Медіафорум : аналітика, прогнози, інформаційний менеджмент : зб. наук. праць. – Чернівці : Чернівецький нац. ун-т, 2019. – Том 7. – С. 47-62 Mediarorum: Analytics, Forecasts, Information Management: Collection of Research Articles. – Chernivtsi: Chernivtsi National University, 2019. – Vol. 7. – pp. 47-62

https://doi.org/10.31861/mediaforum.2019.7.47-62 УДК: 327(497:2:4-6ЄС):07+653.1](497.2)

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## ВПЛИВ РОЗВИТКУ ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКОЇ ІНТЕГРАЦІЇ НА ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЮ МЕДІА РЕСПУБЛІКИ БОЛГАРІЯ

В статті проаналізовано сучасний стан засобів масової інформації Республіки Болгарія та зміни, які відбулися в цій сфері за період підготовки та членства держави в Європейському Союзі. Автор наголошує, що в процесі європейської інтеграції ЗМІ відіграли ключову роль, відображаючи всі суспільні процеси, зокрема вплив євроінтеграції на суспільно-політичне життя країни. Демократизація суспільства сприяла серйозній трансформації медіа-системи і методів управління нею. Держава зуміла синхронізувати своє медіа-законодавство з європейськими нормами та стандартами, що створило позитивну динаміку розвитку на медіа-ринку, особливо в сегменті телерадіомовлення. Процес підготовки та вступу Болгарії до Євросоюзу позитивно вплинув на медіа-політику країни та законодавство про ЗМІ. В даний час головним пріоритетом зовнішньої політики Болгарії є процес європейської інтеграції і ЗМІ відіграють у ній безпосередню роль. Приєднання до ЄС дозволило Болгарії досягти більшої внутрішньої стабільності; використати можливості для розвитку демократичних інститутів, включаючи систему ЗМІ. РБ поки ще не досягла стандартів європейської інформаційної політики у сфері етнічних питань, але після вступу до ЄС є відчутні позитивні зрушення у розвитку цієї сфери. У країні з'явилися комерційні ЗМІ, які відмежувалися від державних, змінили профіль, шукаючи свою аудиторію. Через концентрацію медіа-власності та зростання інвестицій у медіа-ринок РБ, конкуренція між комерційними ЗМІ зросла і з'явилася тенденція до комерціалізації медіа-контенту. Це привело до поширення гібридної моделі преси та тавтологічної аудіовізуальної продукції. «Кла-

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сична» цензура поступилася місцем цензурі власності, що суттєво обмежило різноманітність медіа-контенту і форматів. Істотним недоліком на рівні медіа-системи також є слабке нормативне забезпечення процесу переходу на цифрове поширення інформації.

*Ключові слова:* Республіка Болгарія, засоби масової інформації, європейська інтеграція, медіа-політика та законодавство про ЗМІ.

## The Impact of European Integration Development on Media Transformation in the Republic of Bulgaria

The article analyzes the current state of the mass media of the Republic of Bulgaria and the changes that have taken place in this area during the period of preparation and membership of the state in the European Union. The author emphasizes that in the process of European integration, the media played a key role, reflecting all social processes, the impact of European integration on the social and political life of the country in particular. The democratization of the society has contributed to a major transformation of the media system and methods of its management. The state was able to synchronize its media legislation with European norms and standards, which has created a positive dynamics of development in the media market, especially in the segment of TV and radio broadcasting. The process of Bulgaria's preparation and accession to the EU has had a positive impact on the country's media policy and media law. Currently, the main priority of Bulgaria's foreign policy is the process of European integration and the media play a direct role in it. Joining the EU has allowed Bulgaria to achieve greater internal stability; use opportunities for the development of democratic institutions, including the media system. The Republic of Bulgaria has not yet reached the standards of the European information policy in the field of ethnic issues, but after joining the EU there are tangible positive changes in the improvement of this sphere.

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Commercial media have appeared in Bulgaria, which dissociated themselves from the state, changed their profile, looking for their audience. Due to the concentration of media ownership and increased investment in the media market of Bulgaria, the competition between commercial media has grown and there is now a tendency to commercialize media content. This has led to the spreading of a hybrid model of the press and its tautological audiovisual production. "Classical" censorship gave way to property censorship, which significantly limited the variety of media content and formats. A significant drawback at the level of the media system is the weak regulatory support for the transition to digital distribution of information. *Keywords:* Republic of Bulgaria, mass media, European integration, media policy and mass media law.

