

THE BBC AND 'EUROPE'

ANALYSIS OF EU COVERAGE IN THE 2010 GENERAL ELECTION

SUMMARY

The reporting of EU issues was a very low priority during this election and the paucity of coverage meant that key topics linked to the EU were not properly explored.

Of the total election coverage, UKIP attracted 1.98%, considerably less than its share of the national poll, which was 3.1%. This meant that party policies were not explored in sufficient depth.

There were few editorial efforts to explore UKIP policies such as withdrawal, and the interviews that did take place with senior party spokesmen were disproportionately aggressive or angled on inaccurate or contentious opposing information.

The thrust of many features was to portray the party as mavericks who based policies on poorly researched data.

Exploration of EU issues amounted to only 3.2% of election coverage across all programmes, and was as low as 2.2% in the flagship Today programme. The BBC seemingly acquiesced to the desire of the main parties to attach low priority to the EU as an election issue.

There were no BBC interviews of the main two parties' leaders about EU issues, and the only curiosity about the Liberal Democrats' strongly pro-EU stance related to its support of the euro.

Extracts from the leaders' debates broadcast on news programmes about EU affairs amounted to less than a thousand words

Only ten BBC correspondent reports were filed about EU topics, and only two of these – by Gavin Hewitt, the Europe editor before the second leaders' debate – covered the EU policies of the main parties in more than a few sentences.

PART ONE:

ELECTION 2010

MONITORING STATISTICS

This survey examines the BBC's coverage of EU news and current affairs during the period of the 2010 UK General Election campaign. Newswatch monitored every edition of nine selected BBC radio and television programmes between Monday 29 March and Friday 7 May, an interval of 40 days. This amounted to 278 hours of programming in total.

Each programme was monitored in its entirety. All individual news items were timed and logged, and any items relevant to the European Union or its relationship with the UK were transcribed in full and analysed on a line-by-line basis. Extensive data relating to each programme was entered into the Newswatch database and used to explore coverage patterns during the course of the election period.

This document presents the key statistical findings of the survey, and compares this data to the fourteen monitoring projects undertaken by Newswatch since 2002.

SECTION ONE: EU COVERAGE DURING THE SURVEY PERIOD

1.1 OVERVIEW

Newswatch selected nine programmes for analysis, five from BBC Radio and four from BBC Television. These comprised: Today, The World at One, PM, The Six O’Clock News and The World Tonight on Radio 4, News at One, News at Six and News at Ten on BBC1, and BBC2’s Newsnight.

The nine programmes included additional or prolonged editions during the election campaign. Most notably, the World at One was regularly extended to include ‘Election Call’ phone-ins and discussions with its election panel, Newsnight ran a series of additional programmes on Saturday evenings at the height of the campaign period, and The World Tonight was extended on three occasions to carry live coverage of the televised Leaders Debates. All extended and additional programme content was included in the survey.

A range of additional BBC content was monitored on an informal basis throughout the campaign including Question Time, The World This Weekend, Hard Talk and The Daily Politics. The national press was monitored closely, alongside online news services and broadcast content from non-BBC television and radio channels.

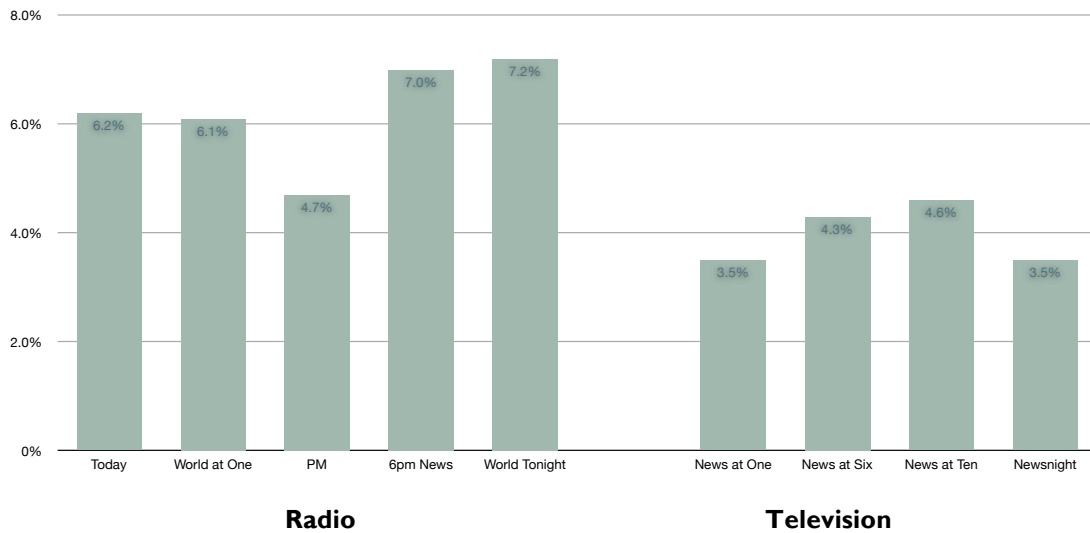
1.2 AIRTIME

Newswatch’s airtime calculations focus on ‘feature reports’, to ensure totals are not affected by repeated content such as bulletins, newspaper reviews, headlines and news roundups, and ‘non-news’ items such as sport, weather and trailers for other programmes. The total space available within the nine programmes for feature reports was 216 hours and 18 minutes. Of this, 11 hours and 57 minutes - 5.5% of the total available airtime - was EU related.

Since 2002, Newswatch has monitored 3855 hours of BBC News Coverage and fully transcribed over four thousand individual news items. This long term monitoring has established that the BBC has devoted an average of 5.4% of its feature reporting to EU-related themes. During the period of the 2010 General Election, EU coverage was slightly higher than this average, at 5.5%.

I.3 COVERAGE BY PROGRAMME

The amount of coverage was not uniform across all nine programmes. The chart shows how coverage differed as a proportion of each programme's total available airtime.



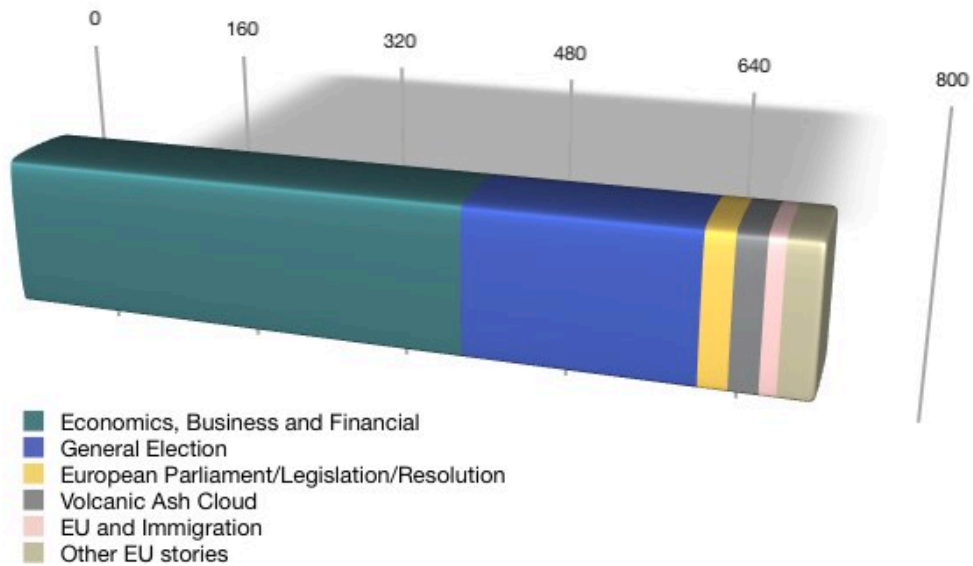
There was a significant difference between the amounts of EU-related coverage on radio (6.2%) as compared to television (3.9%) Radio 4's The World Tonight delivered the highest proportion of EU news, with 7.2% of its available feature airtime given over to EU issues. Both News at One and Newsnight devoting only 3.5% of their respective available airtime to stories with an EU theme.

Programme	Duration
Today	4 hours 5 min
World at One	1 hour 21 min
PM	1 hour 13 min
6pm News	1 hour 8 min
World Tonight	1 hour 44 min
News at One	27 min
News at Six	34 min
News at Ten	44 min
Newsnight	43 min
Total	11 hours 58 min

I.4 EU THEMES

Just five broad subjects accounted for approximately 96% of all EU coverage during the survey period. The charts illustrate the amount of coverage given over to these key themes.

Subject Area	Total Airtime	Percentage
Economics, Business and Financial	428.5	59.7
General Election	198.75	27.7
European Parliament/Legislation/Resolution	24.5	3.4
Volcanic Ash Cloud	24.5	3.4
EU and Immigration	14	1.6
Other EU stories	29.75	4.2

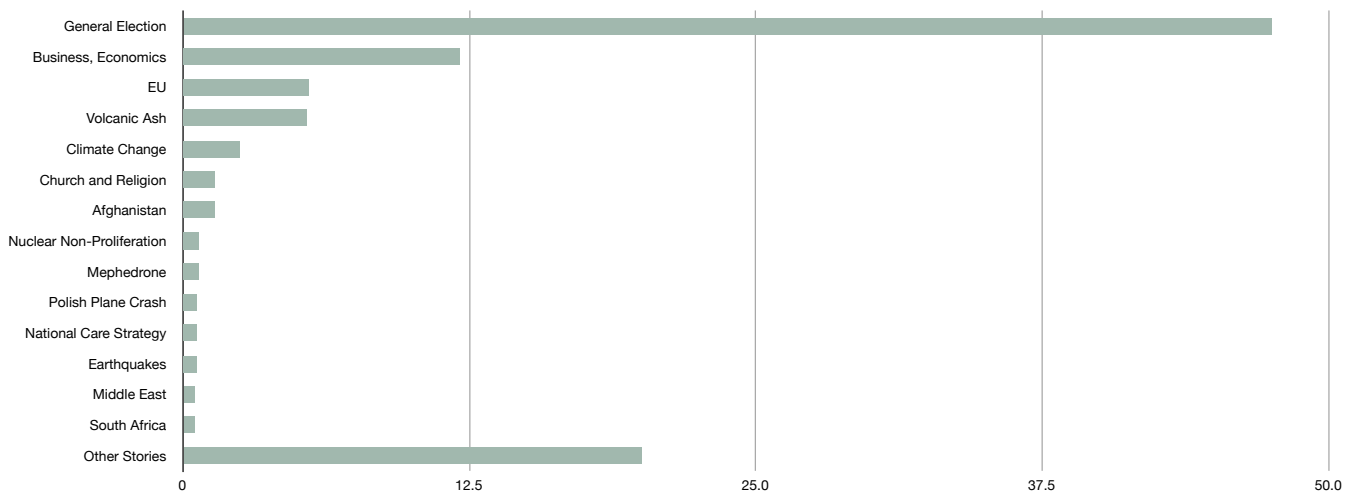


The most widely addressed EU theme during the election period was that of Economic, Business and Financial news. This was principally a consequence of economic problems encountered by Greece during the survey interval, and the subsequent intervention of the EU and IMF, leading to widespread civil unrest over the austerity measures demanded in return for the bail-out.

With over 7 hours of coverage in total across the nine programmes, this theme received more than twice the airtime of discussions of the EU as an issue for the British electorate, which received 3 hours and 19 minutes.

1.5 THE WIDER NEWS AGENDA

The chart shows all news themes that received an hour or more of coverage in total, across the nine surveyed programmes.



Theme	Total Duration	%
General Election	102 hours 47.5 min	47.5%
Business, Economics	26 hours 12.5 min	12.1%
EU	11 hours 57.25 min	5.5%
Volcanic Ash	11 hours 36 min	5.4%
Climate Change	5 hours 20.75 min	2.5%
Church and Religion	3 hours 1.25 min	1.4%
Afghanistan	2 hours 59 min	1.4%
Nuclear Non-Proliferation	1 hours 36.25 min	0.7%
Mephedrone	1 hours 34 min	0.7%
Polish Plane Crash	1 hours 21.5 min	0.6%
National Care Strategy	1 hours 21 min	0.6%
Earthquakes	1 hours 12.25 min	0.6%
Middle East	1 hours 4 min	0.5%
South Africa	1 hours 3 min	0.5%
Other Stories	40 hours 33 min	20%

The General Election dominated coverage during the 40-day survey period, with 47.5% of airtime being given over to election-based reports. EU themes, by contrast, received 5.5% of programme airtime.

However, it must be appreciated that the Newswatch methodology is designed to award precedence to the EU when undertaking the categorisation process. While this ensures the EU

airtime referred to in each survey represents an absolute maximum, it also reduces the proportions of news coverage in other categories by equal measure. As the table in Section 1.3 shows, the vast majority of EU stories could have been categorised reasonably as either 'general election' or 'business and economics'. If this alternate approach had been used, then just 1 hour and 33 minutes of EU coverage (those EU stories which were not either business or election related) or 0.7% of total available airtime during the monitoring period.

Despite the prevalence of the General Election as a news theme, it is also important to note that exactly a fifth of all airtime was dedicated to stories other than the fourteen key news themes presented in the chart.

1.6 ELECTION COVERAGE

The nine programmes devoted 102 hours and 48 min to coverage of the General Election, and a further 3 hours 19 min to Election reports of relevance to the European Union (which thus far have been categorised separately in accordance with the Newswatch methodology). By combining these two figures, a more accurate picture of election coverage emerges: in total the programmes delivered 106 hours 6 min of coverage to Election themes - or 49% of total available airtime.

