

# THE FOREIGN NEWS AND MEDIA IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN CURRENT TELEVISION NEWS PRODUCTION

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As a media theorist and researcher, Anna Kačincová Predmerská deals with issues related to digital journalism, mainly its current trends and aspects, as well as with journalistic genres, newscasting, differences between elite and tabloid press and online news portals. Her key works are the monograph *The Structure and Composition of the English-written Journalism* (2015) and the textbook *News in the Periodical Press: Journalistic Genres* (2017).

## ABSTRACT:

The aim of the presented theoretical-empirical study is to find quantifiable data reflecting information about foreign societies in foreign news through a case study, in which we use quantitative content analysis, focusing on the occurrence of information about events in the European Union and their thematic context. We point out the thematic connection and the position of the European Union in broadcasting in comparison with information about individual states of the world and mainly European countries. Due to the broad spectrum of the topic, we opted for a case study on the Slovak news television *TA3*, while the research material represented all news content focused on foreign events broadcast during a period of two months (1,621 news items). The theoretical part of the study is focused on a brief definition of key terms, in this case news, agenda setting, pro-Europeanism and Euroscepticism. The results of the research point to the dominant position of the European Union in the broadcasting of the chosen television news, while this international grouping of states is presented as a unified political entity appearing in international political events as an entity equivalent to other countries.

## KEY WORDS:

agenda setting, European Union, Euroscepticism, media image, news, pro-Europeanism, TA3

## Introduction

Pro-Europeanism, i.e. the positive perception of European integration and a positive orientation towards the European Union and its institutions, is manifested in many spheres of life. Evidence of this are also the public opinion polls regularly conducted in all EU member states, or so-called Eurobarometer. It reflects e.g. the attitudes of voters before European elections, their perception of the European Parliament, EU membership and its benefits, the perception of citizens' European identity, but also a number of seemingly

lesser issues (such as the functioning and status of European youth, gender issues, economic crisis, etc.).<sup>1</sup> In 2018, Eurobarometer published the results of a survey of 27,474 Europeans across all – at that time 28 – member states, 62% of whom considered EU membership to be good and positive and 68% believed that EU membership benefitted the country. These are the highest figures since the 1980s. In the case of Slovaks, the percentile which considered that the country profits from membership in the regional community reached a level of up to 77%.<sup>2</sup> It is clear from the above that the society is currently pro-European. Proof of this is the frequent occurrence of the terms “European Union”, “European”, “pro-European” in content of all types of media. The year before (2017), however, an interesting study was conducted to describe the differences between perceptions of the EU by ordinary citizens (represented by a sample of 10,000 people) and ‘elite’ Europeans (represented by a sample of more than 1,800 people in political, trade, but also media spaces). It is clear from the results that there is no match between the general public and the elite in terms of their perception of the EU, its competences, powers and benefits. While 34% of the general public think they benefit from the EU, the ‘elite’ percentile is as high as 71%. Despite the fact that both groups express solidarity with the EU and share a sense of European identity, it is clear that both groups (general public and elite) are more cautious and sceptical, regarding the fact that they have higher expectations of the EU.<sup>3</sup> Similar questions are addressed by P. Statham and R. Koopmans.<sup>4</sup> It is also related to these findings that the increasingly emerging voices, which do not perceive this integration grouping so positively (they are not supporters of a pro-European perspective), focus their attention on the disadvantages of this grouping and the transfer of some powers from individual countries to the European Union (so-called Euroscepticism).

It should be borne in mind that the media are perhaps the strongest influencing factor capable of changing the population’s view of public or political events, even in the case of the EU. A clear example is the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union. It was thanks to the frequent references to European integration that the British print media created a picture of the ‘unsuitability’ of UK’s coexistence in the EU, thereby influencing the overall mood and prevailing beliefs in society. The announcement of the 2016 Brexit referendum was just full stop at the end of the whole process.<sup>5</sup> With different rhetoric, e.g. in Spain, the EU appears differently, whereby the media prefer a relatively uncritical pro-European approach.<sup>6</sup> Of course, not only the British but also other states do not perceive integration positively and with enthusiasm. Just as every coin has two sides, pro-Europeanism has its opposite side, the so-called Euroscepticism. Following Great Britain and the attitudes there which led to Brexit, Euroscepticism began to spread and manifest itself in several states, e.g. in the Netherlands, France and Ireland. As M. Ozlem Ultan and S. Ornek claim: “*Euroscepticism is not a temporary phenomenon, it has a long history and strong fundamental support within the state’s political culture. The members of the Union cannot cope with by themselves with the developments in the world, such as climate change, energy security, crime, terrorism, or migration. If the European Union focuses increasingly on substance rather than process, the Eurosceptics can be deprived of their most powerful arguments.*”<sup>7</sup> Within Slovakia, the issue of pro-Europeanism and Euroscepticism is addressed primarily by sociologists and political scientists, e.g. V. Gonč.<sup>8</sup> Interesting and inspiring findings on this topic from Poland and the Czech Republic, on the other hand, are provided by the publication of S.

Riishøj.<sup>9</sup> In order to gain a more comprehensive view of the EU phenomenon, we have decided to focus on an important area that significantly influences the formation of public opinion – the media image of the EU. Due to the wide dispersion of the topic, we have narrowed our range of research to news items broadcast as information about foreign events.

Naturally, as we have mentioned, pro-Europeanism or Euroscepticism is also manifested in media production, primarily in news coverage. The media thus intentionally or unknowingly help both sides of the divide. The terms “news” and “agenda setting” are an integral part of the topic of our study. As these are well-known, notoriously recurring concepts, they are reflected upon by a number of domestic<sup>10</sup> as well as foreign authors.<sup>11</sup> In connection with the present text, we therefore assume that the reader understands the terminology, so we focus only on theoretical reflection on the specific topic.

A. Kačincová Predmerská defines “television news” as informing the general public about important, beneficial, interesting, unsuccessful, tragic, engaging and other facts, while it has a great influence on the public and its thinking, in particular when generating public opinion. News is the oldest part of journalistic work, based on the need to inform about economic and political changes that have (direct or indirect) impacts on people’s lives, but also on the general public interest in events occurring both at home and abroad.<sup>12</sup> Within news, we distinguish several levels. A. Tušer mentions its division according to selected media (agency, press, radio, television, film, internet) and according to the focus of content (domestic, foreign, economic, cultural, sports, other – such as financial, stock exchange, local and regional).<sup>13</sup> Of course, we also distinguish between the content and the formal arrangement of news items. Therefore, according to the focus of the media, we may divide news services into elite and tabloid. Naturally, content must also be supported in television broadcasting by audio-visual materials through which the newsrooms present information to the viewers. With both mentioned forms of information processing, the trend of recent years – infotainment or rather news items produced solely for entertainment purposes – manifested also in the field of the news cannot be neglected.<sup>14</sup> According to a survey conducted by agency *Focus* from 2019, TV and radio news published by the public service media is trusted by the most Slovaks (52.1%), while 39.4% of Slovaks trust commercial TV news, 36.3% the print media and 33.5% online news websites. ‘Alternative’ websites (22.5%) and social media (15.4%) achieved the lowest trust levels.<sup>15</sup> So still, despite the enormous competition from the rapidly evolving Internet, which provides a new existential dimension of recipients and viewers,<sup>16</sup> and with its almost limitless possibilities, television maintains a relatively stable and strong market position, which is also supported by the results of academic research.<sup>17</sup> That is why we focused our research on the medium of television.

