

## **The daily press and political communication: The perception of the Statute of Catalonia in twelve daily Spanish newspapers**

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### **Abstract**

*The research presented in this article analyses the perception of the new draft Statute of Catalonia in the Spanish written press. The study was performed by analysing the editorials and the front pages published in twelve newspapers all over Spain between the 1st of October and the 15th of December 2005. The new draft Statute of Catalonia triggered an oversized debate that converted the media into a true “political arena”, a public locus where the media and politicians displayed a host of cooperative or competitive ideological strategies. The article concludes that the new Statute was harshly rejected in the majority of newspapers, especially in some of the national broadsheets, and it tries to pinpoint the differences among these twelve newspapers. The research also dissects the strong and weak points of the draft Statute in the newspapers analysed.*

**Key words:** media, Statute of Catalonia, political communication, Spanish press

### **1. Introduction and theoretical note**

This article presents an analysis of the perception of the new draft Statute of Catalonia in the Spanish press. The research was performed by analysing the editorials and front pages of twelve newspapers around the country, with the exception of those published in Catalonia<sup>1</sup>, between the 1st of October and the 15th of December 2005.

The new draft Statute of Catalonia riveted – and to some extent still rivets – the political debate all over Spain. The media as a whole, but especially the written press, have taken positions on the draft, which was approved on the 30th of September 2005 by the Parliament of Catalonia.

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<sup>1</sup> The goal of this study is to analyse the public opinion published in the newspapers in Spain which are issued outside of Catalonia. It would be interesting for future research to compare these positions with the ones expressed in the Catalan newspapers.

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The corpus analysed includes the most important newspapers in Spain as a whole<sup>2</sup>. In addition to the major nationwide newspapers, we also took region into account as a selection criterion in order to ensure representation of the different regional sensibilities. For this reason, some of the leading regional newspapers in the most important regions were also chosen.

The newspapers chosen for this study are El País, El Mundo, ABC, La Razón, Expansión, El Correo, La Voz de Galicia, El Norte de Castilla, Levante, Heraldo de Aragón, Diario de Sevilla and Última Hora. A total of 540 front pages were analysed, along with more than 495 editorials.

### *1.1. Theoretical note*

In the 1960s and 1970s, research in communication was dominated by the objectivist current of thinking, which enshrined facts over freedom of opinions and postulated a radical separation between information and opinion. Current research into communication assumes that when reporting the news, journalists inevitably adopt a point of view, an approach, a frame. This concept of approach or frame has been used quite often in journalist studies into political communication, especially in the past two decades.

The approach is the “core organising idea of the content of the news that provides a context through a process of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (Tankard, 1991). The set of approaches to reality that newspapers have used throughout their history creates an image, a corporate identity that gains social importance which makes each newspaper what it is, different from the competition (Canel, 1999).

Using a reordering proposed by Borrat (1989: 99-101), the essential functions of the political language of newspapers can be summarised as: (1) interpreting and connecting; (2) disseminating information; (3) projecting to the future and the past; (4) implementing the public agenda; and (5) stimulating action. Any newspaper, by definition, does the first three; however, the fourth depends on its relative degree of influence in its respective political system (Farré, 1999).

On another front, certain factors in the sociology of communication should be borne in mind to grasp the media’s influence on politics. Sociology perceives reality as a product that is constructed through the multiple actions of human beings. These actions include those performed by the mass media, which become fundamentally important because of their central position in the symbolic mediation of experiences and their socially recognised and legitimised role as creators of public schemas of reference (Grossi, 1985). In turn, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) propose the idea that through their selection of the news, the media determine the subjects about which the public thinks and speaks; the authors call this agenda-setting.

A complementary vision to agenda-setting and the construction of reality is the notion of “theme” – thematisation – (Marletti, 1985). Thematisation confers on the media the ability to choose a theme and place it in the spotlight of public attention. Marletti suggests that the media focus attention on certain themes but not on others out of a clear aim to set the political agenda in connivance with the political powers themselves. This conclusion by the Italian author can be applied in the process of

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<sup>2</sup> According to the latest figures from the Circulation Justification Office (OJD).

drafting and approving a statute. As can be seen, the media and the political apparatus are the ones who primarily develop the processes of thematisation (Marletti, 1985).

Likewise, in different sub-fields of political science, in-depth studies have been conducted on factors like administration, social organisation and constituent processes, such as the target of this study. However, much of the research focuses on shedding light on electoral processes as a whole or on specific aspects of them, such as the actors, the messages or the strategies of the different political parties.

