THE EUROPEAN UNION ONLINE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION’S ONLINE POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

MA Thesis
Global Journalism
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Abstract

The European Union, being a supranational cooperation of 28 sovereign member states, got a power to influence processes in the world and to be an important player on the international arena. While governing such a big partnership, it is important to remember that communicating with the public about all the policies implemented and changes made is a crucial part of the democracy. New era gives governments new challenges – at the time of Internet, politicians got a useful, yet not fully understood tool for approaching the public. In my thesis I focus on issues of non-mediated online political communication i.e. such which does not entail participation of traditional media, but based only on information and communication technologies (ICT). My specific focus was on direct communication between the European Commission and the general public on social platform of Facebook.

As a supporting example of my research, I decided to focus on the issues of mass demonstrations in Ukraine during the winter 2013-2014. This event was chosen to examine how EU’s executive body communicates with public and whether Facebook is used as a platform for direct political communication. The hypothesis of the study was that regardless of its commitments to work actively on promotion itself on social media, European Union still keeps informing about matters, rather than communicating with citizens.

A set of Facebook posts were examine using Critical Discourse Analysis as a primary research method. It has an aim to discover what discourses were created by both the public and European authorities on the social platform of Facebook and whether those discourses interacted with each other.

The findings of the study showed that European Commission suffers from faceless and bureaucratic manner of social media communication. Discourses created by the public and authorities around the same events, bear, however different sets of argumentations, they almost never interact. As a result, the chance of fruitful dialog on the social media platform is significantly diminished as two parts of the process do not hear each other. After conducting the research, I came up with a set of suggestions how to increase the productivity of such kind of online political communication. Those suggestions might be useful for both European authorities and other researchers, who may continue discovering this topic.
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INTRODUCTION

The rapid spread of mass media in the 20th century coupled with the yet unseen rise in the level of education among the population in Europe and US, developed a higher than ever degree of political sophistication among citizens over the last couple of decades (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). This sophistication also expanded the horizon of people’s interests and raised their level of attention to public affairs and participation in politics (ibid.). However, the rise of interest in politics required people’s capacity to analyze information and to draw conclusions from the ongoing issues (ibid.). In 20th century media became a tool for such an understanding. However, with the hasty development of the media, the way politicians used this means of communication also altered. In the early 21st century scholars started discussing a new way of approaching public – direct, non-mediated interactions, which do not include media participation. Thus, new digital media gained equal importance for political communication.

Internet provides opportunities to reach people where they already gather: on forums, through email and to the greatest extent, on social media web-sites. Unlike previous times when online communication presupposed people to go to a web-site in order to find a particular piece of information, new sophisticated ways of direct political communication allow hitting users with information any time.

In this study I will refer to online political communication (or direct political communication) as a way of delivering politically related messages to the public using computer-mediated communication (CMC). While the concept is to be further discussed in later chapters of this Thesis, I should mention now that by CMC I mean communication that takes place between human-beings with a mediation of computers (Herring, 1996). To be more precise, this study will focus on the way political organizations use social media platform – Facebook, – in order to reach citizens for direct political dialogue.

Research Problem

While Internet gives almost limitless opportunities for reaching the public, the way politicians can use these technologies is still to be further developed. In my study I will focus on European Commission’s presence in social media. European politicians are trying to make social media platforms a part-and-parcel of their daily routines, claiming that they will grant EU a chance to finally build up the dialogue with citizens and convert the policy of “informing about” into “communicating on”. It has been a while since European Union was
looking for effective ways of involving citizens into the dialogue and rising interest among people on European related issues. Finally, in the summer of 2013, a decision to focus on social media web-site was expressed clearly and coherently (European Commission, 2013). These days all core European institutions including European Commission, European Parliament and European Council have their own accounts on major social media web-sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube etc. The amount of followers on these platforms ranges from several thousand to over a million people. However, regardless of all the efforts, full participation of citizens is still restricted. Users are encouraged to subscribe to the pages, like or share the content, but their questions and comments are usually left unanswered. The hypothesis of this study is that a chance of a productive citizens’ dialogue is being wasted. On the other hand, however, there is striking evidence that online political communication is crucial for the EU and will not disappear, but only extend. There are two reasons which could be mentioned. First of all, since the possibility of a widely-accepted supranational TV channel or newspaper is unlikely in case of EU, the only other public space where the EU has the opportunity to directly approach the public is cyberspace (Michailidou, 2007). Secondly, the Internet is the only medium which allows EU to conduct its unmediated public communication, i.e. which does not rely on national communicators.

Thus with all the initiatives conducted by the Institutions, it still remains unclear among scholars, how citizens will actually impact the EU. Even in the Internet era there is no single answer about exact ways in which the feedback from civil society organizations and citizens will impact on the modus operandi of the Union (Michailidou, 2008).

**Research Purpose and Question**

The research has several questions and purposes. First of all, it aims at analyzing the online political communication of the executive body of the Union – European Commission – and assessing whether their online presence corresponds to directives stated in policy documents. The European Commission was chosen for the research due to the fact that it deals the most with international affairs of the Union compared to all other bodies. Ukrainian revolution which started in November 2013 was chosen as an example on which the study would be conducted. Thus European Commission becomes a perfect body to analyze the online communication. The main goal of the study is to challenge the notion that European institutions use social media to actively involve citizens and that dialogue on this media network is not possible under the current circumstances. If the hypothesis proves to be true, another goal of the study is to come up with suggestions and ideas how such a powerful tool
as Internet could be used to communicate effectively on both bottom-up and top-down directions.

Another purpose of the paper is to compare and contrast discourses created by officials and by regular users of social media web-sites on the same topics. In order to do that a set of topics will be chosen to examine if the roots of alleged poor communication lie also in linguistic aspects. For this purpose Critical Discourse Analysis was employed as the main method of the research. This method will help me to grasp the differences between two discourses created by two opposite social groups: politicians and citizens.

As far as Ukraine was chosen as a supporting example of the study, a separate research question is defined as: what is the discourse created around a violent revolution on EU’s eastern borders. Because the revolution, which initially started under the name “EuroMaidan”¹, put some amount of responsibility on the EU, this event became a good test of European ability to communicate effectively in crisis situation. Time scale of the research includes two months from November 30th, 2013 to January 30th, 2014. In total, 39 Facebook posts were included in the study.

Last but not least, the aim of the research is also to reveal how social actors are framed in both official discourse and that created by the people. This might provide a deeper understanding of how communication is conducted and what are issues which should be corrected.

**Research significance**

The importance of the research lies in the fact that this is the first attempt to analyze European online discourse on the topic of Ukrainian revolution in winter 2013-2014 with use of CDA methods. A CDA analysis will allow spotting the most striking linguistic difference of how information from both sides is expressed and received. Besides, the research will outline the main features of both top-down and bottom-up communication in social media and thus could be used later on as a comprehensive analysis of successful and failed initiatives in social media and, particularly, on Facebook. This combination will provide a solid conclusion of how language is influencing communication processes and create ideologies. Finally, the study will provide a list of suggestions how to improve presence of a political organization in social media. Based on examples from literature and my own CDA analysis of texts, these

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¹ Euro Square – eng.
² To "re-post" is referred in this study as a process of recontextualizing already existing texts from third
suggestions might become a fertile source of information for future scholars and serve as a basis for further research.

**Research overview**

The paper consists of five chapters. The first one, *Theoretical Background*, provides an overview of previous researches as well as gives a definition of main concepts used in the study. It discusses and contrasts both mediatized and direct political communication, as well as outlines main trends in modern political reporting. Concepts of media and political logic, mediatization and mediation are discussed here *inter alia*. Besides, perspectives and future of such a phenomenon as eParticipation is discussed here in more details.

The second chapter, *Methodology*, describes features of Critical Discourse Analysis as one of the key methods for researching the discursive constructions of social realities. A set of arguments from the literature is used here in order to prove CDA’s suitability for this study. Apart from that, attention is also given to online communication. In order to research it, a concept of Computer-Mediated communication (CMC) is presented here in greater detail. Lastly, a two-level model of CDA analysis is presented here. Thematic- or entry-level analysis is followed by in-depth analysis of argumentation (Krzyżanowski, 2010), rooted in *Discourse-Historical Approach* of CDA.

The third chapter introduces the reader to the *Context of the Research* and prepares for the actual analysis. It includes comprehensive information about European Union as a legal and political partnership, as well as provides a historical overview on communication policies ever adopted by the European Commission. Besides, the Commission’s presence on Facebook is assessed and compared to other European institutions. A separate part of the chapter is dedicated to the situation in Ukraine explanation, giving the reader an overall impression what the reasons behind the protest are.

Chapter four delivers the actual analysis of empirical data. First the initial qualification of materials is presented. Two corpora are compared in terms of size, users' activity and periods of most active updates. This part is followed by CDA analysis of corpora, which is conducted here on both entry- and in-depth levels.

Finally, a *Conclusions* chapter provides reader with most important findings of the study. They are derived from both Critical Discourse Analysis and literature review conducted for this study.
1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter analyzes both mediatized and direct ways of approaching citizens, as both of them exist in political practice.

The first part is dedicated to mediatized political communication, e.g. the one which requires media participation to transmit message from sender to recipient. At this stage the concept of ‘mediatization’ of politics becomes the core one.

The following part discovers non-mediataed, direct communication between politicians and the public. The role of digital media is assessed and the prediction for further development of this form of interaction is made. The core concept here is eParticipation of the public and the notion of Internet politics.

I Mediatized Political Communication

Amid a swift development of mass media technologies during last couple of decades, critics started rising concerns regarding the so called “media-driven republic,” in which mass media will usurp the functions of political institutions. Nevertheless, a closer analysis of media versus politics cooperation reveals that political institutions in many societies hold their independency in times of expanded media power. By the same token, however, one may also speak of constant process of “mediatization,” where political institutions increasingly are “dependent on and shaped by mass media but nonetheless remain control over the political processes” (Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999:247).

The concept of mediatization is complex and disputable by its nature. It has been researched by scholars during at least last thirty years (Hernes, 1978; Altheide & Snow, 1988; Asp, 1986; Schulz, 2004; Krotz, 2007; Hjarvard, 2008; Strömbäck, 2008). In this chapter I will discuss the concept with more details, shading light on different approaches and notions. At the end of the day, however, one approach will be supported and applied for the further research.

1.1. The concept of mediatization

There are many factors which determine diversity of mediatization theories. First of all, they differ in terms of definition of a term “media”. Some scholars see it mainly as mass media of the second half of the 20th century, overshadowing all older types existing prior to print media, radio and television (Altheide & Snow, 1988). Other, meanwhile, link mediatization process to the concept of “media logic” while speaking of contemporary mass
media (Hjarvard, 2008; Strömbäck, 2008; Schrott, 2009). Another approach is to research the process of mediatization in terms of comparison of different types of media, such as traditional versus digital (Schulz, 2004). However, in this chapter I will follow the structure of Finnemann (2011), who suggests that unresolved dispute in contemporary mediatization theory, forms at least three different dimensions of ideas. Some of these conflicting notions of mediatization will be discussed here at glance.

**Mediatization as a “media logic” limited to “contemporary” media**

The first approach to mediatization research refers to a specific operating logic in newsrooms, which determine “the process through which media present and transmit information” (Altheide and Snow 1979:10). In other words, it places so-called ‘media logic’ at the core of the concept. According to Altheide and Snow (1979) this logic is mostly found in the symbolic formats which consist such elements as of how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the grammar of media communication etc.

Strömbäck (2008) narrows down his mediatization focus to journalism. Here ‘media logic’ is defined as “news criteria and the storytelling technique”. Among these techniques he mentions “simplification, polarization, intensification, personalization, visualization and stereotypization, and the framing of politics as a strategic game” (Strömbäck 2008:253). He also contrasts media logic with political logic, pointing out that the former is aimed at ‘being competitive in the ongoing struggle to capture people’s attention’, whereas the latter is oriented toward obtaining power (ibid.: 253). This contrast will be further discussed in section two of this chapter.

