnists, etc. However, by their very purpose, press releases are meant to be retold by the primary audience and disseminated to the wider public through news articles and other means. Since the ultimate target audience of press releases is the audience of news articles written by authors who read press releases, a wider public. Considering the purpose of press releases, which is to share a newsworthy story about the organization that is also persuasive in its positive and favorable depiction of that organization and in convincing the primary audience to report that story, it became obvious that texts needed to be highly convincing and leave little possibility for misinterpretation and alterations of meaning.

The analysis was based on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), and it focused on the linguistic choices employed in nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification / mitigation strategies. The most prominent discursive strategy was predication, so the majority of the analysis is focused on the topic of predication. The principal linguistic means used by the authors of the EP and ECA press releases are the following: information structure (theme-rheme) and ordering of the information within a text, semantic roles, implicit or explicit verbal agency, lexical choices (from semantic fields), allusion, implication, presupposition, inference, choice of verbs (copulative verbs, dynamic verbs), syntax (sentence structure, implicit relative clauses), modality and certainty, passive and active voice, reported speech and reporting verbs, euphemisms and preference for less aggressive lexical choices, nomination strategies, transitivity, pronouns, metaphors, repetition, implicit structures, adjectives and adverbs, connotation, affirmative sentences, exaggeration, using nouns instead of verbs. It is interesting to note that there is very little that can be said to be linguistically marked: there are no considerably unusual lexical choices, or particularly loaded language. Also, there are very few instances of marked syntax and markedness such as dislocation or ellipsis. As a result, the texts appear less subjective, less partial, and more convincing, which is the goal of press releases.

Discourse analysis, as explained above, does not stop at the description of linguistic form, but requires connecting these findings to the language use in human interaction. This inevitably brings us to Widdowson (2004: 79-83)'s concept of pretext – something that is not an inherent part of the discourse-historical approach. Every text has a pretext, an ulterior motive for a text to be produced. There is a general purpose of every text. There are also contextual and pretextual assumptions and if producer and receiver of a text do not share these assumptions, if they both are not aware of them, then they will understand the text differently. This can sound straightforward, but it can encompass much more than is thought of at first. In the present analysis it also includes me and my reception of the texts. My intention for reading these texts is different than those who read them to learn new information so it is very likely that my contextual and pretextual assumptions are different than those of the authors of the texts as well as those of the journalists reading the press releases and considering reporting the story communicated in them. It is, therefore, very likely that in the texts I found something that the authors did not consciously intend to convey. In my analysis and in drawing conclusions, was uneventably biased, at least to a certain extent. I ran the risk of finding the results I wanted to find, and not the results that entirely correspond to authors' intentions. I was interested in finding out how press release authors use language to present EU institutions and pandemic situation and my deliberate search could direct my attention towards drawing conclusions that do not correspond to authors' intentions nor to readers' understanding. However, since I cannot interpret those texts outside of a context and without any assumptions, I can do my best by being aware of these restrictions and limits and carry on the analysis.

Pretext of press releases, or their overall purpose is to share with their audience the latest news relating to their organizations (EP and ECA). At the same time, their purpose is to be persuasive, to create as favorable image as possible of the organization that is publishing them. This goal, the pretext is not explicitly included in the DHA analysis. By answering the five questions, one does identify linguistic choices, but their interpretation inevitably varies, depending on the context of interpretation. Even though I followed the DHA steps in the analysis, prior to looking into the texts, identifying and interpreting linguistic choices in them, I explicitly stated the context and some sort of a pretext against which to analyze these texts. By doing so, I tried to eliminate the inconsistencies and misreading that could otherwise arise. This also means that my interpretation is valid only inasmuch the context and pretext that I had identified are valid. Having said that, I argue that linguistic choices, identified by answering the five DHA questions, reflect the context and the pretext, or rather, I offer an interpretation

of these linguistic choices based on the context and the pretext as I identify them at the beginning of my analysis.

European Parliament's press releases are primarily about the European Parliament. This is expected, given that press releases are the place to present yourself. EP is, of course, doing it linguistically, and not just content-wise. The authors tend to present EP as significant and fighting for the Member States and EU citizens in order to help them in a difficult crisis-like or near-crisis situation. Among the naming strategies, the one that stands out is *co-legislator and budget authority* because it is not just a name, but it also highlights its role and power that it has in the EU hierarchy. EP and EU are presented as institutions with power and money, making decisions and helping others with that money and with their decisions. Others (Member States and EU citizens) have problems, need help, and it is EP and EU decisions that will ensure this help. Such predication is achieved primarily through lexical choices, particularly verb choices and their conceptualizations, the way words are paired, theme-rheme structure, and modality. Particularly interesting is the use of modality and future tense in a way to present something as certain, but without making any fixed promises. This can be seen in a sentence *[EP] will do its utmost to ensure*. While the certainty is at its highest, with the undoubtedly affirmative *will*, it does not say that EP or EU will actually ensure something, but rather, try to ensure it. But the linguistic form used here foregrounds the certainty of EP's decision, while making less obvious that this is just an attempt. EP is also very frequently subject in the sentences and has the semantic role of Agent. It is particularly interesting to observe the difference between the way EP is presented compared to representation of the Commission. While EP is implicit subject of verb *to fight*, Commission *proposed to direct money to the fight*. Such small details are persistent through the texts and help create this image of EP actually fighting for Member States and EU citizens, while the Commission is presented as less active. Particularly important is the use of implicit sub-clauses that lack explicit expression of the subject. By doing so, authors achieve two things. First of all, this is frequently the case in which the agency of the verb in the implicit sub-clause can be assigned to either EP or, for example, certain measure. While more observant reading shows that it is the EU's measures that will bring help, by such construction this helping is automatically associated with EP as well. On the other hand, by means of implicit sub-clauses, as well as assigning the semantic role of Agent to words such as *measures*, the authors avoid giving credit for helping or achieving something to someone else. Furthermore, this indirect suggestion of EP being the Agent of

something and avoidance of naming other Agents can also be achieved by linking several verbs, so as to make the EP Agent of the main clause.

Depending on the aspect of the institution the authors want to highlight, they can write about the European Parliament or about MEPs (Members of the European Parliament). Talking about the Parliament highlights the unity and the institutional aspect of the Parliament. EP is one of the EU's bodies. Referring to MEPs, authors highlight the fact that it is a group of individuals who do actual work and bring actual results. MEPs are shown as caring, active, eager to help. They are virtually always the subject of the sentence in which they appear and they are also given the semantic role of an Agent. A lot of dynamicity is created with the choice of words and verb conceptualization (for examples, verbs such as *want*, *call for*, *quiz*), which suggests that they are active in their work. They are shown as responsible and partaking in this difficult situation – COVID-19 pandemic. Even when MEPs are expressing critique, this negative content is toned down in order to present MEPs not as horrible and criticizing, but as caring and working in the best interest of others. For that reason, critiques are expressed indirectly, with euphemisms and by lexical choices, transitivity, modality, use of nouns (rather than verbs) and positive connotations that ensure that critique is rather implied than expressed overtly. Reader, thus, infers the critique based on the given information. Photographs used in the press releases serve not as much to visualize information that is being shared, but to further characterize MEPs. Also, when EP or MEPs are saying that something should be done or that something has not been done, the authors always avoid naming who should do it. Linguistically, it is achieved either through passive voice structures, implicit sub-clauses, or by making subject of a sentence something inanimate, such as *measures* or *risks*. Sense of urgency is created with superlatives such as *as much as possible* and *as quickly as possible* as well as with various lexical choices whose inherent meaning includes urgency.

Member States are depicted as passive and in need of help, dealing with problems. Lexical choices and verb conceptualization play an important role in this predication, because Member States usually receive help and are allowed something. They rarely carry the semantic role of Agent, and when they do, it is usually verbs like *requesting* (help) in the sense of asking for something they may or may not be given.

Situation is shown differently in different press releases. It ranges from very dangerous and a serious threat to not so dramatic problem. It could be argued that as time passes, in the later published press releases, there is less evoking of the semantic field of war in describing the

situation, and more focus is given to the economic crisis. Semantic field of war, more prominent in the earlier press releases, is mainly evoked through lexical choices. In the later press releases, COVID-19 pandemic is a cause of the (coming) economic crisis. Deliberate or not, MEPs can do very little regarding the pandemic itself, but they can do a lot regarding the mitigating the economic crisis (caused by the pandemic) consequences. So, MEPs are characterized in the context of the economic crisis, rather than directly pandemic, and in such a situation they are shown as those fighting for help and ensuring that the economic crisis does not become too serious of a problem. Most likely for the same reason, pandemic is referred to quite rarely, and focus is rather on the economic crisis caused by it. Unlike the pandemic, MEPs can do something about the economic crisis. Presenting them in the context of the pandemic would inevitably show them as helpless, but in the economic crisis they are capable and proactive.

ECA's press releases, to a certain extent, focus more on the situation in the EU and ECA's verdict on the way EU's is responding to the situation, rather than on the ECA itself. The press release in which ECA announces changes in its work program is the only press release in which the topic is ECA itself. ECA's role is to audit EU's finances, so their communication focuses largely on how well the finances have been managed and where there is room for improvement. In other words, they are the institution that signals what is wrong, what is problematic in the manner EU is spending money. Such a role means that they are expected to give critique. Critique is present in their press releases, but in a very indirect and toned down. Concrete strategies by which press release authors achieve such critique include modality, lexical choices with as little negative connotation and positive connotation whenever possible, implicit sub-clauses with no agency and passive structures in which it is not clear who has not done something or who should do something. Also, instead of saying what is wrong, they frequently say what should be done, and thus readers infer that what is being done now is wrong or insufficient. When looking at the texts in their entirety, it is noticeable that more positive than negative information are present, thus balancing out the possible negative consequences of critique. The same can be concluded about theme-rheme organization. Positive aspects are frequently thematized, so that the negative part comes only after something good has already been said. Furthermore, ECA presents itself as serving others, which is constantly being underlined. Their reviews and their verdicts are there to serve others, and not simply to criticize. This even further eliminates perception of their documents as critique. Even when problematic facts are expressed (as positively as possible, but still with obvious negative aspect to it), they

are frequently in sub-clause to a main clause such as “Auditors see”. So, the critique hidden behind is a perception verb.

Even though not as strongly as in EP press releases, in ECA press releases auditors and ECA are presented in a favorable light also by assigning them the semantic role of Agent and by active voice sentences. In addition, there is a hidden self-praise achieved by implication through the use of adverbs. Frequently these adverbs imply that ECA’s work has been constant, good and useful for quite some time now and shows their constant strive for greatness. Pandemic, on the other hand, is not as much referred to as in the EP press releases. It is given less importance, less relevance, even though lexically it may be mentioned more. However, it is not necessarily as strong of a threat. For example, in the sentence *to counter economic impact of COVID-19* words *counter* and *impact* do not have strong negative connotation and do not imply as great of a threat as words related to the semantic field of war. It could be said that pandemic is in ECA’s press releases simply the situational context in which they all now operate, but it is not used as much in order to characterize others in relation to it.