1 EUROBAROMETER: *Čo je to EUROBAROMETER?* [online]. [2020-07-08]. Available at: <<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/sk/be-heard/eurobarometer>>.

2 *Eurobarometer 2018*. [online]. [2020-07-12]. Available at: <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/slovakia/sk/informacie\\_o\\_eu/prieskumy\\_eurobarometra/eurobarometer\\_2018.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/slovakia/sk/informacie_o_eu/prieskumy_eurobarometra/eurobarometer_2018.html)>.

3 See: RAINES, T., GOODWIN, M., CUTTS, D.: *The Future of Europe: Comparing Public and Elite Attitudes*. [online]. [2020-07-17]. Available at: <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2017-06-20-future-europe-attitudes-raines-goodwin-cutts-final.pdf>>.

4 STATHAM, P., KOOPMANS, R.: Political Party Contestation over Europe in the Mass Media: Who Criticizes Europe, How, and Why? In *European Political Science Review*, 2009, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 435-463.

5 See: GOWLAND, D.: *Britain and the European Union*. London: Routledge, 2016.

6 For more information, see: COOPER, T.: Aleluya por Europa! Press Treatment of the European Union in Spain and the United Kingdom. In *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 2001, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 110-122.

7 OZLEM ULTAN, M., ORNEK, S.: Euroscepticism in the European Union. In *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 2015, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 55.

8 For more information, see: GONČ, V.: From the pro-Europeanism to Eurorealism? Czech and Slovak Experience 1989-2004-2014. In *Modelling the New Europe*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 15, p. 108-131.

9 For more information, see: RIISHØJ, S.: *Europeanization and Euroscepticism: Experiences from Poland and the Czech Republic*. Odense: University of Southern Denmark, 2010.

10 For example, see: KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A.: *Žurnalistické žánre: Spravodajstvo v periodickej tlači*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2017; GREGUŠ, E., MINÁRIKOVÁ, J.: News Values in Slovak Television News. In *Communication Today*, 2016, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 78-89; GREGUŠ, E.: Stráca spravodajstvo dôveru recipientov vplyvom onlinového prostredia? In JURIŠOVÁ, V., KLEMENTIS, M., RADOŠINSKÁ, J. (eds.): *Marketing Identity 2017: Onlinové pravidlá*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2017, p. 44-57; VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J., RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: Introductory Chapter: Some Notes on Journalism in the Age of Social Media. In VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J., RADOŠINSKÁ, J. (eds.): *Social Media and Journalism - Trends, Connections, Implications*. London: InTech Open, 2018, p. 3-9; TUŠER, A.: *Ako sa robia noviny*. Bratislava: EUROKÓDEX, 2010; HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., PRAVDOVÁ, H., GAŽICOVÁ, A.: The Pragmatism of Hybridisation Logic of Television News in Slovakia. In *Communication Today*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 90-124; RONČÁKOVÁ, T.: *Žurnalistické žánre*. Ružomberok: VERBUM, 2011.

11 See, for instance: LIPPMANN, W.: *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922; TRAMPOTA, T.: *Zpravodajství*. Prague: Portál, 2006; MCCOMBS, M.: *Agenda setting: Nastolování agendy – Masová média a veřejné mínění*. Prague: Portál, 2009; LAPČÍK, M.: *Televizní zpravodajství jako paradox: Jak (ne)rozumět zpravodajství*. Olomouc: Palacký University, 2012; HARCUP, T., O’NEILL, D.: What Is News? News Values Revisited (Again). In *Journalism Studies*, 2017, Vol. 18, No. 12, p. 1470-1488.

12 KAČINCOVÁ PREDMERSKÁ, A.: *Žurnalistické žánre: Spravodajstvo v periodickej tlači*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2017, p. 25.

13 TUŠER, A.: *Ako sa robia noviny*. Bratislava: EUROKÓDEX, 2010, p. 127.

14 See: RADOŠINSKÁ, J., KVETANOVÁ, Z., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: To Thrive Means to Entertain: The Nature of Today’s Media Industries. In *Communication Today*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 4-21.

15 *Slováci najviac dôverujú správam vo verejnoprávnych médiách*. [online]. [2020-06-27]. Available at: <<https://dennikn.sk/minuta/1745238/>>.

16 GÁLIK, S., GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Cyberspace as a New Existential Dimension of Man. In ABU-TAIEH, E., EL MOUATASIM, A., ALHADID, I. H. (eds.): *Cyberspace*. London: InTech Open, 2020, p. 13-25.

17 For example, see: VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J. et al.: Television News as an Information Source and Its Perception in Slovakia. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 40-60; VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Aktuálne otázky teórie a praxe žurnalistiky v ére internetu*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2015; ŠEBEŠ, M.: Živě, okamžitě, nonstop. In DVORÁK, T. et al.: *Temporalita (nových) médií*. Prague: Academy of Performing Arts, 2016, p. 65-102; RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: *Mediálna zábava v 21. storočí*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2016.

It is well known in academic circles that the term “agenda setting” comes from research conducted by M. E. McCombs and D. L. Shaw in 1968 during the presidential election in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA. At the same time, they tried to point out the correlation between the media agenda and the reactions of voters and their interest in the discussed topics. It is from this research that the often-quoted thesis comes that although the media do not tell people what to think, they guide them what to think about. The current society is characterised by preferring the Internet, virtual forms of communications and the acquisition of information and knowledge from cyberspace. Most people no longer favour face-to-face meetings and face-to-face communication. That is why in today’s society the media have a monopoly on informing the public about all affairs we should know about. As the mentioned authors claim: “*While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, it is hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues.*”<sup>18</sup> Agenda setting was addressed by a number of academics both in the past and at the present.<sup>19</sup> Of course, the process of gatekeeping is closely related to the setting of topics. According to J. Višňovský, attention has been paid to the method of selecting news for the news since the 1950s, and currently gatekeeping is defined as “... a process of deciding on topics that the media process and offer to the audience.”<sup>20</sup>

According to V. Štětěk, any type of news – domestic, foreign, sports, etc. – is “more or less universally adapted to the national perspective.”<sup>21</sup> In the context of foreign television news, we must note that newsrooms are in a way specific to the certain media audience of the country in which the medium operates. This fact is also pointed out by D. McQuail. He argues that if the news service focuses on foreign news, then mostly only if it reports on events “in large, near and rich countries, or in such states that have a related culture and language”<sup>22</sup> the country to which the news is addressed will pay attention. As D. McQuail adds, there is rarely a distant or politically insignificant state in the reports, leading to a situation where some countries do not seem to exist on the ‘news map’ of the world. On the contrary, those with whom we have economic and political relations, who are geographically close to us or there is a cultural affinity, are strongly represented.<sup>23</sup> According to S. Anholt, it is common in society that most people, apart from their immediate, close neighbours, “really only respect, occasionally think about, claim to know about and generally admire a maximum of 14 or 15 countries apart from their own, and these are all major, industrialized democracies in Western Europe and the English-speaking world, plus Japan and Brazil.”<sup>24</sup> The remaining countries that are known are becoming considered either as ‘problematic’ areas (such as Iraq, Zimbabwe and North Korea), cultural heritage states which in the past held a significant position (for example, Greece, Turkey or Egypt), or as very important, but not universally popular or trusted countries (like Russia, China, India). According to S. Anholt, the remaining states are ignored unless people plan to emigrate or vacation there.<sup>25</sup>

