



# Adequate Information Management in Europe

Adequate Information Management in Europe – Working Papers

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AIM Research Consortium (eds)

## Understanding the Logic of EU Reporting in Mass Media

### The Case of Romania

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December 2006

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Project:	Adequate Information Management in Europe
Project acronym:	AIM
Project website:	<a href="http://www.aim-project.net">www.aim-project.net</a>
Funded by:	Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission
Contract number:	CIT 2 – CT – 2004 – 506301

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## 1. Introduction

The Romanian media market is characterised by profusion and diversity, and it continues to expand. At the time of research, there were 334 print outlets (66 national including 42 dailies, 254 local, 13 regional, and one weekly international), 113 TV stations (43 national, 69 local, one international), and 193 radio stations (29 national, 162 local, and two regional).<sup>1</sup> Print as well as audiovisual outlets are highly market and audience-driven.

The Romanian media claim to be independent, however financial difficulties make them vulnerable to economic control by politicians or influential businessmen. The political pressure on central and mainly on local media has been subject to criticism by the European Union and various other media monitoring organisations.<sup>2</sup> According to a Report on 2005, released in March 2006 by the Freedom of Expression – FreeEx Program of the Media Monitoring Agency – Academia Cațavencu (MMA),<sup>3</sup> since 2005, there has been “a visible decrease of political pressures against media outlets, especially at the national level, and on the public broadcasting institutions” and the present government “has attempted to eliminate two major instruments used by the former government to ‘buy’ the media: state advertising and rescheduling of fiscal debts of media companies.” However, the situation has not changed much with regard to local media. The report states further that the internal problems with which the Romanian media are confronted are related to “the media owners and editors’ low interest in professional issues, the journalists’ low level of professionalism, and to the lack of transparency of media ownership and of media sources of revenue.”

As regards the concentration of the media market, the powerful national media conglomerates, controlling newspapers, national and local television and radio stations, weeklies, magazines, news agencies (among the most important are the INTACT media Group owned by the influential businessman and politician Dan Voiculescu, the Realitatea Media Group owned

by Sorin Ovidiu Vantu, one of richest and most controversial businessmen, and businessman Adrian Sarbu’s Mediapro Group) have become strong competitors for the dominating multinational media corporations (in the press sector - Ringier, in broadcasting - CME and CBS, and in radio - Lagardère), according to the above cited source.

The political context is extremely important with regard to the Romanian media’s coverage of the European Union. Romania is in its pre-accession period, and it is closely monitored by the EU institutions, especially by the European Commission. Hence, since Romania’s EU accession is a top priority on the national political agenda, EU issues receive a coverage framed according to this context. Television rather than the printed press, is more influential on the public agenda.

The sample period (March 7th - 27th 2005, with a European Council summit taking place in Brussels during the second week) was not a special one for Romanian media outlets from the point of view of EU coverage. The most intense coverage was in April, and in October 2005, with the two major events for Romania: the signature of the country’s Treaty of Accession (April 25th), and the publication of the EU Commission Monitoring Report on Romania’s readiness for EU membership (October 25th).

For the study the following outlets were selected: the largest national “quality” newspaper (*Jurnalul National*), the largest west-country regional newspaper (*Renasterea Banateana*), the most popular tabloid (*Libertatea*), and the news broadcasts of the public television station, TVR, and of the main commercial channel, PRO TV. According to a recent National Audience Survey<sup>4</sup> *Libertatea* is the market leader having reached an audience of 1.074 million readers per issue. *Jurnalul National* comes second, with 801.800 readers, but remains the “top quality newspaper” in terms of readership.

1 A comprehensive list of Romanian media outlets is available at [http://www.mediaindex.ro/detalii\\_proprietari.php](http://www.mediaindex.ro/detalii_proprietari.php)

2 For detailed information see: Media Monitoring Agency’s reports on press freedom – <http://www.mma.ro>; <http://www.freeex.ro>; Center For Independent Journalism - <http://www.cji.ro>

3 [http://www.mma.ro/Comunicate%20de%20presa/FreeEx\\_Annual\\_Raport\\_2005.pdf](http://www.mma.ro/Comunicate%20de%20presa/FreeEx_Annual_Raport_2005.pdf)

4 31 January 2005/22 January 2006 - carried out by the Romanian Audit Bureau of Circulations, BRAT (cf. source BRAT, 26 April 2006)

	Jurnalul Național	Libertatea	Renasterea Banateana
Mar - 2005	275.074	298.981	16.432
Apr - 2005	236.466	308.474	16.478
May - 2005	144.394	319.690	15.725
June - 2005	116.700	323.127	15.408
July - 2005	109.017	310.019	15.240
Aug - 2005	104.262	295.896	14.856
Sep - 2005	106.680	304.931	15.020
Oct - 2005	111.230	308.623	14.886
Nov - 2005	110.611	328.344	15.125
Dec - 2005	117.381	334.523	15.417

(Source: BRAT, 2006)

**Table 1.** Net Circulation: March - December 2005  
*Jurnalul Național, Libertatea, Renasterea Banateana*

Circulation figures of newspapers are generally not high in Romania. In the sample period, the best selling national dailies after *Libertatea* and *Jurnalul Național*, were *Adevarul* with an average of 122.067 copies a day, and *Evenimentul zilei*, with an average of 103.814 copies a day (source: BRAT). One year later, with the exception of *Libertatea*, the net circulation figures of the papers have decreased.

	Adevarul	Evenimentul Zilei	Jurnalul Național	Libertatea	Renasterea Banateana
Mar - 2006	36.774	103.285	144.229	342.189	15.334
Apr - 2006	33.605	100.145	111.739	357.593	15.170
May - 2006	34.031	90.983	100.142	325.131	15.007
June - 2006	33.638	94.509	94.830	319.025	15.133

(Source: BRAT, 2006)

**Table 2.** Net Circulation: March - June 2006

One of the possible causes of this decrease is, in the opinion of market analysts, that the readership is getting old and the young readers are turning towards other means of information such as the Internet or the mobile phone.

*Jurnalul Național* is part of the INTACT media Group. *Libertatea* is owned by "Ringier Romania", a branch of Switzerland's largest publishing house. *Renasterea Banateana* is published by TIMPRESS SA, a small group owned by several private investors.

The contents of almost all the Romanian newspapers are a hybrid of sensationalist and serious topics. According to the model proposed by Colin Sparks (2000: 14-15), one would place *Jurnalul Național* in the category of the 'Semi-serious Press', and *Libertatea* in the group of the 'News-stand Tabloid Press'.

The state-owned public service television broadcaster of Romania, TVR, operates four channels (TVR 1, TVR 2, TVR Cultural, and TVR International) along with four regional studios in the main towns of the country (which broadcast usually at the same time on TVR 2, and sometimes on TVR 1). TVR 1 is the only channel with total national coverage (99.8%). TVR 2 has a 74% national coverage.

The main important private competitors of the public television channels at the national level are the commercial stations PRO TV (owned by Mediapro International and CME), and Antena 1 (owned by the INTACT media Group). CME's main Romanian channel, PRO TV, is the leading commercial TV station in terms of audience and revenues. It reaches 72% of Romania, and 92% of the urban population through its 25 local stations. PRO TV news programmes are the market leaders in all their slots. In the first six months of 2005 (which included the sample period), the PRO TV main news programme (*Stirile PRO TV* broadcast at 19h) had the highest average rating - 10.5% -, while the main newscast of TVR 1 (*Jurnal* broadcast at 19h), had an average rating of 4.7%.<sup>5</sup>

In order to better interpret the results of the content analysis of the sampled outlets, the researchers used in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews with journalists working for the respective outlets. The interviews were carried out on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2006 with the journalists from the national newspaper, and from the tabloid newspaper, by Mihaela Paun, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2006 with the journalist from the regional newspaper, by Monica Andreescu, during personal meetings in the newsrooms. Mirela Lazar conducted the interviews with a deputy head of News, a producer at the International News Desk, and the two directors of News from the national public television and the commercial channel PRO TV, on the 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2006, and on the 27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> of

<sup>5</sup> Source: TNS/AGB International in "Pro TV si Antena 1 alearga umar la umar", Capital, 27th July 2005

July 2006, respectively, during personal meetings in the newsrooms. On these occasions, the researchers also observed the editorial practices in these media organisations. The interviewees were informed of the purpose of the research, and they all agreed to be cited and referred to by name. They were selected according to the following criteria: their position in the hierarchy and their responsibility in connection with EU reporting. Most of the journalists interviewed are experienced (between 12 and 16 years within the profession), and some have senior positions in their news organisations. They all have university degrees (in journalism (four), law or political sciences).

