



Adequate Information Management in Europe

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The Case of Estonia

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Premise:

The transition from a Soviet type of society to the market economy has forced Estonians to position themselves on the new economic, political, cultural and social fields at the same time as learning the new rules governing those fields, adapting themselves to the new 'transition culture' (Kennedy 2002). In this situation of changing rules, the media are playing an extremely important role as a re-socialising agency, facilitating adaptation to the new situation.

During the years of transition, the media system itself has also gone through major changes (Vihalemm 2004). These changes were caused by the rapid privatisation of the media, which resulted in commercialisation and internationalisation of media output. At the same time, technological developments and highly competitive markets had made satellite and cable TV accessible to the whole population. At the end of 1990s the Internet had reached the stage of being commonly used as a medium for information, for leisure, for banking and other everyday services. According to the recent data (TNS Emor, spring 2004), 52% of population (aged 6-74 years) use the Internet, 30% of households have a computer at home, and 89% of the population are mobile phone subscribers.

An important aspect of this new situation is the opening up of Estonian international space. In 2003 Estonia became a member of NATO. In September 2003 Estonian voters approved Estonian membership in EU by referendum. This final stage of post-communist transition was completed in the spring and summer of 2004, when Estonia became a member of the EU¹ and had the opportunity to take part in the elections of European Parliament.

However, the Estonian public appeared to be rather sceptical about enjoying its freshly acquired rights: the turnout of voters for the EU parliamentary elections (26.7%) in Estonia was one of the lowest among the new member states. Reluctance to celebrate membership and to feel welcome in the new union characterised the mood of the election campaign, which was rather negative and oppositional. Estonia has been characterised by relatively modest public support for the EU throughout the accession process until joining to EU in 2004. Only during the final pre-accession weeks did support started to stabilise at the 60% level.

The positive attitudes strengthened after the accession, rising in November 2004 to 72%.

The role of EU information management during the low initial support for the EU, and thereafter during the rise of public support, was a question that has bothered Estonian media research. Had media coverage played a role or was it the obvious medium: the flow of Euros into Estonian economy?

In Estonia, one can identify two major agencies of *EU information management* that have been actively collecting, systemising and distributing information, as well as holding the most competence about EU institutions and processes.

First, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs collects, systemises and manages most of the (official) information regarding the Estonia's EU integration process. The Press and Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also compiles systematic and regular news overviews/press releases of EU issues based on the domestic, as well as on foreign press and news agencies. These weekly overviews are also available to journalists and general public on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.² The Press and Information Department also organises press conferences, regular information days and briefings for journalists as well as providing consultations for journalists on different questions.

Second, there is the European Union Information Unit of the State Chancellery that co-ordinates project-based dissemination of European Union related information to the Estonian public via information centres, info points and support organisations.³

These two organisations served as the main sources of background information about the EU given to the public during the pre-accession period, and they are also important sources of news about the decisions made at the European level.

There are also a number of information centres, e.g. **European Union Information Centre** that provides the parliament, other constitutional institutions and bodies, and the public of Estonia with relevant information, and telephone lines.⁴

An aspect emphasised by press experts, in relation to EU information sources and flows, concerns the

significance of the human factor, i.e. various agents, including Estonian representatives, working at EU institutions in Brussels. Besides official information delivered by different EU press centres and EU institutions in general, there is an increase in the amount of informal information received from personal channels that before were unavailable to Estonia and other new member countries.

There is a gap in the Estonian context about the information available on issues related to the EU. On the one hand, the Estonian public appears to be less informed about various aspects regarding EU, while expressing a general willingness to have more such information.

On the other hand, looking from the perspective of the media and journalism, EU related content is not regarded as a priority by Estonian media organisations – the trend can be verified by poor financial and technical allocation of resources to foreign correspondents and by rather biased editorial policy and agenda setting, usually in favour of domestic news. There is insufficient EU related information produced by local mass media, and international news agencies are, to a great extent, used as a primary source of information for international and European news. Estonian public TV is also the only channel having a permanent correspondent in Brussels. However, even after joining the EU, the number of Estonian media outlets represented by correspondents in Brussels is still very limited in comparison with other small-size EU member states (Cyprus, Malta).

Looking at the present situation, the objectives of the AIM project are extremely important for Estonia as a new member state, to improve both the participation of citizens in EPS, and the qualification of journalists as important actors, creating European information for the European publics.

