THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE – BARRIERS AND LIMITATIONS[1]

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ABSTRACT

In the classic approach *the public sphere* is a space, where the *common* debate takes place, where *common* issues are discussed, often through the media and on its forum. This sphere, on a national level, exists in every political system. The question is, is it also possible to speak about a common public sphere on a European scale? The process of European integration after all, deals with countries of varied languages, cultures, and traditions concerning the political debate. Is it possible, that a mutual (European) public sphere may arise in countries with varied media systems and journalistic traditions? And, finally, can this sphere arise – what is especially important today – within countries of varied interpretations of and links to democratic standards? In this context the problem of the fragmentation of the communication environment and its impact on the condition of the public sphere takes on a new dimension. The goal of this article is an analysis of the conditions limiting the creation and development of a European public sphere.

Keywords: European public sphere, media and European integration, international political communication

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Introduction

European history is the story of the coexistence of a multiethnic mosaic of nationalities, which in different epochs to a greater or lesser extent lived, cooperated, competed or fought with each other. This is a rich, colorful, but often also tragic history. The disaster of the two world wars, which began as European conflicts, became the cause for the idea of European cooperation, which would allow the peaceful coexistence of European countries and their stable economic development, as well as the strengthening of democratic standards and humanistic values. Today, however, the process of European integration is at a crossroads. The crisis of the Eurozone, refugee problem, threat of terrorism have all resulted in an increase of national resentments and prejudices deftly fanned by numerous populist politicians appearing today. Looking at Europe today it is clear that once again there is more that divides the Europeans than unites them. All of this means that it is exceptionally difficult to predict the course of events and thereby also to foresee the future of the European Union.

In the classical approach, as mentioned in the foreword to this book, the public sphere is a space where the 'common reality' will be constituted. In this sense 'public' concerns the world surrounding, as long as it includes the 'common' space, which is different from the 'private' space possessed only by individuals. This is therefore the space for common activities of different actors and subjects (groups as well as individuals), the space where 'common' issues are discussed, where the proposed solutions of 'common' problems, undertakings, social and political projects are sought and presented. This sphere, on a national level, exists in every political system. However, is it possible to speak about a common public sphere on a European scale? The process of European integration after all, deals with countries of varied languages, cultures, and traditions concerning the political debate. Moreover, the public sphere is quite often realized through the intercession and on the forum of the media. How can the mutual public space arise in countries with varied media systems and journalistic traditions? Can this mutual space unite countries with varied political cultures, and – what is especially important today – varied interpretations and links to democratic standards? Maybe the lack of this common public sphere is one of the main reasons of the current European problems? In this context the problem of the fragmentation of the communication environment and its impact on the condition of the public sphere takes on a new dimension. The goal of this article is an analysis of the conditions limiting the creation and development of a European public sphere. The considerations presented here are based on the results of research, conducted by me in 2015 with German print journalists, as part of a project entitled: "A German Europe or a European Germany? Media Diplomacy and a (post)National Europe on the Example of the European Political Discourse in Germany" realized thanks to the cooperation of the Institute of

Journalism, Media and Social Communication at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, as well as the Institute of Media Studies (Institut für Publizistik) at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz.[2]

The significance of the media in international communication

The presence of the mass media has a different significance for the process of international communication in various historical periods. The significance of the mass media evolved and was always a derivative of the level of technological development.[3] The special role and the basic, primary significance of the media in international communication results from their possibility of transmitting information from places which are geographically distant from the place of residence of the recipient. In the case of events abroad the domestic recipients often don't have any other information sources than the mass media, nor usually can they revert to their own personal experience or get first-hand information from others. The perception of events taking place abroad is therefore influenced by the quality of the media coverage of these events. The media's influence appears on two levels: on the content level by the selection of covered events and on the image forming level by the choice of presentation context and interpretation of the consequences of covering events.[4] The media image is therefore the springboard for the future attitude of individuals and public opinion to the events covered by the media, and later also for the political activities, taken in fields connected to these events.[5] This and the fact, that the message of the contemporary media reaches political actors very often faster than the information sent through traditional di-