Another author who can be mentioned in this category is Hjarvard (2008) with his definition of mediatization of society as a process where the society to an increasing degree becomes dependent on the media and their logic. Unlike his predecessors, Hjarvard shifts the historical focus of the research from the second half of 20th century to the late 20th century, adding ‘interactive media’ to mass media (Finnemann, 2011). The aim is to include digital media, especially the internet and mobile devices as new tools for mediatization. However, this inclusion runs somehow opposite to his previous ideas. Namely, mediatization was defined as being oriented towards commercial and competitive goals and serving various audiences. But Internet does not necessarily serve these goals, as it also give voice to the civic activities or the activities of public institutions, who do not share the same logic as media (Finnemann, 2011).
Even though Hjarvard made a try to touch upon comparison of different media in terms of mediatization process, he did not go further in this field. However, there is a group of scholars who made a specific focus on that.

**Mediatization as a notion for relations between different media**

Schulz (2004) criticizes existing mediatization theories of being focused mainly on television era which historically connected to the second half of 20th century. “When studying these phenomena,” he claims, “scholars primarily refer to the medium of television and its specific conditions of message production” (Schulz 2004:94). However, with advent of new media in 21st century television era seems to come to its end. Eventually new (digital) media could be able to reduce the level of current mediatization of politics, as they allow institutions to bypass the gatekeeper function of old media. Consequently conventional mass media lose their monopoly as mediators between citizens and politicians (Schulz, 2004; Finnemann, 2011). Potential hazards/benefits of digital media will be further discussed in section four of this chapter.

**Mediatization as a metaprocess**

In his paper Krotz (2007) develops quite a different take on mediatization, presenting it as, what he calls a *metaprocess*. According to Krotz, mediatization “means the historical developments that took place as a change of media and its consequences, not only with the rise of new forms of media but also with changes in the meaning of media in general” (ibid.: 258). Thus Krotz somehow oppose his theory to all emphasized above, claiming that mediatization cannot be applied to only one epoch, and there is no single media logic. He also stresses out that there are different stages of development even among modern societies; therefore the process of mediatization also differs. The bottom line of his theory lies in a fact that mediatization is not a technologically driven concept, but it is rather about historical changes which happen in societies under different circumstances. However, Krotz does not specify his criteria for distinguishing between epochs and/or cultures, which makes his theory difficult to apply for one’s further research.

After several main mediatization approaches have been briefly discussed above, I want to give my specific attention to only one among them. In this study, I will refer to the term of
mediatization in a way Strömbäck (2008) sees it. This particular approach has been chosen, as it to a greatest extent discusses interconnections between journalism and politics, as well as predicts the potential ways of developing of such cooperation.

1.2. **Sub-concepts of mediatization: mediation, media logic, political logic**

Prior to discussing Strömbäck’s (2008) model of mediatization, some important sub-concepts should be examined. In this part I will shed light on differences between mediation and mediatization, as well as media logic versus political logic. Understanding of the foregoing concepts will contribute significantly to fruitful discussion of the whole mediatization theory.

**Mediation vs. Mediatization**

Even though some scholars tend to identify mediation with mediatization (Altheide and Snow, 1988), the majority of works draw a solid line in between them. Hjarvard (2008) claims that mediation is a broader concept, moreover, it refers to communication via any medium. Thus, politician who writes a blog or a column in a newspaper use the mediation, however, this action will not necessarily have any notable effect on politics as a social institution (Hjarvard, 2008). By contrast, mediatization refers to a more long-lasting process, whereby “modes of communication are changed as a result of increasing media influence” (Hjarvard 2008: 114).

Strömbäck (2008) further develops this idea, emphasizing that mediated politics refer to a situation in which the media have become the most important source of information for the public to get news about politicians. “Politics could thus be described as mediated whenever the mass media are the main channels through which politics is communicated” (Strömbäck 2008:230). He also stresses that it does not matter whether the media landscape is dominated by radio, television or Internet. What matters is whether the mass media serve as the most important channels for information exchange and communication between people and political actors. Speaking of the mediatization scholars refer to a long-lasting process of the growth of media influence in a society. Thus, I tend to accept Strömbäck’s point who claims that mediation should be interpreted as only one step in the whole mediatization process, moreover as one of the earliest ones (ibid.).
Media Logic vs. Political Logic

Ever since earliest researches of mediatization started, scholars developed a notion of so-called media logic. Even though, there is no consensus among them about to what extend it influences the society and mediatization process, almost everybody mention this notion in their researches (Hernes, 1978; Altheide & Snow, 1979; Schulz, 2004; Krotz, 2007; Hjarvard, 2008; Strömbäck, 2008). Thus we will discuss it in more details.

Altheide (2004) asserts that media logic is a phenomenon which gradually changes journalistic process. He puts emphasis on the fact that the way in which journalists conduct interviews has changed, and this in turn has also altered political communication. This is very visible especially among TV reporters who instead of “gather” and “discover” entertain public with their journalistic episodes (Altheide, 2004). News sources (e.g. political institutions) also incorporated some media logic. By developing their skills of talking in ‘sound-bites’ and provided the kinds of events journalists will favor, politicians simply mastered the art of ‘getting airtime’ (Altheide, 2004). Besides, in his recent paper, Altheide (2013) added the Internet as a platform to implement media logic at. While historically TV channels were always reluctant to use audiovisual materials from other than news organizations, the advent of YouTube and “smart phones” changed this. It is now common for networks to use videos captured on smart phones and uploaded on YouTube for widespread viewing (Altheide, 2013). This practice has become so common that news organizations increasingly rely on extraordinary visual sources of information and basically let “citizen journalists” decide what will be worth showing at a particular day.

In contrast to media logic, there is also a concept of political logic existing in societies. Thus political communication in a particular society could be governed either by media- or political logic. Speaking of the latter concept Meyer (2002) defines it as “the effort to find solutions for politically defined problems by means of programs for action”. He accentuates that primary actors here are parties and politicians, and the primary focus is on societal problems and suggestions of how these should be addressed (Strömbäck 2008:233). There are some striking differences between media and political logic, which should be understood in order to define which one is used in particular political communication environment. The most important features are presented in a Table 1.

As could be seen from the table, the media logic corresponds mostly to the market model, whereas political logic represents the public sphere model (Strömbäck, 2008). In other words, one can conclude that applying media logic in political communication leads to commercialization of media, with high interests in revenues and advertising profits and
1. the requirements of the media shape the means by which political communication is played out by political actors, is covered by the media, and is understood by the people

2. what people find interesting and what is commercially viable for media companies take precedence

3. media companies are seen as commercial enterprises with no particular obligation apart from catering to the wants of their audiences

1. the needs of political institutions shape how political communication is played out, covered, and understood

2. what is important for people to know, as interpreted by political actors, takes precedence

3. media companies are seen as democratic institutions, with some kind of moral obligation to assist in making democracy work

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<td>1. the <strong>requirements of the media</strong> shape the means by which political communication is played out by political actors, is covered by the media, and is understood by the people</td>
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<td>2. what people find interesting and what is commercially viable for media companies take precedence</td>
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Table 1 Differences between Media logic and Political logic (Strömbäck 2008:234)

diminishing attention to people’s welfare. In the next part I will examine what is normally predominates in the communication: either political or media logic.

### 1.3. The Four Phases of Mediatization

Strömbäck (2008) came up with four phases through which mediatization is developing in a society. He claims that according to this framework it is possible to assess the degree to which politics is mediatized in a particular setting (ibid.:236). I tend to agree with this division insofar as it shows gradual grow of media influence as well as could be applicable to any society in a world, including even supranational governance models.

**Phase #1:** reached when the mass media become the most important source of information and channel of communication between the citizenry and political institutions (Strömbäck 2008:236). This means that the politics is mediated. In other words, the first phase of mediatization corresponds to the concept of mediated politics discussed above.

The way media depict really becomes the way people see it. Therefore, politicians are forced to take media into consideration when endeavoring to shape public opinion. This in turn means that political institutions have to adopt some media logic in their actions. However, as Strömbäck notices, the degree of media independence from institutional actors is likely to be low in the first phase of mediatization, as many media outlets still belong to political parties or other institutions (2008:236). Nevertheless, the first phase, when politics
has become mediated, should mainly be understood as a prerequisite for the successive phases of further mediatization.

**Phase #2:** media have become more independent of governmental or other political bodies (Strömbäck 2008:237). The second phase corresponds to the situation when media do not simply broadcast the messages preferred by the different sources. They now make their own judgments regarding what are the appropriate messages for the audiences. The transition from the first phase to the second also signifies rise in journalistic professionalism, with more pragmatic and less priestly approach to politics, and increasing commercialization (Semetko et al. 1991).

Media can now resist to those who are trying to influence the news, since they became semi-independent with their own control over content and recourses. ‘Political actors and institutions might still have the “upper hand”, but they cannot control the media or unconditionally use them to further their own interests (Strömbäck 2008:237). Thus, at this stage politicians are forced to develop their competence in public relation and cooperation with media (Manning, 2001).

**Phase #3:** the media in daily operations have become so independent and important that political actors have to adapt to the media, rather than the other way around (Strömbäck 2008:238). Components of the media logic (such as formats, content, grammar, rhythm etc.) become so pervasive in communication with public that social actors who want to interact with people cannot neglect these rules. As Asp and Esaiasson noted, the power of the media is not merely in influencing political institutions, but forcing them to adapt (1996). The power which came to the media becomes dangerous. The real world as it is objectively shaped begins to lose its significance (Strömbäck 2008:238). Instead, the depictions of reality shaped by the media logic, become more and more important. In other words, the mediated reality becomes more important than the actual one, as people have to rely on it when forming opinions. With increasing importance of media political and other social actors still see them as external institutions, however, there is no doubt anymore that politicians should adapt to media logic and the notion of newsworthiness (Cook, 2005).

**Phase #4:** political actors think about the media not only when campaigning, but also when governing and in the policy-making processes (Strömbäck, 2008). The notion that mediated reality matters more than the actual one becomes more and more widespread.
Politicians allow the media logic and the standards of newsworthiness to become parts-and-parcels of the governing processes (ibid.). Thus as political institutions have adopted media “rules” one may speak of colonizing the politics at this stage (Meyer, 2002). Meyer also asserts that many political and social actors being at this phase of mediatization would not even recognize the distinction between a political and media logic, as it all became one thing (2002). However, it is not only the media who change over these four stages. Politicians also alter their way of governance: they develop a practice of “permanent campaigning” and “going public” as essential strategy of management (Kernell, 2007). The cooperation between the media and politicians become indeed tight with each of parts having its own interests and competing over the right of having the “upper hand” in this interaction.

The apparent drawback of the media becoming more independent is, of course, increasing commercialism, which sometimes overwhelm journalistic norms and values (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). As Strömbäck concludes, “the more independent the media are or become from politics, the more dependent they become on market forces” (Strömbäck 2008: 241).

Of course, the author stresses and I accept the point that the four phases of mediatization identified above are somewhat idealized, and as in all processes, “the distinctions between the phases are less clear in reality than in theory” (Strömbäck 2008:241). However, they give us an insight of how mediatization is developing in a particular set of circumstances. Now, having this in mind, one can track on what level of mediatization any given political institution is.

1.4. **Digital Media and Their Role in Mediatization**

When it comes to the discussion of the impact of digital media, one thing becomes especially conspicuous. The rapid development of ICT coupled with a swift growth of the number of online media make scholars to underestimate the impact of this kind of communication. Assertion made by researchers may lose their values just in the following years with technologies being developed and contradicting scholars’ predictions. For a supporting example one may look at Strömbäck’s claim made in 2008. He argued that although many use Internet as a means of obtaining information, it is still mainly used as a supplement to the traditional media such as television and newspapers. He also puts emphasis on a fact that Internet encompassed many different media formats, as well as many producers of content (citizens, journalists, social actors), therefore the Internet is not governed by a
single logic, but rather includes many and competing logics (Strömbäck, 2008). As a matter of this, he concludes that Internet is not an organized media space, thus does not think it is important in terms of mediatization. “Theoretically, it is possible to reach out to wider audiences through the Internet, but in the absence of coverage in the traditional news media, this possibility is seldom realized”, Strömbäck concludes (2008: 243).