Using this combined total, it is possible to calculate that 3.1% of Election coverage was devoted discussion of EU matters.

1.7 AIRTIME COMPARISONS WITH THE 2005 ELECTION

During the 2005 General Election, Newswatch employed a different investigative approach. Fewer individual programmes were monitored, but for a longer overall duration. The survey focused on 15 weeks of the Today programme, together with 58 days each of PM, News at Ten and Newsnight.

Year	Total Monitoring	Available Feature Airtime	EU Feature Airtime	EU Airtime %
2005	367 hours	263 hrs 33 min	25 hours 44 min	9.8%
2010	278 hours	216 hours and 18 min	11 hours and 58 minutes	5.5%

1.8 SPEAKERS

In total, there were 358 guest contributions to EU-themed reports during the survey interval. 187 were interviews (or sections of interviews) 171 were pre-recorded soundbites – including Vox Pops, questions from audience members, and letters or emails. The table lists speakers according to whether they expressed Europhile or Eurosceptic views. Each guest was categorised according to the *contents* of the contribution, rather than the established views of the person concerned, or their party affiliation.

Contributions by Party	Labour	Conservative	Liberal	UKIP	EU	Other	Total
Pro-EU	25	2	26	0	34	16	103
In favour of specific EU legislation/action	0	0	0	0	2	18	20
Anti-EU or Eurosceptic	2	28	0	48	1	15	94
Against specific EU legislation/action	2	0	0	0	1	35	38
Neutral/Factual viewpoint	5	1	3	0	2	92	103
Total Speakers	34	31	29	48	40	176	358

For only the second occasion in a Newswatch survey, the numbers of broadly pro-EU speakers outnumbered the number of broadly anti-EU speakers. 123 (34.4%) guests argued in favour of the EU or its legislation, 132 (36.9%) argued against it, and 103 (28.8%) gave a neutral or factual viewpoint.

Long term monitoring undertaken since 2002 has illustrated that the EU debate has been regularly weighted in favour of Europhile speakers. For example, of the 2393 speakers who contributed to the EU debate on the Today programme during Newswatch monitoring periods September 2002 - December 2009, 47% made pro-EU statements, and just 32% offered a sceptical perspective.

1.9 WORD COUNT ANALYSIS

The broad headcount analysis does not reflect how much space each contributor received. A word count analysis of all 358 contributors demonstrated that despite there being far more broadly anti-EU speakers, there were actually more words spoken in favour of the EU - with 36.9% of words coming from Europhile speakers, 34.8% from Eurosceptic or anti-EU speakers, and 28.3% from neutral speakers.

I.8 UKIP AND THE WITHDRAWAL ARGUMENT

Steps were taken to ascertain how many advocates of withdrawal from the EU appeared on the programme to discuss the EU during the survey period and how many of these speakers were members of the UK Independence Party.

55 guests could be classified as ‘withdrawalist’ as a result of their party affiliation, the contents of their contribution, or the commentary on them given by journalists or presenters. 48 were members or supporters of UKIP, 4 were BNP politicians, 2 were members of the English Democrats, and there was an additional unnamed voter who called for withdrawal without any indication or party affiliation.¹

Combined, withdrawal supporters amounted to 15.4% of the total number of speakers during the survey. The table compares data from the current survey to information collected during by Newswatch the 2005 General Election and 2009 European Election.

	2005 General Election		2009 European Election		2010 General Election	
Total EU Speakers	657		388		358	
UKIP	21	3.2%	36	9.3%	48	13.4%
Veritas	1	0.2%	0	0%	0	0%
BNP	1	0.2%	24	6.2%	4	1.1%
English Democrats	1	0.2%	3	0.8%	2	0.56%
No2EU	0	0	3	0.8%	0	0
No affiliation	0	0	1	0.3%	1	0.3%
Socialist Labour Party	0	0	1	0.3%	0	0
Total	25	3.8%	68	17.5%	54	15.1%

Direct comparisons are problematical because the two previous surveys had different parameters, but some broad trends are clear. There has been a steady increase in the number of UKIP supporters across the three surveys. The proportion of withdrawalist speakers reached 17.5% during the 2009 election, owing to a significant increase in the number of BNP speakers being invited to speak.

It is important to note, however, that during European Election periods, a much higher proportion of political speakers tend to be eligible for inclusion in these survey totals, because they often discuss the election, which in itself counts as an EU theme. During general elections, representatives of the smaller parties who advocate withdrawal often appear elsewhere in the wider coverage, but are not included in the Newswatch totals, because they don’t speak directly about the EU.

¹ There were also sixteen additional appearances by representatives of UKIP who discussed issues other than the EU, and therefore did not qualify for inclusion in these EU-specific totals. However these speakers will be considered in greater detail in section 2 of this report

SECTION TWO: THE GENERAL ELECTION

2.1 ELECTION COVERAGE BY PROGRAMME

Reports dealing with the EU as an issue in the General Election were isolated from the other prevalent EU news themes and analysed separately. The chart provides details of the individual programmes and their coverage of the EU specifically as an election theme

	Total Reports	Feature Reports	EU Election Airtime	% of total EU coverage	% of Election coverage	% of Total Airtime	Speakers
Today	30	22	31 min	12.6%	2.2%	0.8%	17
The World at One	23	21	48 min 30s	59.9%	5.5%	3.7%	41
PM	20	19	16 min 30s	22.7%	2.1%	1.1%	21
R4 Six O'Clock News	9	9	8min 30s	12.5%	3.6%	0.9%	9
The World Tonight	14	12	47 min 15s	45.7%	5.6%	3.3%	25
News at One	3	3	3min 30s	13.0%	1.1%	0.5%	6
News at Six	6	6	7 min	20.7%	2.1%	0.9%	8
News at Ten	10	10	13 min 45s	31.6%	3.1%	1.5%	18
Newsnight	18	16	22 min	51.2%	2.3%	1.8%	26

The table shows that The World at One and The World Tonight devoted significantly higher proportions of their overall airtime to coverage to EU themes during the survey interval. However, this is mainly attributed to just two episodes of the programmes in question.

First, The World at One was regularly extended with its 'Election Call', in which members of the public were asked to telephone the programme with their questions for party leaders, including Lord Pearson of The UK Independence Party. Taken in isolation, the ten and a half minute segment in which Lord Pearson discussed the European Union represented almost a quarter of the total time The World at One spent discussing the EU as an election issue during the whole election period.

Similarly, the World Tonight - which delivered the highest proportion of EU election coverage during the survey - 5.4% of its available airtime - broadcast the majority of this in a single programme: the extended simulcast of the second Leaders' Debate, which aired on Sky News.

2.2 EU SPEAKERS IN ELECTION REPORTING

The EU election reports contained 172 contributions from guest speakers. There were 95 interviews (or segments of interviews), 71 soundbites, and six other contributions in the former of vox pops, letters and questions from callers and audience members.

Contributions by Party	Labour	Conservative	Liberal	UKIP	EU	Other	Total
Pro-EU	19	2	22	0	0	8	51
In favour of specific EU legislation/action	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Anti-EU or Eurosceptic	0	27	0	42	0	14	83
Against specific EU legislation/action	2	0	0	0	0	4	6
Neutral/Factual viewpoint	1	0	3	0	0	23	27
Total Speakers	22	29	25	42	0	54	171

In the totals for the survey as a whole, there was a 2.5% differential in favour of broadly Eurosceptic over broadly Europhile speakers. When the election reports are taken in isolation, the disparity is much more significant, with 33% speaking in favour of the EU, 51% speaking against and 16% offering a neutral or factual perspective. Of the 89 contributors who spoke against the EU 42 were representatives or supporters of The UK Independence Party (47%).

There is strong evidence to suggest that this relatively high proportion of UKIP speakers in this survey was actually caused by a vacuum – politicians from the three main parties were reluctant to allow the EU issue to ignite fully during the campaign, whereas UKIP, after their performances in the 2005 General Election and 2009 European Election were awarded space accordingly, under the specific guidelines covering election reporting.

There are some issues that have not been mentioned at all, because they're too incendiary, I mean one of them is Europe, and Europe is really important to us. I mean it's not as if . . . but they don't go there.

Marina Warner, University of Essex
World at One, 12th April 2010, 1.44pm

In terms of actual speaker numbers, UKIP outweighed the other parties within the debate, often quite significantly. However, when a word count analysis was undertaken of the speakers from each of the political parties who commented on EU matters during the debate, the differentials were actually much closer – with the total word count for UKIP being only 0.8% higher than that of the Liberal Democrats. The table lists all speakers from the political parties (including party supporters and voters) who contributed to election issues with an EU-related theme.

Party	Speakers	Total Words	Percentage	Average Contribution
UKIP	42	5000	22.1%	119
Liberal Democrats	25	4824	21.3%	193
Conservatives	29	4165	18.4%	144
Labour	22	2963	13.1%	135
BNP	4	318	1.4%	80
Greens	1	309	1.4%	309
Plaid Cymru	2	267	1.2%	134
SNP	2	253	1.1%	127
English Democrats	2	134	0.6%	67
DUP	1	131	0.6%	131
All Other Speakers	41	4232	18.7%	103

Despite the significant increase in the headcount of UKIP speakers, their contributions tended to be shorter than those of the three main parties. The averages in the table show that of all the parties listed, only the British National Party and English Democrats had shorter average contributions than UKIP. The sample is small for some of the minor parties, simply because they rarely engaged on the EU as an election issue, but that data does show a clear disparity between the average space awarded to UKIP on EU matters, in comparison to speakers from the three main Westminster parties.

2.3 UKIP AND NON-EU RELATED ELECTION COVERAGE

Timings were taken for each individual report and it is possible to establish, using this data, precisely how much space UKIP were given over the 40 day period, as a proportion of all reports on the Election.

In total, the nine surveyed programmes devoted 2 hours and 2 minutes of their election coverage to The UK Independence Party and related themes. This included interview and soundbite time awarded to all UKIP politicians and supporters, on both the EU and on the other election policy matters, together with reporting on UKIP from reporters and correspondents.

I mean you see, you want to take me away again from these issues, which really have to be put in front of the people . . . you know, we're a small party, we don't get a lot of time, we must concentrate on the big issues.

Lord Pearson of Rannoch, UKIP Leader
Radio 4, PM, 27th April 2010

There was an exact split between coverage of UKIP EU policy (61 minutes 15 sec) and coverage of other UKIP manifesto pledges contained within their manifesto (60 minutes 45 sec). UKIP themselves were critical of this journalistic approach on a number of occasions, believing that journalists and interviewers were focusing on the minutiae of their manifesto as opposed to their core messages.

A line-by-line analysis was undertaken of every soundbite and interview sequence featuring a UKIP speaker during the election coverage. Of the 58 UKIP contributors, 26 spoke solely on EU issues, 16 did not refer to or discuss the EU at all, and a further 16 discussed both the EU and other election issues.

The first table shows word count totals for non-EU contributions, arranged by subject matter and proportions.

WORDCOUNT OF UKIP's NON-EU DISCUSSIONS		
Subject	Words	%
UKIP's prospects/General Campaigning /The Buckingham Seat	922	18.1%
The economy/deficit/taxation	922	18.1%
Immigration (non-EU context)	702	13.8%
Prisons	461	9.1%
'Ban the Burka'	438	8.6%
Benefits System	329	6.5%
Defence	259	5.1%
Nigel Farage Plane Crash	248	4.9%
Accusation of Unfamiliarity with Own Manifesto	215	4.2%
UKIP's view on the Televised Leaders' Debates	114	2.2%
Smoking Rooms	110	2.2%
Radio 4 Theme	73	1.4%
Afghanistan	58	1.1%
UKIP Policy on America	50	1.0%
UKIP not standing against anti-EU candidates from other parties	49	1.0%
System of Binding Referendums	38	0.7%
Stated Intention to vote UKIP only	29	0.6%
Pronunciation of the surname 'Farage'	27	0.5%
Free Eye Tests	21	0.4%
Pullman Trains	20	0.4%
Total	5085	100%

The table illustrates the wide range of non-EU issues upon which UKIP representatives were questioned. Although some themes were relatively well covered – such as campaigning in the Speaker John Bercow's Buckingham constituency, taxation and immigration – the table also highlights

the number of questions put to UKIP speakers on relatively minor issues, or on issues which might have been useful, but benefited from minimal exploration.

The second table shows similar statistics for those occasions in which UKIP guests spoke about EU matters in election-based reports.

