

Dora PAPADOPOULOU

University of Central Greece

The Polish EU presidency in selected Greek media

Introduction

The methodological approach used in the study is empirical research. Through primary research among concrete Greek media (nationwide newspapers that have a high circulation, private nationwide TV stations with high audience measurement ratings, online media, and news websites) the article brings to the fore the coverage of the EU Polish presidency activities in news coverage under the shadow of the financial and political crisis in Greece. The news items were collected during the period from June 15, 2011 until January 15, 2012, the data were coded using a codebook and the Excel tables for analysing research findings as methodological tools. The survey was based on the following media: (1) private nationwide television station: *SKAI Television*; (2) online media (www.skai.gr, www.aixmi.gr); (3) weekly magazine: *Kiriakatiki Eleftherotipia* (centre) (15.06.2011–18.12.2011); and online newspapers (daily): www.avgi.gr (left), www.eleftherotypia.gr (centre).

Through representations in tables this attempt is focused on subjects such as the genre, the dominant topic, particular topics (a summary of them taking into account the limited space of this article), EU relevance and attitude towards Poland. The tables demonstrate that despite the economic crisis in Greece, the Greek media represented the Polish presidency as an important issue for Europe. Apart from one online medium, *aixmi.gr* that made no reference to the Polish presidency, every other of the aforementioned media dealt with it. This paper has been divided into two parts: (1) media which belong to the same journalistic organisation: (1) *Skai Television – skai.gr*; (2) *Kiriakatiki Eleftherotipia – enet.gr*, and online media in comparison, so as to understand through the tables as a whole, the picture of Polish presidency that those media formed.

Findings

Private Nationwide Television *Skai*

Investigating the Private Nationwide Television *Skai*, we are able to see that the interest was not substantial, because the concern was the problems with the Greek economy. The only report was about the opening of the Polish presidency. So, reports were rare and intertextually neutral about the subject of this project. They pointed up only those things that were of social significance for Greece during the entire Polish presidency (see Table 1).

Table 1

Content of the *Skai* Television: a general characteristic

Genre	Duration	Relevance	Dominant Area	Topic	Domestication	Framing	Attitude towards Poland
Report	180 seconds	Yes	International topics	State of economy	Yes	EU member	Neutral

Skai.gr

Unlike *Skai Television*, *skai.gr* highlighted important issues about the Polish presidency (13 items). In every reference to the European Union there was almost always something about the Polish presidency, with comments more or less regarding this presidency. Through the tables those media which belong to the same journalistic organisation can be contrasted, in order to perceive the differences in a schematic way.

The respectable importance that *skai.gr* ascribes to the Polish presidency is evidenced by the main attitude that reports took (see Figure 1) with reference to the Polish presidency. 53.8% of the items were in the form of reports, including news reporting and analysis of Poland as holder of the EU presidency. The second place was taken by general news about the presidency (30.8%), the third by interviews with Polish officials about their intention to serve the European vision (7.7%), as well as press reviews, with the same percentage (7.7%).

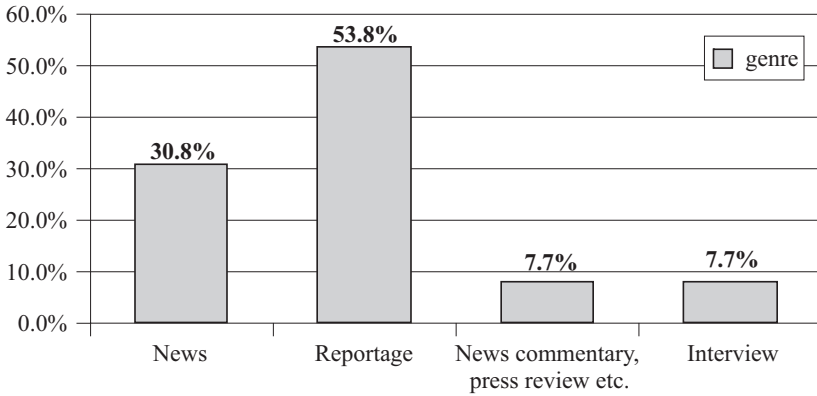


Figure 1. Genres of items

For the best understanding of the topics (see Figure 2) it is significant to group them into two categories of political and economic content, although the boundaries were not always so clear. The Polish presidency