There is a remarkable number of studies into political communication that demonstrate the impact of the media on individuals' electoral behaviour (Norris, Curtice, Scammell and Semetko, 1999; Zaller, J., 1992). Despite the fact that they are eminently empirical, these studies mainly consider three possible media effects on a voter: reinforcement, activation and conversion of the voting decision (Lazarsfeld, P., 1944).

## 2. Objectives and working methodology

The objectives of this study are the following: (1) to ascertain the degree and nature of the criticism against the new draft Statute of Catalonia; (2) to compare the positions of the different media analysed; and (3) to delimit the strong and weak points of the new draft Statute.

In overall terms, the methodology used was a systematic analysis of the contents, with a quantitative and a qualitative facet (Krippendorff, 1990; Wimmer and Dominick, 2001). The corpus was obtained using the criteria of readership and regionalism set forth in the introduction. The period analysed was comprised of 45 calendar days in the autumn of 2005 (October, November and December). The days chosen to be analysed were distributed as follows<sup>3</sup>:

- *Approval in Parliament*. From the 1st to the 15th of October (15 days after approval of the Statute in the Parliament of Catalonia).
- *Consideration and approval of its passage in the Congress of Deputies*. From the 2nd to the 16th of November.
- *Follow-up on the draft Statute*. From the 1st to the 15th of December 2005.

The research efforts concentrated on the editorials and the front pages of each publication. In fact, the editorials were the focal point of the study to validate the conclusions, since they reflect the opinion taken by the publishers of the newspapers. Information on whether the Statute was mentioned inside the newspapers was taken from the front pages, and the content was assessed according to whether it was in favourable, negative or neutral. We evaluated the inclusion of the issue on the front pages because the managers of the newspapers take part in assembling the front pages.

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<sup>3</sup> We considered the two most important dates in the approval of the text. The analysis ends on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December because after conducting an ad hoc analysis of different newspapers we noted that from this date on the agenda was set by other issues. It is worth noting that starting in January, and particularly in March, the issue of the Statute once again rose in prominence, dovetailing with approval by the Congress of Deputies.

Furthermore, we can state that even though they are not exactly an opinion genre, front pages do set trends since processes of hierarchisation with a heavy subjective component are used in assembling front pages.

The methodology proposed was developed by applying an analysis grid with its corresponding protocol. It should be noted that one study of the Statute (Sádaba and Rodríguez, 2007: 187-211) concludes that it is an issue that was given more coverage in opinion genres than in news genres, so that it is a widely discussed issue yet one that is barely contextualised from the news standpoint.

The texts were interpreted using the general principles of hermeneutic methods (Taylor and Bogdan, 1987). As a result, the analysis notes the following fields for each journalistic editorial included:

- Day of publication and thesis of the editorial
- Points in favour of the new draft Statute
- Points against the new draft Statute
- Degree of criticism

In a third phase, a comparative study was conducted of the media analysed which enabled us to identify the newspapers which had been the most critical of the Statute. This analysis also compiled all the most common points in favour of and against the Statute, which were then grouped into thematic areas.

### **3. Ideological positions of the newspapers analysed**

#### *3.1. ABC*

The newspaper ABC was frontally opposed to the new draft Statute of Catalonia. Specifically, all the editorials analysed (100% of the 14 pieces) disapproved of the text voted on in the Parliament of Catalonia. On the front pages, rejection also captures the majority: 81% of the headlines referring to this issue were opposed to it, while the remainder were neutral and none of them was favourable. In the opinion of the heads of ABC, the Statute violates the constitutional principles in force and signals a rupture of the current territorial model. Apparently the editorialists regard it as unacceptable for Catalonia to be defined as a nation, and they oppose the model of financing contained in the new draft Statute, as well as the relationship of bilateralism between Catalonia and Spain. In the words of this publication, the new Statute breaks the pact of coexistence that Spaniards reached in 1978, and this therefore heralds a second Transition, a “negative” one that is being forcefully “imposed”. At all times the newspaper acts as a guarantor of the unity of the Spanish nation, an unnegotiable reality in view of the “challenge” from the Catalan parties.