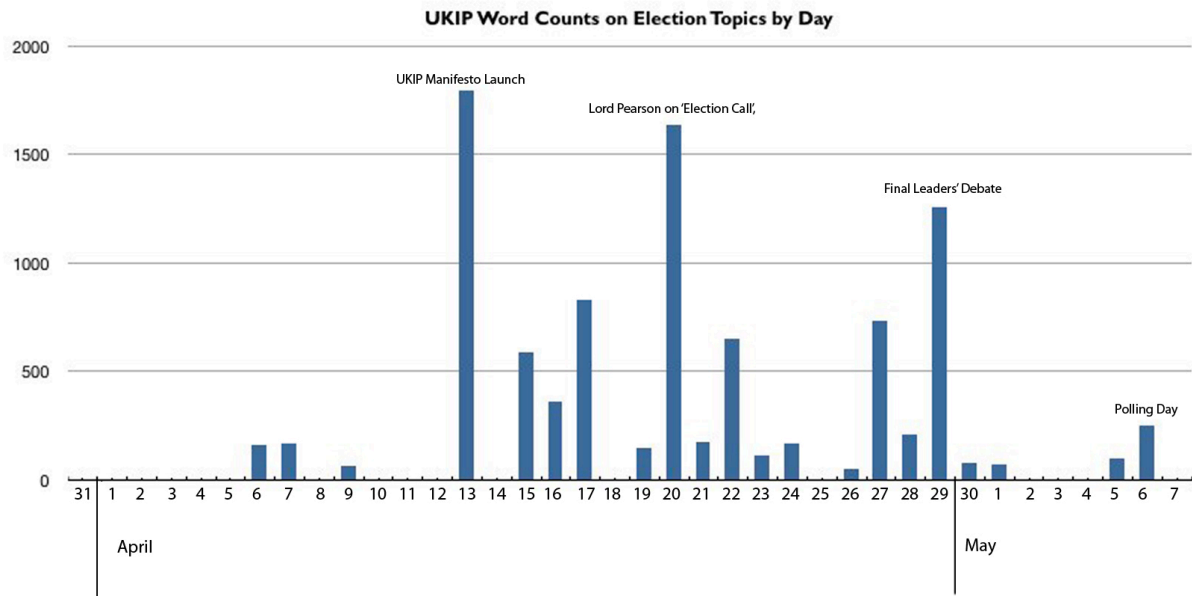
WORDCOUNT OF UKIP'S EU DISCUSSIONS		
Subject	Words	%
Withdraw from Europe to reduce budget deficit/Cost to the UK of EU membership	1323	26.5
EU and Borders/Immigration/EU Enlargement	1201	24.0
Percentage of UK Laws made in the EU/ Ever deeper integration	988	19.8
Withdrawal arguments/Referendum on 'in or out'	827	16.5
UKIP's argument to take part in the televised debates based on their performance in the European Elections	269	5.4
EU Defence	215	4.3
The Euro/ European economics	77	1.5
Nigel Farage previously criticising Herman Van Rompuy	51	1.0
European Funding for Cornwall	49	1.0
Total	5085	100%

2.4 UKIP ELECTION WORDCOUNTS OVER THE FULL SURVEY

The wordcount data for UKIP speakers (on all election themes, both EU and non-EU) were analysed to discover when and where most coverage occurs. As the graph shows, the three events generating the most speaker airtime for UKIP were the launch of the party manifesto on April 13, the single interview with party leader Lord Pearson on April 20, and UKIP's response to the final leaders' debate on April 29.

I think Margaret Thatcher said that the last ten days are the most important. And I think that was always in our thinking – that it would be the end that we would accelerate and take off.

Lord Gould, Labour Party
World at One, 5th May 2010



As the graph shows, there was a decline in UKIP coverage as polling day approached, with very little airtime given to UKIP in the final week of campaigning 30 April – 5 May. There were UKIP contributions on the polling day itself, with party spokesmen being asked to comment on the light aircraft accident which injured UKIP's Nigel Farage. However, on the day after the election, and despite a 55% increase in the numbers voting for UKIP, none of their representatives were invited onto the surveyed programmes to give their response to the results.

PART TWO: ANALYSIS OF EU-RELATED ELECTION COVERAGE

Analysis in this section of the report examines the material broadcast during the general election campaign that was focused on EU-related policies of the main parties and UKIP.

It can be divided into three:

- Appearances by UKIP, when mention of the EU was difficult to avoid or unavoidable. These items are analysed in part 3.
- Mention of the policies of the other parties relating to Europe.
- World Tonight special editions carrying the leaders' debates in full.

The third category has been ignored because the leaders' debates – though an integral part of coverage of the election by all broadcasters – were not structured or analytical coverage, and BBC editors had no choice in what they contained.

The focus in this section is on the second category.

EU ISSUES: 3.2% OF ELECTION COVERAGE

It was evident that the three main parties did not regard the EU as a major issue and did not want the subject to be centre stage. This feeling that the EU was not an important election topic was mentioned by senior BBC presenters such as James Naughtie and Bridget Kendall. Editors apparently followed this lead, in that only 3.2% of election coverage was EU-related across all the programmes analysed. On Today and Newsnight, two of the corporation's main flagship news programmes, the average was as low as 2.2% and 2.3% respectively.

Features about EU-related policies as they related to the three main parties were very few. For example, apart from in The World at One's Election Call (in which Nick Clegg and David Cameron both spoke for a combined total of around nine minutes on EU matters), the combined number of words said by the party leaders about their EU policies in news programmes amounted to less than one thousand, or about five minutes of airtime. And there were only ten occasions throughout the election campaign when BBC correspondents or experts contributed reports that were angled on EU policy topics.

Outside the leader debates, the EU was so low down in priority that there were no dedicated interviews of the Conservative and Labour Party leaders by BBC presenters in which EU-related policies were raised; and only one question was put to Gordon Brown in the entire campaign coverage that elicited a response that mentioned the EU.

It is also noteworthy that there were no BBC interviews of senior party figures from the two main parties (including the leaders) in which questions were asked about the EU, even on the topic of immigration into the UK from the EU which, as a result of the Gillian Duffy encounter, became a major election theme.

Nick Clegg was interviewed briefly on Today primarily about his approach to the euro on April 7. The next detailed mention of the EU as an election issue relevant to the three main parties was not until April 15. This was on the World Tonight when a brief extract from David Cameron's contribution to the first leaders' debate was included. He spoke (two sentences, 95 words) about restricting the number of immigrants to the UK from new EU entrants.

Thereafter, David Cameron and Nick Clegg both featured in The World at One Election Call sequences in which they were dealt with questions about EU-related matters. Nick Clegg was asked whether he would join the euro and whether he would control immigration from the EU; Mr Cameron's interrogators wanted to know why he had decided not to hold a referendum about the Lisbon Treaty and why Conservative MEP seemingly supported anti-gay measures elsewhere in the EU. The combined length was around nine minutes. These were the longest sequences focused on exploring EU policies in the election campaign.

Incidental questions about the EU were put to Gordon Brown, Liam Fox (April 19 and 20), David Miliband (April 22) and Alan Johnson (May5). Mr Miliband explained why Conservative Party EU policies were wrong and that the UK should not become second-class citizens in Europe; Mr Johnson attacked Liberal Democrat policy on the euro; Mr Brown told Jeremy Paxman very briefly why Labour policies towards the EU were different from those of the Liberal Democrats. On April 20, Liam Fox said that the Conservatives would never join the euro, against an assertion from James Naughtie that Kenneth Clarke supported the currency.

LEADERS' DEBATES

The only repeated mention of EU-related matters as they related to all three parties stemmed from the leaders' debates on April 15, April 22 (when the EU was a dedicated topic in changes moderated by Adam Boulton of Sky) and to a lesser extent on April 30, in the BBC-moderated exchanges when the EU was raised indirectly in connection with immigration.

After the April 15 debate, as has been noted, a 95-word quote by David Cameron was included in *The World Tonight*. There was no accompanying analysis.

Around 300 words of actuality about EU policies from the debate were broadcast on April 22; they were used twice, first on *BBC1* and then on *Newsnight*. The angles covered were immigration from the EU, whether the Liberal Democrats would join the euro, and an allegation by Nick Clegg that the Conservative Party was in alliance with alleged "nutters" in the European parliament. In passing, Gordon Brown claimed that three million UK jobs were dependent on the EU.

On *The World at One*, in the build-up to the debate on April 22, Paddy Ashdown, Margaret Beckett and Malcolm Rifkind were each asked for their opinion of how it was likely to go. They answered on predictable lines: Mr Ashdown asserted that Mr Clegg would outline a constructive and positive policy towards the EU; Mr Rifkind attacked the Liberal Democrat support of the euro; and Mrs Beckett said that although she was once doubtful about the EU, she now thought it was a powerful force for good and the government needed to be at the top table.

Associated with the April 22 debates, there was a small amount of analysis by BBC correspondents. On April 23 (*Today*), Tim Harford (the BBC's election 'fact checker') claimed in a feature that an assertion by Gordon Brown about jobs was, "a little misleading".

Bridget Kendall, on *World Tonight* (April 22), before the debate, commented that David Cameron might be on the defensive about his euroscepticism and Nick Clegg for his support of the euro. She claimed that the Liberal Democrat promise of a referendum on the euro and whether the UK should leave the EU was "very bold". Matthew Parris contended that it was unlikely David Cameron would skewer Nick Clegg over the euro. Afterwards Bridget Kendall surmised that foreign policy debates

did not set UK elections alight and said Gordon Brown had conveyed a positive foreign policy message. Former Liberal Democrat press officer Miranda Green claimed that Nick Clegg had come across as someone who could ensure that the UK was at the top table of the EU.

In the build up to the debate, on April 21, Europe editor Gavin Hewitt filed two scene-setting reports which together ran for approximately seven minutes and were the longest items from BBC correspondents dedicated to EU policies in the entire campaign. In the first, he included actuality from senior party figures William Hague, David Miliband and Ed Davey, the origin of which was not specified, but which was picked to highlight the contrast in the different party policies. Outside the leader debates, these few sentences were among the most detailed on EU policy by the main parties. In Mr Hewitt's second item, he repeated some of the recorded material noted above, but chose as his main focus the reaction of EU leaders to the eurosceptic policies of the Conservative Party. He stressed that leaders such as Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy were uneasy with the party's approach, as well as with their association with "fringe parties".

Also on April 21, on Newsnight, Mark Urban discussing the leaders' debate, gave a brief overview of the main parties' policies towards the EU. He noted that the Liberal Democrats were confident that Britons would vote 'yes' in a referendum on EU membership. He added that Conservative plans to repatriate powers could lead to a gridlock in the EU and concluded with the observation that Labour had not held a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

After the debate (April 22 Newsnight) Mr Urban claimed that Gordon Brown and Nick Clegg had ganged up against David Cameron about his "far right" connections in the European Parliament. David Grossman observed that all the parties had "weakness" over Europe: Labour over the reneged promise of a referendum, the Conservatives because "it's the grouping they now find themselves in", and the Liberal Democrats because of their enthusiasm.

No actuality from the debate of April 29 was broadcast, but Nick Clegg's assertion that 80% of immigrants into the UK came from the EU generated spin-off coverage. Tim Harford (Today April 30), in his fact-checker role, disputed that the figure was so high and put it at 40%. After Mr Harford's comments, Vince Cable was asked for his reaction. He responded that Mr Clegg was accurate because had quoted the figure for the numbers in employment in the UK, not the total number of immigrants. Mr Cable was also asked in the same sequence whether the Liberal Democrats would have joined the euro at any time in the past. He refused to be drawn.

BBC correspondent Mark Easton also filed items about the Nick Clegg leaders' debate remarks on April 29 and April 30. In both, he noted that none of the main parties had policies which tackled the flow in the number of immigrants coming to the UK from within the EU.

The only party to be questioned further about their EU related policies was the Liberal Democrats. The interview with Vince Cable on April 30 has already been noted. In addition, Mr Cable was asked on April 20 on The World at One what Mr Clegg was likely to say about the EU in the April 22 leaders' debate. He responded that the party was "constructive but not uncritical" and he mentioned pressing for CAP reform. On Today on April 22, Chris Huhne was pressed on whether Nick Clegg had been a lobbyist for RBS at a time when the bank was pressing for looser EU regulation. Mr Huhne claimed that this was a slur against Mr Clegg. Mr Huhne was also asked to comment on April 27 (The World at One) about the impact on the euro of the Greek financial crisis. He conceded that the euro had been badly run.

Thus the Liberal Democrats – unlike the Conservatives and Labour – were quizzed in some detail on four separate occasions about elements of their policies, mostly their support of the euro. But it should also be noted that the combined length of these sequences was almost 12 minutes and a third of this was about Greece rather than the euro or the EU in general.

SUNDRY EU MENTIONS

In addition to this material, there were 15 sundry occasions when the EU policies of the main parties were raised by other programme contributors or less senior party members. Seven of the 15 hinted at problems within the Conservative Party about their EU policies:

April 5 - Lord Hesletine was asked for his views on the Conservative alliances in the European Parliament. He refused to be drawn.

April 14 - Wine expert Tim Atkin said on PM that he would chose for David Cameron to drink a Bordeaux wine because it would appeal to "Little Englanders" in the party as a well as Europhiles because Bordeaux had belonged to Britain for three centuries.

April 21 - Lord Steel, looking forward to the leaders' debate, said that the Cameron weakness was on the whole issue of Europe.

April 22 - On PM, Robin Niblett, of Chatham House, contended that David Cameron and William Hague had spent time trying to build up bilateral relations with the French and Germans, but the Germans were particularly hurt by pulling out of the centre-right group in the European Parliament. The result was that they no longer trusted the Conservatives. He added:

...they're not sure they can trust David Cameron, with the party that in the end is quite Eurosceptic. And so I think it puts him on the back foot right from the beginning, if he were to be Prime Minister.

CQ: And the Lib Dems, they support in principle the idea of joining the single currency after a referendum, how vulnerable does that make him tonight?

April 24 - John Humphrys on Today interviewed French journalist Agnes Poirier of the *Nouvelle Observateur* about her impressions of the election campaign. She said that the French thought David Cameron was hostile to Europe, and added that they would support Nick Clegg's idea that in joining the EPP, they were linked with a "bunch of nutters". John Humphrys suggested they would be happy with somebody like Nick Clegg having big influence. Ms Poirier agreed. And with his idea that Britain would join the euro.

