

The Dynamics of Europeanness of Lithuania's Media Elite (2008–2015)¹

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Abstract. *This article presents insights about Lithuania's media elite, gained during research carried out on the basis of a complex Europeanness model, developed by Heinrich Best (Best 2012: 208-233). Data describing Lithuania's media elite are analyzed with reference to three dimensions or facets, identified in the original model of Europeanness: emotive, cognitive-evaluative and projective-conative. However, the list of variables examined in the study is considerably longer as compared to the initial static model offered by Best, and the analysis is much more detailed. This comparative study is aimed at identifying and describing the evolution of emotive identification of Lithuania's media elite with Europe in terms of the objective and judging approach of the EU in the period from 2008 to 2015. Results of the*

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research revealed a clear trend that Lithuania's media elite have been becoming European. It was noticed that it tends to increasingly associate itself emotionally with Europe. Besides, the number of representatives of this elite group that assesses the common EU governance negatively (when the EU's common foreign policy in respect of countries found beyond the EU borders is becoming increasingly accepted) has been consistently decreasing and the trust in the EU institutions has been enhancing. Looking to the future, the representatives of Lithuania's media elite tend to assess the EU prospects in the medium-term and long-term (10 years) optimistically. They also hold the view that 10 years later the EU, as a geopolitical, political and economic entity will be stronger, and that both social and economic differences among the EU member states will not be so sharp. Euroscepticism is seen not only on the cultural plane. Correlation analysis has revealed that young age (people under 40) and an intensive socialization in the EU networks (constant communication with the EU partners) determine that Lithuania's media elite have been becoming European.

Keywords: *Europeanness, media elite, the European Union, the EU institutions, Lithuania, emotive or affective identity, assessment, EU's common foreign policy, trust, future prospects of the EU.*

1. Introduction

This comparative study delves into the Europeanness of the Lithuanian mass media elite and its development in the period from 2008 to 2015, which brought many changes both to Lithuania and to the European Union (EU). In 2008 and 2012, Lithuania saw the parliamentary elections, which demonstrated quite different results – the majority, composed of the central and right wing, elected in 2008, was replaced by the majority formed of the central and left wing, elected in 2012. Over the period under consideration, the Lithuanian national currency – the Litas – was replaced with the euro (the first attempt in 2007 had failed, but the second one in 2015 was a success). In addition, the 2008-2015 period is considered to be the time of the painful manifestation of an unprecedented financial crisis in Lithuania and the aversion of the

crisis by using drastic austerity measures as well as a period of absolute economic recovery. Finally, the second half of 2013 is the period of Lithuania's presidency of the EU Council, when our politicians and diplomats took responsibility for the coordination of supranational (European level) decision-making processes.

In the period from 2008 to 2015, the EU itself also encountered a number of important events. At the end of 2009, the Lisbon Treaty came into force on the basis of which the European Parliament, which is elected directly by the EU citizens, acquired new powers in the process of adoption of the EU legislative acts, in the process of approval of the EU budget and in seeking for international accord; also, an initiative was developed by European citizens, which provided for the right of the citizens of the Member States to demand new EU legislative acts; besides, the positions of President of the European Council and High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy were established, a direct election of the President of the European Commission and the European Parliament was approved etc. The years 2009 and 2014 saw ordinary elections of the European Parliament (EP), following which the number of eurosceptics in the EP increased significantly in 2014. In the 2008-2015 period, political and economic tension in the EU was also incited and is still being incited by the Greece debt crisis, which requires new euro stabilization measures and which causes distrust in the European monetary system. Russia's aggression against Georgia and Ukraine recorded during the period under consideration forced the EU to impose economic sanctions on Russia. The almost uncontrollable flow of refugees from the Middle East to Europe, which started in 2014, has been dividing the EU and promoting it to talk about the inclusion of restrictions in the Schengen Agreement. The aforementioned events (in Lithuania and the EU) have affected the value-related attitudes of Lithuania's media elite (just like other segments of the national elite) as well as their attitude towards the EU.

Why is the attitude of media elite and its development important? Discussions in the academic environment and among citizens result in

general agreement that media elite (persons who take managerial positions in national mass media entities, political and social commentators who reach a wide audience) possess significant influence on public opinion as well as on public policy. Some authorities of public communication even state that media creates and shapes, instead of reflecting and resonating to the mood and evaluation by the general public (McCombs, 2004). The impact of the media of the Central and Eastern Europe on the processes taking place in the society reveals important and long-term trends of public trust in media as an institution (Matonytė 2009: 172; Balčytienė, Vinciūnienė, Auškalnienė 2012) and the increasing convergence, homogenization and commercialization of media sources (Balčytienė, Bajomi-Lazar, Štětka, Sükösd, 2015). Besides, the emphasis is put on the power of the national media elite, which is extraordinarily big, particularly in Lithuania, in regard to other segments of social power elite (Matonytė 2010). Thus, these theoretical and empirical observations lead to the need to study the content, the outlines and the development of the Europeanness of media elite of new EU member states (in this case, of Lithuania's) in more detail. This is evident especially in view of the fact that academic research show that the media outlets of the EU member states are one of the most important factors that shape the political and cultural agenda of the EU and determine the occurrence of the European public space (Koopman, Statham, 2010). In this way, this study into trends of the *Europeanness* of Lithuania's media leaders and their characteristics is interesting not only as a certain academic "exercise," but also as a review of important factors, which may have a considerable effect on identity and policy, on levels both national and supranational.

2. The Notion of Europeanness

The concept of *Europeanness*, introduced by Heinrich Best (2012) and developed in empirical research carried out in Lithuania (Matonytė, Morkevičius 2013) accentuates that the EU, as a political project, as a setup of political institutions and as a political community, can be re-

lated to different systems of attitudes (emotive, cognitive, evaluative), different orientation in terms of time (principles directed towards the past, perceptions of *here and now*, visions and expectations directed toward the future) and different reference objects (EU institutions, strategies, policy directions, values etc.). This multifaceted notion of *Europeanness* is defined by identifying three dimensions: *affective*, *cognitive-evaluative*, and *projective* (Matonytė; Morkevičius 2013: 73-75), which all help express the relation between the social actors (segments of elite, individual groups of societies etc.) and the EU.