In the case of Slovakia, based on the above criteria, we could assume the frequent occurrence of reports concerning countries with shared borders – the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, Hungary and Austria. We also presume that Slovak viewers are interested in countries with a strong economy and economic position in the world – G7 member countries, i.e. the United States, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan, along with the European Union as an observational group of states and Russia. Permanent members of

the United Nations Security Council – the People’s Republic of China, France, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom – need to be considered as well. Likewise, on the basis of this concept, we could assume a relationship in which more frequent occurrences in the broadcast mean the greater economic, political or security importance of the presented country or its greater cultural proximity to the final audience. Therefore, we are interested in the position of the European Union in television broadcasting both in terms of occurrence and in terms of the topics presented.

## Research Methodology

### Objectives and Research Method

The aim of the presented theoretical-empirical study is to find quantifiable data reflecting information about foreign societies in selected television news through a case study, in which we use quantitative content analysis, focusing on the occurrence of information about events in the European Union and its thematic context. We also point out the thematic connection and the position of the European Union in broadcasting in comparison with information about individual states from around the world and primarily about European countries. Given the aim of the research, we decided to conduct a case study focused on the only nationwide commercial television channel in the Slovak Republic with a monotype news focus, through quantitative content analysis with the help of a coding book.

H. Scherer considers quantitative content analysis to be a method of “for a systematic and intersubjectively verifiable description of communication content based on scientifically asked questions.”<sup>26</sup> According to him, this type of research method is characterised by “a high degree of structuring and is associated with a high degree of verifiability.”<sup>27</sup> T. Trampota and M. Vojtěchovská come to the same opinion. As it is a quantitative method, the advantage is that it is transferable and guarantees objective, researcher-independent results that can be clearly and unambiguously presented in tables and figures.<sup>28</sup> Among the positives of quantitative research, J. Hendl also advises relatively fast and straightforward data collection, accurate numerical data and its relatively fast analysis with the help of a computer.<sup>29</sup> Also based on previous experience with this method,<sup>30</sup> we consider its application to be appropriate.

### Research Material

*TA3* is the only Slovak commercial television station providing the audience with a monotype news programme (it broadcasts from 06:00 a.m. to 01:00 a.m. during the working week and from 07:00 a.m. to 01:00 a.m. on weekends). It was established in September 2001, when it was founded by Martin Lengyel and its current owner is the *Grafobal Group*. In terms of content, it focuses on domestic, foreign, economic, cultural, political, sports and regional news. According to a survey by the *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism* from 2019, for the second year in a row, Slovaks rated *TA3* news as the most trusted news (7.03).<sup>31</sup> The public television and radio broadcaster *RTVS* (6.88) and the elite newspaper *Hospodárske noviny* (6.55) ended right behind it. Private television channel *JOJ* took sixth place (6.17) together with the daily *Pravda* and private television channel

18 MCCOMBS, M. E., SHAW, D. L.: The Agenda-setting Function of Mass Media. In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1972, Vol. 36, No. 2, p. 176-187.

19 See: EBRING, L., GOLDENBERG, E. N., MILLER, A. H.: Front-Page News and Real-World Cues: A New Look at Agenda Setting by the Media. In *American Journal of Political Science*, 1980, Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 16-49; COOK, F. L. et al.: Media and Agenda-Setting: Effects on the Public, Interest Group Leaders, Policy Makers and Policy. In *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1983, Vol. 47, No. 1, p. 16-35; DEARING, J. W., ROGERS, E. M.: *Agenda-Setting*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1996; GLYNN, C. J.: Public Opinion as a Social Process. In DUNWOODY, S. L., BECKER, L. D., MCLEOD, D. M. (eds.): *The Evolution of Key Mass Communication Concepts*. New York: Hampton Press, 2005, p. 139-164; BOYDSTON, A. E.: *Making the News: Politics, the Media, and Agenda Setting*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

20 VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: Spravidajské hodnoty. In PRAVDOVÁ, H., RADOŠINSKÁ, J., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J. (eds.) et al.: *Slovník vybraných pojmov z mediálních štúdií*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2016, p. 186.

21 ŠTĚTEK, V.: *Mediální integrace národa v době globalizace*. Brno: Masaryk University, 2007, p. 88.

22 McQUAIL, D.: *Úvod do teorie masové komunikace*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Prague: Portál, 2009, p. 273.

23 McQUAIL, D.: *Úvod do teorie masové komunikace*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Prague: Portál, 2009, p. 273-274.

24 ANHOLT, S.: The Media and National Image. In *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 2009, Vol. 5, p. 175.

25 ANHOLT, S.: The Media and National Image. In *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 2009, Vol. 5, p. 175.

26 SCHERER, H.: Úvod do metody obsahové analýzy. In SCHULZ, W. et al.: *Analyza obsahu mediálních sdělení*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Prague: Karolinum, 2004, p. 30.

27 SCHERER, H.: Úvod do metody obsahové analýzy. In SCHULZ, W. et al.: *Analyza obsahu mediálních sdělení*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Prague: Karolinum, 2004, p. 29-34.

28 TRAMPOTA, T., VOJTĚCHOVSKÁ, M.: *Metody výzkumu médií*. Prague: Portál, 2010, p. 103.

29 HENDL, J.: *Kvalitativní výzkum: Základní teorie, metody a aplikace*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Prague: Portál, 2008, p. 47.

30 GREGUŠ, L., MINÁRIKOVÁ, J.: News Values in Slovak Television News. In *Communication Today*, 2016, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 78-89; VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J. et al.: Television News as an Information Source and Its Perception in Slovakia. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 40-60.

31 Remark by authors: The respondents had to choose trust on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is the least and 10 is the most.

Markíza ranked seventh (5.99).<sup>32</sup> In this year survey of the *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism TA3* lost its position as the most trusted news source due to public broadcaster *RTVS*, but the difference between them was minimal. *RTVS* was rated as the most trusted by 67% of respondents, while *TA3* by 66% of asked.<sup>33</sup>

For a clearer idea of the thematic agenda of the monitored television broadcaster, we set the months of January 2019 and May 2019 for the research period, i.e. months with the same number of 31 days and with an optimal broadcast structure. As stated by M. Šebeš, the production of news reflects the cycle of the calendar year: "... news has a different form during the summer holidays and vacation months or during the period of important holidays, anniversaries, etc."<sup>34</sup> It was during the period under review that no major holidays were celebrated, which affected the broadcasting structure of the media. At the same time, the selected months do not follow each other directly, specifically there is an interval of up to three months between them, which provided more representative research material, as the assumption that events with a longer time development and more updates would occur in both monitored months was minimised. During the observed months, i.e. 62 days with a total of 1,162 broadcast hours, we obtained research material, which consisted of a total of 1,621 news reports related to foreign events.