However, only three years later Finneman (2011) predicted bright future for the digital media. He stresses that they bypass many limitation of old media, where only a tiny minority of people had voice, whereas in online media everybody can express themselves. Thus the media environment online goes beyond the frames of the traditional media storytelling, allowing citizens to “compose their own individual media menus and tell wider specter of stories in a richer set of genres” (Finneman 2011: 86). In fact digital media integrate “the storage capacities of print media with the transmission speed of electronic media” (ibid: 83).

By the same token, however, the emerging of new ways of communication through digital media engenders a new matter: will new media slow down or even extinguish mediatization process because of plurality of voices, easy access etc.? As Shulz (2004) claims there are at least three possible answers.

The first one is positive. The new media increasingly individualize communication and this is one of the most striking features of Internet-based interactions (Castells, 1996). While the old (traditional) media were distributing their content to an anonymous audience, new media allow their users to retrieve messages according to their needs and interests. In fact, broadcasting transforms into narrowcasting (Shulz 2004: 94). But the most important point is that political actors rather than having to adapt to the media logics, can bypass the mass media and use digital platforms for directly communicating to their target groups (ibid.).

The second possible answer is skeptical. The core argument here: new media give rise to new modes of mediatization. First of all, online media requires special technological devices, thus not all segment of society will have equal access and consequently will not similarly benefit from the development of new media. The skeptics hold tenaciously to the idea that new media impact on communication process will bring new yet unseen form of dependency and heteronomy.

Finally, there is also the neutral answer to the foregoing question. It might be argued that new media are not all that new. Shulz (2004) suggests that there is a lack of a clear-cut definition of characteristics of the new media in a single term. Most of the attempts to define it so far just labeled such notions as computer-mediated communication (CMC) or multimedia to the term of the ‘new media’. However, such interpretations are nothing but “hybrid
versions or reconfigurations of traditional media” (Shulz 2004: 97). Thus, authors claims that while some changes in communication process could be noticed, much continuity are still there (ibid.).

The bottom line of this discussion is that with the rise of new media, some of the restraints of the conventional media may disappear. However, the new media will bring along new restrictions and new risks, their potential is ‘vulnerable’ (Blumler&Gurevitch, 2001). At the same time, as new media will not fully displace old ones, the mediatization effect of the latter will sustain even in a new media environment (Shulz, 2004).

II Direct Political Communication

1.5. Political Communication Online

When the Internet just started becoming a communication medium several decades ago, a few would take it seriously (Chadwick, 2009). At the time when World Wide Web was primary seen as the tool for scientists, it was common to think of it as being dependent upon “specialist forms of technical knowledge and far less important than television and the press” (Chadwick 2009:3). However, it took a relatively short period of time for Internet to become a fundamental part of our system of political communication. Starting from early 2000s people began conducting important aspects of their lives online, such as internet banking, shopping, social support services etc. All of this was supported also by drop in cost of computers and networking devices. Besides, many were intrigued by the new medium’s capacity for self-expression and its potential to affect social, political, and economic relations (ibid.). Thus, in this part we will speak of Internet as a platform for non-mediated, direct communication. To make it more clear, we should notice, that even online media (which often are mirrors of offline ones) are not taken into consideration, only direct interaction will be researched.

The first signs that the Internet might be effective for politicians came in late 2002 and coincided with such a phenomenon as blogs, frequently written by political parties and their leaders (Chadwick, 2009). In their struggle to control the way they represented in media, governments developed forms of communication that endeavored to bypass journalists (Street, 2010). However, being initially planned on the one hand, to make government more transparent and, on the other, to get access to ordinary citizens, online initiatives mostly turned to deliver messages from center to the citizen, but not vice versa (Street, 2010). This
one-way flow of information became one of the core topics of the internet politics research in early 2000s.

The growing popularity of blogging and other online initiatives soon led to creation of another term: Web 2.0. The new way in which web pages were made and used allowed users to interact and collaborate with each other in a dialogue as creators of a user-generated content in a virtual community. In contrast to websites where people were limited to the passive viewing of content, Web 2.0 pages included such platforms as social networking sites, blogs, video sharing sites, hosted services, web applications etc. (O'Reilly, 2005).

Naturally, Web 2.0 became a part-and-parcel of political communication online. There are several key principles of Web 2.0 developed by O'Reilly, which could be taken as features of this new form of political communication (2005a). First of all, the Internet became a platform for political discourse with politics generating exclusive content online and not reprinting it in offline medium. Thus, they approach a specific audience and create a separate discourse online. Second feature of Web 2.0 is collective intelligence. The core idea here is that a network of creators and contributors (often amateur) using simple tools can produce information goods that may outperform those produced by so-called authoritative, concentrated sources (O'Reilly, 2005a). The third principle of Web 2.0 concerns the importance of data. Web 2.0 era is characterized by huge amounts of information, and those who can successfully mine, refine, and protect it are likely to emerge as dominant (ibid: 6). In the realm of political campaigns, the biggest interest for politicians is personal data of their voters which nowadays can be relatively easy obtained from social media web-sites. Finally, Web 2.0 significantly enriches users’ experience on political web-sites (O'Reilly, 2005a).

Based on Internet spread example, it could be concluded that each new digital technology that captures public attention, quickly becomes politicized and thus interesting for political science. It happened to World Wide Web in general and it continues happening to smaller online initiatives that emerge continuously nowadays. Thus, non-mediated online political communication is likely to remain an exhaustive topic for researches.

1.6. Broadcasting vs. Narrowcasting (ICT)

In this passage I will contrast Internet communication with the mediated one discussed above. Space limits preclude the full analysis of two phenomena; however, I would like to emphasize some features that distinguish direct online communication from its offline predecessor. For sake of convenience I refer to broadcasting as a way of delivering a message
to a big anonymous audience, which is used during mediatized communication. Whereas *narrowcasting* is what was defined by Shulz (2004) and means an opportunity for users to retrieve messages according to their needs and interests (usually online). As one can notice, the two processes have opposite subjects. While broadcasting is performed by media toward the public, narrowcasting in contrast is realized by citizens by themselves, while choosing items of their particular interest.

As Ward (2009) claims the internet has become a perfect recruitment tool unlike previous offline initiatives. ICT is seen as means of attracting additional supporters for political organizations. It is now much easier than ever before for organizations to appeal to a broader global audience (Rodgers, 2003). The collection of e-mail of supporters allows organizations to make connections at less cost. Letters can be sent out to thousands of supporters at the touch of a button (Ward, 2009). It is especially crucial for reaching young people who are referred to as ‘digital natives’ and are easy to catch online. However, the striking drawback of this assumption is that it does not take into consideration the fact that before a person visits a political website, he/she should have some degree of political interest (Ward, 2009). In other words, those who visit political sites are already politically active, thus Internet is not a panacea for recruiting new members.

Blumler and Gurevitch (2001) highlight another apparent difference between broadcasting and the Internet. They claim that broadcasters work within tight time limits and normally show their viewers other people discussing politics, whereas internet allows involving users themselves for more fruitful discussion all around the clock regardless of time and place. However, Nie and Ebring (2000) found that precisely because the internet removes social setting, place, and time, it becomes a much more isolating experience than television. While people may connect online, they tend to spend less time socializing and become less concentrated on political issues compared to the time when they were dependent on evening news shows to get information (Nie&Ebring, 2000).

Nevertheless, regardless of minor drawbacks of internet communication, researchers predict that politicians will adapt the Internet as any other media before. Colonizing the Internet and making it working for their benefits is among nearest future predictions (Ward, 2009).
1.7. **Social Media and eParticipation**

A few would dispute that the Internet allows organizations to deepen their engagement with supporters. As discussed above, the apparent drawback of online communication is that political web-sites attract mostly those who are already keen on politics, thus neglecting the opportunity to recruit more supporters. This is why social media become of equal importance, as they approach people where they already gather. Especially crucial tools for this include, but are not restricted to virtual discussion forums, blogs, and social network sites such as MySpace or Facebook, which could all provide for more regular and in-depth supporter input (Ward, 2009). Online communication could be characterized by raising phenomenon of *eParticipation* through multiple communicational instruments. By eParticipation I mean ICT-supported participation in processes involving citizens in government and governance, and policy making (Karantzeni & Gouscos, 2013). While it has undoubtedly existed before, social media, however, lead this process to a new level of efficiency. Social media gave rise to optimism that problem of weak citizens’ participation through political websites and forums come to the end. There are several reasons for such a confidence. First of all, social media are able to bring policymakers to the people rather than relying on people to come to a specific site. The message is hitting the user, instead of a user going online and searching for a message himself. Besides, social networks have an advantage to create and maintain communication at a cost-efficient way (Karantzeni & Gouscos, 2013). Though, some scholars claim that these costs are not that small if include expenses for a high quality design of social media accounts and efficient maintenance (Reedy & Wells, 2009), the cost cannot be compared, however, to those spent on previous forms of eParticipation initiatives, existing in isolated URLs (Karantzeni & Gouscos, 2013).

A research of online political communication still contains a lot of questions to be further reviewed by scholars. As skeptics claim, so far Internet mostly remains a one-way flow platform, delivering messages from the center to the bottom and leaving little or no room for a solid feedback from public. A question of whether this point holds merits will become one of the core ones of my research.
2. METHODOLOGY

The paper aims at researching discourses created by both authorities and by the public on social media platforms. In order to carefully analyze the texts, critical discourse analysis was chosen as a primary research method.

2.1. CDA - A Method for Researching Social Realities

As Bryman (2012) notices, social reality is produced through discourses, and social interactions cannot be fully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning. Therefore the main task of discourse analysts is to explore the relationship between discourse and reality. (Bryman 2012: 536). More precisely, CDA is focused on language and the way it constructs ideologies and in turn social identities and/or inequalities (Wodak, 2001:10). CDA, being an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of language, has significantly contributed to the deconstruction of mechanisms of persuasion, hegemony and relations of power in political discourse where politicians are seen as those whose actions 'involve power, or its inverse, resistance' (Chilton and Schaffner 1997: 212). As Wodak emphasizes, CDA takes particular interest in the relation between language and power, while seeing language as a crucial component of discourse (2001). However, it should be noticed that CDA is not a pure language analysis. Rather than studying linguistic unit per se, it discovers social phenomena, which are normally complex and require a multidisciplinary approach. (Wodak 2013: xxiii). It is generally agreed then that CDA cannot be classified as a single method but is rather viewed as an approach that consists of different perspectives, concepts and methods for studying the relationship between the use of language and social context.

Key Terms of CDA

There are numerous concepts to be understood before starting CDA research. I will examine some of them below.

One of the core concepts of CDA is discourse, which is usually referred to as an abstract noun meaning "language use considered as social practice" (Fairclough 1993:138). It is not only concerned about language, but also about a set of values, beliefs and ideas in a given social environment. One may say discourse represents diverse dimensions of social life.
example, the lives of minorities would be represented differently in discourses of government, politics, and social science.

Another term which is crucial in terms of CDA research is text. Fairclough refers to it as "the written or "spoken language produced in a discursive event" (Fairclough, 1993:138). In his further works, however, the author uses the term 'text' in an extended way: written documents and websites of governments are referred to as 'texts' also, as well as interviews and government meetings (Fairclough, 2003). Even though the term is not perfectly fit to describe, for instance, the content of web-site, it is difficult to find a preferable general term instead thus "text" is also used here (Fairclough 2003).

Another concept related to CDA is genre. It is "the use of language associated with a particular social activity" (Fairclough, 1993:138). Different genres entail using different mean of production of a text, different resources for texturing (Fairclough, 2000). In other words, genres are different ways of interacting. For the following example one may look at meetings in various types of organization, political and other forms of interview, news articles in the press, and book reviews - these are all different genres.

