

# DAILY NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLIC OPINION ON THE EU AND CROATIAN INTEGRATION PROCESS – AN AGENDA SETTING PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT** *Agenda setting theory postulates that the amount of media attention given to an issue determines the importance the public gives to that issue. This article relies on the theory of agenda setting to determine the relationship between media presentation and public opinion about Croatia's integration process into the EU. It looks at the importance of seven topics related to the issue in three subsequent periods from July 2002 to June 2003. It uses public opinion survey data and content analysis of daily newspapers to examine the relationship between topics in the media and their support among the public. The results reveal an indication of agenda setting only in the first period, while there is no support for agenda setting in later periods. A comparison between each topics' importance scores on both agendas shows that the occurrence or absence of agenda setting is associated with either extensive or minimal coverage of the economy in the media during each period. The findings of this study contrast with studies that have found a link between the media agenda and the public agenda.*

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## KEY WORDS

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AGENDA SETTING, DAILY NEWSPAPERS, PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY, EU, CROATIAN INTEGRATION PROCESS

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Signing the Stabilization and Accession Agreement (SAA) with the European Union (EU) in 2001, Croatia officially began its integration process. From then onward, every Croatian government has been fully committed to the fulfillment of the political and economic measures outlined in the SAA. Therefore, the government of Croatia adopted a communication strategy aimed at systematically informing the public about the EU and all aspects of Croatia's accession to the EU. This was done in order to prepare them for the referendum on accession (Pejčinović Burić, 2002). As a part of that strategy, the Ministry for European Integration has been conducting public opinion surveys two-times a year since July 2000, in order to keep track with the public's attitudes and information needs about the EU and the integration process. Since it is argued that the media are the main creators of public opinion (Pejčinović Burić, 2002) and considered a necessary interlocutor in the exchange of messages between political actors and institutions on the one hand, and the public on the other (McLeod et al., 1994; McQuail, 1994), it is necessary to explore the relationship between media presentation and public opinion concerning the issue of the EU and Croatia's integration process. This study draws on the theory of agenda setting and looks at the importance of seven topics related to the issue of the EU and Croatia's integration process in three subsequent periods and their influence on public opinion.

### Theoretical framework

All constituent parts of society, from individuals and the general public, to the media and policy makers, are engaged with many issues at a give point in time, but not all of these parts share the same concern for each of the issues. The difference in concern is what constitutes an agenda, which is defined as "a set of issues that are communicated in a hierarchy of importance at the point in time" (Dearing and Rogers, 1996: 2). The process of agenda setting is defined by, James W. Dearing and Everett M. Rogers (1996) as a "competition among - issues proponents to gain attention of media professionals, the public and policy elites" (*ibid.* 22). Hence, the agenda setting process is composed of the media's agenda, the public's agenda and a policy agenda, as well as the interrelationship among these agendas.

Studies into the influence of the media agenda on the public agenda constitute the majority of the agenda setting literature. Moreover, the previously mentioned definition of agenda setting as a process stems from the first conceptualization of agenda setting as the function of the media in raising the importance of an issue in the public's mind through repeated news coverage (Severin and Tankard, 2001). Nevertheless, agenda setting is based on the ideas of Walter Lippmann and Harold Lasswell (1960) who view the media as a bridge between "the world outside and the pictures in our heads" (Lippmann, 1922: 3) as they are constructing the 'reality' in the minds of the public through the daily selection of news. In line with this idea, Bernard Cohen offered one of the best and well known notions of the media agenda setting function, stating that:

<sup>1</sup> Parts of this study were published in Ivanković, Monija (2007) Setting the agenda for the EU and Croatian integration process, *Twente Student Review* (2): 32-38.