1: Information/news management

Common understanding relates 'information management' to public relations as the professional task of a press secretary or information officer rather than to journalism. The concept of 'information/news management' has no definition in Estonian handbooks of journalism. In present debates on the role of journalists, the relationships between news reporting and

information management are often interpreted as a conflict between a 'watchdog' role of the journalist and 'infomanagement' role of the information service as a part of PR. The concept of 'news management' as a subject for journalism studies is emerging in recent years in the context of ethnographic studies of the newsroom practices, considering the effects of the editorial policies and discussing the practices of information gathering, news selection and interpretative practices inside the newsroom. Ethnography of the newsroom is becoming an important new part of journalistic research and also for the students of journalism.

The studies of information or communication management belong rather to the fields of political communication or public relations. Concepts of 'spin', 'agenda setting' and 'lobbying' are becoming used in the Estonian context. The Estonian handbook of public relations defines the 'informational objective' of PR as persuasion of the target of addressed activities through the dissemination of a message (*Suhtekorralduse käsiraamat* 2004, part 4.1.) In this field, the main focus of critical research is on the process of control by which individuals and organisations (governments or political parties) try to achieve their strategic objectives in their interactions with the news media. From the second half of the 1990s, the fields of journalism, PR and advertising have become clearly distinct as academic disciplines. Since 1996, in order to have an academic approach to the field, public relations and knowledge management have become part of the curriculum at the Department of Journalism and Communication (DJC) of Tartu University. The first doctoral dissertation on public relations in Estonia (Tampere 2003) was dealing with changes in organisational communication after the breakdown of Communist rule. An important aspect of this study was the role of information management in the changing political environment. The findings of this study are also relevant for the research of information strategies implemented for the better adaptation of Estonian enterprises in the new EU-environment.

An important experience in the field of research methodology for studying the effectiveness of government communication management was achieved by applying media monitoring techniques for discovering the effects of the national minority integration programme on the content of Estonian dailies (Jakobson 2002; Kõuts & Tammpuu 2002). For this research the

innovative methodology of the Latent Class Analysis (LCA) was applied. This methodology, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, originally worked out by Paul Lazarsfeld (1950) and modified by the German researcher Wilhelm Kempf (1994), makes it possible to discover and sensitively measure changes in the journalistic style of the news coverage, to reveal differences in the media representation of certain subjects over time or between sources and channels, and to make quantitative comparative analysis of models of representation in the content of different media.

A traditional area of communication management research is analysis of election campaigns. Two doctoral studies are at present focused on the European parliamentary election campaign (Mart Raudsaar and Külli-Riin Tigasson), both dealing with the shift of political communication in Estonia from the democratic public sphere model to the marketing models.

In the context of the rapid expansion of information technology in Estonia, information management is acquiring more attention as a field of applied research:

- a) as a part of the e-government research and development;
- b) as a part of information policy, including legislation (e.g. the Public Information Act, passed by the Estonian parliament in 2000, regulates public information activities at all levels of government institutions in order to guarantee access for all citizens, including via the Internet, to the relevant public information);
- c) as a part of knowledge management and Intranet-based organisational communication;
- d) as a part of online-journalism and Internet-based new hybrid forms of communication (*information management* here is used in parallel with *content management*).

Looking at the perspectives for implementation of *information management* as a concept in journalism studies, this concept seems to be more appropriate if the research concerns the following issues:

- *management of information flows* from the national or international public institutions (including EU institutions) to the national media;
- mediation practices emerging in the new media in the context of the hybrid *information service*;

- developments on the media market and *management of media organisations*;
- national or EU-level *information policy*.

2: National journalism culture

Estonian journalistic culture had been researched, in the first place, from an historical perspective related to the role of journalism in the nation-building process of the 19th century. Journalists had been recognised as national opinion leaders and 'teachers' of their readers: their position comparable (and often adversary) to the pastors. The change of this paternalist pattern of traditional journalism, at first into political journalism (in the end of 19th century), and then into an Anglo-American type of politically non-partisan news-journalism had formed the basic concepts of the modern journalistic culture in Estonia (Hoyer, Lauk, Vihalemm 1993; Lauk 1997).