Understandably, we are fully aware of our research's potential limits. These include the size of the research sample – results of the research thus cannot be completely generalised – and the highly specific object of the research, i.e. news contents broadcast by the news television *TA3*. However, by using this particular research method it is possible to carry out the research continually in order to monitor possible differences over a longer period of time and the method can also be applied on the television news programmes of other broadcasters.

## Operationalisation of Terms

- *News contribution, news content, report* – any authorial expression that is the result of the creative intellectual activity of the responsible television reporter of the foreign or economic desk of the newsroom, which has been included in the broadcast and has been broadcast at least once. These are exclusively authorial expressions, which can be considered as foreign news (does not apply to the territory of the Slovak Republic and what is happening in it, or the primary information is not related to this territory – for example: the European Union summit – it is a foreign administration, even though we formally belong to this supranational community). We do not consider information related to sports or broadcast components that are not a direct output of the responsible employee for the purpose of news information to be a news contribution/content/report.

- *News topic* – thematically, each news contribution/content/report can always fall into only one category, which has been determined *a priori* and has been tested by pre-research. The topics are:

- Politics (national, international);
- Natural Disasters and Elements (Weather);
- Incidents, Accidents and Crime;
- Attacks and Terrorist Attacks;
- National Armed Conflicts;
- Economy and Business;
- Social Issues and Health Care;
- Culture;
- Environmentalism and Ecology;
- Science and Technology;
- Leisure and More.

32 NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2019*. [online]. [2019-11-11]. Available at: <[https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/inline-files/DNR\\_2019\\_FINAL.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/inline-files/DNR_2019_FINAL.pdf)>.

33 NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020*. [online]. [2020-10-05]. Available at: <[https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/DNR\\_2020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/DNR_2020_FINAL.pdf)>.

34 ŠEBEŠ, M.: Živě, okamžitě, nonstop. In DVORÁK, T. et al.: *Temporalita (nových) médií*. Prague: Academy of Performing Arts, 2016, p. 78.

## Formulation of the Research Questions and the Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and theoretical background, we have established research questions and derived hypotheses from them that we want to verify with the results of research:

### RQ1: Which areas of the world dominate television news?

H1: The number of reports directly or indirectly related to countries in Europe was higher than the number of reports directly or indirectly related to countries from other parts of the world individually.

#### RQ1.1: Which countries are preferred in TV news?

H1.1: Compared to other countries, G7 countries and Russia have the highest incidence in broadcasting.

### RQ2: How often is the EU mentioned as a separate political entity in the monitored contributions?

H2: The EU as a political entity is presented more often than the average number of occurrences per EU Member State in broadcasting.

#### RQ2.1: In relation to what topics does the EU present itself as a separate political entity in television news broadcasting?

H2.1: There are more policy-related contributions about the EU than all other EU-focused topics.

## Results Interpretation and Main Outcomes of the Research

RQ1: Which areas of the world dominate television news?

During the monitored period, *TA3* television reported on a total of 114 countries through 1,621 news contents, while their geographical distribution is shown in Figure 1. The map shows the number of contents about individual countries around the world. It is clear from the figure that the dominant areas are North America (especially the United States), the countries of the European Union, Russia, China and Iran. On the contrary, African countries were mentioned least often; some of them were not mentioned at all. Central and South Africa, and South America are also underrepresented. The strong position of Europe is probably related not only to the geographical seat of the monitored institution – the Slovak Republic, but also to geographic and cultural proximity. The greater presence of Asia and North America reflects the geographical location of major global political and economic players, such as the United States, Canada, Russia, China, Japan. It is interesting to focus the contributions on space. It appeared 14 times in the total number of 1,621 contributions and was associated with the topic of science and technology. The two international groupings appearing in the broadcast as separate entities also had a separate code, namely the North Atlantic Alliance (7 times) and the United Nations (20 times). Although Antarctica is not colour-coded in Figure 1, *TA3* reported about it once during the observed period. The lack of display on the map is caused by the programme that processed the data into a visual form.

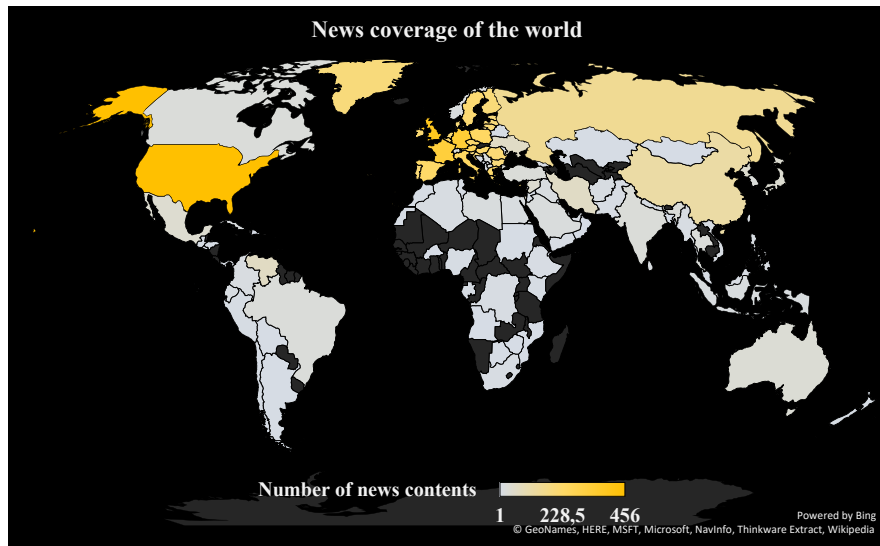


Figure 1: News coverage of the world

Source: Own processing

H1: The number of reports directly or indirectly concerning countries in Europe was higher than the number of reports directly or indirectly concerning countries from other parts of the world individually.

We tested the hypothesis by determining the total number of mentions of individual countries in the broadcast – whether it was direct information, i.e. the topic was predominantly related to events in a particular state, or indirectly, the topic primarily concerned another state, but the country was explicitly mentioned and identified by the reporters in the context of political, economic, cultural or other interrelationships. In one content, there may have been mentions of several states, and we recorded each of them. We grouped countries by geographic location, namely (1) Europe, (2) North America, (3) South America, (4) Asia, (5) Africa, and (6) Oceania. The dominant position of European countries in the monitored period was proved, which is also confirmed by Figure 2. The most presented area was Europe (973 mentions), followed by Asia (573 mentions) and then North America (474 mentions). The hypothesis was thus confirmed.

