Adequate Information Management
in Europe

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The Case of Lithuania

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Premise:

A common understanding in contemporary media studies is that the homogenisation of media systems is becoming a global trend (Hallin & Mancini 2004, Bennet 2000, Hoyer 2001). Therefore, contemporary journalism science has many new questions to answer. What are the main determinants of media systems convergence? Which are the most significant national characteristics of Lithuanian journalism? How does the news coverage in relationship to EU news work in the media in Lithuania? Does the process of 'news management' have any impact on how Lithuanians are being informed?

The questions mentioned above deal with different aspects of media research, and indicate a need to thoroughly assess the new function of the media as affected by rapid changes in global economy and technology. In this report, however, we will only assess the state-of-the-art in Lithuanian journalism research with a particular focus on the concept of *journalism culture* as manifested through *complex strategies* when journalists perform their everyday tasks.

Traditionally, there exists a strong interrelationship between the media research tradition (i.e., how journalism is described and assessed) and journalistic culture in Lithuania: for example, journalism textbooks lean on the approach taken from historiography[1].

Concerning the definition of journalistic genres, the scheme used in journalism textbooks (Nugaraitė 1992, Vaišnys 1992, Urbonas, 2002) is very much affected by a prescriptive attitude: the trainers follow the philosophy of the Anglo-American (or so-called professional) model, arguing that journalism should be fact-centred, neutral and balanced, etc. What is missing in these descriptions is a thorough analysis of the journalistic genres that are actually being used in the press.

The *prescriptive approach* to journalism education is indeed insufficient. Without provision of real-life-case analysis it adds much confusion to the understanding of the culture of journalism. Only recently have scholars (for e.g., Marcinkevičienė 2004, Balčytienė 2004c) addressed their attention to a very normative character of journalism education in Lithuania. On one hand, because of its rooting in professional training, journalism studies tend to reflect upon what journalism should be, rather than to analyse it in practice. On the other hand, a strong impact on journalism education comes from the media research tradition in the country. In Lithuania, for example, mainly textbooks, reference books and source books are produced to discuss journalism. There is a lack of empirical study that would examine the development of Lithuanian journalism, thus demonstrating that it is a social phenomenon.

Indeed, the culture of journalism and media research is bound to tradition and may be similar or different in the neighbouring countries. Only in Estonia, looking at the three Baltic countries, has a tradition of sociological media and audience research existed since the 1960s, while in Lithuania, for example, journalism has always been associated with the field of literature, its research mainly focused on press and publishing history.

A more systematic approach to the assessment of journalism has taken place only recently, when media and journalism studies were transferred from the field of humanities into the field of social sciences[2], and when other disciplines (political sciences, sociology and psychology) made media an object of their scholarly concern (see, for e.g., Balčytienė 2004c). However, despite the change of focus in journalism research, new questions are mainly addressed in research articles, project reports and graduate theses, while a more popular analysis of Lithuanian journalism is still missing. The existing studies cover important aspects of journalistic culture yet their results are mainly read by fellow researchers and students, and seldom reach wider audiences. The number of empirical studies has significantly increased in the past years, but the consecutively generalised results about the development of journalistic tradition in Lithuania are still missing. Therefore, this report is also an attempt to assess the spectrum of media research topics and fill the gaps of public knowledge in Lithuanian journalism.

Our goal, therefore, is to provide a systematic analysis of theoretical and empirical studies in the field of media and communications research. We seek to identify and to explain two issues: the occurrence of a particular phenomena (*information/news management, journalism culture* and *the role of media in (non-)reporting on European topics*), as well as its definitions as applied in the Lithuanian journalism tradition. It is important

to stress that the emphasis here is on theory-building and theory-testing with Lithuanian journalism itself acting as a case.

The review starts with the assessment of those media science publications where the expression of 'information/news management' is applied. It further contemplates the need to understand Lithuanian journalism culture and reviews the findings of existing research. And finally, given the limits of available data, it gives an overview on how the EU coverage in Lithuanian journalism works.

1: Theoretical and empirical approaches to 'information/news management' in Lithuanian scientific discourses

As studies reveal, the definition of 'information/news management' is fairly new in Lithuanian discourse; its introduction mainly coincides with political, economic, socio-cultural and technological changes in the media.

In this section the national state-of-the-art research[3] on the concept 'information/news management' is reviewed. It mainly covers three areas of analysis, such as 'information/news management' (1) from the perspective of political and economic PR; (2) as affected by the rapid diffusion of information technologies and attention to information society related topics; and (3) as discussed in describing issues related to the media and mass communications.

1.1: Context of political and economic PR

What concerns the first aspect, namely the political and economic PR, the concept of information management is mainly used in the context of audience perception management. Discussing dramatic changes in the Lithuanian public sphere, Auksė Balčytienė, an associate professor at the Department of Journalism in Vytautas Magnus University, warns that the information produced for the public is 'packed' to persuade and entertain, that the audience's attention is manipulated and the communication is pre-planned and artificially constructed (Balčytienė 2002a). She further asserts that recent developments in the sphere of political communications in Lithuania (the arrival of political marketing, in particular) prove that the

information explosion and the rise of techniques for *information management* applied by the media have become a striking feature of contemporary life and its risks have to be understood, identified and taken seriously.