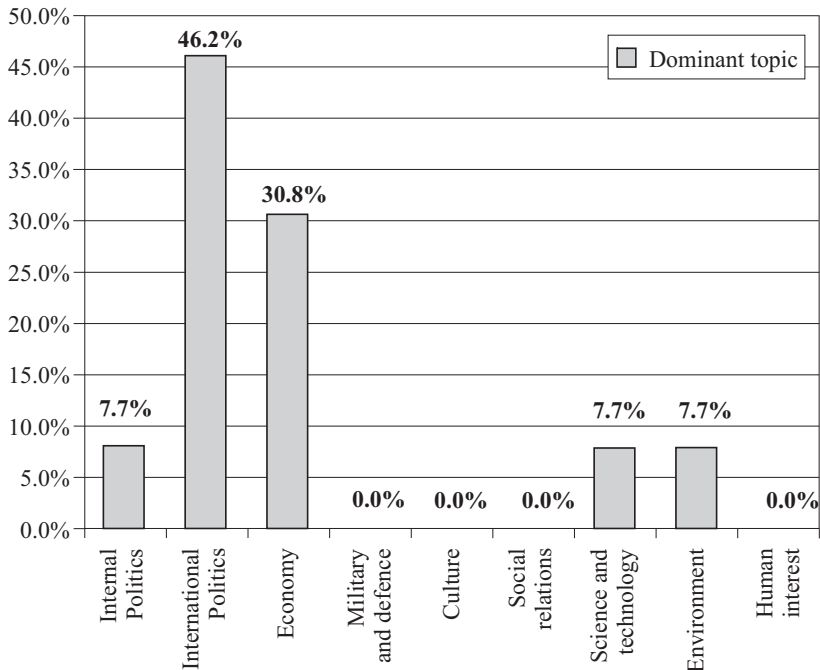


Figure 2. Dominant topics

was part not only of the theme of International Politics (46.2%) but also Poland as a country featured as an actor in solutions on an economic level (economy: 30.8%). In particular, Poland conveyed the message of 'stability' for the economic rescue of Greece. In the case of international politics the strategy of Poland was analysed and focused on the critique of Germany and its adopted politics. Poland is treated in every item as the best negotiator from the point of view of its presidency.

Also remarkable is the fact that even in cases where the references were in general about Europe, the presence of the Polish presidency theme was at the centre of the discussion (100%) although sometimes in a negative way, such as the importance of the rotating presidency that lost its power.

Figure 3 demonstrates, despite the fact that *skai.gr* was critical of the EU presidency, that Poland tried to use the presidency not only for the interests of Europe in general, but also for Greece in particular (30.8%). Sceptical (neutral) approaches (53.8%) are related more to Poland's demand to attend eurozone meetings and become negative in the moment that it is implied that Poland took advantage of its presidency for its own interests.

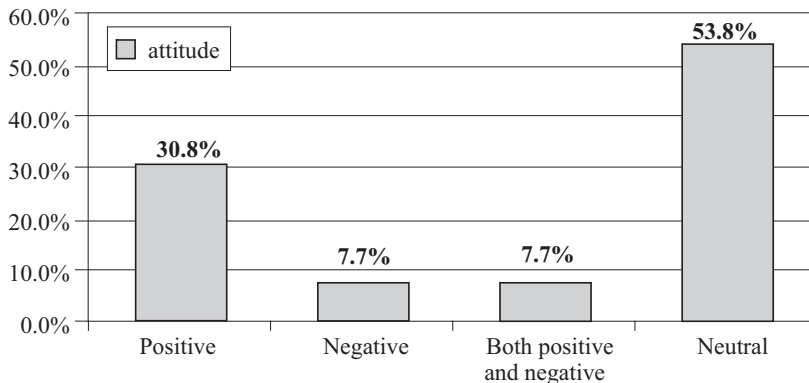


Figure 3. Attitude towards Poland

Kyriakatiki Eleftherotipia

The path of *Kyriakatiki Eleftherotipia* was of special impact for the Greek media. While it developed over many years and operated as an agency of information and debate for citizens to participate in democracy, it closed due to financial difficulties at the end of 2011. The last issue of this newspaper was on 18 December, 2011. So this empirical analysis

started on 15 June, 2011 and ended on 18 December, 2011, before the end of the Polish presidency. In this period, *Kiriakatiki Eleftherotipia* dedicated only one page to announcing the Polish presidency and referred also to the quick reaction of Polish officials regarding the double terrorist attack in Norway. This one report took on a more neutral attitude towards Poland (see Table 2).