#### *3.2. El Correo*

El Correo took a critical position on the draft Statute, but it is not radically against it being passed. Over the 45 days of analysis, this newspaper devoted four editorials to this topic. Of the four, three rejected the text and one was neutral in tone. The analysis

of the front pages demonstrates that the new draft was rejected 66.7% of the times that it was mentioned, was the subject of neutral headlines 22.2% of the time and was discussed favourably 11.1% of the time. The majority position at El Correo is that the draft Statute violates the constitution, and the newspaper does not approve of “the unique model of financing”. Despite the criticisms of the text, El Correo sustains that dialogue and understanding are needed in order to reach statutory reform, and it frontally rejects inflexible positions.

### 3.3. *Diario de Sevilla*

The *Diario de Sevilla* is against the new draft Statute of Catalonia. Over the 45 days analysed, this newspaper devoted six editorials to the draft Statute. On all these days, it expressed its rejection of the text, except once, when it expressed a neutral opinion. The analysis of the front pages also demonstrates that the draft was not accepted: 92.3% of the headlines disapproved of the Statute, while almost 7.7% might be considered neutral.

There is no piece containing a favourable view of the new draft Statute presented by the Catalan parties. The justification of the *Diario de Sevilla*'s rejection of the new text is its unconstitutionality, the fact that it signals a second Transition and the fact that it proposes a “self-sufficient Catalonia” as the step prior to becoming a separate state. This Andalusian newspaper is also highly critical of all the Catalan political parties and of the PSOE.

### 3.4. *Expansión*

Generally speaking, the newspaper *Expansión* has negatively assessed the new draft Statute which emerged from the Parliament of Catalonia. The editorialists of this publication criticised the draft Statute in all eight pieces that discussed this subject. Rejection also figured prominently on the front pages of this Madrid-based newspaper, as half of the headlines in the period studied were against the new Statute, while 36% were neutral and only 14% were favourable.

*Expansión* believes that the draft Statute is unconstitutional and that it throws Spain off-kilter. What is more, the newspaper places special emphasis on the economic aspects of the draft Statute and reaches the conclusion that if it were applied it would be “harmful for the economies of both Catalonia and Spain”. According to the leaders of this newspaper, the new Statute would hinder Catalonia's growth and rupture its financial solidarity with the rest of Spain.

### 3.5. *Heraldo de Aragón*

The newspaper *Heraldo de Aragón* expressed its opposition to the new Statute of Catalonia, as can be gleaned from the fact that twelve of the fourteen editorials analysed over the 45 days (86% of the total) find negative points in the Catalan proposal. Regarding the front pages that were analysed, 61% discuss the Catalan text negatively, while the remainder were neutral and none was positive. The editorialists at the *Heraldo* believe that the Statute far exceeds the limits of the Constitution, leading to clear confrontation with Spain as well as a rise in tensions between Catalonia and Spain. As a result, there are also fears that Catalonia will one day become independent. The other

issues of interest to the newspaper are the term nation and financing. The editorials also reveal that the newspaper believes that the Statute is not only a challenge to the Constitution but also a danger that could lead to amendments in the constitution. It states that the Statute is “excessive” and asks that “it be stopped”.

### 3.6. *Levante*

The newspaper *Levante* is unfavourable in its assessments of the new Statute of Catalonia. First of all, it is worth noting that only two editorials focus on this subject in the 45 days studied (which accounts for a mere 4% of the total). These editorials recognise that the Statute could become a “political problem in Congress”. The front pages, where the Statute only appeared four days out of 45, show clear rejection of the Catalan text, since 75% of them highlight negative aspects of it, 25% remain neutral and none is in favour of it. The editorialists believe that the Statute has controversial points, such as the fact that Catalonia is defined as a nation, as well as the financing it proposes. However, the newspaper’s attitude is to remain neutral and avoid becoming alarmist. Nor does it take refuge in any specific ideology, and it gives a voice to all the political representatives.

### 3.7. *El Mundo*

The newspaper *El Mundo* was extraordinarily critical of the draft Statute of Catalonia during the research period. This Madrid-based newspaper held no punches in loading the paper with harsh invective against the Statute initiative. One hundred percent of the editorials that discussed the issue were unfavourable to the new Statute. Likewise, 82% of the related front page stories censured it, while none of the headlines spoke positively about the Statute. This newspaper’s ideological position is unbending: the draft is unconstitutional “look at it as you may”; what is more, Catalonia cannot be considered a nation as stated in the Statute’s text “because it is not”. Likewise, the newspaper also censures the fact that the new Statute aims to break the solidarity among the regions of Spain. Nor does it allow for any negotiation on the language issue: the publication claims that the current government of Catalonia marginalises Spanish speakers and that the new Statute would only accentuate this purported phenomenon.

