

Crisis All Around? Crisification of the EU Institutional Discourse: A Longitudinal Perspective (2012–2024)

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Abstract

The increasing frequency and complexity of crises have contributed to the crisification of EU policy-making and governance. Despite its far-reaching implications, the discursive dimension of this process remains seriously under-researched. This article addresses that gap by developing a novel conceptual framework for analysing discursive crisification across five dimensions and applying it to a unique longitudinal study of EU institutional discourse. Using a multi-method approach combining discourse network analysis and content analysis, the study examines a large dataset of tweets from six key EU institutions over an extensive 2012–2024 period. The findings reveal that whilst the breadth of crisified issues has remained stable, the emergence of new crises, the pre-emptive framing of potential crises and the articulation of interconnected crises have intensified in recent years. This shift towards a permanently crisis-aware EU reflects an evolving governance mode that reinforces crisis-driven policy-making, with significant implications for EU legitimacy and public perceptions.

Keywords: crisification; crisis communication; EU crises; European Union; legitimacy; social media

Introduction

Crises are proliferating in number, frequency and complexity, increasingly blurring the lines between crisis and normalcy (Anderson, 2021; Ganderson et al., 2023; Kreuder-Sonnen and White, 2021; Tsagkroni and Dikaaios, 2024; Vincze, 2014; Vincze and Balaban, 2024; Voltolini et al., 2020). The growing permanence and rapid succession of crises contribute to the crisification (sometimes referred to as crisisification) of EU policy-making and governance – a process in which crises are mobilised to justify exceptional, abbreviated procedures and measures that, over time, become routinised (Rhinard, 2019; see also Moreno-Lax, 2023; Rhinard, 2023). As a result, policy and decision-making undergo transformations beyond the immediate temporal constraints of necessity (Moreno-Lax, 2023; Olsen and Rosén, 2021; Rhinard, 2019), with the institutionalisation of crisis-driven measures fostering a pervasive risk- and crisis-oriented mode of governance (Moreno-Lax, 2023; Rhinard, 2019). Some even link this process to the expansion of EU emergency powers and the furthering of supranationalisation (Boin and Rhinard, 2023; Kreuder-Sonnen and White, 2021; Lefkofridi and Schmitter, 2015; Rhinard, 2023; White, 2015, 2019).

From a social constructivist and discursive institutionalist perspective (Huang, 2020; Paglia, 2017; Schmidt, 2008, 2014), the process of crisification begins with, and is reinforced and sustained by, discourse. The discursive identification of issues as crises legitimises extraordinary measures, which, once normalised, reshape policy-making in the

long term (Moreno-Lax, 2023). In this sense, crisification at the discursive level (which we call discursive crisification) precedes and accompanies its manifestation in policy-making, governance and law.

Curiously enough, however, despite its profound significance and far-reaching implications, the emerging yet still limited research on EU-related crisification remains largely focused on the legal and policy-making dimensions, often relegating discourse to a secondary concern or confining it to narrow, case-specific contexts (e.g., climate: Paglia, 2017; migration: Moreno-Lax, 2023; counterterrorism: Kaunert and Léonard, 2021). What is more, a systematic framework for analysing crisification as a broader discursive trend is still lacking. These significant gaps highlight the need for a systematic approach to identifying and assessing crisification within the EU institutional discourse.

It is against this backdrop that the article sets out its two-fold aim. The first is to develop a conceptual framework for analysing crisification at the discursive level. The second is to apply this framework to the EU institutional discourse and systematically examine the official communication of six key EU institutions – the European Commission, European Parliament, European Council/Council of the EU, Committee of the Regions, European Central Bank and the Council President – over an extensive 12-year period from April 2012 to June 2024. The analysis is guided by the following overarching research question: which issues are crisified in the EU institutional X/Twitter discourse, and how do trends of crisification evolve over time and across institutions? Theoretically, the study draws on social constructivism, discursive institutionalism and insights from the crisification literature. Methodologically, it adopts a multi-method approach, combining discourse network analysis (DNA) with content analysis.

Understanding crisification at the discursive level is of paramount importance for three intertwined reasons. First, it offers valuable insights into the evolution of crisification beyond the level of discourse, particularly in governance, policy and law-making. Whilst factors such as crisis complexity, spillover effects and policy entrepreneurship also contribute to crisification (see Rhinard, 2019, 2023), there can be no crisification without crisis discourse mobilised by relevant actors (Moreno-Lax, 2023).

Second, the implications of crisification are far-reaching. Crisis discourse can drive institutional change (Mahé and Martel, 2023; Moreno-Lax, 2023; Perkowski et al., 2023) and help us interpret broader trends in European integration (Falkner, 2016; Landwehr, 2021; Radaelli, 2022; Riddervold et al., 2021), or even disintegration (Bosilca, 2021; Radaelli, 2022; Zielonka, 2014). When used strategically, crisis discourse can demonstrate the EU's responsiveness to challenges and lend legitimising weight to its actions, particularly because public support is more likely when policies are framed as proportionate responses to threats (Cap, 2017, p. 9). This can ultimately reinforce EU authority and expand its role in crisis governance, contributing to the maturation of the EU as a polity (Boin and Rhinard, 2023; Rhinard, 2023). However, the increasing designation of issues as crises risks contributing to crisis proliferation, which may undermine EU legitimacy (Boin and Rhinard, 2023; Georgiev, 2023; Michailidou, 2017; Nicoli and Zeitlin, 2024; Rhinard, 2019; Schmidt, 2015), especially if crisis management is perceived as ineffective, or as an encroachment into domestic politics. Such perceptions can raise concerns about institutional overreach and potentially fuel Eurosceptic backlash (White, 2015; cf. Ganderson et al., 2023).

Thirdly, crisification has important consequences for public attitudes towards the EU, as well as for public engagement and resilience (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Shulman et al., 2021). Whilst its effects are ambivalent, existing research typically frames crises as potentially eroding public trust and contributing to anti-EU attitudes (Bergbauer et al., 2020; Clements et al., 2014; de Wilde, 2021; Serricchio et al., 2013). Repeated crises could also result in an 'inoculation effect', where successive crises have diminishing impact on citizens' attitudes (de Wilde, 2021, p. 678), with EU crisis communication being consequential in this regard, as it both manages and constructs crises.

The article proceeds as follows. It first discusses the study's contribution to scholarship. It then establishes the theoretical foundations of the analysis and presents the original five-dimensional framework of discursive crisification. This is followed by elaboration on the data and methodological approach. The empirical analysis examines crisification trends within EU institutional online discourse across the five dimensions: (1) frequency, (2) breadth, (3) expansion, (4) pre-emptive framing and (5) polycrisis. The conclusion sums up the findings and reflects on their broader policy implications.

I. Contribution to Scholarship

The study makes a threefold contribution to the current scholarship on crisification and crisis communication. First, it makes a theoretical contribution by bringing together insights from social constructivism, discursive institutionalism and crisification literature to develop a conceptual framework for analysing discursive crisification. Some studies adopt a longitudinal approach (Eisele et al., 2021; Krzyżanowski, 2009) and offer a limited indication that crisification may be unfolding. For instance, Vincze and Balaban (2024) found increasing crisis salience in the European Commission's press releases, and Rauh (2022) identified a marked increase in emergency language use by the European Central Bank and the Commission. Yet, none of this previous work provides analytical tools for studying discursive crisification nor systematically tracks its long-term trends across institutions. Our framework extends crisification analysis to the level of discourse, offering a versatile tool applicable to any institution or actor, regardless of the crisis domain(s).

Second, the article brings empirical richness to the research on the EU's discursive construction of crises by providing the first systematic, longitudinal analysis of discursive crisification in EU institutional communication. The existing scholarship often examines EU crisis communication through the lens of media framing (Joris et al., 2018; Zamponi and Bosi, 2016), social media users' discourse (Hänska and Bauchowitz, 2019; Mukherjee et al., 2022), national perspectives (Colombo, 2017; Joris et al., 2018; Zamponi and Bosi, 2016) or isolated crises such as COVID-19 (Nguyen et al., 2022), the eurozone crisis (Joris et al., 2014) or migration (Schilde and Wallace Goodman, 2021). Whilst some studies, such as Tasente (2023) and Nguyen et al. (2022), consider EU institutions and representatives as crisis communicators, they often rely on predefined notions of crisis, rather than analysing how EU institutions define and communicate them. By contrast, this study systematically maps how EU institutions themselves articulate crises over time, treating crisification as an evolving, cross-policy phenomenon.

Lastly, from the policy perspective, the findings highlight the risks of over-reliance on crisis messaging in institutional communication (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole, 2009;

Shulman et al., 2021), which can entrench a permanent state of crisis in public perception and shape citizen attitudes (de Wilde, 2021; Katsikas, 2025).

II. Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Framework

Constructivist and critical approaches to crisis, the literature on crisis governance and crisisification, and discursive institutionalism together provide a layered theoretical foundation for understanding discursive crisisification. First, drawing on constructivist and critical accounts of crisis in international and EU studies (Carstensen, 2013; Cross, 2021; De Rycker and Don, 2013; Hay, 1996), this article views crises as discursive products of social agents. Consistent with the securitisation theory (Paglia, 2017), it conceptualises crisis designation as a performative process whereby crisisifying actors label issues as crises (Moreno-Lax, 2023; Paglia, 2017). This process establishes the conditions necessary to justify (often extraordinary) measures and procedures that might not otherwise be considered (Mahé and Martel, 2023). Once routinised and institutionalised (Moreno-Lax, 2023), these measures produce lasting effects on policy-making and governance, as traditional deliberative methods of collective EU decision-making ‘now share space with crisis-oriented methods’ (Rhinar, 2019, p. 2), a development examined in the literature on crisis governance and crisisification. Discursive institutionalism offers a valuable bridge between these two perspectives by treating discourse not only as a medium of communication but also as a source of institutional change. In this sense, it helps theorise discursive crisisification as more than a rhetorical shift: as a mechanism through which crisis becomes embedded in discourse, with the potential capacity to co-construct institutional change and political outcomes (Schmidt, 2008).

In line with these strands of scholarship, crisis discourse propels issues to the forefront of political agendas by initiating politicisation processes, shaping audience perceptions and offering opportunities for strategic use in communication (Coombs, 2011; Cross, 2021; Hay, 1996; Mahé and Martel, 2023; Moreno-Lax, 2023; Paglia, 2017; Statham and Trenz, 2015). Discursive institutionalism draws attention to the kinds of rhetorical power deployed to legitimise actions during crises (Schmidt, 2015), whilst crisis governance (White, 2015; cf. Ganderson et al., 2023) and crisisification literature (Moreno-Lax, 2023; Rhinar, 2019) go a step further, emphasising the potential for the exploitation of crisis as a means of institutional empowerment. At the same time, securitisation theory shows that discursive crisisification can be both intentional and non-intentional (Balzacq, 2010), making it difficult to distinguish between crisis management and strategic exploitation based on discourse alone (cf. Rauh, 2022).

Regardless of motivation, labelling an event as a crisis activates the ‘crisisification machinery’ (Moreno-Lax, 2023, p. 10) that filters reality through a threat-centric lens, expanding the scope of issues perceived as crises. This, in turn, drives law and policy agendas towards a continuous cycle of identifying, anticipating and responding to perceived threats (Beck, 2006). Over time, this governance mode prioritises crisis prevention and mitigation as essential actions (Moreno-Lax, 2023; Rhinar, 2019). Feedback loops (Cross, 2021) reinforce this dynamic by embedding previous crisis articulations into the perception of new crises, often creating self-fulfilling cycles. Once an issue is labelled a crisis, it resists a return to normalcy, sustaining a securitised perspective that frames actors or events as persistent critical threats (Moreno-Lax, 2023).

Drawing on these theoretical foundations, the article develops an original conceptual framework that helps identify and interpret key aspects of crisification, structured along five dimensions and summarised in Table 1. It does not seek to establish a rigid threshold for determining whether discursive crisification has occurred. Rather, it offers a structured approach to identifying and analysing key aspects of the process by capturing how crisis discourse evolves and takes hold. By assessing these five dimensions, the framework enables a systematic examination of the (1) frequency, (2) breadth and (3) expansion of crisis articulation, as well as the discursive shifts towards (4) pre-emptive framing and (5) polycrisis.

The first three dimensions concern (1) the frequency of crisis articulation, (2) the range of distinct issues articulated as crises and (3) the emergence of newly articulated crises. Analogous to the securitisation process (Balzacq, 2010), crisification unfolds over time through repeated crisis articulations by multiple actors. The more frequently crises are invoked, the stronger their perception is by the audience (Fermor and Holland, 2020; Schranz and Eisenegger, 2011). Moreover, crises articulated by a wide range of actors or with high frequency are more likely to become crisified over the long term. The crisification is further reinforced by the increased number of issues identified ‘internally as (EU) relevant from among a wider universe of possible problems’ (Rhinar, 2019, p. 623). Tracking these articulations that label events as crises is thus essential for identifying broader trends in crisification and distinguishing the key crisifying actors and crisified issues. Empirically, this can be examined through an increase in the frequency of crisis articulations (**Dimension 1 – Frequency**) and the variety of distinct crisis types articulated (**Dimension 2 – Breadth**). This process also implies an increase in the emergence of newly crisified issues, absent in previous discourse (**Dimension 3 – Expansion**).

The fourth dimension relates to the articulation of future or potential crises. Research shows that the institutionalisation of crisis measures, such as early warning mechanisms and abbreviated procedures, results in a shift towards pre-emptive security at the level of governance, making it a key feature of crisification (Kaunert and Léonard, 2021;

Table 1: Conceptual Framework of Discursive Crisification.

No.	Dimension	Operationalisation	Indicator	Relevance
1	Frequency	Increase in the number of crisis articulations over time.	Number of crisis-related articulations per quarter.	Captures the growing intensity of crisis discourse.
2	Breadth	Increase in the number of issues articulated as crises over time.	Number of distinct issues articulated as crises per quarter.	Indicates articulation of an increasing variety of crises.
3	Expansion	Emergence of newly articulated crises over time.	Number of newly articulated crises absent in prior discourse.	Tracks the thematic broadening of crisis discourse.
4	Pre-emptive framing	Increase in the number of pre-emptive crisis articulations over time.	Number of articulations of future or potential crises per quarter.	Demonstrates shift towards pre-emptive crisis anticipation.
5	Polycrisis	Increase in the number of polycrisis articulations over time.	Number of articulations of multiple overlapping crises per quarter.	Highlights the complexity and simultaneity in crisis discourse.

Moreno-Lax, 2023; Rhinard, 2019). This intersects with a larger shift towards a crisis- and risk-oriented mode of thinking (Olsen and Rosén, 2021) taking hold in the EU, as crisification drives the search for new crises and their prevention. This is reinforced by the ‘crisis machinery’ (outlined above), producing a self-sustaining cycle that prioritises preventing and managing crises, even as this may, paradoxically, perpetuate the state of crisis (Moreno-Lax, 2023, p. 10). At the level of discourse, framing potential or future threats as crises to legitimise anticipatory measures embodies this pre-emptive shift. As crisification advances, actors increasingly articulate future or hypothetical crises (**Dimension 4 – Pre-emptive Framing**).

The fifth and final dimension concerns the concept of polycrisis – the articulation of multiple/overlapping crises, reflecting their growing complexity, recurrence and potential interconnectivity (Mahé and Martel, 2023; Tooze, 2022; Zeitlin et al., 2019). Reinforcing crisification (Rhinard, 2019), the concept of polycrisis contributes to the shift towards a permanent state of crisis (Katsikas et al., 2025). This dynamic creates pressure in favour of institutional policy expansion (Falkner, 2016; von Homeyer et al., 2021) and institution-level responsibilities. As crisification unfolds, the articulation of multiple/overlapping crises (polycrisis) increases over time (**Dimension 5 – Polycrisis**). It is important to note a caveat: the concept of polycrisis, as identified in the literature (Helleiner, 2024; Nicoli and Zeitlin, 2024), involves more than just the simultaneous occurrence of crises. A true polycrisis is defined by crises interacting in ways that create synergistic consequences, resulting in positive or negative interdependencies (Helleiner, 2024). However, at the X/Twitter discourse level, we cannot capture these complex interactions. In this study, polycrisis thus refers strictly to the simultaneous occurrence of multiple crises and should not be understood as evidence of actual interconnections. In what follows, the framework is applied to the case study of the 2012–2024 EU institutional discourse, examining crisification at both the overall institutional level and the level of individual institutions.

III. Data

The data consist of official crisis communication from six key EU institutions and actors on X/Twitter over an extensive period, from April 2012 to June 2024. These include the Committee of Regions (CoR), the European Central Bank (ECB), the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament (EP), the Council President (EUCO President) and the Council of the EU/European Council (EUCO/COEU), referred to hereafter as the Council. This selection enabled a holistic examination of crisis discourse across different institutional perspectives encompassing supranational, intergovernmental and regional levels of EU governance. Since the Council of the EU and the European Council share an X/Twitter account (@EUCouncil), their discourse cannot be distinguished separately.

