

# THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN EUROPEAN IDENTITY FORMATION: UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF TODAY'S EUROPEAN MEDIA LANDSCAPE

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## **Abstract**

*This analysis is undertaken in the context of enduring questions in possibility of common European identity. This debate has become urgent over the past decade or so. The question I would like to address here is what is the role of the media in European identity formation? The paper attempts to answer this question through secondary analysis of the data from different research. The challenge is to understand how identity formation takes place in today's European media environment. But, an analytical conception of European identity should be understood as a process rather than a final categorization. Although media in Europe are essentially national, different studies prove that they cover European issues. The media have a key role in advancing our knowledge of Europe. For the formation of collective European identity, a strong European media landscape is a prerequisite.*

## **1. Theoretical framework**

The word 'identity' has a history. In the past, it was seen as something that was given to us. Nowadays, scholars suggest that we need to look particularly at identity formation. Modern interpretation of identity brings into question the traditional views about what really is identity formation. In this respect identity is a social construct which is formed along a continuum of "different degrees of choice and ascription".<sup>1</sup> Participation in identity formation has two contradictory principles. On the one hand, according to different theoretical domains which are proven by constructionists, identity is a discursive formation, and the

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1 Michael Kenny, *The Politics of Identity*, (Malden, MA: Polity, 2004), 37-38.

discourse is produced by those who have power. On the other hand, we have the freedom to choose the identity that corresponds to us. It is assumed that the importance of identity formation is associated with increasing unsecured and unstable, dynamic, 'flexible' or 'mobile' living conditions. According to Bauman, identity is "name given to escape for which the trace lies in the uncertainty."<sup>2</sup> Following from this, identity formation is constructed by means of some processes. Thus, the challenge is to understand how identity formation takes place in the contemporary world. In order to investigate the possibility of European collective identity, I will briefly characterize three aspects of the identity formation.

In the literature, it has often been observed these aspects of identity formation: personal (individual), collective and social. Human beings are the only ones that anguish over the question 'who am I'. In this manner, we see that understanding personal identity formation means understanding personal traits (personal choices, behaviors) and environmental circumstances (socioeconomic status, geographical limitations, family dynamics) and their impact on the individual's self-definition. Personal identity formations are the "meanings attributed to oneself by the actor; they are self-designations and self-attributions regarded as personally distinctive."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, collective identity formation refers to a set of individuals' sense of belonging to the collective. It is a cumulative product of individual's consciousness that belongs to a particular social group and emotional value and significance that derives from that membership. Moreover, collective identity formation is the concept that through participating in social activities, individuals can gain a sense of belonging that transcends the individual. However, it is possible that belonging to a particular collective will be so strong that it will trump other aspects of the individual's personal identity. It is also apparent that social identities "attributed or imputed to others in an attempt to situate them in social space. They are

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2 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 21-25.

3 David Snow, *Collective Identity and Expressive Forms*, (Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California, Irvine, 2001), 2-3.

grounded typically in established social roles, such as teacher and mother".<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this article is to explore the question of European collective identity. Thus, it is first necessary to know how important the presence of "otherness" is to the formation of "we-ness". According to Berger and Luckman, we really can not create the world without the existence of the other and without interaction with him.<sup>5</sup> Other is an important element in the sustenance of collective identity. With regard to this concept, the definition of the other is the prerequisite for defining we-ness. "Collective identities can be defined as constituted by a shared and interactive sense of 'we-ness' (anchored in real or 'imagined' or 'simulated' attributes and experiences) associated with a collective agency. Collective identities are fluid and adaptive in order to achieve political recognition, legitimacy or other specific aims. In terms of content, collective identities can be constructed around specific traits which are seen to distinguish one group from another: language, ideology, class, ethnicity or religion."<sup>6</sup> It is usually envisaged that language and ethnicity are regarded to national identity formation.