### 3.8. *Norte de Castilla*

The newspaper *Norte de Castilla* takes a position in favour of the Statute, since 60% of the editorials analysed stressed positive features of the text. However, on the front pages the results are otherwise: 47% of the front pages analysed mention negative points, 40% are neutral and 13% highlight positive points. The newspaper’s editorials reveal that the Statute is viewed as a step towards the modernisation of Spain. Even though some controversial aspects are mentioned in the first editorial, such as the fact that Catalonia may choose independence as a future option, the suspicions and criticisms disappear in subsequent editorials. The Statute is labelled an “innovative” text, and the newspaper asks that it be shown respect for the mere fact that it achieved a majority in the Catalan Parliament.

### 3.9. *El País*

The newspaper *El País* covered the new draft Statute with calmness and balance, in contrast to the other newspapers from the capital of Spain (*El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Razón* and *Expansión*). This Madrid-based newspaper has clearly modulated its position, which has overall been benevolent with the text approved in the Parliament of Catalonia. In its news features, this newspaper owned by the PRISA Group devoted 60% of its front pages to the new Statute and maintained clear neutrality: 68% of the headlines on the front page were neutral, while 21% were positive and 11% negative. The newspaper devoted few editorials to this subject (18% of the days) compared to the other newspapers with nationwide readership. Of the eight editorials that appeared in the 45-day period, half were favourable to the draft, three were neutral and only one could be described as against the new Statute. The newspaper's ideological position is very close to the positions of the PSOE, and in particular to the president of the government, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. It has also spoken out against radicalism and the Partido Popular's lack of tact on this matter.

### 3.10. *La Razón*

The newspaper *La Razón* is totally against the new draft Statute of Catalonia. On the 45 days analysed, the issue of the Statute appeared on a total of 20 days<sup>4</sup>, in every case rejecting the text approved by the Parliament of Catalonia. The analysis of the front pages also demonstrates that the project is not accepted: 70.9% of the headlines disapprove of it, while 29.1% can be regarded as neutral. There is no headline that shines a positive light on approval of the Statute. *La Razón* upholds that the new Statute violates the Spanish Constitution, and it further believes that it may imperil the unity and territorial cohesion of Spain. The Madrid-based newspaper is also highly critical of the stances of the PSOE, *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* and *Convergència i Unió*. On different occasions, it justifies the positions of the Partido Popular in the negotiation of the Statute and in taking the text into consideration in the Congress of Deputies.

### 3.11. *Última Hora*

The newspaper *Última Hora* has demonstrated that it is in favour of approval of the new Statute of Catalonia. Of the 45 days analysed, this newspaper devoted nine days to the draft Statute. Five editorials (55.6%) expressed a neutral position on it, while on three days (33.3%) the newspaper's position was favourable to approval of the text. There was only one day (11.1%) in which the newspaper expressed an opinion against approval of the text as it is currently worded<sup>5</sup>. Regarding the front pages, 69.3% of the headlines express opposition to the draft, while 33.7% of the headlines reveal a neutral position. This newspaper from the Balearic Islands justifies its position that the text must be respected because it was approved by 90% of the Catalan deputies. What is

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<sup>4</sup> This figure on the presence of this topic is one of the highest among all the newspapers in the sample analysed.

<sup>5</sup> The fact that a newspaper can publish editorials both in favour and against the draft of the new Statute might seem difficult to understand. However, the justification can be found in the fact that there are certain factors related to the left-right axis (such as: the Statute is a modern, advanced text in terms of social rights) in which the newspaper may be in favour of it because of its progressive ideology, while it can be against aspects from the national axis regarding relations between Catalonia and Spain (such as: the Statute violates the Constitution). This is the case of the newspaper *Última Hora*, among others.

more, it defends fair fiscal treatment of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. From a strictly ideological standpoint, this newspaper upholds a federal model for Spain.

### 3.12. *La Voz de Galicia*

The newspaper *La Voz de Galicia* took a neutral/favourable position on the new Statute, as indicated by 67% of the front pages analysed over the course of 45 days which mentioned the issue (equivalent to six front pages all together). In contrast, 33% of the front pages (a total of three) revealed negative points about the Catalan text. According to the newspaper's front pages<sup>6</sup>, the issue that is the most worrisome is the constitutionality of the new Catalan Statute; 33% of the front pages analysed refer to this issue. Other aspects which also drew the newspaper's interest include financing and the term nation, but *La Voz de Galicia* always discussed the new draft Statute indulgently.

