

Informacja na żądanie. Ocena narzędzi polityki informacyjnej Unii Europejskiej przez dziennikarzy

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu było przedstawienie opinii, zakresu wykorzystania i oceny narzędzi polityki informacyjnej UE przez polskich dziennikarzy mediów głównego nurtu. W analizie podjęto próbę weryfikacji założenia, że dziennikarze wykorzystują w pracy redakcyjnej narzędzia polityki informacyjnej UE, które, podobnie jak projekt europejski, oceniają pozytywnie. Pomimo przychylnych opinii zgłaszają zastrzeżenia dotyczące funkcjonowania poszczególnych narzędzi lub też proponują wprowadzenie modyfikacji, które miałyby usprawnić ich działanie. Zastosowaną metodą badawczą były częściowo ustrukturyzowane wywiady pogłębione. Dobór próby był celowy, ekspercki (nielosowy), a kluczowym jego kryterium było podejmowanie w pracy redakcyjnej tematyki unijnej.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka informacyjna Unii Europejskiej, narzędzia polityki informacyjnej, dziennikarze, oceny, wywiady pogłębione

Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the assessment of the EU information policy instruments made by Polish journalists of the mainstream media, as well as their opinion about the instruments and the extent to which they are used. The analysis tries to verify the assumption that the journalists use the instruments of the EU information policy in their editorial work and approve them, as much as they approve the European project. Despite positive opinions, the journalists have some objections to the functioning of some instruments and they propose introducing modifications that would make them function better. The research method that has been applied in the analysis is the semi-structured in-depth interview. The non-probability sampling was used in the research. The key criterion for respondent selection was raising the subject of the EU in editorial work.

Key words: information policy of the European Union, information policy instruments, journalists, in-depth interviews

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Information on demand. Evaluation of the European Union's information policy done by journalists¹

Providing information about the meaning, content and form of European integration to the broadest possible public of the member states is the main objective of the European Union's (EU) information policy. One of the more efficient ways of following it is reaching the journalists and the media, who are agents in the information transfer process. Their key role makes them the subject of much research. This research has usually focused on content analysis, frequency of subject matter or the interpretative framework of the editorial material. It was thus the media coverage that underwent analysis. Research that focuses on the perspective of those who create the media, the journalists, is much less common. One of the research methods applied in such research is the in-depth interview. In-depth interview became the basis of research on, for example, the journalists' opinion on the EU media relations (Valentini 2007) or the evaluation of information services and EU communication made by correspondents working in Brussels (Lloyd, Marconi 2014).

The key role of journalists in the communication between the EU and its citizens was also noticed by the European Parliament (EP), which in its 2010 resolution emphasised that journalists "can bring significant added value to information by using their professionalism, ethics, skill and credibility to make sense of the news" (European Parliament 2010). That is why the EU created diverse instruments for delivering fast and full messages, and creating a positive image of European integration.

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Institutions responsible for the information policy are the main EU institutions such as the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament and the Council, as well as the advisory committees and the Court of Justice. Within the European Commission it is the Directorate-General for Communication, officers working for Commissioners, press services and spokespeople that are responsible for the information policy. The European Parliament shapes the information policy through Commission offices, press services, the officers working at the offices of political groups and by the activities of members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Other institutions, committees and EU agencies also have press services and spokespeople. The instruments available for journalists include Europe by Satellite, EU Newsroom, Rapid Database, Eurobarometer, the Representations of the EC in the member states and the EP Information Offices, as well as study tours, institutions' websites and other forms of online presence (EUtube, blogs, Facebook fan pages, Twitter etc.), journalist programmes (trainings, internships)².

The aim of the article was to determine the Polish mass media journalists' opinion on the instruments of the EU information policy and the extent to which they are used. The analysis tries to verify the assumption that journalist use the instruments of the EU information policy in their editorial work. The journalists approve of both the instruments and the European project itself. Despite the positive attitude towards the used instruments, they have some objections to how they function or they suggest introducing some modifications. The objections regarding the EU information policy are also made. The verification of such a hypothesis was possible by finding the answers to the following research questions:

- What is the journalists' attitude towards the European integration process?
- Which of the instruments of the EU information policy do they know and use in their editorial work? How do they assess them?
- How do they assess the EU information policy? What mistakes or problems do they notice?
- What are their suggestions regarding the EU information policy and its instruments?