More specifically, the emotive aspect of Europeanness records people's identification with Europe and, correspondingly, it is thought that the stronger is the relation with Europe (or the EU), the higher is the level of Europeanness. One of the key academic tasks, which is determined by this affective aspect of European identity, is to evaluate and interpret the relationship between the national and supranational (European) identity (positive, negative or neutral). The cognitive-evaluative dimension of Europeanness reflects the interest of an individual person and of collectively operating social actors in the EU politics and relevant events and the normative assessment of these things (approval or disapproval of the observed or forecast trends of the EU political, social and cultural life). In this case, Europeanness is expressed in a pro-European attitude and a positive evaluation of the EU institutions, their political direction and their support. This can be measured when, for instance, the level of trust in the EU institutions is known as well as the attitude towards the statement "the European unification has gone too far or should be reinforced," etc.; also, the determination to direct important and authoritative decisions from the national level to the supranational level, positive assessment of efficiency of the EU decisions etc. In this regard, Euroscepticism is, accordingly, a reverse – negative – form of expression of the cognitive-evaluative Europeanness (Ondruz-Băcescu 2014).

The projective dimension of Europeanness reveals positive expectations related to the successful future of the EU (for example, in the next

10 years). Empirical data of this dimension includes beliefs about the EU prospects in the future, an acceptance of further common policy of the EU etc.

3. Description of Empirical Research

This study refers to the details on Lithuania's media elite collected in the period from November-December 2008 to October-November 2015. In the survey, which was prepared according to the international comparative (of countries and elite segments) methodology, respondents were asked to answer questions related to the national government and the EU (Best, Lengyel, Verzichelli 2012; Matonytė, Morkevičius 2013).

In 2008, as many as 35 representatives of the media elite in Lithuania (just like in other European countries in which this scientific project was carried out) were interviewed. The sample included editors and deputies of national dailies, weeklies, commercial and public television and radio channels, portals of online news, heads of news agencies and the most prominent journalists and political commentators of the country, the content created and disseminated by whom is first of all (and in principle) not of the entertaining, but of informational (political and public) character (for more, see Matonytė, Morkevičius 2013: 240-241). In 2015, by use of the analogous selection method and the same but updated questionnaire, as many as 32 representatives of Lithuania's media elite were interviewed (the methodology of the survey established the quota of 30 respondents).

In 2015, the total "population" of Lithuania's media elite was comprised of 134 leaders of the country's media. This list was compiled with reference to the positional institutional method and the method of elite selection based on reputation, i.e., taking into consideration the position held in significant means of mass media on a national scale and the prominence of the person in the society (expert evaluation was supplemented in autumn 2015, when one informational online portal

announced a list of the most influential leaders of Lithuania's media (Jackevičius 2015). Following the principle of rating (in descending order), 72 persons on the list were contacted (almost every second on the list), i.e., 35 of them who completed the questionnaire drawn up for the survey. To contact the respondents, publicly available contact details were used and (in some cases) personal relations (contacts on *Facebook*). Emails, which contained the description of the survey, were sent to them and they were invited to join the implementation of the survey by responding to questions (an electronic form of the questionnaire was also available, respondents could also answer the questions during a face-to-face meeting with the surveyor or a telephone survey method could be used). Every potential respondent received the invitation twice.

It should be noted that in the reference period, i.e., from 2008 to 2015, the sector of Lithuania's media encountered no radical structural changes (no new players entered the media market). Nevertheless, there were some organizational changes: during the reference period, the internet media became considerably more important in Lithuania – it now bows down only to television in terms of popularity, whereas hardcopy newspapers and magazines have been increasingly losing their audience (the European Parliament Information Office in Lithuania 2015). However, despite the increasingly popular internet news portals, the public trust in media is not evenly distributed: in 2008, those who trusted it accounted for 41.5% (details by portals BNS and *Lrytas.lt* 2008), in 2013, this indicator was at a record low – 33% (details by online dailies BNS and *Lrytas.lt* 2013), and in 2015, this rate increased again and amounted to 40% (*Lietuvos Rytas* 2015). Over the period under consideration, Lithuania (due to Russia's aggression in Ukraine) saw the emergence of new information about the influence of propaganda: announcements that disclosed manipulations in a public sphere were made public (*Delfi* 2015), amendments to the Law on Public Information were discussed (and adopted) (*ELTA*, 2015), also, the retransmission of some foreign

TV channels recognized as propaganda was temporarily suspended in Lithuania (Zubrutė 2015).

The comparison of Lithuania's media elite in 2008 and 2015 as the main set and the list of relevant samples leads to the statement that, in the first case, almost 60%, and in the second case – almost 50% of respondents coincided (in other words, in 2015, every second respondent completed an analogous questionnaire in 2008), which shows the stability of Lithuania's media elite as a collective entity.²

Although it is known that representatives of media elite often take few positions – for instance, the same person is an editor of a media source, the head of a news agency and an influential commentator or blogger – in general, the structural profile of Lithuania's media, when comparing the year 2008 and the year 2015, is fairly similar (see Table No. 1). Given the represented means of mass media, both in 2008 and 2015, most of the respondents belonged to internet media. The absolute majority of the respondents belonged to the same media sector in both periods of the survey and, according with the position they held, they were either the managers (CEOs, editors, owners) or leading journalists (observers, analysts, commentators, public intellectuals).

From the social-demographic point of view, both samples of the media elite were similar: the average age in 2008 was 43 years old, in 2015 – 44 years old. In 2008, the number of male respondents was higher (77%), and in 2015, the sample of respondents demonstrated more even distribution of male and female respondents (59% of men and 41% of women). With respect to whether respondents affiliated themselves to the Roman Catholic confession, which is prevailing in Lithuania, in 2008, such persons accounted for the absolute majority of Roman Catholics, meanwhile, in 2015, their number slightly reduced.

² In simple terms, it would be interesting to have an analysis of the possible development (change) of the attitude of certain individuals who participated in the survey in 2008 and 2015; however, following the principles of confidentiality of survey details and data protection, it is technically impossible.

Table No. 1. The structural profile of the representatives of Lithuania's media elite, interviewed in 2008 and 2015.

Characteristics	Mass media in 2008		Mass media in 2015	
	%	N	%	N
Age:				
under 40	46	16	50	16
40 and over	54	19	50	16
Means of mass media:				
Television	17	6	13	4
Radio	11	4	13	4
Daily (press)	11	4	9	3
Weekly (press)	17	6	19	6
Internet media	27	9	37	12
Media agency	-	-	6	2
other	17	6	3	1
Position occupied:				
Manager (head), deputy, executive director, owner	48	17	34	11
Editor	6	2	13	4
Journalist	46	16	53	17

Interestingly, the intentions of the leaders of Lithuania's media elite interviewed in the 2008-2015 surveys to pursue a professional career on the European level became more evident (from 26% to 31%). Even the sample of 2015 already contained some cases of repatriation – for instance, there was a respondent who said that he managed to attain a career on the European level and returned to Lithuania to continue it; meanwhile, the long list of our survey, which includes a set of Lithuania's media elite, contained some more similar cases.

