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Facets of the Polish EU presidency on Greek news websites

Introduction

In this article we present the results of the research conducted regarding the presentation of the Polish EU presidency by three Greek news websites. The three websites were selected with the criterion of the number of visits of the web users and their popularity in the Greek media in general. The data were collected from the following websites: *www.newsbomb.gr*, *www.newsit.gr*, and *www.madata.gr* from July 1 until December 31, 2011. The keywords used in all three websites through their search engine were: *Poland and the presidency of the European Union*. In order to have the most representative and inclusive sample of articles we have proceeded to include different combinations of the basic key word/phrase such as: *the Polish presidency of the European Union* and *Poland and the European Union*. Our research identified 62 articles from *www.newsbomb.gr*, 45 from *www.newsit.gr* and 55 articles from *www.madata.gr*. In total, 162 articles were collected for further analysis and coding according to the specific codebook provided.

Results

At first, the total number of published articles that were collected from all three Greek news websites, amounted to 162 and concerned the period from July 1 until December 31, 2011. The articles were divided into two broad main categories. In the first category, 84 articles were included which referred to the European Union and the European presidency in general. In the second category, 78 articles were included that dealt with general domestic matters of Poland as well as the Polish presidency of the EU.

Afterwards, each of the main categories was further divided into two sub-categories as shown in Table 1 below. From the *www.newsbomb.gr*

website 62 articles were collected from which, regarding the first category, 31 referred to the European Union and 5 to the EU presidency in general. Regarding the second category, 24 articles referred to Poland and only 2 to the Polish EU presidency. From the *www.newsit.gr* website 45 articles were collected from which 26 referred to the European Union, 3 referred to the EU presidency in general, 15 referred to Poland and only one referred to the Polish EU presidency. Finally, from the website *www.madata.gr* 55 articles were collected in total, of which 14 referred to the European Union, 5 referred to the EU presidency in general, 25 referred to Poland and 11 referred to the Polish EU presidency. In Table 1 below the aforementioned results are displayed.

Table 1

Articles categorized in two main categories

Websites	Total articles	1 st Category Articles referring to the European Union & the European Presidency		2 nd Category Articles referring to Poland in general & to the Polish Euro- pean Presidency	
		European Union in general	European Presidency in general	Poland in general	European Presidency of Poland
<i>Newsbomb.gr</i>	62	31	5	24	2
<i>Madata.gr</i>	55	14	5	25	11
<i>Newsit.gr</i>	45	26	3	15	1
Total	162	71	13	64	14
		84		78	

At this point, we can observe that only 9% of the articles refer to the Polish EU presidency, a fact that leads to our first conclusion that the activities of Poland as President of the European Union were not advertised enough by the specific news websites. Nevertheless, the general advertising of Poland as a country was satisfactory, since 39% of the articles referred to that matter.

In the next stage we have proceeded to the coding of the articles according to the codebook provided.

News website *www.newsbomb.gr*

From *www.newsbomb.gr* website a total of 62 articles were collected, but only 26 corresponded to the topic of our research. Basically, these articles reproduce news excerpts from other media. This is important, as the

choice of the articles they decide to reproduce matters as well. The articles that refer to Poland in general amount to 24, and the articles that refer to the Polish EU presidency specifically account for only two. These 26 articles were studied separately and categorized according to the codebook and their content. The results are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2

Table of Categories *www.newsbomb.gr*

VARIABLE XI. ALLOCATION OF ARTICLES ACCORDING TO THEIR MAIN TOPIC		
Articles Categories	Articles' Percentage	
1. DOMESTIC POLITICS	30%	
2. INTERNATIONAL POLITICS- EU	27%	8% refers to the Polish European Presidency
3. ACCIDENTS- DISASTERS	15%	
4. SPORTS	12%	
5. JUSTICE-CRIMINALITY	8%	
6. SOCIAL RELATIONS	4%	
7. CULTURE	4%	