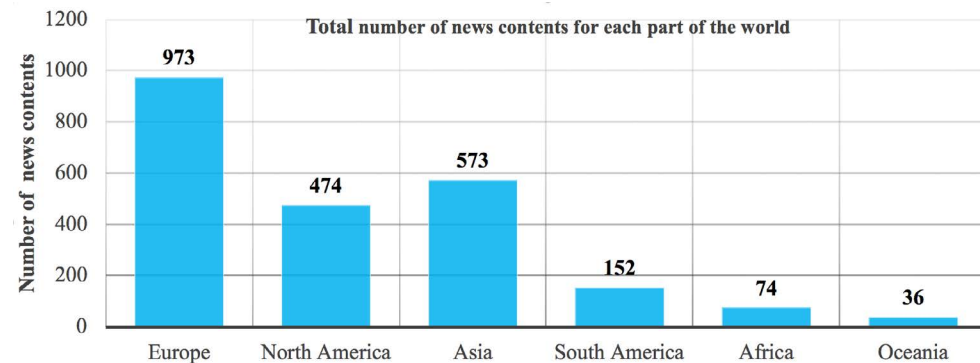


Figure 2: Total number of news contents for each part of the world

Source: Own processing

RQ1.1: Which countries are preferred in TV news?

From the above figures, however, it is not possible to unambiguously determine which states the television broadcaster most often mentioned. In Table 1 we therefore point out both the overall incidence of individual countries and the most presented countries. We also mention the location of the European Union. It does not have a numerically positioned position, as it is an international community that does not act as a single country at all global levels, such as the United States, but has a more sophisticated structure with direct election to its various institutions, such as the European Parliament and it differs from other international communities – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations (UN), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), etc. We consider the presentation of the European Union as a separate entity to be a certain manifestation of pro-Europeanism in broadcasting, because it does not distinguish between individual member states separately, but the medium shows it as a separate legal entity, which is to some extent supported by representatives of pro-Europeanism.

Table 1: Occurrence of individual countries in TA3 broadcasts

No.	Country	OCC	No.	Country	OCC	No.	Country	OCC	No.	Country	OCC
1	United States	456	23	North Macedonia	22		Columbia	10		Guatemala	3
2	United Kingdom	208		Switzerland	22	36	Afghanistan	9		Honduras	3
-	European Union	180		Canada	22		Taiwan	9		Argentina	3
3	Germany	155		South Korea	22	37	Ecuador	8		Chile	3
4	Russia	148		Thailand	22		Algeria	8		Democratic Republic of the Congo	3
5	France	141	24	Belgium	21		Philippines	8		Morocco	3
6	China	115	25	Romania	20	38	South Africa	7		Sudan	3
7	Austria	72		Portugal	20		Republic of the Congo	7		Singapore	3
8	Venezuela	62	-	UNO*	20		Myanmar	7	43	Montenegro	2
9	Iran	58	26	Serbia	19		United Arab Emirates	7		Croatia	2
10	Ukraine	57	27	Saudi Arabia	18	-	Kosovo	6		El Salvador	2
	Italy	57	28	Lithuania	17	39	Vietnam	6		Bolivia	2
11	Poland	54	29	Norway	16	40	Bosna and Hercegovina	5		Bahrain	2
12	Israel	53		Luxembourg	16		Panama	5		Jordan	2
13	Spain	45	30	Finland	15		Ethiopia	5		Kazakhstan	2
14	North Korea	41		Libya	15		Georgia	5		Kuwait	2
15	Mexico	38		State of Palestine	15		Hongkong	5		Lebanon	2
	Syria	38	31	Cyprus	14		Yemen	5	44	Moldova	1
16	Hungary	37	-	Space	14		Malaysia	5		Dominican Republic	1
	Greece	37	32	Malta	13		Pakistan	5		Angola	1
17	Czech Republic	36		Cuba	13	41	Belarus	4		Botswana	1
	Japan	36		Indonesia	13		Peru	4		Burkina Faso	1

18	Australia	31	33	Egypt	12		Gabon	4		Djibouti	1
19	Vatican	29		Iraq	12		Kenia	4		Mozambique	1
20	Sweden	27		Sri Lanka	12		Nigeria	4		Zimbabwe	1
	Ireland	27	34	Bulgaria	11		Tunisia	4		Bangladesh	1
21	India	24		Latvia	11		Qatar	4		Mongolia	1
	Turkey	24	35	Denmark	10		Nepal	4		Oman	1
22	Netherlands	23		Estonia	10		New Zealand	4			
	Brazil	23		Slovenia	10	42	Albania	3			

Source: Own processing

In the top twenty most represented countries, all countries neighbouring the Slovak Republic appeared in the *TA3* broadcast, i.e. Austria (7<sup>th</sup> place), Ukraine (10<sup>th</sup> place), Poland (11<sup>th</sup> place), Hungary (16<sup>th</sup> place) and the Czech Republic (17<sup>th</sup> place). At the same time, the world's top five places were also taken by global economic leaders and important partners of the Slovak Republic, namely the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany, France and Russia. Overall, 14 European countries, 8 Asian, 2 North American, 1 South American and Australia are in the top 20 in broadcasting.

*H1.1: Compared to other countries, G7 countries and Russia have the highest incidence in broadcasting.*

Russia is part of our hypothesis because it belonged to the G8, until it was excluded for the annexation of the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula in 2014. However, it remains one of the most advanced economies in the world and thus one of the most important economic and security players on a global scale.

We measured largest occurrence in the broadcast based on the number of occurrences of individual countries in the broadcast. Since in our hypothesis we are interested in the position of 8 countries and 1 political grouping, it is sufficient to focus on the 10 most represented countries in order to evaluate it. There was a total of 6 monitored countries and the European Union. The United States significantly outperforms other countries in its presence in *TA3* broadcasts. This is probably due to its significant influence on international politics and the economy and at the same time the pro-Western direction of the Slovak Republic. The five most frequently mentioned countries are complemented by the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia and France. We see a more significant drop in Italy, which shares 10<sup>th</sup> place with Ukraine. The other two countries – Japan and Canada, from the G7 group, did not get into the TOP 10 countries in *TA3* broadcasting. Information related to events in Japan occurred 36 times and in the overall ranking it shared 17<sup>th</sup> place with the Czech Republic. The analysed television reported on Canada in 22 reports, placing it 23<sup>rd</sup> in the overall standings, along with South Korea, North Macedonia, Switzerland and Thailand. The hypothesis was refused.

*RQ2: How often is the EU mentioned as a separate political entity in the monitored contributions?*

In the period under review, *TA3* produced 973 contents (60.02%) out of 1,621 examined television contributions, in which it informed about a total of 39 countries located in Europe. In Table 1 is located a separate coding unit for Kosovo. However, as the Slovak Republic does not recognise the country's sovereignty, in the interpretation part we have added the values of Kosovo to Serbia.

As we can see in Figure 3, television broadcasting has been mostly dominated by Western European countries – especially the United Kingdom, Germany and France. The figure does not include the presence of the European Union, for a clearer idea of the 'prioritisation' of specific European states in broadcasting, as well as Russia, which geographically falls under both Europe and Asia. But since most of its territory covers Asian continent, we have included it in Asia.