Furthermore, by describing the process popularly known as 're-feudalisation' of the public sphere, the author also argues that an 'important sign of the loss of the required rationality of the societal discourse is the increased growth of various techniques for *information management* ...' (Balčytienė 2002a: 155-178), and that the rapid establishment of public relations (PR) companies confirms the process of decline in the ideal public sphere. The author quotes Jurgen Habermas, who assumes that the arrival of marketing communications is a response from the media to the need to know its audience better. Additionally she explains, that the potential of new technologies is creatively used by the media to gain a desirable profit:

> The arising commercial goals of the media and the availability of new technologies help the media to define new ideologies such as 'consumer training', which resembles passive consumption of information by the audience and clearly fits the promotion of a 'staying at home' ethos. What is even more striking is that, with the rise of extensive, more intensive and much more sophisticated information management techniques, there has emerged a reluctance to admit its existence (Balčytienė 2002a: 155-178).

Elsewhere the same scholar applies the concept of 'media management' (not just news or information management), arguing about the rise of PR techniques in political communications. In Lithuania, she claims, with the advent of political marketing in the media, very sophisticated political *information management techniques* are applied.

Another approach in the same direction of information management in political communications is a research study by a PhD student from Vilnius University (Matkevičienė 2001).

Matkevičienė (2001) analyses types of techniques that were applied to 'spin' events and to use news management to promote a politician or a party during the elections to *Seimas* (Lithuanian Parliament) in autumn 2000. Three Lithuanian dailies (*Lietuvos rytas, Respub-*

lika, Lietuvos aidas) were analysed and information was gathered about three politicians: A.Paulauskas (The New Union, social-liberals), R.Paksas (former Lithuanian Liberal Union), and R.Karbauskis (Lithuanian Peasants Union).

Altogether, the studies reveal that Lithuanian political actors pay considerable attention to public opinion, that the media is intensively used to gain favour and recognition, and that the popularity of politicians depends on the coverage by the media, etc.

1.2: Context of new technologies

The second element of research in news management concerns the impact of new technologies and is discussed in relation to Information Society issues. According to Arūnas Augustinaitis, professor at the University of Law, *information management* is a new paradigm of information activity, which corresponds with the rise of the post-industrial/information society (Augustinaitis 1996). His understanding is that information management is not a mono-semantic process. In contrast, information management is strongly affected by information research tradition, status and development of information and communication technologies, and understanding of what modern management is. According to the author, in the concept of 'information management' the idea of 'management' is the most important as it links librarianship with information sciences. Information management, according to the author, can be treated from an interdisciplinary perspective, as it creates a new integrated branch of science – communications and information science. Augustinaitis also distinguishes several other fields that relate to the process of information management such as organisational sociology (this approach is heavily based on contacts among people), IT development, social interaction, etc.

A close link between the concept of 'information management' and the idea of the 'information society' is illustrated through the project 'Interaction of Citizens and Public Administration: Development of Social Ideas Based on the Information Management' (Augustinaitis 2000: 18-45).

Two research methods – representative opinion survey and a survey of leading local government officers' – were applied in the study. The goal was to explore:

(1) the general characteristics of the self-government in Lithuania, (2) the possibilities for the development of modern self-government and community building along the lines of the EU integration processes, (3) public opinion concerning ongoing social change incited by the spreading of information society technologies. Augustinaitis concludes that, generally, the Lithuanians approve of the European model of administration and support further implementation of the democratic principles of transparency etc. The citizens are ready to co-operate and join partnerships with local government and they are open to new IT applications. In contrast, local government officers show distrust in cooperation with citizens, and demonstrate the 'old-fashioned' style of management, thus, special programmes promoting professional motivation and orientation towards EU integration seems to be a necessity.

In attempts to understand the use of new technologies in public communication, an empirical assessment of *information management* approach is found in two empirical studies, where interactivity of the Lithuanian news sites was measured (Pukienė 2002, Savickas 2004).

Discussing both (1) the scope of the empirical study (more than 60 news media Web sites were assessed) and (2) the types of interactivity found on front pages of news media Web sites, Pukienė (2002) applies the following methodology: Firstly, the author identifies and discusses different types of interactivity as found on the Lithuanian news sites, such as interactivity as a form of one-to-one communication (reader and journalist); interactivity as means to download news/data/ring tones; interactivity as means to use archives; interactivity as means of entertainment, etc. Secondly, she explains the logic of grouping different types of interactivity into two broad categories. One category deals with responsive interactivity: this type of interactivity presupposes communication, for instance, in online discussions or reader forums. The second type of interactivity is a process-related activity and is called information/content management: it indicates such things as downloading and searching, seeking and managing information.

It is important to mention that, in the study performed by Pukienė (2002), the concept of 'content (information) management' is assessed in the context of online business models as employed by the media compa-

nies in Lithuania. As the study demonstrates, high levels of the second type of interactivity (interactivity as content management) indicate the application of 'service-based' thinking to information presentation by the news media. Therefore, the concept of management is indeed a process-related definition and is *adequate for journalism*.

1.3: Context of media studies

In considering the third perspective – media studies –, Lithuanian scholars mainly actualise the role of the media: the studies contemplate such 'keywords' as *freedom of speech*, *democracy*, *media empowerment*, *citizen participation*, etc., but little empirical data is provided to support theoretical considerations (Nugaraitė 1996, Gudonienė 1989).

Audronė Nugaraitė, an associate professor at the Institute of Journalism at Vilnius University, suggests that knowledge and information are of crucial importance in contemporary Lithuania: the author stresses that the media tend to acquire the powers of the First rather than the Fourth Estate. In this context, the author says little about news or information management, but in her assessments of importance of 'information' Nugaraitė applies such phrases as 'news is selected and systematised by the media professionals', 'information can be fragmented or even unilateral', and, most importantly, that 'news forms the public opinion' (Nugaraitė 1996: 66-71).