In the period from 2008 to 2015, the number of representatives of Lithuania's media elite, who do not communicate with the heads or colleagues from the EU institutions or organizations at all or communicate

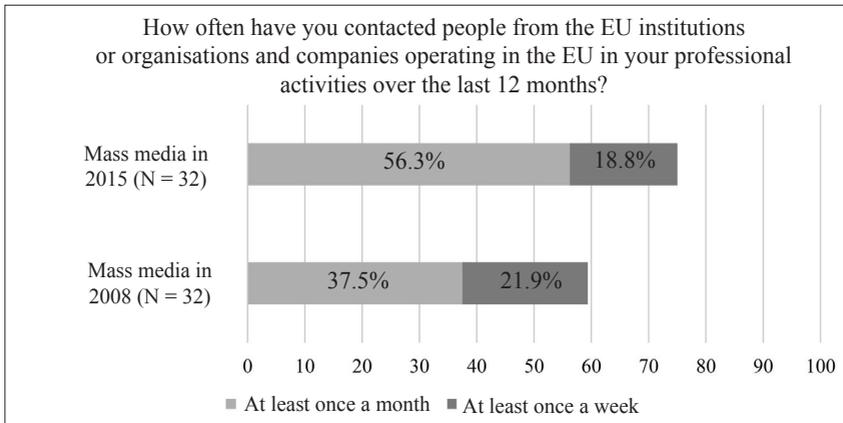


Chart No. 1. The professional contact of the representatives of Lithuania’s media elite in the EU in 2008 and 2015.

very little (merely once in 3 months) in their professional activities, had decreased (see Chart No. 1). Whereas in 2008, the leaders of Lithuanian media, who engaged in the European network, little accounted for 40%, but in 2015, they accounted for only 25%. The proportion of those who communicated with their colleagues in the EU intensively (at least once a month) significantly increased: from 38% in 2008 to 56% in 2015.

With regard to the aforementioned distinctive distribution of power in Lithuania (Matonytė 2009), it should be noted that in 2015, Lithuania’s media elite stressed the role of the EU institutions in the national decision-making system: their (EU institutions’) influence on the changes encountered in the country was seen by the respondents as “very big” and equal to the authority of business organizations and the President of the Republic (Dalia Grybauskaitė). With a view to the changes in the national decision-making system and the field of culture in 2008-2015 (i.e., when Lithuania positioned itself as an EU Member State more effectively), the focus on an ordinary citizen decreased in the reference period and the influence of the MPs of the EP decreased as well (see Chart No. 2). In addition, it is important to note that the

leaders of media started evaluating their (representatives of the most important means of mass media) influence on the national decision-making process in a more reserved manner, though they remained highly ranked: when comparing the year 2008 and 2015, it can be seen that in 2008, the influence of an MP of the Seimas was evaluated as 30% more significant than that of a media leader (i.e., 61 and 41 points accordingly were given on a 100-point scale); meanwhile, in 2015, it was seen as almost twice bigger than that of a media leader (51 and 28 points; see Chart No. 2).

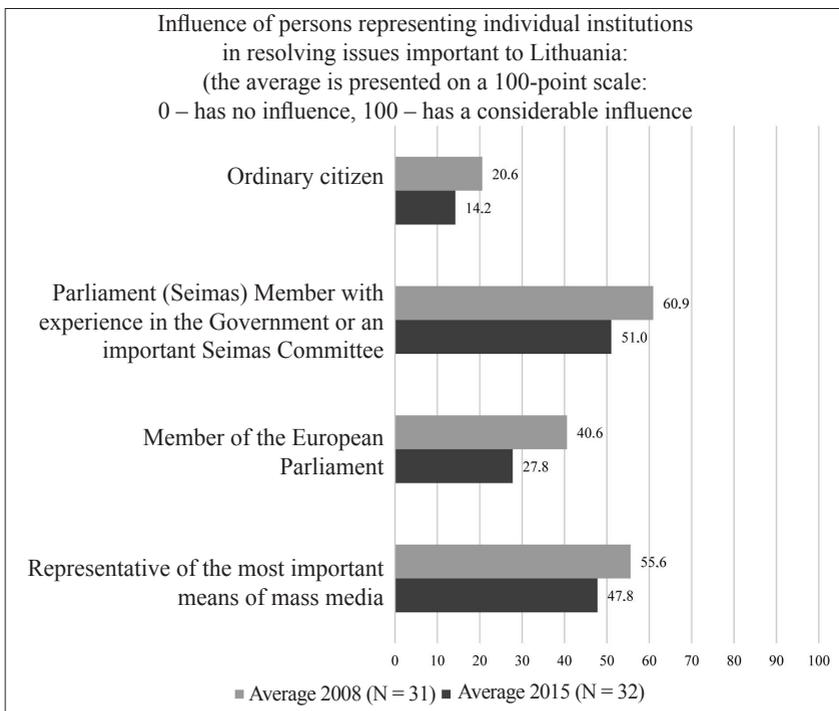


Chart No. 2. The 2008 and 2015 opinions of the representatives of Lithuania’s media elite on power distribution.

4. Emotive Europeanness

As regards the emotive level, i.e., the perception of one's identity, it has been observed that in the period from 2008 to 2015, the share of Lithuania's media elite, which associated itself firmly both with Lithuania and Europe, had maximally increased (see Chart No. 3). The European identity, which has developed in an affective manner, can be explained as a consequence of the increasing experience of Lithuania's membership in the EU (the duration of socialization in Europe). For example, when comparing the old and the new EU member states, it can be observed that the identity in the old EU member states (from all viewpoints of the society) was considerably more developed; this fact can be explained by the particular "mechanical" variable of the duration of membership in the EU (Mansfeldova; Spicarova, Staskova 2009).