### News coverage of Europe (without EU)

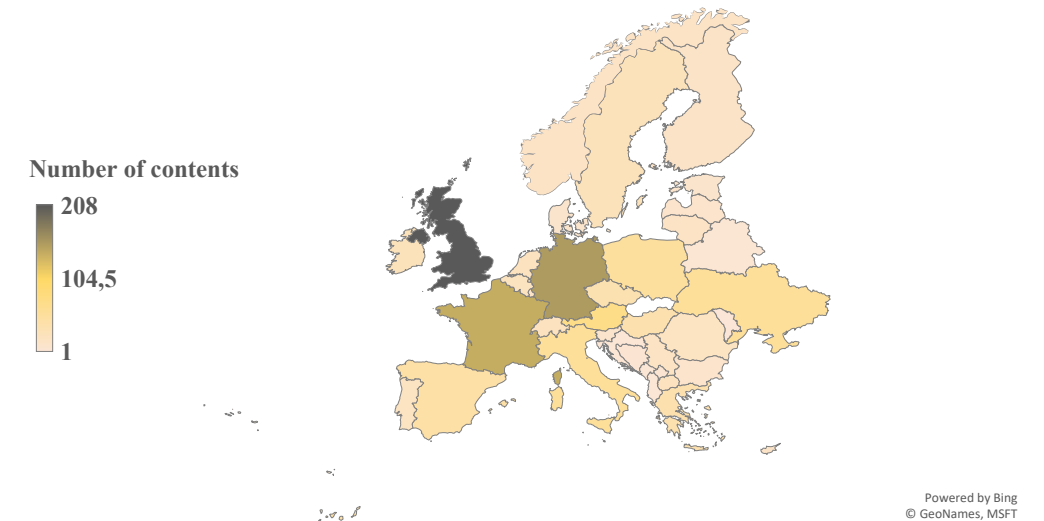


Figure 3: News coverage of Europe (without EU)

Source: Own processing

Of course, with the addition of the European Union as a separate entity to the geographical display, the map has changed and the countries bordering the Slovak Republic, primarily Austria and Poland, but also more distantly Italy and Spain, have come to the fore. Obviously, other member states also moved up compared to non-members.

### News coverage of Europe (with EU)

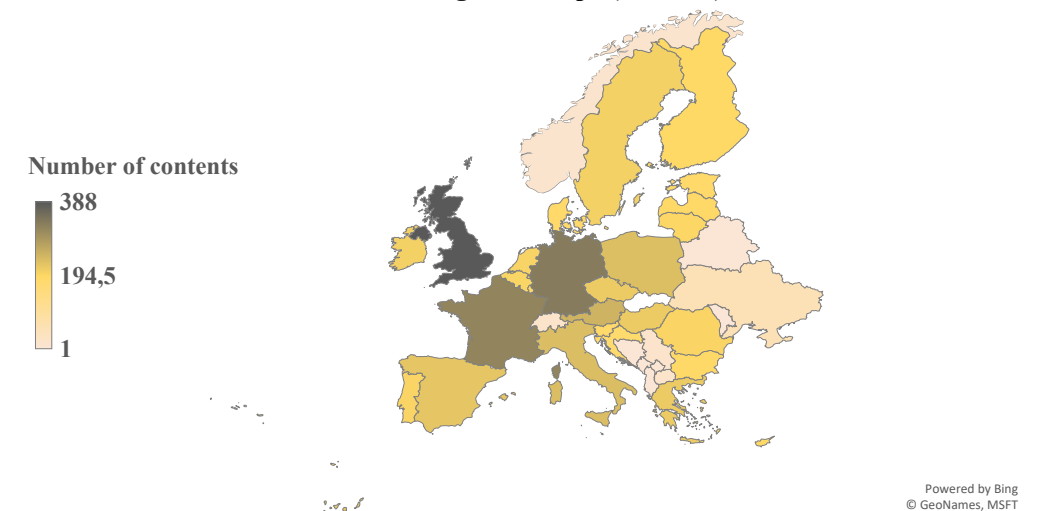


Figure 4: News coverage of Europe (with EU)

Source: Own processing

In Table 2 we offer an overview of the five most represented countries in Europe, also with number of occurrences and order in comparison with all recorded countries of the world. The European Union is a separate entity, which is not included in the final number of occurrences of individual states.

Table 2: TOP 5 European countries about which the most information has been published

	TOP 5 countries		Place in ranking of all countries
1.	United Kingdom	208 times	2 <sup>nd</sup>
-	European Union	180 times	-
2.	Germany	155 times	3 <sup>rd</sup>
3.	France	141 times	5 <sup>th</sup>
4.	Austria	72 times	7 <sup>th</sup>
5.	Ukraine	57 times	10 <sup>th</sup>
	Italy	57 times	

Source: Own processing

H2: The EU as a political entity is presented more often than the average number of occurrences per EU member state in broadcasting.

To test the hypothesis, we had to calculate the average number of occurrences per member state of the European Union. We started from Table 1, while the total incidence of all member states was 1,109 in the period under review. We consider that the Slovak Republic was excluded from the research and the United Kingdom was still a member country at the time of the research therefore broadcasts per member state was 41.07. The European Union as an independent political entity was mentioned up to 180 times during the period under review, which is more than 4 times as much. The hypothesis was confirmed. At the same time, only the United Kingdom was ahead of the European Union in terms of the number of occurrences, but in this we see a connection mainly with the thematic agenda related to the area of Europe.

RQ2.1: In relation to what topics does the EU present itself as a separate political entity in television news broadcasting?

Based on the data obtained from the quantitative content analysis, we can state that the thematic agenda of the selected news consists mainly of 'Politics'. In broadcasts by TA3, out of the total number of 1,621 contributions, up to 816 contents informed about political affairs, i.e. 50.34%. This was followed by the category 'Incidents, Accidents and Crime' (226 contents; 13.94%), with almost the same number of contributions being published in the field of 'Economy and Business' (214 contents; 13.20%). Fourth place was occupied by 'Culture', which was the subject of 90 contributions (5.55%). This was followed by the category 'Natural Disasters and Elements (Weather)' with 69 contents (4.26%) and only one news contribution less was reported about 'Terrorist Attacks and Attacks' (68 contents; 4.19%). In seventh place was the area of 'Social Issues and Health Care' (48 contributions; 2.96%). To a lesser extent, news focused on the 'Environmentalism and Ecology' (32 contributions; 1.97%), 'National Armed Conflicts' (26 contributions; 1.60%), and 'Science and Technology' (17 contributions; 1.05%). The smallest coverage was provided by the television broadcaster on 'Leisure and More' – 15 contributions (0.93%). The data obtained thus verifies the statement of the one of the former heads of the TA3 broadcast, Viktor Masarik, from December 2014, that the three most dominant areas in television broadcasting should be politics, economy and social issues.<sup>35</sup> We can thus claim that the overall philosophy of this television broadcaster is reflected in informing the public not only about domestic but also about foreign events, and the routine of the media interferes with the construction of media reality. The reason for favouring political topics may be the consequences of decisions of other states on events and the situation in Slovakia. As our country is part of several global political structures, such as the United Nations,

35 MIKUŠOVÁ, S.: *Kritéria výberu medzinárodných správ zo servisu spravodajských agentúr v spravodajstve STV/RTVS, TV Markíza, TA3 a TV Joj*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2015, p. 132.

the North Atlantic Alliance, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, decisions by not only our closest neighbours, but also by more distant partners and countries can affect the economic, defence-related and/or political situation in Slovakia, not excluding the national social situation.