The article is based on qualitative research. The research method applied here was the in-depth interview, which is "a great form of collecting data, especially when it comes to exploratory research or when behaviour or the way of thinking can only be described by people deeply involved in the subject matter, who possess unique knowledge"

² The legal and institutional principles of the EU information policy have been presented and closely analysed by the author in a separate article. See: Jas-Koziarkiewicz (2015).

(Buttolph-Johnson et al. 2010: p. 363). The research uses ten interviews conducted in 2014 and 2015. The interview scenario was semi-structured and it consisted of 18 questions. This form of interview was chosen because it allows for “obtaining a picture of the respondent’s world and learning the way in which they interpret the studied phenomenon” (Kvale 2010: p. 100). The non-probability sampling was used in the research, because its aim was to learn the opinions of the journalists who have knowledge of the instruments of the EU information policy and experience in using them. The key criterion for respondent selection was that the journalists raised the subject of the EU in their work. For the purpose of the research, a list of journalists working for the nationwide media who address this topic was prepared on the basis of media content analysis. Snowball sampling was also used when selecting the respondents, which meant that the respondents who already took part in the interview recruited new journalists (Şek 2015: p. 60). Each respondent was asked to choose at least two people who in their work focus on EU topics. All the journalists that were contacted agreed on taking part in the research. The sample covered the journalists from nationwide media – the press, the radio, television, news agencies and information portals³, working in both public and private media. Some of the journalists were former or current correspondents in Brussels. All the respondents had at least 5 years’ experience of working in the media. The empirical data analysis was conducted with the help of ATLAS.ti program. All of the texts of the interviews were coded twice.

Attitude towards European integration

The journalists have an unequivocally positive attitude towards the process of European integration. It is expressed in the terms and phrases they use to describe their attitude, for example: “you know what, I am a Euro-fan (respondent 4), “I must say that I am a Euro enthusiast” (respondent 1), “I am neither a Eurosceptic nor a realist” (respondent 3), “I am a moderate enthusiast of integration” (respondent 6). Sometimes they justify their declarations: “The EU is like democracy in one of Churchill’s famous maxims. It does not function very well, it’s slow, does not know how to deal with crises, but no one thought of anything better for Europe” (respondent 10). At the same time, they express their concerns about the future of the EU: “generally speaking I am a sup-

³ The majority of the interviewees worked for more than one medium. The respondents usually worked e.g. for the press and the radio or the radio and television.

porter of the idea of European integration, what's more, I am worried about the EU's current state and this question, what will be its future form" (respondent 8).

Even the journalists who are critical towards the idea of integration, treated it as the only existing option. One of them observed: "Of course this lack of options is a problem. Because, if there are no alternatives we have monopoly, and if we have a monopoly, then all the aberrations appear. There are people, who get heaps of cash for 'doing nothing'. But the overall balance is very good. These aberrations are visible in 10–15% of cases, and 85% is very positive" (respondent 5). The integration process is seen as inevitable (the term used by all the journalists). The following statement can serve as an illustration: "I think it's a process that we will get to and which is inevitable. Inevitable, because it lies in the interest of the whole Europe, in the interest of everybody, that is, the EU is an invention that serves everybody. Without a doubt, all Europeans are involved, so this integration is inevitable, necessary" (respondent 2).

Determining the attitude towards the European integration made the journalists analyse this process in broader contexts – international and historical. As one of the respondents pointed out: "European integration has led to the longest period of peace on the Old Continent, the longest period of economic growth. Even the African Union has been modelled after the EU, Vladimir Putin is building the Eurasian Economic Union modelled after the EU. Russia criticised the EU, but tries to build something similar" (respondent 10). The journalists also pointed to the role of Germany and France in the European integration process, sometimes they brought up the experiences of the Second World War and building the post-war order in Europe (respondent 1, 5, 8, 9, and 10). Broader references also appear in the statements – references to the geopolitical situation, which also is seen as good: „Especially now, when our European civilisation is threatened by other civilisations from both directions: Russia from one direction and Islam from the other. How can I not approve of the Union?" (respondent 5).

A separate matter brought up by discussing the attitude towards the integration process is the attitude of Poles and Europeans towards the EU. The journalists raise the problem of not recognising the profits coming from the European integration: "the Union's biggest disaster is that Europeans have lived so long in peace and prosperity. It's going to sound a bit solemn, but if you really look at the history of this continent, it has never been this good. They should get rid of the EU, for a day or two, so that people realise that it is the best period in the history of this continent" (respondent 1).