Academic literature fails to substantiate that EU membership could directly and exclusively shape national identity. As stated and asserted

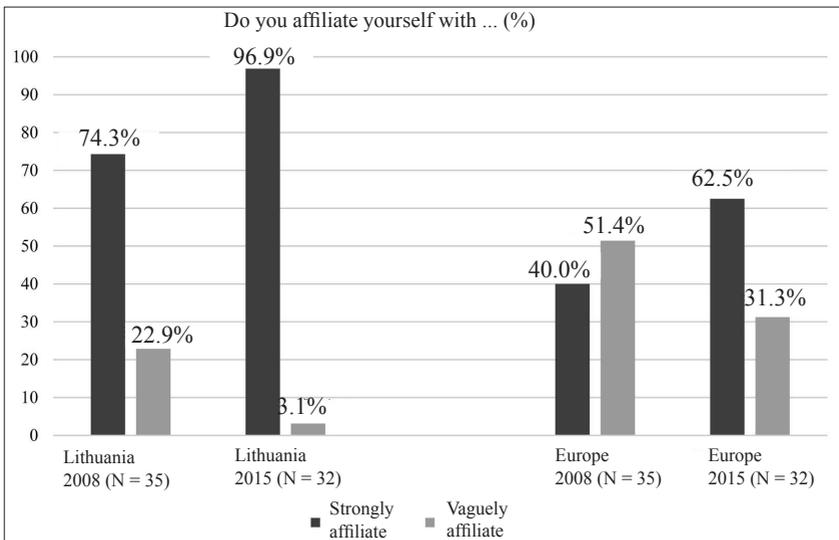


Chart No. 3. The identification of Lithuania's mass media with Lithuania and with Europe (EU) in 2008 and in 2015.

**Exact question in 2008: Do you affiliate yourself with Europe?*

in the classical academic theory of different level of identities, the situation is different: the developed (developing) European identity negatively affects the identification with a nation (and local community) and vice versa – the fear to lose national identity weakens the support to the EU (McLaren 2004). However, the other camp of academic research reveals the “marble cake” trend when analyzing the subject of identity (Hermann, Risse-Kappen, Brewer 2004), which entails the European and the national identity supporting each other rather than acting as opposites. The latter theory is also evidenced by the details about the European and the national identity of Lithuania’s media elite: both have been developing in a coherent manner. In 2015, Lithuania’s media elite (the sample of which included Poles, Russians and Jews) associated themselves with Lithuania and Europe in a parallel manner. This phenomenon of double identification is first of all explained as a response to the events in Ukraine, which is strongly supported by Lithuania as fighting for its European prospect and national sovereignty.

The trend of identification with Lithuania (from the affective aspect), which is prompted by external factors (threat and opportunities) is contributed to by the observation that Lithuania’s media elite assess Lithuania’s democracy, quality of performance of the state institutions and the well-being of citizens critically, and this, in turn, shows no associations with deep feelings towards one’s country – Lithuania – at all (see Section 5.3). In this context, the EU is itself one of the external factors (defined relatively in separation from the national political framework), which determines positive context and offers prospects.

5. Cognitive-Evaluative Europeanness

5.1. Further Support to European Integration

From the cognitive-evaluative point of view, in the period from 2008 to 2015, Lithuania’s media elite demonstrated its Europeanness only fractionally. The direction of the change based on rational considerations and evaluations was completely different (decreased) from the aforementioned any more pronounced emotional identification with

Europe. Although the absolute majority of Lithuania's media elite suppose that the European unification should be promoted and supported, the support (having in mind further prospects of this idea) by the representatives of mass media decreased in 2015, but still remained quite strong: from 7.0 to 6.8 points. The support of a unified Europe in the future was assessed on the 10-point scale, where 0 meant that the process has already exceeded the limits, and 10 - that it should be more active. Still, it should be noted that in 2015, the variety of opinions of Lithuania's media elite on this issue was wider (in 2008, the standard deviation was 2.2, and in 2015 – 2.5 points). There were one or two leaders of Lithuania's media claiming that the EU integration has exceeded all limits. This could be seen as an expression of Euroscepticism.

As seen from the verbal commentaries of the respondents, this change in the idea of European unification (its weakening trend) can be based on economic reasons: the problem of Greece's debts, which became relevant from 2009, unveiled the drawbacks of the European monetary system. However, this eurosceptical "revelation," with respect to Lithuania's media elite, is very narrow, since, in parallel, it was recorded that the fact that Lithuania (eventually) joined the Eurozone, which, as is known, has currently been burdened by many problems and the uncertainty of which was assessed positively.

5.2. Influence of the EU Member States on the EU Governance

In general, Lithuania's media elite were quite undivided both in 2008 and in 2015 in its attitude that some (big) countries are too influential in the supranational EU decision-making system. Still, the number of those who think differently increased over the reference period (from 6% in 2008 to 16% in 2015 (see Chart No. 4). An even more pronounced trend from the cognitive-evaluative attitude towards Europeaness was noticed when comparing the opinions of Lithuania's media elite in 2008 and 2015 on whether consideration is taken of Lithuania's interests when making decisions in the EU supranational or inter-governmental structures: the number of those who think that the EU level

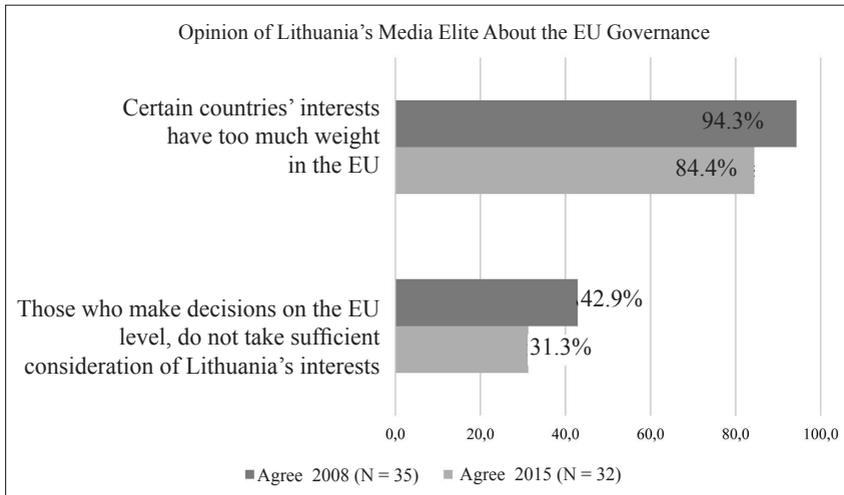


Chart No. 4. The opinion of Lithuania's media elite about governance in the EU.

decision-makers fail to take into consideration Lithuania's interests sufficiently fell notably (from 43% to 31%, see Chart No. 4).

The evaluation by Lithuania's media elite of whether Lithuania benefited from being a member state of the EU did not change and remained maximally high (positive). In 2015, in particular, there were none of those left who had doubts about the benefits of being in the EU among the representatives of Lithuania's media elite. This trend could be explained not only by direct benefits obtained by Lithuania while using the finances of the EU Structural Funds and other sources related to the EU and availing of the provided opportunities, but also indirectly, especially, in the context of the war in Ukraine, when considering a possible scenario of could have happened had Lithuania not been in the EU composition.