In the literature dealing with identity formation, language is very often held to be one of the most important indicators of belonging to a nation. Nation state is characterized by having a common language through which people can communicate with each other. As a consequence of the historical development of nations, concepts about language are not free from ideological connotations. Ethnicity definition tends to be based on a combination of categories including race, skin color, religion and regional origins. But there is no consensus on what constitutes an ethnic group and thus ethnicity also is not free from ideological connotations. Membership of any ethnic group is subjective. However, it has been argued that the ethnic group is a "stage in the development of all nations."<sup>7</sup>

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4 Ibid, 2-3.

5 Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, (Penguin, 1991), 23- 37.

6 Anna Cento Bull, *Collective Identities: From the Politics of Inclusion to the Politics of Ethnicity and Difference*, *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 2, no. 3-4, March/June (2003), 41-54.

7 Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic origins of Nations*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 22-24.

Historically speaking, national identities in Europe are usually traced to the period in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when political actors created 'imagined communities' among people who do not know much of the national territory. But, the map of Europe has been redrawn numerous times since this period. In recent years, the proliferation of transnational agencies, new political organizations and media actors challenge the traditional model of nation state. Gellner once said that for a given nation to exist, it must be one in which its people "can speak and produce the same culture."<sup>8</sup> However, globalization has transformed the classical model of nation and culture. "National identities are, like everything historical, constructed and reconstructed."<sup>9</sup> So, in the era of supra-state organizations and multicultural societies, we arrive at the knowledge point which indicates that in fact our identities are transient, multiple and depend on the circumstances and the angle of view.

Starting with the last point, my presumption is that the European identity formation is possible. Moreover, I think of collective European identity in practical terms. What are the connections between mass media and European identity formation? Is it stronger Europe Americanization than Europe Europeanization? Why is the European public sphere so important? These are a few of the questions we will try to answer in this paper. Thus, I argue that we need to take a practical turn in our understanding of European identity formation.

## **2. The Possibility of Collective European Identity Formation**

European integration and European identity formation are fields of study that have attracted an increasing number of scholars over the last decades.<sup>10</sup> The guiding questions for approaching this part of

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8 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 38.

9 Joseph Llobera, *The role of Historical Memory in (ethno) nation-building*, *Goldsmiths Sociology Papers*, (Goldsmith's College, London, 1996), 2.

10 In order to understand the concept of European identity formation I propose to read these books: Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: idea, identity, reality*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995). Jeffrey T. Checkel, Peter J. Katzenstein, *European Identity*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

my paper are: How much of European identity formation is visible? Is there a confrontation between the European East and European West? It is difficult to answer these questions because we are witnessing a process that still takes place. I do not intend to offer conclusive answers to all of these questions. One thing is clear: identity formation is essentially very fluid. However, in seeking to answer these questions, there may be theoretical lessons to be learned from different research.

The idea of European identity formation is a complex one. As a result of this complexity we will try to point out a few problems. The first relates to the economic and political aspect of European integration which was much more forced for decades than cultural. It is crystal clear when we look at the beginning of formation of the European Union: European Coal and Steel Community was founded in 1951 and transformed into the European Economic Community and then into the European Community and in 1993 it became European Union. Nobody denies the importance of the free market and political participation which are crucial for the stability of European Union. However, it seems the cultural and media aspect are the most important for the formation of European identity.

The identity of Europe has been changing especially since the Second World War. The European Union now has 27 members. Reconfiguration of Europe can be immediately noticed in the former Yugoslavia which is now divided into three different zones, which obviously have different relations with the EU: Slovenia joined the EU, Croatia is considered to be a future member, while the rest of the former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia) is still not included. "Freedom, which followed after the fall of Soviet domination in the countries of Soviet bloc since 1989 was for many of the east and south-east European countries, the first solid confirmation of their European identity after the Second World War. At the beginning of the 1990s, four specific cultural areas had already been identified in Europe: Central Europe, Baltic countries, South-East Europe and Eastern Europe. These areas the EU has offered different types of assistance for the purpose of their integration, that is. The EU has been effectively dealing in many ways with countries belonging to

the sub-regions. As a result, these areas have developed different rhythms and patterns of Europeanization".<sup>11</sup> In most so-called new European democracies, the Europeanization process began to exercise influence on the rhetoric of cultural and media policy. This process is characterized by the requirements to establish the so-called "three pluralism": plurality of ownership, market pluralism, and political pluralism. Accelerating the steps of European integration is the most important event in the history of Europe since the Second World War.<sup>12</sup>