## 4. Comparative analysis of the presence and position of the newspapers in the sample on the new Statute

The presence of the subject of the new Statute on the front pages and editorials chosen for the study was quite disparate depending on the newspapers being analysed. This issued has been tracked in very different ways by the newspapers *La Razón* and *El Mundo*, which showed the highest presence of the topic of all the newspapers (around 50% of the days).

### Comparison of the newspapers most firmly against the Statute (Figures in % of unfavourable pieces)

Publication	Editorials	Front Pages
<i>ABC</i>	100.00	80.77
<i>La Razón</i>	100.00	70.97
<i>El Mundo</i>	100.00	82.76
<i>Expansión</i>	100.00	50.00
<i>Heraldo de Aragón</i>	85.71	64.71
<i>Levante</i>	50.00	75.00
<i>La Voz de Galicia</i>	–	33.33
<i>El Correo</i>	66.67	75.00
<i>Diario de Sevilla</i>	83.33	92.31
<i>Norte de Castilla</i>	20.00	46.67
<i>El País</i>	12.50	10.71
<i>Última Hora</i>	11.11	69.23

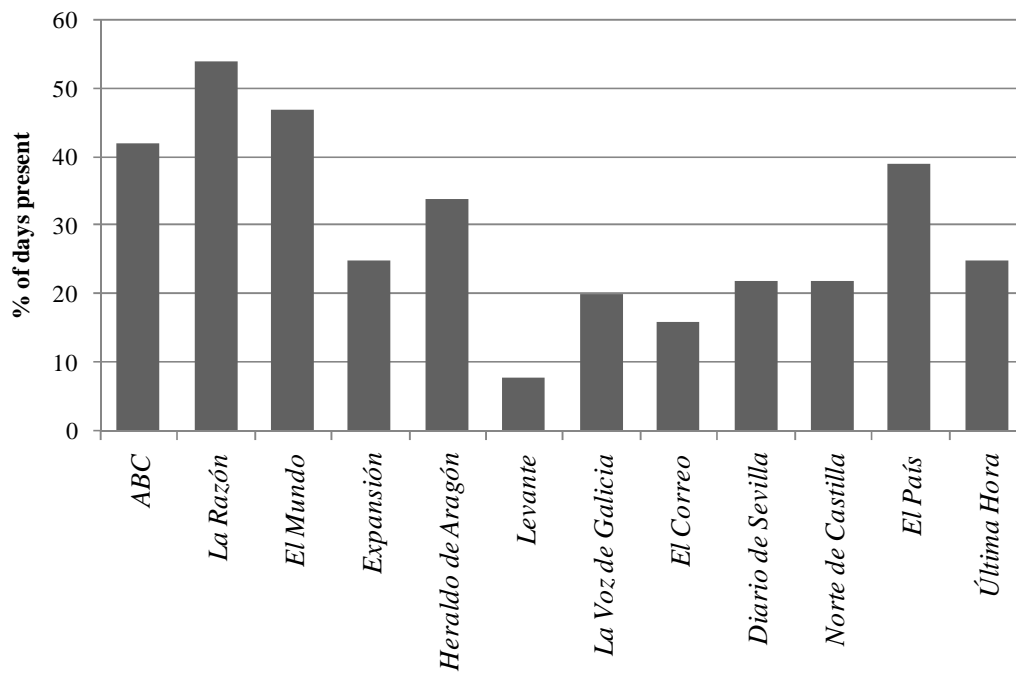
<sup>6</sup> This newspaper upholds a longstanding tradition of not having editorials, which has made it difficult to establish its ideological position in this study.



