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**European Union News Themes in Romanian Radio Stations.
Case Study: Europa FM and Radio Romania Actualitati**

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Abstract: With Romania's integration in the European Union, the media content related to the member states has acquired growing importance. The themes of journalism were enriched with new approaches towards national image in the European context and vice versa. At a first level, the study aims to conduct a quantitative analysis on the news topics broadcasted by Radio Romania Actualitati and Europa FM, for the duration of 32 days. The qualitative component focuses on the topics addressed in radio news in order to see what is the media content which reflects the image of the European Union. The findings show, beyond the numbers, that the editorial policy of the Romanian media is not concerned with the interests of the citizens - from the perspective of common themes - but rather with how can the EU, as a unified body, help member countries solve their problems.

Keywords: European Union; editorial policy; Romanian media

1. Introduction

On the canvas of media discourse in post-revolution Romania, many topics have occurred, aimed on the one hand at the image of Romania in the context of its pre-accession to the EU, on the other, at its new European identity. In the past three years, the reality of joining the EU brought a common approach from all member states which intend – each one - to make meaningful analysis of all dimensions covering the European Community.

The *Eurobarometer - Public opinion in the European Union* (Romania - National Report), developed in 2012, states that the main source of information for Romanians is television (97%), newspapers (51%), radio (64%), the Internet (accessed by 43% of respondents) and social networks (used by 28% of Romanian). “The same hierarchical trend is maintained for procuring information about European political matters: television (88%), media / newspapers (43%), radio (41%) and the internet (22%). The extent to which the Romanian media discusses the EU is assessed as satisfactory: almost half (49%) say this in the case of television, 41% for radio, 39 % for print and only 25% for the internet. Differences from the European average are observed in all cases: 55% of the respondents in EU27 states say that on TV, the Union is debated in a fair amount, 48% for radio, 56% for print and 42% for internet³.”

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³ Eurobarometer - Public opinion in the European Union, p. 13, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_ro_ro_nat.pdf, accessed July 2nd, 2013.

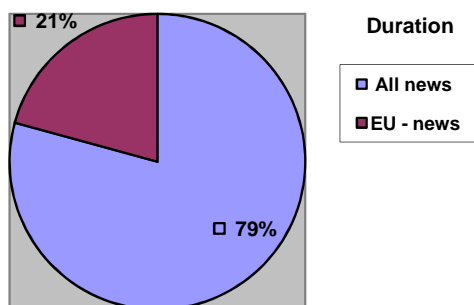
2. Objectives

The study aims to show the extent to which the themes in European media are covered by the media texture of radio stations in Romania, what are the frequent themes and what areas is the media's interest specifically aimed at.

3. Methodology

The research consisted of monitoring newscasts at 7 am and 6 pm broadcasted on Europa FM (privately owned, with national coverage) and Radio Romania News (public post, national coverage) between the 21st January and the 21st February 2013. In the 32 days interval, there were 127 news broadcasts about the EU and / or member states. Of these, 41 were on Europa FM and 86 on Radio Romania News.

Monitoring totaled 1070 minutes (17 hours and 50 minutes), from which news about the European Union accounted for 222 minutes (3 hours and 42 minutes), representing 21%, which indicates, from the start, a moderate interest for European events



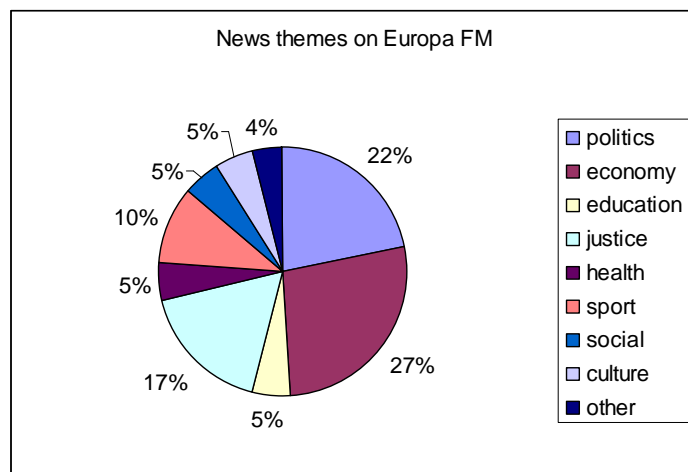
Importantly, it has to be said from the start that, in many cases, given the complexity of issues and approaches, news cannot fall into a single category alone, but they can additionally be labeled “economy”, “EU”, “political” or “social”.

