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THE MEDIA CHALLENGES OF THE EU ENLARGEMENT.

Ana Dinescu¹

Teléfono 91-3942404

Fax 91-3942499

Dirección postal

Papeles del Este, Transiciones Poscomunistas.

Departamento de Economía Aplicada I. Pabellón de 2º Curso.

Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales.

Campus de Somosaguas. Pozuelo de Alarcón. 28223 Madrid. España.

Correo electrónico

Información general: papeles@ccee.ucm.es

Administrador de Web: papeles@ccee.ucm.es

¹ Periodista de ZIUA y Directora Ejecutiva de la Civic Media Association eu.ro.21

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Ana Dinescu

Journalists play a very important role in the frame of EU enlargement process towards East. In the same time, the press - both Western and Eastern European - as one of the creators of what Benedict Anderson called "imagined communities" must acknowledge their role in the creation of the new unified European conscience, 13 years after the end of the Cold War. These have been the "red lines" of the conference "The Contribution of Mass-Media to the extension of the European Union", held in Oradea, a small town from Northern Romania, from 10 to 13 October 2002. The conference was organized by the International Institute of administrative Sciences of Brussels, in cooperation with the International Centre for Euro-Regional Research of Oradea (CICERO), from the University of Oradea, the University of Reims, Champagne Ardenne from France and the Romanian Institute of Administrative Sciences "Pavel Negulescu". For four days, scholars and journalists from Romania, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Sweden, Italy, United Kingdom, Greece, United States and Belgium tried to analyze, from different perspectives and points of views, the role of the media in the creation and formation of a European conscience and the contribution of the media to the present-day process of expansion.

After same case-studies, it have been stressed one conclusion: The news selection in the Western and European media follows different criteria, sign of different positions towards the given socio-political reality, Stjepan Malovic, from the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb, Croatia, outlined in that sense that, in the most part of the cases, media in transition countries don't care about serious criteria, being guided, in the most part of the cases only by sensationalism. As an exemplification, he analyzed the first page of four Western best known newspapers ("The Guardian", "La Stampa", "Le Monde" and "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung"), comparatively with the first page of five Eastern European newspapers ("Nepszabadsag" - Hungary, "Vjesnik" - Croatia, "Politika" - Iugoslavia, "Oslobodenje" - Bosnia Herzegovina, "Delo" - Slovenia). In the first case, the most part of the news are related to international events; for the second case, international affairs are interesting only in relation with the local politicians and the home political activity.

But, among the international news of Western media, the Eastern Europe and the enlargement plays a small, if not a completely insignificant place. In Italy, for

example, outlined both Daniele Pasquinucci and Ariane Landuyt, from University of Sienna, Italy.

With the exception of the Italian public broadcast, who airs periodically a special edition related to European issues, the rest of the peninsular media offered a limited space to that aspect. In Italy, said Pasquinucci, quoting the data of the last Eurobarometer, 60% of the population, don't know about Eastern and Central European countries and 83% don't have information about the EU enlargement.

Before talking about enlargement, Western Europe must first of all rebuild its institutions and structures. The question of the "democratic deficit", the main example, said Gunilla Edelsman, head of the Law Department of University of Soerredtoern, Huddinge, Sweden, is arise for example, by the way in which are adopted the EU main legislative directives. Once adopted by the ministers of the European Union member countries, reunited in the Council of Ministers, these must be implemented by the European Parliament into its legal system.

And, added she, the national Parliaments cannot influence at all something already ordered by the EU. Such procedures can create confusion in the East. Here, the new democratic states, escaped for not too many years of totalitarianism will confront a democracy not conform at all to the basic rules of the system they were taught to adopt. It's why, appreciated professor Albert E. Barker, from the Revans Center for Action Learning and Research from the University of Salford, UK, people begin to use phrases like "administrative totalitarianism" of Brussels.

In the frame of these discussions about mechanisms of the EU, mass-media must be the free observer, registering the points of view expressed and transmitting it forward to the public opinion; they constitute themselves as transmissions channels from Brussels to the EU's countries capital-cities and, forward once-again, to the European citizens. Hard task for journalists who have to allow a bigger place for improving their professional skills in European affairs. Harder task for journalists from the candidate countries. Due to the economic situation, stressed some participants, many newspapers from East, cannot afford to have special correspondants in Brussels or specialized journalist in European affairs. The EU information it's mediated through local and international press agencies, and the degree of accuracy it's pretty low. It's why the direct meetings between Western and Eastern representatives continue to be very important. Both parts have the possibility to discuss openly their problems and new international challenges and, together, think about the proper solutions. Of course, the level of the discussions aren't at the top of the decision centers of the EU and we can legitimately ask about the opportunity of such meetings. The reunification of Europe, after more than 45 years of ideologically separation cannot be done from a day to another. We have to deal with a long process of rediscovering, both of us, who we are, our common roots and, after, to start working in common. Starting at the individual level, considering ourselves as human beings, normal people, without any ideological connotations. We have behind us a past - whose evaluation still must wait the passing of time, we need to look at a common future thinking the present. Otherwise, we'll risk to make the same ideological mistakes and destroy the project before its birth.