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[2] The project included an analysis on three levels. First of all, research was conducted on the attitudes and opinions of journalists as authors of the media content/coverage regarding Europe, the results of which were presented in a monograph [see footnote 1]. The second part of the project contained an analysis of the attitudes and opinions of German politicians on all levels (as traditional political actors) on the subject of the role of the media in the European debate. The results will be presented in a future publication of this cycle. The third stage of the research incorporated an content analysis of selected German media, the goal of which was (and still is – this part of research project has to be expanded), to establish to what sphere and in what context of which events, pro or anti-European rhetoric is present in the coverage of the German media.

[3] Concerning the subject of the evolution of the mutual relations between the media and politics in the context of international communication and phenomenon of media diplomacy see also: A. Hess, A. Szymańska (2009). Pomost medialny. Rola mediów w międzynarodowej komunikacji politycznej na przykładzie relacji polsko-niemieckich. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, pp. 28–37; A. Szymańska (2009). Dyplomacja mediów – wizerunek problematyki wypędzonych na przykładzie wybranych publikacji prasowych ostatniej dekady (dzienniki *Rzeczpospolita* i *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*). *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, 1–2, pp. 50–58.

[4] S.N. Soroka (2003). Media, Public Opinion, Foreign Policy. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 8(1), pp. 42–43.

[5] J. Ramaprasad (1983). Media Diplomacy: In Search of a Definition. *International Communication Gazette*, 31, p. 71.

plomatic channels constitutes the position of the mass media in modern diplomacy and foreign politics.[6]

While the flow of goods, connected with the economic sphere of the process of European integration, like capital, goods and services, labor and others, has been efficiently carried out in the EU for many years (even if we take into account the latest problems of the eurozone), there is still no indication of a similar efficiently functioning exchange of political media information.[7] This sphere is closely linked with language as an element bearing national culture, which is a more efficient barrier of exchange between the Europeans than purely economic culture and the obligatory model of entrepreneurship accepted by a given nation.

The multitude of languages existing in Europe (which are, as mentioned above, not only a code of communication, but also a key element bearing national culture of specific societies) is a very efficient barrier to the appearance of a space for the common European discourse – i.e. European public sphere – as a common forum for the exchange of thoughts and information. Without such a forum it is very difficult for the Europeans to know and to understand each other. This understanding would be however necessary, if they were to have and feel a common European identity, which could be a connecting element, a common denominator of all members of the UE in a globalized world. The European identity is understood in this context according to the definition of Jerzy Mikułowski Pomorski as an awareness of values linking Europeans and is equivalent to a feeling of unity among those nations, which comprise the UE.[8] This definition is also concurrent with the idea proposed by Jürgen Habermas, who referred to the concept of Peter Graf von Kielmansegg, according to whom European identity is awareness of an obligation to the European common good.[9]

European public sphere – concept and definition

European and domestic politics and the media affect each other (and the members of European societies as well) in a communication space, which in professional lit-

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[6] During his term of office as Secretary of Defense in the administration of George Bush, Dick Cheney, often admitted for example that he got important and essential information more quickly from CNN than from the US diplomatic corps. See S. Hess, M. Kalb (eds.) (2003). The Media and the War on Terrorism. Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., p. 63.

[7] See: H.J. Kleinsteuber (2004). Strukturwandel der europäischen Öffentlichkeit? Der Öffentlichkeitsbegriff von Jürgen Habermas und die European Public Sphere. In: L.M. Hagen (Hrsg.). Europäische Union und mediale Öffentlichkeit. Theoretische Perspektiven und empirische Befunde zur Rolle der Medien im europäischen Einigungsprozess. Robert von Halem Verlag, Köln 2004, p. 35.

[8] J. Mikułowski Pomorski (2003). Komunikacja międzykulturowa. Wprowadzenie. Wyd. II. Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, Kraków, p. 90. See also: F. Gołembski (2005). Tożsamość europejska (aspekty teoretyczne). In: *idem* (red.). Tożsamość europejska. *Biblioteka Europejska*, 1. INP UW, Warszawa, pp. 13–67.