4. European Union News Themes in Romanian Radio Stations

4.1 Europa FM

The time Europa FM allocates for news on EU issues during the monitoring period was 1 hour and 50 min out of a total of 10 hours and 13 minutes broadcasted at 18.00, i.e. 17%, which shows an average interest for European events. During the monitoring period, January 21st to February 21st, 2013 (32 days), at the 18.00 news bulletin, 41 news covered realities from EU countries.

Fourteen of the news was announced, because of their importance, at the opening of the journal. Six of them were on external and eight on internal realities.



As can be seen, economic news had the highest rate. External topics are concerned with the effects of the global economic crisis (i. g. “Spain’s unemployment reached a new negative record in the last months of 2012, over 26%, which means that over 6 million people do not have a job” (January 24th); “Thousands of people protested in the streets of Athens, the first general strike this year. Protesters complaints are related to wage reductions; unemployment could rise to 30%” (February 20th)), negotiations and discussions on the EU budget. The most intensely debated event was the horse meat scandal in which Romania was involved.

As outlined in the beginning, there were situations when, during news, topics intermingled. For example, issues related to economic problems were coupled with political turmoil or social problems generated by the crisis, thus the news becoming “economic” and “social” or “political”. The horse meat scandal began as an export/ import matter of a product falsely labeled and later turned into a foreign policy issue (e. g. “the scandal of horse meat exported from Romania arrived in Brussels where ministers of agriculture of the affected countries will gather. The first allegations targeted Romania, where horse meat was labeled incorrectly, but local checks do not confirm this suspicion. At talks in Brussels takes part the Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Cioroş. British Ambassador in Romania said that the British authorities are investigating and declared that the facts must be established, instead of speculation“(February 21st)).

Preponderant attention to economic news is justified by the fact that, as shown in *Eurobarometer - Public opinion in the European Union*, “expectations and perspectives that Romanians have in relation to the EU are mainly in the areas of economic interest. More specifically, 54% of Romanians want EU policies to include strict economic priorities that can generate jobs whilst 16% are asking for a better coordination of economic policies in the European governance¹.

External political issues deal with topics related to domestic politics in EU countries (Presidential elections in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria referendum on building a new nuclear power plant), subjects in which the political theme is related to the price paid in terms of popularity for implementing austerity packages (Ex: “Thousands of supporters of former Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov met before the Parliament in Sofia. [...] Parliament approved the cabinet’s resignation this afternoon. The resignation was supported by all parliamentary parties and was announced yesterday after 10 days of sometimes violent protests against poverty “(February 21st)) but also with issues of supra-national

¹ *Eurobarometer - Public opinion in the European Union* p. 13, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_ro_ro_nat.pdf, accessed July 2nd, 2013.

interest: the question of the Roma minority in France, inter-ethnic conflicts in Romania which escalated to a diplomatic conflict (Ex:”the Szecklerland flag was hoisted today in Budapest right on the top of the Hungarian Parliament building. The Hungarian prime minister initiated the ceremony which comes amid tensions created by a diplomatic conflict with Romania. Officials in Budapest said that the use of ethnic symbols of any community is a fundamental human right. The Hungarian prime minister thanked all municipalities that hoisted the flag. The Hungarian state secretary stated that Transylvanian Hungarians are subjected to symbolic violence in Romania. Authorities in Bucharest reacted immediately. The Romanian premier asked the foreign minister to resolve the issue and send the message to its neighbors that Romania will not accept advice on the issue of raising flags“(February 15th)).