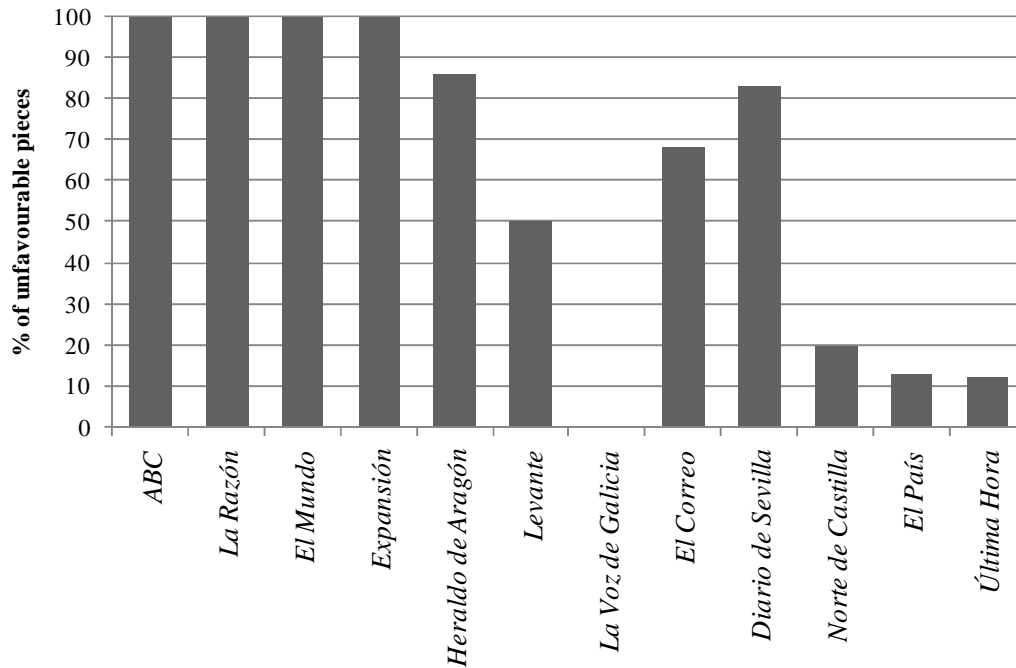
### Comparison of the presence of the Statute in the newspapers (Figures in % of days on which it appears)

Publication	Editorials	Front pages	Overall average
<i>ABC</i>	31.11	51.11	41.11
<i>La Razón</i>	44.44	64.44	54.44
<i>El Mundo</i>	35.56	57.78	46.67
<i>Expansión</i>	20.00	28.89	24.45
<i>Heraldo de Aragón</i>	28.89	37.78	33.34
<i>Levante</i>	4.44	8.89	6.67
<i>La Voz de Galicia</i>	–	20.00	20.00
<i>El Correo</i>	20.00	8.89	14.45
<i>Diario de Sevilla</i>	13.33	28.89	21.11
<i>Norte de Castilla</i>	11.11	31.11	21.11
<i>El País</i>	17.78	60.00	38.89
<i>Última Hora</i>	20.00	28.89	24.45

**Graph 1. Comparison of the presence of the Statute (front pages and editorials)**



**Graph 2. Comparison of the newspapers with the editorials most firmly against the Statute**



In turn, El País and ABC have prominently monitored the Statute and are still in the upper range, while the Heraldo de Aragón has devoted average attention to the reform of the Statute. We then find a group of newspapers which have shown little interest in this issue. The newspapers in this group include Expansión, La Voz de Galicia, Diario de Sevilla, El Norte de Castilla and Última Hora. Finally, there was very little monitoring of the draft of the new Statute by the newspapers El Correo and particularly Levante, as they only referred to it on fewer than 10% of the days studied.

Likewise, the newspapers analysed can be classified into three groups based on their positions on the new draft Statute of Catalonia approved by the Parliament. The first group includes the publications which are extremely opposed to the initiative, including El Mundo, ABC, La Razón, Diario de Sevilla, Expansión and Heraldo de Aragón. Between 80% and 100% of the editorials in these newspapers are against the Statute, and the information published on their front pages is openly against it.

The second group of newspapers includes El Correo and Levante, two publications which should be considered against the draft Statute, although their degree of opposition does not reach that of the first group. In particular, the positions in the Valencian newspaper Levante are slightly more positive than those in its Basque counterpart El Correo, especially in the editorials analysed.

Finally, there is a third group of newspapers that can be categorised as favourable to the new Statute of Catalonia. These newspapers include El País, El Norte de Castilla, Última Hora and La Voz de Galicia. In their editorials, the most positive figures from the entire sample can be found in the Balearic Islands newspaper Última Hora, followed by El País and the Valladolid-based publication El Norte de Castilla. No more than 20% of the editorials in these three newspapers were critical of the new Statute of Catalonia.