**Introduction.** In modern conditions of increasing globalization and development of the information society, the integration process plays a key role in the policy of national States. In this case, the accession of the Republic of Bulgaria (RB) to the EU can be considered as entering the common information space, with the primary principles to be that of democratization. With the development of globalization, individual countries, including the RB, faced the task of preserving cultural and national identity. The integration process, in turn, provides the nation States with all the benefits of globalization without suppressing their identity. The EU contrasted the destructive consequences of globalization with a conscious European identity, which forms new national and ethical guidelines and acts as an integration force of society.

Culturally and historically, Bulgaria considers itself a part of European civilization and since the beginning of democratic changes in the 1990s; it has actively sought its own place in the European space. Gradually, the main priority of its foreign policy activities has become the process of European integration. Therefore, the EU membership is an important step in the development of democracy in the country – due to society seeing it as a warranty of the state stability, international peace and protection of human rights. Such prospects are very important for Bulgaria, which is part of the unstable Balkan region.

**Presentation of the main material.** Joining the EU has become a means to achieve strategic national goals. First, it is a positive dynamics of Bulgaria's development as an independent democratic country, which occupies a worthy place in European politics. Second, it is economic growth and, as a result, an improvement in the standard of living of Bulgarians. EU membership has opened up new economic prospects for Bulgaria, due to access to European markets and new technologies, and EU structural funds have created real prerequisites for stimulating the Bulgarian economy. Joining the EU has allowed Bulgaria to achieve greater internal stability; use opportunities for the development of democratic institutions, including the media system.

In the process of European integration, the media play a key role, because they reflect all social processes and influence the social and political life of the country. The democratization of Bulgarian society has contributed to

a serious transformation of the media system and its management methods (Democratization in post-Communist transition processes, 2006, 96). New structures of media and their regulatory bodies have emerged, and their functions and character have changed. Over time, Bulgaria was able to synchronize its media legal system with European norms and standards, which has created a positive dynamics of development in the media market, especially in the segment of TV and radio broadcasting (The Law on radio and TV; The Law on radio communication; The Law for electronic communications; the law on public radio broadcasting; The Law for copyright and related rights; Resolution No. 1 of the 4th European conference of Ministers of media-sphere policy on the future of public broadcasting).

Modern Bulgarian media operate as commercial enterprises, based mainly on Western experience (Raicheva, 2006, 57). However, the specific conditions of the political and economic situation in the country have a negative impact on the editorial and financial independence of the media.

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The activity of the media system in Bulgaria dates back several centuries. It has come a long way of formation and development. The radical political changes in Bulgarian society that took place in 1989 led to the transformation of the media system, the very nature and functions of the media changed. The process of preparations and accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the EU has had a positive impact on the country's media policy and media legislation. Currently, the main priority of the foreign policy of the Republic of Bulgaria is the process of European integration and the media play a direct role in it.

The stages of formation of the Bulgarian media system are inextricably linked with the periods of national history. The Bulgarian press was born in the depths of the Ottoman Empire; at first its main goal was to preserve the Bulgarian identity, culture, language and religion. During the Bulgarian Renaissance (1844-1877), the press played an important role in the national liberation movement and served as a means of consolidation of the people. The flourishing of the media in this most important period of Bulgarian history can be compared with the emergence of the national code, or with the entry into the common spiritual and cultural space (Panayotov, 1979, 173). After independence, the media had to look for new ways of development in the new state, but disputes in the environment of Bulgarian journalism did not contribute to the integration of society.

During the Communist regime, the Bulgarian media performed exclusively ideological functions (Panayotov, 1999, 838; Deenichina, 2008, 124). With the start of democratization in the Republic of Bulgaria, the social and political system has accordingly changed, which has led to fundamental changes in the media sector. Commercial media appeared in the country, which dissociated themselves from the state, changed their profile, looking for their audience. When the euphoria from the democratic change subsided, Bulgaria identified a number of problems that required immediate solutions. The media sphere required legislative reforms to create an effective system of media regulation and functioning of the media market. In 1998, the Law «on radio and television» was adopted, which regulated the audiovisual media sector. The law provided for the establishment of media regulatory bodies and the introduction of mandatory licensing for all participants in the electronic media market (The Law on radio and TV).