April 27 – Jeanette Winterson said on *Newsnight*:

I think a lot of young people are coming through, I mean, we know there's been great disenchantment with politics among the young, because you can't trust anybody, you know, they go out, they fiddle their expenses, they take you into a war that nobody wants. You know, the whole thing is such a mess. And then you get a guy that stands up, and isn't scared of saying to David Cameron, 'look, you've allied yourself in Europe with a bunch of nutters' – that's what he said, and it's true, and you think, yesss! Let's not hear all this crap anymore, let's hear somebody who says, 'we can change Britain in a way that makes sense'.

May 3 - On *The World at One*, former MP Michael Brown discussed John Major's handling of Maastricht. Martha Kearney asked whether he thought David Cameron would face the same problems of discipline as Mr Major had done with the rebels over Maastricht. Mr Brown said he agreed that that is where the trouble would occur. Later in the same sequence, Jeffrey Donaldson of the DUP, said his party would oppose further expansion of the EU.

A few items also included (much more briefly) reference to Liberal Democrat EU policies. On April 14, it was noted that the party had dropped a pledge to hold a referendum on EU membership; Ann Widdecombe observed on April 16 that many felt the party was too Europhile; Lord Baker, Lord Tebbit and Liam Fox (April 19) all made allegations that the party was too Europhile; and Robin Niblett of Chatham House (April 22) asserted that Nick Clegg's enthusiasm for the EU put him in an awkward position;

There were two direct references to Labour policies: Robin Niblett of Chatham House said Gordon Brown's handling of the Lisbon Treaty had not gone down well with voters; and Matthew Taylor, a former advisor to Tony Blair (April 28) said that immigration from the EU was as a result of globalisation.

Finally, two contributors made general anti-EU observations about EU-related policy: Frederick Forsyth (April 26) noted that the EU was about the total integration into the United States of Europe; and Andrew Roberts (also April 26) said that the main parties had made immigration a major issue because they were not dealing with it properly, unlike under Margaret Thatcher.

Overall, therefore, the coverage of the EU as it related to the three main parties was extremely limited.

Labour

There was very little reference to Labour's policies, apart from the extracts from the leaders' debates on April 22 and April 29. Putting it all together, including David Miliband's comments about the debate, best illustrates the limited nature of the coverage:

Gordon Brown:

Imagine a European Council meeting if David Cameron was in charge two months from now and he would have to go along as he said and say that he wanted to repatriate the social chapter, that's what gives us paid holidays... I'm afraid David is anti European, Nick is anti American and both of them are out of touch with reality.

Look at what they are saying about an amnesty for illegal immigrants, look at what they're saying about a regional tax on immigration, look at how they tried to fund their tax cuts by saying they can get 5 billion out of tax avoidance. Look at what they are saying, have said, on the euro - I mean, I cannot support that. The Liberals have not thought through their policies.

David Miliband:

We also saw tonight, we also saw total Conservative isolation on Europe. This was a foreign affairs debate – influence in the world, strength in the world depends on your alliances. And the Tories want to snub not just the centre left leaders in Europe, they want to snub . . . they have snubbed Mr Sarkozy, snubbed Mrs Merkel, snubbed Mr Reinfeldt, and put them on the edge, put themselves on the edge of Europe. Remember in 1997, the Tories, with William Hague who's now the shadow foreign secretary, in the cabinet were fighting a beef war and losing a beef war with the European Union. My goodness, the only thing worse than starting a beef war with our allies in Europe is losing one. That is the sort of isolation that the Tories are offering.

Well, I think it would be wrong to make British people second class citizens in Europe. We should have the same entitlements, for example, to annual holidays, that every other European citizen has. And the truth is the Conservative Party opposed the minimum wage in this country, they opposed the flexible working measures that were brought in and that's why we say it's right that we don't compromise on the rights that British people have.

This amounted to only 339 words, most of it knocking Conservative or Liberal Democrat policy. In fact, nothing was said about Labour's own policies. So the only material that was carried about Labour's approach to the EU was about what Mr Brown and Mr Miliband perceived was wrong with the policies of others.

An attempt to explain one element of Labour EU policy was through Gordon Brown's claim on April 22 that 3 million jobs were dependent on the EU. Tim Harford said:

...Gordon Brown. Jobs. He said three million jobs were dependent on the EU. So, the three million figure is pretty solid, we think it probably comes from National Institute of Economic and Social Research work, that's a solid think-tank. It is ten years old, and more importantly, sure, three million jobs are dependent on trade with the EU, but that doesn't mean that if you changed your political relationship with the EU, you'd lose all the jobs. I mean, it's not like we're suddenly going to stop trading with Germany. So a little bit misleading.

This was extremely limited analysis that failed to take into account the major disagreements which many economists have with this figure. The BBC is aware that the 3 million is highly contested by eurosceptics and for it only to be said that this was "a bit misleading" (without challenge or qualification from a presenter) was itself grossly misleading and disingenuous.

Former Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett said in the build-up to the second leaders' debate that although she had once been doubtful about the EU, it was now a tremendous force for good and Britain should have a strong place within it. This was predictable comment that introduced no new elements to the debate; presenter Martha Kearney tried in her initial question to suggest there might be a degree of dissension in Labour ranks about the EU, but she did not pursue the point further.

The exchange underlined that throughout the election coverage, there was no mention that a sizeable minority of Labour MPs – led by figures such as Kate Hoey - still had very significant reservations about the Party's EU policies.

Brief analysis by BBC correspondents of some aspects of Labour's approach did not alter the impression that there was very little editorial desire to explain or challenge Labour's EU policies. Mark Easton noted that (like the other two main parties) Labour would not control immigration from existing members of the EU. Mark Urban, Gavin Hewitt and David Grossman all noted that the party had not held a referendum over the Lisbon Treaty, at odds with public opinion. Bridget Kendall asserted that Gordon Brown had put across a coherent vision of foreign and EU policy in the debate of April 22, at the expense of the other two main parties.

The only other contributions loosely related to Labour EU-policy were two from Matthew Taylor, the former advisor to Tony Blair, who suggested that immigration to the UK was to do with

globalisation rather than the EU, and also that the second leader's debate was an opportunity for Gordon Brown to position himself outside the EU rows of Mr Cameron and Mr Clegg.

Conservatives

There were occasions when the Conservative Party leader directly spelled out aspects of EU related policies: during The World at One's Election Call and in extracts from the leaders' debates. Broadly, Mr Cameron defended why there had not been a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, pledged a referendum if the treaty was altered, claimed that steps would be taken to reduce or curb the powers of Brussels, and to limit immigration from new EU entrants. He also defended the voting record of Tory MEPs in relation to gay rights. Excluding Election Call, his direct spoken contribution was 271 words.

In separate contributions, William Hague pledged in one sentence to avoid confrontation with Brussels, and Liam Fox, in a brief exchange with James Naughtie, asserted that the Conservatives would not join the euro, unlike the Liberal Democrats, and despite what Kenneth Clarke thought about the currency.

There were no other direct contributions about the EU from senior party spokesmen. Their whole input was thus extremely limited.

Former Tory minister Ann Widdecombe, together with Conservative peers Lords Baker, Rifkind and Tebbit were heard briefly attacking Liberal Democrat policies about the euro and the EU in general; historian Andrew Roberts supported Mrs Thatcher's stance against the EU; and author Frederick Forsyth (another eurosceptic) warned that the EU project had the goal of total integration.

BBC correspondent Gavin Hewitt filed a report that focused especially on the problems that Conservative euroscepticism could cause among European leaders. This stood out in that it was the only analysis of its type about EU-related Conservative policies; there was no further effort to explore or explain or put into context the Conservative unease about the powers of the EU, or to balance this against the problems perceived by European leaders.

This topic was also raised by European journalist Agnes Poirier, who, from a strongly Europhile perspective in the same vein, heavily stressed that Conservative policies could lead to problems in the EU. Robin Niblett of Chatham House echoed Ms Poirier in his analysis of Conservative EU policy, stating that the decision by the party to pull out of the previous European Parliamentary grouping had hurt France and Germany.

Thus there were three items of analysis which raised problems with the eurosceptic stance of the Conservative Party. There was no equivalent analysis of, or input about, the Labour Party's position.

It is also the case that whilst it was said on several occasions (by David Grossman and Mark Urban as well as Gavin Hewitt, by Robin Niblett and Agnes Poirier, and in a direct quote from Nick Clegg from the leader debates) that the Conservative decision to join with alleged “nutters” in the European Parliament was a problem for the party, there was no editorial effort at any point during the campaign to explore the exact nature of this relationship, nor was there any balancing counter opinion.

By contrast, there was exploration of the Liberal Democrat support of the euro – with mention of likely electoral problems caused by such support. But at least one BBC correspondent pointed out that this was qualified by a promise of a referendum. And Liberal Democrat spokesmen were asked on several occasions to give their reasons why they backed the single currency; the other side of the equation was thus aired.

Conservatives such as Ann Widdecombe had brief opportunities to attack Liberal Democrats EU-related policies (over the euro), but in each case these were incidental. There was no structured editorial effort to articulate debate on these points.

Liberal Democrats

Direct input about Liberal Democrat policies was provided in Nick Clegg’s participation in *The World at One’s Election Call*, in an interview about the euro on April 7, and in extracts from his observations about the EU in the leader debates. On the former, he explained the party’s position over the euro; in the leader debate actuality, he suggested that Britain would lead the world in climate change through having a strong position in the EU, and then attacked the Conservative decision to associate with “nutters” and anti-Semites in the European Parliament.

The other direct contribution from the party was by Ed Davey in a recorded soundbite. He said the case for during the euro would be put, but not during a recession.

Vince Cable and Chris Huhne were both interviewed about aspects of Liberal Democrat EU-related policies. These, combined with the brief exchange with Nick Clegg on April 7, were the only interviews of any main party senior spokesmen during the election campaign. Mr Huhne rebutted claims that there was anything irregular or untoward in Nick Clegg’s former role as an EU lobbyist. He was also asked whether the Greek financial crisis showed that the euro – which his party supported – was being badly run. Mr Cable painstakingly explained on two occasions that the party would only join the euro when the time was right; he also maintained that his party was “not uncritical” in its approach to the EU and supported reform of the CAP.

Because these interviews were the only ones of their kind, they were conspicuous. But, with the possible exception of the rather sharp exchange between Mr Huhne and John Humphrys over Mr Clegg’s lobbying activities, the tone was relatively mild and none were in-depth attempts to understand or expose inconsistencies in party policy. They showed only mild curiosity.

BBC correspondents who filed EU-related reports all said that the Liberal Democrat support of the euro could be a problem for some voters. But their analysis amounted to very few words and did not go beyond a superficial mention of the topic.

As has already been noted, there were a number of brief occasions when Conservative spokesmen or supporters attacked EU-related Liberal Democrat policies. All were no more than one sentence.

In summary, the Liberal Democrat attitude towards the EU and the euro were subjected to superficial scrutiny; the attention they received in this respect was more than that devoted to the Labour Party. Some of the coverage was angled on that that support of the euro might be an electoral liability. But there was no editorial curiosity to examine this topic in depth, or to explore why voters found such proposals so much of a turn-off.

SUMMARY OF EU ELECTION CONTENT

Questions put to politicians about their EU-related policies were as follows:

April 7: On Today, Nick Clegg was asked about the “not very important” topic of the euro.

A quick question on something that wasn't very prominent in your remarks yesterday, and I suspect might not be very prominent in your campaign, and that's Europe. You know that your enthusiasm, historic enthusiasm in your party for Europe is not one that is shared, to judge by polls, by most electors. Are you going to soft-pedal on this?

NICK CLEGG: No. No. Quite the reverse.

JN: Right.

NC: I have no illusions about the warts and all of the European Union, for heavens sake, this is a club that took 15 years to decide what chocolate was . . .

JN: Yes, quite.

NC: Anything that takes 15 years to decide what chocolate is, isn't the model . . .

JN: *(interrupting)* You're still as keen on the euro as you always were?

NC: But, but, but, where I disagree with you, I think if you actually ask people how we can protect ourselves from international crime, how we can deal with climate change, how we can regulate these sprawling banks that operate across borders . . .

JN: *(interrupting)* And is it still an objective to be in the euro?

NC: I don't think the euro is for now, I'd go even further and say that I think that interest rates under the eurozone over the last few years wouldn't have been right for the British economy. However . . .

JN: *(speaking over)* That's a change of tack.

NC: . . . the British economy . . . No. The British economy has a structural weakness, which is that we are a very open economy, because of the City of London, but we don't have the refuge, the stability of being part of a reserve currency.

JN: But if you'd had your way, we would be in there now.

NC: Well . . .

JN: With all the contagion that everyone else has . . .

NC: We are where we are now, we think . . .

JN: *(interrupting)* Well, I know we are where we are now, but I mean we would have been somewhere else if you'd been in charge.

NC: No, I have to deal with the world as it is.

JN: It's not the world you wanted!

NC: No, we think there is a case for, a long-term case for considering entry into the euro, but of course that needs to be done on the back of a referendum. And it needs to be done, by the way, conscious of the fact that we're almost like an enlarged version of Iceland. We are a very open economy, but unlike America, unlike Ireland, unlike other European countries . . .

JN: *(interrupting)* So, you accept . . .