La Voz de Galicia has no editorials, but it is included in this group because the results of the front pages are the second most positive in the entire sample, only surpassed by the front pages of El País. It should be noted that the newspapers El Norte de Castilla and Última Hora have results that are less favourable to the Statute in the study of front pages, but the positive information contained in their editorials – the most important variable in the analysis according to the methodology designed – led them to be included in this third group.

## 5. Main strong and weak points of the new draft Statute

The main point in favour of the draft Statute reflected in the study is the broad support that the text earned in the Parliament of Catalonia – this is considered valid in 19% of the strong points of the project. The second most favourable point is the fact that the constituent initiative prompts a debate which should be conducted in a dispassionate, calm and reasoned way, without exaggerated claims (13%).

One argument used by the newspapers analysed is that the Catalan parties are willing to negotiate the text that emerged from its Parliament (10%). This is particularly appreciated by the newspapers that are the most favourable to the draft Statute, while the newspapers that are more opposed to the text use it as a weapon to criticise the Catalan political class.

One of the most important points praised in the new Statute is that it strives to fit within the Constitution (9%). According to the newspapers analysed, other points that justify supporting this draft include the fact that it is a modern text, that Catalonia needs better financing and that it is the right of Catalan citizens. Other positive points are that the Statute would be the best guarantee against “involutionist” or “adventurous” temptations, and that the text would deliver on many of the Catalans’ demands. Each of these latter points accounted for 6% of the total strong points of the draft Statute.

Representing 3% of the total, we can find strong points of the project such as the ones stating that the Statute can help to solve Catalonia’s fit within Spain, that it is good because it brings Spain closer to a federal model, and that it serves to show the PP that tensions do not help to resolve the territorial conflicts in Spain.

### Main strong points of the draft Statute

1	Broad support from the Parliament of Catalonia (90%)	19%
2	Prompts a dispassionate, calm and reasoned debate on the situation of Catalonia	13%
3	The Catalan parties are willing to negotiate	10%
4	It can fit within the Constitution	9%
5	Catalonia has the right to better financing	6%
6	It is a modern text	6%
7	The Statute would be the best guarantee against “involutionist” or “adventurous” temptations	6%
8	It is the right of the people of Catalonia	6%
9	The text delivers on many of the Catalans’ demands	6%
10	Catalonia’s fit within Spain must be resolved	3%
11	It improves the cohesion of the Tripartite	3%
12	More decentralisation / a federal model is needed	3%
13	Catalonia’s uniqueness must be emphasised	3%
14	The PP’s attitude does not help	3%
15	Other factors difficult to categorise	4%

### 5.1. Main weak points of the new draft Statute

The point in the new draft Statute of Catalonia that receives the most criticism in the twelve newspapers analysed is that it is unconstitutional (23%). In all the newspapers analysed, this is one of the issues that most concerns the editorialists. The majority of texts condemn the draft presented by the Parliament of Catalonia as violating constitutional principles or not being fully in alignment with the Constitution.

The second point most often sanctioned by the newspapers in the sample is that the financing system proposed by the Statute is not acceptable for Spain as a whole (12%). Some newspapers are particularly critical of this point and accuse the framers of the draft Statute of approving a text that is unfair and uncooperative with the other autonomous regions in Spain. This is even criticised by the newspapers that are the most favourable to the project, even though they do so less vehemently than the newspapers that are radically opposed to the text.

#### Main weak points of the draft Statute

1	The Statute is unconstitutional	23%
2	It has an unfair / uncooperative system of financing	12%
3	Catalonia is not a nation	11%
4	It attacks Spanish national unity	5%
5	It breaks territorial cohesion	4%
6	It is not a realistic text / It should be scaled back	4%
7	It defends the interests of "radical minorities"	3%
8	The PP and PSOE should agree to a new text	3%
9	Other autonomous communities might also want the same treatment as Catalonia	3%
10	The Statute is poorly explained	2%
11	It does not capture the thinking of the 10 million voters who support the PP	2%
12	It breaks the peaceful coexistence of the Transition	2%
13	It worsens the Catalonia-Spain conflict	2%
14	The ERC's attitude is inappropriate and hinders negotiations	2%
15	It entails a change in the Constitution	2%
16	Excess of competences (bilateralism)	2%
17	It is a step prior to independence	2%
19	It is a pact that violates laws	2%
20	Other factors difficult to categorise	12%

The term nation is also roundly rejected in the sample analysed: 11% of the total criticisms focus on the definition of Catalonia as a nation. On this point, the newspapers are particularly belligerent with the Statute, and the language that they use is often quite heated. The argument to support this rejection is that if Catalonia is defined as a nation, the state is ruptured, the Spanish nation is finished, the essence of the fatherland is broken, or simply it may serve as the stepping stone to Catalonia's independence.