[9] J. Habermas (1993). Obywatelstwo a tożsamość narodowa. Rozważania nad przyszłością Europy. Tłum. B. Markiewicz. Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa, p. 19.

erature is called the *European public sphere*, eventually the *European public space* (ger. *europäische Öffentlichkeit*). The phenomenon of the European public sphere is understood and described by various authors in a different manner. Some of them understand the European public sphere as a communication space, others as a network of communication links, and still others as a communication system or communication forum or, at least, as a process of communication of European society.[10] According to the definition of Hans-Jürgen Trenz, which referred to the concepts of Jürgen Habermas and Bernhard Peters, public sphere is an intersubjectively divided, communicatively structured space for mutual observation.[11] However, the public sphere must not be understood neither on the domestic nor the European level as a monolithic and uniform space for the exchange of the political views.[12] It is a very structurally diversified space, which is composed of many smaller spaces, where the all debates take place. That is why in practice in many empirical analyses the public sphere is operationalized as the intensity/density of communication activities, undertaken in a given area, by various types of actors. In the context of the European integration process, many authors call attention to the significantly less intensity of communication activities in the trans-national public sphere (European), than occurs on the national level, which is not conducive neither to the creation of a European identity, nor a legitimization of the policies of European institutions.[13]

Significance of the European public sphere

The significance of the European public sphere for European politics and the process of European integration has a similar weight as the national (domestic) public sphere for domestic politics. The significance is connected to and results from the political and social functions and roles of the media, especially in the fields of legitimization of politics and integration of society. That is why the range and quality of the European public sphere is often connected and appraised with the quality of the democratic standards of the European Union itself. The low level of presence of the European public sphere is evaluated as an essential detriment of the democratic standards of EU institutions. Therefore the deficit of the European public sphere is taken as the deficit of democracy of the EU.[14]

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[10] M. Latzer, F. Saurwein (2006). Europäisierung durch Medien: Ansätze und Erkenntnisse der Öffentlichkeitsforschung. In: W.R. Langenbucher, M. Latzer (Hrsg.). Europäische Öffentlichkeit und medialer Wandel. Eine transdisziplinäre Perspektive. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden, p. 11.

[11] H.-J. Trenz (2000). Korruption und politischer Skandal in der EU. Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen politischen Öffentlichkeit. In: M. Bach (Hrsg.). Die Europäisierung nationaler Gesellschaften. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*. Sonderheft 40. Westdeutscher Verlag, Wiesbaden, p. 333.

[12] J. Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[13] M. Latzer, F. Saurwein, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 10.

In the foreword to a publication[15] dedicated to the medial public sphere in the European Union, a German media scientist, Lutz M. Hagen, called attention to expectations, which are commonly bound in the EU with the media as an antidote for all the democratic deficits of the EU institutions: "Great hope is placed in the mass media, according to them the media are in a position to solve the problem of the democratic deficits in European Union. In their social function as the fourth estate the media should support the common identity of EU citizens. With the help of extensive and deep information they should allow the appearance of a transnational discourse, which would help the democratization of Europe and the legitimization of the EU".[16] But are the media really able to fulfill these expectations?

The role of the media in the process of creating the European public sphere – research traditions

In theoretical reflections on the significance of the European public sphere, the benchmark for the specific concepts are the different social functions of the media, to which the authors bestow the highest rank. The highest level of attention is given by researchers, which is understandable, to the legitimizing and integrating functions of the media.[17] That is why in empirical research on the European public sphere, which was conducted in the area of theories of representative liberal democracy, the attention of the authors is focused on the visibility of the European Union, its institutions and actors, and the subject of European integration in the media content as well, eventually factors, which make this visibility stronger or weaker. In light of this research tradition the attention of the media is then a necessary condition for guarantying of transparency and control of politics on the European level. The significance of the media in this research tradition means the control of the European institutions. In turn, in the research, which was conducted in the field of pluralistic-participative theories, the significance of the European public sphere as a space for representative and maximal diversified spectrum of opinions is stressed. The opinion shouldn't be limited to main political actors, but should include also such peripheral actors as citizens, NGOs etc. In this research tradition the role of the media is to assure a forum of opinions exchange for broadest spectrum of actors possible, which is in this tradition the most important indicator of the significance of the media in the European debate. In the center of interest of the research conducted in the area of theories of deliberative democracy are the practice of the process of transnational communication, the factors influencing its quality and the quality of the discourse about European

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[15] L.M. Hagen (Hrsg.), *op. cit.*

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 7.