NC: We're not part of a stable reserve currency.

JN: So, you accept that it's just as well the Liberal Democrat policy on the euro wasn't *(words unclear)*

NC: I accept that Eurozone interest rates over the last few years would have been wrong for Britain.

Moves on to discuss differences with the Conservatives on defence, etc.

April 20: On Today, Liam Fox was asked by James Naughtie about elements of Conservative policy:

LIAM FOX: Now if we were to get a hung parliament, what if the Liberals insisted on the policies that they want being implemented such as abolishing sentences of less than six months for burglary offences, or an amnesty for illegal immigrants, or joining the euro, or scrapping our nuclear deterrent? What if the nationalists . . .

JAMES NAUGHTIE: *(interrupting)* You might even adopt a policy supported by your potential business secretary Ken Clarke?

LF: No, we don't believe in scrapping the nuclear deterrent.

JN: No, the euro.

LF: We don't believe in joining the euro, it's not the party policy.

JN: Ken Clarke's believed in it for ten years.

LF: Well the party's policy is not to join the euro, not ever.

JN: He's very clear on it.

LF: You're straying off the point Jim.

JN: You raised it!

LF: The point is these are policies that the Lib Dems may want to implement if they become part of the government.

April 20 – Vince Cable was asked on The World at One to outline his party’s attitude towards the EU. He said it was constructive and not uncritical. He mentioned CAP reform. The full exchange was:

...And what message do you expect Nick Clegg to be giving on Thursday, do you expect the other political parties to turn on him much more than they did last week?

VC: Well, if they do turn on him, he’s got some very good answers. We are very constructive in our approach to the European Union, but we’re not uncritical, we want fundamental reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, we’ve stood up for Britain in fighting for our share of the budget, in fact we voted against the budget settlement that Tony Blair negotiated.

April 22- On Today, in a quite lengthy exchange, John Humphrys suggested to Chris Huhne that Nick Clegg had worked as a lobbyist for RBS at a time when the bank was pressing to “weaken” EU financial regulations. Mr Huhne contended that there was nothing to hide in what Mr Clegg had done, and that putting such questions was an attempt to smear him.

On Newsnight, David Miliband was the only politician asked to contribute to the discussion of EU-related issues raised in that day’s leaders’ debate. He alleged that the Conservatives were isolated in Europe and had alienated France and Germany. The full contribution was:

We also saw tonight, we also saw total Conservative isolation on Europe. This was a foreign affairs debate – influence in the world, strength in the world depends on your alliances. And the Tories want to snub not just the centre left leaders in Europe, they want to snub . . . they have snubbed Mr Sarkozy, snubbed Mrs Merkel, snubbed Mr Reinfeldt, and put them on the edge, put themselves on the edge of Europe. Remember in 1997, the Tories, with William Hague who’s now the shadow foreign secretary, in the cabinet were fighting a beef war and losing a beef war with the European Union. My goodness, the only thing worse than starting a beef war with our allies in Europe is losing one. That is the sort of isolation that the Tories are offering.

April 27 – Chris Huhne was interviewed about the Greek economic crisis on The World at One. He concurred that the euro had been badly run.

April 30 – Vince Cable was challenged on Today about whether Nick Clegg’s claim that 80% of UK immigration was from the EU. He stuck by the figure on the ground that Mr Clegg was referring to the number of workers coming into the UK, not the number of workers plus dependants. He was again asked about whether the party wanted to join the euro, but refused to be drawn on whether they would have done so in the past.

April 30 – Gordon Brown, appearing on Newsnight, was asked about why Labour policies were different from those of the the Liberal Democrats. He indirectly ands briefly raised the euro in his response:

Look at what they are saying about an amnesty for illegal immigrants, look at what they're saying about a regional tax on immigration, look at how they tried to fund their tax cuts by saying they can get 5 billion out of tax avoidance. Look at what they are saying, have said, on the euro - I mean, I cannot support that. The Liberals have not thought through their policies.

There were a number of short recorded contributions from politicians:

April 21 (Radio 4 Six O'Clock News) in a package from Gavin Hewitt about the leaders' debate, he included previously recorded soundbites from senior spokesmen from each of the three main parties. There was no indication of the origin of the quotes. The same sequences were also included in a separate package on the BBC1 News at Six.

WILLIAM HAGUE: We would have so much to deal with as an incoming government the worst ever financial positions and a multitude of international crises, that we're not looking for an immediate confrontation with the European Union.

DAVID MILIBAND: Well, I think it would be wrong to make British people second class citizens in Europe. We should have the same entitlements, for example, to annual holidays, that every other European citizen has. And the truth is the Conservative Party opposed the minimum wage in this country, they opposed the flexible working measures that were brought in and that's why we say it's right that we don't compromise on the rights that British people have.

ED DAVEY: If Britain's economy recovers properly, there will be a case for putting this (the euro) to the British people. But that's not going to be for some time because of a deep recession that we've seen.

Actualty from the first leaders' debate, April 15

World Tonight special programme:

DAVID CAMERON: If you look at the . . . what's happening with immigration, the difference between the amount of people going to live overseas and those coming here, it's been often as high as 200,000. That's equivalent to two million across a decade. It's too much. I want us to bring immigration down so it is in the tens of thousands, not the hundreds of thousands. How would we do that? I think we need to have not just a points system, but also a limit on migration when people are coming from outside the European Union for economic reasons. I also think when new countries join the European Union, that actually we should have transitional controls so they can't all come here at once. It's been

too high these last few years, and I would dearly love to get it down to the levels it was in the past so it is no longer an issue in our politics as it wasn't in the past

Actuality from the second leaders' debate, April, 22

BBC1 – News at Ten:

NICK CLEGG: We shouldn't have sent soldiers in to battle without the right equipment, we shouldn't be facing allegations of complicity in torture. We shouldn't have invaded Iraq. So I want us to lead in the world, I want us to lead in Europe, not complain from the sidelines, I want us to lead in creating a world free of nuclear weapons and I want us to lead on the biggest challenge of all – climate change.

NICK ROBINSON: The first argument between them was about Europe, with Gordon Brown and Nick Clegg warning that David Cameron risked isolating Britain.

GORDON BROWN: Imagine a European Council meeting if David Cameron was in charge two months from now and he would have to go along as he said and say that he wanted to repatriate the social chapter, that's what gives us paid holidays.

DAVID CAMERON: I just think it is the hypocrisy that people are fed up with, a British politician standing here in Bristol saying I'm going to stand up for us in Europe and we shouldn't give away all these powers and we should fight for British interests and then over they go to Brussels and they do exactly the opposite. I want to make sure that we say the same thing when we're in Bristol about wanting to be in Europe but not run by Europe, wanting to have a single market that's good for our country, wanting to trade with Europe but not going over to Brussels and say something different.

NC: How on earth does it help anyone in Bristol, anyone else in the country for that matter, David Cameron, to join together in the European Union with a bunch of nutters, anti-Semites, people who deny climate change exists, homophobes? That doesn't help Britain. Of course we need to change the European Union, but you change clubs of which you are a member by getting stuck in, not standing on the sidelines and complaining about things.

GB: I'm afraid David is anti European, Nick is anti American and both of them are out of touch with reality.

BBC2 Newsnight carried the same sequences.

Nick Clegg, David Cameron, and Nick Griffin appeared on the The World at One Election Call sequence to discuss a small number of EU-related questions:

April 21 – Nick Clegg stressed that any decision to join the euro, or allowing the EU more powers, would be subject to referenda. He said he had not advocated that Britain should definitely join the euro, only that being part of a reserve currency would have cushioned the impact of recession.

April 23 – David Cameron defended his decision not to call a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, and asserted that any future attempts to pass powers to Brussels would result in a referendum. He was also asked about the voting record of MEPs, apparently against gay rights. He said this was due to laws about homosexuality in different EU countries.

April 30 – Nick Griffin of BNP asserted that 80% of UK laws were made in Brussels and attacked immigration from within the EU.

BBC correspondents made a number of contributions which related to EU policy.

April 20 – Sean Curran said that the Liberal Democrat approach to the euro involved giving voters the final say, because they would have a referendum before joining.

April 21 (Radio 4 Six O’Clock News) – Gavin Hewitt, looking forward to the leaders’ debate, said the topic of Europe had been ignored. He contended Europe had divided the Tories in the past, and asserted that they were trying to repatriate powers while not looking for confrontation. He said the charge against Labour was that they had not allowed a referendum at odds with public opinion; that some in the Liberal Democrats wanted to join the euro, despite its problems; and UKIP that politicians had broken their word about the referendum.

April 21 (BBC1 News at Six) – Gavin Hewitt analysed “the face a Conservative government would show Europe”. He said at the Reichstag there were a lot of questions. William Hague said the party would not be confrontational. Mr Hewitt said some were troubled that Mr Cameron had “abandoned natural allies like Nicolas Sarkozy and linked up with fringe parties”. He said there was little enthusiasm in the capital of Europe for taking back powers. There was actuality from David Miliband explaining why he was against Conservative policy, and also from Nigel Farage of UKIP (analysed separately).

April 21 (Newsnight) – Mark Urban, discussing the leaders’ debate, said the Liberal Democrats were confident that Britons would vote yes in a referendum on EU membership. He added that Conservative plans to repatriate powers could lead to a gridlock in the EU. He noted that Labour had not held a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

April 22 – (World Tonight), Bridget Kendall, before the debate, briefly outlined that Nick Clegg would be questioned about the euro and David Cameron about potentially isolating the UK. Afterwards, she claimed that Mr Brown had presented a coherent view of foreign policy and commented that such debates rarely set the UK electorate alight.

April 22 (Newsnight) – Mark Urban said that Gordon Brown and Nick Clegg had ganged up against David Cameron about his “far right” connections in the European parliament. David Grossman

observed that all the parties had weakness over Europe: Labour over the reneged promise of a referendum, the Conservatives because “it’s the grouping they now find themselves in”, and the Liberal Democrats because of their enthusiasm.

April 23 (Today) – Tim Harford said that Gordon Brown’s claim that 3 million jobs depended on Europe (during the leaders’ debate) was “a little misleading”. He also noted that the claim by David Cameron that the Lisbon Treaty contained only six words about climate change was wrong – the total was eight.

April 29 – Mark Easton, in a report for PM about the Gordon Brown encounter with Gillian Duffy, observed that none of the main parties would do anything about immigration from the EU because they could not do so without leaving the EU. He bracketed together BNP and UKIP immigration policies as being the only ones that would stop EU immigration.

April 30 - Tim Harford (Today) challenged Nick Clegg’s claim that 80% of immigration to the UK came from the EU, and asserted that the true figure was nearer 40%.

April 30 – Mark Easton assessed the main party’s claims about immigration. He pointed out that only one in eight workers coming into the UK was from outside the EU, and that none of the party’s policies addressed EU immigration. He noted that only UKIP and BNP policies dealt with EU immigration. Mr Easton also filed a similar report on the BBC 10PM News. He noted that only UKIP and BNP policies dealt with EU immigration. Mr Easton also filed a similar report on the BBC 10PM News.

Sundry mentions:

April 5 Today - Lord Heseltine was asked about the EPP, though he declined to answer

April 9 On PM, in a report from Barry Island, it was mentioned that Labour was still smarting from its results in Wales during the European elections.

April 12 In a round table discussion about the election on The World at One, Marina Warner of Essex university noted that Europe was a vital issue, but it was not mentioned because it was “too incendiary”.

April 14 A brief item on Newsnight noted that the Liberal Democrats had dropped their pledge to hold a referendum on EU membership until a further treaty change.

April 15 Wine expert Tim Atkin said on PM that he would chose for David Cameron to drink a Bordeaux wine because it would appeal to “Little Englanders” in the party as a well as Europhiles because Bordeaux had belonged to Britain for three centuries.

April 16 On The World at One, Martha Kearney said that the cupcakes provided for guests did not include ones in the colours of UKIP and the Greens. Ann Widdecombe said on the programme - about the leaders' debate – that many felt that the Liberal Democrats wanted closer ties with Europe, which most people felt was going too far.

April 17 On PM, it was noted that the English Democrats had launched their manifesto and we campaigning for withdrawal from the EU. And the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News.

April 19 Today – passing mention that the Liberal Democrats would be challenged on their immigration policy (accepting EU immigration).

On The World at One, an item noted that attacks on the Liberal Democrats had been stepped up following the leaders' debate. Lord Tebbit asserted that if the Liberal Democrat policy on the euro was adopted, the UK would be in the same trouble as the Greeks. Lord Baker agreed that the party was euro-fanatic and Nick Clegg wanted economic and political union. Liam Fox – while at first saying that the need was to attack the party about nuclear deterrence or over the ending of jail sentences for burglars - said they should also explain why joining the euro would be good for the UK and losing control of interest rates would help businesses. Lord Rennard refused to comment directly on whether Nick Clegg would be under attack for his enthusiasm about the EU, and former Tony Blair advisor Matthew Taylor suggested the forthcoming debate was an opportunity for Gordon Brown to be statesmanlike.

April 21 – Lord Steel, looking forward to the leaders' debate, said that the Cameron weakness was on the whole issue of Europe. Lord Parkinson contended that Vince Cable's weakness was his love of the euro.