5.3. Trust in Institutions

As regards the attitude of Lithuania's media elite towards the political authority institutions, in 2015, a slight, but still lower distrust in the

Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania could be felt (on a 10-point scale, the assessment equal to 4.0 in 2008 dropped to 4.6 in 2015 on average). With a view of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, in 2015, trust in this body remained minimal (slightly higher than in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania) but stable (5.1 point in 2008 and in 2015).

In the context of such low trust in political institutions, trust of the representatives of Lithuania's media elite in the EU institutions acquired additional tones of the value. First, change (differences) in the trust expressed by Lithuania's media elite in the EU institutions could be observed over the period from 2008 to 2015. Second, when comparing the level of trust in national and supranational political institutions, a trend to "credit" the European institutions more than the Lithuanian ones could be observed.

Although the number of those who trusted (chosen by 8-10 people on the scale from 1 to 10) in the European Parliament dropped dramatically (from 20% in 2008 to 12.5% in 2015), there were also less of those who had almost no trust in this institution (1-4, from 31.4% to 28.1%). Still, in general, the average rate of trust in the EP did not change: both in 2008 and in 2015, it was 5.5, i.e., 1 point higher than the rate of trust in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

As regards trust in the European Commission, the situation was similar. The number of respondents who did not trust in this institution (1-4) increased (from 14.3% in 2008 to 18.8% in 2015); however, the number of those who highly trusted in the European Commission (8-10) increased (from 28.6% to 34.4%). Yet, the average rate of trust in the European Commission by Lithuania's media elite was fairly stable over the period from 2008 to 2015 (6.1-6.2 points); on the one hand, it was slightly higher than trust in the European Parliament, on the other hand, it was one point higher than the rate of trust in the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

The most marked change in the 2008-2015 period was observed when analyzing the trust of Lithuania's media elite in the European

Council of Ministers. The number of the representatives of Lithuania's media elite who trusted in this institution very much (8-10) increased dramatically (from 22.9% in 2008 to 40.6% in 2015), and the number of those who almost did not trust in it (1-4) dropped (from 20% to 15.6%). The average rate of trust in this intergovernmental organization became considerably higher (from 5.8 points in 2008 to 6.5 points in 2015).

A relatively high level (increases or at least does not drop) of trust in the EU political institutions can be explained by the fact that the latter has become more known. On the one hand, Lithuania's integration in the EU makes assumptions for direct engagement in the operation of the EU institutions and learning about their work more closely; on the other hand, in the second quarter of 2013, when Lithuania presided over the EU Council, more attention was devoted to the activities of the EU institutions. Here, the initiative and responsibility is borne by the media elite, who directly regulated and continue to regulate the flow of this information and the moulding of its content in Lithuania.

5.4. Performance of Democracy in the EU

From the cognitive-evaluative viewpoint, in the period from 2008 to 2015, representatives of Lithuania's media elite were content with democracy in the EU (high rating). In 2015, the share of those who thought so increased up to 90%, and the portion of eurosceptics, who were discontent with democracy in the EU and had their reproaches with regard to the bureaucracy or poor relationship with population, decreased almost twice (see Chart No. 5).

Thus, differently from the EP election in 2015, where the wave of Euroscepticism rose among the ordinary population (voters),³ leaders of the Lithuanian media were not so much Eurosceptical (in some aspects the decreasing trend was observed). The increased content

³ It was also observed in Lithuania, when 3 out of 11 EP members referred to the statements by Eurosceptics in their election campaigns and belonged to the most Eurosceptic groups of EP parties (Matonytė, 2015).

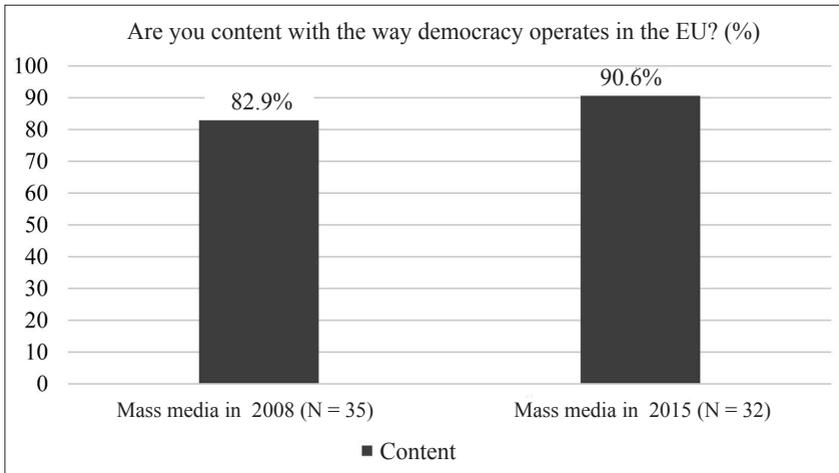


Chart No. 5. The attitude of Lithuania’s media elite regarding democracy in the EU in 2008 and 2015.

of the leaders of Lithuania’s media with democracy in the EU can be explained by two arguments: by directly observing and enlightening about the relevant events in the EU (due to Lithuania’s integration in the EU), they gain more good practice and accept the principles of the Lisbon Treaty, which came into force late 2009 and which guarantees greater democracy in the EP elections as well as when appointing the European Commission (see Section 5.5).

5.5. EU Governance

As regards the model of the EU governance, i.e., giving preference to intergovernmental and supranational (federal) principles of governance, in 2008, the absolute majority of Lithuania’s media elite tended to privilege the intergovernmental model of governance and to give prominence to the national interest (see Chart No. 6), i.e., it was almost unanimously stated that the member states, and not the central EU government, must be the main actors in the EU. Besides, more than a half

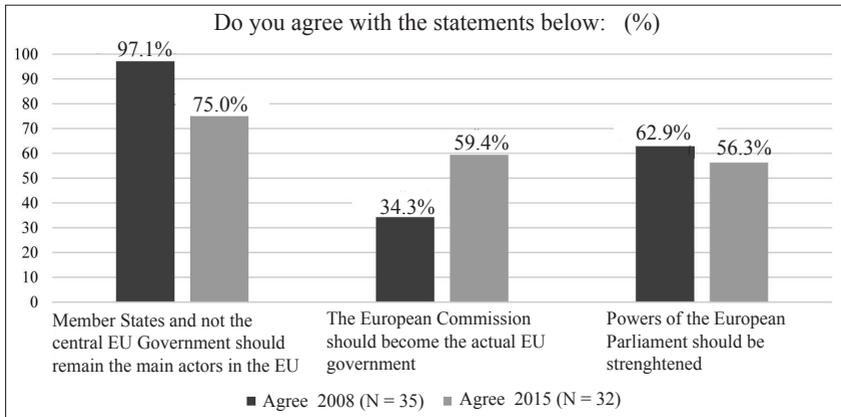


Chart No. 6. The 2008 and 2015 opinions of the representatives of Lithuania’s media elite regarding EU governance.

of the leaders of Lithuanian mass media were inclined to disapprove of the statement that the European Commission should become the actual government of the EU.