An important step for the development of the Bulgarian media was the process of preparation and accession to the EU, when the Bulgarian law on mass media was synchronized with the European norms and standards (Recommendation No.R(96)10 of the Committee of Ministers on the guarantee of the independence of public media broadcasting; Recommendation No. (2003)9 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on measures to promote the democratic and social opportunities of digital broadcasting; Recommendation No. 1641 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe «Public broadcasting»).

The program policy of the Bulgarian media has changed; the legal aspects of the functioning of the media market and the provisions on media ownership have been transformed. In the period of preparation for the EU accession, Bulgaria regulated the main functions and tasks of public and commercial media, the principles of their financing and editorial policy, which, in turn, stimulated competition in the media market (Ognyanova, 2004, 141).

The Bulgarian media sector is very developed in terms of numbers, the stratification of the media market has reached a high level, there are foreign investors and local players, tabloid formats and serious journalism, political conjuncture and independent media. The borders between different types of media are being gradually erased, and media empires are emerging that offer comprehensive services. At the same time, joining the European Union has become a means to achieve strategic national goals and the media play a significant role in this process. The dual nature of the media industry is extremely difficult for a legal entity to regulate. On

the one hand, the media can be considered as a type of economic service, and on the other – we must not forget about the cultural hypostasis of the media. The media themselves and the product they produce are responsible for shaping culture. They are directly related to the concept of public services.

An important step in the integration process was the formation of the public media sector. But most of the country's media is now in the hands of a few entrepreneurs who have turned them into a tool for achieving their political goals. Therefore, in the rating of press freedom, which is compiled by the organization «Reporters without borders», Bulgaria ranks last among the EU countries (Bulgaria: media, 2018).

The situation in modern Bulgaria is such that the pioneers of the number of independent publications – the daily newspapers «24 hours» and «Labor» – retain their leadership positions, but the publication «Duma», the heir of the Communist press, almost fell into decline. Weekly newspaper «Kapital» and the daily one «Kapital Daily» are pretentious publications aimed at educated readers interested in politics and economics. At the turn of the noughties, when the influence of the Internet was growing, a significant number of online portals with news content appeared in Bulgaria («News.bg» and «Dnevnik.bg») and a wide range of subscribers. Blogs, on the contrary, have lost popularity, as most bloggers write mainly in social networks: instead of their own blog, they maintain a page on Facebook.

The most influential TV channels in Bulgaria are the property of foreigners. So, the private TV channel bTV belongs to the concern of Central European Media Enterprises (CME) which belongs to the billionaire from the USA, Ronald Lauder. Nova TV channel was previously part of the Swedish media concern Modern Times Group, but in 2018 it was bought out by the PPF-Group of Czech billionaire P. Kellner (Bulgaria: media, 2018).

Thanks to the introduction of modern entertainment formats, private national TV channels were able to quickly overcome the long-term monopoly of the state TV. However, the social and legal TV channels BNT1, BNT2 and BNT HD continue to significantly influence the formation of public opinion in the country. The national radio of Bulgaria and the private radio station Darik Radio are unified national radio stations, the waves of which are dominated by author's broadcasts, not music content (Bulgaria: media, 2018).

The Law «On radio and television» provided for the financing of public media from the independent Fund «Radio and television», the funds to which were to go from the income from the subscription fee (Law on radio and TV). However, the government considered this measure to be potentially unpopular, because in a country with a low standard of living, society would treat the subscription fee as an additional tax burden. In addition, Bulgarian public media tend to compete with commercial companies in the advertising market, which leads to a decrease in the quality of their programs. Therefore, now the media is funded by program quotas, government subsidies and advertising revenue, which inevitably raises the question of their political and financial independence.

Due to the concentration of media ownership and increased investment in the media market of Bulgaria, competition between commercial media has increased and there is now a tendency to commercialize media content. This has led to the spread of a hybrid model of the press and its tautological audiovisual production. In modern conditions, «classical» censorship has given way to property censorship, which, in turn, has significantly limited the variety of media content and formats. A significant drawback at the level of the media system is also the weak regulatory support for the transition to digital distribution.