Table 2

Content of the *Kiriakatiki Eleftherotipia*: a general characteristic

Genre	Front page	Visual element	Dominant area	Particular topic (1)	Particular topic (2)	Domestication	Role of Poland (1)	Role of Poland (2)	Attitude towards Poland
Reportage	Yes	Yes	International politics	EU relations	Terrorism	Explicit reference to impact on the country	EU member	Host of meeting	Neutral

Enet.gr

Enet.gr and *Kyriakatiki Eleftherotipia* belong to the same journalistic organisation. Here one can see a continuing flow of news in every area, contrary to a weekly newspaper that points out only the most important issues and, above all, concentrates on the internal political and economic problems of its country. That is the reason why in this case we have 19 items relating to the Polish EU presidency, in contrary to the newspaper (see *Kyriakatiki Eleftherotipi*).

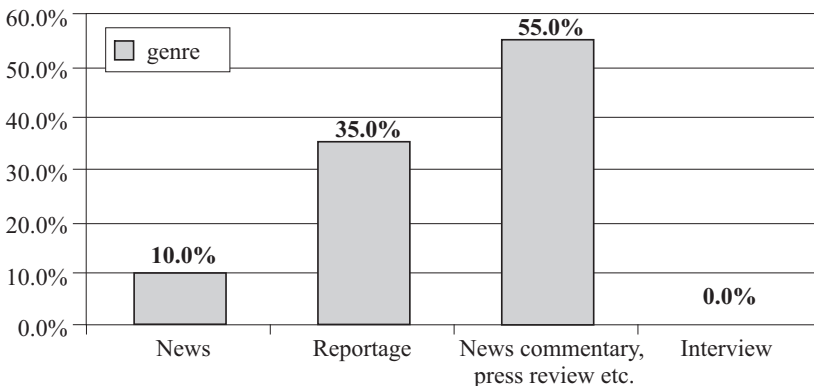


Figure 4. Genres of items

In the form of report (35%) – lower than in the *skai.gr* (53%) – *enet.gr* focused more on covering in the area of news (55%) almost every action (conferences, discussions, humanitarian missions) of the Polish presidency, with the only exception being the field of the cultural actions of this six-month presidency. *Enet.gr* was not interested in focusing coverage on only some aspects of Polish presidency, as the Figure 4 demonstrates.

From this perspective, it is easy to understand the place that the topic of international politics holds (65%) as a dominant topic, since the correlation of the Polish presidency with the situation in Europe was at the centre of several articles. It came across as significant to understand the presidency as something that belongs to the matters of international politics, while economy, with 15%, underlines the situation in Europe and the role that the Polish presidency should fulfil.