It has been observed that the opinion of Lithuania’s media elite, interviewed in 2015, about the EU governance referred less to the priorities of the national government, but the trend to accept the intergovernmental model of governance was still clearly pronounced. The extent of acceptance of the statement that Member States and not the central EU government should be the main actors in the EU decreased by 20 percentage points. The idea that the European Commission should become the actual government of the EU received almost twofold support (more than 50% of respondents agreed with the idea). The attitude of the Lithuanian mass media leaders towards the strengthening of powers of the European Parliament almost did not change over the period from 2008 to 2015 and was favorable in this regard – in particular when this idea was advocated during the drafting of the Lisbon Treaty and later, when it was already established.

5.6. Threats to the EU

In cognitive-evaluative respect, it is important to analyze the evaluation of threats to the EU. Such evaluation is inseparable from certain emotional tints and expresses the attitude toward the EU situation and development. A quite high level of perception of a specific threat shows that this specific aspect is considered important and problematic. This methodological observation is perfectly illustrated by the previously observed trend that representatives of Lithuania’s elite treat the threat posed by Russia to the unity of the EU as an especially great one (Matonytė, Morkevičius 2013).

The opinions of Lithuania’s media elite about the threats to the EU in the 2008-2015 period were dynamic; besides – most interestingly – trends both in descending and ascending directions were recorded (see Chart No. 7). In 2015, the attitude of Lithuania’s media elite towards Russia as a threat to Europe became clear to the maximum extent (from 86% to 97%).

When interviewed in 2008, Lithuania’s media elite pointed out that one of the most serious threats was the inclination of the EU member

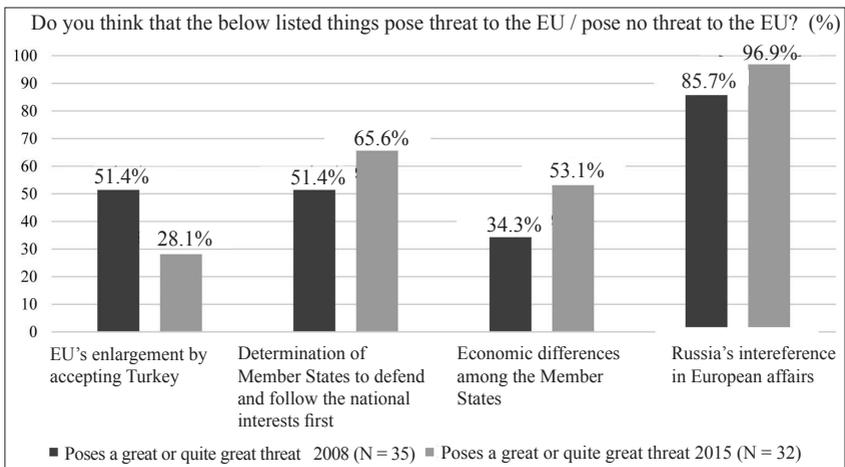


Chart No. 7. The 2008 and 2015 opinions of Lithuania's media elite about the threat posed for the EU.

states to take into consideration their national interests in the first place. As seen before (see Section 5.5), Lithuania's media elite agreed with the idea that member states should be the most important in the EU slightly less over the period from 2008 to 2015; for this reason, it seems consistent that in 2015, Lithuania's media elite gave even more prominence to the threat presented by the determination of the EU member states to defend their national interests first (from 51% to 66%). In parallel, the leaders of Lithuania's media elite held the view that economic differences between the member states posed a threat to the EU. These changes could be explained as a response to the financial crisis of 2009 (and the never-ending Greece's debt repayment drama). This reaction also reveals the movement toward becoming European (i.e., determines the need to reduce economic differences among the EU member states and the importance of national interests in the EU system).

On the other hand, in 2015, the leaders of Lithuania's media elite were concerned about the threat posed by the possible accession of Turkey considerably less than in 2008. In the context of general perception of geopolitical, political and economic threat to the EU, the reduced concern about such a threat as Turkey could be explained by the fact that with the danger of terrorism growing globally and with the increase of political (military) tension between Turkey and Russia, Turkey started to be perceived not as a "threat," but as an "opportunity" for the EU (and Lithuania) both in terms of geopolitical and other aspects. This coordination of the attitude towards threats would mean that Lithuania's media elite are inclined to think not only about Lithuania's as of a separate state's security and well-being, but also about the EU (Lithuania's situation in the European Union). The conducted analysis of the situation proves that it is typical for Lithuania's media elite to behave according with the "marble cake" principle, and this trend, in turn, determines the insights about the interaction of national and supranational combinations and landmarks.

The attitude towards the threats which are possibly posed to Lithuania due to its membership in the EU brings forward another complete-

ly different (opposite) aspect of the cognitive-evaluative Europeanness (the other side of the coin). The opposite of low and insensitive assessment of different threats to the EU as an entity, which would mean the trend of becoming European is the threats, which are given high points and are sensitively assessed and posed to Lithuania due to its membership in the European Union and which thus show weakening Europeaness; it is also called Euroscepticism.

Over the period from 2008 to 2015, the concern of Lithuania’s media elite over the threats posed to Lithuania, which are related to its membership in the EU, became more serious. Only 3% of respondents interviewed in 2008 claimed that the EU policy presented a threat to Lithuania’s cultural integrity, and this number grew to 19% in 2015 (see Chart No. 8). Thus, a handful of individual eurosceptics, in terms of culture in 2008, increased to 20% in 2015 as regards Lithuania’s media elite.

The opposite trend of weakening Euroscepticism is observed when talking about the threat posed to Lithuania’s social wellbeing by the EU policy. The number of the representatives of Lithuania’s media

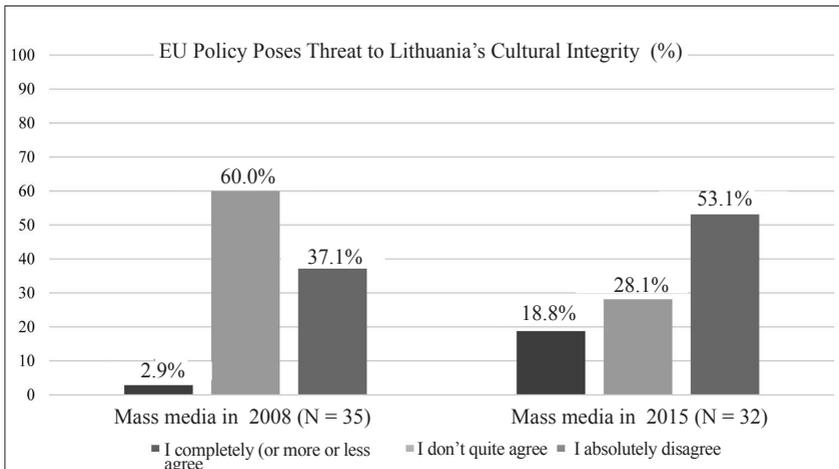


Chart No. 8. The 2008 and 2015 opinions of Lithuania’s Media Elite on the EU’s threat to Lithuania’s cultural integrity.