As this study examines how actors articulate crises, rather than relying on a predefined definition of crisis, the data collection focused on original crisis-related posts, excluding retweets and containing the keywords ‘crisis’ and/or ‘crises’ in English. Whilst this necessarily omits the discursive build-up to crisis designation through broader securitising language, it ensures that only explicit labelling of an event as a crisis is captured. This narrow lexical scope ensures consistent operationalisation of crisification across institutions and over time, avoiding the interpretive variability that would arise from including a

wider set of potential synonyms (e.g., ‘emergency’, ‘shock’, ‘challenge’). Restricting the corpus to English, the EU’s institutional lingua franca also avoids cross-linguistic inconsistencies in meaning or translation that could complicate diachronic comparison. As such, the extent of discursive crisification may exceed what is reported here. This opens the door for future research to explore how the identified crises are discursively designated as such through broader, register-sensitive approaches (cf. Rauh, 2022).

Posts were extracted from the official X/Twitter accounts of the selected institutions (@EU_CoR, @ecb, @EU_Commission, @eucopresident, @EUCouncil, @Europarl_EN), using NodeXL Pro software. This resulted in a total of 1925 crisis posts. To ensure a comprehensive longitudinal analysis, the dataset spanned the longest time period during which all of the selected institutions were active on X/Twitter, beginning in April 2012. It should be noted, however, that the @eucopresident account ceased crisis-related discourse entirely after June 2022. From that point, the EUCO President stopped posting on X/Twitter, limiting activity to retweets. Accordingly, data from the EUCO President discontinued across all studied dimensions after 2022.

By analysing X/Twitter post contents, this study examines the crisis discourse of EU institutions as communicated directly without third-party framing or mediation (Zaiotti, 2024). Although the primary source of EU-related information for citizens is at the national level (European Commission, 2024; Krzyżanowski, 2018), X/Twitter garners media and public attention due to its widespread use by journalists and national-level outlets, with growing activity on EU institutional accounts (Cage et al., 2020; Mikulaschek, 2023; Oschatz et al., 2021; Özdemir and Rauh, 2022). X/Twitter is also a crucial tool for crisis communication, amplifying institutional messages through sharing, tagging and hashtags (Michailidou, 2017; Schultz et al., 2011; Zaiotti, 2024). Whilst shaped by platform-specific logics such as branding and visibility incentives, this performative quality is not a distortion but an object of analysis in its own right. As a form of communicative discourse in the sense of discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008), it offers insights into the strategic projection of institutional crisis discourse. Although X/Twitter also enables co-ordinative discourse – facilitating interaction amongst EU institutions (e.g., between the Commission, Parliament and agencies) and within them (e.g., between DGs and spokespeople) (Krzyżanowski, 2018) – future research should triangulate such public-facing discourse with internal communication to explore how crisis designations evolve across registers and audiences.

IV. Methods

Methodologically, the study adopts a multi-method approach, combining DNA with content analysis. First, manual content analysis was conducted on 1925 crisis-related posts to identify (1) the crisifying actor (author of the post), (2) the type of crisis or crises articulated, (3) pre-emptive framing (articulation of future or potential crisis) and (4) polycrisis articulation. [Full operationalisation of all categories with examples from the corpus is provided in the Codebook (Appendix S1).] To enhance validity, manual coding was preferred over automated methods to ensure accurate identification of issues articulated as crises. Crisis types were primarily determined through collocates (e.g., ‘economic crisis’ categorised as economic) and contextual, temporal or spatial anchors [e.g., ‘... crisis period of 2008 ...’ (ECB 4 May 2021), categorised as financial_2008]. When the crisis type

was unclear, posts were classified in either the *a_crisis* or the *the_crisis* categories based on linguistic markers. For instance, posts employing definite pronouns and possessives [e.g., ‘Today, although the crisis is still with us ...’ (EUCO President 26 September 2012)] were categorised as the *the_crisis*, indicating reference to a specific crisis. Conversely, posts using indefinite articles, conditional phrasing or general crisis articulations [e.g., ‘When a crisis hits, it hits young people hard ...’ (CoR 27 December 2022)] were categorised as *a_crisis*, referring to an unspecified or hypothetical crisis.

Based on the content analysis results (particularly with the categories of crisifying actor and crisis type), DNA was conducted to map the relationships between institutions and crisis articulations. Binary and weighted network matrices were created, with rows representing actors and columns representing crises. These matrices were then imported into the network visualisation software Visone, where degree centrality (DC) was calculated. For actors, DC indicated how central they were in the discourse based on the number of different crises they articulated. For crises, DC was used to identify the most central crises – those widely articulated by multiple actors, also reflecting a level of institutional convergence. The resulting two-node unidirectional network visualised the connections between institutions and crises, highlighting the most crisified issues and key crisifying actors, revealing their prominence within the EU’s discourse landscape.

In addition to its use for DNA, content analysis was further applied to assess five key dimensions of discursive crisification. Dimension 1 (Frequency) was measured by the number of crisis articulations per quarter for each institution, capturing fluctuations over time. Dimension 2 (Breadth) was assessed by determining the number and types of distinct crises articulated per quarter. Dimension 3 (Expansion) was identified by tracking the first appearance of crisis types, providing a count of the emergence of new crises per quarter over time. Dimension 4 (Pre-emptive framing) was evaluated based on articulations of future or potential crises, measuring the evolution of their salience both in absolute terms and relative to overall crisis articulations. Finally, Dimension 5 (Polycrisis) was determined by the frequency of articulations of polycrisis, again tracking their salience over time both in absolute numbers and in relation to overall crisis articulations.

V. Analysis and Results

Discourse Network Analysis

The DNA revealed a structured hierarchy in EU institutional crisis discourse, with the EC, EP and ECB emerging as the most prominent crisifying actors. As shown in Table 2 and the network visualisation (Figure 1), these institutions exhibited the highest DC. Specifically, the EC (DC = 17) and EP (DC = 10.6) articulated the broadest range of crises, whilst the EC ($N=645$) and ECB ($N=532$) employed crisis discourse most frequently.

To assess crisis communication intensity, the total number of crisis articulations was divided by the number of distinct crises each institution articulated (see Table 2), identifying institutions that concentrated their discourse on fewer crises with high repetition. In contrast, DC indicates how many distinct crises each institution articulated, highlighting which actors expanded crisification across a broader range of issues. The ECB (intensity = 18.4; DC = 5.8) and CoR (intensity = 9.3; DC = 3.6) exhibited the highest crisis intensity, reflecting intense but thematically narrow crisification. The ECB focused almost

Table 2: Overview of X/Twitter Crisis Discourse by Crisifying Actors (April 2012–June 2024) by Crisis Posts, Crisis Articulations, Crisis Types, Degree Centrality and Intensity.

Crisifying actor (X/ Twitter account)	<i>Crisis posts</i>	<i>Crisis articulations (frequency)</i>	<i>Crisis types</i>	<i>Degree centrality (%)</i>	<i>Crisis communication intensity (mean crisis articulations per crisis type)</i>
@EU_CoR	162	168	18	3.6	9.3
@ECB	503	532	29	5.8	18.4
@EU_Commission	616	645	85	17	7.6
@eucopresident	156	160	34	6.8	4.7
@EUCouncil	147	169	31	6.2	5.5
@Euparl_en	341	365	53	10.6	6.9

exclusively on financial and economic crises or economic aspects of central crises such as COVID-19, whilst CoR amplified crises where institutional convergence already existed, emphasising their regional and local consequences, as reflected in its less radial network layout (Figure 1) and limited role in expanding crisification (lower DC; see Table 2). By contrast, the EC and EP crisified a broader range of issues with a lower intensity (EC: DC = 17, intensity = 7.6; EP: DC = 10.6, intensity = 6.9), which aligns with their supranational roles and policy-making competencies across multiple sectors. Notably, unlike other institutions and in reflection of its electoral mandate, the EP highlighted crises with social and economic impacts on citizens. Meanwhile, the Council and EUCO President, with the lowest crisis intensity (intensity = 5.5 and 4.7, respectively), selectively crisified a few geopolitical issues, such as *Ukraine_2022*, *Syria* and *Libya*, whilst also reinforcing crises with high institutional convergence. Rather than engaging in broad agenda-setting, their crisis discourse remained limited, with relatively infrequent articulations even on the crises they did address.

The network structure (Figure 1) highlights the level of institutional convergence in EU crisis discourse. Tightly clustered nodes in the middle with high DC suggest consensus on key crises, whilst peripheral crises with low DC were typically articulated by a single actor. As seen in Table 3, the most crisified issues from April 2012 to August 2024 were COVID-19 (DC = 1.2, frequency = 470), financial matters (financial: 0.8, 86; euro/debt: 0.8, 47; economic: 1.0, 57) and migration-related concerns (migration: 1.0, 81; refugee: 1.0, 33) (for the full list, see Appendix S2). Curiously enough, amongst the most prominent were unspecified crises – ‘a crisis’ (1.2, 262) and ‘the crisis’ (1.2, 382). Combined, these surpassed the rest of the articulated crises in both frequency and centrality, indicating a strategic reliance on generalised crisis discourse. This facilitated the perpetuation of a crisis mentality within EU discourse, reinforcing crisis articulations as an enduring and potentially strategic feature (cf. Lawrence, 2014) rather than a reactive, episodic occurrence, thereby amplifying the crisification process. Whilst central crises dominated, many peripheral ones remained niche and actor-specific, such as ‘Eastern Baltic cod’ or ‘semiconductor supply chain’, reflecting the extension of crisification into specialised policy areas. Though these crises lacked institutional convergence, their presence suggests that crisis discourse is not limited to major EU-wide issues but also operates at a micro-level, underscoring the pervasiveness of crisification across governance fields.