There is another problem. What is the best way to integrate so many different peoples, languages, religions, minorities and immigrants maintaining their separate identities yet at the same time building a new common identity? The task is not easy. "Euroskeptics are asking: Why is there no significant collective identity Europeans as Europeans...? Europe, even that narrow Western one, is not a communicative community, barely has a common memory, and only very limited shares same experiences".<sup>13</sup> But here we must ask whether the European identity is brand new or a new form of an old European identity which has been formed over the centuries. It seems that the second one is more correct, because regarding all of the differences, Europeans share a common culture. It is consisted of all traditions, of ancient Greece and Rome, through Humanism, the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, philosophy, art, and folklore of all nations up to the symbols of the European Union. However, many theorists rely on research of Eurobarometer 57.1<sup>14</sup> where it is clearly visible that is not a high percentage of those who feel as Europeans. Viewing one's self purely as a European was an option selected by an average of

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11 Milena Dragicevic Sesic, Sanjin Dragojevic, Zamisljene ili prave podele? - Kulturne politike i njihove granice, [database on-line]; available at:

[www.produkcija.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=45&Itemid=38](http://www.produkcija.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=45&Itemid=38), last accessed August 1, 2009.

12 Ibid.

13 Graf P. Kielmansegg, Läßt sich die Europäische Union demokratisch verfassen?, in Auf der Suche nach europäischer Identität, ed. Gütersloch (Europa Union Verlag, 2005). 233-236.

14 EB 57.1 (2002), Standard Eurobarometer 57.1, European Union Enlargement, the European Parliament, and the Euro.

only 4% of those polled. A much higher percentage identify more with their own nation. On the other hand, almost half of the respondents in Europe, 44%, admit not knowing any other language than their mother tongue.<sup>15</sup>

Indicators are good, but one very important fact is forgotten viewed from the historical period of only six decades not much time has passed allowing for European integration. Why? If we focus only on changes in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin wall, we are clear how difficult it is to form a common identity from the patterns that used to be quite polarizing: West and East, capitalism and communism, democracy and one party system.

As a result of this complexity, it is usually envisaged that the Communist media regime in the Central and Eastern Europe was replaced by a market-led pluralistic media system after 1989. The post-Communist transformation involved fundamental changes in the media sectors in terms of production, organization, management, distribution and consumption. At this point we assume that establishing a new form of European identity is a difficult and slow process, especially given that Central and South Eastern European societies are not a "tabula rasa".

Here it is important to note that institutional, cultural and economical domination of Western countries should not be allowed. If all have the same task in forming the common European identity, it must take care that all parts of Europe give their contribution. Central and Southeastern Europe from its cultural wealth can provide a lot to Western Europe. This is not to be forgotten. Also, the aspiration of Turkey to enter the EU must be taken into account because Europe goes beyond the symbolic geographical Europe which, for example, has already been confirmed many times in Eurovision, a large media event. For this reason, it is claimed that the new conception of European belonging is needed. It is a complex and long process that is implemented at the national, regional and local level. This leaves open the question of how to achieve a balance between

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15 EB 243 (2006a), Special Eurobarometer 243, Europeans and their languages.

theoretical and practical definitions of EU politics. For example, when asked whether they are interested in European politics, 47% of the citizens of Europe responded positively. Also, it is not a small percentage who believes that things are moving in the right direction in the European Union (39%)<sup>16</sup> Following from this, the developed literature on negative aspects of the EU lacks a firm evidentiary base for many core claims.