Another approach in the same direction concerns the issue of 'the public right to receive information'. In her article 'Civic Society and Information', Vilija Gudonienė, an associate professor in the Faculty of Communications at Vilnius University, stresses that in a democratic society there is a need for civic information, i.e. information about individual rights and duties, in order to ensure active and informed participation of individuals in social, political and economic life. The author further declares that *information accumulation* depends directly on the public sphere – the role of media institutions in delivering content and reflection upon public affairs, the social infrastructure in general, and social and cultural interactions. Civic information is realised using formal communication networks – official sources, state and public institution officers. Gudonienė also indicates, that 'the main supplier of civic information should be

public administration institutions both regional and central, which should have clear information strategy and tactics, based on legal documents' (Gudonienė 1989: 38-43).

Otherwise, in the context of media and communications research, the concept of *management* is mainly used from a media (organisation) management perspective. For example, in talking about the 'the issue of LRT' – ongoing problems at the Lithuanian public service broadcasting – Balčytienė discusses that:

> … [the] years of 1993-1994 were crucial for the public television channel. It escaped radical reforms that were taking place in the print and broadcast media and had remained solid with old-fashioned technical staff, too large human potential and bad management for many years to come (Balčytienė 2002b: 103-135).

Another also:

> … as one can see, the public information sector had changed over once again a few months ago: at the end of 2003 only TV3, out of four national coverage television stations, remained under the management of foreign investors (Balčytienė 2004c: 75-110).

In conclusion, there is no clear and explicit definition of 'information/news management' in Lithuanian scientific discourse, although the term 'information/news management' is widely used in the fields of communication (political communications), in IT-diffusion related discussions and general media management.

It seems that the application of the concept arose together with the diffusion and development of at least two things. On one hand, the arrival and rapid application of new information and communication technologies has had an immense impact on how information is processed. On the other hand, the very obvious change in political communications in Lithuania is the arrival of political marketing, which has had a tremendous impact on how the public sphere is constructed. With the arrival of new actors (PR companies, politicians and political parties, and governmental institutions), *the need arises to assess the role of journalism as both an actor and an arena of public communications*.

2: Assessing Lithuanian journalism culture

Despite some restrictions in the journalism research tradition (e.g., lack of empirical data), some studies are nevertheless available which make it possible to summarise the state-of-the-art in research on the concept of journalistic culture with a special focus on news flows and cycles.

This section deals with national characteristics of Lithuanian journalistic culture as constituted in *attitudes and values as well as strategies* which journalists apply in their everyday tasks, such as selecting, seeking, reporting, writing, interviewing, etc. The review of the state-of-the-art research begins with an historical assessment of the roots of Lithuanian journalism. It later delves into political and legal aspects of restrictions on news flow. It then assesses economic and technological influences on the processes of news selection, and, finally, contemplates social aspects of news presentation and journalistic culture as described in contemporary research studies. It is important to stress that, in discussing the concept of journalism culture, particular attention is paid to the influence of all above-mentioned *categories* (historical, political, technological, etc.) on the dynamics of news flows and cycles as manifested in the Lithuanian journalism tradition.

2.1: Historical category

The historical aspect of research on journalistic culture mainly concerns theoretical studies of the role of the media in the development of a civil society in Lithuania and discloses itself in scholarly discussions on the role of the literary press in creating national culture in the period between the World Wars (Mačiulis 2004), on the professionalisation of journalism training and education (Gudaitis 2002), or on the consolidating function of the cultural media in general (Balčytienė 2003b).

The historical analysis of journalism, as provided in review articles and books, reveals a strong interrelationship between journalism and the worlds of literature, the Church and politics (Mačiulis 2004, Vaišnys 1999).

Since the establishment of independent Lithuania in 1918, the catholic intelligentsia (represented mainly by catholic priests) has thought of itself as highly qualified and knowledgeable on how the national culture has to be developed. The clergy constituted the largest group of intellectuals whose idea of the development of the press was strongly nation-focused; therefore, the largest investments of both financial and intellectual type were made in cultural projects focusing on the nationality of culture. 'The cultural magazine *Naujoji Romuva* was published under the support of economically strong Catholics, and it was mainly the achievement of the editor in chief that journal articles addressed wider audiences, not just the clergy', concludes Mačiulis (2004: 17-48)[4]. But, as the author reveals, the attempts of *Romuviečiai* (the followers of *Naujoji Romuva*) to defend the purity of the national culture and suspiciousness towards the West have gradually pushed the society towards cultural self-isolation.

Altogether, the attempt by Mačiulis (2004) to identify the civic function of *Naujoji Romuva* demonstrates that over two decades, the Lithuanian press functions and journalism's genres and styles have developed along with the overall transformation of the socio-political life in Lithuania. Other authors (Gudaitis 2002 Vaišnys 1999) also confirm that literary genres have played a significant role in setting the course for the development of Lithuanian journalism in the first half of the 20th century.

In addition, concerning the historical category in journalism research, it is interesting to investigate how the argument about which international model of cultural modernisation (and journalism professionalism) to follow evolved, during the years of the First Republic, and six decades later – after 1990, when independence in Lithuania was re-established.

For example, in the 1930s, 'getting rid of foreign influences was considered to be the most important condition of a successful creative work' (Mačiulis 2004: 17-48). *Naujoji Romuva*, introducing itself both as a journal and a movement fighting for cultural independence, also considered the idea of journalism professionalism to be the most important issue in its programme. In attempts to consolidate the Lithuanian identity, the rejection of what was not appropriate from other cultures seemed to be the right approach to the creation of a national one and the examples of what kind of approaches to the development of culture may be used were sought from different countries. The French cul-

ture was appropriate to many (Juozas Keliuotis), and the Scandinavian countries also seemed attractive.