What both institutions have in common in their press releases is the underlying premise that the situation is bad and therefore member states and their citizens need help. The EU is there to help. In addition, even though both EP and ECA are presented as serving others (member states, EU, etc.), there is a substantial difference. EP has more power – it can ensure money, make decisions, etc.; ECA, on the other hand, is there to pass judgement, to say whether money was spent well (correctly) or not. This difference, offering information versus ensuring financial means, is also mirrored in the language their authors employ.

Corpus analysis yielded some significant results as well. Frequency word lists, KWIC and searching for words in context showed certain particularities of the choice of verbs in ECA and EP press releases. In many cases, high frequencies of certain words further support what has already been identified in individual analyses. What stood out was that *however* was in top 100 most frequent words in ECA press releases, and modal verbs *could*, *should*, *would* in EP press releases. The former can be explained with tendency of ECA writers to offer a positive piece of information followed by a negative one, and the latter further confirms what has already been explained about the modality use in EP press releases. Eye-catching was also the frequency of the verb *want*. It is used 7 times in these six press releases, and it is mostly something that MEPs want. This helps to characterize them as requesting something – they have the right to it – and what they are requesting is connected to helping Member States. This

is a different kind of requesting than that of member states. EP is giving orders, while member states are asking for something. Given the topics of the press releases, Covid-19 pandemic and finance, it came as no surprise that among most frequent words in ECA press releases there were *support*, *medical*, *challenges*, *outbreak*, *mitigating*, and *risk*. The words also summarize how ECA press releases authors approach pandemic: as not too serious of a threat, and definitely not within the semantic field of war. Similarly, the frequency of words such as *support*, *increase*, and *ensure* in EP press releases perfectly captures what MEPs are doing (or at least are presented to be doing): they are providing support to Member States, increasing funding and ensuring that Member States receive help.

KWIC analysis was done comparing ECA and EP press releases to Paul Baker's BE06 corpus and AmE06 corpus. Unsurprising was the frequency of words related to Covid, pandemic, and vaccines. Some of the words had higher frequencies because of the differences in spelling. Word *to* was on that list too, and it could be linked to implicit sub-clauses thus confirming that they are used in press releases more frequently than would be considered average, thus confirming the findings of the DHA analyses. There are also words such as *debt*, *hardest*, *imbalances*, whose frequencies are a result of the chosen topic. Interesting is the frequency of verb *obtained* in EP press releases. It is usually used to say that MEPs obtained something – and this further confirms that in EP press releases a lot of what is said revolves around what MEPs are doing, and, even more specifically, what they are doing to help Member States.

Searching for words in context showed several interesting facts. First of all, it can be seen that words such as *pandemic*, *Covid-19*, *crisis*, and *Coronavirus* are not always said in the negative context. Almost the opposite is the case. These words could be the most negatively connoted ones in the sentences in which they appear. This shows that the situation is not being described as too dangerous. There are, however, expressions such as *to fight the pandemic* and *to combat the pandemic*, but looked at in a wider context, this fight- and war-like perception is down-toned with a positive outlook on the results of this fight and combat. In a way, this contrast between the really dangerous situation and the success of the EU makes the success appear even greater. It can be concluded that even though fighting is frequently evoked in the press releases, it is not that often that the pandemic is being fought. Pandemic, or crisis, or its effects are more frequently being mitigated or tackled, thus confirming that the EU, EP, and ECA are being presented in the context in which they can appear the best (helping the economic crisis

caused by the pandemic) and not in the pandemic, where they are helpless in the fight against the virus.

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Appendix I: Selected press releases

Appendix I: Press releases

PR.EP.01

Press release

13-03-2020 - 15:15
20200313IPR74903



1 Parliament mobilised to channel EU funds to those 2 affected by Coronavirus pandemic

- 3 • All measures to fight the COVID-19 outbreak and its effects are a priority for the European
4 Parliament as co-legislator and budget authority
- 5 • REGI Committee to start working on proposed measures to provide support for regions and
6 communities which are hit the hardest



EP mobilised to channel EU funds to those affected by Coronavirus pandemic

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Press switchboard number (32-2) 28 33000

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7 The Regional Development Committee is ready to find the most efficient way possible to
8 allow the Corona Response Investment Initiative to be adopted and swiftly implemented.

9 EP Regional Development Committee Chair, Younous Omarjee (GUE/NGL, FR) said: "Europe
10 must show solidarity right now. Cohesion policy is intrinsically linked to solidarity and now more
11 than ever, it must rise to the challenge, so that it is implemented as efficiently as possible. The
12 Regional Development Committee will do its utmost to ensure that money is made available
13 where it is most needed."

14 **Next steps**

15 Amending EU funding rules falls under the co-decision procedure, so both Parliament and
16 Council will need to adopt it. The Regional Development Committee bureau and coordinators
17 will discuss the procedure and announce next steps to be taken as soon as possible. The
18 committee will aim to conclude its examination of the proposal as quickly as possible.

19 The adoption of the amendment will allow the funding to be channelled towards affected areas
20 and sectors.

21 **Background**

22 On 10 March, the European Commission announced it would bring out a "Corona Response
23 Investment Initiative" directed at health care systems, SMEs, labour markets and other
24 vulnerable parts of the EU member states' economies. A legislative proposal to amend the
25 Common Provisions Regulation, the European Regional Development Fund and the European
26 Maritime and Fisheries Fund regulations were published on 13 March.

27 Commission proposed to direct EUR 37 billion under the cohesion policy to the fight against the
28 Coronavirus crisis, by means of relinquishing this year its obligation to request the return of pre-
29 financing for the structural funds. This amounts to about EUR 8 billion from the EU budget,
30 which Member States will be able to use to supplement EUR 29 billion of structural funding
31 across the EU. In addition, the Commission proposed to extend the scope of the EU Solidarity
32 Fund by also including a public health crisis within its scope, in view of mobilising it if needed for
33 the hardest hit Member States.

Press release

Further information

Statement by Parliament President David Sassoli following announcement from the European Commission of measures to address COVID-19
European Commission proposal for a Regulation on COVID-19 Response Investment Initiative
Commission Communication on the economic aspects of the COVID-19 crisis
Press release (European Commission): COVID-19: Commission sets out European coordinated response to counter the economic impact of the Coronavirus (13.03.2020)
Press release (European Commission): Commission will use all the tools at its disposal to make sure the European economy weathers the storm (10.03.2020)
European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control website on COVID-19

Committee on Regional Development

[EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material](#)

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Press release

21-04-2020 - 20:08
20200419IPR77414



1 More ambition needed for EU recovery 2 instruments, says majority of MEPs



To respect precautionary measures, most MEPs and speakers attended the committee debate via videoconference. ©European Union

- 3 Days after Eurogroup proposals for mitigating the economic crisis due to COVID-19 and
4 ahead of the European Council, MEPs met with Eurogroup President Mario Centeno.
- 5 During the hearing in the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee, numerous MEPs called for
6 stronger measures to be put forward, arguing that the ones currently on the table consisted
7 mostly of loans which would leave those countries most hit by the Coronavirus heavily indebted
8 and increase economic divergence in the Eurozone.
- 9 Mr Centeno agreed that more ambition should be sought after but also cautioned that
10 pragmatism would also need to be the order of the day. Notably, he recommended against

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11 exploring instruments which would require any review of the Treaties.

12 **Tabled proposals – a good first step or a non-starter?**

13 MEPs were quick to present diverging views with Markus Ferber (EPP, DE) asking why was it
14 that some countries said that they would not avail themselves of the assistance instruments
15 currently being proposed and yet called for additional instruments to be devised. Jonás
16 Fernández (S&D, ES) however pointed out that the proposals currently on the table only
17 provided for liquidity through loans and already indebted countries could not afford to borrow
18 more. Various MEPs who took the floor shared Mr Fernandez's sentiment.

19 **Ideas for bolder instruments**

20 Some MEPs put forward their group's ideas for bolder ways to mitigate the crisis. Stéphanie
21 Yon-Courtin (Renew Europe, FR) put forward the idea of establishing Recovery Bonds and
22 asked how they could be designed in such a way as to bring the more reticent member states
23 on board. José Gusmão (GUE/NGL, PT) said that the ECB should be given more room for
24 action by changing the rules which restrict its action. Antonio Rinaldi (ID, IT) argued that it was
25 impossible for such a big crisis to be overcome with such a limited ECB, adding that all other
26 central banks have many more options open to them.

27 **The danger of widening imbalances**

28 Some MEPs outlined the danger of the economic imbalances, which will be created as a result
29 of the pandemic, and that the risk that recovery efforts, if not well coordinated at EU level, will
30 actually increase these imbalances. Sven Giegold (Greens, DE) pointed out that those member
31 states with more fiscal space would be able to support their businesses much more than those
32 countries with less, and this all the more so if the EU support instruments were only a loan type.
33 Roberts Zile (ECR, LV) warned that if the EU recovery funds were to take time to be in place,
34 the national support funds, mostly in place very quickly, would increase disparities in the single
35 market.

36 **Further information**

37 [Audiovisual package related to the meeting](#)
38 [European Parliament resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the](#)
39 [COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences](#)
40 [Profile of the Chair of the committee, Irene Tinagli \(S&D, IT\)](#)
41 [Catch up via Video on Demand \(VOD\)](#)
42 [Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs](#)

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Press release

27-04-2020 - 21:36
20200427IPR77907



1 MEPs call for concrete details and novel tools to 2 address the economic crisis

3 **MEPs on Monday quizzed Commissioners Dombrovskis and Gentiloni on planned**
4 **measures to tackle the looming economic crisis due to COVID-19.**

5 Opening the discussion held within the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee, Committee
6 Chair Irene Tinagli (S&D, IT) underlined that although the measures agreed by the European
7 Council were to be welcomed, more was needed, including fresh funds. "At stake is more than
8 solidarity", Ms Tinagli said, explaining that "the divergences that risk being created could lead to
9 unprecedented pressure for the European Union".

10 The divergences on the horizon were highlighted by both Mr Dombrovskis and Mr Gentiloni,
11 who agreed that this was the primary reason that more measures were needed to help the
12 hardest hit regions and countries.

13 **The devil is in the detail**

14 Various MEPs asked for more details on the planned interplay between the EU's long-term
15 budget and the envisaged recovery fund. Many also wanted to find out more about how the
16 recovery fund would function, especially regarding what proportion would consist of grants.
17 Questions were also asked regarding the mechanism for allocating the fund's money between
18 the countries.

19 **Finding the middle ground**

20 Some MEPs raised concerns that, however they were named, the measures being considered
21 would invariably take the EU down the road of mutualising debt in one form or another. On the
22 other hand, other MEPs argued that the ideas on the table did not seem credible or useful. Not
23 credible because leveraging guarantees with funds from private investors would be very difficult
24 in times of crisis and not useful because some countries could not afford to be saddled with
25 further debt.