The five decades of Soviet occupation had seriously distorted journalistic culture in Estonia from two opposite directions: According to the official role model of Soviet journalist, the media had to play the role of the 'weapon of ideological struggle'. According to the oppositional 'cultural resistance' model, journalists had to maintain national values and resist the official ideology, using 'hidden language', 'double-thinking' and, if possible, openly expressing their critical views (Vihalemm & Lauristin 1997). Despite the obvious antagonism of those two understandings of the role of journalism, they had one common feature: journalism was understood not as 'news', but mainly as 'views'. The leading principle of separation between fact and comment was turned upside down: journalism had to provide comments first, with or without facts, and facts themselves were looked at as mere illustrations of the comments. The research results of the changes in the journalistic culture under Soviet repressive system were analysed from the perspective of censorship and self-censorship of journalists (Lauk 1999) and the ideological character of the whole editing process (Lõhmus 2002), and also on the system level as a hierarchy of the control level over media (Vihalemm & Lauristin 1997).

Development of journalistic culture in contemporary Estonia has been investigated from economic, socio-cultural, political legal and technological perspectives (Vihalemm 2002; Lauk & Harro 2003; Vihalemm 2004).

Looking from the economic perspective, journalistic culture is under pressure from rapid marketisation. The Republic of Estonia has experienced a rapid development of the media market during the last 15 years, which has resulted in structural changes among media organisations. These changes have influenced the ways and means by which the media content has been produced, and which formats are used. Naturally, all this has had an impact on Estonian journalism culture.

Latest developments of Estonian media market can be divided into four periods (Paju 2004):

- 1989-1995 emergence of advertising market, establishment of new publications and the commercialisation of existing ones;
- 1995-1998 media companies' struggle for Estonian market, emergence of two large media groups;
- 1998-2000 inflow of foreign capital, struggle between two dominating companies;
- 2000-2004 armistice between competing companies.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation that took place in the Estonian media market has, according to Robert G. Picard (2002), enabled audiences to enjoy increasing opportunities for choice of formats and contents, provided increasing choice for advertisers, and enhanced competition among electronic media and magazines.

Ownership of Estonian private media is divided between Estonian and Scandinavian companies (Paju 2004). For instance, the Norwegian company Schibsted ASA owns 93% of the shares of *Eesti Meedia* (Estonian Media), the largest media group in Estonia, which owns newspapers, magazines and radio stations. The group publishes the daily newspaper with the biggest circulation, owning 100% of the shares of the largest morning paper *Postimees* (with a circulation of 63,000) and 50% of the shares of popular tabloid *SL Õhtuleht* (with a circulation of 64,100). Through *Eesti Meedia*, a Schibsted ASA owns a 50% stake in *Ajakirjade Kirjastus*, the largest magazine publishing house in Estonia. In addition to these holdings, *Eesti Meedia* owns a printing house and newspaper delivery venture. Finally, Schibsted ASA owns 100% of the commercial broadcaster *Kanal 2*.

Estonian commercial media have moved rapidly towards market-driven journalism. The Estonian pri-

vate TV channel *Kanal 2* (owned by Schibsted) has radically changed its main news programme format from a classical one to 'infotainment', which can be characterised by a mixing of news and entertainment, facts and opinions, political news and horoscopes. In order to maintain dominance in the media market, private broadcasters had launched a 'television war' against public broadcasting, which ended with a ban on the advertising on public TV. Estonian TV, which is financed by a government grant, still has considerable audience share and, despite the poor financial support, maintains the original range of cultural, social and news programmes (Šein 2004).

From the socio-cultural point of view, notwithstanding the rapid adoption of the Western criteria of news journalism since the restoration of Estonian independence in 1991, Estonian media culture still remains in transition. Due to geographical and cultural proximity to the Nordic countries and the leading role of the Norwegian and Swedish companies in the Estonian media ownership, Estonian journalism is gradually adapting Nordic conventions of 'good journalism' and is developing in the direction of the Nordic model of self-regulation (Harro-Loit & Lauk 2003). On the other hand, privatisation and marketisation of the media has developed hand in hand with commercialisation of journalistic information and orientation to the audience-as-consumer. For today's Estonian journalists, the question of a professional identity consists of at least three parts: what role do journalists take in the political battlefield, how do they define their positions in the commercialisation of the media industry and what are their obligations towards the public? (Lauk & Harro 2003).

After gaining independence from political control, the Estonian media have shifted towards complete liberalisation, which has given rise to charges of social irresponsibility against journalists driven by the commercial interests of media companies and advertisers (Lauristin 1998: 4). Estonian journalists have, by and large, adopted the role of transmitter of information and of 'watchdog'. However, in real life, objective and qualitative reporting is often distorted by sensationalism.