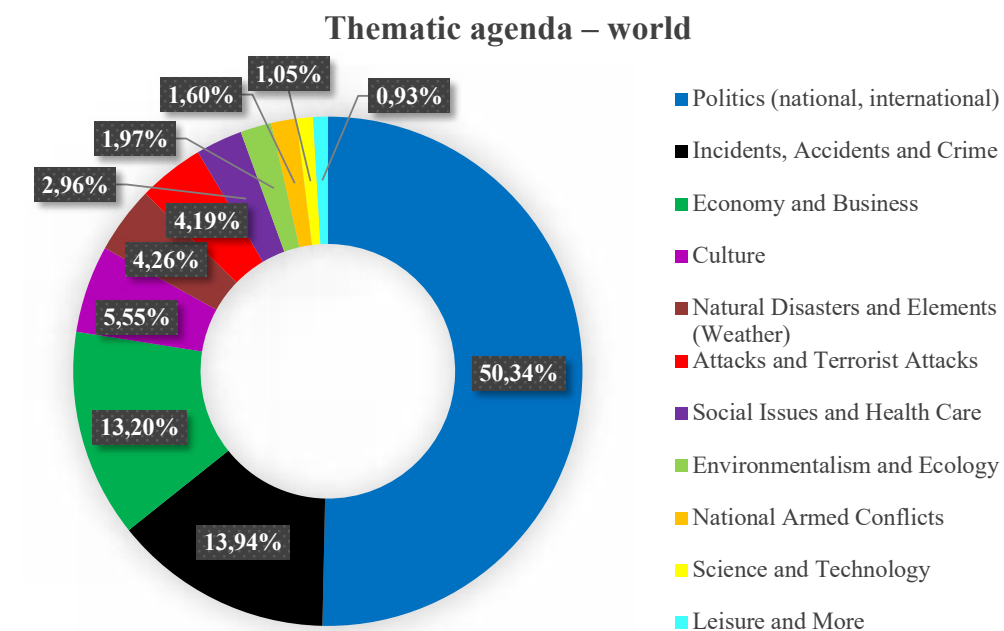


Figure 5: Thematic agenda – world

Source: Own processing

Of course, if we want to look at the thematic anchoring of the European Union, we need to look at what topics the newsroom has dealt with in relation to Europe in general. In 973 contents on countries in Europe, there were reports on all 11 topics. TA3 again broadcast the most news about 'Politics' – 513 contributions (52.72%). These were both domestic political phenomena and information on international and regional policy. The topics 'Incidents, Accidents and Crime' (146 contents; 15.01%) and 'Economy and Business' (128 contents; 13.16%) also received a more significant space in the broadcast. The field of 'Culture' finished in fourth place with 61 contributions (6.27%). We recorded almost the same amount of news contents on 'Social Issues and Health Care' (31 contents; 3.19%), 'Natural Disasters and Elements (Weather)' (29 contents; 2.98%), and 'Attacks and Terrorist Attacks' (28 contents; 2.88%). The topic of the 'Environmentalism and Ecology' also exceeded the 2% threshold in broadcasting (20 contributions; 2.06%). Almost a half less contents focused on 'Leisure and More' (12 contributions; 1.23%). 'National Armed Conflicts' (3 contributions; 0.31%) and 'Science and Technology' (2 contributions; 0.21%) received the least space in the broadcast.

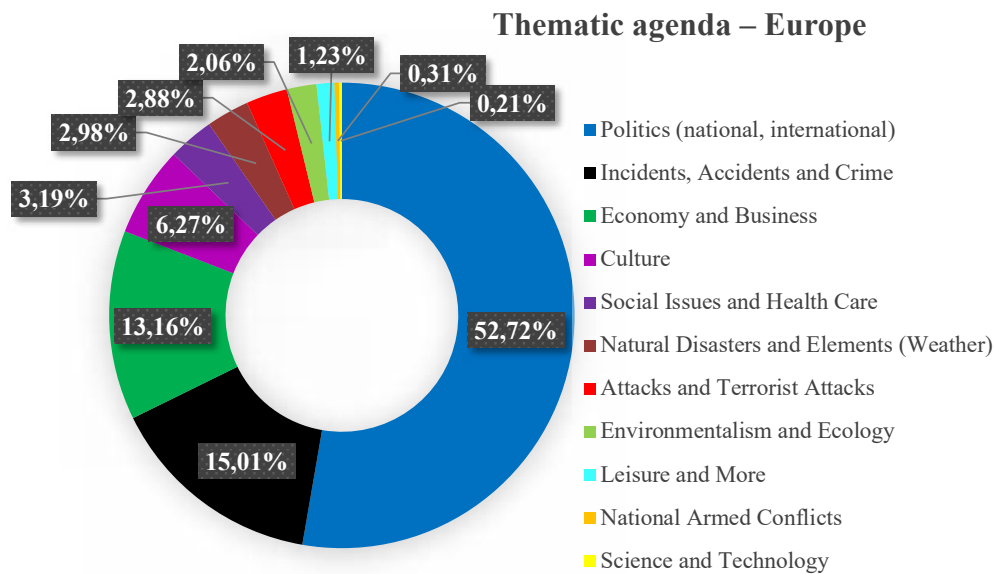


Figure 6: Thematic agenda – Europe  
Source: Own processing

We sought an answer to the question concerning in which topics the European Union was mentioned in relation to in the broadcasts by evaluating hypothesis H2.1.

*H2.1: There are more policy-related contributions about the EU than all other EU-focused topics.*

Out of a total of 973 news reports on European countries, the television broadcaster published 180 items which mentioned the European Union as a whole in the period under review. In the context of the thematic agenda, 'Politics' was the broadcaster's most dominant area of interest, with 133 television mentions, which is exactly 73.89% of all EU reports. The second most common topic was the category 'Economy and Business' (38 contributions; 21.11%). We recorded significantly lower values in the areas of 'Natural Disasters and Elements (Weather)' (3 contributions; 1.67%), 'Social Issues and Health Care' (3 contributions; 1.67%), 'Incidents, Accidents and Crime' (2 contributions; 1.11%) and 'Environmentalism and Ecology' (1 contribution; 0.56%). The remaining thematic categories did not appear in the context of the European Union. Based on the above data, the hypothesis was confirmed.