In the 1990s, when Lithuania's independence was re-established, a different course of events occurred. A huge wave of know-how was transferred from the West into Lithuania. The adaptation process was not a smooth one, as Lithuanian journalism has been continuously criticised if not performing in the way it is meant to perform, according to the idea of professional model. Only recent studies have questioned the tendency in journalism training in the Baltic countries to borrow a literature from other countries (in many cases from the Anglo-American culture) and to treat that borrowed literature as though it could be applied without any problems. Despite the objective changes in the Lithuanian news paradigm, some traditional and characteristic features and patterns (esp. a publicist type of writing, literary tradition of journalism) have remained.

Apart from changes in the news paradigm, the historical dimension of the analysis of journalism culture also indicates the arrival of business reasoning into contemporary Lithuanian newsrooms. Balčytienė (2004c) says that, after the 1990s, changes in the media content 'were going hand in hand with the changes in the 'infrastructure' of journalist information sources'. In the mid 1990s many of the State institutions and large private companies introduced the position of press secretary, and entire public relations (PR) departments were established. This move has significantly altered the information flow that reached journalists – both a new source and a new pressure affects the journalistic newsgathering process.

Generally speaking, the proximity of journalists and PR personnel remains to be researched more thoroughly in the future. Theoretical studies reveal a negative side of information management coming from PR people about journalists, and one result of this is the existence of fixed (pre-established) routines in the newsgathering process.

In summary, the historical dimension in the state-of-the-art research on the concept of journalism culture reveals several phases of journalism development: (1) the beginning of the 20th century, (2) the soviet period and (3) the transformation of the media after 1990. It also reveals some traditional patterns and contemplates successes and failures in the development of

Lithuanian journalism. The historical analysis shows that Lithuanian journalism attempts to re-orient itself from literary and political worlds towards the world of management and business.

2.2: Legal and political categories

According to studies researching legal and political aspects in news flow management, an important factor in the change of paradigm in journalism was the abolition of censorship (in 1990) of the media.

A significant achievement, as Laimonas Tapinas (1998, 2000) concludes, was that the State, municipalities and banks could not be owners of the media, while during the communist rule the mass media had to adhere to a prohibition of criticism of the Communist system, the communist nomenclature, as well as other matters such as the dissatisfaction of people with Soviet realities, activities of dissidents, information about various disasters, reflecting life in Western states in a positive light, and the Soviet Army. Many topics were listed in a 'special fund'[5] and were pictured in a highly biased way. In Soviet Lithuania, the institutions of the communist party had strictly controlled the media and only they had the right to take decisions on the establishment and closure of publications, appointment and dismissal of heads thereof (who usually were members of the communist party), and issue special resolutions with instructions for work. Instructions on how the media must function were published in *Pravda* (main publication of the communist party), and the State institution GLAVLIT (the Chief Administration for the Protection of State Secrets in Print) observed whether military, economic and other secrets were protected from unwelcome public interest[6]. In the middle of the 1980s, in the course of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the Soviet censorship restrictions eased. The discourse became more open and varied; the press started to talk about 'human factor' issues, i.e. the focus was redirected towards the problems of the ordinary man.

Changes in the news flows (as affected by legal and political factors) are discussed in several studies by journalism graduates in Vytautas Magnus University (in Kaunas) and Vilnius University.

As indicated by the dynamics of the topics in major Lithuanian dailies, the change in thematic distribu-

tion of topics in the newspapers clearly corresponds to general socio-political dynamics in the country, 1947-2002 (Kazlauskas 2002). Content analysis of two national dailies *Komjaunimo tiesa* and *Kauno tiesa* (now *Lietuvos Rytas* and *Kauno diena*) shows that topical issues fall into the following phases first described by Hoyer/ Lauk & Vihalemm (1993): (1) a well-established pattern of communist advocacy (1947-1955), (2) the ideological thaw (1956-1968), (3) the period of stagnation (1969-1987), (4) the breakthrough (1988-1990) and (5) the decade of a new beginning (1991-2002). Throughout the second half of the 20th century the media's discourse in Lithuania has changed dramatically, and only two topics – culture and sports (especially basketball) – have remained unchanged in the newspapers. In addition, the distribution of thematic categories, for example, 'political ideology' and 'communist youth related matters' in the period of stagnation (1969-1987) and the 'increased public concern with national history' and 'political upheaval during the breakthrough' during (1988-1990), indicate the transition from 'closed totalitarian' towards 'participatory discourse of the Singing revolution'[7].

Another analysis of Lithuanian newspapers demonstrates changes in the dynamics of the main topics in the media during the post-communist decade (Labanauskienė 2002). Two national newspapers were analysed – *Lietuvos rytas* and *Respublika*[8], the latter established in 1989 as a first newspaper of the breakthrough years. Thematic distribution of topics in the period of analysis (1988-2002) revealed that criminal news and celebrity-related topics have gradually pushed ecology, culture and history from the first to the back pages of the two newspapers. Since the advent of independence, the public value orientations have passed through four logical phases: (1) political and national revival (1988-1989), (2) declaration and consolidation of Independence (1990-1992), (3) political and economic reforms (1993-1999) and have entered into (4) the heyday of materialist and hedonistic motives (since 2000).

Empirical studies demonstrate that contemporary society is clearly structured around the individuals' needs: its journalism has little concern with public interest – materialist values dominate, which makes public consolidation a difficult matter indeed.

Another issue to be assessed with reference to the political aspect of journalism culture is the relation between media and politics. The noteworthy case in this respect is the status of National Radio and Television. Financing of Lithuanian public broadcasting is not favourable for the independent functioning of the company. There is no licence fee, so the financing is not stable and the company is forced to look for commercial sources of support. However, in the light of negative public opinion about the introduction of the license fee, the politicians are reluctant to introduce the fee and to thus reduce financial difficulties for the broadcaster.