[17] M. Latzer, F. Saurwein, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

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political issues. The significance of the media in this research tradition results in the creation of a space for transnational communication.[18]

The quality of media content about European issues

As many research results show, among them also the results presented in a monograph edited by Lutz M. Hagen, which – nota bene – were conducted before the eastern EU expansion in 2004, the media can't fulfill the expectations, which are placed in them in context of the European integration. The media content about European issues is inadequate to the significance and impact of the European politics and decisions on the day to day life of EU member states citizens.[19] The media content is very often also reduced to the economical dimension of European integration, and within specific member states is also presented almost solely through the perspective of benefits for this particular country.[20] The platform for the creation of the common European discourse appears only sporadically and is usually connected with some kind of difficult events on the international stage like the war in Kosovo, or lately conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, or such events within the EU, which are exceptionally controversial (for example the Greek crisis, refugees from war torn countries, Brexit). In this situation it is no wonder, that the expansion of the EU in 2004, 2007 and 2013, which enlarged the internal discourse of the EU by the next 10 national discourses of the new member states, exacerbated the identity crisis in the EU.

The barriers and limitations of the media in the creation of the European discourse

Hartmut Weßler,[21] the author of reflections on the structure and functions of the European public sphere in the aforementioned publication edited by Hagen, maintains the position that the abilities of the media are more limited than the expectations commonly placed in them. It is because the European public sphere doesn't exist in a singular form. It exists only in the plural and has the form of a polyphonic choir created by the discourses of all the national media in the member states. The EU doesn't have any common, transnational media to offer

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[18] *Ibidem*, pp. 13–14.

[19] L.M. Hagen (Hrsg.), *op. cit.*, pp. 7–8. In this monograph see also follow articles: J. Peter (2004). Kaum vorhanden, thematisch homogen und eher negativ – Die alltägliche Fernsehberichterstattung über die Europäische Union im internationalen Vergleich. In: *ibidem*, pp. 146–161, and M. Kalantzi (2004). Europa in der Tagespresse Deutschlands und Griechenlands – Ergebnisse einer empirischen Untersuchung. In: *ibidem*, pp. 178–194.

[20] K.M. Hagen (Hrsg.), pp. 7–8.

[21] H. Weßler (2004). Kulturelle und politische Integration durch Medien? Theoretische Überlegungen zur Europäisierung von Öffentlichkeit. In: *ibidem*, pp. 13–28.

its citizens.[22] The forming of the European public sphere was and is therefore a process, which takes place only spottily and temporarily, it means only when the media in different member states are covering the same European issues, and thereby the specific national (domestic) discourses get for a short time the same common denominator. However, such kind of situations are rather an exception and not a rule and are connected to the events or actors, which are attractive for the media according to the media's logic (news values), i.e. which range and significance are extraordinary, arouse exceptionally emotions and so on. Nevertheless this is usually not favorable for this common denominator, and further also for the positive character of the media's message concerning the European Union. These considerations allowed Hartmut Weßler to propose a thesis, which is rather unpleasant for the future of the EU, that "conflict keeps the European public sphere alive".[23] This phenomenon is worrying, because the media are very important for social integration. The mechanism of integration realized with the help of the media means including citizens, who are taking the role of media recipients, into the public life taking place in a given public sphere. If therefore this sporadically appearing media content about the EU, which could become the European 'common denominator' is constantly negative, than the expected social integration is not possible. The only things, which can unite all the Europeans in this situation, are skepticism and disbelief in the success of the European integration project. The latest debates, which are taking place on the media forum in all European countries, concern the Greek crisis, Ukrainian conflict or a refugee problem etc., seem to confirm the thesis of Weßler.