April 22 – On PM, Robin Niblett, of Chatham House, contended that David Cameron and William Hague had spent time trying to build up bilateral relation with the French and Germans, but the Germans were particularly hurt by pulling out of the centre-right group in parliament. The result was that they no longer trusted the Conservatives. He added:

...they're not sure they can trust David Cameron, with the party that in the end is quite Eurosceptic. And so I think it puts him on the back foot right from the beginning, if he were to be Prime Minister.

CQ: And the Lib Dems, they support in principle the idea of joining the single currency after a referendum, how vulnerable does that make him tonight?

RN: Well, Nick Clegg is very knowledgeable on Europe, a former member of the European Parliament, he knows how to bat away tough questions on the European Union. But, in the end, I think the fact that he's a default pro-euro and pro-Europe position is going

to put him in an awkward position, where Gordon Brown could say, I don't agree with Nick Clegg on this particular issue.

CQ: And is Gordon Brown trouble-free, do you think, for the debate on the issue of Europe?

RN: I think Europe is an area where he's been seen to be uncertain, undecided, signing the Lisbon Treaty, but not wanting to sign it with everyone else, it put's him in a . . . he's done well on finance, but ultimately he's a little bit vulnerable, I think, on the European question as well.

April 24 - John Humphrys interviewed French journalist Agnes Poirier of the Nouvelle Observateur about her impressions of the election campaign. He said that the French thought David Cameron was hostile to Europe, and added that they would support Nick Clegg's idea that in joining the EPP, they were linked with a "bunch of nutters". John Humphrys suggested they would be happy with somebody like Nick Clegg having big influence. Ms Poirier agreed. And with his idea that Britain would join the euro.

April 26 - On The World at One, there was brief discussion of the EU by novelist Frederick Forsyth, Susie Orbach, the feminist, and Henning When, a German comedian. Mr When said that it was obvious Britain was in the Europe, you only had to look at a map. Mr Forsyth said:

I'm sorry, you see the thing about the European debate, it's completely out of erm, what's the word? I go back right to the very, very start, 1957, which a lot of youngsters nowadays don't do, and I remember very clearly that we were told in 1973 when we came in that there were two visions for a future De Gaullian vision of a nation . . . or a Europe of nations, and the other was the total integration into the United States of Europe. We were told, absolutely clearly and categorically, it was only the first. What nobody will admit is that the first dream is dead. The only living dream of Europe now is total integration into the United States of Europe, which we do not want.

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- On Newsnight, Jeanette Winterson said:

I think a lot of young people are coming through, I mean, we know there's been great disenchantment with politics among the young, because you can't trust anybody, you know, they go out, they fiddle their expenses, they take you into a war that nobody wants. You know, the whole thing is such a mess. And then you get a guy that stands up, and isn't scared of saying to David Cameron, 'look, you've allied yourself in Europe with a bunch of nutters' – that's what he said, and it's true, and you think, yesss! Let's not hear all this crap anymore, let's hear somebody who says, 'we can change Britain in a way that makes sense'.

Question on the role of economic mess, and the expenses crisis

ANDREW ROBERTS: What's happening is the reason that fewer and fewer people are voting for the two main parties over the last several elections is that the two main parties are fighting over a smaller and smaller central part of the vote. That's why we had the obscenity of having a million people vote fascist, for the BNP in the Euro Elections and local elections, you know. This is monstrous that we should have had two fascists elected to the European Parliament, and it's because questions like immigration are not discussed by the two main parties in the way that they ought to be. UKIP, another classic example. There was no such thing as UKIP under Margaret Thatcher, because her Euroscepticism was taken for granted.

April 28 - On World Tonight, Matthew Taylor, the former adviser to Tony Blair, said that immigration was categorically the result of globalisation. He said:

Labour's got its rules-based system, the Conservatives talk about a cap on numbers, the Liberal Democrats talk about tightening up the borders, in fact, it is globalisation that drives this process. We can't exit the free market in Europe, businesses in Britain want talent from across the world. There are, as Gordon Brown said today to Gillian Duffy, there are lots of British people who go and live in Spain and France. So I think the problem that politicians have is that they do get it, but what they do find hard to say to voters is, this is a consequence of the world in which we now live.

DAVID EADES: And it's not going away.

MT: And it's not going away. So they can offer solutions, but I'm afraid those solutions lack credibility.

April 29 – Today carried a brief mention of the EU's fisheries policies in an item about the election in Scotland.

May 3 – On The World at One, former MP Michael Brown discussed John Major's handling of Maastricht. Martha Kearney asked whether he thought David Cameron would face the same problems of discipline as Mr Major had done with the rebels over Maastricht. Mr Brown said he agreed that that is where the trouble would occur. Later in the same sequence, Jeffrey Donaldson of the DUP, said his party would oppose further expansion of the EU.

PART TWO: ANALYSIS OF UKIP CONTENT

UKIP items accounted for 1.98% of the total election coverage in the monitored news programmes, amounting to 122 minutes of airtime. The percentage of the national votes attracted by the party in the poll was the fourth highest of any party, 3.1% (a 0.9% positive swing) and the overall numbers voting for the party increased from 592,147 to 919,546 – a percentage increase of over 55%. As such, the airtime devoted to the party was disproportionately low.

Despite the level of electoral support, UKIP was not invited to take part by broadcasters in the leader debates which were a central part of election coverage. This absence, combined with the way that – with all but a very few exceptions – UKIP was treated meant that in BBC coverage, the impression given was that the party was on the margins of politics.

Within the 122 minutes, there were several major problems which are analysed in detail below. These outweighed the editorial efforts that were made on some occasions to include the UKIP perspective and to achieve a semblance of balance. The problems hinged centrally on a disproportionate efforts to portray the party *en bloc* and in leadership terms as outsiders and mavericks.

On the face of it, the break-down of speakers on EU election themes suggests that UKIP had favourable treatment. They spoke 42 times on such topics, compared to 22 for Labour, 29 Conservative and 25 Liberal Democrat (with 12 from smaller parties and 41 non-politicians). But this has to be seen in the context that the EU was only 3.2% of election items; UKIP were thus only a significant part of a small cake. Overall coverage of EU affairs was so small that – as has already been established – it failed to deal with the major concerns of voters about the EU project. Editors may have paid lip service to the need to include UKIP in relevant discussions, but that it did not mean that party spokesmen had adequate opportunities to explain the position of the party. And the analysis which follows shows that what UKIP could say was severely limited.

The “lip-service” claim is based on the word-count analysis which clearly shows that the majority of UKIP coverage was concentrated in just three days when it was impossible to avoid the inclusion of UKIP.

That said, the 42 UKIP spokesmen contributed to EU-related election items exactly 5,000 words. By contrast, the combined total of appearances by the three main parties on EU election issues was 76 speakers who spoke between them approximately 12,000 words, a ratio of more than 2:1. As the main parties wanted to keep the EU as low election priority, and went out of their way to avoid talking about the subject (for example refusing to appear on a World at One feature about the EU and immigration), this is another element that underlines the degree of under-representation of the UKIP case.

CONSERVATIVES AND LABOUR NOT ASKED ABOUT EU POLICIES

What did not appear on the BBC election agenda is also striking and a constituent in the bias against UKIP. For example, as has already been pointed out in the analysis of non-UKIP EU coverage, there was no attempt in the monitored programmes by BBC presenters to ask the main two party leaders about their EU policies. There were very few features angled on EU affairs, and the topic was usually only brought up incidentally to other matters. Only a small handful of senior figures from the three main parties were asked EU-related questions, and then mostly about what they disliked about the other party's policies.

And despite continuing high levels of distrust and dislike of the EU among the British electorate expressed in opinion polls, only one topic about the EU - the Liberal Democrat support for the euro - was deemed of sufficient importance to be investigated through repeat questions put to the main parties.

BROWN '3 MILLION JOBS' CLAIM OPPORTUNITY MISSED

An indication of how limited coverage was of UKIP-related issues can be seen in the editorial treatment of the prime minister's assertion, made in the leaders' debate on April 22, that 3 million UK jobs are dependent on EU membership. This figure is hotly contested by UKIP and has been the subject of correspondence between it and the corporation; the issue is whether those jobs do actually 'depend' on membership of the EU, in that trade would continue whether or not Britain left. The only editorial reaction to Mr Brown's claim was from an economist working for the BBC who, speaking on Today, claimed it might be "a little bit misleading".

Had the editors of the surveyed programmes been genuinely interested in the UKIP case, this could have been seen as an important peg first to discuss to discuss the claim more thoroughly and from more than one perspective, to air in more depth the issues involved, and to debate the matter between the three main parties and UKIP, thereby allowing output to reflect to some extent the general public concern about EU membership. But the opportunity was not taken.

It can thus be concluded that, despite UKIP's high showing in the European Parliamentary elections in 2009, and despite the likelihood of UKIP being the fourth largest party in the general election, the editorial curiosity raised about EU affairs and related matters was very low.

LIMITED NON-EU UKIP COVERAGE

Against this background, coverage of UKIP included six dedicated interviews of leading party figures; contributions to a number of discussions of election issues, especially immigration; several reports and interviews about the UKIP election manifesto launch, some with soundbite extracts from UKIP spokesmen: and scattered mentions of some of the key party election stories, including the manifesto launch and a decision not to field candidates in some seats. A summary with notes is contained in the appendix.

Of the total material involving UKIP, almost exactly half was devoted directly to EU matters and the other half to non-EU related policies. There was thus low-level editorial effort to explore the party's domestic agenda.

The fact that UKIP representatives took part in a small number of debates with members of the main political parties also suggested that there limited efforts to ensure that UKIP was occasionally represented in the mainstream election coverage. But this should be kept in perspective. The party contributed only a total of 922 words (around six minutes) to items about the economy, and 702 to the debate over immigration in a non-EU context. Though spokesmen from UKIP were able to make basic contributions in these areas, they were not substantial, and it was possible to advance only the most basic outlines of essential areas of policy.

Within this framework, UKIP were briefly able to put across elements of their policies with regard to withdrawal, the need for a referendum, the cost of EU membership, and the problems caused by immigration from the EU. There were 1,323 words (c.9 minutes) in the area of the savings that could be made by withdrawal and general UKIP-proposed cost cuts; 1,201, about immigration from the EU, EU borders and enlargement; 988 about the amount of UK law now made in Brussels and 827 about the withdrawal argument itself and the need for a referendum – a little over five minutes.

The totals show that although there was a range of topics discussed, this was done only on a very limited basis; in most cases party spokesmen were able to deliver only very brief outline arguments about their policies, and often did not get the chance to even begin to explain the Rational for and justification of policies.

TWO STRAIGHTFORWARD INTERVIEWS

Two items deserve special mention, both about immigration. The first was an interview of Gerard Batten on PM on April 15. Andrew Bomford posed tough questions, but allowed Mr Batten to outline the party's concerns regarding the rate of influx of immigrants to the UK, and that there had been a loss of control of borders because of the EU. The exchange was noteworthy because there was no attempt to suggest Mr Batten's ideas were other than genuinely held or maverick.

The second was on April 29 in the BBC 10pm news, Nigel Farage was asked to give his reaction to the leaders' debate discussion about immigration. The sequence ran to 419 words and was unusual in that presenter Huw Edwards put to him three straightforward questions about his reaction to that evening's leader debate. It stood out as the longest uninterrupted sequence involving UKIP in the entire campaign. And it was the only one of a handful of occasions when such a straightforward approach was adopted.

Elsewhere, there were serious recurrent problems with the coverage.

Detailed examination of the UKIP items shows that the low level of UKIP material already mentioned was made worse by a sustained emphasis in trying to discredit the party's policies and its senior figures. This pressure was applied in most of the key interviews with party figures.

Of course, an important part of BBC journalism was to examine the veracity and nature of UKIP policies. This is fully accepted. But too great a weight was placed on attempts to discredit UKIP at the expense of properly exploring, in a balanced and fair way, party policy. As will be shown, for example, UKIP's detailed proposals for savings in government spending were the subject of only one interview or feature, and on this occasion presenter Evan Davis was so sharply adversarial that his questions formed more than half the exchange and Nigel Farage was forced so much on to the defensive that it was hard to discern what UKIP's proposals were. Had this interview happened against a background of more detailed coverage elsewhere, such intense scrutiny would have been perhaps justified; but in the context of almost zero alternative exploration, it was not.

WITHDRAWAL NOT A SUBJECT FOR INTERVIEW

Another factor that underlines the limited nature of coverage of UKIP is that there was no attempt to investigate the case for withdrawal from the EU. The subject was never the main focus of an interview; none of the main parties were asked about the topic and on the occasions when it was raised by UKIP party spokesmen in relation to other matters, there were clear attempts by presenters to deflect discussion elsewhere. Thus when Eddie Mair interviewed Lord Pearson of Rannoch on PM on April 27, his main questions were about his lordship's alleged poor grasp of the UKIP election manifesto, whether he was competent as a leader, and on the minor details of the costing of UKIP policies. The focus of editorial inquiry was on matters of lesser importance (eye-tests and dental check-ups) rather than the bigger picture. He thus seemed focused on perpetuating the idea that the party was maverick, petty and incompetent.

“MAVERICKS”

The impression of trying to find incompetence at the expense of balanced journalistic inquiry was also illustrated by a World This Weekend special investigation on April 18 in which reporter Jon Manel used dubious methodology and made disingenuous statements to discredit UKIP immigration policy,

including giving the impression that the think-tank chosen as a source of information was neutral in the immigration debate when it patently was not. The feature doubly stood out as an example of unfairness because it was the only special report in all the monitored programmes that investigated directly an aspect of EU-related policy. There was no correspondingly stringent investigation – for example – of why the main parties’ immigration policies failed to deal with entrants to the UK from within the EU, even though BBC reporters such as Mark Easton (who mentioned this point) were aware that this was a significant issue and had flagged the fact in reports.