Thus, the date of completion of the transition to digital technologies in Bulgaria was postponed from December 31, 2012 to January 1, 2015. However, despite the postponement of the date of completion of digital dissemination of information, Bulgaria still occupies one of the last places among the EU countries in the use of digital technologies. As reported by the Nova TV, the report of the European Commission (EC) «On the progress of digital technologies in the economy and society», indicated that Bulgaria takes the second to last place in the EU for the use of digital technologies. So far, the Republic of Bulgaria remains in the group of «weakly digital» countries and only Romania is doing worse with digital technologies in the European Union (Digital technologies, 2016).

Only one direction is developing seriously in Bulgaria right now – communication, and according to this indicator it is at the level of developed EU countries. 72% of families in Bulgaria have access to high-speed broadband Internet, but it is not always available in rural areas. In addition, Bulgaria ranks last in the EU for the use of digital technologies in payments for utilities. Few Bulgarians use online banking or make purchases on the Internet; it is most often used for social networks. According to the EC,

only 31% of Bulgarians have basic computer skills. Moreover, 50% of Bulgarians have never used the Internet in their lives (Digital technologies, 2016). An important event of recent years in Bulgaria was the departure of the publishing group WAZ and the media conglomerate News Corporation from the Bulgarian media market. In this regard, a new stage of development of the Bulgarian media has begun, in which the liberal values of communication are based primarily on technological convenience, and not on marketing strategies (Kalinkin, 2005).

The content of new media is video, online radio, television broadcast, animation, sound design and text. Custom content also distinguishes new media from traditional media. New media are open to interaction with readers and allow them to create and modify the content of messages (Crosbie, 2006).

The harmony of the national minorities living on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria was a necessary condition for the European integration of the state. The information component of the media policy has played a significant role in this process. At the same time, racial and religious stereotypes still exist in society, which, in turn, create serious spatial, labor and educational distances in relation to ethnic minorities. The EU accession process required the government to seriously review the state policy regarding the ethnic and national communities living in the Republic of Bulgaria and to take thorough measures to integrate and consolidate them in the Bulgarian society. The information component played a very important role in this process.

The media of national minorities and media for national minorities received financial support from the «Open society» Institute of the National Council for ethnic and demographic cooperation, after which there was a positive trend in their development. Despite this, media reports addressed to ethnic communities are not yet effective enough. There are no mechanisms for tracking the communication characteristics of minority audiences and feedback (Tomov, 2009). The media often manipulate audiences in favor of certain political interests. Bulgaria has not yet reached the standards of the European information policy in the field of ethnic issues, but after joining the EU there are tangible positive changes in the development of this sphere. Bulgarian society has become, if not more tolerant, then at least more interested in the life of ethnic minorities living on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. The public media sector plays an important role in the integration process of ethnic communities.

The Bulgarian media is the channel of communication that ensures the process of European integration. Bulgaria, as one of the countries with a totalitarian past, has often demonstrated the substitution of social media roles. In modern conditions, the formation of new social roles is possible only if there is a clear model of transition to a new political structure, in which adequate parameters of the relationship between the media and political power are set (Matvienko, 2014). However, the lack of stable democracy in society in the beginning of the 2010s caused the formation of pseudo-media networks, as a result of which modern Bulgarian journalism mainly records significant events, but does not disclose their cause-andeffect relationships. There is no adequate understanding of media power in the media environment. After the parliamentary elections of 2017, a trend of mediatization of political life was formed in Bulgaria, which undoubtedly led to the politicization of media content. There is a belief in the media community that the media imitate the performance of real functions, and their own position has been replaced by the ideology of capital. In this regard, in 2018 there have been a number of serious initiatives in the field of media legislation in relation to their regulation, the establishment of transparency of ownership and the introduction of real restrictions on the concentration of media in one hand (Angelov, 2018).

In the process of European integration, the most significant transformations took place in the broadcasting sector of the Republic of Bulgaria (Bulgaria, 2016). In the EU, electronic media is traditionally considered a key element in the development of democracy. In the second half of the XX century, Western Europe began a rapid development of the audiovisual sector, which was characterized by the growing globalization and commercialization of electronic media. There were public and commercial broadcasters, and an effective system of media regulation was created. European TV and radio companies in their information policy focus on the program content, which helps them to be original and thus contribute to the development of media pluralism. Public television is an important element of the European media system, because its mission includes a number of social obligations to respect democratic principles and preserve the cultural heritage of Europe.