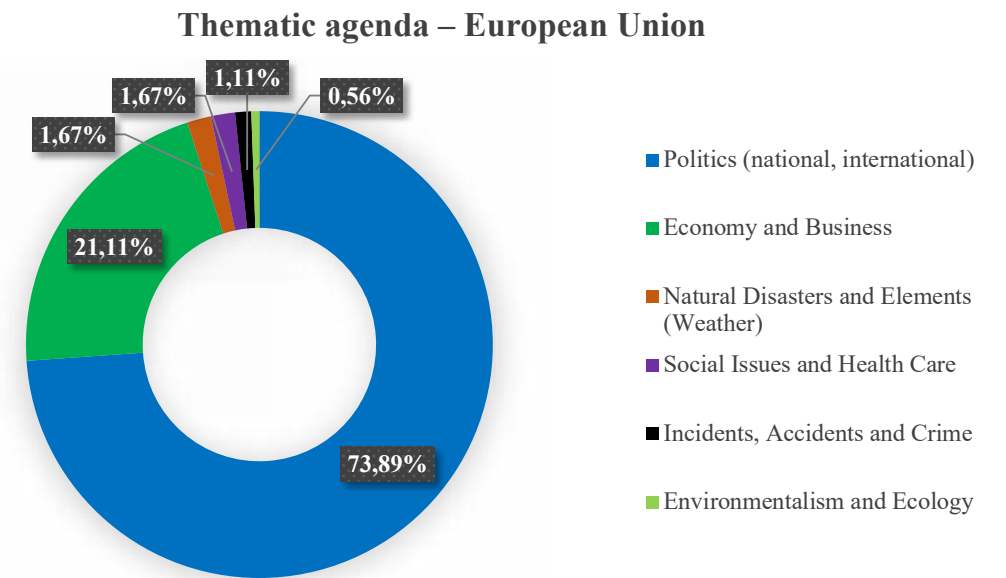


Figure 7: Thematic agenda – European Union  
Source: Own processing

We consider it important to point out the dominant global and regional events, which the television broadcaster covered more significantly in the monitored period, specifically, devoting a space to them for several days or weeks in a row, during which it published decisions or events related to the European Union:

- *Brexit events* – negotiations on the 'divorce settlement' following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union; political turbulence and disagreements in the British Parliament; the resignation of the then British Prime Minister Theresa May;
- *the trade war between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China* – long negotiations between the parties to the 'conflict'; economic consequences for the European Union and world trade;
- *elections to the European Parliament in May 2019* – election campaigns in European countries; voting during the European elections from 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019 to 26<sup>th</sup> May 2019; information on the results within the individual countries of the European Union;
- *events and consequences related to the termination of the nuclear agreement with Iran by the United States of America* – negotiations of other signatories (including the European Union) of the agreement with Iran on the subsequent compliance with the obligations under the Treaty; economic and political conflict between the USA and Iran.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The promotion of certain topics in broadcasting supports the assumption in society that this is important information, events or phenomena, according to which we subsequently adjust our worldview, general view of reality and ways of behaving in everyday life. However, due to the realistic and logical impossibility of publishing all information from the entire world, television news often focuses only on economically or security-wise nearby states, nations and cultures of the target audience. As we stated in the introduction, according to D. McQuail's

ideas,<sup>36</sup> it is necessary to realise that in the reports there is seldom a distant or politically insignificant state, which leads to a situation where some countries do not seem to exist on the 'news map' of the world. The preference for a specific number of countries is also confirmed by the results of our research. During the inquired period, *TAS* published news items covering a total of 114 countries, with the United Nations listing up to 193 member countries<sup>37</sup> and two permanent observer states in the form of the Holy See (Vatican) and Palestine.<sup>38</sup> From a sample of 1,621 contributions, we found that among the most presented countries are countries neighbouring the Slovak Republic – namely Austria (7<sup>th</sup> place), Ukraine (10<sup>th</sup> place), Poland (11<sup>th</sup> place), Hungary (16<sup>th</sup> place) and Czech Republic (17<sup>th</sup> place). We thus assume a connection to the surrounding national cultures or languages occurring in our immediate vicinity. At the same time, many Slovaks work or study abroad, and we consider what is happening in the surrounding states to be crucial for them. The first places (1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>) belong to the largest economic and political players in European region and from around the world – the United States (1<sup>st</sup> place), United Kingdom (2<sup>nd</sup> place), Germany (3<sup>rd</sup> place), Russia (4<sup>th</sup> place) and France (5<sup>th</sup> place). Most of them are also part of both the European Union (excluding the US and Russia) and the NATO (excluding Russia). Slightly less covered, but still with a high number of occurrences, China is ranked 6<sup>th</sup>, and is currently consolidating its global position, especially in the economic field. Given the fact that these countries are among the world's major political players, we consider it understandable to point out events concerning these states. However, we were particularly interested in the position of the European Union in the news agenda. We recorded a high number of occurrences, ranking overall between the United Kingdom and Germany. References to it as a political entity also significantly exceeded the average number of broadcasts per member state. EU's ranking signals a dominant position in Slovak news. We can assume that its frequent appearance in the news, where it is portrayed as a strong political entity, could legitimise in the viewers' perceptions its position within the world as a political grouping to create a unified state with the international recognition – as currently the United States or federations such as India, Brazil or Russia. This could clearly and perhaps radically spread pro-Europeanism throughout society. However, we must not forget the Eurosceptics, whose depiction, on the other hand, may reinforce the idea that the European Union wants to 'seize' sovereignty and the identity of individual nation-states and create a multicultural, multi-religious and non-traditionally formed state.

Of course, the effect of the European Union's media portrayal on news recipients cannot be monitored solely on the basis of quantitative research; more extensive qualitative research needs to be conducted to determine the exact impact of constructed media reality on the individual. We did not focus on the problem of whether the European Union is portrayed in a positive or negative light, as can be determined from research of the British or Spanish media. Since theories of all the powerful media have long since ceased to exist, we consider it necessary to continue to monitor this issue both from the position of the recipient and from the position of the media institution, its internal processes and, of course, the process of creating media products. We understand that it is not possible to present all countries and regions of the world equally. However, we agree with the opinion of Z. Vybíral that the mass media offer recipients their own description of the world. Because one does not have the opportunity to empirically verify every piece of information, one tends to trust and rely on it.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it is very important to know what kind of media reality television creates and through which images it affects the lives of viewers of all ages. Media reality is not an exact reflection of objective reality, because it is no longer possible to inform and reproduce all events 'out there' by its very nature. We perceive the preference of countries culturally, geographically or linguistically close as an important factor in the selection of content for the news, which is also demonstrated in Slovak media production.

We also consider it important to point out that the television media agenda can be influenced not only by looking at what is happening through the national lens<sup>40</sup> or by focusing on culturally and economically close

countries,<sup>41</sup> but also by the absence of visual material, which is a very important part of television journalism. In our opinion, it is highly probable that several reports from Europe and North America can also be covered by illustrative (neutral) or archival television footage, and thus at least some of the reports are published even without current visual materials. We therefore believe that this area needs to be addressed continuously through both quantitative and qualitative research.

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37 UNITED NATIONS: *Member States*. [online]. [2020-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.un.org/en/member-states/index.html>>.

38 UNITED NATIONS: *Non-Member States*. [online]. [2020-04-24]. Available at: <<https://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/non-member-states/index.html>>.

39 VYBÍRAL, Z.: *Psychologie lidské komunikace*. Prague: Portál, 2000, p. 142.

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