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SERBIA – MEDIA – EUROPEAN UNIONⁱ

Summary

The aim of this paper is to show how much and in which way the electronic and print media in Serbia report on the European Union. Considering the fact that Serbia is a candidate country for EU membership, the main hypothesis is that there is a big interest for “European topics” in the media. The first special hypothesis is that the media report on this topic mainly in a positive way, and the other hypothesis is that the participants in the media reports have a highly neutral opinions about Serbia becoming a part of EU and “Europeisation” in general.

The corpus of this research is 272 theme packages and articles, collected from different media during seven days of monitoring in October 2012. The authors paid special attention to the fact that all types of media should be incorporated in the research, public services, national commercial, regional and local media, tabloids and broadsheets and one quality weekly newspaper. The research was conducted based on a code sheet with 23 categories.

Qualitative-quantitative method of media discourse analysis was used and it was found to be most suitable for this type of research, since it questions the society and the culture in which the real interlocutors exchange messages.

The preliminary results showed that, in the corpus of all “European packages/articles”, 34% were broadcast at the beginning of radio and TV programs or on the front pages of newspapers, meaning that there is a relatively big media interest for the analyzed topic. About one third of the journalists had a neutral approach to reporting on “European topics”, while as much as 85% of the participants in the stories had a positive attitude towards EU membership. That is significantly more than 48% of citizens who supported the process in a research from October 2012.

Key words: European Union, Serbia, Media, Discourse Media Analysis.

"Only Europe of free people, self-conscious citizens 'walking upright' can be and remain civilisational and cultural lighthouse to modern world" (Jakšić 2006, 109).

1. Introductory notes

The process of bringing Serbia closer to the European Union began in 2000. after democratic changes of government and overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic. In the following years, Serbia has signed several important agreements: *The Agreement on Free Trade in South East Europe* (CEFTA) (2006); *Visa facilitation agreement and Readmission agreement* (2007), *Stabilization and Association Agreement* (ratified in Strasbourg 2011) .

In Serbia, for years, one of the main issuesⁱⁱ that politicians "imposed" on media is the European Union membership. Very often, the headlines in the electronic media and on the covers of Serbian daily and weekly newspapers have been when and under which conditions will Serbia (one day) become a member of the European Union. Such was the case during the previous government (from 2000 to 2012), and this trend continued even after the elections, held in Serbia in May 2012.

Republic of Serbia officially applied for candidacy for European Union membership on 22nd December 2009. European Commission, on 12th October 2011 recommended that Serbia should be granted candidate status for membership, and that membership negotiations officially begin as soon as Belgrade and Pristina make progress in bilateral negotiations. By Europeans Council decision from 1st March 2012 Serbia was given candidate status for membership in European Union. Since then, the country has been in preparation for the next step in the process of European integration - obtaining the date of commencement of membership negotiations.ⁱⁱⁱ That date also depends on progress on the route Belgrade - Pristina.

Given that the "European theme" is in focus of politicians, media, and therefore among the public, experts start to deal with the "European discourse" of politicians and the media. "A growing source of literature within sociology media and journalism studies are focusing on the role and influence of the news media, originating from and around the political institutions of the European Union" (Slaatta 2006, 8).

2. Defining of research subject

The aim of this paper is to show in what extent and how print and electronic media in Serbia report on the European Union. Given that Serbia is a candidate for the European Union membership, the initial hypothesis is that there is a great interest in "European issues" in media. The first specific hypothesis is that media generally report positively on the presented topic, while the second hypothesis is specific because report participants have a balanced opinion on Serbia's joining the European Union and about the concept of "Europeanization" in general.

The subject of this paper is media discourse in reporting on relations between Serbia and European Union. Discourse is seen as a larger unit than the sentence (voice or text message) that occurred between interlocutors in some context (according to Savić 1993, 29-33). "Discourse includes written communication, even written interaction, so that message receiver (the audience) and the author are not interacting face to face" (Van Dijk 1998, 2-3).