A concept of discursive event is described by Fairclough as an "[example of] language use, analyzed as a text, discursive practice, social practice" (1993:138). Thus discursive events refer to text, discursive practice (both production and interpretation of a text), and social practice.

**CDA in My Research**

Critical Discourse Analysis is a widely developed approach in social research. One may speak of at least five different schools within CDA (Krzyżanowski, 2010). They all differ in terms of theoretical and philosophical origins, their main fields of concern, their research goals etc. I find the so-called 'British' Systemic-Functional trend of CDA to be the most appropriate for my research. It investigates the role of discourse in the process of socio-political change as well as "approaches the connection between politics and mass media" (Krzyżanowski 2010: 69). The most important feature, however, is that the trend discovers interaction between texts, images and sounds. The latter might be of a great importance when researching online communication, which often includes diverse types of messages (video, audio, text etc). It should also be noted that Systemic-Functional approach belongs to the so-called 'core CDA' school, which also includes Discourse-Historical and Socio-Cognitive approaches (Krzyżanowski, 2010). The three schools share their commitment to CDA as their
'own' distinct problem-oriented approach and are among the most developed schools of critical discourse analysis. Therefore, I will use theories not only from Systemic-Functional approach, but also from the two other foregoing trends.

**Why is CDA Adequate for This Research?**

Focused on language analyses, CDA is definitely the appropriate method for researching communication. However, one may also think of further arguments bolstering such a choice. There are several dimensions of social research which may deserve CDA analysis nowadays (Wodak&Meyer, 2009). Among others, Wodak and Meyer speak of phenomena in the evolution of new media and the related consequences. They stress that CDA might be effectively used for understanding and explaining new Western political systems, which have evolved due to the impact of new media. More specifically, they use new terms such as "depoliticization" and "participation" which should be understood in more details (Wodak&Meyer, 2009). Moreover, they also raise a question about the importance of analyzing the impact of new media and of the process of developing new multimodal approaches. "*Our concepts of space and time have changed, and these changes interact in dialectical ways with new modes and genres of communication*", - they conclude. (Wodak&Meyer, 2009: 11). As far as the upcoming research will touch upon usage of new media in communicating political ideas, I find my topic to be clearly related to the abovementioned agendas. Therefore, the research is not only compatible with the CDA method, but also belongs to the particular interest of discourse analysts all around the world.

**2.2. Online Discourse**

As my research focuses on online communication, another crucial concept to be discussed is so-called computer-mediated communication (CMC). According to Herring, CMC is "*communication that takes place between human-beings via the instrumentality of computers*" (1996:1). When computer networks were in their infancy in the 1960's, few could imagine that they would be used predominantly for human-to-human social interaction. Back then the main task of such networks was merely to transfer information protocols between computers (Herring, 1996). However, as the time passed, more and more scholars paid attention to an increasing popularity of computer-mediated communication among regular citizens, not only amongst scientists or researchers. In 1991 Ferrara, Brunner and Whittemore wrote an article in which they described a new emergent discourse genre 'interactive written
discourse', giving rise to a more comprehensive research of communication performed behind computers screens (Ferrara, Brunner & Whittmore, 1991).

There are many dimensions of CMC research, however, there are three features described by Herring (1996) as being at the core of computer-mediated communication.

The first among them is language used in CMC. It is typed, therefore could be considered as writing, but exchanges are often rapid and informal, so more like spoken conversation. Hence the language of such a communication is in between written and spoken communication. On top of this, the computer-mediated register has unique features of its own, such as the use of "smiles" and other graphics, as well as special lexis and acronyms (Herring, 1996).

The second characteristic is that participants in CMC interact without a particular reference to the gender, identity, personality, or mood of their interlocutors (ibid.). This observation has led some researchers to the assumption that text-based CMC is impersonal and distancing, thus is useful for the transfer of information, but unsuitable for personal communication (Deuel, 1996). Others however, doubt such a hypothesis, and claim that a lack of identity is a potential freedom from limiting gender, class, ethnic, and other status-based prejudice, hence CMC is inherently democratic - one is judged only on the merit of what one says, not on whom one is (Herring, 1996).

The third issue is related to the phenomenon of community formation in cyberspace. Online communities live their own lives; generate norms of interaction and conflict resolution procedures and protect their members. CMC has a potential to bring people together and this might have numerous practical consequences both for individuals and for the social order (ibid.).

Researching computer-mediated communication has a set of advantages if compared to other sources of data. First of all, large corpora are relatively easy to retrieve and data comes already entered as text on a computer. Furthermore, surveys can be distributed and returned electronically, which makes this process less time- and effort-consuming. Finally, an observer "can observe without his presence is being noticed" (Herring 1996:5).

However, researchers using CMC as a source of their data may face some ethical problems on the way. There is a dilemma of whether it is ethical to collect data whilst 'lurking' (reading without contributing) on an electronic forum/chat page/social network? I, however, tend to accept the Herring's point claiming that "to the extent that the forum is open to the public, one can argue that this practice is no different from collecting data eavesdropping on a conversation in a public place such as a restaurant or an airport" (Herring 1996:5). Another
ethical problem divides researchers into two groups and raises the question of how much information about the data sources should be revealed in scholarly publications. One group of scholars is prone to avoid using participants' real names, so as not to violate the "perceived privacy" of the participants (ibid.). The opposite group, however, goes to the other extreme and argues that as far as computer-mediated communication is published in a written form, any quoting of what participants said without crediting the source is in violation of copyright (Cavazos, 1994). As for this research I tend to agree to the latter assertion, but without giving it such an extreme tone. I would name the sources of a message where it is relevant and important in a given context.

2.3. **Sampling and Analyzing Data**

As Wodak claims there is "no approved cannon of data collection existing in CDA"(2013: xxxix). However, most critical discourse analysts work with existing data, i.e. data not specifically produced for their particular research (ibid.). Some scholars claim that already written data has a striking drawback of being not totally objective in depicting social reality, therefore, ethnography, and fieldwork should become common in CDA research (ibid.). I accept the later point insofar as widening research scope will help to get more data for analysis. Aside from the foregoing point, however, I tend to assume that ethnography and fieldwork add even more subjectivity to the research; therefore it is not worthwhile to use them in my study.

A detailed description of my corpora as well as criteria of sampling is to be further discussed in the Analysis chapter. However for a better understanding of my methodological approaches, I should mention that the analysis of EU communication activity will be performed here in two corpora: 1. "discourse of EU politicians" and 2. "reply of the public". The first refers to texts published by EU institutions on their respective Facebook accounts, whereas the latter includes comments written by users under those texts.

After gathering various types of data, I will proceed to analyzing the material with a two-fold approach, which has its roots in *Discourse-Historical Approach*. This involves two steps: (a) thematic analysis (also known as entry-level examination) and (b) an in-depth analysis of argumentation (Krzyżanowski, 2010).
Entry-Level Analysis

Entry-level examination entails mapping out 'content units' of the text (Krzyżanowski, 2010), usually referred to as topics. Van Dijk stresses that topics "summarize the text and specify its most important information" (Van Dijk 1991: 113). He also emphasizes that there is a hierarchical set of topics and macro-propositions existing in a text. A researcher, by using recursive rules, should categorize the list of all propositions into several macro-topics (ibid.). However, Van Dijk also notices that in order to derive such topics (macro-propositions) one should be familiar with the real world situation, using common sense to sum up smaller topics. In other words, context should be widely used in this process (ibid.).

Speaking in a more practical way, the process of thematic analysis will consist of two steps: (a) defining the list of 2-4 'larger' topics of the texts, and (b) defining the list of 'smaller' topics embedded within the aforementioned larger ones (Krzyżanowski, 2010). These steps will already allow me to see if there is an existing difference between the topics in the two corpora. Moreover, I will be able to focus further on one specific issue of the analysis if needed. As Bryman notices, "research questions in discourse analysis tend to be initially fairly open-ended and then narrowed down" (2012: 529). It will be clear at this step whether or not I should narrow down my focus.

In-Depth Analysis

After defining the key topics of the text, an in-depth analysis should provide the capacity for a deeper examination of the structures which lie under the surface (Krzyżanowski, 2010). The key concept of this analysis is that of topos. Though it is rooted in Aristotle's Rhetoric there are many other definitions of the concept in modern literature. I am prone to agree with Perelman's and Olbrechts-Tyteca's statement which claims that topoi are headings under which arguments can be classified (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). The aim of CDA then is to discover the links which are established between topics (thematic analysis) and topoi (in-depth analysis) (Krzyżanowski, 2010). Eventually I want to compare the typology of topoi which exist for different texts to be analyzed.

2.4. Representation of Social Actors

Discourse as a way of researching social practices is closely tied to acts of describing and referring to individuals and to groups of people. Each language gives different ways of representing social actors. I will discover the ways of framing social actors which the English
language provides, and what the reasons behind representing people in a particular manner are. I will discuss six ways of representing social actors, which I find to be of crucial importance for CDA research.

(1) **Exclusion.** When a discourse event is researched, attention should be given to what social actors may have been excluded from the foreground. For example, if in discourse about protest, little or no attention is given to police forces, this means that this social actor has been excluded. There two ways of exclusion: *suppression* and *backgrounding* (Van Leeuwen, 1996).

In the case of *suppression*, there is no reference to the social actor(s) in question anywhere in the text. The classic realization of this is through the use of the passive voice, such as 'concerns were expressed' (ibid.: 39). Moreover, it can be also grammatically framed through non-finite clauses: "To authorize this step is hard". But, as Van Leeuwen notices, it is always difficult to understand whether social actors are or are not supposed to be retrievable by the reader (ibid.). There are always two options for a researcher to choose from: either the reader is assumed to know details already, or the author has taken a deliberate "*step to block access to detailed knowledge of a practice*" (ibid.: 41).

In the case of *backgrounding*, the exclusion is less drastic: the excluded social actors may not be mentioned right away, but they will appear elsewhere in the text. "They are not so much excluded as *de-emphasized*, pushed into the background,"- Van Leeuwen concludes, (ibid.: 39). It is normally realized in the same way as suppression, but with respect to social actors who are included elsewhere in the text.

(2) **Role allocation** considers the role that social actors play in a particular representation. It concerns the questions of who is involved and the choices made concerning the distribution of roles i.e. who has been made the subject or object, and why (ibid.). In other words who is active and who is passive with respect to a given action. Along the same lines, Van Leeuwen also emphasizes that the roles that social actors actually play in the real world, and the grammatical roles they are given in texts, do not necessarily coincide. *Activation* usually entails representing social actors as forces in an activity, whereas *passivation* occurs when they are represented as being 'at the receiving end of it' (ibid.: 44). What the researcher should do while comparing active and passive actors is to investigate why these choices were made, what/who's interests are served, and what purposes are achieved.

(3) **Individuals vs. groups.** Social actors in a text could be referred to either as individuals (individualization) or as groups (assimilation). Linguistic individualization is realized by singularity, and assimilation by plurality. For example, middle-class oriented
newspapers can be said to be prone to individualizing elite persons and to assimilating 'ordinary people'; whereas the opposite can be said to apply to mass-oriented media which often individualize 'ordinary people' (ibid.: 48). In respect, this category should involve the researcher looking at a variety of ways to define groups of individuals, based on their origin, for example, or their social status, religion etc.

(4) **Indetermination vs. Determination.** *Indetermination* takes place when social actors are represented as 'anonymous' individuals or groups. It is typically realized by the indefinite pronouns 'someone', 'somebody', 'some people', e.g. "Someone had put flowers on the teacher's desk" (ibid.: 51). In this case the author treats the social actor as irrelevant to the general context.

*Determinination* occurs when the identity is specified. It is meant to differentiate a social actor from another one, "creating the difference between the 'self and the 'other' or between 'us' and 'them'" (ibid.: 52).

(5) **Categorization** consists of two key types: *functionalization* and *identification*. The former occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of the activity they do, such as their occupation for example. Grammatically it is typically organized by adding suffixes such as -er, -ant, -ian, -ee, e.g. 'interviewer', 'celebrant', 'correspondent', 'guardian', 'trainee'; (ibid.: 54).