Could this be seen as a balancing item with the favourable treatment (mentioned above) afforded to Gerard Batten and Nigel Farage when they were interviewed about immigration? Not really, because the methodology deployed by Mr Manel was both highly suspect and misleading.

Another example of unfairness against UKIP was in the main report on BBC1 television about the party’s manifesto launch on (April 13. Reporter Reeta Chakrabati pulled together a series of negatives about the party in reaching a conclusion that its approach was seen as “maverick”. She further gave the impression that Lord Pearson, the party leader, was bigoted, by stating that he supported the “anti-Islamic” Geert Wilders (a claim hotly contested by Mr Wilders and his supporters), buttressing this with two-month old footage that was designed to imply that Nigel Farage, the former UKIP leader, had launched an unwarranted and immoderate attack on the EU President, Herman von Rompuy. Both items were included in the report without giving adequate explanation or context; they seemed to be used purely to enhance the “maverick” claim.

TENUOUS CLAIMS

Another special feature that unfairly undermined UKIP preceded Lord Pearson’s interview on Today on the day of the party’s manifesto launch. The programme’s election ‘fact checker’, economist Tim Harford, was asked for his verdict on whether UKIP’s claim that 75% of the UK’s laws were now made in Brussels was accurate. He said on highly tenuous grounds that it was not, and hinted that the real figure could be as low as 10%. His claim was nevertheless the main basis of the interview with Lord Pearson that followed. John Humphrys pushed repeatedly that UKIP policies and philosophy were built on highly shaky foundations. He also appeared unaware about how EU law was actually made and changed the subject when pressed on the matter by Lord Pearson. This was glib journalism and was a wasted opportunity to explore the issues surrounding withdrawal in a more concrete, positive way. The editorial emphasis, yet again, was too much in casting UKIP as a maverick, dubious party rather than giving them a fair opportunity to debate party policy.

Today interviewed Nigel Farage, on April 30 in the second and final interview by the programme of senior UKIP figures. Presenter Evan Davis was unusually and strongly adversarial throughout. He contributed 20 questions (493 words, more than half) of the 923-word encounter. Today presenters often adopt an adversarial approach, but not often to this extent. The treatment stood out from the outset for the rate of interruptions.

Mr Davis's lines of attack were to challenge whether £45bn could actually be saved by leaving the EU; whether getting rid of the government bodies Mr Farage named would save the amounts he claimed; that Mr Farage was not being honest in claiming that quangos that he had named spent £50bn a year; that quangos could not be cut in the way he suggested because they provided essential services such as "equality and human rights"; that it was not as easy as Mr Farage suggested to draw a line between frontline and back office providers; that Ministry of Defence back office workers provided essential services so could not be cut; that he had not gone into detail about where cuts in spending would actually be made.

Mr Farage, though he did not buckle, was hard-pressed during the encounter to complete a single sentence or train of thought, or to explain adequately any element of party policy. This sort of tough approach might have been justified had there been attempts elsewhere in the output to explore what UKIP was planning, or if there was clear evidence that what UKIP suggested was seriously wrong. But there was not. There were no other occasions during the election campaign when UKIP was asked about the main substance of its spending plans, or had the opportunity to explain in any depth the £50bn target. Mr Evans' approach suggested yet again that the editorial emphasis was on attempting to establish that UKIP were maverick charlatans. The problem was compounded by the fact that both Today interviews of senior UKIP figures were in different ways strongly negative.

Overall, the treatment of these main interviews suggested there was a sustained underlying editorial negative mindset about UKIP which warranted both unusually aggressive questioning, and the need for disproportionate effort to cast doubt on key elements of policy. This went beyond normal journalistic inquiry, especially in the Evan Davis and Jon Manel sequences. The problems with the sequences were heightened by the lack of detailed exploration of UKIP policies elsewhere.

There were 42 UKIP spokesmen on EU issues all of whom wanted to ensure that the EU was centre stage in the election; pitted against them were 76 from the main parties, most of whom, as Marina Warner from Essex University noted on World at One on April 12, were trying to avoid this "too incendiary" topic. BBC editors assisted them in that task. A measure of the extent to which this happened is that not a single UKIP spokesman was invited to take part in the post-results programme coverage, even though they were the fourth largest party and had achieved a 0.9% favourable swing, despite not being part of the leader debates.

PART THREE:

KEY UKIP INTERVIEWS

March 31

Chris Huhne and Nigel Farage interviewed on The World at One about immigration and border controls. 'BNP with brass button blazers' accusation.

On BBC News at One and News at Six, Nigel Farage was quoted about immigration caps.

Newsnight featured David Campbell Bannerman of UKIP in a round-table discussion about immigration. Chris Huhne again said that the UKIP policy would force UK workers abroad to come home.

April 6

On The World at One, Nigel Farage was quoted as saying that it was not a vote for a change of government, only a change in management; the reality was that with 75% of law made in Brussels, unless there was a referendum on British membership of the EU, British democracy was pointless. This was also mentioned on PM.

Announcement of general election – Nigel Farage was quoted calling for a referendum on The World at One.

R4 6 o'clock news:

The UK Independence Party, which wants Britain to withdraw from the European Union says it's aiming for a significant increase in its share of the vote. Its spokesman Nigel Farage described the forthcoming election as a phoney one.

On Newsnight, in a report by Michael Crick from Gillingham, a vox pop female said she quite liked UKIP.

April 7

World Tonight had a brief soundbite from Lord Pearson in which he said that there was a danger of five years more integration. There was also mention that disaffection with the main political parties could lead to UKIP winning votes.

A Newsnight vox pop included a disaffected voter saying he would do anything including voting UKIP, because he agreed with the policies in coming out of Europe and reducing the deficit

April 9

BBC1 News at Six said that the Conservatives had set out their plans for tackling benefit fraud. There was a UKIP appearance from David Campbell Bannerman, but no mention of the EU.

April 13

UKIP Manifesto published.

Today carried a bulletin soundbite from David Campbell Bannerman attacking the number of EU laws. Bulletins said UKIP was fielding 500 candidates.

In a feature, Tim Harford examined the UKIP claim that 75% of UK laws were made in the UK. He found it was not substantiated without really explaining why.

Lord Pearson was interviewed at 8.45am. He was asked why the UK should leave the EU; and then robustly challenged about the amount of EU law that was passed that affected the UK. Lord Pearson challenged John Humphrys on how EU laws were made, and urged that a cost-benefit analysis should be conducted as the acid test. Lord Pearson also alleged strongly that Mr Humphrys, in contending that European laws were made by the European parliament, had not understood how EU law was made, but Mr Humphrys moved on before the issue was properly explored.

Mr Humphrys then alleged that the UKIP manifesto had pages of spending increases, but did not address how the money would be found. Lord Pearson outline in detail – without interruption – the core proposals and their logic.

On The World at One, Peter Hunt analysed the UKIP manifesto after it was said that Lord Pearson had promised not to contest seats where rival party candidates were anti-European. He said that Lord Pearson was not *au fait* with the party policy on burkas, and included actuality of an exchange on the subject. Mr Hunt added that Lord Pearson admitted that his strategy of not contesting seats where there were strongly sceptical Conservatives was risky in that it could lead to the Conservatives having a working majority. Nigel Farage was also quoted saying UKIP had a chance to win seats and should not be written off.

In the BBC1 bulletins, Reeta Chakrabarti said the defining issue for UKIP was hatred of Brussels. She included a quote from Nigel Farage about the country being 'skint'. Ms Chakrabarti said the manifesto contained promises about cutting immigration, a referendum on EU membership, a simpler tax system and saving £6bn a year by leaving the EU. Lord Pearson was quoted about EU waste. Ms Chakrabarti said that the party had 'courted controversy' by hosting Geert Wilders, the 'anti-Islamic' Dutch politician; she added that Nigel Farage had set out to provoke Europe and had succeeded by describing Herman Von Rompuy as having 'the charisma of a damp rag'. She concluded that UKIP had offered

to withdraw in seats where eurosceptics were sitting, 'but whether the support of a maverick party is welcomed may be another matter'.

The PM bulletin mentioned that UKIP had launched its manifesto with a pledge to pull out of the EU, and this was followed with an feature item which noted that the UK Independence Party was campaigning for withdrawal from the European Union. The featured interview with UKIP's David Campbell Bannerman ran to five minutes total, but only around 15 seconds were spent on the EU.

Peter Hunt in the Radio 4 6pm news majored on that UKIP had offered not to stand in several constituencies. There was a quote from Nigel Farage explaining the policy. He detailed some of the party's fiscal policies and then observed that in the past former Conservative former Tory voters had found their policies attractive. He said UKIP had a considerable challenge, to convert success in European elections into seats at Westminster.

World Tonight bulletins said that the UK Independence Party had launched their manifesto, claiming that their policy of leaving the EU could save up to £120 billion a year.

Newsnight had a brief mention of the manifesto launch, with a claim that exiting the EU would save the UK £120bn a year. It was also noted that the party would campaign for six Conservative candidates who were noted eurosceptics.

April 14

World at One reported that Labour was promising a points system for non-EU migration. Both UKIP and the BNP wanted to go further, halting all immigration including that of European Union citizens who can currently live and work here freely.

April 15

It was mentioned on Today that EU President Herman Van Rompuy had published a book of haiku poetry, and in passing that he had been 'unkindly castigated' by UKIP.

On PM, Andrew Bomford asked UKIP MEP Gerard Batten whether policies on immigration were used by politicians as a 'distraction'. Mr Batten disagreed. Mr Bomford challenged Mr Batten in his observation that 'gridlocked Britain' was the result of immigration. He was able to put across several UKIP points about the problems of current levels of immigration.

On The World Tonight, Godfrey Bloom MEP discussed briefly some of the problems of immigration tackled in the leaders' debate; he claimed they had been dishonest in their declarations of how matters were being handled.

April 16

On Today, Paul Curran (discussing the leaders' debate) noted that Lord Pearson had written to broadcasters asking that his party should take part. There was actuality from Nigel Farage, who asserted that people would not remember a single phrase and that it was clear that the main parties' policies were the same. UKIP chairman Paul Nuttall said the debate was a turnoff.

On PM, Mr Nuttall was again quoted, and he also re-affirmed that UKIP should have been allowed to take part. He added that the party had a radically different manifesto.

World Tonight also mentioned UKIP's concerns about not being represented in the debate. The presenter bracketed UKIP with the BNP and SNP.

All three BBC1 television bulletins contained a soundbite from UKIP spokesman Paul Nuttall. He said the leaders appeared to be 'fiddling while Rome burnt' as at no point had EU immigration been mentioned. He claimed there had by 1 million EU immigrants since 2004, which had driven down wages.

April 17

On Newsnight, it was said that UKIP were standing against the Speaker of the House of Commons in the Buckingham constituency. The sequence included a brief Nigel Farage Interview. There was also a contribution from Lord Pearson.

April 18

The World This Weekend investigated UKIP's immigration policy with the question whether 'it was all it was made out to be'. This was a detailed investigation of the party's policy by John Manel.

His approach appeared to be to deliberately cast UKIP's policies as unworkable.

He first noted that the UKIP policy appeared to be to limit all immigrants to the UK to 50,000 each year.

Mr Manel then quoted Will Sommerville, of the Migration Policy Institute in Washington which he said was 'non-partisan'. This is not borne out by analysis of its stance; it claims that 'right-wing' groups are agitators and rabble-rousers. Mr Sommerville contended that what was being proposed would hurt the economy, and be impossible to enforce.

Mr Manel then spoke to Mike Wieteska, whom he said was a founding father of UKIP. Mr Manel pointed out that the 50,000 referred to by UKIP wasn't 'the usual definition of immigrants'.

There was a complicated exchange in which Mr Wieteska said the cap would not apply to 2.5 million people who had arrived in the UK since 1997 and who had work permits. He asserted that temporary work permits would be granted for those who really needed work.

Mr Manel pointed out the Mr Wieteska's wife, who had an 'interesting background' might not be able to stay in the UK. Mr Wieteska responded that where a marriage was genuine, people would be allowed to stay in the UK.

Mr Manel then said UKIP's cap was not a cap on immigration, but on permanent settlement, though it did not say that in the manifesto.

Mr Manel concluded by going back to Will Sommerville, who asserted that, in the light of what had been said, UKIP's policy would have very little impact.

April 19

In The World at One it was said that Boris Johnson had been visiting marginal seats. He mentioned a voter 'who was so hacked off with everything he was probably going to go for UKIP or the BNP'

In PM, Nigel Farage contributed to a report about the Buckingham constituency. He claimed that John Bercow represented much of what was rotten with British politics.

April 20

Lord Pearson appeared on The World at One's Election Call and fielded questions about UKIP's 'Sod the Lot' poster, whether the party was getting rid of disability benefits, whether the UKIP policy on leaving the EU would force millions of Britons to return to the UK, whether the party should only talk about the EU (rather than wider issues), what UKIP thought of the US, whether UKIP would take part in a coalition government, and why the party wanted to increase the prison population.

April 21

Radio 4's Six O'Clock News said that Europe was likely to feature prominently in the second live televised election debate between the leaders of the main Westminster parties tomorrow evening. There was a soundbite from Nigel Farage

A similar report aired on BBC1's News at Six and News at Ten, also with contributions from Nigel Farage.