Not only does the negativism of the media content 'common denominator' not serve the creation of the European public sphere. Not favourable for the appearance of the European public sphere is also the 'national' colored interpretation frame of the media coverage (framing) concerning European issues. As the results of the content analyses, which were conducted by numerous authors in different EU countries during the debates about the European constitution and Lisbon Treaty, show, the individual national debates indeed took up at a similar time period similar issues, however they showed them in different interpretation frames and in context of different discussions taking place in a given member state, which could not really support the transnational exchange of European ideas.[24] Beyond that there is also a different perception of the benefits taken from the presence

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[22] The existing European media (mostly in English), like the Brussel's weekly "European Voice", the economic daily "Wall Street Europe" or the TV information channel "Euronews" (available in English, but also in French, German, Spanish and Italian) didn't gain popularity by the wide spectrum of European citizens and are still only an exclusive offer for a small group of professionals. See: H.J. Kleinsteuber, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

[23] H. Weßler, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

[24] D. Lichtenstein, Ch. Eilders (2015). Konstruktionen europäischer Identität in den medialen Debatten zur EU-Verfassung. Ein Inhaltsanalytischer Vergleich von fünf EU-Staaten. *Publizistik*, 60, p. 281. The authors recall the research results of Silke Adam (2007), Claudia Butter (2009), Ellen Dietzsch (2009), Melanie Tatur (2009) and Paul Statham & Hans-Jürgen Trenz (2013).

of the EU in the media content in specific member states. In this context this 'national' coloring is visible in the orientation of European narrations, presented in the national media discourses in EU member states. In Germany and Spain for instance the process of European integration is seen in the media discourse in a context of the difficult past of these countries and in this way also as an opportunity for a unique historical rehabilitation. In turn, in Great Britain the media observe the development of the integration process mostly through the perspective of economic cooperation, whereby the frame of reference is the idea of the British Commonwealth. In Poland and other countries of this region membership in EU structures is taken as a chance for economic and political development or – like in the case of Bulgaria – as a method for compensating the weakness of their own political system.[25]

The factors limiting the creation of the European public sphere

The reflections concerning the circumstances, which have to be fulfilled for the appearance of the common European public sphere, were also conducted by another German researcher, Jürgen Gerhards.[26] Among five conditions, which are in his opinion absolutely crucial, he named in first place the existence in all member states of such legal regulations, which guarantee freedom of speech and the independence of the media. The second condition was access to effective and efficient information transfer technologies. The third condition was the presence in Europe of an interested audience (recipients), who actively use the media content and is able to take part in the European discussion. The fourth condition was the professionalization of such media professions like especially journalism and media management. The last condition, which should permit the appearance of the European public sphere in the opinion of Gerhards was the creation of the category of collective political actors, who would take a voice on the European public forum and through promoting on this forum their own election programs they would neutralize, or at least weaken, the existing barrier of the borders of national public spheres. What is interesting, in the time, when he published his article (2000), Gerhards saw the obstacles for the appearance of the European public sphere only within the third and the fifth conditions, which were mentioned above. In case of the third condition his doubts were aroused by the problem of the aforementioned multiplicity of languages in use in Europe. However, the real barrier was in his opinion first the fifth condition, because the borders of national public spheres are identical with the territorial borders of specific member states, inside of which all

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[25] *Ibidem*.

[26] J. Gerhards (2000). Europäisierung von Ökonomie und Politik und die Trägheit der Entstehung einer europäischen Öffentlichkeit. In: M. Bach (Hrsg.). Transnationale Integrationsprozesse in Europa. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*. Sonderheft. Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen, pp. 277–305.

the political elections are held. That is why the collective political actors, who are present on the European forum, send their message not to all Europeans, but only to a specific national audience.[27]

From the current point of view the appearance of the European public sphere seems to be even more difficult, and the spectrum of obstacles significantly exceeds the two conditions, which bothered Gerhards.