*Identification* takes place when social actors are defined, not in terms of what they do, but rather in terms of what they are. In a modern society it is usually a classification by age, gender, class, wealth, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and so on. However, as Van Leeuwen notices, these classification categories are "*historically and culturally variable*" (ibid.: 54). Thus they depend on the socio-cultural context in which a discourse event is happening. Furthermore, this categorization may also include the factor of "belonging to a company or organization", such as "Orebro University researcher", "European official" etc.

(6) Last but not least is the issue of **impersonalization** of social actors, carried out by representing them not as humans, but as abstract or concrete nouns (ibid.). This category distinguishes between *abstraction and objectivation*. One may speak of *abstraction* when social actors are represented by means of a quality assigned to them. For instance: "The country is in danger of overflowing with unwanted problems" where "unwanted problems" remain for the "poor, uneducated, illegal immigrants".

*Objectivation* occurs when social actors are referred to a place with which they are closely associated. This happens, for example, when citizens are substituted with the name of their country: "Sweden expects to see improvement in immigration laws". Moreover, social actors can also be represented in terms of their developments. Referring to "the report" or
"surveys" is a relevant example: "A recent report reveals the rise in potentially threatening mobile applications".

Using impersonalization as a way of framing social actors, could have several reasons behind it. First of all, it can background the identity or role of social actors, and can also "add positive or negative connotations to an activity or utterance of a social actor" (ibid.: 60). Thus, the use of this choice in discourse is of critical significance for discourse analysis (ibid.).
3. CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

3.1. European Union – economic and political partnership

The European Union (EU) is an economical and political partnership that represents a unique form of cooperation amongst twenty-eight sovereign countries within Europe. After two exhausting World Wars in the 20 century, a number of European countries came to a conclusion that the only way to keep peace on the continent was to reconcile two biggest confrontational nations – France and Germany – both politically and economically (CIA, 2014). In 1950, French Foreign Minister Robert Shuman proposed to integrate the coal and steel industries of Western Europe and eventually to create a union of entire Europe. The following year six members; Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, signed the Treaty of Paris and created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). As the Community turned out to be a successful project, several years later the decision was made to integrate other elements of the countries' economies. In 1957 the Treaties of Rome created the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). In addition, the six member states abolished trade barriers amongst themselves and formed a common market. In 1967 all bodies were formally merged into the European Community (EC), creating a single Commission, a single Council of Ministers, and the body known nowadays as the European Parliament (CIA, 2014). Today, the EU is composed of 28 member states, including most of the countries of Western, Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. EU member states share a customs union, a single market in which people, goods, and capital move freely, a common trade policy and a common agricultural policy (Archick&Mix, 2011). Eighteen EU member states use a common currency (the euro).

EU member states work together through a set of common institutions. Key EU institutions include the European Council, composed of EU Heads of State or Government; the European Commission, which maintains the common interest of the Union as a whole and functions as the EU’s executive; the Council of the European Union (also known as the Council of Ministers), represented by national ministers; and the directly elected European Parliament, which represents the citizens of the EU and is elected every five years since 1979 (Archick&Mix, 2011).

The European Union has had several waves of enlargement. Since 2004, EU membership has grown from 15 to 28 countries. The EU which initially started with six members was joined in 1973 by Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Greece joined in 1981, followed by
Spain and Portugal in 1986. In 1995, Austria, Finland, and Sweden acceded to what is now known as the European Union. In 2004, the EU welcomed eight former communist countries—the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia—plus Cyprus and Malta as new members. Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007. Croatia became the 28th member of the EU on July 1, 2013.

### 3.2. European External Action Service and EU delegation abroad

As far as the main object of the research is EU communication about Ukrainian issues, I will focus on a particular institution of the EU, namely the European External Action Service (EEAS). This body serves as a single foreign ministry and diplomatic corps for the EU, implementing the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, thus it is an institution mostly responsible for the EU-Ukraine relations discourse. Technically, EEAS is functionally autonomous from other EU bodies, but in order to ensure its policies are consistent with other EU decisions, the chief of EEAS (called *High Representative*) is also a Vice-President of the European Commission. The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) was one of the most significant changes introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force on 1 December 2009. The treaty aimed at making the EU's external action more coherent and efficient, thereby increasing the European Union's influence in the world (EEAS, 2013).

The EEAS is currently chaired by Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The High Representative *inter alia*: conducts the Union's common foreign and security policy; carries out political dialogue with third parties on the Union's behalf and expresses the Union's position in international environment, exercises authority over the European External Action Service and over EU delegations in third countries.

To assure the EU is well represented abroad, there are 139 EU Delegations and Offices working around the world. Prior to the adoption of the Lisbon treaty in 2009 they served as the Commission's representations abroad, but starting from January 1st, 2010 they were renamed European Union delegations and were gradually upgraded into embassy-type missions that employ greater powers than the regular delegations. Over the years these Delegations and Offices have acted as the eyes, ears and mouthpieces of the European Union vis-à-vis the authorities and population in their host countries (European Commission, 2004).
In essence these delegations: present, explain and implement EU policies, analyze and report on the policies and developments of the countries to which they are accredited and conduct negotiations in accordance with a given mandate (European Commission, 2004). Each head of delegation is the EU ambassador (appointed by the High Representative) and they are at the disposal of the Parliament for questions concerning the country they deal with (Mahony, 2010). These delegations have a power to speak on behalf of the entire EU, not only the European Commission (Rettman, 2010).

The Delegation of the European Commission to Ukraine was opened in Kyiv in September 1993. Starting from 1 December 2009 - after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force-, the Delegation of the European Commission was renamed the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine. The current agenda of the diplomatic mission of EU in Ukraine includes, but is not restricted to promotion of political and economic relations between Ukraine and the European Union, informing the public about the development in the EU and explaining individual EU policies. The current Ambassador, Head of Delegation to Ukraine is Jan Tombiński, who has previously served in the Polish Diplomatic Service.

3.3. EU communication policies

Communication has never been the priority for European Union institutions (Krzyżanowski, 2012). Closed-door decision-making processes and communicating through spokesperson services became a commonplace practice in late 90s early 2000s. External communication, even if taken into agenda settings was primarily focused on ‘informing about’ the EU rather than on communicating between institutions and the European public (ibid.:197). However, things started changing when in 1999 the European Commission crisis resulted in the resignation of the entire cabinet of the College of Commissioners under the then President Jacques Santer (ibid, 2012). The Commission learned a lesson that unless it develops communication strategies and enhance external relation with European citizens, it would not be able to maintain its dominant role in the EU. Introduced in early 2000s, the changes to the Information Policy focused Commission attention primarily on improving the quantity, quality and accessibility of information on EU issues (Michailidou, 2008). A White Paper of European Governance, published in July 2001, proposed cooperation with national media, national governments and civil society actors as they were accused in poor communication about the European matters (European Commission, 2001).
However, the most dramatic shift in EU communication policies took place with the incoming of the new College of EU Commissioners (CEC) under Jose Manuel Barroso in 2004. The new CEC decided to make communication one of its priorities. In the following years several important documents were issued. The *Action Plan to Improve Communicating Europe by the Commission* underlined the mistakes of a previous EC Cabinet and proposed a New Approach to communication which included three core components: listening, communicating and connecting with citizens by “going local” (European Commission, 2005). Communication was seen as more than just information: it should initiate a dialogue with European citizens, listen carefully and connect to people. The document also elaborated a strategy of explaining all major policy initiatives to the citizens. Short summaries of documents should elucidate in plain words the personal and societal benefits of the policy, without using jargon and “Euro-speak” (European Commission, 2005). Another document issued the same year dealt with the increasing mistrust in the European integration. In order to rebuild public confidence *Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate* was supposed to stimulate a wider debate between the European Union’s democratic institutions and citizens (European Commission, 2005a). The Internet was mentioned as a tool for active debates and promoting policies in cyberspace, “which has become an important opinion forming forum of debate” (European Commission 2005a:10). The *White Paper on a European Communication Policy*, issued in 2006, outlined how and when the aforementioned plans should be put into practice (European Commission, 2006). It stresses that good two-way communication between the citizens and public institutions is essential in a healthy democracy, thus the Commission proposed to develop a widespread citizen-based consultations, as well as to further exploit the potential of local media outlets and new digital technologies. Eventually towards the end of 2006 consultations were implemented, including such actions as ‘stakeholder forums’ and a series of Eurobarometer surveys, which served as a source of data for future analysis and actions (Krzyżanowski, 2012).

Based on a success of consultation practices, CEC issued another paper - *Communicating Europe in Partnership* (European Commission, 2007), where reinforced its intention of ‘going local’. While again emphasizing the need to reach citizens in a diversity of ways, the document formulated a set of concrete proposals which should serve as the basis of an improved communication policy for the European Union, which respects the autonomy of the different institutions (European Commission, 2007). The most important aspect, however, was in offering all three major European Institutions to provide their communication activities under single umbrella to avoid confusion among citizens and to boost visual identity of the
Unit. However, the proposal was refused by European Parliament and thus the idea of an EU-wide orchestrated communication policy was grounded.

Even though communication policies were developing rapidly during the 2004-2009 period, with Barroso becoming a President of EC for the second time (CEC 2010-2014) communication-oriented policies went to the background of Commission’s agenda (Krzyżanowski, 2012). In the following years European Commission has not developed comprehensive communication documents, but produced only small-scale policy directives instead. It should be emphasized, however, that many of them deal with striking changes in communication environment e.g. active usage of Internet. The endeavor of the Commission to approach public online will be highlighted below.

**European Union goes online**

The documents discussed above deal to a great a extent with traditional media or alternative ways of approaching people such as consultations, brochures etc. As in the case of EU which has suffered from the incomplete, fragmented and at times low-quality pieces of information provided regarding its activity, a chance to approach public directly by bypassing journalists and media became of an equal importance (Karantzeni & Gouscos, 2013). New digital media grant the EU the opportunity to create its own discourse online and develop an Internet-communication strategy.

To start with, it should be clarified what the online strategy is. As Michailidou (2007) defines: *European Union’s (EU) online public communication strategy understood as the topdown process of the unmediated, direct, online communication between the EU and the general public* (2007:1). The main task of this communication is to transform EU way of communicating with the public from information- to communication-orientated. In other words, to encourage discussion instead of simple informing (Michailidou, 2008). The idea that people should be approached online was firstly expressed as far as in 2001, when the EC published the document *Towards the e-Commission. Europa 2nd Generation Advanced Web Services To Citizens, Business And Other Professional Users* (European Commission, 2001a). They accentuated that EUROPA – the official web-site of the EU – has grown into one of the largest, “most popular and most referenced public web-sites in the world”, with information services providing “easy access for all updates, user friendly and multilingual information tailored to the users’ needs” (European Commission, 2001a). Later on the European Commission also admitted that they should go beyond the EUROPA web-site, even though it
has 500,000 daily visitors (European Commission 2007a). In the *Communicating about Europe via the Internet* document the EC highlighted that information on the web-site is often presented from an organizational viewpoint rather than from the user's perspective. The main aim is to make it more user-friendly, with more images, video, and audio material to be provided and accessible also from different sources (European Commission 2007a).

Finally, in 2013 the EC clearly expressed the importance of social media in the process of its political communication. It declared the decision to rationalize and modernize its overall web presence, but first of all understanding who their users are and which of their needs they can serve (European Commission, 2013). In the *Principles of online communication* document the EC emphasizes on making its content on social networks from now on: (1) relevant, accurate and usable; (2) clearly worded, so users can easily understand; (3) decreasing in number, so only the most valuable goes to the user (4) adapted to any kind of a device: PC, smartphone etc. (European Commission, 2013). The purpose of communication on social networks is seen in relaying official announcements, press releases and statements in a consistent and coherent way, as well as promoting policies or campaigns and sharing experiences.