26 **No stone unturned**

27 A few MEPs underlined the need, now more than ever, to ensure that the EU does all that it can
28 to ensure that tax fraud and tax havens are tackled more effectively. This would ensure that

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29 more money would be available to deal with the fallout from COVID-19.

30 You can catch up with the debate [here](#).

31 **Further information**

32 [Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs](#)

33 [EP resolution on dealing with COVID-19 pandemic](#)

34 [Profile of the chair of the committee, Irene Tinagli \(S&D, IT\)](#)

35 [Watch the debate again](#)

36 [EP research - Developing a pandemic emergency purchase programme: Unconventional](#)

37 [monetary policy to tackle the coronavirus crisis](#)

38 [EP research - Thematic Digest on EU Economic Governance during the pandemic](#)

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Press release

19-05-2020 - 19:50
20200515IPR79218



COVID-19: MEPs urge quick action to prevent “huge recession”

In an EP webinar on the EU's long-term budget and response to the crisis, MEPs urged that the recovery fund must be set up as soon as possible to prevent a major recession.

In Tuesday's [EP webinar for journalists](#) on the EU long-term budget and Europe's economic recovery plan, MEPs welcomed the recent French-German proposal for a €500 billion recovery fund and reiterated [Parliament's position on the recovery plan as adopted in the recent plenary session](#).

Parliament will hear Commission President von der Leyen present the revised Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and recovery plan proposals and hold a debate in plenary session on the afternoon of Wednesday 27 May.

[Johan Van Overtveldt](#) (ECR, BE), Chair of the Committee on Budgets, warned that the current economic situation might be getting out of hand and demanded quick action: “COVID-19 is still a major health crisis, and we realise that, slowly but surely, it is transforming into a huge recession. In the coming days and weeks, we have to work out how to reconcile solidarity with responsibility. [...] If we don't stop the recession in its tracks as soon as possible, we might be confronted with what I define as a new financial hurricane.”

[José Manuel FERNANDES](#) (EPP, PT), co-rapporteur for the EU's Own Resources (EU revenue), said that the French-German initiative is a “step in the right direction” and underlined that the recovery fund is needed immediately, as the MFF will not be in place before 2021. On member states' reticence until now to agree on a robust long-term budget, Mr Fernandes said: “Member states do not say to what extent they want to cut cohesion or agriculture funding. They want to keep their envelopes. They all want to increase research funding. The Commission wants a ‘geopolitical Europe’ and to finance the Green Deal. We therefore need the means to honour these commitments.”

[Margarida MARQUES](#) (S&D, PT), co-rapporteur for the MFF, insisted that the recovery fund must be anchored to the MFF. “The EU's answer to the crisis is based on the MFF and the recovery fund. The MFF can also be a platform to access other financing sources, like the EIB or the ESM.” The three main priorities now are to “repair the internal market in the wake of state aid measures, set up the economic and social recovery plan and, thirdly, increase the EU's

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31 resilience.”

32 Valérie HAYER (Renew, FR), co-rapporteur for the EU’s Own Resources, said: “According to
33 the Commission’s latest forecasts, the EU economy will face a 7.5% GDP decrease in 2020.
34 That is tragic. It corresponds to around €1 trillion. The EP is asking for a €2 trillion plan that
35 should include loans but mostly grants.”

36 On the French-German initiative, Ms Hayer highlighted: “It goes in the right way - the
37 Parliament’s way. The two countries agreed to raise common debt [...] and on direct spending,
38 and that is very important.” She welcomed that the initiative leaves the door open to introduce
39 new Own Resources to pay back the debt.

40 Luis GARICANO (Renew, ES), also highlighted new Own Resources as a useful initiative: “The
41 key issue is how to fund this package. The Parliament here is very clear. It offers member states
42 a good bargain: we realise that EU countries have limited abilities to increase their direct
43 contribution to the EU budget. We think that there is a comparative advantage in collecting
44 certain types of revenue, for example a digital tax that allows member states not to increase
45 their contribution. Let’s raise taxes from these sources of revenue which are now unexploited
46 and help pay the interest on this long-term debt generated by the recovery plan.”

47 Ernest URTASUN (The Greens/European Free Alliance, ES) said: “The recovery fund must not
48 be created at the expense of the MFF. It would be a bad solution to have a strong recovery fund
49 frontloading MFF spending, and then have a very weak MFF in three or four years’ time. We
50 need both: a strong recovery fund and a strong MFF, because after the recovery, the urgent
51 climate and digital challenges will remain.”

52 [Watch the full webinar](#)

53 **Background**

54 As the current long-term EU budget runs out on 31 December 2020, the EU needs a new
55 budgetary planning horizon for the next seven years. The EU Commission thus presented plans
56 for the next MFF for 2021-2027 in [May 2018](#). Parliament adopted its position in [November 2018](#)
57 , and re-confirmed it in [October 2019](#), updating it recently through two plenary resolutions on 17
58 [April](#) and on 15 May 2020. The Council has not yet been able to agree on a position.

59 **Further information**

60 [Committee on Budgets](#)

61 [Parliament: EU27 need €2 trillion recovery package to tackle COVID-19 fallout](#)

62 [Press release: “Parliament: EU27 need €2 trillion recovery package to tackle COVID-19](#)
63 [fallout” \(15/05/2020\)](#)

64 [EP resolution of 15 May 2020 on the new multiannual financial framework, own resources and](#)
65 [the recovery plan](#)



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Press release

09-11-2020 - 21:25
20201105IPR90912



COVID-19: first go-ahead given to the new Recovery and Resilience Facility

- €672.5 billion in grants and loans to support EU countries for four years
- Funds available only to member states that respect the rule of law
- EU funding should be visible and implemented transparently

On Monday, MEPs adopted the Recovery and Resilience Facility, an instrument designed to help EU countries tackling the effects and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Budgets and Economic and Monetary Affairs committees adopted the objectives, financing and the rules for providing funding from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), with 73 votes to 11 and 15 abstentions.

MEPs also adopted a mandate to enter into negotiations with EU governments by 84 votes to 11 and 4 abstentions. They want the mandate to be announced during the upcoming plenary of 11-13 November, to be able to start the talks without delay.

Eligibility to receive funding

MEPs agreed that the RRF should only be made available to member states committed to respecting the rule of law and the European Union's fundamental values. National recovery and resilience plans would be eligible for financing if they are consistent with six EU priorities - green transition, digital transformation, economic cohesion and competitiveness, social and territorial cohesion, institutional crisis-reaction and crisis preparedness, as well as with Next Generation EU policies, which include the European Skills Agenda, the Youth Guarantee and the Child Guarantee.

MEPs also want each plan to contribute at least 40% of its budget to climate and biodiversity and at least 20% to digital actions. The plans should have a lasting impact on EU countries in both social and economic terms and provide comprehensive reform and a robust investment package.

Availability of funding

MEPs want the amount of €672.5 billion euros in grants and loans to be available to finance national measures designed to alleviate the economic and social consequences of the pandemic, which will be in place from 1 February 2020 onwards. They also want the funding to

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30 be available for four years (instead of three as in the Council position) and for EU governments
31 to be able to request up to 20% pre-financing for their recovery and resilience plans, instead of
32 proposed 10%, so that they can react faster and do more.

33 Transparency and communication

34 MEPs from the both committees demanded that the Commission (responsible for the RFF
35 implementation) be accountable to the EP, including by submitting a report twice a year
36 outlining how the targets and milestones have been implemented as well as the amounts paid to
37 each EU country. They also stressed that the recipients should ensure that spending under the
38 RRF is visible by clearly labelling the supported projects as "European Union Recovery
39 Initiative".

Further information

[Procedure file](#)

Rapporteur: Siegfried MUREȘAN (EPP, RO)

Rapporteur: Eider GARDIAZABAL RUBIAL (S&D, ES)

Rapporteur: Dragoș PÎSLARU (Renew, RO)

EP Think Tank: Recovery and Resilience Facility: Key features and developments

EP Research in-depth analysis: How to provide political guidance to the Recovery and Resilience Facility

Recovery and Resilience Facility (European Commission)

Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

Committee on Budgets

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Press release

04-12-2020 - 14:27
20201127IPR92635



1 EU Budget 2021 deal: supporting the recovery

- 2 • Provisional agreement reached on Friday
- 3 • Boosting funds for transport infrastructure, Digital Europe, climate action
- 4 • First annual budget of new seven-year financial framework

5 **MEPs have fought for and obtained better support for key EU programmes creating jobs,**
6 **tackling the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and boosting climate action.**

7 On Friday, the negotiators from the European Parliament and the Council reached a common
8 understanding on the 2021 EU Budget.

9 The preliminary figures are €164.3 billion in commitment appropriations and €166.1 billion in
10 payment appropriations. Detailed figures will be available later.

11 For a more competitive Europe, creating jobs and investing in the EU's future

12 MEPs succeeded in reinforcing, on top of the Commission's original budget proposal,
13 programmes they considered key to boosting growth and jobs, reflecting widely agreed
14 European Union priorities, namely Digital Europe (+25.7 million) and the Connecting Europe
15 Facility (CEF) for transport infrastructure (+€60.3 million).

16 Strengthen respect for Europe's values and boosting climate action

17 As a supplementary effort to fight climate change, the reinforcements obtained by the EP for the
18 LIFE programme (+€42 million) aim at contributing from the outset to reaching the target of 30%
19 of climate-relevant spending in the EU budget for the 2021-2027 period.

20 The Rights and Values programme will receive an additional €6.6 million, and the European
21 Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), an independent Union body aiming to fight crimes against
22 the Union budget will benefit from an extra €7.3 million.

23 MFF top-ups: supporting the young, EU research and healthcare

24 Other reinforcements for 2021 reflect the [top-ups to selected key EU programmes](#) Parliament
25 obtained in the [deal with Council on the next long-term EU budget \(MFF\) 2021-2027](#).

EN

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European Parliament - Spokesperson: Jaume Duch Guitart
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1 1 3

26 This is the case for Erasmus+ (+€175.1 million), Horizon Europe (research programme, +€20
27 million) and the EU4Health programme, the EU's response to COVID-19, by a further €74.3
28 million. EU4Health will support medical and healthcare staff, patients and health systems.
29 Similarly, the commitment appropriations for humanitarian aid have been increased by €25
30 million and for supporting the EU's southern neighbourhood by 10.2 million.

31 Quotes

32 "I'm pleased we could reach a swift agreement in the interest of European citizens in these
33 challenging times. With the top-ups for some of the future-looking programmes agreed in the
34 multi-annual framework just weeks ago, we obtained budget increases for other programmes
35 with proven European added value. These extra investments in, for example, the trans-
36 European transport networks and digital Europe all answer to real needs and are in line with the
37 expectations of EU citizens", said the Chair of the Budgets committee [Johan van Overtveldt](#)
38 (ECR, BE).