In Table 2, we can observe that 31% of the articles focus on the domestic politics of Poland, probably due to the national elections that were held during that period, while 27% focus on topics of international politics and the country's policy on issues concerning the European Union and the economic crisis. It is important that only 8% from a total of 27% articles in the category of international politics refer to the Polish EU presidency. 15% of the articles present accidents and disasters, such as the tragic derailment that took place in Baby in Poland, but also the disasters provoked by the bad weather from strong hurricanes in northeast Poland. 11% refer to sports and the great event of European Championship of 2012 in football that was held in Poland. 8% present nationalist demonstrations and conflicts with the police during the Independence Day celebrations in Poland, as well as statements of undercover intelligence officers from Poland, regarding the warnings to Norway's intelligence with reference to Anders Breivik, who in March 2011 attacked and killed many people in a camp in Norway, an event considered as one of the greatest criminal acts that Norway has suffered in modern history.

Finally, only 4% refer to culture and social relations and present the international exorcism conference that took place in Jasna Góra Monastery

in Częstochowa in southern Poland and the informal medical conference for transplants, healthy living, electronic health (eHealth) and communication disorders of children that took place in Sopot.

We should notice that out of 62 articles only two referred directly or indirectly to the Polish EU presidency. The articles present Poland as the 'President country' of the European Union providing information about the 'presidential agenda' of Poland while holding the EU leadership but without commenting further on these activities. Therefore, we can argue that these articles are neutral regarding the Polish EU presidency.

It should be mentioned that 36 articles refer to the European Union and the European presidency in general, with articles referring to the economic crisis in the European Union, the Greek economic problems as well as meetings and conversations between Prime Ministers of the Union.

In this specific website, most of the articles studied were mostly related to the ongoing economic crisis in Europe and the domestic condition of Poland, while the activities of Poland regarding the EU presidency are barely covered.

News website *www.newsit.gr*

From the website *www.newsit.gr* 45 articles were collected but only 16 referred to our topic of the Polish EU presidency. As has happened with the previous website, there are many articles republished from other media and news organizations. In addition, there is information taken from national and foreign news agencies.

Articles that refer to Poland regarding general matters of domestic situation and policies account for 15 articles out of a total of 45, and only one article refers to the EU presidency of Poland. Following their coding, these articles were divided into the categories mentioned below in Table 3.

From the above table we can see that 31% of the articles focus on the domestic politics of the country due to the national elections period, while 19% refer to accidents and disasters with the main topic being the derailment in Baby in Poland. Also, 19% of the articles refer to international politics and the European Union, activities, meetings and conferences of the institutions of the EU regarding the economic crisis. 6% refer to the EU presidency of Poland commenting only the undertaking of the presidency on July 1, 2011. 13% refer to economy. Thrift measures

are presented that have been enforced by the Polish government, as well as government opinions regarding the economic crisis in Europe and mainly the countries that were seriously affected like Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Table 3

Main topics (*www.newsit.gr*)

Main topics	%	
Domestic politics	31	
International politics – EU	19	6% refers to the Polish European Presidency
Accidents – disasters	19	
Economy	13	
Sports	6	
Justice – crime	6	

Finally, 6% refer to categories of sports and justice-crime. In these articles, Poland is featured as the organizer of one of the biggest sports events, the European Championship of 2012 in football. Regarding crime, new evidence is presented from the Polish authorities' audit of the crimes that took place in Auschwitz.

The important fact on this website is that only one article refers either directly or indirectly to the Polish EU presidency. The content of the article presents Poland as a country that is undertaking the presidency of the European Union accompanied with a commentary on the private visit of Angela Merkel to Poland. The report on undertaking the presidency by Poland was not accompanied by the comments of the reporter and, therefore, we could say that on this occasion a neutral attitude was maintained.

Out of a total of 45 articles collected, 29 articles (70%) refer to the EU and the presidency in general, with information basically referring to meetings and conversations of EU and country officials related to the economic crisis of the European Union.

News website *www.madata.gr*

From the news website *www.madata.gr* 55 articles were collected, but only 36 were relevant to our research topic. 25 of them refer to general

matters concerning Poland and 11 refer directly or indirectly to the Polish presidency of the European Union. These 36 articles were allocated to the thematic categories mentioned below (Table 4). It is important to mention that also on this website, the total amount of the articles studied was republished from other media organizations.