Education news covered exclusively international realities and had as central theme: the general dissatisfaction with certain legislative measures. The legislative and legal domains were represented by news about EU policies for Romania, for instance the justice monitoring report prepared by the EC. But most of the news focused on cases of law breach (i.e. raising the flag and other Székely symbols and encouraging “temptations” on ethnic autonomy in a prefecture of Covasna and legal consequences which arose from here, the investigation into the causes of the accident in which 16 people were injured after a Carpat Air plane missed the landing at an airport in Fiumicino and after which the Italian company Alitalia is investigated for fraud) and the legislative initiatives of the EU

Health topics were related to EU policies (e.g.: “Officials do not take any action against the pill that killed four women in France. Diane 35 pills is not withdraw from the Romanian market until a decision from all Member States is made”(January 31st)”; if certain blood components are not produced in the country, Romania could import blood from the EU, in case of a natural disaster “(8 February).

The social is very poorly represented, with 5%, but here must be included the news related to the economic crisis or legislative proposals that imply dysfunctions of the social system. Thus, from a total of 41 news included in other categories, 6 refer to aspects of social discontent (i.e. Dutch financial group ING fires 2,400 employees. The company prepares to separate its insurance and financial operations. Many European financial institutions have been forced to reduce staff because of the global economic crisis)

During the monitoring period, Romania has organized the European Youth Olympic Festival, so that all 4 news related to sports (outside sport news), spoke about organizing the event from the moment when the Olympic flame started its journey from Braşov towards the capital, until the opening festivities.

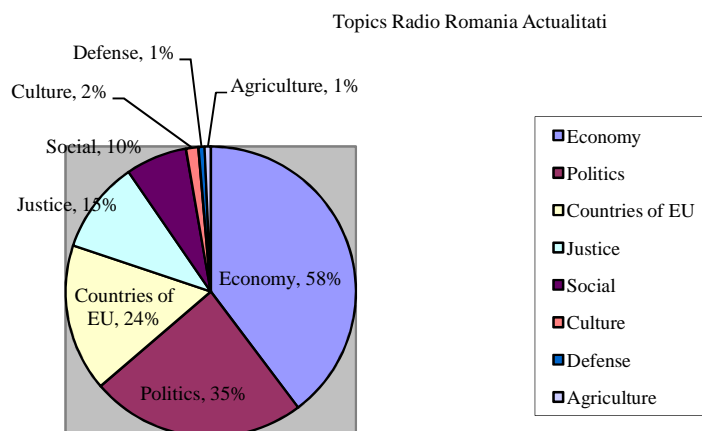
The only cultural topic treated in 2 news was related to the participation of Romanian film “Child’s Pose” in the Berlin Film Festival and its winning of the “Golden Bear” trophy. Also there were presented news of general interest related to the gypsies voluntarily returned from France to Romania and to the acquisition of vignettes by the ones who travel to Slovenia.

16 pieces of news were presented at the foreign chapter, one at flash news and 24 in the domestic section. Six of the news from the foreign section aims at topics of national interest (falsely labeled meat, European budget)

As a specific of the news broadcasted by Europa FM, I noticed that they are grouped on the basis of belonging to the same topic under an “umbrella lead”. The news follows all the implications of the topic or of the event, not only for Romania, but also for the EU states (horse meat scandal).

4.2 Radio Romania Actualitati

During the 32 days of the monitoring period, at the public radio, out of 448 news, there were 85 news about the European Union and member states, which is 18.97%. The analyzed news bulletins included 457 minutes, out of which 112 minutes were dedicated to topics about the European Union and member states, which means 24, 50%. The percentages are small and prove that subjects dedicated to Europe are not placed on the same level of importance as the national topics.



Realities, events and preoccupations of the moment could be found in the bulletins of Radio Romania Actualitati. Thus, economy and politics were leading in all reports about the EU and its members, the two topics being dealt with in 94% of the analyzed news. Yet, contradicting what Hall et al. (1978, p. 54) said – that the main subject is about politics and after that comes economy – in what concerns the news about the European Union and its members the situation was the other way round. The most discussed topics and events were about the economy, which proves that, for the press and the public, this is still the most important topic when talking about the European Union and that the passing from an economic union to a political or cultural union is not completely realized¹.