39 "Parliament and Council today reached an agreement on the 2021 EU budget. 164 billion euros
40 to protect citizens, reduce the immediate impact of the crisis and prepare for a more
41 prosperous, balanced and sustainable future. In the last two days of the negotiations,
42 Parliament secured an additional 183 million euros for its priorities: health, climate and
43 employment. Considering the very rigid framework, this is a good result. Faced with
44 governments that were unwilling to give up one cent, Parliament did its utmost and obtained
45 additional increases. But, in all conscience, we all know that this budget is not up to the task. It
46 was the maximum that could be obtained given the multiannual budget that was negotiated with
47 heads of state who decide unanimously.

48 But the good news is that there is a solution that can mobilise more than 50 billion euros per
49 year for health, climate and employment, and that will not be blocked by the unanimity rule:
50 taxing speculation by relaunching the existing reinforced cooperation on this subject. I call on
51 the leaders of these pioneering countries, starting with Ms Merkel and Mr Macron, to get to work
52 on this tax without delay", said the lead rapporteur (Commission section) [Pierre Larouttouriou](#)
53 (S&D, FR).

54 "Thanks to the united position of the EP, we have reached a very good political agreement on
55 the 2021 budget of the European Union institutions, despite a difficult context of crisis. My
56 concern throughout these negotiations was to ensure that all the institutions of the Union, i.e.
57 the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the European Ombudsman, the Committee of the
58 Regions, the Economic and Social Committee, the European Data Protection Supervisor,....
59 have sufficient resources and staff to enable them to fulfill their missions as well as possible and
60 to function optimally. This was made possible following our commitment to save money in
61 connection with the changes in our activities during the COVID-19 pandemic", said the
62 rapporteur for the other sections, [Oliver Chastel](#) (RENEW, BE).



63 **Next steps**

64 In the absence of an agreement in Council on the EU's long-term budget (MFF, Multiannual
65 Financial Framework 2021-2027), the two arms of the EU's budgetary authority, Parliament and
66 Council, have not formalised their deal. Once the MFF is adopted, Commission will propose the
67 substance of the agreement as second draft budget.

68 Once Council has formally adopted the compromise in the form of this second draft budget, it
69 will be submitted for approval to the Committee on Budgets, then voted on in plenary in the
70 European Parliament and signed into law by its President.

71 **Further information**

72 [Committee on Budgets](#)
73 [European Parliament webpage on the 2021 budget](#)
74 [EU Commission webpage on the 2021 budget](#)
75 [Council webpage on the 2021 budget](#)
76

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ECA measures taken in view of the COVID-19 pandemic

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has taken the necessary steps to be able to continue providing an effective public audit service in the EU, and to deliver timely audit reports, opinions and reviews, during the COVID-19 pandemic, as far as this is possible in these challenging times. At the same time, we express our gratitude to all those who work to save lives and fight the pandemic, in Luxembourg, in the EU and around the world. We also remain committed to supporting the Luxembourg government's policy on safeguarding public health. We are mitigating the effects of the ongoing health crisis on our staff and have taken precautionary measures to minimise to the extent possible the risk for them and their families.

Press Release

Luxembourg, 15 April 2020

1 Mitigating the COVID-19 outbreak using EU structural funds 2 requires a balance between more flexibility and 3 accountability, say Auditors

4 The European Commission is proposing a temporary relaxation of spending rules for the European
5 structural and investment (ESI) funds in order to help Member States in mitigating the effects of the
6 COVID-19 outbreak. While EU support needs to be available to Member States as soon as possible,
7 relaxing the procedures in place entails risks, according to a new opinion from the European Court
8 of Auditors (ECA).

9 The Commission's proposal is part of the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis. In particular, as an
10 exceptional measure, new rules are proposed to transfer ESI funds faster to the Member States and
11 give them greater flexibility to target EU support where it is most needed. For example, this would
12 allow Member States to request 100 % EU funding without putting up their own co-financing or
13 needing to devote a fixed share to key topics such as research or climate. In addition, they could more
14 easily transfer funds between their programmes and regions and decide themselves where they want
15 to target them.

16 "The current situation requires the urgent mobilisation of all available financial means to address the
17 effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on health, businesses and citizens," said Iliana Ivanova, the ECA
18 Member responsible for the opinion. "This short-term reaction proposed by the Commission is

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' opinion. The full opinion is available at eca.europa.eu.

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19 *necessary to support Member States in mitigating the crisis effects, but the right balance should be set*
 20 *and this proposal should not lead to substantial compromises in terms of accountability”.*

21 The auditors note that the proposal does not provide additional clarification on the intended nature
 22 of operations for fostering crisis response capacities. They also highlight that reliable information
 23 about ESI fund spending in response to the COVID-19 outbreak would not be readily available to the
 24 Commission or the legislators, potentially affecting accountability to EU citizens for the use of funds.

25 The Commission will have to monitor the developing situation carefully to ensure the temporary and
 26 exceptional measures are in place only as long as the extraordinary situation requires, say the
 27 auditors. While some measures would be available for a fixed period, others could remain until the
 28 end of 2023, when the current programme payment period ends. This would allow Member States to
 29 finance their crisis response operations, and fund COVID-19-related measures that they have already
 30 undertaken.

31 The Commission’s proposal is currently being discussed by the two legislators – the European
 32 Parliament and the Council – and is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks.

33 Notes to editors

34 The ECA’s Opinion 3/2020 on amending the EU regulation on the use of the European Structural and
 35 Investments Funds in response to the COVID-19 outbreak was requested by the European Parliament
 36 and Council in line with the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It is currently available on the ECA
 37 website eca.europa.eu in English; other languages to follow shortly. The auditors previously issued an
 38 [opinion](#) on the proposed 2021-2027 Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) in 2018 and will shortly
 39 issue another one on the proposed modified CPR proposal for 2021-2027.

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Press release

Luxembourg, 28 May 2020

EU's public health and economic response to COVID-19 to be reviewed by Auditors

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has revised its 2020 work programme today to shift the focus of its work towards COVID-19-related aspects: it has adjusted the scope, approach and timing of a number of ongoing tasks and, in addition, decided to discontinue some tasks initially planned to start in 2020. The EU's external auditor has also added two new reviews to the programme: one on the EU's contribution to the public health and another on its economic policy response to the coronavirus pandemic. The aim of both reviews is to contribute to public discussion on how the EU and its Member States have dealt with the effects of the pandemic. In addition, they will contribute to the lessons-learned exercise and the debate on the role of the EU and its bodies during this and future crises.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges for the EU and its Member States, and across a broad range of policy areas. The ECA has revised its programme to ensure that its work in 2020 responds to these challenges as far as possible and in a flexible manner. Where appropriate, the auditors have re-scoped their ongoing tasks and adjusted the approach and timeline to take account of changed and changing circumstances. They have also decided to discontinue four tasks and add two reviews with a specific focus on the COVID-19 crisis.

"The European Commission and other EU and national bodies responsible for implementing EU policies and programmes are still operating in crisis mode. We understand their current constraints in dealing with audits and our auditors will take every care not to overburden them and compromise their pressing work in responding to the crisis," said ECA President Klaus-Heiner Lehne. "With this COVID-19 revision of our work programme, we want to ensure that our audits and reviews will contribute to public discussion on how well the EU and its Member States have dealt with the effects of the pandemic."

The two new reviews will provide an independent, objective and impartial review of the EU's actions and role in tackling the crisis in two key areas:

- The public health response to COVID-19, with its grave economic and social consequences, is the stated priority of EU policymakers and public administrations throughout Europe. The EU's response is already under the spotlight, with tensions between EU legal responsibilities and public expectations, as well as the certainty of intense political discussions at the highest level. The main purpose of this review will be to look at the

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- 32 actions taken and resources used by the Commission and EU agencies to protect the
33 public's health in response to the pandemic.
- 34 - The review of the economic response will focus on measures and challenges in the context
35 of EU economic coordination, providing a comprehensive stocktake of the EU's and
36 Member States' economic policy actions to combat the pandemic. It will reflect their costs
37 and governance arrangements, as well as mapping the risks and opportunities for the
38 future of EU fiscal and economic coordination stemming from the decisions that the
39 Member States and EU authorities have taken and will have to take in the near future.
- 40 Each of these reviews will give a descriptive overview of the facts in the respective area and an
41 informative assessment of significant financial management, governance, transparency and
42 accountability issues. They will mainly draw on publicly available documentation and help to
43 identify specific issues requiring further, more detailed audit work, and will serve as preparation for
44 such audits.
- 45 The ECA's revised 2020 work programme is available on its website eca.europa.eu.

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ECA measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has taken the necessary steps to be able to continue providing an effective public audit service in the EU, and to deliver timely audit reports, opinions and reviews during the COVID-19 pandemic, as far as this is possible in these challenging times. At the same time, we express our gratitude to all those who are working to save lives and fight the pandemic, in Luxembourg, in the EU and around the world. We also remain committed to supporting the Luxembourg government's policy on safeguarding public health. We are mitigating the effects of the ongoing health crisis on our staff and have taken precautions to minimise the risk to them and their families.



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Press Release

Luxembourg, 9 December 2020

1 COVID-19 crisis risks widening the economic gap between EU 2 countries

3 The early measures taken by the EU and its Member States to counter the economic impact of
4 COVID-19 have helped save jobs and businesses, according to the European Court of Auditors
5 (ECA). However, the auditors also see the risk that the pandemic's uneven impact on Member
6 States and their differing capacities to support their economies may serve to widen the economic
7 gap between them. They also view the currently proposed EU financial response to the crisis as
8 an opportunity to promote EU priorities and to reflect on long-term improvements to strengthen
9 economic coordination between Member States. At the same time, the auditors note risks and
10 challenges relating to the implementation and the coordination of these measures.

11 In response to the economic shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Member States adopted a
12 wide range of fiscal measures to support their economies. As of July, the value of the 1 250
13 measures was around €3.5 trillion or 27 % of EU-27 gross domestic product (GDP). Job retention
14 schemes and liquidity support made up most of the measures, which have so far largely mitigated
15 layoffs. However, these national fiscal measures will considerably increase countries' budget
16 deficits and public debt levels. Moreover, their size and composition reflects the Member States'
17 relative wealth, rather than how badly the crisis has affected them. The auditors also warn about
18 the risks of economic divergence and distortions of the level playing field between Member States.

19 *"The Member States' crisis response measures saved jobs and businesses, but inevitably lead to*
20 *rising budget deficits. We see a risk that this will curtail the economic convergence in the years to*
21 *come,"* said Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, the ECA Member responsible for the review. *"A challenge for the EU's*
22 *governance will be to return to current fiscal rules or design new ones without hampering post-*
23 *pandemic recoveries or debt sustainability."*

24 The EU reacted by rapidly deploying flexible economic coordination. This allowed Member States
25 to cushion the emerging economic crisis via fiscal stimuli, temporary state aid and suspended
26 budgetary ceilings (the "escape clause"). The EU also mobilised available funds and created new
27 safety nets for businesses, governments and employees. However, there had been no large
28 payouts by the end of August 2020.

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' review. The full review is available at
eca.europa.eu.