In Poland's case it was noticed that in the public perception the benefits are reduced to financial matters: "Poles have a very commercial attitude towards the EU, they think

that the EU mainly gives, gives money, the EU is something you use” (respondent 2). Such an attitude was seen as misguided, because it does not include the co-responsibility for the lives of others and the solidarity in the EU. One of the journalists claims that Poles do not appreciate the benefits of integration because they got accustomed to the EU, it became an “everyday” thing, what is more, “there is now a whole new generation for which that is how it is” (respondent 4). The generation of people who “function in the integrated Europe. What... the borders, should we get rid of Schengen? Those young people, they think that is has always been like this... they don’t know that you couldn’t buy things in an on-line store, move, live somewhere else, change jobs” (respondent 10). Poles do not appreciate the actions of the EU especially those of an immaterial character: “Because if you have a sign saying that this street was built from Union’s funds people will say ‘Yeah, that’s great’. But how can they see that they have some rights? Because they have them thanks to this institution. Maybe we should put more signs on everything, so that people are more conscious it is a Community’s contribution” (respondent 1). Poles lack a sense of belonging to the West and the Union, they have a tendency to make a division between “us” and “them”: “So there is no self-confidence here in Poland, no sense of belonging to the West. It’s characteristic that we say that something happened in the West but we don’t feel like the West, although we are the West” (respondent 6), “we’ve learnt to look in such a way, ‘we and the Union’, not that we are also this Union” (respondent 1).

Using the instruments of the EU information policy

The European Union is an organisation that puts great emphasis on the process of communicating with its citizens. Besides its own channels of communication, the Union also uses national media. As a result, besides the instruments of information policy for the general public, there have been many instruments addressed specifically to the journalists, the authors of information about the EU.

Websites and web portals of the EU institutions are among the sources of information on the EU indicated by the respondents, although its usefulness varies. Internet journalists emphasise how these instruments facilitate the search for information, although they signal the problem with the duplication of information, the lack of pre-selection and importance evaluation. The journalists of the old media perceive them differently, usually as too general: „So these institutional web portals are more general

and less aimed at journalists” (respondent 1). Their lesser use is explained by the work specificity and the fact that they do not ensure fast information transmission: “I work in news journalism and when something gets published on a European institution website, it’s too late for me. It’s a result of the race for information” (respondent 7). The internet journalists, as well as the old media journalists follow profiles of European institutions or politicians on Facebook and Twitter. Very often they guarantee fast access to information: The first information on Tusk [being elected the President of the European Council], as well as the one on agreeing the financial perspective was sent on Twitter by Herman von Rompuy. I also follow EP, EC, Tusk and individual commissioners” (respondent 9).

The Representation of the EC and the EP Information Office in Warsaw are treated in various ways by the journalists. Some claim they make their work easier: „we contact the Polish representatives. It’s because of their proximity, also because we know them and have contact with them, they come here to the radio and it’s easier this way” (respondent 2). Others noticed that both the Office and the Representation provide not direct, but indirect information, helping with the contacts with the MEPs and experts. According to the journalists such help is redundant, because they have their own contacts or the information they need has to be acquired directly and fast. This assessment can be backed by quotations: “I turn to them very rarely. I don’t need agents, there are people there [in Brussels]. The newspaper needs immediate information, not late information” (respondent 5), “I omit them, not because I think it is not needed, but I can do it faster myself” (respondent 10). The last respondent recognises that these entities can be useful for the journalists working in local media:” I think they could be useful for the local media that do not have such an access to MEPs or people working in Brussels. We know them personally, have their cell phone numbers and we don’t need help when it comes to, inviting them to the studio, for example. I think that, from the local journalist’s perspective, it is a really valuable source of information” (respondent 10). There are, however, situations in which the journalists of the national media benefit from the assistance of these entities. The growing interest in the activities of the EP Office and the EC Representation is recorded inter alia in respect to European elections, legislative procedures of important EU acts or when it is necessary to quote the officers working there in a journalistic material.

Press releases and information prepared by the press services and the spokespeople of the EU institutions are the basic instruments of the EU information policy. The respondents see them as instruments that make their work easier: they help in finding

information, explain all doubts or give interviews. The materials prepared by them sometimes become the basis for further information search. The following quote reflects this: "The press releases of the press services are used extensively. Firstly, because there are various elements there, that interest us, they are very well clarified there. If I didn't understand something, I could formulate an overview of the situation and study it further" (respondent 9). Their activities are assessed as useful: "They mainly provide information. If something from the past is needed, if not all documents are available, the press services make it easier" (respondent 7). The journalists are reserved when it comes to the information provided by the press services, because they see them as one-sided. The information needs to be verified and confronted with other sources. As one of the journalist's point out: "If it's information coming from the EP or the EC then it is logical that it is showing their decisions in the best light possible. There are more positives than negatives, that's for sure. We must conclude ourselves what the negatives are. Such press releases become a good background for a discussion with experts, who can present a more diversified image of a situation" (respondent 9). The journalists cannot imagine copying the information and using it in an unchanged form.