Another of the severest reproofs of the Statute is regarding the unity of Spain. Thus, if we add the criticism arguing that the text breaks Spain's national unity to the criticism that it breaks Spain's territorial cohesion, together they total 9% of the admonitions on similar issues.

What is more, it is interesting to note the series of points that criticise the wording of the text. Five percent of the criticisms refer to the fact that the Statute is not a realistic text and that it is poorly worded. The newspapers that express disapproval of the draft Statute believe that it should be trimmed back because it is poorly thought through and poorly written.

Beyond the position against the new model of financing, we noted how some newspapers opposed approval of the Statute and justified it in economic terms, wielding the following arguments: it is an interventionist text, it would negatively affect the economy, and finally, it reveals the privileged treatment of the fiscal pact with the Basque Country and Navarra. If we add these points, they account for 3% of the total negative points of the analysis.

## 6. Conclusions

### *6.1. The Spanish newspapers analysed harshly criticised the new draft Statute*

The main conclusion of this study on the Catalan Statute initiative is that generally speaking the leading newspapers in the country are harshly against the draft written by the Parliament of Catalonia. The criticisms are quite harsh at times. This generic conclusion validates the main working hypothesis stated at the beginning of the study. If we make an overall numerical assessment, for every positive point of the Statute, six negative points can be found in the sample as a whole.

### *6.2. The newspapers in the sample can be classified into three groups based on the intensity and nature of their criticisms of the draft Statute*

The newspapers considered highly unfavourable to the Statute are El Mundo, ABC, La Razón, Diario de Sevilla, Expansión and Heraldo de Aragón. In turn, in light of the results, the newspapers that take a somewhat unfavourable stance include El Correo and Levante, while El País, El Norte de Castilla, Última Hora and La Voz de Galicia can be described as favourable to the Statute, albeit to differing degrees. The new draft Statute had a much broader presence in the newspapers that are opposed to the Parliament of Catalonia's initiative. Generally speaking, the new Statute figured more prominently in the nationwide newspapers than in their more regional or local counterparts.

### *6.3. The main criticisms of the new draft Statute revolve around two immovable theses: it is unconstitutional and Catalonia is not a nation*

The majority of the newspapers analysed believe that the draft presented by the Parliament of Catalonia does not fit within the bounds of the Constitution and must therefore be revised or withdrawn. This thesis accounts for 23% of all the criticisms of the new text. The newspapers that are the most hostile to the project are the ones that cultivate this argument the most. However, the newspapers that view the text more favourably also made its fit within the bounds of the Constitution an indispensable condition. The study also shows that the definition of Catalonia as a nation leads to vehement rejection in the Spanish written press. According to the media in the sample, the new Statute is an attack on the unity of Spain and breaks its territorial cohesion. The argument wielded against the Statute by the newspapers in the sample is that if it moves forward it could break the "unity of the fatherland".

*6.4. Another major criticism is that the financing system proposed is unfair and uncooperative with the rest of Spain*

Most of the newspapers analysed do not like the system of financing proposed by the draft Statute. The main criticisms are that the text is unfair to the rest of Spain and not very cooperative with the poorer autonomous regions in the country. For this reason, the newspapers analysed view the Catalan draft Statute as a text which “is not realistic”, and they suggest that the text which emerged from the Parliament of Catalonia be scaled back.

*6.5. The most noteworthy points in favour of the new Statute in the Spanish press are the broad support of Parliament and the fact that Catalonia has the right to have more economic resources*

The newspapers which find points in favour of the new text deem that it should be respected because it received the approval of almost 90% of the deputies in the Parliament of Catalonia. This, along with the fact that Catalonia has the right to better financing, are the only two points where there is some degree of unanimity among the handful of newspapers that found something positive in the Statute. They also view the Catalan parties’ willingness to negotiate and the fact that the text is modern and innovative as positive factors.

The newspapers that approve the new Statute believe that the Catalan parties are not opposed to negotiating the text. These newspapers believe that this argument is enough to merit listening to the proposal and embarking on negotiations that are agreed upon among all the Catalan forces which have supported the text and the state government.

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