In summary, both political and legal categories, as well as historical approach to the assessment of journalism culture, demonstrate attempts by Lithuanian journalism to reorient itself towards new goals. Theoretical and empirical studies reveal that the media (especially the print media and commercial broadcasters) seek to move away from the world of politics and are becoming increasingly market oriented and consumer-centred. The sphere of public communications is regulated by legislative acts and by international acts endorsed by Lithuania. Furthermore, the mechanism of self-regulation (code of conduct, press council and the ombudsman) forces the media to take more responsibility for their actions. But again, there exists only a limited number of empirical studies to assess, for example, whether the media adhere to the principles of self-regulation.

2.3: Economic category

The economic is another factor to affect the professionalisation of the media. On one hand, commercialisation of the media is a positive event as it brings market forces to the fore. However, the outcome of the media operating under the free market also brings some unpredicted results[9].

There exists a general agreement that commercialisation of the media has had an impact on the type of journalism that is being produced. Consumerism is cultivated, while civic values tend not to be represented. The media owners are concerned with rapid financial gains and 'new criteria' seem to replace all others: as fast as possible, as much as possible, and as funny as possible. Market-oriented journalism has indeed found its way into Lithuanian public communications and, therefore, journalism is produced that is biased, saturated with advertising and has a low quality.

But indeed commercialisation is a process that need not stop. One can say that this is a bad model, but what then are the alternatives? A principal concern in media modernisation should be whether media commercialisation leads to democratisation. So it seems that in Lithuania (as well as in other countries with a young democracy) stricter regulation is needed to protect public communications from undesirable impacts (such as reduction of pluralism with increase of media concentration and cross-media ownership).

2.4: Technological category

The technological aspect of Lithuanian journalistic culture in respect to news flows deals with questions about whether the conventional media makes active use of new technologies, whether journalists employ new technologies to accomplish everyday tasks such as researching, writing or interviewing, or which types of editorial decisions guide the development of Internet media. In addition, an interesting research question is about what motivates media organisations to publish journalistic content online and what types of electronic business models they use.

A significant amount of research in this respect has been carried out within the COST action A20 project framework, 'The Impact of the Internet on Mass Media in Europe', also through independent studies concerning the development of Internet media as well as the new media journalism training tradition in Lithuania (Pukienė 2002, Savickas 2004, Balčytienė 2002a, Balčytienė 2003a, Balčytienė 2004a, Balčytienė 2004b, Balčytienė 2004d). This section reviews some significant findings concerning the impact of new technologies on the development of journalism and news management.

A study to analyse responses of 63 Lithuanian journalists working both in traditional and Internet-based institutions was conducted at the Department of Journalism in Vytautas Magnus University in Spring 2002 (Pukienė 2002).

The questions asked in the survey focused on the following items of analysis: whether and how often do journalists use the Internet, and how new technologies have affected the journalistic job (i.e., what the tasks are that journalists perform online, how often they go online, from where they get story ideas, and how they communicate with their sources). Results confirm an agreement among Lithuanian journalists that the Internet has improved their work, as it is extensively used to accomplish various journalistic tasks: the researching, collecting and checking of facts, and interviewing sources. Journalists seem to be familiar with so-called computer-assisted-research and reporting[10.] On the whole, there seems to be agreement that the Internet has improved journalists' work, which indicates that, in general, Lithuanian journalism has potential to become more technology-driven.

In another research study five editors from the mainstream media were interviewed (Cucėnas 2002). The respondents of the qualitative study represent different media institutions, including the biggest regional newspaper with an online publication, (*Kauno diena* is Norwegian owned Kaunas city newspaper with an average circulation of 40,000), the second biggest national newspaper so far resisting Internet experiments, (*Respublika* has a circulation of 42,000), the business newspaper, (*Verslo žinios* is owned by Bonnier Media from Sweden; its circulation is 9,000) and two online only news portals with a varied audience (*Delfi* and *5ci*). The editors were asked about decisions concerning the application of new technologies in the newsrooms and about the impact of interactive technologies on changes in newsroom cultures, etc. Interestingly, the opinions expressed by the editors varied a lot – from views which emphasise that having an online publication is a 'matter of prestige', or that a news site is a 'charity to the readers', through to more business-oriented views acknowledging that a financial logic is needed to be economically successful on the Internet (*Verslo žinios*).

The study revealed that decisions made by editors are a major driving force behind the use of Internet applications in the conventional media. Although journalists understand the importance of multimedia and interactivity, they seldom produce pure multimedia journalism. The most widespread form of online media production in Lithuania is the mainstream news site, generally offering a selection of editorial content and a minimal (often moderated) form of participatory communication. Journalists seem to be motivated to use interactivity as well as other Internet media features on a much wider scale, but the managers are less keen.

An important step towards the assessment of the impact of technological challenges on the development of online journalistic culture was carried through an

international project that aimed to analyse the front pages of the three national dailies in eighteen European countries[11].

Concerning the Lithuanian contribution, the study reveals at least one national characteristic of three online dailies analysed (*Lietuvos rytas*, *Kauno diena*, *Lietuvos žinios*), which is to offer the possibility of commenting online. Online commenting about journalistic content is uncommon in many European countries (perhaps because of legal regulations, or journalistic culture), but seems to be very important to readers in Lithuania (and in Estonia, too). Online newspapers in Lithuania tend to compensate for the lack of online content through commentaries from the audience. On one hand, this helps to keep-up the community of loyal readers and commentators; on the other hand, it also diversifies content. Multimedia journalism is rare, as online newspapers do not include links to previously told stories, do not add external links to other Web sites, and remain print-news-story focused[12.] Online versions of Lithuanian newspapers are at a hand's reach: the same news stories as in print, no breaking news and little investment in additional services (horoscopes, games, e-cards, ring tones, and etc.) for the readers.