Media discourse is a broad term that can refer to overall reality presented through print and electronic media - news, spoken or written text, but also the process that is involved in formation of texts (according to O'Keeffe 2006, 1; Cotter 2006, 416-417). Media discourse circulates within institutions and between them and it is deeply rooted in everyday life and in almost everyone. It has been said that discourse is not a finished product, but a process, and constant change, and that text is a part of discourse process and it is pointless to study it out of context (according to Talbot 2007: 5-10).

3. Method, research corpus and unit of analysis

In the analysis of journalistic texts and reports on relationship between Serbia and the European Union, the methods of quantitative and qualitative analyses of media discourse have been used. Discourse analysis has proven to be the most suitable for this type of research as an interdisciplinary science which critically examines the culture and society in which real interlocutors who understand those messages are involved. The analysis of media discourse studies society and examines what types of interactions text established between people of the world and between the powerful (government, media) and those who are not (population, audience, public) (according to Matheson 2005: 1-3). We can learn a lot about social issues and stereotypes that reflect the language and communication by analyzing the content in media (according to Bell, Garrett 2001:3).

The research corpus is a sample of a total of 272 media products (newspaper articles and radio and television articles) collected from four television and radio stations, three daily and one weekly newspapers during seven selected days in October 2012.^{iv} The authors took into account the representativeness of the media that were observed, so that the corpus was taken from public radio-television service (prime news of *Radio Television of Serbia* and *Radio Television of Vojvodina*), the national commercial media (*Television Prva* and *Radio B92*), regional and local media (*TV 5* from Niš and *Radio Zrenjanin*), a tabloid (*Večernje novosti*) and a daily newspaper (*Danas*) and a prominent weekly newspaper (*NIN*). The research includes three code lists^v with 23 categories that have been analyzed. In this paper we will present details only of those categories in which relevant data have been obtained.

There are two units of analysis - Radio / Television report (for electronic media) and newspaper articles (for print media), which as prevailing topic contain information about relations between Serbia and the European Union. As a form, broadcasted / written content journalistic genre is implied.^{vi}

4. Analysis and results

1.4. Number of articles, reports

Analysis of the four radio and three television stations and newspapers showed a total of 272 thematic articles / RTV reports. In total, the most numerous thematic texts /articles were in print media - 132, then on television - 73, and the least were on radio stations - 67. Observing individually, the largest number of "European" texts were found in the *Danas* - 66, then *Television of Serbia* - 33, and the least on *Television 5* - only 6.

media	the number of thematic articles/RTV reports during the monitoring days
<i>Danas</i>	66
<i>Večernje novosti</i>	38
<i>Televizija Srbije</i>	33
<i>NIN</i>	28
<i>Radio Vojvodine</i>	26
<i>Televizija Vojvodine</i>	21
<i>Radio Srbije</i>	18
<i>Radio B92</i>	16
<i>Prva televizija</i>	13
<i>Radio Zrenjanin</i>	7
<i>Televizija 5</i>	6

Table № 1. Number of thematic articles/RTV reports in specific media

Quantitatively, it was shown that all observed media, throughout the period of monitoring, held the topic "Serbia's relations towards the European Union" in the focus of their attention. How much it would be important for an average audience member, is based on how much this theme, as well as any other, had media coverage (according to McCombs 2004:2). If we as a society aspire to European integration, it is essential that journalists contribute to it in a serious extent.

4.2. Headlines

The power of media in one society is reflected in how the media report on certain people, events and phenomena. So, this media power could be observed on the basis of whether newspaper or TV editors, as gatekeepers, gave thematic articles /RTV reports a level of priority and included them in the program announcement or headlines or in the news at the beginning of primetime news program, or gave them a place on the cover page of daily and weekly newspaper. If an article / RTV report appeared at the beginning of the programme^{vii}, as an announcement or a short story, and then were aired during the show in general / written extensively on some of the interior pages of the newspaper, its level of informativeness and persuasive power is far more prevalent than those information who have not had their announcements.