Table 4

Table of categories *www.madata.gr*

VARIABLE XI.		
ALLOCATION OF ARTICLES ACCORDING TO THEIR MAIN TOPIC		
Articles Categories	Articles' Percentage	
1. INTERNATIONAL POLITICS- EU	34%	28% refers to the Polish European Presidency
2. ECONOMY	29%	
3. DOMESTIC POLITICS	23%	
4. OTHER	8%	
5. SPORTS	6%	

According to Table 4, we detect that 34% of the articles referring to Poland belong to the international politics category and comment mainly on the European Union. More particularly, they present statements relevant to the summit meetings and to matters influencing the European Union. In addition, it is important that 28% of the articles out of 34% in the category of international/EU relations comment on matters relevant to the Polish EU presidency. Their basic topic is the undertaking of the presidency, as well as the supportive attitude of some representatives of the Polish presidency to the economic situation that Greece is experiencing. 29% of the articles refer mainly to economic matters relevant to the economic crisis that struck the eurozone. 23% refer to the domestic politics of the country due to the national elections that took place during that period.

Also, 8% refer to matters that could not be defined by the codebook, such as that Poland should implement new rules on telecommunications according to the European Union as well as new information from the biography of the wife of Lech Wałęsa, the former President of Poland who governed from 1990 until 1995. Finally, 6% refer to sports due to the fact that Poland was the host country of the European Championship of 2012 in football.

As we have already mentioned, only 11 articles referred to the EU presidency of Poland. Five of them presented statements by Polish Presidency Ministers regarding the economic crisis, without the reporter ex-

pressing a positive or negative opinion. In the remaining six articles, the reporter's approach is positive, since the article presents a supportive attitude towards the Polish presidency, but in relation to Greece and its deep economic crisis. The activity of the Polish presidency for the induction of Croatia in the European Union is also presented in a positive way, since it constituted a target that the Polish presidency had set from the beginning.

Concluding, we should point out that regarding the specific website, out of a total of 55 articles, 36 belong to the 2nd category and only 19 belong to the 1st category (Table 1). On this website there are more articles related to our research than on the two websites analyzed previously. However, we should clarify that the content of all the articles concerns the economic crisis in Europe, and even the ones that refer to Polish EU presidency cite the supportive policy of Poland towards Greece.

Comparison of the websites' content

In order to compare all 162 articles from all three news websites they have been divided into two main categories, as we have shown in Table 1. In the 1st category we have placed 84 articles that refer to the European Union and the European presidency in general. 13 articles, that is 8%, refer to the European presidency in general, with the main topic of the rotation of the presidency to Denmark and Cyprus, completing the presidency trio, as well as the statements of the Turkish Prime Minister and his reaction to the taking of the presidency by Cyprus.

In the 2nd category, we have placed 78 articles that refer to Poland and the Polish EU presidency. Fourteen of these articles, which is 9%, referred directly or indirectly to the EU presidency of Poland. Eight of these fourteen articles kept a neutral stance, without criticizing the activities of Poland concerning its presiding, but, on the other hand, they referred to the undertaking of the presidency by Poland and to the policy agenda of the Polish EU presidency. The remaining six articles out of fourteen present in a positive manner the role of Poland as President of the European Union, basically because Poland maintained a positive position towards the Greek debt crisis.

The fact that very few of the articles studied referred to the Polish presidency demonstrates that on the websites analyzed the presentation of the Polish EU presidency was at a low level. Certainly, it should be underlined that 64 articles out of 78 articles in this category had Poland as their main topic, as a country and its internal affairs.

The 64 articles which finally entered into the coding procedure show that Poland triggered journalistic interest while it held the EU presidency. The articles were categorized according to their content and their main topic in 9 out of 13 categories that were given by the codebook. These categories are: international politics, domestic politics, economy, accidents and disasters, sports, justice and crime, social relations, culture and other categories.

As far as the international politics category is concerned, the content of the articles in all three websites was constituted by information regarding the European Union, and statements about the economic crisis of member states, such as Greece, Portugal and Spain. In Table 5 below we see how these articles are categorized.

