The European Neighborhood Policy, Mass-media and Cross-border Cooperation

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THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY,
MASS-MEDIA AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

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Abstract. *Cooperation seems strictly necessary, and from this perspective the media can bring, with direct involvement of authorities, a contribution to strengthening the connections and the relationship between people and institutions. A company located in a process accentuated by globalization can not be conceived without taking into account the role of the media, to influence and control exercised by it. The impact of media is different, depending on which a public nature, but according to the typology and the different forms of media. The impact is different when we take into consideration the press, radio or television.*
The cultural contact are the importance of media in promoting common, human values, is very high. If this cultural space is doubled by a politic delimitated area, the media's role is even more significant. Cross-border cooperation and joint initiatives involves the development of interstate relations but also people. As a result of developing relations of good neighborliness in space requires new definition and the reclassification of border.
Good Neighborhood is a basic condition for maintaining security in the border area, it is a principle of international law, legal form of the formulation containing the principle of the obligation to make, and the obligation not to do. Thus, the obligation to make can be expressed by the rule which requires subjects of international law to act as good neighbors. Media Action appears in this perspective as an important factor for the transmission and control of legal or social rules.

Keywords: *neighborhood policy, mass-media, cross-border cooperation, border, multimedia*

1. The European neighborhood policy and the "new external border"

The community perspective on external relations envisages as a support and starting point *the European Neighborhood Policy* whose results have been noticed by the European Commission as positive (Communication, 2007). This and the external policy of the European Union directly support two other general tools with impact on external border: pre-accession policy (potential candidates to accession are included) and the development policy for third countries (Hubeny-Berlsky, 2007: 313). In such a community construction both between members and in the direct neighborhood relations at the external borders, stress has to be laid on dialogue and constructive cooperation amongst all parties. A special role in this equation is played by promotion of education and human capital through different programmers' funded and supported by the European Union, such as the partnerships under the TEMPUS programme and the convergence with the Bologna process and the Lisbon Agenda (Communication, 2007).

Under the influence of the European neighborhood policy, the concept of external border of the European Union tends to acquire new means of expression. On the one hand, we see a flexibility of contacts between the two sides of the border. Such a trend is enhanced by the means of cross-border cooperation through Euro regions and European instruments successfully implemented at the external border. On the other hand, the remarkable actions of the European Union through which they attempt to implement policies for regional cohesion at the current borders is, according to some analysts, the proof that the European Union is consolidating the current external borders, thus considering, at least for the moment, the option of slowing down

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the enlargement to the east without effectively closing the gates to this enlargement[1] (Matuszewicz, 2007: 109). Irrespective of the reasons for the European neighborhood policy, we can see that there is a change of attitude on external border due to its implementation. In such a situation, regions and people outside community structures can benefit from programmes and instruments of a policy bringing them closer to community citizens. Through its programmes for territorial cooperation at the external border, the neighborhood policy significantly contributes to developing a more homogenous system (Hubeny-Berlsky, 2007: 317) and the "integrated regional development" (Hubeny-Berlsky, 2007: 317). These policies are also required by the need to promote harmonization of economic policies to contribute to achieving economic cohesion on a regional level. The attenuation of important commercial unbalance between EU and its neighbours by enlarging the common market beyond the external borders of the community is thus an imperative responding to the European policy for good neighborhood (Matuszewicz, 2007: 110). We can conclude to pointing out that the implementation of the European neighborhood policy leads to altering the perception of external border; moreover, the implementation of European instruments for cross-border cooperation tends to move current border to the outside by building a new symbolic one including a peripheral privileged area having the advantages of neighborhood. Nevertheless, this policy has limits. For example, in spite of the "opening", we feel in the discourse of European officials referring to a possible enlargement of the European Union by Turkey's accession, that it would lead to some issues in managing the European neighborhood policy – some of the new partners might be Syria, Iraq and Iran. At the time, the EU is not ready to face such challenges.