April 22

Gerard Batten, the UKIP MEP, was invited on PM to comment about a proposed Belgian ban on the burka. He said it was a good idea.

The World Tonight carried an interview with Nigel Farage in which he was questioned on the foreign affairs debate and Afghanistan.

April 23

On Today, Nigel Farage contributed a brief comment on his reaction to the latest leadership debate. He said that the participants had all agreed not to discuss EU issues (including the cost of membership), repeated that 75% of UK laws were made by the EU, and claimed the whole election was a charade.

April 24

PM carried a report from Torbay, where it was said that UKIP had topped the polls in the European elections. The local candidate said UKIP was a real alternative. Reporter Terry Stiasny noted that the Conservative candidate did not believe that UKIP was a threat.

April 26

On Today, reporter Martin Oates mentioned the UKIP challenge in the South West and Bristol and noted that they had managed to attract up to 8% of the vote. He noted that the level of voting could make the difference between a Conservative and Liberal Democrat win, and added that – despite a national UKIP promise to the contrary – local UKIP candidates had not stood aside in seats where Conservative candidates were eurosceptic. He said that this had caused ‘deep divisions’ within UKIP.

Also on Today, Adrian Lee, political analyst, talked about UKIP with regards to Cornwall and the election.

UKIP candidate Derek Eliot denied on The World Tonight in a report from Redruth that EU money had benefited the region. He explained that there were no new jobs, especially in manufacturing, though EU money had paid for business units.

On Newsnight, historian Andrew Roberts claimed it was a disgrace that the BNP was attracting votes, the reason being that the main parties were not tackling immigration issues. He added that there had also be no need for UKIP under Thatcher because her euroscepticism was taken for granted.

April 27

Lord Pearson was interviewed on PM. Eddie Mair first asked him why he was threatening the BBC with legal action. He replied that the leaders would not talk about key EU issues (including its crippling cost) and therefore the leaders' debates were not fair and short-changed the British people. He said if the BBC did not reply satisfactorily, court was an option. Mr Mair asked whether it was wise for him to press to get on television when one of his problems was that when he was asked about policies, he did not know what they were. Lord Pearson suggested that this referred to an interview with John Sopel. Mr Mair elaborated that he had said on The World at One's Election Call that he was not a professional politician and had told John Sopel that he did not deal with minutiae of policies. Lord Pearson said he wanted to talk about the big picture and did not pretend to remember every detail of the very voluminous policy documents. Mr Mair asked whether he thought he was representing people well. Lord Pearson said he was doing his best but did not pretend to be a professional politician. He pushed the exchange towards discussing the cost of EU membership. He said that Britain was spending £9.7bn on EU membership and therefore he must press to discuss the issues that mattered. Eddie Mair said that at the front of the manifesto was a range of policies which would be of interest to the people listening, including free eye tests and dental check-ups. He asked how much that would cost and how it would be paid. Lord Pearson said that money could be found by cutting EU membership, stopping government waste and eliminating quangos.

Mr Mair switched topic to asking what the party's realistic ambitions were in terms of seats. Lord Pearson said he would make no specific promises but would do as well as possible.

April 28

Today bulletins noted that Lord Pearson had written to newspapers in the Somerset area urging voters to elect Conservatives in seats where eurosceptics were standing. It was noted that one of the local UKIP candidates had said he knew nothing about this.

On The World at One, Nigel Farage was invited to comment about the Greek financial crisis. He warned that because the Greek people could not change their destiny by changing government, civil disorder on a much bigger scale was a possibility. He added that they were trapped in the 'prison' of the euro.

PM bulletins said that UKIP had asked the BBC to include its leader Lord Pearson in the leaders' debate. It was noted that the party had received a reply but had not disclosed its contents

Radio 4's Six O'Clock News carried an item saying that UKIP had asked the BBC to include its leader Lord Pearson in the leaders' debate. There was a soundbite from Nigel Farage.

April 29

On The World at One. Paul Nuttall of UKIP took part a debate with Darren Johnson of the Green party about immigration, in the wake of Gordon Brown's remarks concerning Rochdale voter Gillian Duffy. His view was that numbers were out of control because around 5.5 million had settled since 1997 and population was growing by 400,000 a year. Mr Johnson said there had been economic and cultural benefits and that Britain needed to accept economic refugees that had been forced here by climate change.

He was not challenged on this by Martha Kearney. She instead asked Mr Nuttall if he accepted there had been benefits and also whether Britain had a record of tolerance. He accepted that tolerance was important, but repeated that immigration was out of control and that what was needed was a work permit system. Ms Kearney asked Mr Johnson if he accepted this. He replied that such a system would not bring benefits. .

On PM, Eddie Mair asked BBC correspondent Mark Easton what parties with a different line (from Labour) on immigration 'like the BNP and UKIP' would do. Mr Easton said that both parties would take Britain out of the EU and UKIP would allow only 50,000 people to settle, including EU nationals. BNP would stop all immigration and deport 2 million that were here illegally.

Nigel Farage was interviewed on the BBC1 10pm news about the leaders' debate exchange on immigration. Mr Farage contended that all the parties looked uncomfortable with the topic, and there was an admission from Nick Clegg that because Britain was a member of the EU, nothing could be done about EU entrants. He added that the only way of dealing with the issue was by leaving the EU and having a free trade agreement. Huw Edwards also asked Mr Farage to comment about City bonuses. He said that excessive taxes on The City would drive people offshore and would be a mistake.

Mr Farage was also interviewed on World Tonight. He repeated in full UKIP's policy on immigration, and outlined the plans on work permits, which, he said, were the only way of dealing with the problem.

On Newsnight, Mr Farage was asked about the leaders' debate again, with respect to what was said about the euro and the Greek financial problems. He responded that Nick Clegg wanted to go into the euro, and was thus exposed, while David Cameron – in reverting to a battle about the euro that had been won a decade ago – was trying to say 'do not vote UKIP in marginal constituencies'. Kirsty Wark asked about immigration. Mr Farage repeated that Nick Clegg had admitted that EU numbers could not be controlled, and that both Labour and Conservative responses showed that there was nothing they could do.

April 30

The Today bulletin reported that Nigel Farage from the UK Independence Party had said the most important issue to emerge from the leaders' debate was that a member of the European Union, Britain had no power to reduce immigration from member states.

On Today, Nigel Farage was interviewed at length by Evan Davis. Mr Davis first suggested that £45 billion was a bogus gross figure for the cost of EU membership – the real figure should be net. He then suggested that Mr Farage was not being honest in saying that £50 billion could be saved by coming up with ‘something like the Human Rights and Equality Commission because that amount was not spent on such quangos. He said that tens of millions was being spent on these bodies and some of them were essential.

Nigel Farage suggested that only 2 million of 8 million public workers were in frontline services. Mr Davis said it was not easily possible to distinguish between frontline and back office services and asked whether teachers were regarded as frontline. Mr Farage said that in the Ministry of Defence there were two workers behind the scenes to one in front, and that there had been a massive increase in NHS bureaucracy.

Mr Davis said that a lot of the defence staff were engineers, not people who were useless. He suggested that Mr Farage had not properly counted those who were doing essential jobs and those who were. Mr Farage said UKIP had published a list; he maintained that the combined savings on quangos and leaving the EU would be £30 billion, and a further £20 billion would be found through cuts.

Mr Davis closed by saying he had not given more details than the others. Mr Farage quickly repeated that a list was on the website.

On PM, in a constituency report from Luton, there was a vox pop with someone planning to vote for UKIP. It was said that the Referendum party in 1997 had pushed the EU further up the political agenda, even though the party had not won many votes.

On Radio 4’s Six O’Clock News, in an item about immigration, it was stated by Mark Easton that only UKIP and the BNP would withdraw from the EU, a ‘prerequisite for restricting EU citizens from coming to work in Britain’.

On Newsnight, the UKIP candidate David Daniel contributed to a report on the election hustings which suggested that Ed Balls was thought by many to be in danger of losing his seat.

May 1

An audience member said on Newsnight that Britain was being pushed into a dictatorship of Europe and the choice was thus to vote UKIP or spoil the ballot paper.

May 5

On Today Nigel Farage said that immigration and withdrawal of Britain from the EU were closely linked. There was a brief Interview with Nigel Farage

Radio 4's Six O'Clock News said that the UK Independence Party was fielding 558 candidates, in the hope of winning its first seat in the Commons. There was a soundbite from Christopher Monckton of UKIP who called for withdrawal

May 6

Items on the BBC1 News at One, PM bulletins, the Radio 4's Six O'Clock News and the BBC1 News at Six said UKIP candidate Nigel Farage was receiving treatment in hospital for injuries sustained in a light aircraft crash in North Lincolnshire

May 7

Today . There was passing mention that the vote of both the BNP and UKIP were up 'very slightly'

BBC1 News at Six and News at Ten reported that The Speaker, John Bercow, had seen off a challenge from UKIP's Nigel Farage

World Tonight bulletins said that UKIP had failed to make any mainstream political breakthrough.

On Newsnight the historian Andrew Roberts claimed that a 'collapse of the BNP and UKIP votes'.

APPENDIX

CHAKRABATI INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Lord Pearson was defined by Reeta Chakrabati in BBCI bulletins on April 15 as “courting controversy” by hosting a visit to the UK Geert Wilders, whom she said was “the anti-Islamic” Dutch politician. This was a simplistic and disingenuous description. Mr Wilders is against aspects of hard-line Islam and its impact on Holland and the West, but also advocates free speech for Muslims. Ms Chakrabati’s over-simplified description was calculated to make Lords Pearson look bigoted. This impression was compounded by her decision to next include Nigel Farage’s attack (in February) on Herman von Rompuy in the European Parliament as being like a “damp rag”, again without adequate explanation or effort to put the remarks in context. Her conclusion was that UKIP had offered to withdraw candidates in seats where a eurosceptic was standing; she then suggested it was unlikely that others would want the support of a “maverick party”. Ms Chakrabati in her construction of this piece deliberately set out to stress the “maverick” elements of UKIP. She described UKIP at the beginning as being defined by a “hatred of Brussels”. This in itself was highly biased, and negative. She could equally have said UKIP was defined by a desire to leave the EU, to re-assert British sovereignty, or a host of less acidic phrases. Her entire aim was to paint UKIP as “maverick” and extreme.

UKIP IMMIGRATION POLICY

On April 18, in World This Weekend, Jon Manel investigated UKIP’s immigration policy. This stood out as an unusual item in that it was the only investigation of an EU-related policy during the entire election campaign. Mr Manel first had an actress read out what UKIP’s election manifesto policy on immigration was:

End mass, uncontrolled immigration. UKIP calls for an immediate five-year freeze on immigration for permanent settlement. Any future immigration should not exceed 50,000 people annum, including dependents - actual, not net immigration.

JM: So, it would appear from this that there would be an immigration quota. Those entering Britain who want to stay for more than 12 months would be capped at 50,000 each year.

He then turned to Will Sommerville of the Migration Policy Institute for comment about this. Mr Manel claimed – as the crux of the rest of the feature - that Mr Sommerville’s organisation was “non-partisan”. The Institute itself also prominently claims to be “independent”. But examination of its personnel and its publications suggests that this is a matter of opinion. For example, the New Europeans, a recent Institute paper:

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/new_europeans.pdf,

into the impact of immigration from the EU citizens into the UK, treats the issue entirely from the perspective of the immigrants. Its observations included:

The new EU citizens' overall fiscal impact is probably small but positive. Perhaps more significant is the impact on local areas: local public services have had to adjust to concentrated increases in population and larger numbers of non- English speakers. The growing numbers of children of eastern European immigrants will continue to challenge local schools, although in the long run, analysis of the performance of the children of immigrants indicates that many will be highly successful.

Its recommendation included:

To promote equality, however, policy must focus on helping those who are most vulnerable; and importantly this includes both immigrants and the UK-born. Such policies include measures to encourage upward mobility (such as improved credential recognition and workforce development programmes); a re-examination of language acquisition policies; enforcement efforts to curb the exploitation of a minority of workers; and support for local areas with large immigrant inflows, particularly those unused to migration.

This is an entirely upbeat approach to the likely impact of immigration and is clearly from the perspective that steps must be taken to improve the lot of immigrants for reasons of inequality and human rights; there is nothing whatsoever about stemming the flow or about the possible concomitant infringement of the human rights of UK residents.

The approach contrast sharply with Migration Watch UK, another think-tank concerned with immigration that analyses the influx of EU residents into the UK. It too, claims to be independent, but its perspective contrasts sharply with that of the Institute, for example, in that one of its central concerns – unlike the Institute – is that it believes the unusually large numbers currently coming into to the UK are causing a plethora of problems.

It is not clear from Mr Manel's commentary why he chose the Migration Policy Institute rather than Migration Watch UK to comment on UKIP's manifesto policy on immigration. Perhaps, had he had been properly concerned to achieve balance, he would have chosen both. In the event, Mr Somerville made it clear from the outset that he disagreed vehemently with UKIP, and he said uncompromisingly – without any hint of a doubt – that what they proposed would damage the UK economy and be unenforceable.

Mr Manel then spoke to UKIP candidate John Wieteska, who he said, an "interesting" background, in that he was the son of a Pole, had worked in Australia as a 17-year old, then had worked in Geneva and was married to a women from the Philippines.