As a part of the EU information policy access to technical infrastructure is provided: from professional radio and television studios, through special cabins, ISDN-lines, to ready-made audio and visual materials shared by e.g. Europe by Satellite (EbS).

According to the respondents the radio studios in Strasbourg and Brussels are used for preparing live programmes, hosting radio programmes and inviting commentators. This solution made it possible to invite guests to the studio, without the journalist being present in Brussels, but it was connected with many technical difficulties, at least in the initial period of using the studio. "We talk with the guests that are there, I wasn't there in person (...). Now we have some experience, but there have been various technical difficulties, sometimes we had transmission problems, but we have it under control now. Maybe it's not routine, because you have to think about it earlier and prepare. But it's ok" (respondent 8). These problems are dealt with at training courses organised by the EP, EC and the Committee of Regions, which are supposed to facilitate information gathering and the use of infrastructure; technical support for the journalists is also provided. As one of the journalists said: "I took such a training course at the EP about who deals with what, and these people know what they are doing. They book these studios. And when we have to invite some MEP to the studio they even have a man who brings the MEP to us" (respondent 10). The studio staff provides extensive help and deals with technical problems. As a result, as one of the respondents emphasises: "We stopped

worrying about technical matters that the staff dealt with. If there is a problem on the spot, there is a special service that take care of it. Different things happen, sometimes something does not work, because the local services didn't do something, sometimes the laptop stops working or coffee gets spilled on it and these services are for that" (respondent 7).

The high quality of broadcast that is essential in the electronic media is the advantage of the radio and television studios: "The radio very often hires studios in Strasbourg or Brussels, to broadcast live with the studio quality" (respondent 7), "Television studios in Strasbourg and Brussels are very professional, they give many production possibilities and they make programmes that, well...it's not like you're ashamed of them, on the contrary" (respondent 1). In their answers the journalists emphasise not only the studios' professionalism, but also the fact that they are available for free: "They have professional, well-equipped studios, a type of a radio and television complex and it is available at any time (...). And we pay nothing for it. Absolutely nothing. From what I know, none of the editorial teams pay for it" (respondent 4). The lack of charge is strongly emphasised by the commercial media journalist: "For us it's great, because our radio has the funds it has, and as a result we don't have our own studio in Brussels or a correspondent, what's more, we don't have satellite links. The studios give us incredible possibilities, usually to connect with the MEPs that are at or between the meetings in Brussels or Strasbourg" (respondent 8).

The journalists who report on the Union's meetings and the EU correspondents also notice matters that might seem very mundane, such as where the meetings of the European Council take place. The decision about the meetings being held in Brussels, and not in the capitals of the Presidencies received approval: "It made our work easier that these summits take place in Brussels and not in the capitals of Presidencies. The country usually learned how to provide service for the journalists and then the Presidency ended. When it comes to technical infrastructure, especially the radio and television journalists, it hit the bull's eye" (respondent 7).

Other instruments of the EU information policy used by the journalists are Europe by Satellite and audio-visual units of the EC, the EP and the Council, and also the euro-parl.tv channel. Photos, sound and audio-visual materials that come from these sources are an additional source of information for the media, or they become a part of the message or live feeds. When asked why they use these instruments, the journalists said that they offer speeches of the most important EU politicians that can be used freely and for free: "My producer and I both have accounts on the audio-visual websites of the EU

institutions, where you can take what you want, simple as that” (respondent 1). They also allow for getting information when the journalist cannot be present at an event: “On the internet there are real-time press conferences and if I’m not there I use this (...) Not only can I take the sound, but, what’s important, I can follow it live and hear what the person is talking about”(respondent 7), “EbS if I couldn’t be somewhere, if the EP meetings took place in Strasbourg and we couldn’t go, then yes, internet broadcasts were useful” (respondent 9). Also sharing photos for free is seen as a good solution: the EU shares photos on under license that allows the media to use it, and that’s useful. I’m glad about it” (respondent 3).