2. Role of mass-media in promoting cross-border cooperation

Media has a huge power over public opinion in forming a community or relaying values. A society involved in an increasing process of globalisation cannot be conceived without considering the role, influence and control of the media. We do not refer to mere control, as we can consider that media is more and more obviously an important actor in governing (Dugget, 2002: 13). From this perspective, we can see the trends of contemporary societies and the role granted to mass-media in the process of democratisation, in relaying and promoting human values.

The impact of mass-media differs depending on the nature of the public it addresses to and the typology and different forms of mass-media. The impact differs when speaking about written press, radio, or television. Each has its public to which it is related while the message is more often than not the same yet with different impact.

From the enumerated perspectives, media is not only an instrument of influence over society. It also becomes an important means through which one can hear the voice of groups outside governance or civil society.

In the area of cultural contact, the importance of mass-media in promoting human values is very high. If this cultural area is doubled by an area of political limits, mass-media has a more significant role.

In contemporary Europe, accent is laid on cross-border Euroregional cooperation. Considering this element, an important role in moulding good relations on both sides of the border is played by the media.

The transparency and opening of institutions, as well as people's participation to decision-making are important factors in society democratisation. The language of communication between institutions and populations beyond political and cultural barriers is mass-media (Palmer, 2004: 20-22). Nations' transition to democratisation is measurable through

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[1] Connecting the "orange revolution" in Ukraine, the European Commissioner for external relations and European neighborhood policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, stated on the 1st of December 2004 that „*la question de l'Ukraine dans l'UE n'est pas à l'ordre du jour. Mais il est clair que nous ne fermons aucune porte*".

institutional transparency including the media in that particular country. Interstate cooperation is illustrated by the existence of joint media projects, by the voice of public opinion expressing joint possibilities, opportunities and needs of two spaces now united in a single identity – the identity of human values.

The information transmitted is not enough unless it is objective, impartial, plural or satisfying. It also has to be transparent. It is not enough to answer public's questions. It is highly important to let the public express their opinion and answer the issues raised themselves (Doulkeri, 2004: 175-180).

Cooperation on cross-border level with a view to promote human values supposes respecting some principles and laws. *Transparent information* involves good knowledge of decision-making and government actors. Secondly, it is important that there is *transparent participation* to decision-making both directly and through representation. Finally, the third principle refers to *stakeholders' skills*. In this last situation, it is very important to measure state institutions' capacities to respond to people's requests and needs. Mass-media may intervene each time when public interests are damaged. Beyond these principles, freedom of press and expression in press is highly important.

From the perspective of cross-border area, we have to consider an aspect relating to mass-media as a phenomenon; information can be used to create a false perception or to preserve a tense situation thus generating nationalist and extremist movements on both ethnic and religious grounds. Another aspect concerns the role and involvement of mass-media in the process of moulding public opinion. In this sense, we can see that most actions of mass-media are informative rather than formative.

Border area supposes good neighbourhood. The issue, we may say the whole "drama" of international relations, is relations between neighbours. As a doctrine, good neighbourhood is defined as "a state of facts", as "unavoidable" (neighbours are given by history and geography) existing ever since peoples and states have been established and generating two aspects at borders (Ciocan, 2003): preserving security by managing conflicts and preserving cooperation between neighbouring states.

Good neighbourhood is tightly connected with the concept of "border", yet the role of border has altered in time. It has changed from barrier to meeting point between different realities discovering the opportunity of complementarity beyond rigid conceptions on national sovereignty. In the cross-border area of good neighbourhood, "small diplomacy" has a special role under the influence of official relations it expresses (Ciocan, 2003). An institution necessary to the state, border police is a power directly involved in the process of increasing cross-border cooperation and indirectly involved in integration. The positive activity in "small diplomacy" area gives security and confidence as good governance is expressed as a principle. Together with border police, we have to stress the importance of other institutions greatly contributing to cross-border relations. Thus, we have to refer to some basic notions on legal condition of borders. Border condition, according to the definition provided by literature in the field (Niciu, 1999: 246) is settled by each country law according to agreements signed by the countries. In this way, countries intend to provide good neighbourhood, avoid border conflicts and defend their borders.