**European institutions in social media**

European institutions also started exploring social networks in order to reach the public directly. European Parliament, for example, is especially active on Facebook, reaching over one million fans and is by far the most successful initiative led by a European institution on a social network. The page is full of updated news concerning ongoing European issues, and also contains photo albums and links to other social media, such as YouTube, promoting interviews, polls, programs etc (Karantzeni & Gouscos, 2013). The European Commission is the leader on Twitter instead. Its account gathers some 172 thousand followers. The European Council, however, has an extremely limited presence in social networks with only an unofficial group on Facebook and no separate account on Twitter at all.

European External Action Service, as well as its delegations are well represented on social media. EEAS has over 27 thousand fans. The page is full of updates about business trips of EEAS’s officials, pictures and videos from countries which Service deals with, as well as links to the YouTube channel and Flickr Service for users’ further reference. The Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine has some 5 thousand fans and consists of comprehensive information about EU-Ukraine relations. However, the majority of posts are extracts from press-releases published by European Commission, EEAS or the Delegation itself. After
reading a short summary users are encouraged to follow the link and read the whole text. All official statements are translated into both Ukrainian and English.

As Facebook pages of the foregoing services will form the core of my empirical material, a more detailed analysis of their activities will be provided in the following chapters.

3.4. The Recent Situation in the Ukraine

Ukraine is amongst the youngest countries in the world - in August 2013 it turned 22. Prior to the independence gained in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine never existed as a sovereign state within its current borders. Western and central parts of what is known to be Ukraine nowadays did have independency in mid-17th century and then again in 1918-1920. Not to forget, the powerful country Kievan Rus' also existed at its greatest time (mid-11th century) from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south. However, it did not include all parts of modern Ukraine, and people of Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia all claim Kievan Rus' as their cultural heritage.

After centuries of difficult history, it is hardly surprising that the country is bitterly divided on almost every issue, from foreign policy preferences and perceptions of the recent past to the best way to manage the national economy (Peisakhin, 2013). Recent data revealed by one of the leading domestic survey firms, the Razumkov Center, demonstrates that Ukrainians are divided in their opinion on whether Ukraine should move towards European integration or look for cooperation with Russia. Whereas 46 percent support closer relations with Europe, 35 percent favor the idea of Ukraine joining the Russia-led Customs Union with former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan and Belarus (Razumkov Center, 2014). However, on average, the pro-European direction is a little more popular especially among the well-educated population and those living in big cities.

The protests in Ukraine started in November 2013 when President Yanukovych rejected an expected deal for greater economic integration with the European Union. But the riot which broke out initially the capital of Kyiv was much more than just about a trade deal. Symbolically, Yanukovych's decision was seen as a turn away from Europe and toward Moscow, which rewarded Ukraine with a "stimulus" worth billions of dollars and a promise of cheaper gas exports (Fisher, 2014). Thousands of pro-EU Ukrainians poured into Kyiv’s streets, urging President Yanukovych to cancel his decision and to sign the agreement with the EU. He refused, and the protests continued.
When riot police first took action on 30 November, dispersing a relatively small student protest out of the square and beating hardly many of them, it boosted anger among people. Right on the next day the main square was filled by some half a million of people fuelled with anger for the president and willing to fight against the regime.

During the next month and a half a protest having its highs and lows remained solely peaceful. It was actually dying down until January 16, when Yanukovych signed an "anti-protest law" that deeply restricted freedom of speech and introduced restrictions such as: ban of driving in a group of more than five cars, prohibition of wearing a helmet or a mask, collecting information about officials. Protests kicked back up with yet unseen anger, not just in Kyiv but in a number of regional capitals, seizing government administration buildings and most importantly, creating a real battlefield against the riot police on one of the main streets in Kyiv. Protests turned violent on 19 January and deadly on 22 January.

Even though the parliament eventually withdraw most of the anti-protest law that had so angered people, the immediate crisis is already more than just about the EU deal or the cultural divide or even the anti-protest law, even if all those things brought Ukraine's crisis to this point. Protesters came up with the new goal – force the President to resign. Yanukovych after these two months has forced himself into a very tight little corner (Fisher, 2014).
4. ANALYSIS

4.1. Description of the Empirical Material

In order to develop a solid and coherent research, two types of empirical material were chosen. As the aim of the study was to analyze EU discourse about Ukrainian protests and to assess EU communication online, I focused on two discourses: (1) created by European officials on Facebook pages and (2) produced by public in comments under each of the posts (see Figure 1).

The research was based on information published by European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine on their respective Facebook pages. The decision to focus on a Facebook presence, but not on other social networks (e.g. Twitter, YouTube) lies in the fact that messages here are longer, thus are more useful for CDA analysis. However, Twitter posts were also analyzed in case they were re-posted\(^2\) on a Facebook page.

\(^2\) To "re-post" is referred in this study as a process of recontextualizing already existing texts from third sources to one's Facebook page.
includes, but is not restricted to official visits updates, as well as photos and videos provided by the Audiovisual Service of the Commission.

Another Facebook page included in the study is the European External Action Service (EEAS). The account is followed by almost 28 thousand people, which is more than 5 times higher than in the case of the Delegation to Ukraine page. This number is explained by the general focus of the two: while the Delegation is reporting only on issues related to the Ukraine, the EEAS delivers messages about foreign policy of the European Union in general. As for my study, it is interesting to analyze which topics regarding the Ukraine are included in EEAS discourse, thus what is seen as an interesting issue for a wider audience.

**The Corpora of Empirical Material**

As it has been mentioned above, the analysis of the EU communication approach online is performed here on two corpora, which are defined as:

(1) *EU messages*;

(2) *Public’s response*.

The two sets of data are juxtaposed in order to compare and contrast two discourses created by two opposite sides of the communication process.

The *EU messages (D1)* corpus comprises 39 texts delivered by both the EEAS and the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine on their Facebook pages between 30 November 2013 and 30 January 2014. The starting date marks a day when security forces in Kyiv for the first time tried to end the pro-Europe rally violently. Upon this event, European officials left the previous hot topic of Association Agreement behind and moved to a new discourse of protests and violence in Ukraine. Brussels-based politicians started expressing their concerns and trying to calm down the situation at the Kyiv's Independence Square where people initially supported ideas of European integration. Two months were marked with an unseen level of European attention since the time of Orange revolution in 2004. The time limit of the research ends in late January when brutal and violent clashes took place on Kyiv’s streets and first casualties were reported. This will result in a study of a full range of events to be discovered: from peaceful demonstrations to fatal outcome for half of a dozen of rebels.

Sampling criteria for the items in this corpus included key words: Euromaidan, protest, Maidan, use of force, peaceful demonstration, political crisis, riot police, violence, Verhovna

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3 Hereafter *D1* will stand for referring to the discourse “EU messages”, whereas *D2* will stand for the discourse of “Public’s response”.
Rada, anti-protest law. In total 30 posts from the Delegation page and 9 posts from the EEAS page matched the criteria. These items are meant to examine the discourse created by EU officials about Ukrainian protest and eventual political crisis. Because many posts on the Facebook pages included only a headline of news followed by a link to a full text, involving an original source was crucial. In my case, the web-site of Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine was such a source, as the majority of links forwarded users to the full text available there.

The other corpus which is defined as Public’s response (D2) consists of a set of users’ comments under all 39 of the abovementioned posts. The number of comments ranged from 1 to 29 per post. The analysis of this corpus made it possible to trace the reaction of the public to the discourse created by politicians. The main task was to examine whether a communication between authorities and the public exists and also what the differences in topoi are, which appeared in the discourse.

The Initial Qualification of the Corpus

The aim of the initial qualitative analysis of the corpus was to discover how many items were produced exclusively for Facebook. As it turned out, the Facebook page of the Delegation was comprised mostly of re-posts of news from the official web-site of the body. Out of 39 posts published during the period of two months, 29 were re-contextualized from the web-site in a format of a short headline followed by a link to the full article.

In terms of quantity of materials, the corpus of EU messages (D1) was marked with highs and lows. The biggest amount of publications was released in early December 2013 (weeks 49, 50) and late January 2014 (week 4) (see Figure 2). These dates coincide with police’s attempts to forcefully stop demonstrations on November 30 and December 10; and with the first casualties reported on January 22. Several weeks around Christmas and New Year were barely filled with any news from Ukraine due to holiday leave among politicians and a calmer situation on the Kyiv’s Independence Square as well.

In the Public’s response corpus (D2) the highest users’ activity was also noted during week 50 and week 4 (see Figure 3). The maximum of 29 comments were written under the statement of Catherine Ashton who reported from Kyiv about the violent over-night police intervention to the Maidan Square⁴.

⁴ A transliteration of the “Майдан” – Ukrainian name of the Independense Square
It should also be noted that certain topics tended to receive more comments than others; however, this is to be discussed further in the in-depth analysis of corpora.
4.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

4.2.1. Entry-level analysis

During an entry-level examination a set of topics were mapped out in texts. There are two main topic and two sub-topics shared by both corpora (see Table 1). The topic of “protests in Ukraine” goes through the majority of the texts. It is the most visible in early December 2013, when European authorities started paying attention to rebel developments on their Eastern border. The sub-topic which arises from the previous one is that of “attempt to end the protest” by police forces. During the first half of December it was integrated into most of the EU messages and thus reflected in users’ comments. Furthermore, this topic received the biggest amount of users’ comments and therefore gave rise to the diversity of topoi to be discussed below.

EEAS messages were mostly concerned with EU-Ukraine relations topic, while somehow neglecting the “protest in Ukraine” topic. On the day of the second police violent intervention on December 11th, the Delegation posted information about them trying to “get in touch with competent people in order to prevent the use of violence against ordinary citizens”. The EEAS however, published news about Catherine Ashton meeting with President Yanukovych. This shows the difference in approaching the situation: the Delegation was trying to show support to citizens, while the EEAS was focused on the EU external policy reporting.

Another sub-topic common for both corpora is that of the negotiation process. This topic included both information about EU-Ukraine negotiations and solution seeking inside the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Sub-topic</th>
<th>Discourse 1 (EU messages)</th>
<th>Discourse 2 (Public’s response)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Protests in Ukraine</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Attempt to end the protest</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. EU-Ukraine relations</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Negotiation process</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Request for help</td>
<td>❌ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: List of topics identified in texts

The topic of request for help was limited only to the corpus of Public’s response. It appeared in many different contexts and gave rise to the diversity of topoi. However, the most important feature is that it changed gradually during the two months starting with strong
notion among users that Europe will rescue Ukraine and turned to a blame game in late January 2014.

4.2.2. In-depth analysis

The in-depth analysis was performed here based on the comparison of different topoi embedded to the same topic. As mentioned above, there were four topics, identified as common for both corpora and one topic exclusive for the corpus of Publics’ response (D2). It should be noticed that topoi of two corpora almost never coincided; creating different discourses inside the same topic (see Table 2).

The lists of topoi identified in the respective corpora differ primarily in terms of size: there are 4 topoi identified in the EU messages corpus (D1) and 5 in Public’s response corpus (D2). In total, there are 6 unique topoi identified in both corpora, which appear under different topics and entails a different set of arguments. Some of them appear in both corpora, whereas other are exclusively presented only in one of them. Among these, the topos of political crisis appears to have the main role in EU messages corpus (D1), as it was raised 13 times in all the analyzed texts. Meanwhile, corpus of Publics’ response (D2) was marked with the popularity of anger topos, which was discovered 9 times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference in topoi in two corpora</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Protests in Ukraine</td>
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<td>1.1. Attempt to end the protest</td>
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<td>2. EU-Ukraine relations</td>
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<td>2.1. Negotiations process</td>
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<td>3. Request for help</td>
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*Table 2: list of topoi identified in both corpora*

In order to present and compare topoi of both corpora, they will be presented under headlines of abovementioned topics.
“Protests in Ukraine” topic

The “Protest in Ukraine” topic is the biggest one among those discovered in texts, as it was a part-and-parcel of many news items during these two months. It should be noticed that this topic appears in texts regardless of the time: both in December and January. Nonetheless, due to the fact that it includes another sub-topic, the list of its own topoi is not very diverse.