Analysis of primetime radio and television news programmes, as well as the pages of newspapers showed that for the editors who made decisions which news would be broadcast or printed, the articles about the relations between Serbia and the European Union in 64% of cases did not find their place as an announcement news . Most announcing (thematic) news was on television (42%), for example:

- *Economic crisis in the EU*
- *Start of census for farms which are financially supported by EU*
- *Ban of gay parades and European officials' comments*
- *The annual report of European Commission on progress of SRB towards EU*

then on radio stations (36%):

- *President of SRB Tomislav Nikolić visits Italian president Giorgio Napolitano, who supports SRB European future*
- *European Commissioner Štefan Füle speaks with SRB Prime Minister Ivica Dačić*
- *Statement of Prime Minister of Vojvodina Bojan Pajić on Days of Vojvodina in Brussels*

and the least on the cover of newspapers (23%):

- *Croatian experience on the road to EU*
- *Interview with SRB Vice Prime Minister Suzana Grubješić on conditions to be met in order to obtain starting date for EU accession talks.*

From these examples we can see that the editors mostly gave advantage in announcements to the articles related to majority of population, compared to the "local issues", not taking enough attention on the fact that a specific example on "micro level" can be very interesting, inspiring and applicable on a larger scale, or in other areas that benefit from the cooperation with the EU. Although the European Union, through its funds, finances a number of projects in the local communities, as well as cross-border cooperation of municipalities and towns, editors, unfortunately, did not recognize it. "It is not enough just to write about the ugly events that are happening across the border, or to establish a 'special section in the paper' that will randomly fill the news from the region, it is necessary to carefully select topics and interlocutors in order to encourage regional cooperation and foster good neighbourly relations in practice "(Pralica 2011, 55). The exception is the public service *Radio Vojvodina*, which reports extensively about the days of the Province in the European capital. However, even this exception should not be especially highlighted in relation to media coverage, given that the task of the provincial public service media is to report on everything what is in the public interest for the citizens of Vojvodina.

4.3. Location

Category locations in each survey could indicate several aspects of the media reporting. First, how big is the area where the headquarters of the media is dominant by the number of quantitative information in relation to other parts of the country, and how journalists report "by inertia". This primarily refers to the assumption that the majority of thematic articles, as a location of events, had two major cities - Belgrade (headquarters of government authorities in Serbia) and Brussels (the EU headquarters). However, in this study, other than Brussels, as the headquarters of most of the European institutions, the remaining locations are categorized in a broader context, for example, Serbia, members of European Union, the United States and so forth.

If we compare results by type of media, we will see that there is no essential difference - the press (70%) , radio (67%) and television (58%) have the highest thematic articles from Serbia. On the radio and television on the second place is Brussels, while in print media, the second place belongs to the EU countries. All together, the greatest number of specialized articles / texts are about Serbia, followed by the European Union and Brussels:

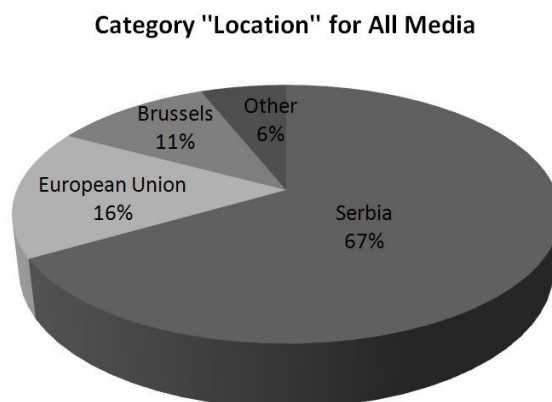


Chart № 1: Category "Location" for All Media (Radio, Television and Newspapers Together)

These results show that Serbian politicians mostly spoke about European topics in Serbia, that is, for this topic the attention was focused on the Serbian audience, not the foreigners. The research results showed that the authorities prefer and it was the most important for them to talk about the European Union "at home" and thus win favor of the public, although the EU access process does not depend on the local public, but on the attitudes of European officials. This may be explained by the fact that the Serbian authorities have not done enough "lobbying" for the interests of country by traveling abroad. This gives the impression that it was more important to them what the Serbian public will think about it, than the reactions from European officials from whom, among other things, depends Serbia's admission to the European Union.