Table 5

Sub-categories within international politics

Sub-categories of topics	%
Activities of international insitutions	28
European Union	25
Other	23
Diplomatic visits	9
Diplomatic negotiations	9
Activities of politicians	3
Wars between countries	3

Regarding domestic politics, the main topics of the articles was the election campaign of the Prime Minister Donald Tusk, the results of the elections as well as the election period in Poland. Table 6 below demonstrates that the elections were highly projected by the news websites.

Table 6

Sub-categories within domestic politics

Sub-categories of topics	%
Elections	29
Statements and activities of politicians	20
Public opinion	17
Other	17
Legislative activities	5
Judicial decisions	5
Intergroup relations	2
Activities of interest group	5

The content of the articles that dealt with the Polish economy consisted of information relevant to the economic measures that Polish citizens had to suffer in order to avoid a debt crisis such as the crisis other member states were already experiencing. In Table 7 below we present the high percentages of the subcategories of economic situation and economic crisis according to the coding performed.

Table 7

Sub-categories within economy

Sub-categories of topics	%
Economic situation	30
Economic crisis	19
Labour market	11
Currency	11
Tax measures	7
Budget matters	7
Foreign capital	7
Economic law matters	4
Bank loans	4

The category of accidents and disasters consists mainly of articles that quote information regarding the rail accident that took place in Baby in Poland with many injuries reported due to the derailment. 48% of the articles that belong to this category refer to rail accidents (See Table 8 below).

Table 8

Sub-categories within accidents and disasters

Sub-categories of topics	%
Rail accidents	48
Natural disasters	14
Massive accidents	14
Missing	14
Airlines accidents	5
Home accidents	5

Sports is equally interesting for the reporters, since Poland was the host country of the European Championship of 2012 in football and, therefore,

the content of the articles provided information about the Championship, the games and the teams that participated. Table 9 shows these details.

Table 9

Sub-categories within sports

Sub-categories of topics	%
Results	33
Players/managers/teams	27
Other	27
Champions	13

The information that initiated a new cycle of investigation for the Polish authorities in relation to the war crimes in Auschwitz, the statements of the authorities relevant to the warnings of Poland to Norway regarding Andres Breivik and the murderous attack on a camp in Norway, as well as the nationalist statements and conflicts with the police forces during the Independence Day celebrations in Poland constitute the content of the articles in the category of justice and crime. Finally, regarding the categories of social relations, culture and other, the content of the articles consists of information relevant to scientific congresses, religious ceremonies and public figures.

In Table 10 below we can clearly see the 9 thematic categories and the percentages of the articles that each category covers out of a total of 64 articles, that is 39% of the articles that addressed Poland as a country.

Table 10

Topics of articles about Poland

Main categories of topics	%
International politics	30
Domestic politics	23
Economy	16
Accidents and disasters	11
Sports	8
Justice and crime	5
Other	5
Social relations	1
Culture	1

It is also important that, from the 13 categories provided in the codebook, only 4 were not used, due to the lack of articles referring to these categories. These categories are: military and defense, science and technology, environment and, finally, human interest.

If we want to reach a conclusion from the research presented above, it is obvious that the EU presidency of Poland, regarding the activities and elaborations during the presidency period, was very little projected, since only 9% of the articles referred to this specific issue. In addition, it was very difficult to decide what the attitude of the reporters towards Polish EU presidency was, because the content of the articles was limited to providing only the essential information. This happened probably because of the 'reproduction strategy' of the articles, which republished news from other media sources.

However, leaving aside the EU presidency, Poland as a country was satisfactorily promoted by the relevant Greek websites, since 39% of the articles approached mainly Poland's domestic affairs. The question which arises is whether Poland would have been given equal importance by the media if it was not holding the EU presidency.

Another important fact is that 44% of the articles refer to the European Union and the ongoing economic crisis. These topics received a high level of attention by the Greek websites, an element which underlines the significance of the factor of domestication in the presentation of a news topic. Table 11 displays the interest in EU topics.