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29 Moreover, in July 2020, the European Council agreed the €750 billion Next Generation EU
 30 programme to support the return to sustainable and resilient recovery. Together with its next
 31 seven-year budget, the EU's financial support will thus amount to €1.8 trillion. The auditors warn,
 32 however, that there is no guarantee these measures will boost sustainable growth and increase
 33 convergence between Member States. The effectiveness of the support will depend crucially on
 34 how well it addresses the actual impact of the crisis and increases the Member States' capacity to
 35 support their own economies and implement new measures adequately.

36 Background information

37 EU-27 GDP is forecast to contract by 7.4 % in 2020 and may not return to pre-crisis levels in 2021.
 38 This risks significantly increasing insolvencies and job losses. It is probable that almost none of the
 39 27 Member States will remain within the EU deficit limit of 3 % of GDP in 2020.

40 Today, the ECA published review 6/20 "*Risks, challenges and opportunities in the EU's economic policy*
 41 *response to the COVID-19 crisis*", which is currently available in English on eca.europa.eu; other
 42 languages will be added in due course. In January 2021, it will publish a review of the EU's public health
 43 response to COVID-19. The ECA decided to launch both reviews in Spring 2020 shortly after the outbreak
 44 of the pandemic.

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Press Release

Luxembourg, 18 January 2021

The EU's initial response to COVID-19: learning lessons to improve European cooperation in public health

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has reviewed the EU's initial response to the COVID-19 crisis and draws attention to certain challenges faced by the EU in its support for Member States' public health actions. These include setting an appropriate framework for cross-border health threats, facilitating provision of appropriate supplies in a crisis and supporting the development of vaccines.

The EU's public health competences are limited. It mainly supports the coordination of Member State actions (through the Health Security Committee), facilitates procurement of medical equipment (by creating joint procurement framework contracts), and gathers information/assesses risks (through the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control - ECDC). Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU took further action to address urgent issues, facilitating the supply of medical equipment and information exchange between Member States, as well as promoting testing, treatment and vaccine research. It allocated 3 % of its annual budget by 30 June 2020 to support public health related measures.

"It was a challenge for the EU to rapidly complement the measures taken within its formal remit and support the public health response to the COVID-19 crisis," said Joëlle Elvinger, the ECA member responsible for the review. "It is too soon to audit ongoing actions or assess the impact of COVID-19 related public health EU initiatives, but these experiences can provide lessons for any future reform of the EU's competences in this field".

In a [2016 audit report](#), the auditors had already flagged weaknesses in the use of the EU's 2013 legal framework for dealing with serious cross-border health threats. Some issues, such as preparedness planning have proved to be persistent.

It was challenging for the ECDC to manage the timeliness, quality and completeness of information received from Member States, and the different surveillance and testing strategies used by the Member States makes comparisons and assessments difficult. The ECDC has cautioned that considerable work still needs to be done to establish and strengthen robust population-based surveillance of COVID-19.

A key test for Member States in addressing the pandemic was ensuring the supply of sufficient

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' review. The full review is available at eca.europa.eu.

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medical equipment. The European Commission took a range of measures to help Member States meet this challenge. These measures included introducing an export authorisation scheme, starting an EU-financed strategic stockpile of medical and personal protective equipment and setting up an online “matchmaking” tool for medical equipment purchases. The Commission also launched joint procurement framework contracts for medical equipment. However, the Member States procured the vast majority of their medical supplies through national procurement pathways.

The EU budget supported a range of actions including COVID-19 research and vaccine advance purchase agreements. By mid-2020, the EU specifically allocated €4.5 billion to public-health related measures and expanded the range of spending eligible for cohesion funding to cover COVID-19 related public health spending. The use of these funds was at an early stage at 30 June 2020.

€547 million from the EU budget were allocated by June 2020 for research on the development of COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines. In the first half of 2020, the Commission also allocated €1.5 billion to fund advance purchase agreements with a range of COVID-19 vaccine developers. To mitigate the inherent risk linked to vaccine development, the Commission’s strategy focused on investing in a range of vaccine technologies and companies. The strategy included funding research on vaccine hesitancy as well as fighting disinformation, which could harm the success of mass immunisation campaigns.

Background information

Public health is primarily a national competence. The COVID-19 pandemic has tested the relatively limited powers assigned to the Union by the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU and the 2013 legal framework for cross-border health threats (Decision 1082/2013). This review does not intend to conclude on the outcomes and impact of the actions taken by June 2020, especially as at the time of writing these are still evolving.

The ECA recently published its [review of the EU economic response to the COVID-19 crisis](#); ECA’s 2021 work programme includes an audit on the health-related actions and vaccine procurement. The ECA’s review No 01/2021 “*The EU’s initial contribution to the public health response to COVID-19*” is available on [eca.europa.eu](#).

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Press Release

Luxembourg, 28 January 2021

1 EU Auditors to focus on Covid-related action in 2021

2 One in four new audits by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) this year will deal with the
3 EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Next Generation EU (NGEU) recovery
4 package, the ECA announced in its audit plan for 2021, published today. Moreover, in the
5 coming five years, the EU auditors will aim to contribute to a more resilient and sustainable
6 European Union which upholds the values on which it is based. They will continue striving to
7 provide citizens with strong audit assurance, improving the accountability and transparency of
8 EU action and auditing its performance in the areas that matter most, according to the
9 institution's new strategy for 2021-2025, also released today.

10 The EU auditors' 2021+ work programme, which extends into the following year, lists 73 special
11 reports and reviews they plan to publish in 2021 and 2022 in four strategic areas:

- 12 • the EU's economic competitiveness and cohesion
- 13 • climate and resource challenges
- 14 • security and European values
- 15 • fiscal policy and public finance.

16 These publications will focus mainly on assessing the performance of EU action in select areas
17 such as vaccine procurement, food security and free movement during the pandemic, national
18 recovery plans, digitalisation of schools, e-government, circular economy, climate
19 mainstreaming, sustainable fishing, fighting fraud in the common agricultural policy, the
20 European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), EU banking supervision, and lobbying of
21 lawmakers. The auditors have selected these areas based on an assessment of the main risks in
22 relation to EU spending and policy delivery.

23 "Our 2021 work programme marks the start of our new strategy that will guide our work as the
24 EU's independent external auditor until 2025," said ECA President Klaus-Heiner Lehne. "EU
25 citizens can continue counting on us on key issues for the future of the EU: we will target our
26 audits at the areas where we can add most value, highlighting what works well and drawing
27 attention to what does not. This also applies to the new EU measures to protect citizens from the
28 adverse effects of the pandemic."

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the ECA's 2021-2025 strategy and 2021+ work programme.
The full documents are on www.eca.europa.eu.

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29 Over the next five years, the auditors will also further develop their audit approach for signing off
 30 the EU accounts and checking whether spending complies with the rules. They will take into
 31 account the far-reaching changes brought by the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework and
 32 the NGEU recovery package, which will affect the financing and use of the EU budget, including
 33 new forms of own resources and a potential shift from eligibility rules to performance-based
 34 aspects. Another area of focus will be cooperating more closely with the EU's fraud-detection
 35 bodies and contributing more to combating fraud in EU spending and revenue collection.

36 The ECA's 2021-2025 strategy also looks at possible changes to the auditors' own mandate. The
 37 institution's main task is to hold to account the various bodies managing EU funds and
 38 implementing EU policies, but there remain accountability and audit gaps. In the coming years,
 39 the EU auditors will therefore seek clear and broader powers to audit not only EU bodies, which
 40 is currently the case, but also key intergovernmental structures relevant to the functioning of the
 41 EU.

42 Background information

43 The ECA's role is to check that EU funds are raised and spent in accordance with the relevant
 44 rules and regulations, and properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively in the
 45 interest of EU citizens. Its audit reports and opinions are an essential element of the EU
 46 accountability chain – they are used to hold to account those responsible for implementing EU
 47 policies and programmes: the Commission, other EU bodies and administrations in Member
 48 States. They also help EU citizens to understand more clearly how the EU and its Member States
 49 are meeting current and future challenges.

50 The ECA's 2021-2025 strategy and 2021+ work programme are available on the ECA website
 51 eca.europa.eu in English; other EU languages will be added shortly.

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Press Release

Luxembourg, 3 March 2021

EU auditors probe the protection of air passenger rights during COVID-19 crisis

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has launched an audit to assess whether the European Commission has been safeguarding effectively the rights of citizens who travelled by plane or booked flights during the coronavirus crisis. The auditors will examine whether the current rules on air passenger rights are fit for purpose and resilient enough to deal with such a crisis. They will check whether the Commission monitored that air passengers' rights were respected during the pandemic and took action accordingly. In addition, they will assess whether Member States took passenger rights into account when granting emergency state aid to the travel and transport industry.

"In times of COVID-19, the EU and Member States have had to strike a balance between preserving air passenger rights and supporting the ailing airlines," says Annemie Turtelboom, the ECA Member leading the audit. "Our audit will check that the rights of millions of air travellers in the EU were not collateral damage in the fight to save struggling airlines."

The COVID-19 outbreak and health measures taken in response have brought about major travel disruption: airlines cancelled around 70 % of all flights and new bookings plummeted. People no longer could or wished to travel, also because of the frequently uncoordinated emergency measures by different countries, such as flight bans, last-minute border closures or quarantine requirements.

EU Member States introduced further emergency measures to keep their struggling transport industry afloat, including airlines, for example by granting them unprecedented amounts of state aid. Some estimates show that throughout the crisis, until December 2020, airlines – including non-EU ones – had obtained or were obtaining up to €37.5 billion in state aid. In addition, twelve Member States notified the Commission of state aid measures to prop up their tour operators and travel agencies to the tune of some €2.6 billion.

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' audit preview. The full preview is available at eca.europa.eu.

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26 Member States also allowed airlines more flexibility in refunding passengers whose flights were
 27 cancelled. The Commission issued guidelines and recommendations, including the fact that
 28 offering vouchers does not affect the passengers' entitlement to a cash refund. However, the
 29 passengers whose flights had been cancelled were often pressured by airlines to accept vouchers
 30 instead of receiving a cash refund. In other cases, airlines did not refund passengers on time or
 31 not at all.

32 The EU auditors' report is expected before the summer holiday with the aim of supporting air
 33 passengers in times of crisis and launching a general attempt to restore trust in aviation. In the
 34 context of this audit, the auditors are also checking whether the recommendations they made in
 35 their [2018 report on passenger rights](#) have been put into practice.

36 Background information

37 Protecting passenger rights is an EU policy with direct impact on citizens and thus highly visible
 38 across Member States. It is also a policy which the Commission considers to be one of its great
 39 successes in empowering consumers, as their rights are guaranteed. The EU aims to provide all
 40 air transport users with the same level of protection. The Air Passenger Rights regulation gives air
 41 travellers the right to cash refunds, to re-routing and on-the-ground support such as free meals
 42 and accommodation if their flights are cancelled or significantly delayed, or if they are denied
 43 boarding. Similar protection exists via a European Directive for people who book package deals
 44 (e.g. a flight plus hotel).