4.4. Europeanization theme

The theme of Europe, the European Union and Europeanization in most of newspaper articles and radio and television stories (51%) was in the main focus, which means that 140 of the 272 articles were thematically about Europe and in most cases, about expansion or joining the European Union. Only few articles were about monetary policy, economy and industry.

- *Report on the recommendations of Centre for Foreign Policy for the rapid accession of Serbia to the European Union on 10th October 2012 in the 'Danas'.*

Europe as a theme in 43% of cases was in secondary focus, however, it is important to note that most of these articles deal with Kosovo, and resolving the issue of Kosovo is one of the main preconditions for Serbia to get a candidate status for joining the European Union.

- *The report after the meeting between the Prime Minister of Serbia and Kosovo and EU High Representative for Foreign Policy and security released on 20th October 2012 in 'Danas'.*

Europe and the Europeanization was one of several topics which media reported in 12% of cases.

- *Report on the List of agricultural land in Serbia, broadcasted on Prva television on the 1st October 2012 containing a statement of the Head of EU Delegation in Serbia Vincent Degert.*

Subthematic areas which were related with the concept of "Europeanisation" and which were pointed out as the most common in all three media types were: enlargement of the European Union (30%), negotiations with Kosovo (21%) and economic issues (17%), which represent 68% of subthematic units that were observed in this study. The common feature is that subthematic areas such as human and minority rights were represented in only 6% of the entire corpus. In the 2010 survey, as well, it was found that nine journalists of printed media from five countries of the Western Balkans (Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro) "were insufficiently and non-analytically involved in reporting about minority issues" (Pralica 2010, 25-34).

4.5. Subjects

Subjects are persons and / or institutions that media paid the most attention to. If those were the people, and usually those who are in power, in the electronic media they can be heard or seen, and in the print media their statements are quoted. And examples of this category demonstrate the mechanism of power that media may play in the socio-political context of one country. If someone is not in the media, for the public, they do not exist. For this reason, it is important for public figures and citizens to appear in the media. It is important for them to show their best, to represent themselves in the best light, to get the influence on society, that is, to form public opinion.

The study showed that subjects who talked the most about Serbia's relations with the European Union, were representatives of state authority (at radio stations, 26% of the total number of subjects, 25% on television, in print 21%). A large percentage of them were representatives of the EU institutions (radio - 31%; television - 20%; print - 13%), heads of the European Union member states (television - 11%; print - 9%; radio - 7%), and on television and in print the experts^{viii} were marked in a significant percentage (11%) (details Chart 2). Far less space

is given to non-governmental organizations, civic associations, unions, workers, entrepreneurs, provincial and local authorities, journalists and commentators, whose share of media exposure is less than 7%.

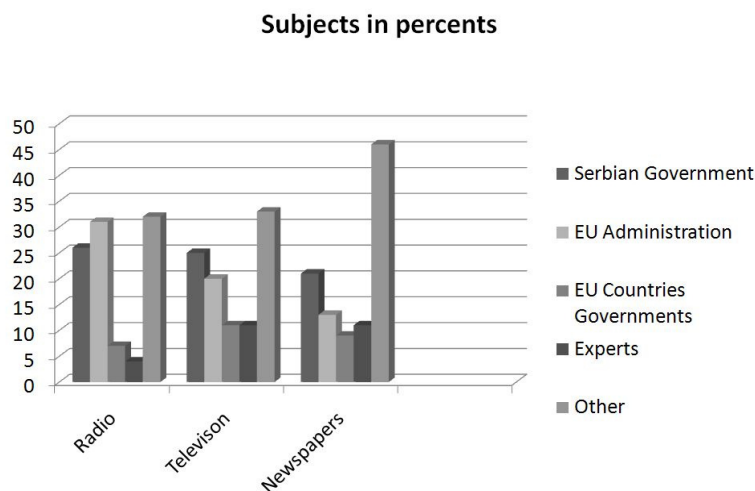


Chart № 2: Category “Subjects” Separately by the Media

Research results for this category could be interpreted in a way that the topic of relations between Serbia and the European Union is marked as "elite" and reserved, in the highest percentage, for the state government, such as Serbia and the EU member states, and officials themselves and the common institutions of the European Union. All the other participants who spoke on a given topic were negligible to media or they were given very little attention. The results of this category indicate the application of the 10th journalistic factor on "Galtung and Ruge scale" which tells that the news about event which is about elite figure from politics will certainly be released (according to Galtung, Ruge 1993, 31-39).