One of the main reasons for the rapid turn towards the liberal model by the Estonian media has been the almost complete replacement of a generation of journalists during the 90s, due to the expansion of the media market and the introduction of new technolo-

gies (Lauk 1996). Young generation of journalists, often without proper professional education, filled the openings in the numerous new channels, including the leading dailies. Journalists with the Soviet era as a background, who used to stress educational and ideological role of the press, were replaced by young professionals, who look at journalism through entrepreneurial glasses. They quickly implemented standard Western news values and the formal criteria of news writing, but also were quite submissive to the commercial values of the owners.

Foreign ownership, along with this generation replacement among journalists, has been the most important reasons why the Estonian media could declare very decisively their political non-engagement. While political partisanship of journalism in the East-European countries is one of the major issues, coined by Slavko Splichal as the phenomenon of 'Italianisation' in the post-socialist media (Splichal 1994), Estonian journalists have tried to maintain political autonomy. However, due to the recruitment of new journalistic staff from the ranks of young and ambitious 'winners' of the transition, journalists have strongly promoted in their own discourses so-called 'transition culture' (Kennedy 2002) oriented to the liberal market economy and individualistic values. This has given reason to criticise the Estonian media for their political bias in favour of liberal reform policies and right-wing parties (Palmaru 2001).

Commercialisation of the newspapers is the main reason why trust in the press significantly decreased around the new millennium. In the year 2002 only 44% of Estonians trusted the press. According to current survey the number has been increased – now 52% of Estonians trust the press. There is much more trust for public television and radio –75% among all Estonians. (Saar Poll, Eurobaromeeter 2004.1)

Analysis of media regulation (Harro 2002) proves that Estonian legislation has mainly followed the liberal model of a de-regulated media-market. The activities of the Estonian press remain unregulated by law. The Broadcasting Act strictly regulates only the activities of the public broadcasters. The Broadcasting Act defines three regulatory bodies of broadcasting in Estonia with different competencies: the Ministry of Culture (which supervises adherence to the Act and fulfilment of license conditions), the Broadcasting Council (which regulates public television and

radio) and the State Communications Board (which supervises adherence to the technical conditions of broadcasting licenses).

Estonian law both guarantees the independence of broadcasters from the state and prescribes political balance, and this does not appear to have been threatened in practice. The independence of ETV (public broadcaster) may be indirectly affected by the restriction of its budget by politicians. The editorial independence of private broadcasting stations from their owners remains unregulated, however, good practice appears to have prevented interference by owners.

Professional self-regulatory bodies support the stabilisation of journalistic culture, creating ethical norms of journalism and maintaining good practices. In 1991, the Estonian Press Council, as the self-regulatory body for the media, was founded by several media organisations. EPC has three main objectives: (1) to protect press freedom, (2) to examine complaints about mass media from the aspect of good conduct, (3) to support the development of journalists' professional skills (including a perception of ethics) and adherence to the good tradition of journalism. The EPC participated in creating the national Code of Ethics. The Code was introduced in December 1997 and the Estonian Newspaper Association, the Association of Estonian Broadcasters and EPC, supported its implementation. Before that adjudication was made on the basis of international professional tradition and the best knowledge of the members of EPC. At present, the Code provides a basis for assessing cases but as it does not cover all possible cases, the EPC refers to precedents (Harro-Loit & Lauk 2003).

Technological development of the Estonian media since 1991 has been quite rapid in terms of multiplicity of available channels (Vihalemm 2002, 2004). Until 1990, there was only one radio and one television station, both owned by the state. By 1996, there were three national television channels and four national radio stations (one of them Russian) and numerous local stations. As most print and electronic media are concentrated in the capital, Tallinn, the job market is also largely based in the capital. The rapid spread of new technology has provided Estonian journalists with very good access to the Internet and all major Estonian newspapers and magazines distribute electronic versions of their publications. Technological developments have made access to different sources of information

possible for Estonian newspapers through several international news agencies, which has also complicated and added to the normal routines of journalistic work (Saks 2002: 193). From the viewpoint of journalistic culture, this new situation has stimulated research on the changing profile of journalistic work in the converging media environment. Online journalism and developments in the field of digital TV have become new directions of the postgraduate studies.

3: European public sphere(s)

The concept of the 'public sphere' itself had become relevant for the post-communist countries as one of the dimensions of democratic transition (Lauristin 1998). The turn from a totalitarian regime to an open market society has been discussed in the terms of a structural transformation of the public sphere and as a revival of the political public sphere, with the development of freedom of speech and abolition of state control over the media (Hoyer/ Lauk & Vihalemm 1993; Lauk & Harro 2003; Vihalemm & Lauristin 1997, Vihalemm 2002). The new situation of Estonia as a member of EU also meant that the meaning of the public sphere had to be re-considered: Estonians started to discover themselves as actors within the 'European public sphere' (Lauristin 2004). For Estonia as a new member of EU, 'European issues' had become vital during the pre-accession Euro-referendum campaign, and soon after that, during the European Parliamentary election campaign.