### **3. What is the Role of Media in European Identity Formation? Advantages and disadvantages**

Because of all the above mentioned problems, it is of huge importance to determine what is the role, and how big is that role, of mass media in the formation of European identity. We live in an era of European integration where conditions change all the time. Europe today is increasingly driven by a combination of information and entertainment values. The media have the potential to exert enormous influence. In this light, Kellner defines several characteristics of the media culture. "Radio, television, film, and the other products of the culture industries provide the models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless. Media culture also provides the materials out of which many people construct their sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality, of 'us' and 'them'. Media culture provides the materials to create identities whereby individuals insert themselves into contemporary techno-capitalist societies."<sup>17</sup>

The mass media penetration in the twentieth century encouraged scientific research in various fields and the researchers tried to answer whether the phenomenon of mass media changed the forms of knowledge, culture and social life. Mass media has been long thought to be an authentic transformer of reality (the concept of media objectivity) and from this authenticity, especially in television broadcasts, comes public confidence in media. However, the process of creating media images is very

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16 EB 201, (2006), Special Eurobarometer, The future of Europe.

17 Douglas Kellner, Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern. (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.



complex. It includes the organization, selection, emphasis, and exclusion of certain aspects of reality through defining, representing and using stereotypes, and is also under huge influence of economic, social and ideological factors.

Media imposed themselves as one of the key agents of almost all political or cultural changes. Media speak from the vicinity, leaving the impression that it was speaking to someone closely related, which leaves the impression of personal contact. The question of the media role in common European identity formation imposes itself as crucial for understanding the processes which describe identity formation. Already at the beginning of 19th century it had been shown that mass media were very powerful because they represented the new governments, authoritative decision makers, which pre-structured world events and formed the institutional image of reality.<sup>18</sup> What can we learn?

Media offer many forms of identity. As one of the characteristics of European identity is that European identity keeps changing, the media have powerful arguments for this process. The media should actively promote the possibility of European identity formation. It is important to know that we use media representations of collective identity to create our sense of belonging. European identity formation is a project. Thus European media have to create a European identity by presenting to Europeans things they can identify with. "While trying to bridge gap between nations and Europe, and make her people become aware of their second identity, the media remain pluralism. This can be seen widely through broadcast media."<sup>19</sup>

However, growing differentiation, segmentation and fragmentation of media audiences in the communication subcultures can be seen, as well as paying the ransom of mass

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18 George Gerbner, Toward 'Cultural Indicators': The Analysis of Mass Mediated Message. Systems. AV Communication Review, 17(2), (1986), 137-148.

19 Ploy Udomsinka, Power of Media and the Forging of National and European Identity, [database on-line]; available at:

[www.euroculturemaster.org/pdf/udomsinka.pdf](http://www.euroculturemaster.org/pdf/udomsinka.pdf), last accessed August 1, 2009.

communication in the traditional sense of individual forms of communication. This results in a growing number of special interest groups in all types of media, as well as highly individual combinations of the use of media. Also, new media are no longer just an academic concept, they are not something which is discussed in theoretical debates. Media and audiences are becoming more fractured and dispersed with the arrival of new media. A study from Reuters Institute<sup>20</sup> says that if this trend continues, we will no longer have news. It will happen because the money for advertising migrates toward new media.

These concepts indicate the next conclusion: there are many events and many aspects of a certain event, they all cannot be presented. Therefore, the media's work is reflected in the fixation of meaning and definition of reality. That defining role of the media implies the ability to close ideological preferences selected in the meaning of the dominant discourse. Media defines the collective identity. If the media's job is important in the formation of identity, we need particularly to look at the works and research in which are traces of contradictory views regarding the media coverage of European topics in the existence of the European public sphere. Scholars agree that the media are the central institution of the modern public sphere, but they do not agree on the issue of their role in the formation of European public sphere.

"Impossibility school"<sup>21</sup> believes that there is no common European public sphere, because there is no common language, pan-European media and a common identity. Authors deny the existence of the European public sphere. It seems that the things here are put in the reverse direction. It would be logical to say that national and pan-European media should influence the formation of European identity, and not that the common public sphere does not exist because there is not that identity. Also, the

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20 Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 'What's Happening to Our News', Oxford Media Convention 2009.