4.6. Value attitude of the subject to EU accession

Explicit attitude of the subject towards Europe and the process of joining the EU was recorded in less than half (42%) of the 272 analyzed articles. In most of the articles (85%) the subject had a positive attitude of the EU accession process. The high percentage of positive attitude towards the accession process can be explained by the fact that the representatives of the Serbian authorities appeared as a subject in the largest number (such as the President of Republic, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister), and the official policy of the current government is Serbia's entry into the European Union. This was announced by Tomislav Nikolić and Ivica Dačić:

- "... Serbia's European path is the path of the future, the path of economic prosperity and I will help Serbia to continue on this road" (Nikolić, 11th June 2012) ...^{ix}
- "... As an ancient European nation in the unification of Europe and fulfilling conditions for joining the European Union, we will use our most valuable tradition - liberty, democratic spirit and respect for European values. Eligibility for admission of Serbia to the European Union should be considered as an action for the general progress of civilization for our country. Our goal is to accelerate the process of European integration, with the maximum effort to get the date to start negotiations with the European Union. This government will implement required system measurements and meet the criteria established by the Copenhagen European Council which are necessary in the process of stabilization and association." (Ivica Dačić, 26th July, 2012) ...^x

In a small percentage subjects are officials of the European Union and foreign and local experts, who also have a positive attitude about joining.

In contrast to positive attitudes of media entities, in which an absolute majority was comprised of local and

European government officials, public opinion in Serbia was much less likely to support European integration. If we compare these results with the polls from October 2012, the month of monitoring, conducted by Ipsos Strategic marketing, it is notable that, opposed to the representatives of government, the support of citizens of Serbia to the membership in European Union fell below 50% and was 48%.^{xi} Poll results of public opinion on Serbia's entry into the European Union, carried out by the Office for European Integration of the Republic of Serbia also saw the fall in people's support to European integration of the country. In June 2012, 49% of people voted for Serbia's entry into the European Union, even less in December - 41% of respondents. That was the lowest support for European integration since 2002.^{xiii} (Chart 3).

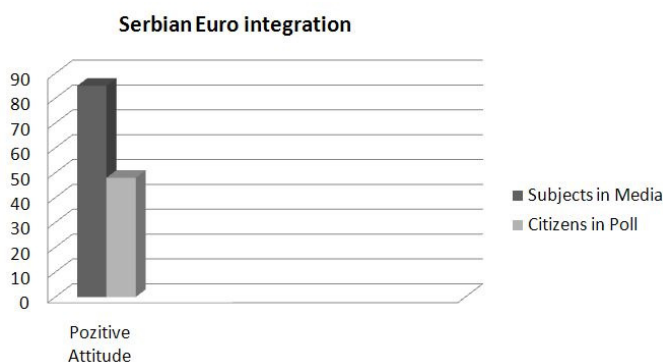


Chart № 3: Serbian Euro integration (in percents).

Negative attitude of subjects towards Eurointegration in our study was reported in 12% of articles, such as, for example, an interview with the playwright Siniša Kovačević published on 28th October 2012. The daily newspaper *Večernje novosti*. Kovačević is a senior official of the Democratic Party of Serbia, which openly declares against Serbia joining the European Union. Neutral attitude of subject towards European integration was present in all three media texts (1%).

4.7. Journalists' value statements by theme

When looking at the results in general, in most of the analyzed articles, radio and television reports, evaluative attitude of journalists towards the topic was neutral (47%). It was positive in 23%, balanced in 20%, while a negative attitude appeared in 10% of all articles.