The attitudes of Estonian publics concerning various aspects of European integration has been among the main interests of Estonian communication studies.

The specific feature of the Estonian approach to the European public sphere is its focus on audience perceptions. Among the main approaches are: the role of identity in the perception of the European Union (Vetik/ Nimmerfeldt/ Taru & Kivimäe 2004); the image of the European Union among Estonians (Past & Vihalemm 2004); and the relationships between political participation and trust and interest in EU information (Kirch 2004; Lauristin 2004)

According to surveys, Estonian people express a general desire to be more informed about EU issues. First, 26% found that there has been too little talk about the EU in public, and only 51% consider the amount of in-

formation available about EU to be sufficient. 89% of the population claims interest in getting additional information about the EU. The most important sources from where the Estonian people want to get information about the European Union are first of all the electronic media, television – 73%, radio – 56%, and daily newspapers – 42%. Compared to other EU countries, in Estonia the Internet appears to be a much more important information source, preferred by 25%, compared to only 18% of all new members of the European Union by and 16% of the EU-15 countries. This can be explained by the relatively high level of Internet usage in Estonia. By October 2004, 52 % of the adult population (15-74) in Estonia were Internet-users.⁵

In the research project *Pragmatics of Euro-communication in Estonia* (Runnel 2003) the focus was on the communication system, consisting of the media, public space, public opinion and individual perceptions of the transition. The question was how the different elements participated in knowledge-formation and how people reflected upon the issue of getting information about the European Union. This study included research of the media's role, compared with the topics in everyday communication that form the nodes in Euro-communication, as well as the issues of collective identities. The study was interested in everyday information 'management' of people, using both the public mediated texts and their personal knowledge as participants in Euro-communication. People's concerns about getting relevant EU-information were interpreted in the context of the emerging European identity (Runnel 2003: 48). As a background, the results used were from a major survey about the development of the media society in Estonia carried out by the Department of Journalism and Communication, Tartu University, (Past, Vihalemm 2004).

An aspect that has been discussed in different theoretical conceptualisations, as well as in empirical studies on the European public sphere, concerns the definition of a 'European issue' or a 'European affair'. On the one hand, 'European issues' are often limited to those directly related to the EU or its institutions and policies. On the other hand, one could also define 'European issues' in broader terms, including various issues that have relevance or a common point of reference for Europe and Europeans at large.

Among the latter one may consider, for example, issues concerning new technologies such as gene- and

biotechnology, those related to immigration and treatment of ethnic/ national minorities, and many others. Besides having a common point of reference due to various conventions, directives and regulations elaborated at European level and ratified by national governments, these issues are today debated throughout Europe and can also be seen as issues which allow analysis of the formation and/or existence of a European public sphere. According to Michael Bauer, for example, 'much European sentiment about biotechnology is both about the technology and about European integration' (Bauer & Howard 2004: 145; see also Gaskell and Bauer 2001). In his words:

The mass media continue to serve mainly a national public sphere, setting the agenda and reflecting concerns of a national public. A new technology is however a global phenomenon, and many actors transcend the national borders. The emergence of a *transnational public opinion*, a European public in the making, is reflected in the synchronization of coverage and the assimilation of news framing. (Bauer & Howard 2004: 145)

Bauer and his colleagues have published numerous studies based on the project 'Biotechnology and the Public', a continuous international press monitoring of biotechnology news in the national elite press between 1973 and 2002. According to their findings, a synchronization of public discourses about biotechnology and genetic engineering appeared after 1996-1997 in Europe, and worldwide. Countries, previously discrete, started to group according to a particular story frame: the separation of a 'green' agro-food from a 'red' biomedical biotechnology (Bauer & Howard 2004).

When looking at European issues in broader terms, and including not only those directly and strictly related to the EU, its institutions and policies, one can mention several studies analysing the Estonian media coverage of issues that have relevance for the whole of Europe, and are also vividly discussed in other national public spheres.

Tammpuu (2004a, 2004b) has analysed gene-/biotechnology within the public discourse of the Estonian Genome Project in the national media (1999-2001) by taking into account the overall global and European context of such.⁶ According to her findings, issues of gene-/biotechnology have been received by the Estonian public with great optimism and belief

in progress and paying little attention to the ethical and social aspects of genetic research. At the same time, studies in other European countries and/or in an Anglo-American context have identified an increase of ethical concern related to the issues of genetic research and biotechnology.