45 For more detail, see the audit preview "Air passenger rights during the Covid-19 crisis", available
 46 in English at eca.europa.eu. Audit previews are based on preparatory work before the start of an
 47 audit, and should not be regarded as audit observations, conclusions or recommendations. The
 48 ECA recently published two reviews of the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis, one on [health](#)
 49 and the other on [economic](#) aspects. Its [work programme for 2021](#) announced that one in four of
 50 its new audits this year will be related to COVID-19 and the recovery package.

51 Press contact for this audit preview

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Appendix II: Results of corpus analysis

Table 7: 100 most frequent words in ECA and EP press releases, grouped thematically

ECA	EP
Function words	
The, to, and, of, in, on, for, s, as, a, will, is, by, its, this, their, an, have, it, these, also, be, has, taken, that, with, between, we, at, they, are, or, our, them, not, was, well, however, two	The, to, and, of, for, that, in, a be, on, as, s, is, with, it, will, by, not, would, this, have, its, they, we, also, from, were, all, which, an, are, further, other, their, was, at, out, should, these, very, want, could, if, or, some
Covid/pandemic	
Covid, health, crisis, measures, pandemic support, medical, vaccine, challenges, outbreak, mitigating, risk	Covid, health, crisis, measures, pandemic Recovery
ECA/EP/EU	
Eu, member, eca, states, public, auditors, economic, European, commission, review, reviews, audit, funds, programme, budget, court, policy, fiscal, framework, opinion, allocated, business, Europa, financial	Eu, meps, budget, european, committee, economic, fund, mff, parliament, ep, countries, commission, council, europe, member, states, funding, funds, adopted, union, agreed, agreement, instruments, obtained Mr
No clear / large-enough category	
Response, work, available, actions, risks, effects, new, range, related, coordination, equipment, information, possible, impact, ongoing, procurement, proposal, proposed, research, accountability, contact, current, currently, far, pr	More, said, million, billion, Climate, digital Long, possible, term, action, available, increase, initiative, next, plan, support, contacts, ensure, information, needed, new, now, resilience pr

Table 8: Key word list (reference corpora: BE06 AmE06), organized in groups by topic

Topic	PR.ECA vs. BE06	PR.ECA vs. AmE06	PR.EP vs BE06	PR.EP vs. AmE06
EU	Eu, member, states, European, commission, policy, (ecdc), budget, europa, framework, bodies, (safeguard), strategy,		Names: Centeno, dombrovskis, gentiloni, hayer, Johan, overtveldt, tingali Abbreviations: ecbc, ecr, ep, epp, es, eu, eur, gue, mff, ngl, pt, rff, rrf Euro: Europe, European, euros Other: agreement, budget, budgets, climate, cohesion, digital, facility, framework, initiative, instrumnets, multiannual, programmes, regional, renew, resilience	
	legislators, (responsible),	Cohesion, financial, programmes		

			Bodies: commission, council, countries, eurogroup, member, states,	
			Appropriations, budgetary, resources	Co, fernandes, programme, term
ECA / EP	Eca, auditors, audit, reviews, audits, fiscal, review, programme, Luxembourg, court, auditor, heiner, Klaus, lehne, tasks, areas, fraud, Contribute,	Abstentions, adopted, agreed, committee, economic, fr, meps, monetary, parliament, plenary, rapporteur		
	Discontinue, focus, responsible,			
Pandemic	Covid, pandemic, crisis, vaccine, outbreak, effects, ongoing, coronavirus, vaccines		Coronavirus, covid, crisis, pandemic, recession,	
			corona	
EU & pandemic	Measures, response, mitigating, funds, challenges, implementing, allocated, recovery, supporting, rules, proposal, economies, safeguard Abbreviations: ecdc, ngeu	Action, billion, debt, divergences, financing, fund, funding, funds, grants, hardest, imbalances, implemented, loans, measures, million, plan, proposal, proposed		
	Billion, financing, gdp, (precautionary,), revised, trillion	Businesses, impact, minimise		Mobilized, tackling
Words with positive connotation	Accountability, sustainable		Boosting, increase, needed, obtained, priorities, recovery, solidarity	
			bolder	
Thematically explainable frequency of words	Airlines, passenger, (programme,) flights, passengers, ecdc, esi, cancelled, air, refund,	webinar		
				travellers
Should be analyzed in context	Economic, health, public, coordination, procurement, risks, actions, citizens, rights, support, spending, equipment, resilient, related, medical, available, border, aid, competences, work,		Available, more, possible, underlined	
				(realise), welcomed

		Flexibility, possible, range, remain		
Function words	Will, the, taken, its, also, to		Be, the	
	and			will

Table 9: Verb *want* in EP press releases

before	Key word	after
reform and a robust investment package. Availability of funding MEPs	want	the amount of €672,5 billion euros in grants and loans
which will be in place from 1 February 2020 onwards. They also	want	the funding to be available for four years (instead
negotiations with EU governments by 84 votes to 11 and 4 abstentions. They	want	the mandate to be announced during the upcoming plenary
said: “Member states do not say to what extent they	want	to cut cohesion or agriculture funding. They want to
agriculture funding. They want to keep their envelopes. They all	want	to increase research funding. The Commission wants a ‘geopolitical
extent they want to cut cohesion or agriculture funding. They	want	to keep their envelopes. They all want to increase
Agenda, the Youth Guarantee and the Child Guarantee. MEPs also	want	each plan to contribute at least 40% of its budget

Table 10: Keyword in context: *boosting*

Corpus	before	Key word	after
PR.EP	transport infrastructure (+€60.3 million). Strengthen respect for Europe’s values and	boosting	climate action As a supplementary effort to fight climate
	creating jobs, tackling the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and	boosting	climate action. On Friday, the negotiators from the European
	-	boosting	unds for transport infrastructure, Digital Europe, climate action
	Commission’s original budget proposal, programmes they considered key to	boosting	growth and jobs, reflecting widely agreed European Union priorities

Table 11: Keyword in context: *increase*

PR.EP	example a digital tax that allows member states not to	increase	their contribution. Let’s raise taxes from these sources
	we realise that EU countries have limited abilities to	increase	heir direct contribution to the EU budget.

	the national support funds, mostly in place very quickly, would	increase	disparities in the single market. MEPs call for concrete
	those countries most hit by the Coronavirus heavily indebted and	increase	economic divergence in the Eurozone
	They want to keep their envelopes. They all want to	increase	research funding. The Commission wants a ‘geopolitical Europe’ and
	set up the economic and social recovery plan and, thirdly,	increase	the EU’s resilience.” Valérie HAYER (Renew, FR)
	efforts, if not well coordinated at EU level, will actually	increase	these imbalances

Table 12: Keyword in context: obtained

PR.EP	to give up one cent, Parliament did its utmost and	obtained	additional increases
PR.EP	new seven-year financial framework MEPs have fought for and	obtained	better support for key EU programmes
PR.EP	agreed in the multi-annual framework just weeks ago, we	obtained	budget increases for other programmes with proven European added value
PR.EP	As a supplementary effort to fight climate change, the reinforcements	obtained	by the EP for the LIFE programme (+€42 million) aim
PR.EP	It was the maximum that could be	obtained	given the multiannual budget that was negotiated with heads
PR.EP	reflect the top-ups to selected key EU programmes Parliament	obtained	in the deal with Council

Table 13: keyword in context: accountability

PR.ECA	managing EU funds and implementing EU policies, but there remain	accountability	and audit gaps.
PR.ECA	striving to provide citizens with strong audit assurance, improving the	accountability	and transparency of EU action and auditing its performance
PR.ECA	proposal should not lead to substantial compromises in terms of	accountability”.	-
PR.ECA	reports and opinions are an essential element of the EU	accountability	chain – they are used to hold to account those
PR.ECA	an informative assessment of significant financial management, governance, transparency and	accountability	issues. They will mainly draw on publicly available documentation
PR.ECA	EU structural funds requires a balance between more flexibility and	accountability	say Auditors
PR.ECA	readily available to the Commission or the legislators, potentially affecting	accountability	to EU citizens for the use of funds.

Table 14: Keyword in context: pandemic

PR.ECA	ECA measures taken in view of the COVID-19	pandemic	The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has taken the
PR.ECA	europa.eu. ECA measures taken in view of the COVID-19	pandemic	The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has taken the
PR.EP	EU countries tackling the effects and consequences of the COVID-19	pandemic.	The Budgets and Economic and Monetary Affairs committees adopted
PR.ECA	both reviews in Spring 2020 shortly after the outbreak of the	pandemic.	The EU's initial response to COVID-19: learning lessons
PR.EP	mobilised to channel EU funds to those affected by Coronavirus	pandemic	The Regional Development Committee is ready to find the
PR.ECA	and another on its economic policy response to the coronavirus	pandemic.	The aim of both reviews is to contribute to
PR.ECA	to protect the public's health in response to the	pandemic. -	The review of the economic response will focus on
PR.ECA	its Member States have dealt with the effects of the	pandemic.”	The two new reviews will provide an independent, objective
PR.EP	EU programmes creating jobs, tackling the fallout from the COVID-19	pandemic	and boosting climate action. On Friday, the negotiators from
PR.EP	imbalances, which will be created as a result of the	pandemic,	and that the risk that recovery efforts, if not
PR.ECA	will deal with the EU's response to the COVID-19	pandemic	and the Next Generation EU (NGEU) recovery package, the
PR.ECA	Commission monitored that air passengers' rights were respected during the	pandemic	and took action accordingly. In addition, they will assess
PR.ECA	deliver timely audit reports, opinions and reviews, during the COVID-19	pandemic,	as far as this is possible in these challenging
PR.ECA	deliver timely audit reports, opinions and reviews, during the COVID-19	pandemic,	as far as this is possible in these challenging
PR.ECA	and its bodies during this and future crises. The COVID-19	pandemic	has resulted in unprecedented challenges for the EU and
PR.ECA	information Public health is primarily a national competence. The COVID-19	pandemic	has tested the relatively limited powers assigned to the
PR.ECA	all those who work to save lives and fight the	pandemic,	in Luxembourg, in the EU and around the world.