The analysis of the results by the type of media indicates the existence of differences in journalists' attitudes towards themes in print and electronic media. That is why there was the positive attitude in 132 texts (47%) in the paper, while the negative was in 38 articles (29%). On the other hand, in more than half (59%) of a total of 73 television stories journalists' attitude was balanced, it was neutral in 32% (23 items), and positive in six (8%) stories. The expression of the positive attitude of journalists towards themes in the print media can be explained by the presence of comments and columns (17%), which is characterized by a clearly stated opinion. This analytical journalistic genre is not typical for television, thus it was not recorded there. An example of positive journalists' attitude towards the theme of joining the European Union is the text "The great secret of Toma Nikolić," by the editor-in-chief of the weekly magazine *NIN* Nebojša Spajić in which he criticized the statement of the Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić:

- "We will not rush into the EU, so far rushing has brought us to the brink of the abyss", and Spajić comments that Serbian president talks "the mythic, symbolic images devoid of any real content" (*NIN*, 4th October 2012).

On the other hand, an example of a balanced journalists' attitude was a television report aired on 19th October on RT Vojvodina which talks about reactions of parties in power and opposition in Serbia about the meeting of the Prime Ministers of Serbia Ivica Dačić and Kosovo Hashim Thaci in Brussels.

6. Conclusion

This study shows that in Serbian media there is a great interest in information regarding Serbia's relations with the European Union. Over 270 articles in representative sample of the electronic and print media confirms that the "European theme" is the focus of domestic media reporting.

The first specific hypothesis, which is set at the start, saying that media generally report affirmative on the theme mentioned above, has been confirmed in one of its parts, since journalists' value statements towards the articles / packages in highest percentage (47%) is neutral, and affirmative in 20% of the examples.

Another specific hypothesis, that some political figures in media reports have a balanced opinion on Serbia's accession to the European Union and about "Europeanization" in general, is refuted, due to the fact that the results showed dominant positive attitude in 85% of thematic articles.

If we have these results and the impact that media have on public opinion in mind, then data about relatively small support of citizens on Serbia joining the European Union (48% from October 2012, 41% in December 2012) are completely unexpected. Thus, either media do not have such a big influence as it is thought or most of the citizens do not share the opinion of the majority of officials who have appeared in the media. If today citizens of Serbia "do not understand" the media and politicians, the question is whether they will be ready to understand the essence of the European future. ... "In 'the Europe' of citizens, in which it would not matter where people were born, what nation they belong to and to what God they pray, people have a lot to learn from each other" (Jakšić 2006, 109).

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ⁱⁱ Remaining "major" topics are: current relations within the coalition in power, cracking down on organized crime and negotiations with Albanians from Kosovo.

ⁱⁱⁱ Data available on the official website of the EU Delegation in Serbia: : <http://www.europa.rs/srbija-i-evropska-unija.html> (Accessed 10.02.2013).

^{iv} For electronic media monitoring days were 1, 3, 9, 11, 19, 21 and 27 October 2012, and for print media (daily newspaper): 2, 4, 10, 12, 20, 22 and 28 October 2012, while monitoring days for the weekly newspapers were 11, 18 and 25 October 2012 (these were the days when this weekly magazine was published).

^v One for radio stations, television stations and newspapers.

^{vi} For electronic media it includes announcement of reports, their entire contents, and for print media, it is a form that includes the title, the text, the author's name as well as accessories, such as photographs, cartoons, frame or any other additional element.

^{vii} Often in the middle of the programme and at the end of the programme once again.

^{viii} n radio stations, experts were marked with 4%.

^{ix} Part of the inauguration speech at The National Assembly on 11 June 2012. The full speech is available on: <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Politika/1119566/Evropski+put+Srbije+%E2%80%93+put+budu%C4%87nosti.html> (Accessed 11 March, 2013).

^x Part of the expose of Prime Minister Ivica Dačić at The National Assembly on 26 July 2012. Complete exposé available on: <http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vlada/> (Accessed: 11 February, 2013).

^{xi} Data available on: <http://www.naslovi.net/2012-10-22/akter/za-ulazak-u-eu-48-odsto-gradjana/3992498> (Accessed 10 February, 2013).

^{xii} In comparison, the highest citizens' support to Serbia's joining the European Union was in 2003 (72%). Available on: <http://www.seio.gov.rs/%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8.43.html> (Accessed: 11 February, 2013).

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