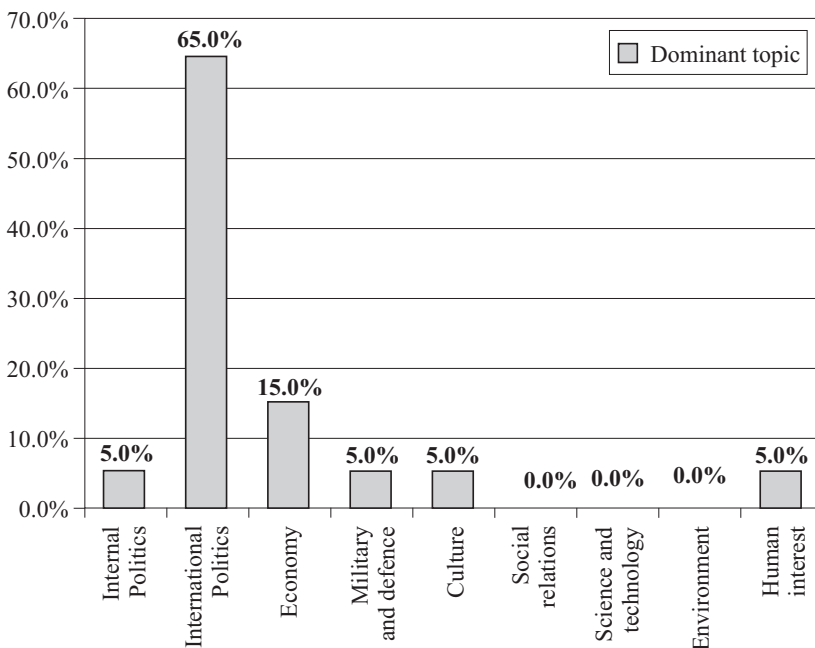


Figure 5. Dominant topics

Following this path of thinking is also consistent with the fact that the heart of its attention was not only to inform about the Polish presidency but also to bear in mind the whole situation in Europe and what should be

the role of the EU presidency. So, in order to accomplish that, it dedicated space to articles dealing with matters of internal politics (elections, problems of the government etc.) and economy. Also *enet.gr* highlighted the commitments of Poland in terms of its presidency not only to issues about the economy but also in terms of its diplomatic negotiations and agreements, although it also presented the difficulties of this rotating presidency because of the economic situation in Europe.

Since *enet.gr* dealt with almost every issue of Polish presidency from the point of view of its importance to the EU, the percentage of 90% relevance to the EU presidency was expected. Also the fact that *enet.gr* studied other aspects of Poland as a country and member of the EU is demonstrated by the 10% that reported speeches on the occasion of the EU presidency but which are not related directly to the Polish presidency (see Figure 6).

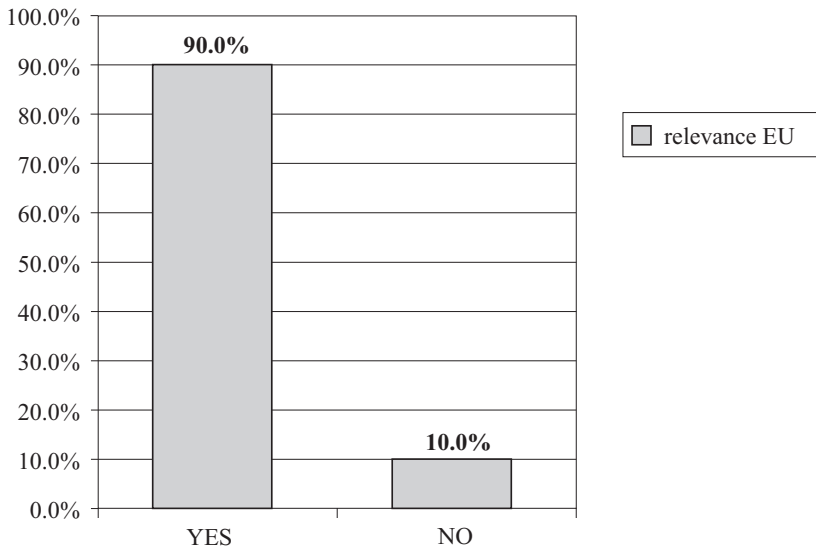


Figure 6. The EU relevance

In the case of *enet.gr* the attitude towards Poland was equally divided between positive oriented issues and neutral ones. Positive ones (44.4%) were, in general, comments about the way that Poland dealt with its economic problems and the strategies it used in order to come out of them as

a winner, as well as its accomplishments during its presidency (accession of Croatia). Although only 11.1% constituted negative remarks about Poland, the words that were used are notable. *Enet.gr* saw the comments of Polish officials regarding Turkey in a negative way. The critique at this point from *enet.gr* was very strong. More neutral were the comments about the participation of Poland in the eurozone, if the discussions were only about economic measurements (44.4%).