PR.ECA	all those who work to save lives and fight the	pandemic,	in Luxembourg, in the EU and around the world.
PR.EP	mobilised to channel EU funds to those affected by Coronavirus	pandemic	All measures to fight the COVID-19 outbreak and its
PR.ECA	its Member States have dealt with the effects of the	pandemic.	In addition, they will contribute to the lessons-learned
PR.ECA	s and Member States' economic policy actions to combat the	pandemic.	It will reflect their costs and governance arrangements, as
PR.ECA	In response to the economic shock caused by the COVID-19	pandemic,	Member States adopted a wide range of fiscal measures
PR.ECA	measures to protect citizens from the adverse effects of the	pandemic.”	Over the next five years, the auditors will also
PR.ECA	as vaccine procurement, food security and free movement during the	pandemic,	national recovery plans, digitalisation of schools, e-government, circular
PR.ECA	ECA). However, the auditors also see the risk that the	pandemic’	s uneven impact on Member States and their differing
PR.EP	connection with the changes in our activities during the COVID-19	pandemic”,	said the rapporteur for the other sections, Oliver Chastel (
PR.ECA	Prevention and Control - ECDC). Since the start of the COVID-19	pandemic,	the EU took further action to address urgent issues,
PR.ECA	COVID-19. A key test for Member States in addressing the	pandemic	was ensuring the supply of sufficient medical equipment. The
PR.EP	designed to alleviate the economic and social consequences of the	pandemic,	which will be in place from 1 February 2020 onwards. They

Table 15: Keyword in context: COVID-19

PR.ECA	collateral damage in the fight to save struggling airlines.” The	COVID-19	outbreak and health measures taken in response have brought
PR.EP	those affected by Coronavirus pandemic • All measures to fight the	COVID-19	outbreak and its effects are a priority for the
PR.ECA	all available financial means to address the effects of the	COVID-19	outbreak on health, businesses and citizens,” said Iliana Ivanova,
PR.ECA	possible the risk for them and their families. Mitigating the	COVID-19	outbreak using EU structural funds requires a balance between
PR.ECA	reliable information about ESI fund spending in response to the	COVID-19	outbreak would not be readily available to the Commission
PR.ECA	soon to audit ongoing actions or assess the impact of	COVID-19	related public health EU initiatives, but these experiences can

PR.ECA	the range of spending eligible for cohesion funding to cover	COVID-19	related public health spending. The use of these funds
PR.ECA	available on eca.europa.eu. EU Auditors to focus on	Covid-	related action in 2021 One in four new audits by
PR.ECA	programme today to shift the focus of its work towards	COVID-19-	related aspects: it has adjusted the scope, approach and
PR.ECA	Member States to finance their crisis response operations, and fund	COVID-19-	related measures that they have already undertaken. The Commission'
PR.EP	key EU programmes creating jobs, tackling the fallout from the	COVID-19	pandemic and boosting climate action. On Friday, the negotiators
PR.ECA	year will deal with the EU's response to the	COVID-19	pandemic and the Next Generation EU (NGEU) recovery package,
PR.ECA	EU and its bodies during this and future crises. The	COVID-19	pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges for the EU
PR.ECA	Background information Public health is primarily a national competence. The	COVID-19	pandemic has tested the relatively limited powers assigned to
PR.ECA	to deliver timely audit reports, opinions and reviews, during the	COVID-19	pandemic, as far as this is possible in these
PR.ECA	to deliver timely audit reports, opinions and reviews, during the	COVID-19	pandemic, as far as this is possible in these
PR.ECA	measures. In response to the economic shock caused by the	COVID-19	pandemic, Member States adopted a wide range of fiscal
PR.ECA	Disease Prevention and Control - ECDC). Since the start of the	COVID-19	pandemic, the EU took further action to address urgent
PR.ECA	ECA) has reviewed the EU's initial response to the	COVID-19	crisis and draws attention to certain challenges faced by
PR.ECA	the extent possible the risk for them and their families.	COVID-19	crisis risks widening the economic gap between EU countries
PR.ECA	EU's initial contribution to the public health response to	COVID-19"	is available on eca.europa.eu. EU Auditors to
PR.EP	might be getting out of hand and demanded quick action: “	COVID-19	is still is a major health crisis, and we
PR.ECA	ECA measures taken in view of the	COVID-19	pandemic The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has taken
PR.ECA	eca.europa.eu. ECA measures taken in view of the	COVID-19	pandemic The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has taken

PR.ECA	done to establish and strengthen robust population-based surveillance of	COVID-19.	A key test for Member States in addressing the
PR.EP	from COVID-19. You can catch up with the debate here.	COVID-19:	MEPs urge quick action to prevent “huge recession” In
PR.EP	planned measures to tackle the looming economic crisis due to	COVID-19.	Opening the discussion held within the Economic and Monetary
PR.ECA	a review of the EU’s public health response to	COVID-19.	The ECA decided to launch both reviews in Spring 2020
PR.EP	money would be available to deal with the fallout from	COVID-19.	You can catch up with the debate here. COVID-19:
PR.EP	after Eurogroup proposals for mitigating the economic crisis due to	COVID-19	and ahead of the European Council, MEPs met with
PR.EP	and the EU4Health programme, the EU’s response to	COVID-19,	by a further €74.3 million. EU4Health will support medical
PR.ECA	EU auditors probe the protection of air passenger rights during	COVID-19	crisis The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has launched
PR.ECA	formal remit and support the public health response to the	COVID-19	crisis,” said Joëlle Elvinger, the ECA member responsible for
PR.ECA	and add two reviews with a specific focus on the	COVID-19	crisis. “The European Commission and other EU and national
PR.ECA	proposal is part of the EU’s response to the	COVID-19	crisis. In particular, as an exceptional measure, new rules
PR.ECA	published its review of the EU economic response to the	COVID-19	crisis; ECA’s 2021 work programme includes an audit on
PR.ECA	opportunities in the EU’s economic policy response to the	COVID-19	crisis”, which is currently available in English on eca.
PR.EP	has not yet been able to agree on a position.	COVID-19:	first go-ahead given to the new Recovery and
PR.ECA	and its Member States to counter the economic impact of	COVID-19	have helped save jobs and businesses, according to the
PR.ECA	outbreak of the pandemic. The EU’s initial response to	COVID-19:	learning lessons to improve European cooperation in public health
PR.ECA	to help Member States in mitigating the effects of the	COVID-19	outbreak. While EU support needs to be available to
PR.EP	in connection with the changes in our activities during the	COVID-19	pandemic", said the rapporteur for the other sections, Oliver

PR.EP	help EU countries tackling the effects and consequences of the	COVID-19	pandemic. The Budgets and Economic and Monetary Affairs committees
PR.ECA	pathways. The EU budget supported a range of actions including	COVID-19	research and vaccine advance purchase agreements. By mid-2020, the
PR.ECA	the crisis,” said ECA President Klaus-Heiner Lehne. “With this	COVID-19	revision of our work programme, we want to ensure
PR.ECA	were allocated by June 2020 for research on the development of	COVID-19	tests, treatments and vaccines. In the first half of 2020,
PR.ECA	aid to the travel and transport industry. “In times of	COVID-19,	the EU and Member States have had to strike
PR.ECA	coming weeks. EU’s public health and economic response to	COVID-19	to be reviewed by Auditors The European Court of
PR.ECA	billion to fund advance purchase agreements with a range of	COVID-19	vaccine developers. To mitigate the inherent risk linked to
PR.ECA	crisis in two key areas: - The public health response to	COVID-19,	with its grave economic and social consequences, is the

Table 16: Keyword in context: *crisis*

PR.ECA	has reviewed the EU’s initial response to the COVID-19	crisis	and draws attention to certain challenges faced by the
PR.ECA	on how well it addresses the actual impact of the	crisis	and increases the Member States’ capacity to support their
PR.ECA	with the aim of supporting air passengers in times of	crisis	and launching a general attempt to restore trust in
PR.EP	from private investors would be very difficult in times of	crisis	and not useful because some countries could not afford
PR.EP	euros to protect citizens, reduce the immediate impact of the	crisis	and prepare for a more prosperous, balanced and sustainable
PR.ECA	border health threats, facilitating provision of appropriate supplies in a	crisis	and supporting the development of vaccines. The EU’s
PR.EP	demanding quick action: “COVID-19 is still is a major health	crisis,	and we realise that, slowly but surely, it is
PR.ECA	add two reviews with a specific focus on the COVID-19	crisis. “	The European Commission and other EU and national bodies
PR.ECA	auditors probe the protection of air passenger rights during COVID-19	crisis	The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has launched an

PR.ECA	who travelled by plane or booked flights during the coronavirus	crisis.	The auditors will examine whether the current rules on
PR.ECA	additional clarification on the intended nature of operations for fostering	crisis	response capacities. They also highlight that reliable information about
PR.ECA	the level playing field between Member States. “The Member States’	crisis	response measures saved jobs and businesses, but inevitably lead
PR.ECA	period ends. This would allow Member States to finance their	crisis	response operations, and fund COVID-19-related measures that they
PR.EP	for concrete details and novel tools to address the economic	crisis	MEPs on Monday quizzed Commissioners Dombrovskis and Gentiloni on
PR.EP	the EU’s long-term budget and response to the	crisis,	MEPs urged that the recovery fund must be set
PR.EP	via videoconference.] Days after Eurogroup proposals for mitigating the economic	crisis	due to COVID-19 and ahead of the European Council,
PR.EP	and Gentiloni on planned measures to tackle the looming economic	crisis	due to COVID-19. Opening the discussion held within the
PR.ECA	health. We are mitigating the effects of the ongoing health	crisis	on our staff and have taken precautionary measures to
PR.ECA	health. We are mitigating the effects of the ongoing health	crisis	on our staff and have taken precautionary measures to
PR.ECA	them and compromise their pressing work in responding to the	crisis,”	said ECA President Klaus-Heiner Lehne. “With this COVID-19
PR.ECA	remit and support the public health response to the COVID-19	crisis,”	said Joëlle Elvinger, the ECA member responsible for the
PR.ECA	its review of the EU economic response to the COVID-19	crisis;	ECA’s 2021 work programme includes an audit on the
PR.ECA	is part of the EU’s response to the COVID-19	crisis.	In particular, as an exceptional measure, new rules are
PR.EP	of the European Union institutions, despite a difficult context of	crisis.	My concern throughout these negotiations was to ensure that
PR.EP	their group’s ideas for bolder ways to mitigate the	crisis.	Stéphanie Yon-Courtin (Renew Europe, FR) put forward the
PR.ECA	for purpose and resilient enough to deal with such a	crisis.	They will check whether the Commission monitored that air
PR.ECA	also view the currently proposed EU financial response to the	crisis	as an opportunity to promote EU priorities and to

PR.EP	under the cohesion policy to the fight against the Coronavirus	crisis,	by means of relinquishing this year its obligation to
PR.ECA	Commission is necessary to support Member States in mitigating the	crisis	effects, but the right balance should be set and
PR.ECA	the Member States' relative wealth, rather than how badly the	crisis	has affected them. The auditors also warn about the
PR.ECA	of the EU's actions and role in tackling the	crisis	in two key areas: - The public health response to
PR.EP	anchored to the MFF. "The EU's answer to the	crisis	is based on the MFF and the recovery fund.
PR.ECA	to contract by 7.4 % in 2020 and may not return to pre-	crisis	levels in 2021. This risks significantly increasing insolvencies and job
PR.ECA	for implementing EU policies and programmes are still operating in	crisis	mode. We understand their current constraints in dealing with
PR.EP	and competitiveness, social and territorial cohesion, institutional crisis-reaction and	crisis	preparedness, as well as with Next Generation EU policies,
PR.EP	transformation, economic cohesion and competitiveness, social and territorial cohesion, institutional	crisis-	reaction and crisis preparedness, as well as with Next
PR.ECA	extent possible the risk for them and their families. COVID-19	crisis	risks widening the economic gap between EU countries The
PR.EP	IT) argued that it was impossible for such a big	crisis	to be overcome with such a limited ECB, adding
PR.ECA	amounts of state aid. Some estimates show that throughout the	crisis,	until December 2020, airlines – including non-EU ones – had obtained
PR.ECA	coordination. This allowed Member States to cushion the emerging economic	crisis	via fiscal stimuli, temporary state aid and suspended budgetary
PR.ECA	in the EU's economic policy response to the COVID-19	crisis",	which is currently available in English on eca.europa.
PR.EP	the EU Solidarity Fund by also including a public health	crisis	within its scope, in view of mobilising it if