Also, it is important to underline that many of the analyzed news do not refer to the European Union as an institution, but to the relation between Romania and the EU (28% of the news), to the relation between Romania and other member states (6%) or to other member countries (25%). Thus we can notice a thematically nationalization of the news, these being presented rather from the perspective of the interest for the internal public and of the way that the events from the EU level affects the conationals. It is interesting that this thing seems to have not changed during the 6 years that passed since the integration of Romania in the European Union. In December 2006, right before accession, Lazar and Paun noticed: “For EU topics to be covered by Romanian media, they have to be either of national and/or of audience relevance, or “spectacular” (Lazar, Paun, 2006, p. 4).

Economic news represented more than half, with a percentage of 58, 83%. Most of them (31,76%) were about general economic events/situations/problems such as: “The European Commission prepares an action plan for the European syderurgy and asks Arcelor Mittal not to close its fabrics” (February13th); “Presentation of a document about the economic growth perspectives in Europe “

¹ On the European Union site it is stated that “what began as a purely economic union has evolved into an organization spanning policy areas, from development aid to environment. A name change from the EEC to the European Union (EU) in 1993 reflected this” (http://europa.eu/about-eu/index_en.htm).

(February 19th); “The European Union took an important step yesterday in applying the tax on financial transactions. In Brussels, finance ministers authorized 11 states to apply this” (January 23rd).

The economic crisis from the last years put a deep mark on the European Union but also on the way that journalist report about it. Crisis was the subject of 14, 12% of the news “The economic growth will be smaller in 2013 that it was previously expected especially because of the problems in the Euro zone, which entered the second year of recession” (January 24th); “In Spain, country that faces a record level of unemployment, yesterday were announced the first measures of cutting down taxes for young persons who start a business” (January 29th).

On February 7th, 2013, the European presidents and prime ministers met in Brussels in order to reach an agreement on the budget of the Union for 2014-2020. On February 8th, 2013 the European Council reached an agreement on the next multiannual financial frame. This event, considered individual, generated the largest number of news even before the event took place. Thus, the budget of the Union for the next six years was the main topic in 13% of the reports: “The European budget for 2014-2020 was the main topic of the discussions between French president Francois Hollande and the Italian prime minister Mario Monti” (February 4th), “The president of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, admits that the discussions about the budget of the European Union are very difficult (February 6th). An important element is that out of 11 reports on this topic, 5 referred to the budget for Romania.

Important events that took place during the monitoring period occupied a lot of the broadcasting space at the public radio. Thus, political news were on the second place, with a percentage of 35,30%. The most important moment was the publication on January 30th, 2013, of the report of the European Union about the progresses recorded by Romania within the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism. The conclusions of this report generated live disputes between the members of the government and of the opposition and news slided several times to the political registry: “In Bucharest, the government considers that the report includes some errors and the representatives of justices considered the report to be a positive one. But the opposition states that the report of the European Commission is negative and that the government needs to assume full responsibility” (January 31st).

A new national contextualization of Romania in connection with the European Union referred to large disputes about the accession to Schengen space, theme which is also framed within political news category: “Holland doesn’t condition any longer the integration of Romania in Schengen space to the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, said Dutch foreign minister Frans Timmermans during his meeting with Romanian minister Titus Corlăţean” (February 13th); “Romania’s entering the Schengen space could be affected by the stability in Bulgaria, where the government resigned yesterday. This is the opinion of Victor Ponta...” (February 21st).

News about justice also represent a category which presents exclusively Romanian problems and not European problems: “The experts of the European Council will examine the changes in parliamentary status made in Bucharest in order to see if the amendments about immunity don’t bring about a series of difficulties in the investigation of deputies and senators by the prosecutors” (January 25th), “The president of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, considers that in Romania there is a context for advancing reforms in justice” (February 5th).

We should also notice that the attention of the public radio focus very little on the social problems within the European Union, only 10,59% of the news belonging to this category, much less than politics or economy: “The European day of the unique emergency number 112 is celebrated today in

the whole European Union” (February 11th); “Romania is on the last place in Europe in what concerns hiring persons with disabilities” (January 27th); “Furious protests in Bulgaria after people saw that starting from this year, electricity will cost them double than in 2012 (February 18th – the information was also included within the category Countries of UE and economy).