Table 11

EU-related topics

Categories of items	%
European Union in general	44
European presidency in general	8
Poland in general	39
European presidency of Poland	9

Conclusions

The European Union presidency is one of the key institutions of the EU and it constitutes an important task and role undertaken by the country which holds this position. The country which is in charge of the presidency organizes all the meetings within the EU and can affect the daily

agenda of the discussions and deliberations of the European Council. Each country which is assigned with the EU presidency holds a large responsibility and has to face the challenge of leading and shaping the EU agenda.

In this procedure, the media have an important role in how the EU presidency will evolve, as well as in the achievement of the final results. Studies show that European citizens know relatively few things about EU institutions and thus they do not have confidence in how they can really affect EU politics. This 'communicative gap' between the 'official EU' and its citizens was fully comprehended by EU officials and an effort is evident in recent years towards the direction of approaching EU citizens and informing them about the EU and its policies.

The economic crisis which showed the strong connection between EU members' economies helped towards this direction, as the media have focused on the EU agenda and EU policies during this period in order to keep citizens informed. The Internet is one of the basic media platforms used to bridge the gap between 'Brussels' and the citizens.

This is why our research on Internet websites is important. Citizens use the Internet widely for their political information. Consequently, for our topic it was important to see the level and frequency of the presentation of the Polish EU presidency on popular websites.

The news websites surveyed were *www.newsit.gr*, *www.newsbomb.gr* and *www.madata.gr*. The research results demonstrated a low interest and level of projection of the Polish EU presidency, as of the 162 articles collected only 14 referred to the Polish EU presidency. These articles represent only 9% of the total articles collected, a very low percentage in relation to the period of the presidency, as some would reasonably believe that the topic of the EU presidency deserved a lot more attention. A more qualitative approach demonstrates that 8 articles maintained a neutral stance while 6 had a positive attitude because of the supportive position of Poland towards Greece and its poor economic situation. This is a feature related to the element of domestication of news and how media address issues that are of a certain interest for a country.

However, 64 articles of the total of 162 dealt with Poland in general and these articles reflect a general rate of 39% of total articles, which is significant. The main topics of these articles, according to the categories of the provided codebook were: international policy, domestic politics, economy, accidents and disasters, sports, justice and crime, social relations and culture. The elections, the big sporting event of the European

football championship and a train accident that took place in Poland were the topics that basically attracted journalistic interest probably because of their significance *per se* and not because Poland was the presiding country of the European Union at that time.

In general, the presence of Poland as a country in articles is important, if we calculate together the articles which refer to its presidency of the European Union and the articles which refer to key domestic issues of Poland. The percentage of these articles where Poland is presented in either way is 48% (14 articles about the presidency and 64 about Poland in general). This is a significant factor in assessing the visibility of Poland in the media, taking into consideration that the country which undertakes the EU presidency receives more attention from the media anyway, and is likely at that time to be more visible in media texts in comparison to other countries. The EU presidency is also a way for countries to enhance their country's image internationally, a technique which is well described by the term 'nation branding'.

We should also point out that although not many articles referred to the Polish EU presidency, a significant number of articles referred to the European Union, with their interest being focused mainly on the economic crisis issues, and countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal. These articles accounted for 44% of the total but were not included in the subsequent analysis as their central theme, although it was the European Union, was not that of the Polish EU presidency.

To sum up, the Polish EU presidency did not receive the presentation rates expected on the websites we have studied, but EU related topics in general did. This fact shows that there is a growing interest of the e-press regarding the issues of EU policy and European institutions.

In conclusion, we believe that due to the hectic period that Greece was experiencing while Poland held the EU presidency, because of the debt crisis which struck Greece with tremendous consequences, the articles focused their interest on issues related to Greece and the EU presidency, and did not pay much attention to the Polish EU presidency itself.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the promotion of the Polish presidency of the European Union through the analysis of three popular Greek news websites. The survey collected articles from the websites, using the keywords *Poland and EU presidency*, which were published between July 1 and December 31, 2011. Re-

sults obtained provide several aspects regarding the presentation of the Polish EU presidency in the Greek media. Additionally, the research results reveal information about the role and activities of the rotating presidency of the European Union, as well as information of the European communicative policy.