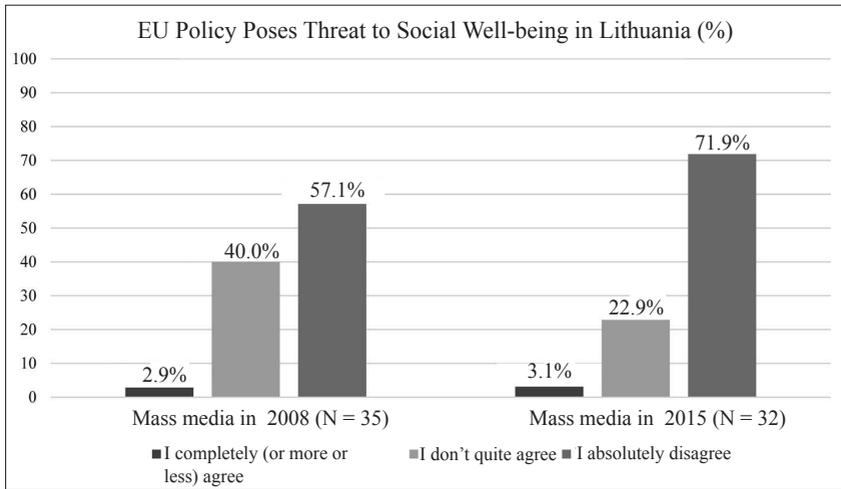


Chart No. 9. The 2008 and 2015 opinions of Lithuania’s media elite about the EU’s threat to social well-being in Lithuania.

elite thinking that there is no such threat at all increased by 15% and this happened at the expense of those who stuck to the “lukewarm” attitude in 2008 towards the possibly negative EU’s effect on the social wellbeing of Lithuania, but later changed their mind (see Chart No. 9). As regards the threat of membership in the EU to the quality of democracy in Lithuania and Lithuania’s economic growth, Lithuania’s media elite, surveyed in 2015, was unanimous and did not observe any threat regarding this notion.

6. Projective Europeanness: EU 10 Years Later

From the projective point of view, i.e., looking at the approval (and disapproval) of the supranational level governance 10 years later, the outlines and the level of the Europeanness of Lithuania’s media elite over the period under consideration (2008-2015) slightly changed (see Chart No. 10). Whereas in 2008, when the idea and the need to provide greater support to the EU regions facing economic and social difficul-

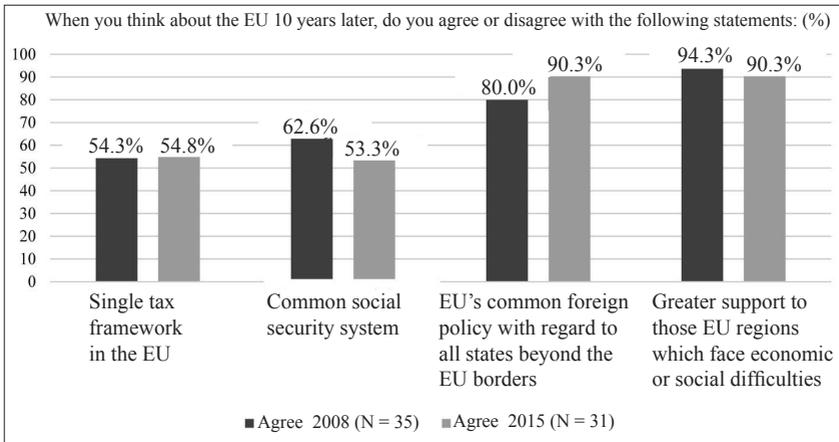


Chart No. 10. The 2008 and 2015 opinions of Lithuania's media elite about EU governance 10 years later.

ties received the highest degree of approval (90%), in 2015, the same degree of approval was expressed in terms of the EU's common foreign policy vis-a-vis non-EU members states (increased by 10%).

Assuming that the most important component in the common policy of EU's spheres is possibly the component of foreign policy, which is related to the development of national and supranational sovereignty (see Matonytė, Morkevičius 2013: 74-84), the available details about the fact that the support of the EU's common foreign policy increased by 10% leads to a general statement that from the projective perspective, Lithuania's mass media has been becoming European. This can be explained by the attractiveness of the EU's pooled sovereignty, which has become prominent, especially in the face of geopolitical tension (due to upheaval in Ukraine and the threat posed by Russia). In part, it could be stated that the projective Europeaness of Lithuania's media elite in the same (strengthening) direction was affected by the economic crisis, the control of which requires the provision of greater EU's support to regions. Still, there is no reason to claim that economic motives would strongly promote Lithuania's media elite to become

European in terms of projective dimension. Lithuania's media elite only moderately favorably assessed the common EU tax and social security system over the reference period: both in 2008 and 2015, almost more than a half of leaders of Lithuania's media elite agreed with these ideas of commonness; however, the number of those who disagreed with the idea to have the EU's common social security system in 10 years evidently increased (the degree of approval dropped by 10%).

Looking from the perspective of long-term visions, the attitude of Lithuania's media elite towards the EU in the future is optimistic (see Chart No. 11). Two thirds of the leaders of Lithuanian mass media consider that 10 years later the EU will be politically more integrated, its economy will be probably stronger, economic and social differences among the EU members states and their citizens will not be so much pronounced and the EU, as a geopolitical power, will become more important on a global scale.