The situation of culture is even worse; this domain received a minimum attention from the journalists of the public radio. In this category we find only two pieces of news: the opening of the Venice carnival on February, 3rd and the success of a Romanian film at Berlin film festival, where the movie *Pozitia copilului* of Calin Netzer received the Golden Bear prize (the information was broadcasted on February, 17th). It is surprising that during the 32 days of the monitoring period, the public radio did not broadcast a single piece of news about health and education within the European Union.

The topics that dominated news bulletins at Radio Romania Actualitati were the voting of the Union’s budget and the scandal of horse meat labeled as beef meet (each topic with 11 broadcasted news) followed by the voting of the European Commission report on justice progresses in Romania (10 broadcasted pieces of news).

In spite of the strong national character of news, the European Union is gaining ground, almost half of the news (46%) being considered so important that they were placed at the beginning of the bulletin. Yet 54% of this news is placed in the second part of the bulletins, within foreign section, altogether with news from the United States, Israel, Libya and Syria. This thing shows that in most of the cases, the EU states are not considered as being a part of the same trans-state organization but, on the contrary, they are seen as “foreign”.

The first of the values stated by Radio Romania is to insure a correct, impartial and objective information, both within news bulletins and other programs¹ and that’s why the journalist working there must build up news in a very objective manner, trying to present only facts, without commenting them or coming up with judgments. Thus, the tone of the monitored news was mainly neutral (48,23%). 23,52% of the news had a clear negative message but this tone was not about the belonging of Romania to the European Union but was about each event described in the news (the scandal of horse meat, corruption accusation brought to Spain prime minister Mariano Rajoy, etc.).

5. Conclusions

The best represented domains within news bulletins from Europa FM and Radio Romania Actualitati, in what concerns the realities of the European Union, are the economic and political ones, although in news selection policies – as results from the approx. 20% value of news number within total air time at 7.00 and 18.00 bulletins – the accent is not placed on themes that concern the relations of the Romanians with the European Union.

The *Eurobarometer – Public opinion in the European Union* shows that Romanians’ expectations regarding the EU aim at life quality (life level, buying power, higher incomes) and employment, indicators that have the highest values, being chosen by 26% respectively 19% of the Romanians. The rights that Romanians want to be informed about are working right (51%) live a life right (45%) and the right to benefit of medical services (34%) in another EU member state.

The analysis of the topics dealt with in news bulletins I noticed that the first two aspects are well represented in current affair information offered by Europa FM but weakly represented with Radio Romania, while medical services are not dealt with by either of the two radios.

¹ <http://radiatoromania.ro/files/CY1923/14/VIZIUNE%20MISIUNE/VIZIUNE-MISIUNE.pdf>.

We cannot draw a clear separation line between the discussed topics because in most cases, news is built on correlated themes and aims at several aspects from different fields that inter-relate.

The topics are numerous and cover many subjects:

- Politics: diplomacy and inter states relations (Romania-France), interethnic conflicts (Romania-Hungary) political resignations and Parliament elections (Bulgaria, The Czech Republic), scandals related to import-export activities (wrongly labeled horse meat), the expel of Romanian gypsies from France etc.;
- Legislation: Ruling on gay marriage in France, referendum on national interest topics (Bulgaria), law bills (Spain);
- Economy: economic crisis (Greece, Hungary) social crisis with violent protests (Greece, Spain, Bulgaria), activity limitations of great companies (ING-Holland, Iberia-Spain).

We have to notice that there is a great accent placed on the economic crisis of the EU states. In finance filed an emphasis was placed on the negotiations with the European Commission regarding the EU budget and the position of Southern and Central European countries towards this.

Education and health are two topics less represented in comparison with political and economic problem at Europa FM and not at all present at Radio Romania Actualitati. Also, both radios broadcasted only 2 cultural events each during the period of monitoring.

With Europa FM, messages about the advantage of being in the European Union are positive but due to the fact that there is an emphasis on the economic and financial crisis in countries as Greece, Spain, Hungary, the perception of the economic situation of the EU is negative. At Radio Romania Actualitati the tone of the news is mainly neutral, only a quarter of the news has a clear negative or more negative than positive message but this did not refer to Romania's belonging to the EU but referred to each and every event.

The topics found in the news in the monitoring period carry the economic-financial crisis to the EU space without mirroring the internal realities as a conjunction point of common politics.

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