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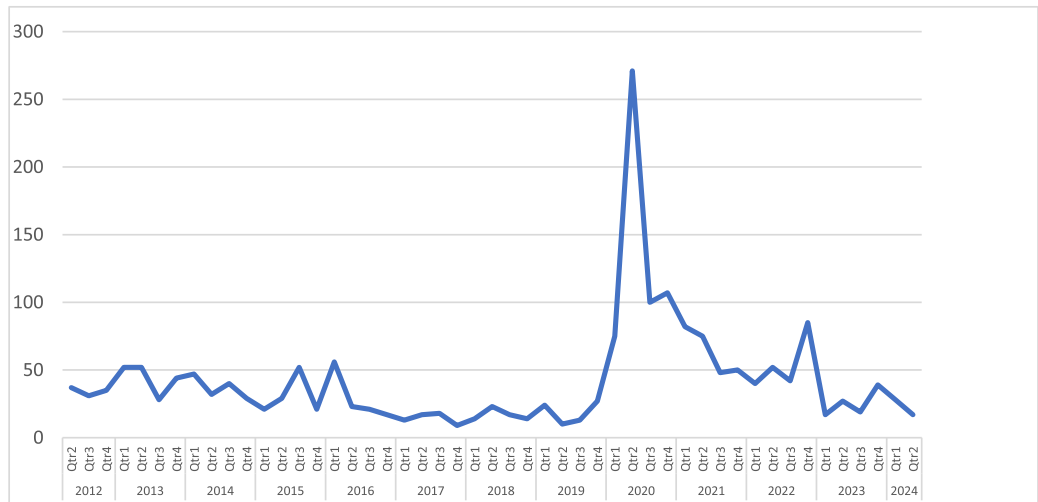
Dimension 1: Frequency

The frequency of crisis articulations discourse did not follow a linear trajectory but fluctuated across four distinct periods (Figure 2). The first period (2012–2015) was marked by moderate and stable crisis communication, primarily driven by the financial and eurozone crises alongside the emergence of the migration crisis. The second period (2016–2019) saw a decline in crisis articulations, despite ongoing challenges such as Brexit, rule of law compliance and migration. A sharp and unprecedented surge marked the third period (2020), overwhelmingly driven by COVID-19. This was followed by a more gradual return to pre-peak levels (2021–2024), except for the EC, which exhibited

Table 3: Most Prominent Crisified Issues in EU Institutional Discourse (April 2012–June 2024) – Degree Centrality and Frequency (Full List Available in Appendix S2).

Crisis	Degree centrality (%)	Frequency
a_crisis	1.2	262
Climate	1.2	57
Covid	1.2	470
the_crisis	1.2	382
Ukraine_2022	1.2	40
Economic	1	57
Energy_2022	1	74
Food	1	37
Health	1	39
Migration	1	81
Refugee	1	33
Syria	1	47
Ukraine_2014	1	29
Afghanistan	0.8	5
Bank	0.8	21
Euro/debt	0.8	47
Financial	0.8	86

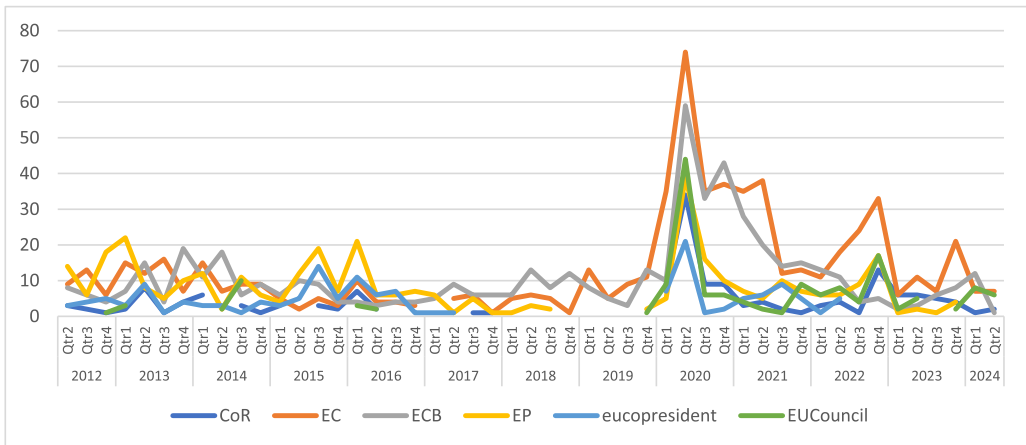
Figure 2: Overall Crisis Discourse: Total Crisis Articulations by EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



a secondary spike in 2022, linked to the Ukraine war, the Gaza conflict and energy and food crises. However, this increase was short-lived, ultimately reverting to the pre-peak levels of the first period (2012–2015).

The absence of a sustained post-pandemic increase in crisis discourse further suggests that event-driven spikes do not translate into a continuous crisification in terms of

Figure 3: Institution-Specific Crisis Discourse: Crisis Articulations by Individual EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



frequency but rather reflect a pattern of temporary amplification and de-escalation. Moreover, this fluctuating pattern appears selective and deliberate – despite multiple high-salience crises with high DC (e.g., climate change, Ukraine, migration, Syria etc.), only COVID-19 triggered a massive spike in crisis articulations. The lack of sustained crisis escalation during 2016–2019, even amidst pressing challenges, suggests a strategic shift away from crisis discourse, potentially aimed at signalling recovery and stability to the audience in an effort to de-escalate prolonged crisis periods.

The frequency of crisis articulations across EU institutions reveals both shared patterns and institutional divergences (Figure 3). The EC consistently registered the highest number of crisis articulations, particularly during major crises such as COVID-19, reinforcing its role as a primary crisifying actor. The ECB followed a similar pattern, with crisis spikes concentrated around economic crises. The EP also demonstrated substantial crisis engagement, particularly during the financial, migration, COVID-19, energy and Ukraine-related crises. In contrast, the CoR, Council and EUCO President engaged in more intermittent crisis communication. Thus, whilst institutions converged in their crisis articulations during major, high-salience crises, their overall engagement was rather episodic and selective.

Dimension 2: Breadth

For Dimension 2, the findings indicate no substantial increase in the number of distinct crises articulated over time, challenging the notion of crisification in this dimension. Rather than expanding the range of crises, EU institutions maintained a relatively stable repertoire of distinct crisis types articulated per quarter, with both mean and median at 11 crises (Figure 4). This reinforces a governance framework that consistently, but not increasingly, operated within a crisis-oriented logic. A slight reduction in crisis diversity between 2016 and 2019, surrounded by periods of moderate increase, coincided with the

Figure 4: Overall Crisis Discourse: Number of Distinct Crisis Types Identified by EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

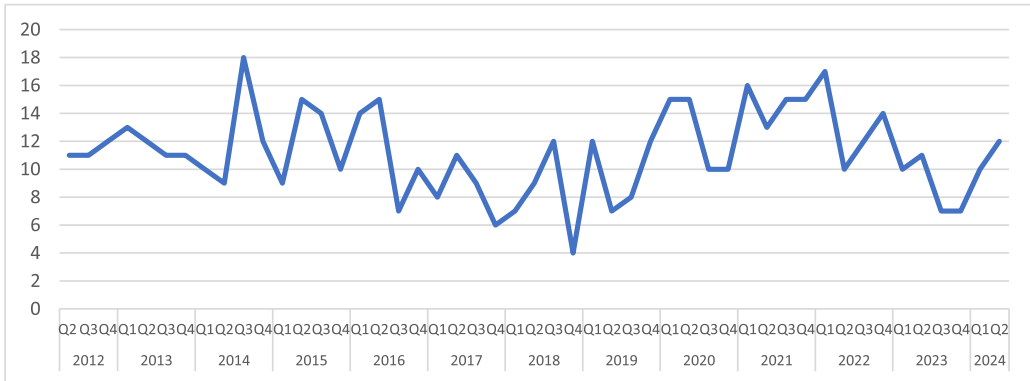
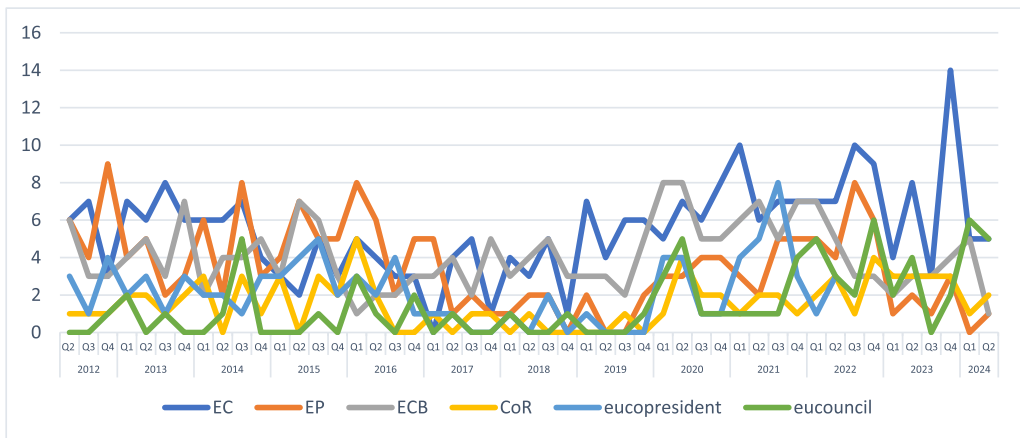