Besides the positive voices, a negative one also appears, although it does not refer to the idea, but the rules of functioning: “I also use EbS. Now, under the new Commission’s term it worsened a bit. It is just a technicality, in the past when they uploaded something, for example a speech from a conference, the speech was written down in a separate file. They don’t do it anymore... It made work easier, because if I want to cut out a stand-up set from, for example, Juncker’s speech I have to listen to the whole thing, write it down, translate and it takes more time. And sometimes these 15–20 minutes do matter” (respondent 10).

Study tours, training courses and workshops were other instruments of the information policy indicated by the journalists. There were, however people who not only did not participate in them, but have not heard of such a possibility (respondent 6). The EC, the EC Representation, the EP Information Office and the offices of individual MEPs were named as the organisers of these activities. Groups of journalists of various sizes coming either from one or a few states participated. The EU structures encouraged to participate in the courses by inviting specific journalists or representatives of the editorial staff, or by sharing the information in the newsletters addressed to journalists. The decision to participate was based on private interests and the subject matter of a given course or workshop (respondent 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10). When assessing the frequency of the training programmes one of the journalists noted that “these usually take place when there isn’t anything important going on, or nothing’s going on and you have to get the journalists interested in a subject, because that is what the European institutions want. And if something important happens then of course the journalists will come anyway” (respondent 7). Many of the respondents claim that the number of tours and seminars has fallen after 2012, they think it is because of the changes in the EU (European elections, a new Commission) and the situation in Europe (Ukraine and the Greek crisis among others). The number of offered tours changed from 6–10 to 2–3 during the year (respondent 4).

The journalists noticed the variety of themes of such offers. As one of them says: “These seminars are about different things: women rights or outreach, really peculiar ones such as water purification, but there were also those that talked about the EU relations with China, Africa, The Middle East, but also about the agreement with the USA or economic seminars. I took part in one about the relations between the EU and the world. There have also been meetings about the specificity of individual institutions” (respondent 4). Economy was one of the subject matters that was mentioned most often by the respondents. The EC and EP really want the journalists to become more involved in economy-related matters (respondent 7). The level of the seminars and meetings has been said to be high. The meetings are often aimed at journalists that have narrow specialisation. The following quotation exemplifies this very well: “But there were these strictly economical seminars that I didn’t attend, because I went to one once and it turned out that I don’t know that much about economy to... so it was a waste of time, I didn’t understand what was said to me” (respondent 4). The journalists preferred meetings not with politicians but with the administration representatives, the civil servants, In their opinion these people possess bigger knowledge and have more to share, they are seem as more competent (respondent 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10), what is visible in the following quotation: “It happens very often in the EU that those political, chosen ones are hopeless, however, at the lower level of the Commission, in the civil service, there are people with great knowledge, very specific, ready to speak” (respondent 5). The importance of off the record meeting (meeting from which the information cannot be used directly, but it makes the understanding of the subject easier) was emphasised. As one of the journalists remarks: “What I liked was off the record meetings on some important matters, such as working on some important documents. Not with politicians, but with experts, analysts. I used to take part in something like that in Brussels and I think those meeting were really useful, they shed light on the subject” (respondent 9).

The tours are treated by the journalists as an additional possibility to gain information, deepen their knowledge and do networking. The last point is especially important and very often becomes the decisive criterion that makes the journalist want to participate in a seminar, as one journalist points out: “If there is the new EP and we have meet new people I’m willing to go to these study tours, so that I have some contacts for the next few years” (respondent 7).

Other factors decisive in the journalists’ participation in the tours are the fact that the seminars provide expertise on more complicated matters, provide access to important and extensive EU documents (respondent 9), which all facilitates editorial work:

“For me as a journalist these meetings provided lots of knowledge, because, it’s obvious that what we share is only the tip of the iceberg, but to make this iceberg as attractive as possible, one has to know where to find the needed knowledge, so that the final effect is the best” (respondent 4). The respondents do not treat the information from the meetings as their only source, and, being aware that “it’s not neutral, but it is the information that the EU wants to share”, they take it with a pinch of salt (respondent 8).