Based on these five criteria (increasing political integration, growing economy, indistinct social differences, smaller economic gap and

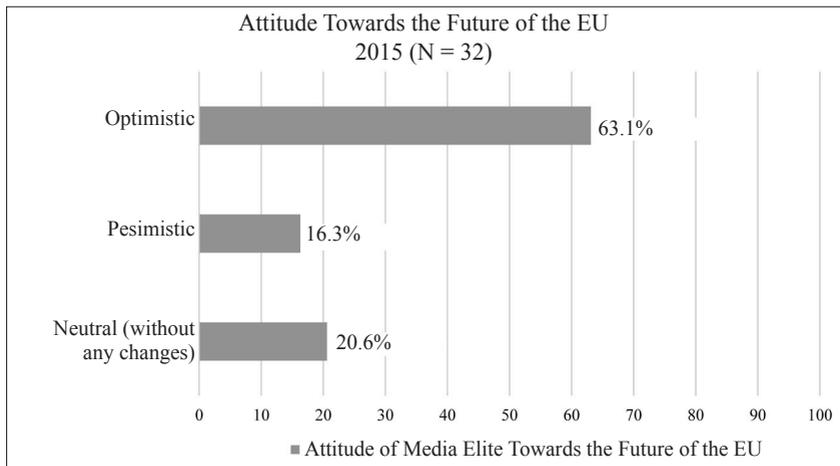


Chart No. 11. The 2015 opinions of the representatives of Lithuania's media elite about the future of the EU.

greater geopolitical power), a general statement could be made that the EU's future is seen negatively by about 16% of the representatives of Lithuania's media elite. Taken in isolation, the most pessimistic opinion held by Lithuania's media elite was of the prospects of the EU as a geopolitical power (the number of pessimists (eurosceptics) accounts for 30%). Lithuania's media elite were least sceptical about the promising forecast with regard to economic development of the EU (hardly 5%).

7. Factors of Becoming European: Young Age and Socialization in the EU's Networks

The analysis of details available on the period from 2008 to 2015 about Lithuania's media elite revealed that this segment of the elite, having in mind the trends of becoming European, is quite united both on the emotive (affective), cognitive-evaluative and projective levels. Still, even relatively small samples (N 35 and 32) illustrate two catalysts of Europeanness. First, younger leaders (under 40) distinguish themselves from Lithuania's media elite for their Europeanness. Over the period under observation, their emotive identification with Europe became especially evident (increased by 6%). From the cognitive-evaluative perspective, younger representatives of media elite are more supportive of the ideas of the EU's unification and supranational governance. For instance, the idea that the European Commission should become the actual government of the EU both in 2008 and in 2015 was more supported (by 20%) by the leaders of mass media of younger age, the absolute majority of whom (68.8 %) expressed this opinion in 2015. If compared, it would become evident that this idea of making the EU more prominent is accepted by only every second leader of mass media, who is aged 40 or over 40. An even greater difference, while comparing the representatives of media elite of younger and older age, is demonstrated by their attitude towards the issue whether the EU policy poses a threat to social wellbeing in Lithuania. For instance, "I don't quite agree/I completely disagree" was the answer of almost every respondent aged under 40 (93.8%); meanwhile, this opinion was expressed by

only every second respondent aged over 40. The leaders of mass media aged less than 40 were more enthusiastic when talking about becoming European, i.e., they assessed the future prospects of the EU optimistically.

Analogous trends were observed looking at which of the representatives of Lithuania's media elite identified persons who communicate (keep contacts) intensively with the EU institutions and colleagues versus those who communicated with them only seldom or did not communicate at all. Those leaders of Lithuania's mass media who were more engaged in the EU networks were more tied to the EU and, in view of both cognitive-evaluative and projective approaches, were more European.

8. Conclusions and Prospects of Research

Assessing the changes that took place in the period from 2008 to 2015 in observation of Lithuania's media elite, an evident trend of *becoming European* was noticed. This is seen from all three dimensions, namely the affective, cognitive-evaluative and projective, which were taken into consideration when making the assessment.

From the emotive perspective, the trend of Lithuania's media elite becoming European is seen from the fact that it tends to relate itself not only with Lithuania, but also with Europe. Cognitive-evaluative *Europeanness* becomes clear when comparing the elite's attitude towards individual EU institutions, the general EU governance and satisfaction with democracy in the EU. Over the period under consideration, more trust was placed in certain EU institutions (in particular, the EU Council); trust in the European Commission also increased (most representatives of the elite would even give the European Commission the role of the EU government), and the general level of trust in political authority institutions in the EU is greater than in political bodies in Lithuania. Given the EU governance, the share of representatives of elite which negatively assess decision-making on the EU level decreased. The number of those who think that when making decisions the interests of cer-

tain countries are over-weighted had decreased; besides, there were also less of those who believed that, when making decisions in the EU, the interests of Lithuania were not taken into consideration enough. Besides, when assessing the quality of democracy in the EU, there were almost none among the leaders of Lithuanian mass media who would pronounce adversely about democracy in the EU.

The analysis of the notion of a threat posed to Lithuania and the EU showed only a slight increase in cultural Euroscepticism among the representatives of Lithuania's media elite. With reference to other aspects of this parameter, Lithuania's media elite are becoming European.⁴

The Europeaness of Lithuania's media elite is manifested also from the perspective of the projective dimension. In this regard, the elite of mass media are also becoming European: this is especially evident on the geopolitical and political planes, though in view of economic policy this process is quite sluggish. Representatives of Lithuania's media elite are increasingly unanimously supporting the EU's foreign policy. Besides, they tend to assess the EU's future in the medium-term and long-term in a very optimistic manner: most of them think that the EU will be stronger both politically and economically and that social and economic differences among the member states will be smaller 10 years later. In fact, it is evident that such optimistic view of the EU's future is based on beliefs, hopes and desires, rather than on the cognitive assessment and analysis of the actual situation.

A more active affiliation of one's self with Lithuania as well as with Europe, greater content with the EU governance and demonstrated support to further supranational decisions and processes, as well as optimistic evaluation of the EU's future, are all unquestionably related to changes which took place in the period from 2008 to 2015 in Lithuania, the EU and worldwide. Economic downturn, Russia's aggression in Ukraine, the threat of terrorism and other challenges increase trust in

⁴ Positive, i.e., high and sensitive consideration of the EU's integrity, and negative, in other words, low and insensitive perception of the threat which is posed to Lithuania by its membership in the EU.

supranational political organization. In the presence of an upheaval, the EU is perceived not only as a provider of financial support, but also as a certain guarantor of social security and geopolitical stability.

When thinking about the future of research on Europeanness, it would be worthwhile to draw attention to the attitude of other segments of Lithuania's elite and the public opinion, to prepare a comparative study, one that would highlight the discrepancy between the notion and the feeling and the related problems and which would presuppose that the EU is becoming an integral part of Lithuania's political and cultural agenda. Besides, what the study did not include within its analysis and what should become the focus of future studies is the comparative research into the elite of the EU member states and their ordinary population, which would help identify how Lithuania's elite and society are distinct in the EU context (if they are at all).

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