Another field that has been thoroughly examined is that of Estonian concerns about minority issues and the integration of the Russian-speaking population, an issue that has been constantly high on the agenda during the period of EU accession, and having considerable relevance for the whole of Europe with respect to immigration and minority protection. There has been a five-year monitoring period (1999-2003) of media coverage of minority issues in Estonia, which have been published in a number of articles and volumes (Lauristin & Vetik 2000; Kõuts 2002, 2003; Kõuts & Tammpuu 2002).

The studies of media monitoring have, among other aspects, also examined the significance of European institutions and actors such as the OSCE, in the integration process, as well as the overall impact and relevance of European integration on the public debate about the issue.

Paradoxes of Estonian public attitudes towards the EU have been discussed in several studies (Vetik/ Nimmerfeldt/ Taru & Kivimäe 2004; Kirch 2004; Past & Vihalemm 2004; Lauristin 2004). On the one hand, joining the EU (along with NATO membership) has been at the top of the Estonian political agenda since re-establishment of Estonian independence in 1991. International observers had stressed that EU membership was, in Estonia as in other Baltic states, a political goal enjoying strong national consensus because of its security implications. On the other hand, the nearer the EU became a reality, the more sceptical were the Estonian public, coming last in in all Eurostat pre-accession polls among the candidate countries, despite the efforts of the above mentioned institutions to disseminate information about the EU through the media. As Kirch (2004) had argued, the negative attitudes toward the EU were merely a reflection of the low public trust in their own government. Estonian politicians and state bureaucracy were blamed for using EU directives as a pretext for their own non-achievements. Critical opinions defined the EU as an 'elite project', belonging to the scope of 'transition projects' meant for the Westernisation of Estonian

economy and politics and creating a situation of 'two Estonias': an internally polarised society of 'winners' and 'losers'. Social contradictions, shadowing the 'success story' of Estonian transition (Lauristin 2003) had presumably also been creating negative frames for the public image of the EU as a repressive and arrogant force (Past 2001; Past & Vihalemm 2004). Vetik/Nimmerfeldt/ Taru & Kivimäe (2004) had formulated two main dimensions of the Estonian EU debate: a materialistic dimension of practical gains and losses, and a cultural dimension of identity protection. Taking into account the discourses about the EU and national governments, and about the EU as an 'elite project' etc., one can add the third, political dimension of mastery and power. From the viewpoint of communication strategies, the first, practical dimension is clearly connected with the rational information about conditions in EU to achieve materialistic goals, for individuals, for different groups in society, for the countries. The second is related to 'identity power' as formulated by Castells (1997) and is rooted in values and emotions, relationships between 'we' and 'the other', rather than in rational arguments. The third dimension is in the first place an ideological and political one, raising and answering the question 'EU for whom?' (Lauristin 2004).

It is clear that those meaningful aspects of EU discourses did not disappear from the public debate on European issues, but, rather, they are gaining momentum as an important context for the participation of national publics in the European public sphere. In the forthcoming study of European information management, the dimensions of EU-discourses in different countries could become one of the important subjects for international comparison.

4: Conclusion

In the context of European integration, Estonia, as a new member of the EU, is making the first steps towards active participation in the European public sphere. Experiences of Estonian media research in this field are concentrated on the discursive dimensions of European information, and on conditions for involvement of national publics as actors in the European public space. Lack of comparative data about the interests and involvement of different European audiences in the debate on important European issues is a serious obstacle for effective European information

management, which to a great extent would depend on the successful targeting of information from EU institutions through the national media to the culturally and socially diverse national audiences.

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- ¹ Referendum on EU in Estonia took place in September 2003. The referendum question consisted of two parts: "Are you in favour of accession to the European Union and passage of the Act on Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia?" There were 867 714 eligible voters in Estonia, of which 555 835 citizens (64.1%) took part in the referendum. 369 657 citizens (66.8%) voted in favour of joining the European Union.
 - ² Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: www.vm.ee/eng
 - ³ European Union Information Unit: <http://www.riigikantselei.ee/?id5025=>
 - ⁴ European Union Information Center: <http://elik.nlib.ee>
 - ⁵ Gallup e-Ratings. TNS Emor, May 2004 www.emor.ee
 - ⁶ The study was carried out within the comparative research program ELSAGEN (Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects of Genetic Databases) financed within the 5th Framework Program of the European Commission.

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