Direct contacts and the possibility of gaining new sources of information result in a positive evaluation of the tours. As one of the respondents put it, the benefits come from the fact that “I learn a lot and I gain new contacts” (respondent 2). The journalists also say that the fact that those seminars are organised by the EU structures and they are free is important because of the media’s financial situation (respondent 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10). The meetings are assessed as “valuable”, “bringing knowledge”, “useful”. Among the positive voices, there was one showing attitude of ambivalence. The respondent noticed the matter of journalistic credibility, the necessity of informing the audience about the source of financing and the fact that meetings of this kind are a bit like “lobbying” on behalf of the EU. Also the costs of these activities rise his doubts: “On the one hand it was interesting for me as a journalist because I learnt those mechanisms, those programmes, projects, strategies, so it was interesting, but on the other hand it is a discussion on the costs of functioning of the EU. It raises doubts. Because really, how much does it cost? But the question is, is it better to go there with the help of the EP funds and see something, prepare yourself very well, understand the context, or sit in Warsaw in an office and know nothing. I do not know the answer to this question. It’s ambiguous” (respondent 8).

Other instruments of the EU information policy are Eurobarometer, Eurostat and project supported financially such as Euranet and Euractiv. European institutions that provide statistical data or poll results are treated by the journalists as an additional source of information, as entities they turn to when they have problems with finding information. In the case of electronic media journalists these entities are useful for presenting an event, a poll or statistics in such a way that they can be used in radio and television programmes. The following quotation confirms the Eurostat’s and Eurobarometer’s role is as described above: “I also used the Eurostat and Eurobarometer, but I didn’t browse the Eurostat’s big archive, I called there, they have a nice press office, they helped me. I say what is of interest to me and they find it and send it to me. Sometimes it turns out well and one of the analysts, well, maybe doesn’t comment on it, but says what’s in the document, which makes the material more appealing” (respondent

10). Euractiv is used mainly as an additional source of information, although in this case the journalists do not check what is on the web portal, but reach it “rather through search engines” (respondent 1). The journalists working in the Polish Radio also mention the Euranet Plus platform: the materials available there become an introduction to the preparation of the shows (respondent 2).

Evaluation of the EU information policy

When evaluating the EU’s information policy some journalists recognise that the emerging problems do not result from the mistakes made by the EU itself: “The main problem is not the Union, because they try to share the information” (respondent 5). Supporting this thesis, they notice the technical and technological possibilities offered by the EU and creating instruments addressed only to journalists. This assessment can be supported by the following statement: “Honestly, if somebody wants to work with this, they have everything. It might be a simplification, but really there are no barriers in getting access to information. The meetings organised in the EP Information Offices, for example, are always transmitted on the Internet, and if somebody can’t come they can always stream it. It’s all very well prepared. Really, the only barrier in this job is on the other side, on the side of the editorial board and the media. If someone wants concentrate on the EU, on the European institutions, nothing can stop them” (respondent 1). The journalists evaluating the information policy base it on their own work experiences: “Every EU institution has well-organised press services and websites so good that press conferences can be watched live on the Internet and even record the sound. So, when we need the sound of a politician that was at the meeting, we can use it” (respondent 7).

Among the voices critical towards the EU information policy some point to the high level of bureaucracy of the structures responsible for the policy, their lack of flexibility and making the actions too concrete, which results in being closed to new ideas. The lower number of actions aimed at journalists (i.e. study tours) is also observable, “weakening of the media offensive”. One of the respondents justified the change in the intensity of the actions as follows: “They stopped a little, because if something happens the media come to them. Because, if there is the conflict in Ukraine and we are talking about the association agreement, it is obvious that the journalist come and ask about what’s happening in Ukraine and how the European institutions perceive it.

If there are things happening in Greece and the EU solves them, there are summits and as a result the EU is on the tongues of everybody, it is in the media” (respondent 4). The same respondent notices how the Union evaluates its own information measures and acknowledges that applying only the quantitative indicator is incorrect. As he says: “A stream of current problems is coming to us from the Union. I think the officers stamp their cards and put the numbers in columns: during the day 15 journalists visited their offices, there are so and so many hours of news about the EU and it’s over and done with. If there were no crises one journalist would come and they would have to think of something, because their boss would start thinking if he needs three workers in that office. Now it’s justified because they have the numbers. It’s not information policy but taking care of current matters” (respondent 4).

What is also emphasised is the fact that the policy is reactive, underfinanced and lacks a long-term strategy. The respondents also thought the policy’s dependence on the EU political situation and its connection with the political calendar problematic, something that results in changes in the staffing and among people responsible for the information policy. The lack of a general concept of how to implement the policy is most visible in the case of communicating in emergency situations, when there is no one, common voice but “multiplicity of voices” and internal conflict (respondent 10).