The number of the journalists thus selected from each of the five media organisations included in the study is relative both to the market position of the respective outlet, and to the status of EU news in the outlet: two interviewees from the national newspaper, one from the tabloid, one from the regional newspaper, two from the public television station, and two from the commercial channel. According to the selection criteria used, there were six women (including two directors of News), and two men participating in this research.

For EU topics to be covered by Romanian media, they have to be either of national and/or of audience relevance, or "spectacular":

"such as the referenda in France and the Netherlands that rejected the EU constitution. Stories about fisheries policies for instance are considered irrelevant in Romania. Regarding the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Romanians are only waking up to this, so it will take some time before they follow developments in Brussels" (public television director of news, R.C.).

*Relevance* is the key standard in assessing the quality of news selection. It applies at many levels: choice of the topic, of the event/story (in terms of its being more or less *newsworthy*), and, seen as an *internal relevance* (among the component elements), in the news editing (McQuail, 1992:198). McQuail also notes that the relevance criterion, assessed in terms of *significance* of the news topics or events, is judged by choosing different perspectives addressing the questions: 'according to whose evaluation?', and 'for whom?' *Significance* according to the journalists' own judgement, on the basis of internalised conventions and routines, implies

that the news "has to deal with significant matters of current concern and with what is actually going on" (McQuail, 1992:198). This "journalistic assessor" of relevance is doubled, mainly in the case of the national newspaper and the public TV, by an "external" indicator, another source of relevance, namely the "news agendas of significant institutions and actors" (e.g. the national Presidency and Government, European Commissioners, MEPs, etc.). Another important external assessor of relevance is the *audience*. "The foremost characteristic of 'newsworthiness' is 'consequence' for the audience – what affects readers' lives, what they need to know, etc." (McQuail, 1992:199).

In this respect, more „bottom-up“ EU news items are required dealing with how policies affect citizens: "how does the EU integration change people's lives. Any change in taxes, policies, funding, salaries, etc. is important for them" (R.C., public TV). As McQuail notes:

"If measures of audience interest or demand are used as the main criteria of relevance, the outcome is unlikely to correspond with the views of experts..., or even with any of the various institutional agendas" (1992: 199).

The research revealed that this is mainly true in the case of the tabloid newspaper *Libertatea*, and, to a certain extent, also at the commercial channel PRO TV, where news selection in the sample period reflected more what was perceived as relevant or "newsworthy" for the public than what institutional sources would have liked to see in the news.

In terms of the quality of the information that journalists produce, comprehension by the public is one of the most important aspects. News comprehension depends, among other factors, on the capacity to understand, based on education and prior knowledge. With regard to knowledge of the EU on the part of the audience, and knowledge of its institutions and policies, the level for Romania was, in the spring of 2005, among the lowest, along with that of Bulgaria, Croatia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> However, the proportion of those who could be considered to have a "good deal of knowledge" about "elementary institutional procedures within the EU" increased

6 Eurobarometer 63.4, Public Opinion in European Union, Spring 2005, Executive Summary National Report, Romania

from 28%, in the autumn of 2004, to 42%, in the spring of 2005.<sup>7</sup> According to the same data, the Romanians who are best informed about the EU institutions are young people living in towns, and having a high level of school education, wide exposure to the media, and good knowledge of foreign languages. Additionally 23% of the rural population declared themselves as not being at all interested in EU issues.<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting to note that the people having solid information about the EU institutions shared more concerns about the effects of Romania's EU integration than those having just a high media consumption (e.g. the concerns regarding the difficulties that membership is expected to bring about for agriculture: 60%, and 57%, respectively; higher payments to the EU budget that the country might have to pay: 51%, and 46%, respectively, etc.<sup>9</sup> This could be interpreted as implying that it is not the general information provided by all media, but rather the specialised information that makes Romanians more aware of, and critical of, the EU. As a matter of fact, the level of trust of Romanians in the EU fell from 74% in the autumn of 2004 to 68% in the spring of 2005.

Similar to the rest of Europeans, over 70% of Romanians get their information about the EU mainly from television. Only 25% use newspapers as information sources about the EU, as compared with 41% of citizens in the EU.<sup>10</sup> This justifies an assessment of the type of information to which they have the widest exposure.

In influencing social imageries that shape an EU 'reality', Romanian journalists draw a distinction between the EU "seen as a complex of bureaucratic institutions", which is "too complacent and manipulative, too remote from its citizens" (R.C., public TV), and the EU as a space of economic, social and cultural integration for the Romanians who "need to have a grasp of the European culture, traditions and values" which enables them "to better understand the new political structure, and better integrate in the EU" (head of the International News Desk, commercial channel, O.M).

7 Eurobarometer 63.4, Spring 2005, Executive Summary National Report, Romania

8 Rural Eurobarometer, Open Society Foundation, February 2006

9 Eurobarometer 63.4, Spring 2005, Executive Summary National Report, Romania

10 Eurobarometer 65, Spring 2006, Executive Summary National Report, Romania

## 2. Newsroom organisation

### Newsroom policies and daily routines

EU coverage is organised differently in the various newsrooms. In the newsrooms of the television channels, there are journalists assigned exclusively to EU coverage (four at the public television channel, and two at the International News Desk of the commercial broadcaster), but there are also journalists at each who deal with EU issues according to their respective fields (15 and eight, respectively). At the office of the national newspaper, EU issues are covered by two journalists (the editor of the 'Integration Page', and another foreign news editor), in the regional, by 12-13 journalists, in the tabloid by one, and also occasionally by other journalists.

This situation is relevant to the way in which the newsrooms treat EU news: where EU affairs are dealt with as both foreign and domestic news, there are several journalists involved in their coverage (from sections that deal with business, society, economy, agriculture issues, etc.). This is mainly the case at the regional newspaper.

"The EU news items are treated as domestic when dealing with the effects of different decisions on Romanians, or with events Romanian officials take part in. Otherwise, they are dealt with as foreign news" (commercial television director of News, G.P.). According to the interviewees, EU news items tend to be more a part of national news as Romania draws closer to its accession date.

None of the newspapers felt it necessary to have a correspondent in Brussels ("mainly for financial reasons", admit I.C. and M.T., from the national newspaper, and M.D., from the tabloid newspaper), but this does not imply that the newsrooms have "missed any important event" (I.C.) in connection with the EU because of this decision. As the regional newspaper editor (L.N.) pointed out, information about the EU is anyway available from the EU institutions themselves, or can easily be accessed from the news agencies.

The broadcasters do have permanent correspondents in Brussels (three, who worked in shifts for the public television channel in the sample period, and one for the commercial newscast) because it is indispensable for them to be "informed first-hand about events at EU headquarters, especially since Romania is going

to join the EU on January 1st, 2007" (R.C., public television), and to be "updated continuously on the issues of importance" (O.M., commercial channel).

The importance granted to EU affairs as compared to other national or international news depends on the newsroom editorial policy. It is "secondary" (M.D.) in the tabloid, and higher than that of other international news in the commercial television newscast (O.M.). The national newspaper assigns a high priority to EU issues with national relevance, having been the first newspaper to introduce a special page devoted to Romania's EU integration.