In conclusion, Lithuanian journalism in its online character is rather restrictive. Online news providers are more interested in short-term rather than long-term investment. The most significant impact of technology on the development of journalistic culture in news flows and cycles is not just a concern of journalists with technological innovations and cross-media reporting, rather it is the editorial decisions and policies made in the newsrooms that affect the development of online newspapers. Readers' interest in writing of online commentaries is an important national characteristic. It may be an indication of a certain political culture where the Internet acts as a new (pseudo)participatory channel.

2.5: Socio-cultural category

The socio-cultural aspect of journalistic culture is another issue that relates to the professionalisation of journalism. Considering the high levels of trust in the media, Aurelija Juodytė, a PhD student from Vilnius University, touches upon the role of traditions and habits in professional journalism (Juodytė 2004: 135-148). She expresses an opinion that trust in

the media is a result of habit. On one hand, such a habit is based on the routine of the production of information, which allows the media to effectively collect reliable and important information without great expense of time and capital. This routine is based on a fixed network of information sources, consisting of 'hot' points, constantly producing newsworthy information. Journalists focus their attention on the social groups that hold the power in society and are in this way reducing the dissemination of alternative information. On the other hand, it might serve as a method for the groups seeking media attention – to use the knowledge of the working routines and rhythms of the media in order to get to the attention of the media and to fit the agenda of new actors (politicians or business companies).

This section has provided a summary of theoretical and empirical research studies on the concept of Lithuanian journalism culture.

This state-of-the-art report reveals that the profession and its paradigms changed and developed as a complex and a multi-layered process. The result of this development is a mixture of old (i.e., literary type of journalism) and new (i.e., objective and balanced) journalism. Historical, political, legal, economic and technological categories of analysis show that some elements of the journalism tradition have been preserved, while other elements were introduced as a result of rapid modernisation, such as diffusion of new technologies or the arrival of business reasoning.

Indeed, Lithuanian journalism has undergone an obvious modernisation, but much remains to be done in learning how to deal with new possibilities (technological innovations) as well as new threats (commercialisation).

3: Assessing 'information/news management' in Lithuanian media with regard to European public sphere

In Lithuania, empirical studies on the news flow of European issues have been determined by two facts: the accession of Lithuania to the EU[13] and the public's increasing need of information on European issues.

With Lithuania's accession to the EU a significant number of sociological studies was undertaken. How-

ever, they were not without limitations: the official bodies (governmental institutions) commissioned the reports and very few of them were made available to a wider scientific community. Hence, the topic of the provision of information on the EU, as well as its distribution in the media, was substantially researched in bachelor and master theses in universities all over Lithuania. The range of issues assessed by students of political and communications studies covered, for instance, the analysis of EU information campaigns as performed in other countries (Gužaitė 1998, Endzinas 2002, Gamziukaitė 2004), the role of the media in Europeanisation of the Lithuanian public sphere (Raipaitė 2003, Ivanauskaitė 2002), and the analysis of special EU-related issues as presented and distributed via the media (Urbonavičius 2002, Macevičiūtė 1998, Voldemaras 2003, Žilinskas 2001).

As the studies reveal, the topics of agriculture, economics, Lithuania-EU relations and energy policy were among the leading issues described by the media in the pre-negotiation period. In contrast, in the pre-accession period, the main issue was the referendum, followed by other issues. Hence, the range of topics covered in the media bears a close relationship to the profile of the country, i.e. the topics cover issues that are relevant to the national setting (agriculture or energy policy) and the time of the research.

Aside from questions about which topics have the highest probability of being addressed in the media, the studies also touched upon the sources of information for the media and news cycles about EU issues.

3.1: The role of official bodies

Several official institutions, such as the European Committee at the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Delegation of European Commission to the Republic of Lithuania and the ministries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, etc.) have heavily influenced the appearance of European topics in the local and national media (*see Figure 1*).

Figure 1: **Information cycles concerning (non)reporting on the EU in the Lithuanian media.**

Official bodies: European Committee under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (before May 1,

2004), European Commission Delegation to the Republic of Lithuania, EU Information Centre at the Parliament of Lithuania, Ministries (Agriculture, Science and Education, Foreign Affairs, Inner Affairs, etc.) *News agencies*: Baltic News Service (BNS), Lithuanian News Agency (Elta).
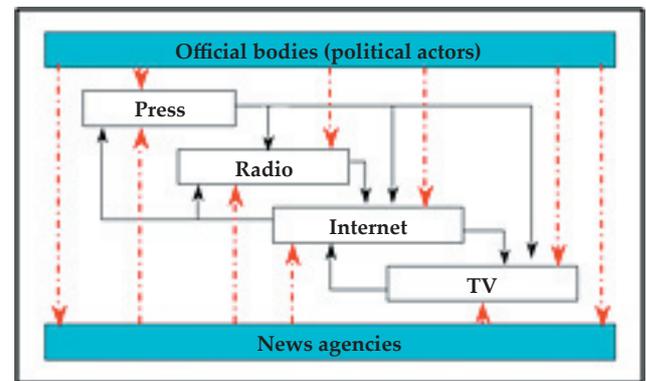
The official bodies have employed various strategies to keep the media focused on the EU. For instance, Europe-related topics were offered to the media; training seminars for journalists took place; assistance for journalists to find experts was provided; and financial support for EU-related media projects – such as development of special radio and TV programmes and design of special news portals – was given. In many cases, contacts with the media (regarding the cooperation on the preparation of special publications, interviews with experts, etc.) were based on commercial contracts between the European Committee and the media. The ministries (e.g., the Ministry of Agriculture)also had special agreements with the local press.