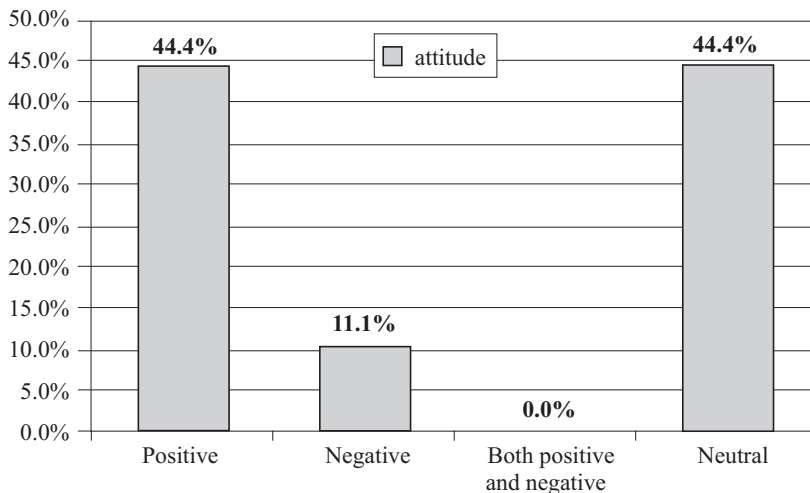


Figure 7. Attitude towards Poland

Online Media (*skai.gr, enet.gr, avgi.gr*)

The criteria upon which the selection of the three online media was made, were the nationwide cover of those media, their penetration of public opinion, their high viewership as well as the ‘co-existence’ of their ‘traditional’ profile along with their online profile. It was an attempt to investigate representative media from every kind of area, in order to study the way that underlying policy orientation also affects such an important issue as the EU presidency.

So, on a secondary level it is important to compare the items regarding our findings of online media. In this way the role that the occasion of the Polish presidency took in the important Greek online media can be understood. The Greek media became engaged in a perpetual effort to inform Greek audiences about all the current developments on the crucial subject

of the future of Greece in the European Union and to fulfil their mission as gatekeepers in the informative process.

As we can see in the Figure 8 below, the important factor for online media was to underline the general frame of events in terms of the Polish presidency. So neither reports (31.8%) nor interviews gain ground here on the information process. From this point of comparison, it seems that the aim was the communication of the most important news (36.4%). Only when the discussion involved, or offended, Greece, then (2.3%), through interviews (primarily), those online media attempted to understand or to judge the position of Poland. It is also important to point out the critical perspective of those articles. Greek online media, through discussions and interviews (D. Tusk, J. Sikorski, etc.), emphasised something that Greek officials also pointed out, that is seeing the problems of Europe not only in economic but also in political terms.

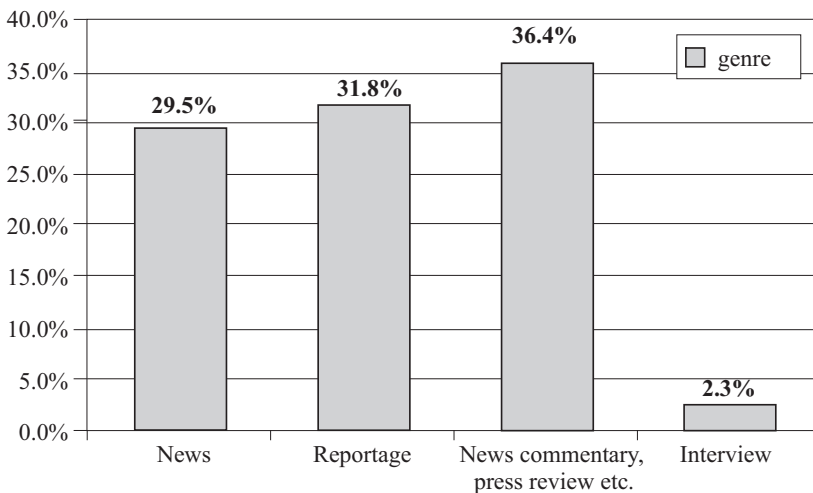


Figure 8. Genres of the items

The theme of Polish presidency was at the centre of our references. Those items were almost everywhere under the topics of politics or economy, and *avg1.gr* also provides us with a lot of information about cultural events that took place on the occasion of this presidency. Through them, the picture which characterised the Polish presidency was gradually pieced together, which allows us to have a picture of its course over this six month period.