There is a consensus among the journalists interviewed that the status of EU news is growing in importance, but only if it is relevant to Romania in the particular context of European integration. "The importance given to EU affairs reflects the real degree of the country's integration" (L.N., regional newspaper), meaning that the media will have to provide more information once the Romanians feel more interested and involved in this European common project. "People are becoming more aware that this will affect their lives, and it is important that they be informed of the consequences" (O.M., commercial TV).

For almost all of the interviewees, EU stories are, generally, the result of a collective editorial choice, motivated either by the role the type of media assumes, or by market orientation. "We are a public television organisation, and we have a duty to inform people about things that will change their lives" (R.C.). "Our newspaper is a civic information media, and EU topics are published in proportion to their being of interest to the citizens" (L.N., regional newspaper). At the national newspaper, the choice of EU topics is made by the editor of the 'Integration Page' and also by a foreign news editor. At the tabloid, it is down to one individual to select topics to cover.

In the opinion of the journalists interviewed, what initiates a EU story is usually an event with relevance to "national or international policy, and to the public" (public television deputy head of news, L.P.), to the "national interest, but also to personalities and VIPs, and also what is unusual" (M.D., tabloid newspaper). Once again, the type of media, and, consequently, the targeted audience are the factors that influence the shape of the news agenda.

"Topics related to Romania's accession to the EU and to the role of Romanian representatives in the European institutions, and policy making will always be important news for our foreign news and European news section" (M.T., national newspaper). "Issues of interest are mainly those that can change, in one way or another, the lives of people in our local area, and the actors who at, the European level, take decisions in this respect" (L.N., regional newspaper). "A statement by an EU official or MEP about enlargement in general or about Romania in particular, an EU report signalling shortcomings in accession preparations, or any alert that may end up in a loss of EU funds" (R.C., public television).

The opinions above place an emphasis on a component of the selection standard of *significance* (see McQuail, 1992) as interpreted by these journalists (from national daily, regional newspaper, and public television), namely the extent of influence on the political, in shaping the news agenda. Other selection criteria were also mentioned by representatives of the national newspaper: the importance of topics directly related to the EU (e.g. the EU Constitution, the Bolkestein directive, enlargement), the peculiarity of the topics (such as the standardised quantity of cocoa in chocolate), and scandals within the EU.

On a six-point scale (where one is 'not important at all', and six is 'very important'), the following criteria for the selection of EU news ranged from five to six: 'relevance for national policy', 'possibility to find a local/regional angle', 'easy to intermediate to the reader/viewer', and 'odd or exceptional topic'. By contrast, the criterion of the relevance for the whole EU had the lowest scores: with scores of one for the tabloid newspaper, two for the television channels, three, and four for the regional newspaper and the national daily, respectively. The correlation between a particular EU topic and a journalist's area of expertise was, generally, not seen as being highly important.

The editorial decision-making process regarding EU topics is practically the same in all of the newsrooms observed. The editors responsible for EU coverage, or the television correspondents, propose subjects that are discussed at the daily editorial meeting in terms of relevance and interest (for the public), or are directly submitted to the head of the foreign news desk in the case of the national newspaper. The final decision is

made by the editor or the producer of the day for the newscasts, and by the editorial board in the regional and in the tabloid newspapers. "Most of the ideas for the EU stories come from assignments by the editor, chief editor or director of news. Seldom does the initiative come from the reporter", stated the director of news from the public television station.

The television journalists underlined the fact that they look for specific examples to illustrate the angle they choose to present the EU topic. If a subject is more "interesting" and "timely" than another EU topic, journalists from the national newspaper ask for more space in the page (I.C.). Major events, such as European Council summits, monitoring reports, European Parliament sessions on enlargement, etc. get special coverage within the public service television newscast, with correspondents on site, live two-ways and analysts in the studio (R.C.). This journalist also gave the example of one exceptional news item i.e. the *Monitoring Report* on Romania delivered by Commissioner Olli Rehn on May 16th 2006. They organised a special edition to broadcast the main points of the report and the EP debates live, with analysts in the studio and live two-ways with relevant politicians and EU officials. In advance, they prepared several reports on how the EU integration was perceived in various areas of the country. An extra team was sent to Strasbourg to cover the debates, in addition to the Brussels correspondent. The special edition was followed by the main news programme of the day, where the main aspects of the report were further discussed.

The main constraints concerning EU news coverage mentioned by the journalists interviewed are related to: selection standards (*relevance* in terms of consequences for Romania, and *interest* of the audience), technical aspects (lack of editorial space, lack of time for preparation/research, and lack of time in the newscast), expertise (difficulty for public television newsroom to maintain a number of journalists dedicated to EU topics), access to relevant information (and, mainly, that via Romanian bureaucracy), and quality of message/comprehension (specific concepts, jargon).

A serious question raised with regard to the newsroom internal relations in reference to EU news concerned the expertise of journalists:

"The newsroom staff are not enthusiastic about

EU affairs as covering them forces the journalists to learn about things they are not familiar with, which are sometimes intricate and bureaucratic. Practically, these subjects are often dull, and journalists know the newscast will not open with them" (R.C., public television).

Asked about reference points of "good EU journalism", some of the interviewees cited Euronews, and BBC World (R.C.), EUobserver, the Eubusiness online news services, and the EurActiv website (M.T., national newspaper). "In Romania, there is not yet such a reference point", claimed G.P. from the commercial channel.

### 3. Agenda-setting and news management

The vast majority, of the interviewees, believes that the journalists are not sufficiently informed about the EU, but that the situation is improving. Some respondents argued that there are journalists who are familiar only with the EU institutions and their role, but starting from this point they lack detailed information. Others suggested that journalists are not interested in the EU (M.T., national newspaper), because, if interested, they could easily get the information they needed (O.M., commercial channel). Also mentioned was the difficulty journalists had in understanding the jargon of the EU officials. The opinion was expressed that a high degree of specialisation is required from journalists in covering bureaucratic and intricate EU affairs (R.C., public television). The bureaucracy aspect was also mentioned by some of the journalists as one of the factors that undermine the emergence of EU affairs in the news agenda.

Among the major sources concerning EU issues cited by all the journalists interviewed were the official ones: EU officials (especially the European Commission and MEPs) – although they are not particularly available -, and Romanian government officials. Other important sources mentioned were EU documents, Romanian and foreign news agencies, international news media (e.g. the German press was cited by the editor from the tabloid newspaper), and the EC and EP online services. All the interviewees evaluated the national news media as being the least accurate and reliable source.

Public television journalists retrieve the largest amount of their information from official communication or interaction with EU officials, politicians and other EU sources: approximately 75% (R.C., L.P.). At the other end of the spectrum, there are the journalists from the tabloid who retrieve only 5% of their information from the interaction with EU officials (mainly the former head of the EC Delegation in Romania, Jonathan Scheele, and Baroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne, the former Rapporteur for Romania of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human rights, Common Security and Defence Policy), and 0% from other EU sources or official communications (M.D.). The information received from EU official press releases is 20% in the regional newspaper, and 30% in the national newspaper, respectively, and that coming from the interaction with the EU officials is 30%, and 40%, respectively (L.N., I.C.).

"Statements by the Romanian government and Romanian Presidency, followed by statements of EU officials referring to Romania's shortcomings in the accession process, and decisions by the European Parliament regarding Romania" play, according to R.C., the most important role in setting the public television channel's news agenda in connection with EU affairs. The agendas of significant institutions and actors (e.g. the Romanian government, the Ministry of Integration, the Ministry of Agriculture, the EC Delegation in Romania, and Brussels and Strasbourg institutions, according to G.P.) also influence the commercial channel's news agenda.