Figure 5: Institution-Specific Crisis Discourse: Number of Distinct Crisis Types Identified by Individual EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



broader decline in crisis communication observed during this period in Dimension 1 but did not indicate a pronounced shift away from the overall pattern.

At the level of individual institutions (Figure 5), the EC and EP consistently articulated the highest number of distinct crises per quarter, reinforcing their role as the leading crisifying actors. The ECB maintained a thematically concentrated crisis discourse, whilst the CoR, Council and EUCO President engaged in a narrower, more selective one.

Several types of crises, including the euro/debt crisis, migration, financial crisis and Syria, consistently appeared in EU institutional discourse from 2012 to 2024, indicating discursive entrenchment rather than episodic discursive representation. The financial

crisis was articulated every year, whilst the euro/debt (2012–2022) and migration-related crises (2013–2022, with EU-specific migration appearing from 2015 to 2021) also remained present in discourse over extended periods. Whilst this continuity may suggest protracted or evolving crises, the data reveal their function as rhetorical legitimisation tools rather than reflections of acute threats, as in ‘Lessons from the global financial crisis about the risks of excessive leverage are being forgotten in some parts of the financial system’ (ECB 30 March 2022). Additionally, the nonspecific crisis articulations – ‘a crisis’ [‘When a crisis looms, she intervenes behind the scenes to resolve it using the EU’s foreign policy instruments’ (EC 10 November 2018)] or ‘the crisis’ [‘Does the crisis make us sick?’ (EP 21 February 2013)] – appeared consistently in each quarter throughout the analysed period. Amongst the institutions, the ECB employed unspecified crisis articulations most frequently (51.88% of all its crisis articulations), followed by the EP (30.68%) and the CoR (31.55%). The EC used unspecified crises less often (23.57%), with the Council (13.61%) and the EUCO President (17.50%) having the lowest proportions. Articulations of ‘a crisis’ remained relatively stable over time with slight fluctuations, suggesting a sustained, deliberate avoidance of specificity and allowing crisis language to function as a flexible yet ambiguous signifier of a critical threat. In contrast, articulations of ‘the crisis’ peaked during 2012–2014 and 2020–2021, corresponding to the Eurozone crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating a reliance on the audience’s prior knowledge to interpret the overarching, widely recognised crises (cf. Reboul-Touré, 2021). Whilst this rhetorical elasticity allows us to apply crisis articulations across diverse, even ambiguous, contexts, it also constrains the number of distinct crises identifiable per quarter in our analysis.

Dimension 3: Expansion

As seen in Figure 6, the overall data illustrate a gradual and consistent rise in newly identified crises per quarter, indicating a continuous expansion of what is articulated as a crisis.

Figure 6: Overall Crisis Discourse: Number of Newly Identified Crises by EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

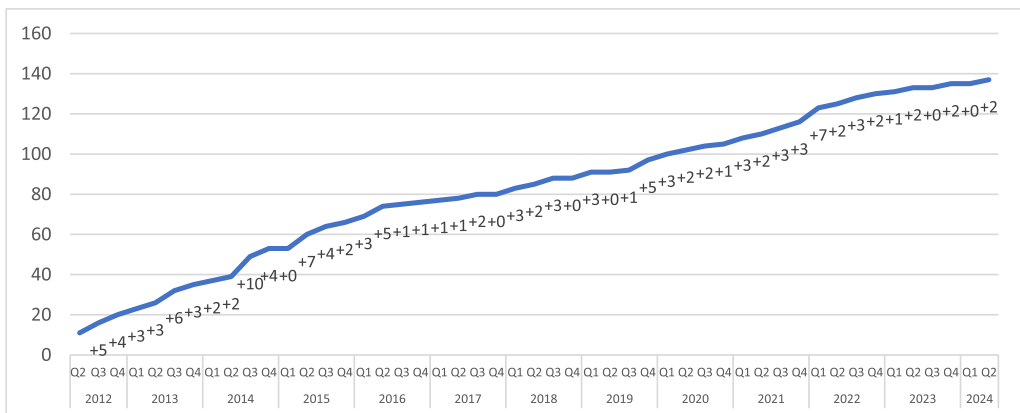
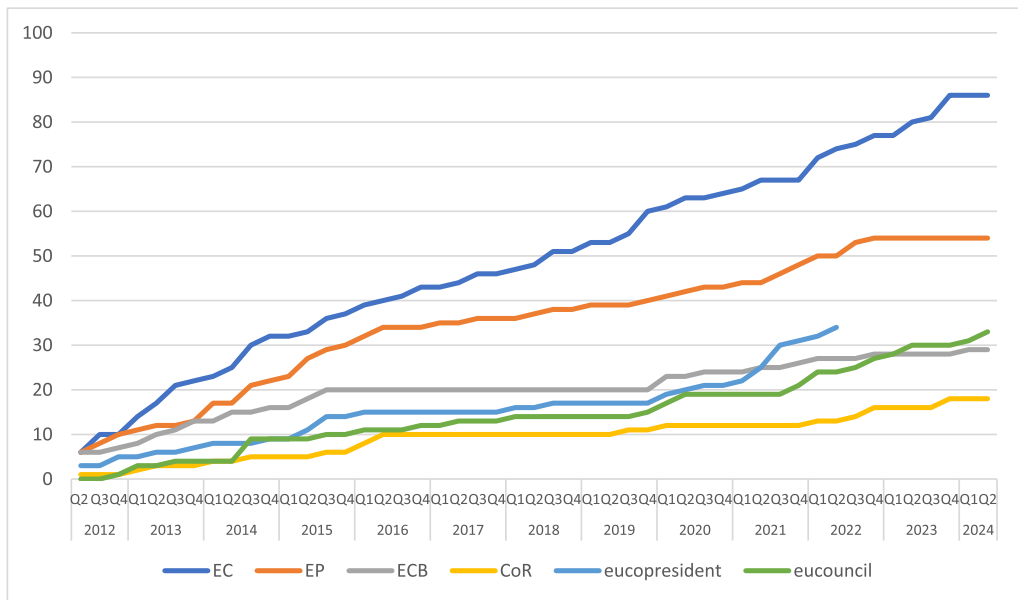


Figure 7: Institution-Specific Crisis Discourse: Number of Newly Identified Crises by Individual EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



Broken down by institutions (Figure 7), the data reveal a common upward trend in crisification, but with varying speeds. The EC exhibited the steepest and most consistent rise, again reinforcing its role as the primary crisifying actor. The EP followed a similar but less pronounced trajectory, whilst other institutions exhibited more moderate increases, interrupted by a plateau between 2015/2016 and 2019, which coincided with the period of decline in articulations observed in Dimension 1. Apart from moderate increases aligning with key EU crises (financial/euro-debt, migration and later COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 crises), the prolonged plateau highlights the more cautious approach of the ECB, CoR, Council and EUCO President to new crisis articulation (as also evidenced by DNA), in contrast to the continuous crisification of new issues observed with the EP and EC.

When examining specific crisis types alongside the results of Dimension 2, it becomes evident that the EU not only sustained protracted crises but also continually articulated new crises. Multiple newly articulated crises – such as the housing crisis, or Venezuela refugee crisis – emerged each quarter only to vanish from the discourse soon after. This fluidity blurs the boundary between crisis and non-crisis, fostering a ‘state of perpetual crisis’ at the discursive level. By directly linking crisis articulation to policy proposals [as in ‘The Sahel region continues to suffer from armed conflicts, climate change, and a food and nutrition crisis. We are providing €152.05 million to bring relief to people in need ...’ (EC 11 June 2019)], the EU reinforced its role as a crisis manager. Whilst a more

rigorous analysis is needed to assess the consistency of this practice, it nonetheless served as a legitimising tool in shaping EU crisis discourse.