The multiplicity of voices is manifested in the fact that all the European leaders, representatives of European institutions and the representatives of the member states present their own interpretation of events and assessment of the decisions made. The EU activities are often left uncoordinated and each institution is “its own kingdom” (respondent 3). It is especially visible in the case of the European Council because after each summit the representatives of the member states present their own version of events and “boast” of their success, while the Union does not send a clear message about the decisions made. The cause of this state are said to lie in the EU structures and the way decisions are made within them. The following quotation confirms these conclusions: “These meetings are often held behind closed doors, it’s difficult to get something more than the official information, and official things are often very diplomatic and vague. Decisions are often made by consensus, so these positions, those press releases are such, that one has to know, and that’s a big thing, how to read between the lines, know what’s more interesting and isn’t included in the documents. That’s the first thing, because I was talking about documents like statements, and when these are specific documents... I’ll give half my kingdom to the one who has read the Treaty of Lisbon, I haven’t, I relied on some extracts. It’s really difficult. And then you have to make it into a short information” (respondent 10).

When evaluating the Union's method of communication some respondents noted the EU's construction and its decision-making process. The European matters are so complex that journalists have to first understand what is happening, and then try to present it in a clear way. "Working at the summits was a nightmare, it was very difficult, because it is characteristic of negotiations and the Union policy to reach these compromises on many levels, which are created by lawyers and understanding that, what decision has been made, is difficult. And then, writing about it in a way that is understandable for the listener is a huge challenge, not to oversimplify the matter, but still make the message understood. One thing is what they said they agreed upon, the other was understanding what was written there" (respondent 8). Another journalist agrees with this opinion: "I need to have this knowledge, read, ask this one or that one and abstract the main ideas. It's the main difficulty, this experience, this knowledge, it's something I'm constantly learning" (respondent 10).

Another factor that impedes the understanding of European matters is the language of communication, which is said to be too formal, pompous, complicated. As one of the respondents says: "Very often even we, the journalists, don't catch everything, and translating it in such a way so that the ordinary people get it... sometimes the language is too formal and pompous" (respondent 9). One of the features of the EU system that might have a negative impact on communication is a career model that does not award quality and the involvement in the information measures: "There are so many people there who care about quality, but the system is not motivational, it does not promote people who want to say something, their promotion does not depend on that, if somebody wants to say something, convey a message" (respondent 5).

Another mistake of the information policy indicated by the journalists is the large amount of information and pace of information sharing, although here the opinions are not clear-cut. Assessing the amount of information one of the respondents remarks that "the Union, the EP or the EU institutions publish a lot of information. I think it's too much" (respondent 3).

In the case of the pace of information sharing the journalists say that sometimes during important meetings (e.g. the European summits) they have no access to information for many hours: "Let's say that Foreign Ministers meet and the meeting is happening now. I have to prepare the material by 5 o'clock p.m. and they are still sitting around the table. I have to know whether something has happened or not, what tense to use, the past or the present. There are summits during which we don't know anything" (respondent 7). Also the websites do not share the information fast enough: "That web

portal of the European Council does not function very well, because even the day after the informal meeting there was no information posted on the website. The last information was about the heads [of governments] coming. And it was already after the summit and there were no conclusions on the websites, there was no description, nothing” (respondent 1). There were also positive voices about the accessibility of information and its pace: “One of the advantages is the pace of the information. The messages are detailed and they become the basis of the material, it can be broadened, it’s all efficient” (respondent 9).

The journalists’ evaluation of the EU information policy is not unequivocally positive or negative. They often see the positive aspects of the activities of the press services, but they also raise doubts about their comprehensive design and vice versa, what can be illustrated by the following statement: “At the technical level, we have no complaints about sharing information and documents, decisions and data, but at the level of constructing the media coverage, the image that should be created by the EU as a whole, something is not working. I think the success of the Eurosceptics stems from that. There is a mistake somewhere here” (respondent 10). Another attempt at a comprehensive assessment of the information policy takes note of its connection with and dependence on the EU structures: “When it comes to the information policy itself, I don’t know if it can be done better. Maybe these are systemic problems? Because it’s like a story about the Union’s communication problems, but it’s been said, not only to the media, that people don’t care about the decisions made within the EU because of its construction. But it’s not a matter of bad communication between journalists and the press services, but of the whole construction, the Union’s structure and, because of some compromises, these decisions are very bureaucratic, and, because of this, difficult to understand and boring” (respondent 8).