Among the practices that television journalists and correspondents most frequently utilise to interact with sources are the briefings and the press conferences, followed "at a significant distance" (according to R.C.) by informal talks with EU representatives. The journalists of the commercial channel assessed the communication with Romanian institutional sources, who during their press conferences tend to provide dull accounts of how they are successfully meeting the EU requirements, as being rather difficult. "The interesting or negative information is stolen by more experienced journalists from institutional sources of second or third rank" (G.P.). The editor of the regional newspaper, L.N., expressed the opinion that the institutional sources are insufficiently adapted to communication with the citizens. I.C. from the national newspaper claimed that MEPs and the Romanian ob-

servers at the EP count as good sources but that their messages must be very carefully sifted because they often mask political interests.

#### 4. Evaluation of political communication

In their public role, that of contributing to an informed democracy, to an active debate on issues of significance, media are considered to address the audience in the role of citizens rather than consumers (McQuail, 1992:307-308):

"...At a time when increased competition makes it harder for them to give privileged attention to world affairs or to the routine details of domestic politics" (...), "the chances of the mass media contributing to informed debate and citizen involvement seem to diminish rather than to grow..."

Under market pressure, media systems are shaped by the same factors as consumption in general. The standard of relevance in news often stresses "consumer sovereignty" (see McQuail, 1992: 220) "which conflicts with some claims of journalistic professionalism".

"Unfortunately, the Romanian public is formed more of consumers, and less of citizens", noted G.P. (commercial channel). R.C. (public television) tried to further explain: "there are few real citizens in Romania, given the economic and social backwardness of the countryside and small towns. The dependence of people on state hand-outs in these areas is too great for them to be aware of their citizen status". She added: "however, as a public television organisation, we do organise a series of reports in the news about the implementation of EU standards and the degree of preparation of people and organisations for the new life that awaits them in the EU" (R.C.).

The interviewees all think that whatever affects the public is of interest to the audience. In fact, this is more likely to be the journalists' idea of the newsworthiness in terms of *consequences*: EU topics that "impact on ordinary lives" (L.P.), such as "social, business and agriculture regulations" (O.M.), "the increase of the rate of exchange, of the rate of interests, of the prices of the estates" (G.P.), "changing traditions" (M.T.), "freedom of movement, freedom to work" (I.C.). In contrast, most of the journalists think that EU affairs

in Brussels are of little interest to the audience. "EU affairs as such are too bureaucratic, technical and boring to be covered" (R.C., public television).

Seeking to satisfy the audience's (real or assumed) demand, the journalists from the commercial channel, and the regional newspaper chose to explain some EU stories through personalisation, focussing on the 'human interest' news value (ordinary persons, such as the farmer Ion Micu from Costeiu village and his clean farming, the individual producer of home-made *tzuica*/brandy, Florea Vlad). "It is important we succeed in putting these stories in terms of real interest for the people's lives" (G.P., commercial broadcaster). While public television emphasised the national impact of an official EU decision, the commercial channel simplified the story by creating a feeling of empathy with ordinary people's experiences and worries following EU decisions.

With regard to the pre-knowledge of readers/viewers of EU issues, almost all the journalists interviewed agreed that the level is minimal. However the regional newspaper editor, L.N., assumed that the newspaper readers have a level of knowledge higher than the average, due to their contacts on the western frontier. According to R.C. (public television), the danger for Romanians is "that this knowledge is not only scant but also distorted, as the authorities are trying to blame the EU for all the hardships people are encountering". The Romanian Public Opinion Barometer<sup>11</sup> shows that 59% of the respondents think that the problems with which Romania is presently confronted are linked "to a great and a very great extent" to their country's EU accession. Most of their worries in this respect concern the potential negative effects of integration.

In this context, the professional challenges for EU journalists are mostly related to the quality of the message: to making the information comprehensible, that is, on the one hand, explaining to people "the concepts of European construction, and the functioning of the EU institutions" (O.M., commercial channel), "making relevant a subject that looks extremely remote" (R.C., public television); and, on the other hand, turning the jargon and the technical issues into "interesting stories that people would want to watch" (R.C., public

television, M.T., I.C., national newspaper). "It is important to correctly inform the people about the EU, and to catch their attention at the same time" (G.P., commercial channel). The logic of the audience (in terms of relevant content for the consumers) works for the market driven media. These challenges require from journalists a very good understanding of both EU institutions (and of the "European reality, beyond the clichés" - L.N.), and of Romanian affairs (R.C.).

The majority of the interviewees agreed that opinion columns and analytical journalism concerning EU affairs should be more present (for the public opinion to "better understand what is at stake in most European decisions and actions" - M.T., national newspaper). There are also journalists (from the tabloid newspaper, and the commercial television) who think that people mostly need information (M.D., G.P.). "There should be a more opinion-oriented approach on this, this should also ensure a solid background on the topic, but it should also present the facts so that the public can make-up its own mind" (O.M., commercial channel). This "objective journalist's naively empirical view"<sup>12</sup> is contradicted if we only take into account two elements mentioned above by the interviewees: news selection and placing the events in "wider frames of reference which give them evaluative meanings" (McQuail, 1992: 187). Deciding what to report, what sources to approach, and how to report (angle, quotations, etc.) does not make the journalist a neutral conveyor of news.

This is thought to be in line with the role journalists see for themselves with regard to EU coverage: mainly that of a provider of information, and mediator, but also that of educator (national newspaper, public television, and commercial channel), and watchdog. For the public television director of News (R.C.), responding from the perspective of her position, her role is "to find the financial and training resources to create a minimum of expertise in the newsroom, and to increase the number of correspondents in Brussels". She also pointed out that, although journalists mostly think of themselves as watchdogs, "there is not much

they can do, as they operate on a national level, while EU officials can play nations against each other".

11 May 2006, "Perceptions on mass-media"

12 According to T.L. Glasser, 1988: 50, quoted in McQuail, 1992: 188

Asked about the probability for journalism to have had an effect upon decision-making processes of the EU, the interviewees expressed doubt, with one exception - R.C. (public television) giving the example of the resignation of Jacques Santer's Commission.

## 5. Evaluation of identity and the public sphere

### The future of EU journalism

All the interviewees shared the conviction that EU issues would become more important in Romanian media outlets ("especially after the accession date" - L.P., public television), but emphasised the national relevance as a special criterion in news selection: "only insofar as they are connected to Romanian interests. After all, all politics is local" (R.C., public television). They mentioned several ways in which EU journalism could be further developed in their media outlet: at the technical level, by providing for more space in the grid (R.C., public television); at the level of treatment, by improving the quality and the completeness of EU news - (L.N., regional newspaper), and by giving more attributes of "personalisation", and "concreteness" - (G.P., O.M., commercial channel); at the level of expertise i.e. a group of specialised journalists in the newsroom that focus exclusively on EU affairs (public television); at the level of communication i.e. by improving communication between journalists and officials dealing with the EU integration (commercial channel); at the level of training with EU journalism studies, and continuous training (interviewees from national newspaper, tabloid newspaper, public television, and commercial channel).

The journalists were divided on the question as to whether or not they should play a role in creating a European identity. Firstly, it was suggested that one should define European identity ("I am sure that if we asked journalists from various countries, they would come up with different definitions of a European identity" - R.C.). The regional newspaper editor, L.N., expressed the opinion that a European identity already exists, it being an historical process. Some of the journalists (G.P., O.M., M.T.) pointed out that their role in creating this is "to familiarise people with the common values and symbols of Europe" or "to influence the public on the European issues that they view through different perspectives".

Some others argued that journalists are not involved in the emergence of a European identity. Journalists work for national media and for the national public. The journalistic standard of news selection and news shaping, applied by all the interviewees, is national relevance. So, "journalists are accountable to their national audience, not to a European audience - which is actually a theoretical construct. Their purpose is to report the facts on decisions by officials at home and abroad, and sometimes to analyse them - not to create identities" (R.C., public television). The same view was shared by the editor from the tabloid newspaper: "the role of the journalist is to inform" (M.D.).