Dimension 4: Pre-Emptive Framing

The overall data show a growing trend towards pre-emptive crisis framing, reinforcing the broader process of crisification. Whilst not linear, pre-emptive crisis framing gradually increased over time in both absolute numbers and relative proportions (Figure 8), with 2020 marking a pivotal shift towards its sustained presence. This sustained presence aligned with the largest surge in crisis frequency during the onset of COVID-19. However, what stands out is the stabilisation of pre-emptive framing at a higher baseline beyond the 2020 peak in frequency, indicating its persistence even as the overall crisis frequency declined. Whilst future and potential crisis articulations remained a subset of overall crisis communication, their sustained presence signals a shift in the EU's crisis communication. Rather than solely addressing ongoing crises, the EU institutions increasingly emphasised anticipation and preparedness, reinforcing crisification.

At the institutional level (Figure 9), the EC, followed by the ECB, led in pre-emptive crisis framing, demonstrating anticipation and preparedness. Other institutions, such as the EUCO President, the Council and the CoR, engaged more sporadically here, though even they followed the general post-2020 increase in salience (albeit with a different intensity).

The crisis type most frequently linked to pre-emptive framing was unspecified (a_crisis). By repeatedly invoking potential but unspecified crises, EU institutions

Figure 8: Overall Crisis Discourse: Pre-Emptive Crisis Framing by EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

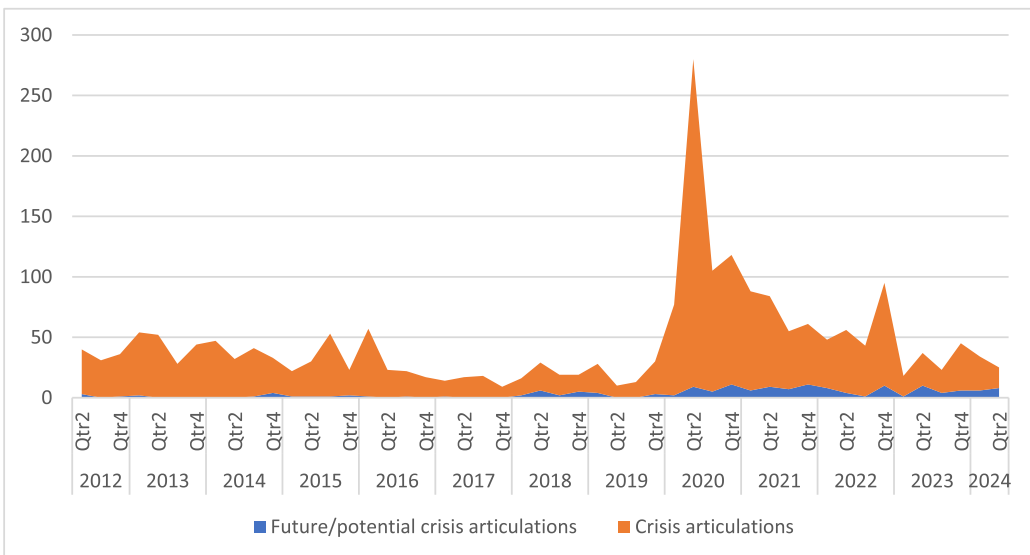
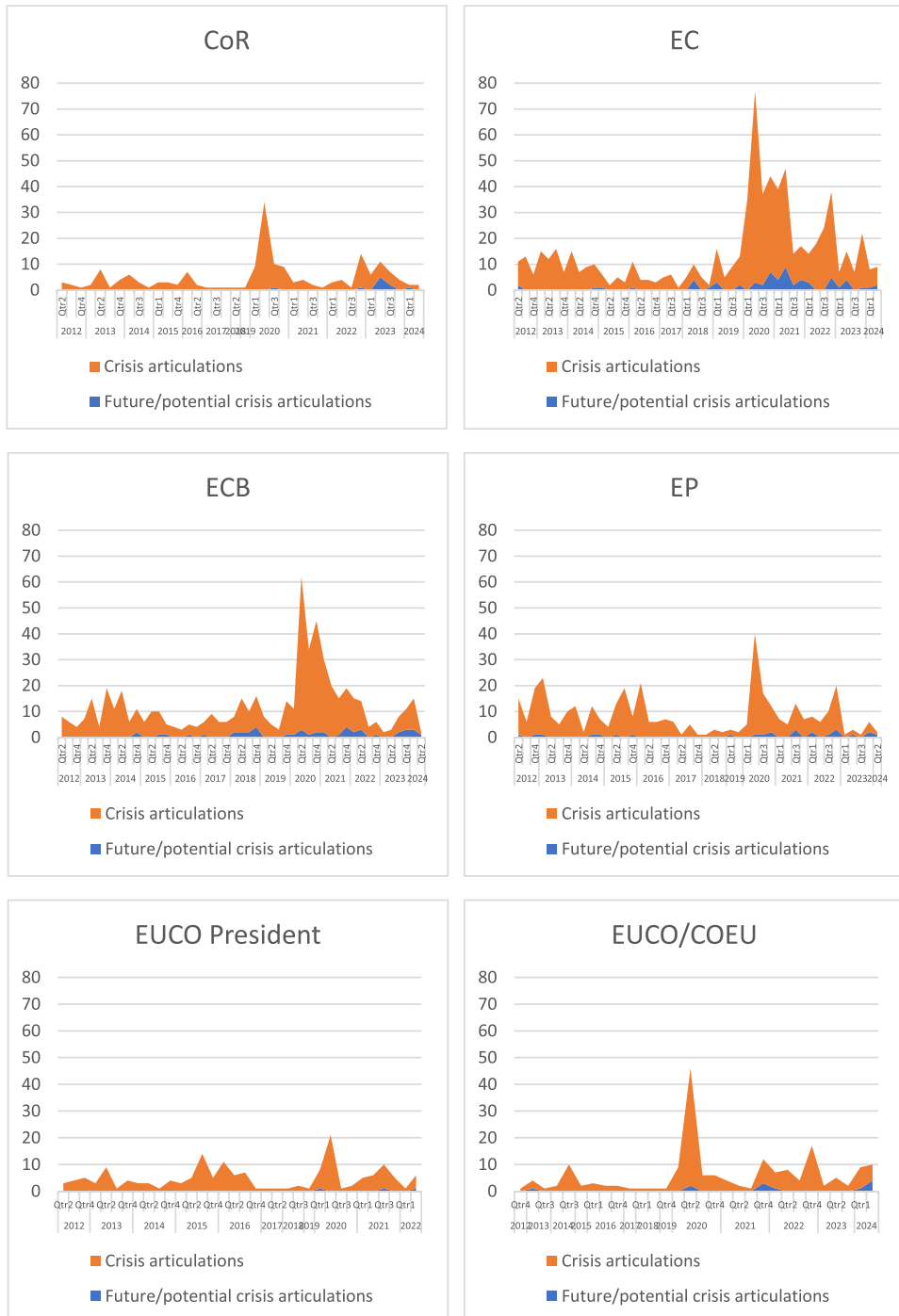


Figure 9: Institution-Specific Crisis Discourse: Pre-Emptive Crisis Framing by Individual EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



communicated a general sense of crisis to justify anticipatory measures and sustained crisis governance, reinforcing crisisification even in the absence of a clearly defined or imminent threat. Statements such as ‘When a crisis strikes, the EU must have the tools to offer a rapid response’ (EC 14 February 2021) illustrate how the interplay between unspecified crises and pre-emptive framing fostered a governance approach centred on pre-emption – potentially even prevention. Equally importantly, the predominance of pre-emptive framing detached from any specific or even potentially known crisis event (the_crisis) suggests that pre-emptive framing was not predominantly event-driven but represented a more structural pattern in crisis communication. Beyond unspecified crises, COVID-19 and broader health crises emerged as core drivers for the pre-emptive shift, frequently tied to discourse on preparedness, lessons learned, resilience-building and the expansion of crisis prevention and management capabilities. Though less frequent, financial and migration crises were also framed pre-emptively. This suggests that large-scale, EU-wide crises characterised by complexity and interdependencies played a role in driving the shift towards future-oriented crisis articulations.