21 'Impossibility school' applied the model of a unitary national public sphere to the European arena; for more details see: Dieter Grimm, Does Europe need a Constitution? *European Law Journal* 1 (3), 1995, 282-302 and Peter Graf Kielmannsegg, *Integration und Demokratie*. In M. Jachtenfuchs and B. Kohler-Koch (eds.), *Europäische Integration* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1996), 49-71.

authors argue that the EU suffers from a "communication deficit". According to Kurpas, Meyer and Gialoglou,<sup>22</sup> the EU is still an "unknown entity for many journalists". So, the role of media is crucial for the promotion of attitudes about the common European experience and the common European identity. William Gore, however, believes that there is no Europe as a media construct, because media audiences are interested only in what is happening in their country and that the issues of EU policy are completely ignored in the media space, and therefore there is no need for a supra-national body for self-monitoring as it would be, for example, the Pan-European Media Council.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, the "realistic school"<sup>24</sup> resents requirements that must exist in the media presentation of the European issue either on the national or European level. They agree that the real scenario of the European public sphere existence is linked, not for the supra-national common sphere, but for the Europeanization national sphere. Risse concludes that if media across national public spheres use the same media frames and formats when reporting on a specific European issue, this is a pointer of an actual common European public sphere. "As long as media report about the same issues at the same time, there is no need for pan-European media based on common language."<sup>25</sup> I am aware of the two stands and of their conclusions. In the next sections I will formulate an explanation.

Although media in Europe are essentially national, different studies prove that they cover European issues. The overview over self-references in European media from the 1950s to 2003

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22 Sebastian Kurpas, Christoph Meyer, and Kyriakos Gialoglou., *After the European Elections, Before the Constitution Referenda - Can the EU Communicate Better?*, (Centre for European Policy studies, CEPS Policy Brief, 2004), 2-21.

23 William Gore, *The benefits and disadvantages of pan European media accountability system*, Paper presented at the conference *European public sphere and journalistic responsibility*, Vienna, 26th -28th February, 2009.

24 Thomas Risse, *An Emerging European Public Sphere? Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators*, [database on-line]; available at:

[userpage.fuberlin.de/~atasp/texte/030322\\_europe\\_public.pdf](http://userpage.fuberlin.de/~atasp/texte/030322_europe_public.pdf), last accessed August 1, 2009.

25 Tuomo Mörä, *Boundaries of Public Sphere Ideals*, [database on-line]; available at: [www.uta.fi/laitokset/tacs/papers0506/Mora\\_public\\_sphere.pdf](http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/tacs/papers0506/Mora_public_sphere.pdf), last accessed August 1, 2009.

indicates that, for the first decades of its existence, Europe has played merely a marginal role in the landscape of self-references. The Maastricht Treaty marks a possibility for enabling a political union in Europe. The fruits of this process can be seen in 1999 and in 2003 (20.1 %).<sup>26</sup> Hodess concludes during the comparison of the periods 1985 and 1990/1 that clearly more intensive EU reporting can be found during the later period.<sup>27</sup> German media report a great deal on EU topics. Danish media also concern themselves quite frequently with EU topics.<sup>28</sup> Mezek from survey in Sweden television (1999 and 2004) comes to this conclusion: "The new member-states were, around the EU expansion, presented more as 'us', as the shared fate was stressed, as well as stereotypes were rejected. What is more, ordinary people have been noticeably more present in the news reports more than before, which are important for bigger identification."<sup>29</sup> Also, Adriana Fagarasan has done research on European Public Sphere in BBC News and SVT Rapport during the 2004 European Parliament Elections debate and came to the next conclusions: the importance and weight given to the European elections is highly reflected in a technical aspect; both the British and the Swedish news programs devoted on average a fifth ( $\approx 20$ min) of their emission time to election news in the two weeks leading up to the elections; the tone of the news connected to the European elections is generally neutral in both the television broadcasters.<sup>30</sup>

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26 David Trefas, National and European Identities in European media 1956 to 2003, *Culture nationale et identité communautaire: un défi pour l'Union européenne*, 11-13 décembre 2008.