According to one interviewee, when they talk about European identity and the process of creating such identities, journalists have in mind "the values of civilisation common to all developed Western countries, and the cultural and ethnic integration according to the standards of civilisation of the EU economic and social space". "The process of shaping the Romanian space according to that European identity is difficult, and long" (G.P., commercial channel). Another journalist considered that "Europe is conceived mostly in opposition to the US, and is often identified with France. This has to do with the internal political debate in Romania" (R.C., public television).

The opinions of the interviewees were quite similar with regard to the European democratic deficit and journalists' contribution to making European integration processes more transparent. Once again, a clarification in terms of definition was needed: "European democracy? The EP and the Commission in Brussels, or the democratic systems in EU member states?" (R.C., public television).

Regarding the EP and the EC in Brussels, it was suggested that:

"Journalists can put pressure on the system by exposing its flaws and lack of transparency, and its democratic deficit, which is real. It is the business of the EU institutions to improve their communication skills and mechanisms, or they will face dismal failures as they did in France and the Netherlands - and would also face in the UK if a referendum were attempted" (R.C.).

A similar opinion was expressed by the regional newspaper editor: "The democratic deficit and the flaws

of the European institutions can only be adjusted by these very institutions. Media reflect society” (L.N.). “The critics saying that the integration process is not transparent enough may be completely relying on the media to make it accessible” (O.M., commercial television). “Journalists can play the role of a watchdog, they can point out the flaws of the European representatives, their lack of objectivity and transparency” (M.T., national newspaper).

According to some journalists, the appropriate fora and media where transnational political issues should be discussed are the Parliament, the public television channels, and the whole public space (meaning school, media, meetings, conferences, etc.).

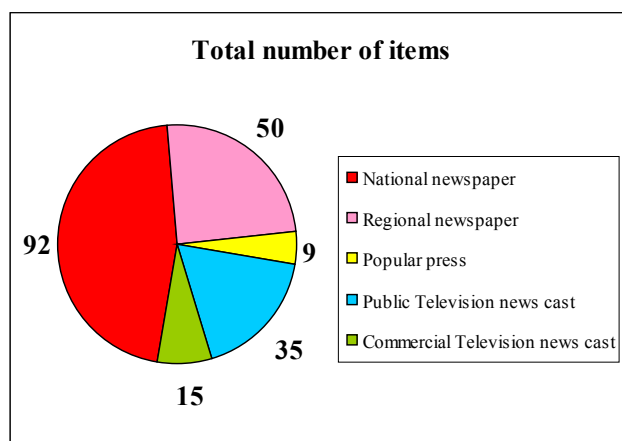
**6. News Agenda Analysis findings**

The content analysis carried out shows the salience given by the sampled outlets to different topics or events according to pre-defined categories such as themes, actors, prominence, presentation, location, etc., assumed as indicators of relevance. These indicators are also good predictors of audience attention to news items (cf. McCombs & Mauro, 1988, in McQuail, 1992: 214). The categories used for the purpose of this evaluation are listed in tables by (decreasing) frequency.

The total number of items collected in the sample period was 201. As Table 3 indicates, the largest number of items appeared in the national newspaper, *Jurnalul National*. This could be explained by the amount of EU news published, almost every day, in the page devoted to Romania’s integration into the EU. The lowest frequency for the tabloid is due to the editorial policy as regards the EU news status in comparison to other international or national topics.

	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Renasterea Banateana</i>	Popular press <i>Libertatea</i>	Public Television news cast TVR	Commercial Television news cast PRO TV	Total
Frequency	92	50	9	35	15	201
Percentage	45.77	24.88	4.48	17.41	7.46	100.00

**Table 3.** The total number of items in the news sample



It is obvious that, given the current national political context in which EU information is framed, and also the tight relationship between the EU institutions and Romania in this strictly monitored pre-accession period, the main themes to appear in the items related to the EU (Table 4) were those concerning the “Enlargement”, the “Economic and Financial Affairs” and “Justice, Freedom, Security”.

In the sample period, one month before the signature of Romania’s Treaty of Accession, the recurrent themes on the European Commission agenda in connection with Romania, corresponding to the shortcomings and areas where progress was still needed, were “Justice, Freedom, Security” (with the verification mechanism for the judiciary, and the fight against fraud and corruption), “Economy” (with the need to balance economic growth that has deteriorated due to increased public deficit, the slow pace of privatisations, and the poor administrative capacity), and “Agriculture” (with the need to improve the veterinary control system, and accelerate preparations for the funding agencies).

“Justice, Freedom, Security” was the subject of eight public television newscasts items, as the Romanian Minister of Justice was in Brussels at that time to

present the results of the reform of the justice system, and the national Government discussed the national strategy against corruption to be voted by the Parliament.

Content coding	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Renasterea Baneasa</i>	Popular press <i>Libertatea</i>	Public Television news cast <i>TVR</i>	Commercial Television news cast <i>PRO TV</i>	Frequency	Percentage
Enlargement and acceptance of new possible members	30	14	8	35	2	89	35.89
Economic and Financial Affairs	29	2	1	4	5	41	16.53
Justice, Freedom, Security	8	1	1		2	20	8.06
Not clear	1	7	0	0	1	9	3.63
Social Issues	5	2	0	1	0	8	3.23
Agriculture and Rural Development	4	3	0	0	1	8	3.23
EU Constitution and Poll	7	0	0	0	0	7	2.82
Environment	4	2	0	0	1	7	2.82
External Relations	0	5	0	0	1	6	2.42
Education and Culture	5	0	0	0	1	6	2.42
Competition	0	5	0	0	1	6	2.42
Employment and Equal Opportunities	2	4	0	0	0	6	2.42
Enterprise and Industry	1	2	0	0	1	4	1.61
Trade, Import/Export	3	0	0	0	0	3	1.21
International Terrorism	0	3	0	0	0	3	1.21
Taxation and Customs Union	0	2	0	0	0	3	1.21
Regional Policy	1	2	0	0	0	3	1.21
Science & Research	2	0	0	0	0	2	0.81
Consumers Protection	1	1	0	0	0	2	0.81
Internal functioning and disfunctioning of the EU	2	0	0	0	0	2	0.81
Media Policy	1	1	0	0	0	2	0.81
Migration, incl asylum issues	1	1	0	0	0	2	0.81
Internal Market	0	1	0	0	1	2	0.81
Traffic, Transport, Aviation, Navigation	1	0	0	0	1	2	0.81
Budget Control & Stability and Growth Pact	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.40
Fisheries and Maritime Affairs	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.40
Energy	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.40
Military, Defence	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.40
Human Rights	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.40
TOTAL	111	60	10	48	19	248	100.00

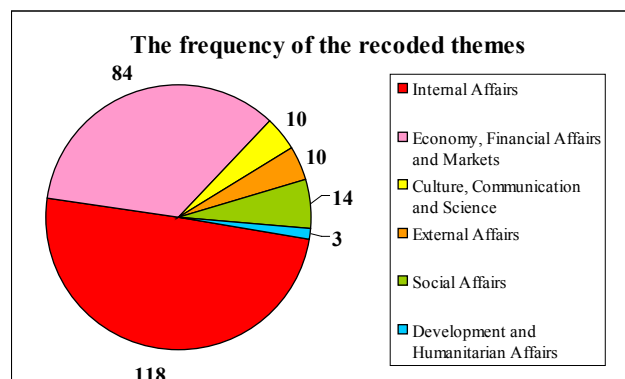
**Table 4.** The frequency of themes appearing in the news items

The news agenda of the sampled outlets included the themes of the European Commission and the national political agendas. It is also true that the Romanian public agenda with respect to the EU was dominated by the same subjects, because the concerns of Romanians in connection to the EU were related, in that period, to agriculture (55%), economic crisis (36%), and the loss of social benefits (25%).<sup>13</sup> The following topics did not appear during the monitoring period: „Development aid, Third World and Humanitarian Aid”, “European Anti-Fraud”, “ICT and Telecommunication”, “Health”, “Minority Rights”, “Sports” and “Crime”.