Democracy and respect for human values are important indicators to measure the process of transition of former communist countries to liberalisation of political regime. An important role in this process is promoting regulations imposed by law, human rights and social constraints. For these reasons, mass-media has decision influence in accurately and constructively transmitting information.

Some of the most important aspects shown in a society process of democratisation refer to absolute rights to freedom and power division. The essence of the idea thus transmitted through media channels has to be that man is free and has the right to this freedom (Edelstam,

2002: 102). Another role of law is to divide power, as we pointed out. In democratic countries, institutions have built a division of power. The basic idea is to create different points of view as well as different opinions or means to control the way of carrying out the laws. The democratic state has to protect the individual. From this perspective, media has the role to guarantee the information and to voice these rights and freedoms.

Law and governance do not have to be a secret. All laws have to be published and made known to citizens. Information should not be transmitted one way, there has to be a ceaseless dialogue between citizens and political actors. Mass media play a core role as a go-between in this process. Their role is even more important when referring to cross-border cooperation, cross-border area, and respect for human values in this area.

Cross-border cooperation supposes joint initiatives and actions to develop interstate and human relations. As an effect of relations development in good neighbourhood area, there is a need for a new definition and classification of borders. Border legal regime can be classified according to modern desiderata (Ciocan, 2003) as follows: *unilateral regime* designing norms elaborated by a state to regulate different border activities, or activities relating to border; *joint* or *bilateral regime* of the border made up of joint norms adopted by two states regarding the border between them; *Euroregional regime* made up of norms elaborated by regional organisations, norms with impact on the activity of member states borders; and *community regime* of the border made up of joint norms adopted by supranational organisations relating to their internal and external borders. The duty to cooperate is inherent to the principle of good neighbourhood.

Good governance is a basic condition to preserve security in cross-border area; it is an international law principle; the legal means to formulate the principle comprises both the *duty to do* and the *duty not to do*. Thus, the duty to do can be expressed through the norm compelling international law subjects to behave as good neighbours.

From this perspective, media action is an important factor to relay and control legal or social norms. In authoritarian regimes, media is under strict control of state. In a democratic state, the independence of the press is and has to remain a reality. From this position, media makes a great contribution to the act of governance.

It is not a secret the fact that in Eastern European societies press has had a core role in facilitating communication between public and administration when the latter could not adopt a series of norms presenting all legal and institutional changes. Practically, newspapers, radio and television have often replaced the institution of administration when critical moments occurred on the level of communication (Corcodel, 2002: 294). This kind of press involvement envisages border region, as well as border and cross-border area.

Cooperation in cross-border area supposes the existence of "global audience" (Palmer, 2003: 19). Even though we can speak of nations' crisis, it is very important to point out that human values are most accurately represented in this environment. Going beyond cultural barriers it obviously has the quality of stimulating exchanges including the cultural ones. Media and broadcasting channels, both traditional and new communication technologies greatly contribute to making what is now known as global society.

Good governance and free press must be promoted simultaneously. They cannot exist separately, yet they cannot live together. They both need to stimulate and promote each other (Iorgovan and Vasiu, 2003: 36).

In Europe, a solution and opportunity is creating multimedia channels to inform the society. An important trend of the European institutions or Euroregions is cooperating with mass media. Cross-border cooperation includes socio-cultural cooperation (Czimre, Suli-Zakar and Teperics, 2003: 98). The same authors propose creating newspapers, radio or television channels in a cross-border framework (in this case, it is the area of the Carpathian Euroregion) (Bujdosó,

2003: 193-195). At the same time, they propose establishing positions and jobs for people with skills to cooperate with mass media.

An interesting concept is *image building* (Bujdosó, 2003: 193-195). From this perspective, we have to be familiar with a whole process and a series of strategies needed to cooperate on higher levels (national and international) or lower levels (local and regional). Cooperation is strictly necessary and from this perspective mass media may make an essential contribution to strengthening relations between people and institutions with direct involvement of authorities.

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