27 Robin Hodess, News Coverage of European Politics: A Comparison of Change in Britain and Germany, in *Europapolitische Grundverständnisse im Wandel: Analysen und Konsequenzen für die politische Bildung* eds. Mathias Jopp, Andreas Maurer and Heinrich Schneider (Bonn: Europa-Union Verlag, 1998), 449-72.

28 Machill, M., Beiler, M. and Fischer, C. Europe-Topics in Europe's Media: The Debate about the European Public Sphere: A Meta-Analysis of Media Content Analyses, *European Journal of Communication* 21(1) (2006), 57-88.

29 Spela Mezek, European identity and the media, Re-definition of identity [database on-line]; available at: [www.statsvet.su.se/mediarum/Media\\_and\\_Politics\\_2/PDF/Cpapers/european\\_identity\\_and\\_media.pdf](http://www.statsvet.su.se/mediarum/Media_and_Politics_2/PDF/Cpapers/european_identity_and_media.pdf), last accessed August 1, 2009.

30 Adriana Fagarasan, The European Public Sphere in BBC News and SVT Rapport during the 2004 EP Elections debate, [database on-line]; available at: [www.statsvet.su.se/mediarum/Media\\_and\\_Politics\\_2/.../EPS.pdf](http://www.statsvet.su.se/mediarum/Media_and_Politics_2/.../EPS.pdf), last accessed August 1, 2009.

In order to conclude what is the role of media in constructing European identity, we must also underline some negative aspects of European audiovisual concepts that should be reconceptualized. In Europe, the lack of high-quality programs is evident. Investigative journalism and a program for minorities are represented in a small extent on public and commercial channels. News often has tabloid character, especially in the commercial channels. As a result, viewers often fail to find the information they need for democratic decision making. The European Union has to establish an independent agency for monitoring media markets and media concentration on the EU and global level. Although in Europe there are nearly 6500 TV channels, 1809 regional and local channels, 269 entertainment channels,<sup>31</sup> the report states that the television market in reality is very concentrated in terms of ownership structure and participation of the audiences. In most countries, several channels attracted the largest number of viewers. What defines media industry in Europe is consolidation. That process means that media industry in Europe is overpowered by the media conglomerate. Since 2003 there have been no changes between the first ten big ones, and it is a concern that the economical crises intensified the current processes and that it will be easier for the huge and powerful to survive than the small, local medias. Political pressure on regulatory bodies and public electronic media is widespread.<sup>32</sup> Concentration of media ownership is very frequently seen as a problem of contemporary media.

The main goal of the project "Understanding the Logic of EU Reporting from Brussels" is to better understand how an EU news topic is selected. According to a report, over 70% of lobbyists in Brussels work for corporate interests, and just 20% represent non governmental organizations.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, according to the interviewed spokespersons in Brussels, "particularly those

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31 The European Audiovisual Observatory, (2008), Broadcasting (Radio/TV).

32 Television across Europe: Regulation, Policy and Independence (2005) - Reports, press releases, media coverage, available at:

[www.eumap.org/topics/media/television\\_europe](http://www.eumap.org/topics/media/television_europe), last accessed August 1, 2009.

33 Understanding the Logic of EU Reporting from Brussels, Analysis of Interviews with EU correspondents and spokespersons, (AIM) Working Papers 2007/3, Bochum/ Freiburg: Projekt.

with a journalistic background, many problems occur because journalists of small media outlets are underpaid and work in very harsh conditions; they are obliged to write stories before they really know the subject and they do not have time to carry out a deep and profound investigation. As a result, they are looking for stories that are easy to produce and easy to sell. This, again, adds to a communication deficit."<sup>34</sup>

Another major problem is the Americanization of European media. Commercialization, deregulation, convergence and concentration its final term finds in the so-called "Americanization" of mass media's sphere. More specifically this means adopting the American model of organizing communication centers, production and programming patterns, as well as the American media products in a large part of the world, and even in Europe which was a bastion of mass communication in the public services. "Americanization is not only a huge presence of American media, but above all, understanding the role of media in society on the American way and acceptance of appropriate values postulated, thanks to which that the role is realizing. Many prominent European intellectuals publicly demand the European Union to protect the old continent from the Yankee Leviathan and American cultural imperialism, which Edgar Morin called "the new colonization".