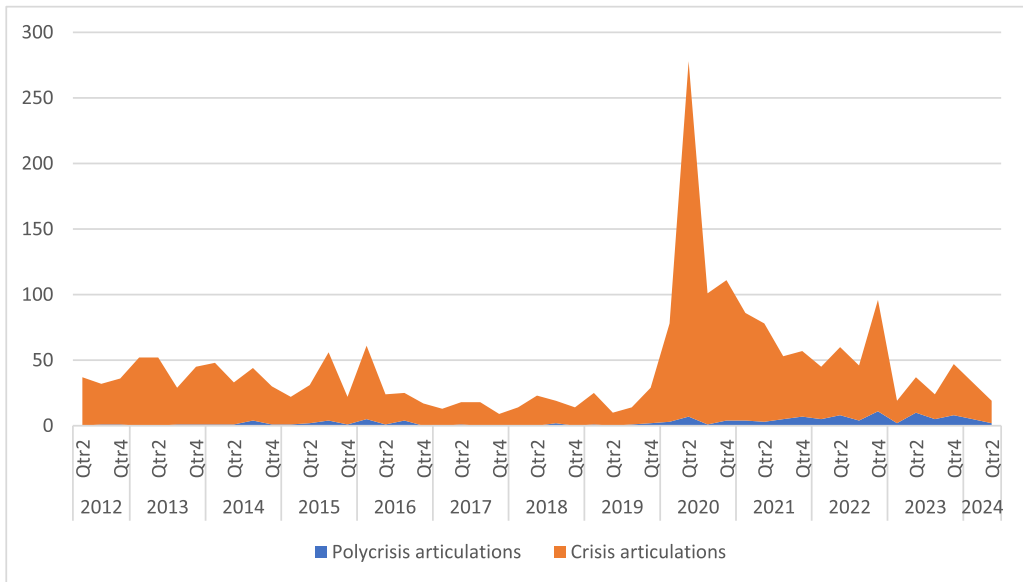
These articulations not only frame the present as precarious but also project instability into the future, as illustrated by statements such as ‘What have we learned from the 🤖#COVID19 pandemic? How will we prepare for future crises?’ (EUCO/COEU 24 November 2020). The growing emphasis on preparedness and proactive policy responses underscored a broader trend in the EU discourse – recasting crises from being exceptional events (De Rycker and Don, 2013, p. 5) to being ever-present, almost inevitable challenges (cf. Katsikas et al., 2025; Lawrence, 2014) requiring continuous readiness. This extends the discursive longevity of crisis beyond immediate events, prolongs the temporal scope of the crisisification and reinforces a continuous state of alert.

More importantly, this way, crisis may serve as a constantly available and flexible discursive tool for legitimising new policy measures or even institutional expansion. The ECB’s framing of financial resilience [as in ‘Banks are emerging relatively unscathed from one of the worst crises on record. To strengthen their resilience for the challenges ahead, we now need to bridge the remaining gaps in the banking union’ (19 November ECB 2021)] exemplifies how crisis discourse can justify long-term institutional adaptation.

Dimension 5: Polycrisis

The findings indicate a growing prominence of polycrisis articulations over time, albeit not in a strictly linear fashion. Both absolute figures and relative ratios (polycrisis to crisis articulations) demonstrate heightened salience from 2020 to 2024 (Figure 10), mirroring trends in Dimension 4. Whilst moderate expansions in the breadth of concurrent crises (Dimension 2) coincided with increased polycrisis articulations, the rise was not proportional. Articulations of simultaneous crises emerged as early as 2014–2016 (during the first period of moderate breadth expansion) – typically linking foreign humanitarian and security crises (e.g., Syria, Ukraine, Gaza) with internal crises such as rule of law concerns or financial instability. However, polycrisis articulation became significantly more pronounced in the second period of the moderate breadth expansion (2020–2024). This phase saw an amplified discursive linkage between the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy

Figure 10: Overall Crisis Discourse: Polycrisis Articulations by EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

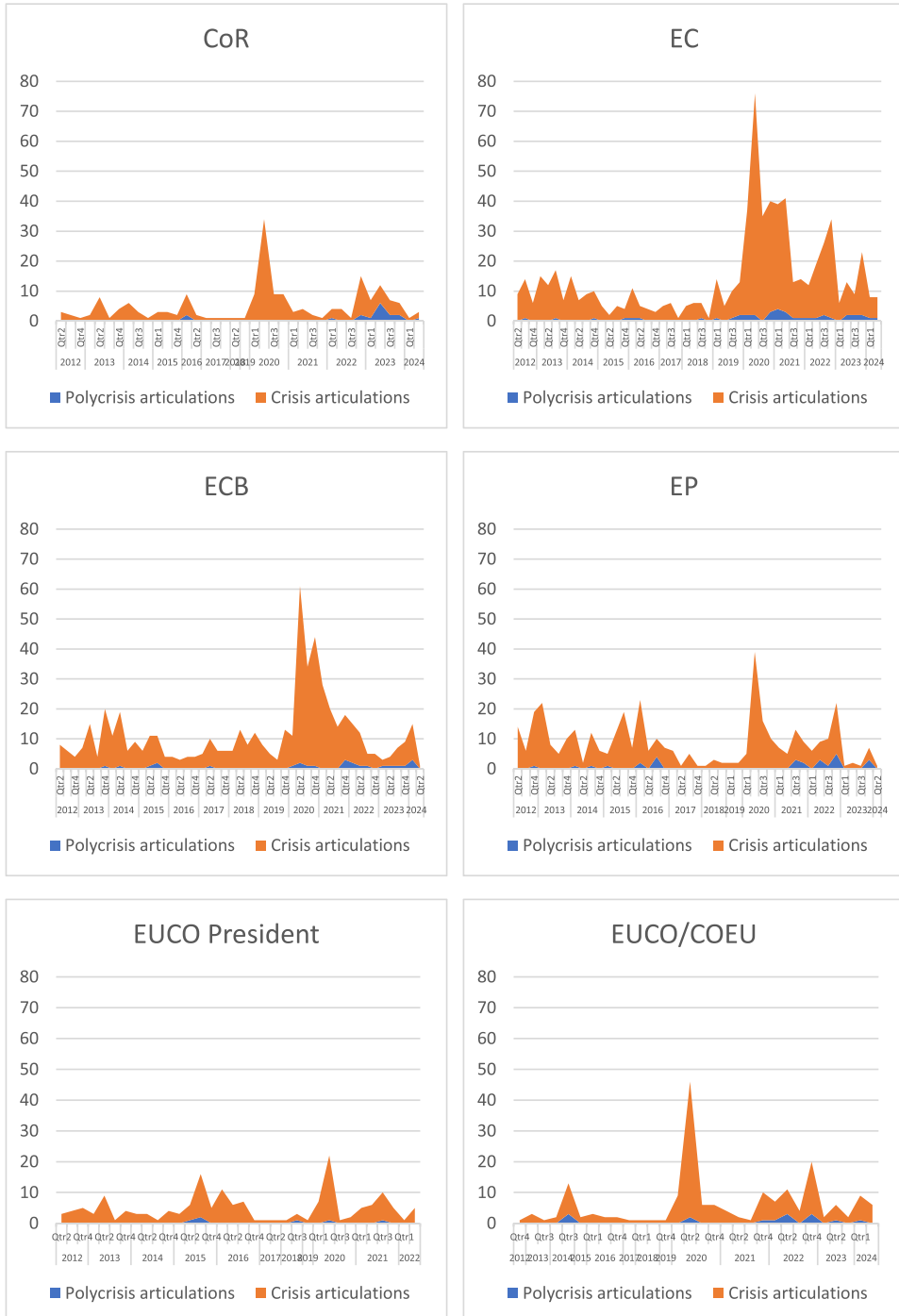


crisis, food insecurity, the war in Ukraine and climate-related crises. And whilst polycrisis discourse explicitly articulated multiple of these concurrent crises, it most often coalesced around a presumably known yet unspecified set of ‘the crises’ and not ‘a crisis’, suggesting that the polycrisis articulations reflected external conditions of heightened crisis concurrency.

The presentation of data for individual institutions (Figure 11) confirms the post-2020 rise in polycrisis articulations by all except the EUCO President. The EC demonstrated the most sustained use of polycrisis articulations, a pattern mirrored by the EP, albeit with lower intensity yet a clear upward trend. The ECB and the Council engaged more sporadically but showed a noticeable post-2020 rise, too, whilst the CoR and EUCO President made only occasional articulations.

A key finding emerges when considering Dimension 4 (Pre-emptive crisis framing) and Dimension 5 (Polycrisis) together: polycrisis articulations were far more likely to incorporate pre-emptive crisis framing (12.3%) than non-polycrisis articulations (0.01%). This suggests that polycrisis articulation not only reflects crisis interconnectivity but is also reinforced by a shift towards anticipatory crisis discourse, wherein polycrisis is positioned as a governance rationale for increasing preparedness for future crises or even institutional reform [‘In the context of unprecedented challenges and multiple crises, MEPs put forward proposals to change the EU. Parliament is advocating reforms that will increase the EU’s capacity to act and give citizens a bigger say’ (EP 23 November 2023)].