The abovementioned original themes were recoded, irrespective of whether they were the main topic or the secondary topic in a news item, into new, more general, categories, such as “Internal Affairs” consisting of previous ‘EU Constitution and Poll’, ‘Enlargement’, ‘European Anti-Fraud’, ‘Internal functioning and disfunctioning of the EU’, and ‘Crime’, or “Economy, Financial Affairs and Markets” that included many former categories such as ‘Economic and Financial Affairs’, ‘Enterprise and Industry’, ‘Competition’, ‘Consumers Protection’, ‘Internal Market’, ‘Taxation’, ‘Agriculture’, ‘Trade’, etc.

Recoded content coding	Frequency	Percentage
Internal Affairs	118	51.08
Economy, Financial Affairs and Markets	84	36.36
Social Affairs	14	5.86
Culture, Communication and Science	10	4.33
External Affairs	10	4.33
Development and Humanitarian Affairs	3	1.30
TOTAL	239	100.00

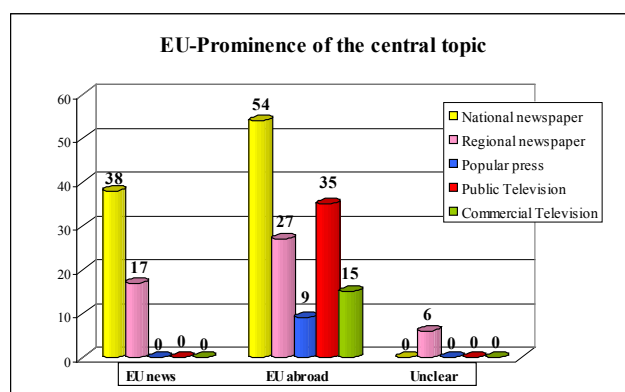
**Table 5.** The frequency of the recoded themes to appear in the news items



The recoded themes (Table 5) showed extensive coverage of “Internal affairs”, the main reason being the attention given to the Romanian integration issue. The news items coded for the category of “EU-prominence of the central topic” were defined as news dealing with internal European policies -“EU news”-, as EU matters with regard to third countries -“EU news abroad”-, as EU news in the frame of national policy -“EU news at home”-, as “Home news in EU”, and as “EU news in EU member states except home country”.

EU-Prominence	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Re-nasterea Banateana</i>	Popular press <i>Libertatea</i>	Public Television <i>news cast TVR</i>	Commercial Television <i>news cast PRO TV</i>	Frequency	Percentage
EU abroad	54	27	8	35	15	140	69.65
EU news	38	17	0	0	0	55	16.53
Unclear	0	6	0	0	2	6	2.99
TOTAL	92	50	9	35	15	201	100.00

**Table 6.** EU – Prominence of the central topic.



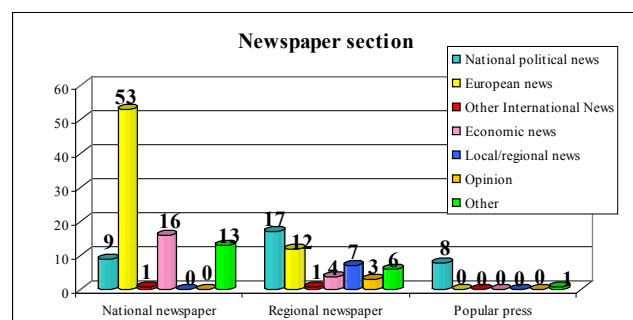
<sup>13</sup> Eurobarometer 63.4, Spring 2005, Executive Summary National Report, Romania.

As the central topic in the sampled items (Table 6) was mostly connected to Romania, the largest amount of items are the ‘EU news abroad’ (EU matters with regard to a third country).

News-paper section	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Renasterea Banateana</i>	Popular press <i>Libertatea</i>	F r e - quency	Percent-age
European news	53	12	0	65	43.05
National political news	9	17	8	34	22.52
Economic news	16	4	0	20	13.25
Other	13	6	1	20	13.25
Local/regional news	0	7	0	7	4.64
Opinion	0	3	0	3	1.99
Other International News	1	1	0	2	1.32
TOTAL	92	50	9	151	100.00

Table 7. Newspaper section where news appears

Due to the ‘Integration page’ in the national newspaper, the section “European News” (Table 7) accounts for the largest amount of items. The regional newspaper treated EU topics mostly as domestic news. The “Other” section includes the 13 pages of the national newspaper “Observator”/ “Observer” section - a miscellaneous selection of political, economic, social, and “fait divers” topics. The same “Other” section comprises the ‘VIP and Gossip’ section of the tabloid, and the ‘EU Dictionary’, and the ‘Agriculture’ in the regional newspaper.

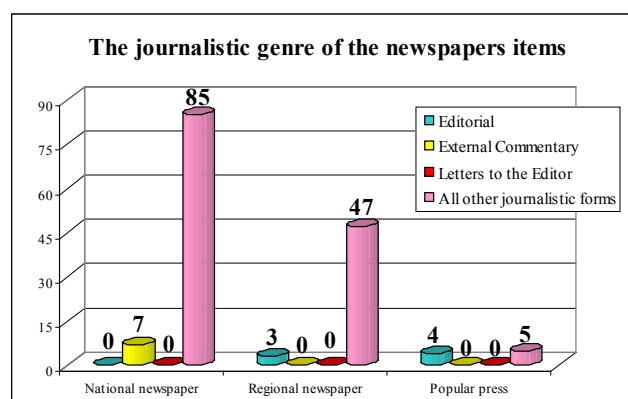


Although the great majority of journalists interviewed agreed that there should be more analytical journal-

ism about EU issues, the vast majority of articles on EU topics in the sampled outlets were news reports. As Table 8 illustrates, the “all other journalistic forms” category is the dominant one (90.73%). Into this category fell news reports, accounting for 81.02% of the items. The journalists chose to simply mediate the information. In the tabloid, the EU appeared as a subject in four editorials (of short length, but located in a visible position, upper, on page two). These mainly represented an occasion for the editor to speak critically of the attitudes of the “natives” (politicians or ordinary people) not yet prepared to meet the EU requirements.

Journalistic Genre	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Renasterea Banateana</i>	Popular press <i>Libertatea</i>	F r e - quency	Percent-age
All other	53	12	0	65	43.05
journalistic forms	9	17	8	34	22.52
Editorial	16	4	0	20	13.25
External Commentary	13	6	1	20	13.25
Letters to the Editor	0	7	0	7	4.64
TOTAL	92	50	9	151	100.00

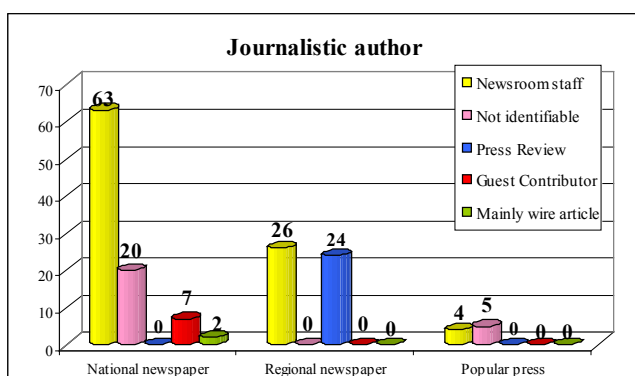
Table 8. The journalistic genre of the newspapers items



Regarding the journalistic authors of the various news items and reports, it is clear from Table 9 (below) that the newsroom staff provided the largest amount of items. Although not overall a significant trend, one can note the tendency for the national newspaper to bring in a variety of “guest” contributors.