The recent changes, which took places in the field of legal regulations concerned the functioning of mass media in several member states, especially in the region of Central Europe (Hungary, Poland and others) or the question of media ownership (Czech Republic, Slovakia, but also many states of the so called old Europe), also caused the first condition named by Gerhards to be questioned.[28] Beyond that also the changes on the media market itself evoke fears, if there is today a space for guarantying condition four. The level of professionalism of journalists and media workers and the quality of media functioning (media content) are constantly linked with the economic sphere of media functioning[29] and unfortunately the media have been for many years afflicted by a deep financial crisis. Also different are the characteristics of specific national media markets and the traditions of journalism in a given culture/country. According to Jeremy Tunsall for instance the differences between political journalism in Greece and Germany are just huge. In 2002, when he conducted his research, in Germany there were still a very strong public media, and the German media market was characterized by a strong position and high readership of newspapers, while in Greece the public media were very weak and the market of the print media was very limited and dominated by afternoon tabloids. The media market in Italy and France were also completely different from that in Germany and the Scandinavian one was completely different from the Spanish one and so on.[30] And these are only a few examples of the rich diversity found in European media markets.[31] No less important is the reigning climate of discouragement, exhaustion and inertia within the EU, which caused lack of interest and positive involvement of specific European audiences in EU issues (see Brexit).

Whatever will happen to all other conditions named by Gerhards, the multiplicity of languages and cultures of the EU would remain the factors, which will constantly and – as it seems – rather unchangeably stop/block the appearance of the European public sphere as a collective, united public space for the mutual discussion about common European issues. Also the significance of the nation

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[27] *Ibidem*, pp. 289–292.

[28] See the results of pilot research project *Media Pluralism Monitor 2015* (*Monitoring Risk for Media Pluralism in EU MEmber States*). Data from 2015 and concerning 19 member states [http://monitor.cmpf.eui.eu/mpm2015/results/; 16.11.2016].

[29] A. Szymańska (2017). Dziennikarstwo w epoce nowych mediów – przykład Niemiec. *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, 1, pp. 201–213.

[30] J. Tunstall (2002). Trends in news media and political journalism. In: R. Kuhn, E. Neveu (eds.). Political Journalism. New Challenges, New Practices. Routledge, London–New York, p. 231.

[31] See the results of *Media Pluralism Monitor 2015*...

state will not weaken, as has been proven by the latest events on the European stage (conflict about refugees quotas, rising popularity of national populists etc.). As Kazimierz Łastawski has noted, on one hand the national states do delegate a huge part of their own competence to the European and local level, but on the other, they still fulfill very important political, economic and – above all – cultural functions.[32] All this indicates, that the significance of the national state will once again increase.[33] That is why some researchers are seeking the space for the appearance of the European public sphere at the intersection of the public media discourses of the individual member states.[34] The most popular form of this kind of intersection is in the opinion of these researchers the mutual leaking of information published in the media in another member state. Therefore the public discourses of different states connect with each other always, when one of the domestic media is quoting (or is referring in any other form) to the content of a medium from another EU member state). By so doing this medium became for its recipients a unique translator of the public discourse taking place abroad and is eliminating the existing linguistic and cultural barriers, which the majority of the recipients couldn't overcome without the help of this medium. In this way the media in Europe, despite the diversity of their communication codes and the whole structural barriers mentioned above, are still the basic and key institution, which has the necessary potential and infrastructure for building the European 'network' linking public spheres of the individual member states. That is why those authors, instead of searching for any other form of common media offer for all the EU citizens as a platform for the creation of the European public sphere and the common European identity, propose to concentrate on seeking and promoting such forms of coexistence of the national public spheres, which would link them in a unique network. The key question, which should be asked is in their opinion if and under what conditions the public discourses of the individual member states can penetrate and influence each other.[35]

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[32] K. Łastawski (2004). Polskość w Europie. Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej / Departament Wychowania i Promocji Obronności, Polskie Przedsiębiorstwo Geodezyjno-Kartograficzne, Warszawa, p. 8.