It should be noted that the journalists who were asked to evaluate the EU information policy also noticed factors that obscured communication but were not connected with the Union such as the media’s financial problems, the weakening of ethical principles among journalists, media tabloidisation, seeking fast information sharing, media politicisation, the lack of generation change and, as a result, lack of young journalists who possess knowledge about the EU. These factors fall into a category that could be defined as the state of Polish media. Some of the respondents are certain that it is the media that are responsible for the problems in sharing information about the EU: “So, I always start every meeting on the EU information crisis with ‘it’s the media’s fault’” (respondent 1), “It’s not the EU that is the problem, it’s a combination

of factors, many factors, it's a problem of the media crisis and the development of the media" (respondent 5).

Expectations towards information policy

The journalists' comments on their expectations towards the EU information policy can be grouped in three categories. The first category includes comments of journalists who do not have any demands and think that what has been done so far is enough, e.g. "To be honest, I'm satisfied with the current model" (respondent 7). What's more, the journalists sometimes feel responsible for explaining possible problems with sharing information. One of the respondents indicated: "Unfortunately, It's also my duty to excuse the sometimes slow EU, and show that it's not the Union or the five guys that sit in Brussels, but it's the mechanism that's faulty" (respondent 1).

In the second category there are statements that include precise demands that are to make the journalists' work easier e.g. an interactive calendar that has information on latest events, concise information materials (one page instead of ten), sending materials and information in Polish, sharing useful contacts (e.g. experts who can comment on the current European events), making establishing contacts with international experts easier, increasing the number of meetings with the civil service representatives. Within this category there are also demands based on the specificity of a given medium. For instance, the electronic media journalists noticed that it is necessary for the Union to see that the material has to be ready by a specific time and the events are sometimes broadcasted live. The following quotation illustrates this assessment: "Maybe it would be useful if somebody came out during longer meetings and told us what's happening. Because now, there are a few hours with no information and one has to deal with that through private channels" (respondent 7), "Couldn't they just stop having these summits till 4 o'clock in the morning, can't they just meet earlier and finish at a normal time, cause I don't have much experience in camping at the summit, but I sit here till late morning, because they can't come to an agreement" (respondent 10).

The third category can be called proposals of systemic changes. One of the respondents suggested modifying the employment status, other proposed personalised measures: "the Union should take care about the journalists, in a personal sense. I mean it should try to spotlight some subjects, not only via emails, but also call, I know it's difficult and requires time. But that's my idea" (respondent 3). The question of profes-

sionalisation of the EU communication actions was also raised, especially in case of information campaigns and advertising spots. They need to be highly professional and attractive. As one of the journalists said: "If there is something to boast about it has to be done well, so it gets stuck in your head, and now the message passes and it is quickly forgotten" (respondent 6).

Conclusion

The conducted interviews provided in-depth knowledge about the journalists' opinion on the EU information policy and its instruments. The answers of the ten respondents confirmed that Polish journalists have a positive attitude towards the European integration. They interpret and analyse this process in a wider perspective, in an international and national context. The interviews also confirmed that they journalists know and use the instruments of the EU information policy in their editorial work. Both the knowledge about the instruments and their evaluation is diversified and depends on personal experiences. Objections are made about the websites and Europe by Satellite. The study tours and the infrastructure provided by the EU, such as radio and television studios and technical support, have been assessed positively. Although it has not been the subject of research, one might assume that the different levels of knowledge about the instruments and their assessment is a result of the specificity of the medium that the journalists work for and the profile of the materials they prepare (news, opinion journalism).

The errors in functioning of the information policy instruments named in the interviews stem from the instruments' incompatibility with the media logic or specific problems with using them at work. The interviewees tried to find the source of these errors in bigger systemic problems, e.g. the career model or the EU structure. It is especially visible in the opinions on the information policy. The respondents include both internal and external factors that impede the implementation of information policy. The former consists of determinants such as the language of communication, reactivity of the information policy, the EU structure, the EU decision-making mechanisms and subjecting information activities to the political calendar. The latter are connected with the state of Polish media, e.g. financial problems, the lack of generation change and the crisis within the journalistic profession. It has to be emphasised that the evaluation of the EU information policy is much diversified, the opinions range from positive to extremely negative.

Despite their reservations concerning the EU information policy, the respondents did not formulate many expectations: they concerned both concrete solutions and systemic changes. It has to be stressed that the journalists sometimes demanded introducing solutions that had been introduced e.g. an event calendar, a list of experts. These opinions should become a signal that information measures on the functioning solutions and the EU information policy instruments should increase. As a result the journalists' evaluation of the EU information policy might become positive.

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