Table 17: Keyword in context: Coronavirus

PR.EP	billion under the cohesion policy to the fight against the	Coronavirus	crisis, by means of relinquishing this year its obligation
PR.ECA	citizens who travelled by plane or booked flights during the	coronavirus	crisis. The auditors will examine whether the current rules

PR.EP	loans which would leave those countries most hit by the	Coronavirus	heavily indebted and increase economic divergence in the Eurozone.
PR.EP	Parliament mobilised to channel EU funds to those affected by	Coronavirus	pandemic • All measures to fight the COVID-19 outbreak and
PR.ECA	health and another on its economic policy response to the	coronavirus	pandemic. The aim of both reviews is to contribute
PR.EP	EP mobilised to channel EU funds to those affected by	Coronavirus	pandemic] The Regional Development Committee is ready to find

Table 18: Keyword in context: outbreak

PR.ECA	damage in the fight to save struggling airlines.” The COVID-19	outbreak	and health measures taken in response have brought about
PR.EP	affected by Coronavirus pandemic • All measures to fight the COVID-19	outbreak	and its effects are a priority for the European
PR.ECA	help Member States in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19	outbreak.	While EU support needs to be available to Member
PR.ECA	decided to launch both reviews in Spring 2020 shortly after the	outbreak	of the pandemic. The EU’s initial response to
PR.ECA	available financial means to address the effects of the COVID-19	outbreak	on health, businesses and citizens,” said Iliana Ivanova, the
PR.ECA	the risk for them and their families. Mitigating the COVID-19	outbreak	using EU structural funds requires a balance between more
PR.ECA	information about ESI fund spending in response to the COVID-19	outbreak	would not be readily available to the Commission or

Table 19: Keyword in context: consequences

PR.EP	instrument designed to help EU countries tackling the effects and	consequences	of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Budgets and Economic and
PR.EP	finance national measures designed to alleviate the economic and social	consequences	of the pandemic, which will be in place from 1
PR.ECA	health response to COVID-19, with its grave economic and social	consequences,	is the stated priority of EU policymakers and public

Table 20: Keyword in context: fight*

PR.ECA	gratitude to all those who work to save lives and	fight	the pandemic, in Luxembourg, in the EU and around
PR.ECA	gratitude to all those who work to save lives and	fight	the pandemic, in Luxembourg, in the EU and around
PR.EP	funds to those affected by Coronavirus pandemic • All measures to	fight	the COVID-19 outbreak and its effects are a priority
PR.EP	to direct EUR 37 billion under the cohesion policy to the	fight	against the Coronavirus crisis, by means of relinquishing this
PR.EP	values and boosting climate action As a supplementary effort to	fight	climate change, the reinforcements obtained by the EP for
PR.EP	Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), an independent Union body aiming to	fight	crimes against the Union budget will benefit from an
PR.ECA	strategy included funding research on vaccine hesitancy as well as	fighting	disinformation, which could harm the success of mass immunisation
PR.ECA	of schools, e-government, circular economy, climate mainstreaming, sustainable fishing,	fighting	fraud in the common agricultural policy, the European Border
PR.ECA	travellers in the EU were not collateral damage in the	fight	to save struggling airlines.” The COVID-19 outbreak and health

Table 21: Keyword in context: mitigat*

PR.ECA	Luxembourg government's policy on safeguarding public health. We are	mitigating	the effects of the ongoing health crisis on our
PR.ECA	investment (ESI) funds in order to help Member States in	mitigating	the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. While EU support
PR.ECA	Luxembourg government's policy on safeguarding public health. We are	mitigating	the effects of the ongoing health crisis on our
PR.ECA	the extent possible the risk for them and their families.	Mitigating	the COVID-19 outbreak using EU structural funds requires a
PR.ECA	by the Commission is necessary to support Member States in	mitigating	the crisis effects, but the right balance should be
PR.EP	put forward their group's ideas for bolder ways to	mitigate	the crisis. Stéphanie Yon-Courtin (Renew Europe, FR) put
PR.EP	the committee debate via videoconference.] Days after Eurogroup proposals for	mitigating	the economic crisis due to COVID-19 and ahead of
PR.ECA	purchase agreements with a range of COVID-19 vaccine developers. To	mitigate	the inherent risk linked to vaccine development, the Commission'

PR.ECA	up most of the measures, which have so far largely	mitigated	layoffs. However, these national fiscal measures will considerably increase
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Table 22: Keyword in context: tackl*

PR.ECA	impartial review of the EU's actions and role in	tackling	the crisis in two key areas: - The public health
PR.EP	and Resilience Facility, an instrument designed to help EU countries	tackling	the effects and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The
PR.EP	and obtained better support for key EU programmes creating jobs,	tackling	the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and boosting climate
PR.EP	Monday quizzed Commissioners Dombrovskis and Gentiloni on planned measures to	tackle	the looming economic crisis due to COVID-19. Opening the
PR.EP	can to ensure that tax fraud and tax havens are	tackled	more effectively. This would ensure that more money would

Table 23: collocations for 'pandemic': Neutral expressions, referring to time

ECA	EP
During the pandemic	During the COVID-19
During the COVID-19 pandemic	
During the COVID-19 pandemic	
During the pandemic	
The start of the COVID-19	

Table 24: collocations for *pandemic*: Neutral verbs and/or nouns

ECA	EP
Measures taken in view of the COVID-19 pandemic	As a result of the pandemic
Response to the coronavirus pandemic	
Response to the pandemic	
EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic	

Table 25: collocations for *pandemic*: Between neutral and negative connotation / slightly negative connotation

ECA	EP
The outbreak of the pandemic	Tackling the effects and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic
The outbreak of the pandemic	Those affected by Coronavirus pandemic
Deal with the effects of the pandemic	Tackling the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic
The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges	Those affected by Coronavirus pandemic
The COVID-19 pandemic has tested ...	
Deal with the effects of the pandemic	
The pandemic's uneven impact	
Addressing the pandemic	

Table 26: collocations for *pandemic*: Verbs/nouns characterizing the pandemic as a threat

ECA	EP
Fight the pandemic	
Fight the pandemic	
To combat the pandemic	
The adverse effects of the pandemic	

Table 27: collocations for *pandemic*: Verbs/nouns characterizing the pandemic as economic threat

ECA	EP
The economic shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic	To alleviate the economic and social consequences of the pandemic

Table 28: *fight* in EP press releases

to direct EUR 37 billion under the cohesion policy to the	fight	against the Coronavirus crisis, by means of relinquishing this
values and boosting climate action As a supplementary effort to	fight	climate change, the reinforcements obtained by the EP for
an independent Union body aiming to	fight	crimes against the Union budget will benefit from an

All measures to	fight	the COVID-19 outbreak and its effects are a priority
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Table 29: *Covid-19* can be followed by or preceded by following words (in both ECA and EP press releases)

Followed by		Preceded by	
ECA	EP	ECA	EP
Related + public health initiatives, public health spending, action, aspects, measures Outbreak Pandemic Crisis Outbreak Research Tests vaccine	Is still a major health crisis Outbreak Pandemic	Caused by the During the Focus its work towards Impact of In times of Measures taken in view of the Mitigating the Mitigating the effects of the Response to the Start of the Surveillance of The public health response to To address the effects of the To counter economic impact of the To focus on	During the Economic crisis due to Fallout from Response to Tackling the effects and consequences of To fight the

Table 30: *Crisis* is used in ECA and EP press releases

ECA	EP
EU's initial response to the COVID-19 crisis Addresses the actual impact of the crisis In times of crisis	In times of crisis Reduce the immediate impact of the crisis COVID-19 is still a major health crisis

In a crisis A specific focus on the COVID-19 crisis During the coronavirus crisis Fostering crisis response capacities The Member States' crisis response To finance their crisis response operations Mitigating the effects of the ongoing health crisis In responding to the crisis The public health response to the COVID-19 crisis Economic response to the COVID-19 crisis To deal with such a crisis EU financial response to the crisis Mitigating the crisis effects How badly the crisis has affected them Tackling the crisis May not return to pre-crisis levels Operating in crisis mode Covid-19 crisis risks widening the economic gap Throughout the crisis To cushion the emerging economic crisis EU's economic policy response to the COVID-19	To address the economic crisis EU's long term budget and response to the crisis For mitigating the economic crisis due to COVID-19 Measures to tackle the looming economic crisis Despite a difficult context of crisis Bolder ways to mitigate the crisis To the fight against the Coronavirus crisis The EU's answer to the crisis Institutional crisis-reaction and crisis preparedness It was impossible for such a big crisis to be overcome with such limited ECB Also including a public health crisis within its scope
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Abstract / Zusammenfassung

Abstract

The objective of this MA Thesis is to apply the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) method in analyzing European Parliament (EP) and European Court of Auditors (ECA) press releases related to COVID-19 pandemic. The first part is dedicated to explaining the theoretical foundations needed for later analysis and the second part is the analysis and discussion. The analysis revealed what linguistic means these EP and ECA use in presenting themselves, the EU, EU member states, and the pandemic. DHA analysis findings were then amplified with a brief corpus research analysis of the selected press releases. There are similarities as well as differences between the two institutions. The findings show that both EP and ECA use different areas of language to achieve their goal, which is to create a positive image of themselves as well as a hierarchy in which they are above others.

Zusammenfassung

Ziel der vorliegenden Masterarbeit ist die Analyse von Presseaussendungen des Europäischen Parlaments (EP) und des Europäischen Rechnungshofs (ECA) zum Thema Covid19 mit Hilfe der diskurshistorischen Analyse. Der erste Teil der Arbeit erarbeitet die theoretischen Grundlagen des Analyseverfahrens, der zweite Teil beschreibt die Durchführung der Analyse und präsentiert die Ergebnisse.

Die Analyse zeigt auf, welche sprachlichen Mittel Parlament und Rechnungshof verwenden, um sich selbst, die EU und die Mitgliedsstaaten zu präsentieren und die Pandemie zu thematisieren. Diese Ergebnisse wurden durch eine kurze Korpusanalyse von ausgesuchten Presseaussendungen vertieft. Die Korpusanalyse zeigt hier sowohl Unterschiede als auch Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen den beiden Institutionen auf: Europäisches Parlament und Europäischer Rechnungshof setzen unterschiedliche sprachliche Strategien ein, um ein positives Image von sich selbst und ihrer Bedeutung in der Hierarchie, in der sie über anderen Institutionen der Union stehen, zu vermitteln.