[33] See: Zurück zur Nation. Wie die Rechtspopulisten das politische Klima in Europa verändern, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Woche*, 9.12.2016, No. 50; H. Schuman, Europa nach dem Brexit: Starke nationale Regierungen machen die EU unsozial. *Der Tagesspiegel*, 5.07.2016, [http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/europa-nach-dem-brexit-starke-nationale-regierungen-machen-die-eu-unsozial/13829186.html; 16.11.2016]. The same opinion presented Donald Tusk, see: *Kropka nad 'i' / TVN24*, 20.12.2016, www.tvn24.pl.

[34] See H. Wessler (2002). Multiple Differenzierung und kommunikative Integration. Symbolische Gemeinschaften und Medien. In: K. Imhof, O. Jarren, R. Blum (Hrsg.). Integration und Medien. Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen, pp. 56–76. Also see: K. Eder, C. Kantner (2000). Transnationale Resonanzstrukturen in Europa. Eine Kritik der Rede von Öffentlichkeitsdefizit. In: M. Bach (Hrsg.). Transnationale Integrationsprozesse…, pp. 306–331.

[35] H. Weßler, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 22–23.

Examples of media initiatives for creating the common European public sphere

An another form (even if only substitutive) of the European public sphere, which with the help of the mass media could support the appearance of bonds, commitments and a sense of community among the inhabitants of EU member countries, are different kinds of open political and social debates organized by the media. An example of this kind of event could be the discussion organized in 2013 by a few European newspapers (*El País*, *The Guardian*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *La Stampa*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Le Monde*), where six famous publicists were asked how the European crisis should be overcome.[36] The editorial staffs of the German weekly *Die Zeit* or the French daily *Le Monde* also organized several meetings,[37] during which the European politicians representing various national viewpoints, presented their opinions about current European issues or their own visions of the future of European integration. The value of these meetings was, that they didn't speak about it in the silence of their offices but on the forum of the mass media. Thanks to this the audience of the medium, which organized the meeting, gained a direct opportunity to see the way of thinking about Europe in other European countries. The latest Polish-German duel organized between the 13 and 17 of June 2016 by the Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* together with the German *Zeit Online* is also an example of this kind of debate. The formula of the duel foresaw the publication in both countries of the answers to five rounds of rather very controversial questions concerning Polish-German relations. The goal was to make clear to the domestic audience from which perspective the neighbors look at these problems.[38]

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[36] See: J. Zielonka (2014). Koniec Unii Europejskiej? Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warszawa, p. 73.

[37] H.J. Kleinsteuber, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39.

[38] The questions of **round 1** were: *Germany is responsible for its own immigration crisis.* […] *Why does Germany want the other EU countries to pay for their mistake?* │ *Why are the Poles so intolerant of other religions, especially Islam, even though there are hardly any Muslims in Poland?* [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75968,20233612, sparing-polska-niemcy-wyborcza-kontra-zeit-online-po.html; 16.11.2016]. The questions of **round 2** were: *Why are the Germans surprised at Brexit? The Europeans have had enough of German domination* │ *Poland only takes from the EU. Where is Polish solidarity?* [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75968,20237674,sparing-polska-niemcy-wyborcza-kontra-zeit-on-line-po.html; 16.11.2016]. The questions of **round 3** were: *The Germans declare they are supporting Ukraine, but they are doing business with the Russians behind their backs* │ *The Poles are so proud about their natural environment, but they are polluting everything with their coal fired electric power plants.* [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75968,20243398,sparing-polska-niemcy-wyborcza-kontra-zeit-online-po.html; 16.11.2016]. The questions of **round 4** were: *Why do the Germans treat the Poles only as a cheap labor force?* │ *And why have the Poles, who created their own model of democracy, chosen a party which wants to destroy it?* [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75968,20251406,sparing-polska-niemcy-wyborcza-kontra-zeit-online-po.html; 16.11.2016]. The questions of **round 5** were: *Why don't the Poles have their own political representatives in Germany?* │ *And why are the Poles, who are allegedly so traditional, so deeply impressed by neoliberalism and everything, which comes from the USA?* [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75968,20257378,sparing-polska-niemcy-wyborcza-kontra-zeit-on-line-po.html; 16.11.2016]. In the weekly *Die Zeit* the debate was published in the series 'Kumpel