In the EU messages (D1) corpus, topos of responsibility was quite common. On November 30th High Representative Catherine Ashton together with Commissioner Štefan Füle issued a statement on overnight turmoil on Kyiv’s streets:

"We call on Ukraine, also in its capacity as Chairmanship in Office of the OSCE, hosting its Ministerial Conference on 5-6 December in Kyiv, to fully abide by its international commitments to respect the freedom of expression and assembly".

By referring to “Ukraine” author meant Ukrainian authorities, but nevertheless shortened the form of addressee to simple mentioning the country. One may say that objectivation as a way of framing social actors took place here (Van Leeuwen 1996:60). By this step an author avoided referring to a particular group of politicians (e.g. government or opposition) and instead made an appeal to all those ruling the country. The issue of responsibility is framed by appealing to Chairmanship in Office of the OSCE and hosting Ministerial Conference. In order to reinforce the importance of the abovementioned events, such emotionally strong verbs as fully abide and respect the freedom were also mentioned.

Along with that a topos of issue of gravity also appeared in texts of D1. EU Ambassador in the Ukraine Jan Tombinski published an appeal on January 19 after first casualties were reported:

"We call on people not to aggravate very difficult and dangerous situation. Attacking police may give reason to those, who don’t advocate political solution of the crisis”.

In this case, no objectivation is used. The Ambassador addresses people, citizens of Ukraine, thus making his message as precisely directed as possible. The phrase “we call on...” has very strong linguistic tone, which is meant to be very official and, perhaps, not very appropriate for
online communication with public. The issue of gravity is depicted here by juxtaposing and contrasting such phrases as *attacking police* and *political solution*, making it clear that if the former case will take place, the later will not be possible anymore. Besides, the hazard of the situation is reinforced by using linguistically strong adjectives such as *difficult* and *dangerous*.

The corpus of *Public’s response* (D2), however, consisted of different *topoi*. The issue of *responsibility* had a main role; it was presented from a different angle compared to the *D1* example. What is noticeable is also that it has changed significantly during these two months. In early December 2013 users felt rather favorably toward the EU, giving much hopes about its intervention into the conflict and making it responsible for what will happen next:

“What is so frightfully scary about Putin? [...] Can you just stop fearing him? What will happen if you stopped paying your respect to him? What if you skipped the Winter Olympics in Sochi? What will happen then?” (user Tetyana Stang Lund, December 10, 2013)

President of Russia Vladimir Putin is foregrounded here with the strong adverbs *frightfully* and *scary*. At the same time the author of the post is challenging EU’s abilities to act on the international arena, implying that they were not able to oppose Russia. For a supporting example one may look at verbs *stop fearing*, *stopped paying your respect* which are integrated in the text and supposes that EU actually *does* fear and pay its respect to Russia.

As the time passed, the public started having doubts on Europe’s role, but still giving it a portion of responsibility:

“... 49 days since police attacked our people neither EU nor USA haven’t accepted any sanctions against criminals in government. [...] You were waiting, but it’s okay for you – you are citizens of civil democratic country. While we are still not. If EU and USA do not need such devoted partner as democratic Ukraine – then you can wait even more”. (user Anton Zhuk, January 19, 2014)

Ukrainian authorities are categorized as criminals in this example. Usage of such a tough word is only possible in *D2* discourse; as people here are tend to be more emotionally extreme. By saying “…you are citizens of civil democratic country. While we are still not...” the author describes Ukraine as a non-democratic country and opposes it to Europe, rather
than showing the common features of both sides as it happens in speeches of politicians from D1 discourse. Besides, the author grants responsibility to the EU for converting Ukraine into a well-developed state if they want “such devoted partner as democratic Ukraine”. Thus the issue of responsibility is seen here as exclusively EU’s business, while people of Ukraine seems to not be included in the building of welfare in the country. What is more, a lack of action from EU’s side is seen as personal offence and irresponsibility in this case.

“...well, since EU decided not to help and simply give up Ukraine to Russia without any fight, people on streets, having no hopes of help anymore, started to do what they can” (user Alexandra Kovaleva, January 19, 2014).

In the example above the EU policies are described with the emotional verbs simply give up, having no hopes, implying that the EU is not taking enough care about Ukraine.

Another topos raised under the topic of “protests in Ukraine” is that of reality. The most important feature is that people changed the goal of the protest. While the demonstration started as a pro-Europe rally, it gradually became a fight for a better life in the country. While EU officials did not revise their notions of what the reason behind the protest was, people on the street clearly expressed that EU membership was no longer a reason to stand up for.

"I would like to tell you Catherine [a response to Catherine Ashton visit to Kyiv – G.K.] that people are no longer there just to support the EU agreement. People are there to strive for their existence in Ukraine. People are there to make sure the government does not apply political repressions on peaceful protestors” (user Lyubov Pryadko, December 11, 2013).

The High Representative Catherine Ashton is addressed in a very direct manner, thus making the message very personally oriented and aimed at reaching Mrs. Ashton personally. The issue of political repressions is juxtaposed to peaceful protestors, making it visible that those two exist simultaneously in a society. Moreover, a change of mood among protesters is expressed as clearly as possible. By saying “people are no longer there just to support the EU agreement” the author makes a clear point in change of aims of the protest. However, this was not heard by the politicians, as there was no response to this topos spotted in D1 discourse.
‘Attempt to end the protest’ sub-topic

The sub-topic of “Attempt to end the protest” was actively engaged in texts in early December 2013 after first violence against protesters was reported. This topic received the biggest amount of users comments, thus a corpus of Public’s response (D2) has quite rich set of arguments here.

In the corpus of EU messages (D1), a solution seeking topos became of the core ones.

> “Dialogue with political forces and society and use of arguments is always better than the argument of force” (Statement of Catherine Ashton, December 11, 2013).

> “The Ukrainian authorities should listen to its citizens and not beat them”. (Statement of Martin Schulz, December 3, 2013).

A seek for a peaceful solution is described by referring to terms “dialogue”, “use of arguments”. These are opposed to an “argument of force”, which seems to be a very unfavorable way of protest development. Speaking of social actors, one may notice that while discussing the solution, European politicians are prone to address “Ukrainian authorities”, instead of simply calling on “Ukraine”, as it was before.

The corpus of Public’s response (D2) is described with topos of anger. It is one of the most wide spread topos of the corpus. It appears under different topics in different periods of time. The most common referring to these set of arguments was noticed from mid-January 2104 on.

> Dear Catherine! Please pack your suitcases, grab those pricks from Maidan and leave our country immediately. We are fed up with you. Thank you. Good bye! (user Vitaliy Nikolaev, December 10, 2013).

The High Representative Catherine Ashton is again addressed directly. This leads to a notion that the public sees Facebook as a platform where politicians can be reached directly, even though they normally do not get a reply on their comments. The tone of public messages is rather angry with use of very expressive phrases as “pack your suitcases”, “leave our country immediately”, “fed up with you”. Moreover, the issue of othering is taking place. “Leave OUR country immediately” implies that High Representative is an alien in Ukraine who is not able to help much.
“EU-Ukraine relations” topic

Another main topic identified in the text is that of “EU-Ukraine relations”. It runs in parallel with the topic of protests in Ukraine and mostly touches upon diplomatic related issues. As it has been noticed among the EU messages corpus (D1), this topic was mostly spotted on the Facebook page of the European External Action Service (EEAS), whereas it was given a relatively little attention on the page of Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine. This is easily explained by the fact that the EEAS carries out the foreign policy of European Union, thus it is supposed to create a discourse about diplomatic related issues. Meanwhile, the Delegation is expected to represent EU among the population of respective country; consequently, it paid more attention to the aforementioned topic of protests in Ukraine.

The main topos identified in the corpus of EU messages (D1) is that of political crisis, which turned to be the most frequent in the entire corpora. It has been referred to 13 times in the corpus of EU messages. The topic of “EU-Ukraine relations” is unique in terms of coincidence of the same topoi for both corpora, as Public’s response texts also consisted of these arguments. However, they differed in terms of angle of discussion. Whereas EU politicians stressed out their disappointment about political situation in Ukraine, in despite of their willingness to continue the dialog, the public as represented on Facebook blamed Ukrainian politicians in all the struggling people experienced.

"We respect and regret the decision of Ukraine’s government of late November not to sign. But the future of our relations is for the long term" (Statement of Herman Van Rompuy, December 23, 2013).

The use of verbs “regret” and “respect” points on general disappointment of EU in the decision of Ukraine’s government, and at the same time distances EU politicians from the political situation in Ukraine. It shows that it’s not them experiencing political crisis, thus the only thing they can do is to “regret”. By referring to Ukraine’s government, the author of the message is differentiating government from ordinary people, stressing out that the disappointment is addressed to authorities, while protesters are still supported. Finally, even though the political crisis is spotted, the “future of our relations” is still discussed, leaving room to the possibility of further development of bilateral cooperation.

In contrary, Public’s response corpus (D2) included the following messages:
"Blame on such authorities! We don’t have people there to respect anymore and the only thing they deserve is our contempt" (user Natalia Gorbonos, January 14, 2014).

“Authorities” here are assimilated (Van Leeuwen, 1996), meaning that social actors in the text were referred to as a group. The author of the message did not clarify exactly which politicians caused the political crisis, but rather blamed all of them in neglecting problems in the country. She also writes “us” versus “them”, by giving no reference to citizens and thus putting all the responsibility exclusively on politicians. Furthermore, politicians are addressed with a dose of anger with the phrase “deserve our contempt”.

In addition, one may also speak of the entire topos anger in the corpus of Public’s response (D2), which appeared for the second time. But this time the Ukrainian people started questioning their willingness to join the European Union if none of the actions were taken:

"Ciao Europe! We follow different goals, Nazism did not teach you anything. Bureaucracy, fear of somebody else’s power, disability to protect yourself – it’s all about you, Europe. You don’t have leaders like Churchill or De Golle anymore. Don’t count on my vote when it comes to deciding whether or not to join EU" (user Oksana Brovdiy, January 16, 2012).

European politicians are referred to as “Europe”. Such an objectivation serves to reinforce the othering process, as well as to background the identity of Brussels’ politicians. People do not care of exactly who the decision makers are, they rather oppose us (victims) to them (rescuers from EU) and get frustrated when the other side remains sluggish. The issue of othering could also be seen in a statement: “We follow different goals” followed by examples from history which are especially sore for Europeans. An angry mood is expressed by describing EU’s alleged characteristics: bureaucracy, fear of somebody else’s power, disability to protect yourself.

“Negotiations process” sub-topic

In scope of the EU-Ukraine relations topic, there is a dimension which requires specific attention: a sub-topic of “negotiation process”. From the first day of protests in Ukraine, Europe was trying to intervene in one way or another. Thus a topic of ongoing negotiations appeared.
In EU messages corpus (D1) it was presented by topos of solution seeking. Suggestions of what should be done were expressed clearly and frequently, but their entering into force remained questioned.

"Catherine Ashton condemned the recent violence and said “I have come here to help... in the next hours I will try to explore all possible ways to assure that a genuine peaceful solution is still reach” (statement by Catherine Ashton, December 11, 2013).

By foregrounding Catherine Ashton in this message, the author grants her responsibility for calming down the situation on the Kyiv’s Independence Square. Unlike the previous time when this topos was mentioned, EU no longer refers to Ukrainian politicians, but instead foregrounds its own High Representative. A term of violence is juxtaposed to that of peaceful solution. Besides, a use of verbs “try to explore” and “to assure” shows a strong intervention of Catherine Ashton into the situation. Another example of this topos is referring to “all intellectuals” as social actors:

My appeal to all the intellectuals, to all men and women of culture, to all citizens, is not to give up to this defeatism, is to have the courage to fight the negative forces (Statement of Jose Manuel Barroso, December 9, 2013).

A striking impersonalization of the enemy is taking place here. “To fight the negative forces” does not make it clear who those forces are and who should fight them. Thus EU is avoiding naming the cause of the problem, but giving this anonymous enemy negative characteristics. In the corpus of Public’s response (D2) the topos of political crisis appeared for the second time. It was presented from a slightly different angle than before. In case of negotiation processes, the public was convincing European politicians that their Ukrainian colleagues are not sincere, thus should not be trusted.