Figure 11: Institution-Specific Crisis Discourse: Polycrisis Articulations by Individual EU Institutions per Quarter (April 2012–June 2024). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



Conclusion

The proposed framework for analysis proved to be a valuable tool for examining discursive crisification, providing clear analytical markers to structure and advance the discussion. The study presented substantive evidence of discursive crisification in the EU institutional discourse, though its manifestation varied across dimensions. Whilst crisis communication fluctuated rather than increased in sheer frequency (Dimension 1), EU institutions maintained a stable breadth of distinct crises articulated per quarter during the 2012–2024 period (Dimension 2). This suggests that whilst crisification is not expanding in breadth, it has reached a prolonged plateau where crises remain persistently embedded in EU discourse. Yet, crisification intensified in other dimensions: with newly crisified issues emerging steadily (Dimension 3) and a sustained post-2020 rise in pre-emptive crisis (Dimension 4) and polycrisis articulations (Dimension 5). These trends reflect both the persistence (Dimension 2) and intensification (Dimensions 3–5) of a crisis-oriented mindset in the institutional communication, reinforcing and shaping crisis-driven governance. As a result, crisis has become increasingly normalised in EU institutional communication as several elements of crisification became deeply entrenched in the discourse.

Whilst all EU institutions exhibited similar crisification trends, their intensity varied. The European Commission emerged as the central crisifying actor, as confirmed by both DNA and content analysis across all dimensions. This aligns with Vincze and Balaban's (2024) observations of growth in the salience of crisis in EC press releases and corresponds to the EC's agenda-setting power, its legislative competence and its broad thematic scope across policy areas (Bocquillon, 2024). Although these factors may explain the EC's consistently high crisification levels, they do not fully account for the markedly steeper increases over time across all dimensions, especially compared to institutions with a decisive role in crisis management such as the European Council (subsumed under @EUCouncil) (Bocquillon, 2024). The EC's growing reliance on crisis discourse suggests not only an institutional response to external crises but also potential political entrepreneurship – a strategic effort to expand its authority in crisis governance (as suggested by Kaunert and Léonard, 2021, Moreno-Lax, 2023, and by Rauh, 2022). Rising patterns across some dimensions also appear in other institutions, indicating that the political entrepreneurship may be part of a broader shift in how institutions approach crisis governance.

The DNA results and the linear increase in newly crisified issues (Dimension 3) show that EU institutions are extending crisification beyond high-profile, large-sector crises like health, energy and migration into micro-level niche areas like dairy, eastern Baltic cod, the Baltic Sea and aviation. This broadens the scope of crisis governance, embedding a securitised perspective even in domains previously outside its reach. Over time, this expansion may drive the classification of emerging challenges in these areas as crises and routinise crisis-related measures. This steady emergence of new crises (Dimension 3) coupled with the rise in polycrisis articulations (Dimension 5) reinforces the perception of a permanent need for crisis management. Crucially, the EU links crisis identification to policy-making and institutional expansion, supporting the premise that discursive crisification both reflects and drives crisification in policy, law and governance (Moreno-Lax, 2023; Rhinard, 2019). Whilst this discursive strategy may reinforce the EU's authority as a crisis manager across governance domains, it also raises concerns about institutional overreach and encroachment into national policy-making. However, the motivations for crisification and the instrumental use of crisis

discourse are still underexplored by scholars, requiring systematic scrutiny to assess its role in policy expansion.

Even though this study does not seek to explain the causes of crisisification, the observed periodic fluctuations across dimensions offer insight into its potential drivers, which is relevant for future research. Whilst some variations align temporally with major crises and periods of crisis concurrency, others suggest a selective and curated deployment of crisis discourse. For example, despite Juncker's (2016) characterisation of the then-ongoing situation as a 'polycrisis' and despite the period (2016–2019) encompassing Brexit, rule of law disputes, populism, migration and asylum quota debates, discursive crisisification levels remained relatively low across multiple dimensions. The findings also show that internally induced crises did not generate the same spikes as externally driven ones such as Ukraine, Gaza, or COVID-19. Moreover, some internal challenges, such as Brexit or the democratic backsliding in Hungary and Poland, were not articulated as crises at all, raising questions about how EU institutions decide which events warrant the crisis label. All of this, coupled with the frequent use of unspecified crisis articulations, confirms that EU crisis discourse is not always linked to specific crisis events, but often serves broader institutional objectives (see also secrecy as a form of crisis exploitation in Kreuder-Sonnen, 2018, and Rauh, 2022, on the use of emergency language beyond objective crisis pressures). The selective amplification and de-emphasis of crisis discourse suggest that EU institutions employ crisis articulation strategically – to mobilise action, justify policy interventions and balance urgency with legitimacy and Euroscepticism concerns, as crises may undermine public trust and fuel anti-EU attitudes (as shown by de Wilde, 2021). This does not imply that discourse is disconnected from events altogether. Rather, the growing dissociation between the term 'crisis' and identifiable events may be a cumulative effect of increasing discursive crisisification, shaped by the EU's experience of consecutive crises over the past decade.

The findings reveal crucial interrelations between dimensions of crisisification, suggesting that crisisification is not merely a historically linear accumulation of crisis discourse but a structured, self-reinforcing process. Whilst no consistent upward trend in crisis frequency was observed (Dimension 1), the largest rise was accompanied by a sustained increase in pre-emptive crisis framing (Dimension 4) and polycrisis articulations (Dimension 5). This suggests that surges in frequency (Dimension 1) may drive crisisification across other dimensions. Likewise, the heightened salience of polycrisis discourse (Dimension 5) correlates with pre-emptive crisis framing (Dimension 4), reinforcing and sustaining the crisisification process through a (potential) feedback loop, though the causal mechanisms of this dynamic warrant further investigation. Given these recurrent patterns evidenced across dimensions and the strong crisisification observed in recent years across multiple dimensions, we expect this trend in crisisification to persist.

Crucially, the increasing normalisation and deep entrenchment of crisis discourse within EU institutional communication carry policy implications for EU governance and legitimacy. A key manifestation of this entrenchment is the sustained invocation of previously crisisified issues (such as migration) as default policy justifications, irrespective of their immediate urgency. Similarly, the reliance on unspecified crisis articulations across dimensions and framing the future through the lens of potential crises sustains a sense of generalised ongoing threat and extends crisisification over time – even in the absence of an actual crisis. This entrenchment not only provides discursive evidence for the

debated so-called permacrisis in the EU (Bevitori and Russo, 2024; Zuleeg et al., 2021) but also demonstrates how EU institutions actively shape this new normal (cf. Katsikas et al., 2025) in which crises are an enduring reality rather than a temporary disruption. However, the progressive normalisation of crisification presents a paradox: whilst crisis discourse can legitimise governance interventions and mobilise action, its overuse may ultimately weaken the rhetorical effectiveness of crisis as a mobilising and legitimising tool. Indeed, empirical evidence indicates that prolonged fear-inducing communication can lead to disengagement and helplessness (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Shulman et al., 2021), as exemplified by climate doomism (Johnstone and Stickles, 2024). If crises are framed as omnipresent, their ability to legitimise exceptional measures may weaken, fostering desensitisation (Stevens et al., 2021) rather than responsiveness.

The findings revealed how EU institutions increasingly position themselves as permanently crisis-aware, forward-looking actors that anticipate and prepare for crises before they materialise. This discursive shift suggests a broader move towards anticipatory crisis governance. The alignment between our findings and evidence on the EU's expanding crisis detection and preparedness policies (Boin and Rhinard, 2023; Rhinard, 2019) points to a transition from a historically reactive approach – long a source of critique (Forman and Mossialos, 2021; Sottillotta, 2022) – towards a more strategic and proactive mode of EU governance. The drivers of this shift remain open to further investigation, but its implications warrant attention: whilst a proactive stance may reassure the public and strengthen trust in the EU's crisis management capabilities, it also carries risks. Perpetual crisis and its anticipation could foster a culture of fear and urgency, and if perceived as fearmongering, may ultimately alienate parts of the public.

This analysis focused on the discursive designation of crises by EU institutions, without addressing how such discourse is received by audiences whose responses are shaped by contextual factors such as diffusion, reception environments and competing framings in the public sphere (Balzacq, 2010). Whilst fear-based and negatively valenced EU-related communication has been associated with the demobilisation of collective action (McQueen, 2021) and with negative attitudes towards the EU (Triga and Vadratsikas, 2018), such outcomes should not be automatically assumed. Crisis messaging may also emphasise public benefits, reinforce legitimacy and foster support for EU action (Triga and Vadratsikas, 2018). Future research could therefore examine how crisis framings are received, reinterpreted, or contested across different audiences and communicative contexts.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Appendix S1. Codebook 1.

Appendix S2. Crisified issues in EU institutional discourse (April 2012–June 2024) – degree centrality and frequency.