The position of international politics (see Figure 9) is the main pattern of the comparative items here as well. It is remarkable, as we can see from the results, that although it was a difficult period, of rotating the Polish presidency, from the point of view of the economic situation in Europe, the Greek online media focused on the economy as the second most important issue (economy: 18.2%) because they interpreted the necessity of politics as a solution for the problems of Europe. From the findings it is also understandable that faith in European institutions can only be built through constructive criticism. It seems that the Polish presidency was presented by those online media as a reason to raise the matter of policy problems in Europe. In addition, it was not neglected (6.8%) to emphasise internal politics, in order to give the addressees a concrete view of Poland. The 6.8% on culture came mainly from *avgι.gr*, because of the general perspective that this online medium adopted.

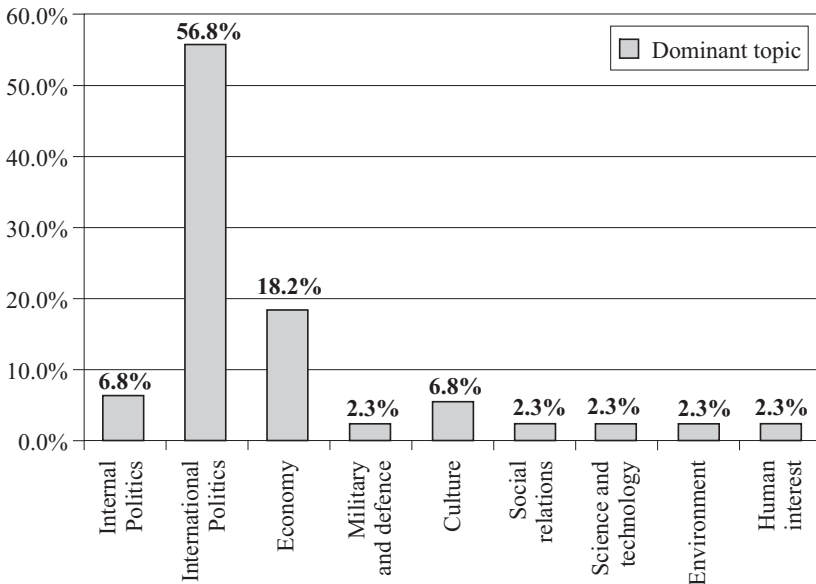


Figure 9. Dominant topics

As our results (Figure 10) demonstrate, with a percentage of 95.5%, almost every mention relates to the rotating presidency. Perhaps this percentage (95.5%) can be explained also by the fact that Poland was the holder of the EU presidency for the first time in its history. Even in cases

where references were about Poland as a country with its own problems, the reference was in response to its presidency.

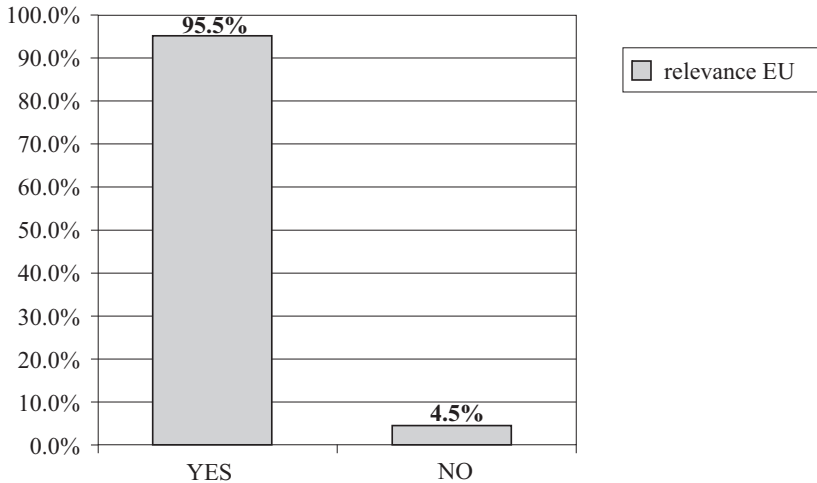


Figure 10. The EU relevance

In addition, our findings (Figure 11) demonstrate that the online Greek media had a rather neutral attitude (47.6%) towards Polish presidency.