"You should remember that all Ukrainian politicians come from post-soviet era of politics, ergo they are very mean. Watch out, they have jokers in their sleeves” (user Ihor Galychyna, December 2, 2013).

The framing of social actors is very straight forward in this example. “Ukrainian politicians” are opposed to European ones in terms of their background and way of doing business. Anger
is not very strong, as the only adjectives politicians were described with were “mean” and having “jokers in their sleeves”. To sum up, while European politicians were claiming to seek for a peaceful solution of the crisis, people online tended to express more extreme ideas and encourage Europe to act aggressively against Russia and pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine.

"Request for help" topic
The topic of request for help was exclusively presented in Public's response (D2) corpus only. Being relatively widespread in users' comments it entailed a set of topoi. Unlike the corpus of EU messages (D1), a topos of issue of gravity appeared here for the first time. A need to help Ukraine is shown through a set of arguments which describe potential hazards to a country and a world where the international community remains passive.

"Do it before it's too late! [...] You now face a country with the criminal regime that can turn the territory into a mixture of Zimbabwe and Afghanistan and, more disturbingly, controls the industrial and scientific potential to be easily transformed into many nasty things. You seem to have forgotten what the cold war was like and how it was to live with an outlandish evil power at your borders" (user Oleksandr Voroshylo, January 17, 2014)

Social actors are assimilated, as the message is addressed to a faceless recipient using imperative mood in phrases like “Do it!”. Ukraine is referred to in an extreme way using the words criminal regime and by comparing to countries like Zimbabwe and Afghanistan. Another social actor is objectivated as it mentioned as “evil power at your borders”. The author refers to Russia, which is seen as a common enemy for both EU and Ukraine, however, avoids calling it by its name.

In mid-January a topos of anger started appearing also under this topic. A lack of actions was received aggressively:

"Where are your sanctions? You all are cowardly liars!" (user Vad Shukach, January 19, 2014)
"Why were you silent when dictatorship laws were passed? The protesters have been asking you to help for ages! You are nothing, but hypocrites!" (user Yuri Ivanchenko, January 19, 2014)
By using “you” as a way of addressing the recipient of the message, the author assimilates European politicians, making his appeal very purely directed. The issue of anger could still be seen in extreme language constructions such as “cowardly liars” and “hypocrites”. Alike the previous times, the issue of othering is taking place. A categorization of a group of “protesters” is opposed to those who are responsible for not taking actions and remains “nothing, but hypocrites”.
5. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Political communication has a long and rich history. Development of the mass media in 20th century gave a new turn for this process. Starting with the wide spread of newspapers, followed by raising popularity of radio and television, the media became a loudspeaker for politicians. Such an intensive growth made critics to cast doubts on the role of the media in the process of political communication. Some claimed that media could usurp the power of political institutions and become even of more importance. While others did not embrace the aforementioned claim, what is unanimously agreed is that the media provoked the so-called phenomena of “mediatization” of politics. There is no single definition of the process and the reasons behind the media starting playing more crucial role in politics. One group of scholars emphasized that mediatization entails politicians and society to become dependent on media logic which in fact means following the rules of media and adjusting one’s activity to what media find interesting and attractive. Another group evaluated the role of different media in mediatization process. The main question so far was whether or not new (digital) media could bring change to mediatized politics. However, as far as many researchers are concern, online media will still inherit the practice of being a mediator between politicians and public, as they are nothing, but hybrid versions of traditional media. Finally, some scholars saw mediatization as a historical process which occurs to different extend in different countries due to the diverse set of circumstances. Thus, it is also impossible to predict its future. However, the most important feature about mediatization is that applying media logic in political practice leads to commercialization of such communication. Thus, not only media become keen on producing commercially successful messages, but also political and social institutions. Interest in revenues and profits could exceed the initial task of politicians to serve public interests.

Another type of interaction between politicians and audience came with wide spread of Internet. Direct communication allows social institutions to bypass journalist and to create their own discourse. Among most striking benefits of ICT-based interactions one may mention easier recruitment of new supporters for political initiatives, as the Internet make it possible to approach thousands of people at a touch of a button. Ideally, online communication encourage dialog, giving voice to citizens, who are left voiceless otherwise. However, as skeptics claim, so far the Internet mostly remains a one-way flow platform, delivering messages from the center to the bottom and leaving little or no room for a solid feedback from public. What is more, it somehow extinguishes people’s attention to political
issues by removing place and time component. Being not limited by a certain evening news program or morning newspaper issue, people prone to become less concentrated and thus consume less political information.

European Union, driven mostly by efforts of the European Commission, is one of the most active developers of online communication strategies. Starting from 2004 EU declared its plan to increase a two-way communication flow. The main idea was to switch from information-oriented to communication-oriented type of interaction. However, up until now it was attempted to achieve by increasing the amount of information about EU activity on different platforms: web-sites, social media, email communication, easy access to public information etc. But as scholars conclude, simple raise in data published online does not give a desirable outcome and does not lead to a fruitful dialog with public. Besides, it is still remains unclear how citizens will actually impact; in what ways their feedbacks will change the agenda of EU.

5.1 Findings of the study

This study made a contribution to answering the research questions mentioned above and coupled with a set of suggestions for improving communication can make a solid input to supranational political communication research.

European Union, being a densely populated, multi-cultural, multi-lingual polity, has little if not no chances to develop a widely-accepted supranational TV channel or newspaper. Thus, cyberspace become of an equal importance for communicating with wider public. While online media do not bring much changes compared to their traditional ancestors, direct unmediated political communication has a chance to make it to the point in communication with a wide public. This research, however, spotted weak points in European Commission’s online political communication.

Qualitative findings

Initial qualification of empirical material revealed that most of the content on Facebook accounts of both organizations (EEAS and European Union Delegation to Ukraine) was re-contextualized from their respective web-sites. News initially posted on the web-site was usually re-posted on Facebook in a form of a short headline followed by a link to full text. Thus in most cases, content of Facebook accounts were not exclusively produced for social media platform. One can feel this in a way that messages usually bear very bureaucratic language and do not look appealing. Out of 39 posts which were published during the
researched period, 29 were re-contextualized from the web-site. This, however, runs opposite to the EC’s commitment done in July 2013 when they clearly expressed in the Principles of online communication a need to modernize their web-presence by inter alia improving a content of social media messages, making them more relevant and useful for an average user. Re-contextualizing web-site content, rather than producing a separate one for a platform such as Facebook, which grants an opportunity to speak directly to citizens, is one of the biggest mistakes done by the Commission in their online communication.

In terms of quantity of materials both corpora (EU messages and Public’s response) were marked with highs and lows. The time when the biggest amount of texts were released coincide in both corpora and corresponds to the time when police tried to forcefully end the protest. These days (during week 49, 2013 and week 4, 2014) were marked with highest number of Facebook posts and highest activity of users under each of those posts. This, however, does not mean that members of both groups found a common ground and started a fruitful dialogue, as differences between two discourses remained striking.

Differences in discourses

Entry-level examination of corpora showed inter alia the difference in priorities for two European organizations which were included in the study. The Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine was trying to show support to citizens, thus the topic of “Protests in Ukraine” became the most common in their texts. Meanwhile the EEAS was focused on the EU external policy reporting, therefore “EU-Ukraine relations” topic was mostly used here.

The main finding of a research, however, comes from the in-depth analysis and shows that corpora of EU messages and Public’s response posses two different set of topoi. While both set of texts share the same topics, arguments which are embedded to these topics almost never coincide (see Table 2 for a supporting example). This is especially visible under the "Attempt to end the protest" topic, where EU officials argue in favor of peaceful solutions, whereas the public raise issues of use of force coupled with strong feeling of anger. Thus, it should be concluded that while existing in frames of same topics, two corpora creating two different discourses, without finding a consensus of a problem. Even though some topoi arise in both corpora, they are rarely equal in terms of number of mentions. EU messages corpus was mostly filled with solution seeking and responsibility topoi, while in users' comments these arguments appeared fairly less. However, Public's reply corpus included solid argumentation about angry mood of citizens, but it was not reflected in any way in EU’s messages. It should also be noted that two corpora almost never interacted in between of each other. The
discourse created in EU messages corpus did not affect the one produced in Public’s response and vice versa. In other words EU officials almost never intervene in the discourse created by users in their comments, meaning that they barely answer any questions which are raised there. For a supporting example one may look at a topos of reality, which appeared in Public’s response corpus and argued among other in favor of change in priorities of protesters. The clear message was that the initial pro-Europe rally turned into a revolution inside the country aiming at changing the regime, not only signing the Association Agreement as it was before. The important issue here is that European Union did not alter their discourse in order to include a topos of reality, thus acting as if EU agreement still remains of equal importance for local protesters. However, trying to convince the audience in their exceptional importance, EU, nonetheless, did not accept all the value of responsibility for such an important role, as topos of their own responsibility did not appear in their messages.

The only exception was noticed under a post published by the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine where the delegation actually started a discussion with user about perspectives of visa cancelation for Ukrainian citizens. However, this practice was spotted only in one item out of 39 analyzed in this study. A conclusion which derives from the analysis of topoi and reinforced by poor interaction between speakers of two corpora is that there is a clear lack of communication between EU officials and citizens. Informing rather than communicating is still the main problem of the EU online approaches. With comments remained unanswered and different arguments being raised, the two sides seems to flow parallel to each other, without bringing any fruitful results of such cooperation.

Representation of social actors

Two corpora also differed in terms of framing of social actors. European officials were tend to mention every social actor by name, thus making messages very clear and straight forward (“Catherine Ashton condemned the recent violence...”). Meanwhile in the corpus of Public’s response messages were often very expressive and assimilated politicians by addressing them simply as “EU”, “Europe” (“Ciao Europe!..”, “...since EU decided not to help...”). This way of addressing release politicians from a responsibility as neither of them is addressed personally. This might be another reason of poor cooperation between two corpora.

However, if citizens do speak directly to policy makers, they prefer to address them in a rather informal way (“Dear Catherine”, “I would like to tell you Catherine ” – for reference to High Representative Catherine Ashton). This evidence leads us to conclusion that people see
Facebook as a way approach politicians directly and informally. However, there is no reciprocity from the other side.

5.2. Recommendations

Upon the detailed analysis of corpora and review of the literature, I would like to outline common mistakes which were noticed in the Commission approach to the online political communication, as well as suggest couple of solutions how to overcome them.

Karantzeni and Gouscos who made a research on EU presence in social networks, came up with four common mistakes made online (2013), which I tend to support based on my own observations:

1. EU social media presence suffers from a faceless and bureaucratic style. A user does not feel like being contacted by real people, but rather by a bureaucratic machine;

2. EU pages do not really welcome interactivity and real communication among users;

3. The only possibility available for friends/supporters is to make comments under the content posted, without a chance to receive a feedback or response. It is also not possible to leave a post themselves or to write a private message to institution officials.

4. The entire process is rather a top-down one, focused on a continuous upload of latest news and official rhetoric. In such a case there is a risk to be seen by public as endeavoring to propagandize European achievements, rather than honestly attempting to offer real access and inclusion to citizens.

Based on these observations, Karantzeni and Gouscos created a set of recommendations for EU institutions (2013). I tend to accept them insofar as they will allegedly bring more efficiency to such potentially useful tool as social networks. First of all, the language of published messages should be plainer and easier. Besides, citizens inquires should be responded if possible or otherwise forwarded to responsible institution bodies, but they should not, under any circumstances remain unanswered. Finally, communication should be focused on more personal interaction. A different approach of citizens according to their age/employment/level of interest on EU issues should be taken into account. Especially due to the fact that nowadays social network profiles, in most cases, provide such information. Thus, making messages more personal, filtering users according to their interests and developing new ways of interaction on social media should be among top priorities for governmental and public sector institutions during next couple of years.
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