

## Preface

Today Europe is celebrating its cultural diversity, which is both a strength and a challenge for a deliberative democracy, identified with functioning electoral system, active civil society, rule of law, as well as independent and responsible media. However, recent processes of EU enlargement and integration, ratification of EU Constitution and Lisbon Agreement have not been successful to proof sufficient commonness within the new Europe and its public sphere. On the other hand, we may observe increasingly diverse public spheres where national and international players construct and transform public agenda.

Mediation of European news is one of the key conditions while creating and sustaining European Public Sphere (EPS). The role of civil society and mass media in the development of EPS has been intensively questioned by researchers through the last decade. For instance, the emergence of a post-national civil society and spring of civic media initiatives in Europe have been amplifying during the last decade. Therefore, to theorize and assess public sphere, the interplay between journalism culture, political culture and societal culture has to be taken into consideration.

Europeanization of the national public spheres is clearly a *process* which could take place more intensively, thus there are many

questions that need to be clarified in this respect: What is the role of the media and organized forms of civil society in it? What are the obstacles for creating European public spheres which are friendlier towards different groups in society? Do all Europeans have the same powers to act as citizens or non-citizens? What is the role of the media in constructing civic cultures in Europe?

This special issue of "Sociologija. Mintis ir veiksmas" contains a number of original papers presented at the international conference "European Public Spheres, Civil Society and Civic Mass Media", organized by Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas in April 2007. The conference and its proceedings have been supported by the EU 6 Framework Programme, the CINEFOGO Network of Excellence *Civil Society and New Forms of Governance in Europe – the Making of European Citizenship*<sup>1</sup>. The Network aims at enhancing the understanding of social and democratic processes, citizenship and democratic participation in Europe. More than 40 institutions and 180 researchers and PhD students contribute to the Network activities coordinated by the University of Roskilde (Denmark).

Dynamic changes within and outside Europe and significant challenges have attained a lot of research and debates. Studies of

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<sup>1</sup> More information about CINEFOGO Network of Excellence is available at [www.cinefogo.org](http://www.cinefogo.org)

EPS have been in rise for more than a decade. The articles published in the special issue represent a wide range of different approaches and topics around the EPS issue, including political communication, media organization and journalism practices, European reporting and coverage.

Paolo Mancini opens the discussion on the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the EPS research. Hannu Niemenen invites to rethink the conceptualization of EPS(s) and normative understanding of the notion of public sphere. The author suggests considering Europe as social and cultural networks, and EPS seen as an intersection of a multiplicity of different European networks and their public spheres.

Bridgette Wessels applies the notion of 'proper distance', which is understood as hospitality, responsibility and trust, in the context of Europeanization and mediation of public spheres. Boris Popivanov sheds light on the development of the contemporary citizenship framework in Bulgaria with regard to the EU accession in 2007. Ina Dagytė and Aurelijus Zykas elaborates on different country communication strategies, particularly *country branding*, understood as an effective tool to develop the European identity and create common values.

Drawing on the comparative research results of the European project "Adequate Information Management", Auksė Balčytienė and Aušra Vinciūnienė discuss European news environment and the implications EU reporting has on the journalism practices and routines. Following the authors, today we can observe the signs of internationaliza-

tion, institutionalization and professionalization of the European communication culture. Tuomo Mörä continues analysis of the major challenges for the European journalism culture. The authors argue that emerging EPS has been hindered by the prevailing journalism logic, news values and existing practices of EU governance and structures.

Mojca Pajnik questions the potential of commercial and public media to reactivate the citizens because of their increasing dependence on the economic and political interests. Instead, she introduces alternative, i.e. public-generated media, understood as a public space created by the individual citizens acting in their own name, as a solution to the problems of commercial and public media. In the final article prepared by Auksė Balčytienė, Kristina Juraitė and Jolanta Reingardė, the empirical evidence on the existing media cultures is analyzed to arrive at possible solutions and recommendations for a more successful development of political and media cultures in the enlarged Europe.

With the special issue we hope to encourage an elaborative discussion on the issue from the comparative perspective which is indispensable to comprehend and conceptualize the multidimensional processes of the EPS (trans)formation. We would like to thank all the authors for their contributions, as well as Nemira Mačianskienė and Algimantas Valantiejus for their help and guidance with this special issue on EPS.

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