In the global market, film, television, music, publishing and advertising industries are dominated by American media oligopoly. "Media are America" argued Jeremy Tunstall.<sup>35</sup> Since 1911 with the formation of the first film studio in Hollywood to the present day, American film production is the largest and most profitable on the world media market. Recent research shows that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the leading position still belongs to Hollywood with an over 40% share in the global film production.<sup>36</sup> The

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34 Aukšė Balčytienė, Karin Raeymaeckers, Els De Bens, Aušra Vinciūnienė, Roland Schröder, Understanding the Complexity of EU Communication: The Spokespersons' Perspective, [database on-line]; available at: [www.aim-project.net/fileadmin/docs/13\\_spokespersons.pdf](http://www.aim-project.net/fileadmin/docs/13_spokespersons.pdf), last accessed August 1, 2009.

35 David Morley, and Robins, Kevin, Spaces of identity : global media, electronic landscapes, and cultural boundaries, (London ; New York : Routledge, 1995), 220.

36 The European Audiovisual Observatory, (2001), Film, Television, video, and new media in. Europe.

largest film productions in Europe are English, Spanish, French, German and Italian. However, their role is not large, because about 75% of films are imported from the USA to Europe.<sup>37</sup> In the TV industry exists a similar situation. During the seventies USA exported two more hours of program than all other countries combined. "Narrative conventions, visual tropes and storylines found in Hollywood film and U.S. television have become the 'norm' for the European audience. These modes of representation have also had an impact on the ways in which most Europeans have learned how to "know" reality. This does not mean that Europeans have become completely and passively "Americanized", but that a U.S.-based system of representation has informed their identities in meaningful ways."<sup>38</sup>

In sum, we assume that there are positive and negative aspects of media power. Thus, it is quite clear, a common European identity does not develop in some kind of a vacuum. The starting point for the concept of European identity needs to begin with the common transnational media systems and European public sphere. In other words, research needs to begin by media observing EU citizens, policy makers and interest groups. Mass media actors are able to cut across national boundaries. Because of Americanization, consolidation and commercialization, the EU needs to create a well organized pan-European media institution and self-regulatory bodies. A more realistic model of European identity formation would allow the EU to improve some parts of its transnational media strategies. That is why Europe needs a theoretical and practical redefinition of media practices.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The relationship between media and collective European identity in this paper has been examined in various contexts. We may safely conclude that the media are deeply linked to the formation

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37 The European Audiovisual Observatory, (2003), Horizontal rating of audiovisual content in Europe: an alternative to multi-level classification?

38 G. Aiello, 'Talking Back as a Strategy in Identity Formation: The European Union vs. the U.S. on Issues of (Audio) Visual Representation', (2009) Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Sheraton New York, NY.

of European identity. The media should provide information concerning all European countries and cultural exchange through films, programming and media events. In the same time, media should actively support a forum for discussion on European affairs. Since the authors agree that there is still more "communication deficit" in Europe, national and transnational media system must work harder on the presentation of the European issues because their role is the largest in the formation of European identity. Media are a pivot of democratic multicultural European society that will respect, protect, cherish and improve ethnic, national, cultural, religious and linguistic differences. If someone is a German, Italian or Romanian he is at the same time European. The foundation requires respect for diversity and it is contained in the modern understanding of identity that implies freedom as essential feature of identity. Everybody is free to feel as members of a certain nation, but at the same time they should feel like Europeans who are privileged at least because they participate in the construction of a unique historical project which is called the EU. This project is not similar to the United States or to traditional nation-state or supranational uninfected monolith community. It is a Europe composed of small Europes, enriched at the same time with the same similarities and differences, and that is what the media should represent. Europeanization of media space and a common identity is a process that lasts. But this does not mean that European identity does not exist. European identity just needs more care through media practices. Europe now has to consider how to form new models to advance pan-European media institutions.

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