Upon joining the EU, the essence and nature of TV and radio broadcasting in Bulgaria has changed. The main changes were related to program policy and media regulation. Many new commercial companies have appeared in the electronic media market, but this has not improved the

quality of their programs. New broadcasters cannot resist competition from major TV and radio companies, which creates the preconditions for a monopoly on the media market (Tobacco, mafia and media, 2018). There is a need for effective regulation of the electronic media sector. A step in this direction was made by introducing a procedure for licensing broadcasters, which introduced two types of licenses – software license, which is issued by the Council of electronic media, and telecommunication license, which is issued by the Commission on regulation of communications (Zakharieva, 2016). In theory, this system was supposed to streamline the functioning of electronic media in Bulgaria, but disputes between regulators and the desire of the authorities to control the audiovisual sector blocked the licensing process for almost four years.

The negative consequences of the situation were that new broadcasters were forced to conduct professional activities on the basis of temporary permits, which caused contradictions with permanent participants in the media market (Le Temps (Genève), 2013). The licensing process was unblocked after the Parliament approved the regulatory strategy for the development of radio and television in Bulgaria. After changes in the Law «On radio and television» and the Law «On electronic communications», a new regulatory framework for licensing radio and television programs intended for digital distribution was formed. Under the changes, the Commission for regulating communications issues licenses to multiplex operators, and the Electronic media Council licenses programs developed for digital distribution on a competitive basis. Public media receive digital broadcasting licenses automatically (Roth, 2013).

An important role in the context of the European integration of the Republic of Bulgaria in general, and the Bulgarian electronic media in particular, is played by the media legislation regulating the main functions and principles of professional activity of the media. In the field of audiovisual media, Bulgaria has managed to harmonize national legislation with European information law. At the EU level, the regulation of electronic media is carried out in accordance with the Directive «Television without borders» and its new version and the Directive «On audiovisual media services». Back in 2000 amendments to the Law «On radio and television» were adopted, according to which the legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria was fully consistent with the requirements of the EU Directive «On television without borders».

At the same time, the Parliament of Bulgaria adopted a number of official documents aimed at the development of the information society, including the «Strategy and national program for development of information society» (1999), «The e-government Strategy» (2002), Law «On electronic signatures» (2001), the Law «On personal data protection» (2002), etc. currently the main internal Bulgarian laws that regulate the electronic media sector are the Law «On radio and television», the Law «On electronic communications» and the Law «On public broadcasting».

At the present stage of its development, the Bulgarian media turned to the Western experience and cultural logic of postmodernism. However, most of the transformations in the Bulgarian media system were carried out mechanically, and the Western cultural experience was superimposed on an insufficiently developed economic basis. The idea of the mechanical formation of the media market has led to quite mixed results. The economy of late capitalism did not appear in Bulgaria, so the Western experience has taken root only partially, and the main characteristics of the Bulgarian media environment remain fragmentary and unstable.

*Summary.* Thus, as a result of the study, certain conclusions can be drawn. Starting with the preparation for EU accession and during the 12 years of membership in this international organization, the Bulgarian media constantly felt the positive impact of European integration on the transformation of the media of Republic of Bulgaria. The main direction of development of modern Bulgarian media is related to changes in the sphere of media ownership and the dynamics of media regulation.

In terms of future influence on the media environment, it was important to exit the Bulgarian News Corporation market and to sell the National Directorate of radio and television systems. Introduced by the media conglomerates formula of combining information and entertainment content, caused a reduction in publicist broadcasts and rational analysis, before the emergence of a hybrid form of program elements, such as format and content. Hybrid television products have become widespread, maintaining a steady trend towards the politicization of media content.

In the course of European integration, the media legislation has undergone changes, which has been synchronized with European norms and standards, and this has created a positive dynamics of development in the media market, especially in the segment of TV and radio broadcasting. A new law on radio and television is currently being drafted in Bulgaria, which is based on ensuring a balance between public and commercial me-

dia. In addition, the Council of electronic media has been reformed. Its new members stated that their professional activity is public and that they can exercise civil control over their current work, as well as that the regulatory process should not become a hostage of political and economic interests in the conditions of active development of the media.

At the same time, we note that the political process in Bulgaria is carried out in a media-mediated environment, but the media is not a determining factor in political life. They influence the political agenda, but not the political processes as a whole. The boundaries between information and entertainment content are blurred, and media culture is often reduced to the elementary consumption of media content. At the same time, Bulgarian politicians and the media are closely linked, and the general public often remains only a bystander.

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