Journalistic author	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Renasterea Banateana</i>	Popular press <i>Libertatea</i>	Frequency	Percentage
Newsroom staff	63	26	4	93	61.59
Not identifiable	20	0	5	25	16.56
Press Review	0	24	0	24	15.89
Guest Contributor	7	0	0	7	4.64
Mainly wire article	2	0	0	2	1.32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100.00</b>

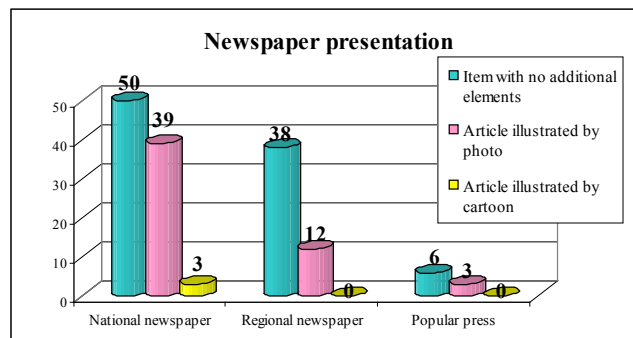
Table 9. The journalistic author of the newspaper items



Newspaper presentation	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Renasterea Banateana</i>	Popular press <i>Libertatea</i>	Frequency	Percentage
Item with no additional elements	50	38	6	94	62.25
Article illustrated by photo	39	12	3	54	35.76
Article illustrated by cartoon	3	0	0	3	1.99
Stand-alone photo with caption	0	0	0	0	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100.00</b>

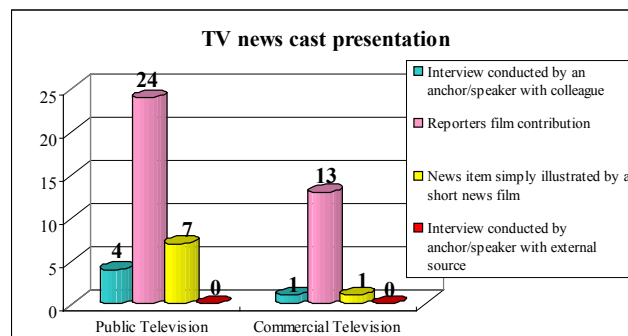
Table 10. Newspaper presentation

Most of the items that appeared in the newspapers had no additional illustration elements (Table 10) showing a degree of abstraction concerning the presentation of EU topics.



TELEVISION Presentation	Public Television news cast <i>TVR</i>	Commercial Television news cast <i>PRO TV</i>	Frequency	Percentage
Reporters film contribution	24	13	37	74.00
News item simply illustrated by a short news film (off-commented)	7	1	8	16.00
Interview conducted by an anchor/speaker with colleague (correspondent)	4	1	5	10.00
Interview conducted by anchor/speaker with external source	0	0	0	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.00</b>

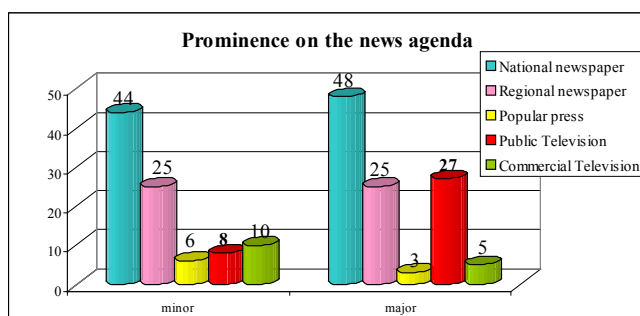
Table 11. TV news cast presentation



While the prevalent items to appear in the newspapers in connection with the EU were those without illustration, the broadcast news items were largely filmed contributions by the reporters. These quantitative data confirm what all the television interviewees said about the need to turn the EU subjects into palatable, interesting television stories by means of (good) images.

Prominence	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Re-nasterea Banateana</i>	Popu-lar press <i>Libe-r-tatea</i>	Public Tele-vision news cast TVR	Commer-cial Tel-evision news cast <i>PRO TV</i>	Fre- quen- cy	Per- cent- age
major	48	25	3	27	5	108	53.73
minor	44	25	6	8	10	93	46.27
TO- TAL	92	50	9	35	15	201	100.00

Table 12. Prominence on the news agenda



The “Prominence on the news agenda” was defined in terms of journalism culture conventions. Thus, the interpretation of the ‘major’ category in most of the items (Table 12), mainly in the national newspaper, must not be related to the fullness of the account about the EU, but it touches on a distinctive form of presentation (see Tables 10 and 11) designed to catch the attention of readers/viewers (under conditions of competition between outlets): the use of large headlines, of photographic illustrations, primacy in order of television presentation, amount of time allocated, etc.

The main actors (persons)	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Re-nasterea Banateana</i>	Popu-lar press <i>Libe-r-tatea</i>	Public Tele-vision news cast TVR	Commer-cial Tel-evision news cast <i>PRO TV</i>	Fre- quen- cy	Per- cent- age
Other	12	8	1	2	14	37	18.97
national head of government	7	5	1	16	4	33	16.92
Foreign EU-commissioner	1	2	1	12	1	17	8.72
MEP from other countries	12	3	0	0	1	14	7.22
Not clear	3	2	1	4	4	14	7.18
Member of the national government (minister etc.)	7	3	0	0	0	10	5.13
foreign political leader, politician	2	4	0	3	1	10	5.13
foreign head of government	1	5	0	2	0	8	4.10
foreign head of state	0	4	1	0	0	5	2.56
national political party leader (government)	0	2	0	2	0	4	2.05
national political party leader (opposition)	3	0	0	0	0	3	1.54
President of the EU-commission	3	0	0	0	0	3	1.54
non-political celebrity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
TOTAL	61	48	6	52	27	194	100.00

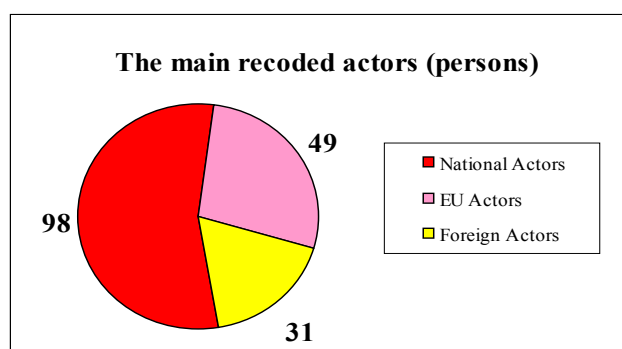
Table 13. The main actors (persons) in the news items

Not surprisingly, Table 13 shows the prevalence, in terms of EU relevant news actors (persons), of the national heads of government and of state, on one side,

and of the EU commissioners<sup>14</sup> and MEPs<sup>15</sup>, on the other side. These two categories of actors and their respective institutions were, in fact, those most actively involved in Romania's accession process. Actors were recoded into three more general categories.

The main recoded persons	Frequency	Percentage
National Actors	98	55.06
EU Actors	49	27.53
Foreign Actors	31	17.42
TOTAL	178	100.00

Table 14. The main recoded actors (persons)



14 e.g. Olli Rehn, Enlargement Commissioner, the most cited EU-commissioner, along with Jonathan Scheele, former Head of the Delegation of the EC in Romania, Neelie Kroes, Commissioner for Competition, Franco Frattini, Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security, Joaquin Almunia, Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Jan Figel, Commissioner for Education.