Although the work of these institutions has been performed within the framework of an official information campaign, their task has not been to persuade the people to vote for the EU (Valsiūnaitė 2001); rather, the main goal was to supply the public with relevant information, which would serve as a basis for their informed and independent decision. As declared by the representatives of these bodies, they did not seek to influence the content of the messages in the media. Journalists were free to interpret the news in their own way. However, there has been no formal research about whether the efforts have been successful. But one thing is clear: information campaigns helped to establish steady connections with journalists, the official bodies functioning as both the intermediary information source and supporter to journalists' initiatives.

After May 1 2004, when Lithuania became a member of the EU, the role of the institutions has changed. The European Committee under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania has been re-organised into the Department of Public Information and EU Information in the Government of Lithuania, and a new institution – the EU Information Centre at the Committee of European Affairs of the Parliament of Lithuania – was established. The Delegation of the European Commission in Lithuania was reorganised into the European Commission Representation in Lithuania. Information policies of the ministries were adapted to special issues such as international financial assistance at the Ministry of Finance, or media and culture policies at the Ministry of Culture.

3.2: The role of the media

Apart from the official bodies, the biggest EU information providers for Lithuanian media are two news agencies – the Baltic News Service (BNS) and the Lithuanian News Agency (Elta)[14]. However, neither of the two news agencies has a special correspondent in Brussels, and, according to the data provided on their Web sites, nor have they journalists who specialise in EU topics.

Only a few media institutions in Lithuania have special correspondents working in EU institutions in Brussels. The National Radio and Television of Lithuania (LRT, which is a public service broadcaster), has a journalist reporting on the EU from Brussels. LNK TV station (one of the three national private television channels) has two accredited journalists in Brussels. The biggest national daily *Lietuvos rytas* has a journalist in Paris (who also covers news from Brussels). Other media, such as TV3 (private television station – a strong competitor with LNK) send their special correspondents to Brussels only during important events (e.g., Lithuanian accession to the EU), and the majority of the media use information provided by news agencies or official bodies. Similarly, only some of the media have journalists who specialise in EU topics. Traditionally, journalists who specialise in economics, politics or agriculture also cover European issues.

The official bodies and the news agencies remain the strongest intermediary source of information. They supply the Lithuanian public sphere with European topics (see *Figure 1*).

The two Lithuanian news agencies distribute the news, which is duplicated on the Internet (in online-only news portals such as *Delfi* or *Omni Laikas*, online newspapers[15] or on broadcast stations' Web sites[16]) and in the traditional media. Subsequently, the Internet media catch the news flow from the print media, and transfer articles online from print. The radio and television stations, too, broadcast different types of programmes based on press reviews, thus providing additional assessment on what has been described in the newspapers and on the Internet. Finally, Internet media close the daily news cycle by providing additional information for evening television news.

To which media does the biggest amount of EU-related news go?

The greatest amount of information concerning EU issues (between one and five items of EU news related topics), is placed in different online-only news portals such as *Delfi* (http://www.delfi.lt), *Bernardinai* (http://www.bernardinai.lt), *Info* (http://www.info.lt), *Omni Laikas* (http://www.omni.lt), *E-biz* (http://www.ebiz.lt)[17]; significantly fewer European issues are found in national dailies and broadcast programmes[18]. Some of the conventional media have established EU related news verticals and programmes[19,] but online news portals had EU-related news verticals long before and during the referendum information campaign. At present, some of the portals offer news 24 hours per day (http://www.vz.lt, which is *VŽ Online* – an online business news agency developed by the business daily *Verslo žinios*), thus providing a non-stop flow of information.

Before Lithuania joined the EU, (even before the referendum took place), the amount of information in the media on European issues was significantly greater. Some of programmes were funded by the European Committee of the Government of Lithuania or the European Commission Delegation to the Republic of Lithuania[20].

There have been no studies performed to assess the Lithuanian press coverage of Europe, thus it is difficult to predict which main actors (government bodies, the media) will be the main providers of information in the future. It only can be concluded that the information cycle on EU-related news in the Lithuanian media significantly differs from those of other foreign news, where most of the news comes from the news agencies.

There is a general agreement that news in the Lithuanian media is much more local than pan-European, therefore it is necessary to negate (or support) this hypotheses with empirical data. It is also necessary to understand which factors (technological, economic or cultural) contribute to (non)coverage of Europe in the Lithuanian press.

4: Conclusion

This report has provided a review of the three major issues: the concept of information/news management, journalism culture and the European public sphere, as described and discussed in Lithuanian scientific discourse.

The main findings, therefore, are:

1. The concept of 'information/news management' is not discussed in the Lithuanian textbooks for journalists, or in communication and media science books. Also, there is no clear and explicate definition of 'information/news management' in Lithuanian scientific discourse (although the term itself is widely applied in various fields of communications research such as political communications, media management or discussing the impact of new technologies on the processes of how journalists perform their everyday tasks). Apparently, the diffusion of a 'information/news management' concept into scientific discourse was a natural response to at least two issues. On one hand, the arrival and rapid application of new information and communication technologies has had an immense impact on how information is processed; on the other hand, changes in political communications have had a tremendous impact on how the public sphere is constructed. With the arrival of new public actors (PR companies, politicians and political parties, and governmental institutions), the need has arisen to assess the role of journalism as both an actor and an arena of public communications. The timing seems to be right to *introduce a new definition of 'information/news management'* into the Lithuanian journalism research tradition.
2. The state-of-the-art research on the concept of Lithuanian journalism culture revealed that the profession and its paradigms developed as a complex and a multi-layered process. The result of this development is a mixture of old and new journalism. Some of the traditional elements have

been preserved (e.g. an advocacy type of journalism), while many new elements were introduced. *Lithuanian journalism has undergone an obvious modernisation, but yet should learn to deal with new possibilities as well as new threats.*
3. Much remains to be done in the near future about the Europeanisation of the Lithuanian public sphere.