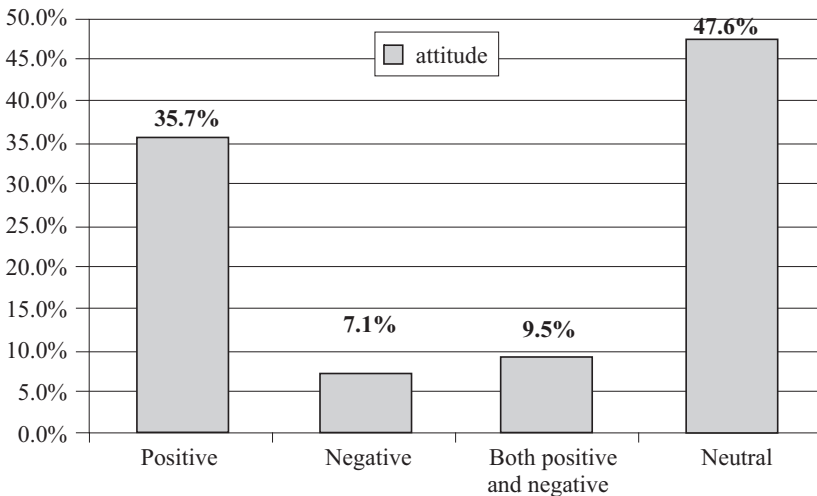


Figure 11. Attitude towards Poland

They appreciate Poland's efforts, to play an important role in European history and to bring stability and security in Europe. Although 7.1% of the items included a negative evaluation, the Polish EU Council presidency was largely seen as successful (35.7%) under the difficult circumstances of the eurozone crisis. Poland was presented as a country which had to face major challenges and to keep the balance between being overtaken by events and ensuring the true meaning of EU cooperation. Indeed, it was often outlined that both A. Merkel and N. Sarkozy worked as handicaps to the true meaning of the presidency.

Conclusions

The six months of Polish presidency of the European Council may have been the most difficult period in the history of the project, due to the eurozone crisis. The aforementioned Greek media tried to cover almost every area of interest in terms of this presidency without forgetting the interests of Greece and what might also be the best way for Greece to take advantage of this presidency. Not only did they address the presidency as something altered but also concentrated on the role that the presidency should fulfil, especially at the moment that the ideal of European cooperation was going through a crisis. Additionally, acting as 'citizen journalism', the Greek media covered the news from the standpoint that information is a project of social construction.

Without taking this for granted, the expectations were higher from the point of view of the amount of references regarding the Polish presidency. Even though the theme of Polish presidency was at the centre of those 45 references from the total of 47 findings (only two were in general about Poland). Those Greek media highlighted the political and social importance of the presidency as the figures and the tables in this article demonstrate. Those references were almost everywhere under the topics of politics or economy, while www.avgi.gr provided us also with information about cultural events that took place during the presidency. In order to understand our findings, it was important to divide them into two categories. The first one refers to those media which belong to the same journalistic organisation, while the second one to the amount of details that online media contain. The quantitative analysis reveals the necessity of covering every kind of information about the presidency mostly through reportages, taking into account the difficulties of this presidency as well as the re-

quirement to study its political dimension. Because of that, the findings related mostly either to economy or to politics (internal or international). In order to understand the role of Poland in the EU the news items provide information not only showing Poland regarding the EU presidency, but also Poland's government and its political actions corresponding to its position. Thus, most of the findings demonstrate that the Greek media had a positive attitude toward this presidency.

Abstract

The main purpose of this article was to cover the most important news presented by the Greek media (*SKAI Television*, www.skai.gr, www.aixmi.gr, *Kiriakatiki Eleftherotipia*, www.avgi.gr and www.eleftherotypia.gr) about the Polish presidency from a quantitative perspective – (reporting only the most essential results because of lack of space). The rotating Polish presidency was a fact that received special attention – more or less – in almost every aspect (politics, economy, culture, international issues, etc.). Via those themes, the pieces of the jigsaw eventually completed the picture of different events that characterised the Polish presidency, which allows us to have a picture of its course over this period of six months. Apart from the key issues that those media addressed, it is worth mentioning both their critical view and the attitude that was adopted towards Poland.