15 e.g. Elmar Brok, President of the EU Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hans Gert Poettering, leader of the European Popular Party Group

The institutional actors	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Renasterea Banateana</i>	Popular press <i>Libertatea</i>	Public Television news cast TVR	Commercial Television news cast PRO TV	Frequency	Percentage
Other	13	21	3	14	8	59	39.07
Not clear	12	8	3	0	0	23	15.23
European Commission	11	5	0	2	0	18	11.92
European Parliament	3	2	0	11	1	17	11.26
European Parliament Committees	1	0	0	8	0	9	5.96
European monetary and financial institutions	4	1	0	1	0	6	3.97
National political party	0	4	0	0	0	4	2.65
European Parliament Political Groups and Fractions	0	1	0	2	0	3	1.99
National parliament	0	2	0	1	0	3	1.99
EU police and security institutions/co-operation	0	2	0	0	0	2	1.32
Commission Directorate Generals	0	1	1	0	0	2	1.32
Other than national pressure group	1	1	0	0	0	1	1.32
EU Council and Councils of National ministers	1	1	0	0	0	1	1.32
EU internal control institutions	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.66
EU Foreign Policy Intergovernmental bodies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	47	49	8	38	9	151	100

Table 15. The main institutional actors in the news items

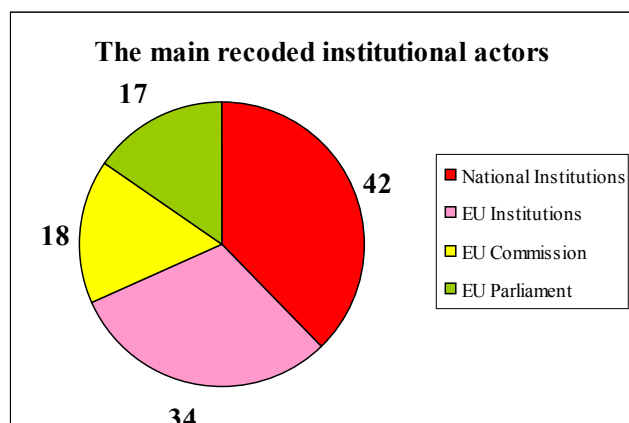
It is interesting to note (Table 15) that, while the European Commission appeared in the largest number of items (11) in the national newspaper, the European

Parliament was present in an equal number of items in the public television newscasts. The common element of relevance for the two media organisations is the importance of the political context they give to the EU institutions. The difference that emerges in the coverage, and accordingly in the appearance of actors, is related to the news selection and presentation according to the type of media.

In the sample period, there were animated discussions within the European Parliament Committees (especially the Committee for Foreign Affairs) on the vote of ratification of Romania’s Accession Treaty to the EU, and on whether or not to activate a safeguard clause for Romania. These were suitable subjects for the television news. The European Commission, in the same period, launched campaigns (e.g. “eMobility project”), made decisions (e.g. restrictions on salmon imports), discussed perspective plans (e.g. a free air traffic market with Russia and China). All these were suitable topics for the EU page in the national newspaper. The difference in topic selection and presentation is a difference between the story as told in words, and the story as told in images. Again, institutional actors were recoded into (four) general categories.<sup>16</sup>

The main recoded institutional actors	Frequency	Percentage
National Institutions	42	37.84
EU Institutions	34	30.09
European Commission	18	15.93
EU Parliament	17	15.04
TOTAL	111	100.00

Table 16. The main recoded institutional actors



<sup>16</sup> Included in the recoded „EU institutions“: European Council; EU Council; European Central Bank; European Investment Bank; European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO); Europol; Eurojust.

The main ‘hook’ or angle for all the outlets (Table 17) consisted of statements or declarations (38.79%). The tendency for Romanian journalists to make an event out of statements of actors is much in line with this abovementioned particular context, where the ‘arena of declarations’ became *newsworthy* by its credibility quality (coming from the highest rank officials), and topicality.

News Hook	National newspaper Jurnalul National	Regional newspaper Renasterea Banateana	Popular press Libertatea	Public Television news cast TVR	Commercial Television news cast PRO TV	Frequency	Percentage
Statement or Declaration	30	17	6	21	9	83	38.79
Press Conference	10	8	1	6	2	27	12.62
Not distinctive	22	4	0	0	0	26	12.15
Press Release	15	2	1	2	1	21	9.81
EU Legislation	11	5	0	0	0	16	7.48
National Legislation	1	7	0	2	4	14	6.54
Summit or other Meeting	0	4	1	6	1	12	5.61
Opinion Poll	3	2	0	0	0	5	2.34
EU-Report	0	2	0	2	0	4	1.87
Not applicable	0	3	0	0	0	3	1.40
Demonstration	1	1	0	0	0	2	0.93
Other	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.47
TOTAL	93	55	9	39	18	214	100

Table 17. News Hook

The amount of ‘not applicable’ locations (Table 18) concerns the news content: most of the information referred to conclusions, arguments, requirements of reports or statements by EU officials, political actors, etc. The ‘Other’ category also included the 13 locations mentioned in the regional newspaper items, seven of them being the city of origin of this media outlet, Timisoara. The two-way communication between capitals Bucharest and Brussels was clearly illustrated through these locations appearance in the national newspaper.

The locations	National newspaper <i>Jurnalul National</i>	Regional newspaper <i>Renasterea Banateana</i>	Popular press <i>Libertatea</i>	Public Television news cast TVR	Commercial Television news cast PRO TV	Frequency	Percentage
not applicable	42	30	0	0	5	77	38.31
Other	20	13	1	7	2	43	21.39
Capital city of the media country	13	2	6	10	7	41	20.40
Press Release	16	4	2	18	1	38	18.91
Brussels	11	5	0	0	0	16	7.48
Strasbourg	1	1	0	0	0	2	1.00
TOTAL	92	50	9	35	15	201	100

**Table 18.** The locations of the news items

## 7. Conclusions

The results of the news agenda analysis show certain trends in the EU coverage by Romanian media. Reporting on the EU is first and foremost conditioned by the national political context, related to Romania's EU accession. EU issues are at the cross-point between political agendas, public agendas, and media agendas.

The most consistent coverage and the greatest diversity of EU news are both provided by the national newspaper: EU affairs, new EU new member states' experiences, EU officials' statements on Romania, EU accession consequences for Romania.

Equally varied and prominent are the EU topics in the regional newspaper. The vast majority reflect institutional agendas: agendas of local actors, on one side, and national political and EU officials (especially the EC) agendas, on the other side. In accordance with the assumed citizens' interest, the newspaper paid almost equal attention to regional/local topics related to the EU, and to EU issues.

The agenda of public television newscasts in connection with the EU topics echoed mostly the institutional agendas, those of the EC and the EP and of the national political agenda, while the news agenda of the commercial channel newscasts reflected mainly the professional viewpoint on the information 'needs' of the audience, assessed in terms of 'consequences' for their lives, being thus most influenced by the public agenda.

The low amount of items related to the EU in the tabloid newspaper did not practically influence the newspaper's agenda, which was shaped according to the readers' interest.

For the national daily, the regional newspaper, and the public television, the emphasis is put on news about processes, politics, economics, etc.; for the commercial channel and the tabloid, the stress is more on human-interest stories, on personalisation.

However the great variety of topics is not coupled with a diversity of journalistic genres of reporting. News reports are, by far, the prevalent genre. This tends to indicate the most frequently chosen version of the self-perceived role of the journalists: that of neutral observer and transmitter of the EU information.

The prominence, in the sampled news items, of some EU actors such as the European Commission/Commissioners, and the European Parliament, who are involved, along with the national politicians, in Romania's accession process, accounts, once more, for a national framing of the EU issues.

## Appendix

The list of the interviewees in the sample:

1. Irina Cristea, national newspaper *Jurnalul National*, editor of the EU Integration Page, foreign news desk.
2. Maria Toader, national newspaper *Jurnalul National*, foreign news editor, covers EU topics.
3. Marinella Dohi, tabloid newspaper *Libertatea*, news editor, covers EU topics.
4. Laurentiu Nistorescu, regional newspaper *Renasterea Banateana*, news editor, covers EU topics.
5. Rodica Culcer, national public television TVR, director of News.
6. Liviu Popescu, national public television TVR, deputy head of News.
7. Gabriela Popescu, commercial television channel PRO TV, director of News.
8. Oana Matei, commercial television channel PRO TV, head and producer at the International News Desk, responsible for EU topics.

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