Since it is very important in this form of activities not to avoid during such kind of discussions so called tough and controversial questions, because "the European public sphere can only then appear, when a diagnosis of deficits and an investigation of common elements are done together.[39] A similar opinion was represented by Jürgen Habermas, who said, that the media should not only inform about political events, but also about the political reactions to them and the controversies, which they arouse in other member countries.[40]

Another example of medial activity, which has had a very positive result and made a wide Polish audience familiar with the cultural diversity of the European community was a very popular talk show *Europa da się lubić* [It is possible to like Europe],[41] which was shown (16 Feb. 2003–21 June 2008) on the TV channel *TVP2*, the second channel of Polish public TV. The talk show was a Polish version of the French format *Union Libre*, which in 1998–2002 was broadcast by *France 2*, the second channel of French public TV. The formula of the Polish version of the show was based on the participation of foreigners living in Poland, who in each of the episodes (each episode dealt with a different subject) in a very humorous way told stories about the customs in their native countries. The show was supposed to have been a strictly entertaining, but in opinion of Wiesław Godzic was a very educational program.[42] The host of the show, Monika Richardson-Zamachowska, is of the opinion, that it was even more useful for the process of European integration, than any other government program.[43] This opinion seems to be proven by the high ratings, which were maintained for years at a level of several millions of viewers and by the huge sympathy and popularity, which the majority of the foreign guest of the show enjoy in Poland until today.

Conclusions

Dealing with the subject of the circumstances, which have to be fulfilled for the appearance of the common European public sphere, is should be remembered, that the quality of the media content about European issues and its connotation depend not only on the journalists' and editorial staffs' will, but also – in a significant dimension – is caused by the events taking place. The involvement and attitude of politicians, not only at the European level of politics, but especially of domestic and local politicians, as those who are closer to the electorate, have an

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seit 91: Fünf fiese Fragen an Polen' [Five nasty questions for the Poles], [http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2016-06/deutsch-polnische-freundschaft-fragen-an-gazeta-wyborcza; 16.11.2016].

[39] H.J. Kleinsteuber, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

[40] J. Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

[41] R. Borczyk, Europa da się lubić. 10 lat temu była hitem ramówki [http://natemat.pl/91657,europa-da-sie-lubic-hit-ramowki-mialby-10-lat; 16.11.2016].

[42] B. Sowa, "Europa da się lubić" znika z anteny. *Dziennik Polska Europa Świat*, 5.05.2008 [www.dziennik.pl; 16.11.2016].

[43] *Ibidem*.

enormous impact on the climate and connotation of the media coverage, framing etc. concerning European issues, since to the task of journalist first of all belong the obligations to record events and to inform about them. Therefore in face of such structural and cultural barriers, which were mentioned above and block the creation of the European public sphere, it is exactly the element of journalists' and editorial staffs' will, which may obtain key importance. On this will and the general attitude of media professionals to the European integration project will depend if, and in what dimension activities will be undertaken, which could support this European media 'network', by the help of which European citizens will get the opportunity to learn about and to know each other better.

Meanwhile however there is no reason for being afraid to demand more from the politicians too. On their will depends the legal regulations for the media's functioning as well as the frame of interpretation of the consequences of European issues presented by them to the media and through the media to the domestic audiences. On their will depends if EU membership will be presented by them through the prism of benefits or only useless obligations to other EU countries. Among the others political actors dealing with the process of European integration the politicians are absolutely the primary and basic ones, who are responsible for the creation of the future of the European project. There is no doubt, that the European Union needs many reforms and strengthening of its legitimacy. But there is no chance for it without the will and political visions of the politicians. The media's work is secondary. If one day the European project fails the media is not to be blamed.

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