There is a need to create a *typology of national strategies* (press conferences, contracts with the media, e-projects, investigative journalism, PR campaigns, etc.), which are used by the actors (the media, the official bodies, etc.) in EU information provision. In addition, it is necessary to the *main factors* (economic, technological, cultural, etc.), which affect the (non)coverage of Europe in the Lithuanian press.

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[1]   It is an approach to journalism research when newspapers, news bulletins, books etc. are carefully calculated and documented, but no further analysis of the occurrence of the particular phenomena itself is provided.

[2]   Journalism graduates now receive BA or MA degrees in Communication and Information, which is a field of social sciences.

[3]   Scholarly publications such as peer-reviewed academic journals or research reports provide relatively little information on news and information management. *Informacijos mokslai* (information and communication sciences journal) and to some extent *Darbai ir dienos* (journal for social sciences and humanities) are the two academic journals, where concept of management has been found as described by Lithuanian scholars in the context of news and information flow.

[4]   At the beginning, *Naujoji Romuva* attempted to establish links between the readers of different ideological standings and by doing so it tried to accomplish a double task – to consolidate the audience and to identify the nationality of culture. In this respect it fitted the expectations of the political regime very well, but in society where people were attached ideologically, the position of the editor created controversial reactions ranging from genuine interest to discontent.

[5]   Journalists could not provide objective information about the history of the First Republic (1918-1940), about the intrusion of the Soviets in the Baltic States in 1940, events of WWII and post-war period (such as the partisan movement in 1944-1953), as well as a great number of other topics.

[6]   The officials of GLAVLIT read all newspapers and books in advance, watched all upcoming radio and television broadcasts, films and plays, executed political censorship in accordance with the instructions of the Communist party, and

banned distribution of ideas and knowledge unacceptable to the Soviet regime. Every single piece of literature and art had to include some Marxism and Leninism in order to be published. The only acceptable trend of art was a social realism, which had to educate people in the Communist spirit.

[7] A distinctive feature of a totalitarian text is its prescribed meaning, which is pre-defined and pre-determined much in advance, while the participatory text is constructed upon the input from the outside (i.e., the reader).

[8] Since 1990s, both dailies have remained sound competitors struggling to attract a loyal reader.

[9] The general idea under the model of the Libertarian media is that individuals pursuing self-interest also benefit society at large. As studies confirm, there exist obvious advantages of the media working in a free market. The economic freedom is essential to political freedom; a free market provides incentives to firms to produce services that public wants (information that the audience needs), and market-economies encourage individual responsibility for decisions. But the liberal market is also criticized. It cannot eliminate the basic social discrepancies, and there exists a danger that the economic power may eventually turn into the political power.

[10] The World Wide Web and e-mail are extensively and intensively used in the newsgathering process. Two thirds (68%) of respondents search the Internet 'almost always'; forty percent of respondents spend from 1 to 5 hours a week researching on the Internet. A rather illustrative result comes with the fact that one third of those using the Internet occasionally hold discussions with their readers in forums or via electronic mail, and ten percent of journalists discuss things with their readers 'very often'.

[11] The project was carried out on the same day – 8th of October 2003 – in each participating country. The goal of the study was to assess the strategies that the newspapers imply, rather than to argue of what is generally possible to do with new technologies.

[12] It seems that an editorial decision is either to follow the idea of 'an informational welfare' (to offer all content for free), or to provide a fee-based service. Online newspapers concentrate on journalism, but not on advertising (although some of them offer paid archives, yet as international practice reveals, this is indeed a moderate income). The main income for the newspaper (its both offline and online versions) is print advertising and subscription.

[13] Majority of studies performed are related to information campaigns before the referendum, which took place 10-11 May 2003.

[14] Main sources of news is information provided by biggest world news agencies (Reuters, Epa, dpa, ITAR-TAS, etc.).

[15] *Lietuvos rytas* is the only Lithuanian daily, which publishes breaking news on its Web site.

[16] For instance, on http://www.lrt.lt (Lithuanian Radio and Television), which is news portal of public service broadcaster.

[17] Pre-ceding the accession to the EU, the number of items published online was significantly higher (15-20 news items was a normal amount of daily information).

[18] Interactive technologies allow unrestricted placement and access to information, while the conventional media have a fixed amount of pages or limited number of minutes. In addition, both print and broadcast media are much stricter with what news they select for presentation. Studies have revealed that many online only news sites in Lithuania are seeking to compensate lack of original journalism with news from wire services (BNS or Elta) and in many respects that can be news related to European content. It can be argued that to place information on the Internet is also cheaper than to write an article for a newspaper or to prepare a news report for radio or television.

[19] M1, which is a leading commercial radio station with a national coverage, had a project *Eurovasara* (European Summer) funded by the EU. Traditionally, in newspapers and TV programs the EU topics appear under special themes, such as economics or agriculture, sometimes culture or travelling.

[20] LNK television (one of three national private television stations) has a special segment called *Europiečiai* (The Europeans) in his evening news broadcasts. Besides that, some other programs such as *Perspektyvos* (The Perspectives) were broadcasted on LNK during 1999-2000, and *Europos laikrodis* (The Clock of Europe) was a regular debate programme on the LRT since 1997.

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