*The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. The world will look different to different people depending on the map that is drawn for them by writers, editors, and publishers of the paper they read.* (Cohen, 1963: 13)

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) first introduced the term and systematically studied agenda setting during the 1968 presidential campaign in Chapel Hill. The public agenda was determined by rank ordering the 15 key issues according to the percentages of undecided voters naming each issue in the survey. The media agenda was determined by rank ordering the 15 issues according to the number of news stories devoted to each of them in the nine major news sources used by the voters. A high correlation was found between the importance of issues to the voters and their prominence in the media, which suggested that the media have a direct effect on people's perception rather than their attitudes. This presented a change in thinking from the, at the time dominant, view of the media's direct influence on audience attitudes and attracted many researchers to further explore the level of influence of the media on public opinion. In a consecutive study in Charlotte in 1972, the same authors further explored the causal order between the media agenda and the public agenda by comparing them across two time periods, which finally showed that the media are more likely to shape the public agenda, then vice versa (McCombs, 2004). The theory was further confirmed on a national level in a study on the prominent issues of the 1960s, done by G. Ray Funkhouser (1973). James P. Winter and Chaim H. Eyal (1981), established the existence of agenda setting in a single issue by looking at the change in importance of the civil rights issue over 23 years. More importantly, they found that time presents an important factor in determining agenda setting effects. The strongest correlations between media coverage and public concern with civil rights were found between one and two months of news coverage prior to the polls. In their study on the time-lag for eleven issues in five different media, Wayne Wanta and Yu-Wei Hu (1994) found that the range of optimal time frames varied from one to eight weeks. Additionally, other researchers carried out studies to establish the conditions or factors under which agenda setting is most likely to work (Zucker, 1978; Peter, 2003).

Harold Gene Zucker (1978) first proposed and demonstrated that the obtrusiveness of an issue is an important factor in predicting agenda setting effects. He showed that stronger agenda setting effects are more associated with issues which most people cannot experience directly (unobtrusive) than with issues that most people can experience directly (obtrusive). Nevertheless, even for unobtrusive issues more coverage does not necessarily result in increases of perceived importance. In his study of an unobtrusive issue during European integration in different countries, Jochen Peter found that, "the effect of the amount of coverage on importance perceptions was conditional on the nature of elite opinion in the various countries" (Peter, 2003: 698). The more polarized elite opinion was about the issue, the more important European integration was to the public.

## Research questions

The focus of this study is to determine if a relationship between the importance of topics related to the issue of the EU and Croatia's integration process in the media and the public exists. This study uses agenda setting theory to determine that relationship by answering the following questions:

1. What is the importance of the topics related to the issue observed in the public opinion surveys and how do they change over time?
2. What is the importance of issue related topics in the articles, and their changes in the three time periods?
3. Is the importance of topics presented in the articles related to the importance of topics in the public opinion survey?

## CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The political developments in the Republic of Croatia, following Parliamentary and Presidential elections in early 2000 marked a new beginning in bilateral relations with the EU. This relationship resulted in a report that underlined the encouraging steps undertaken by the new Croatian Government towards compliance with the EU and assessed that the Republic of Croatia had the capacity to fulfill the obligations of the Stabilization and Accession Agreement (EU Commission, 2000). This political change from the rule of the first Croatian president, Franjo Tuđman, during the 1990s, was characterized as a long delayed and needed step towards the European Union and a step out of the international isolation following his politics (Jović, 2006). The new government led by Prime-minister Ivica Račan, was very active and engaged in starting the integration process. On October 29, 2001, the SAA between the EU and Croatia was signed in Luxembourg and ratified in the Croatian and the European Parliament two weeks later. However, in July 2001 and August 2002 the Government was strongly challenged with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia's indictments for war crimes of two highly ranked Croatian Army generals, Ante Gotovina and Janko Bobetko. At this time the Government was experiencing a division within the ruling coalition and facing many protests around the country. It therefore stalled and did not arrest the two generals. This caused a delay in the integration process, while also serving to strengthen the opposition, the former President's political party, HDZ. Nevertheless, the commitment to the integration process and the consensus of all the political parties about integration into the EU was confirmed in December 2002 when the Croatian Parliament adopted the Resolution on the Accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union. At the same time the Croatian Government accepted the first National Program for the Integration of the Republic of Croatia into the European Union which consisted of measures geared at fulfilling the SAA obligations and the accession criteria. The accession criteria for Croatia meant the fulfillment of the so-called Copenhagen criteria, which referred to the existence and stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, such as the rule of law, respect for human rights, protection of minorities; a functioning market economy, such as the ability to sustain the competitive pressure and market forces within the Union and the obligations of membership, as well

cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, regional cooperation and the return of refugees (EU Commission, 2004).

In February 2003, Croatia submitted the application for membership in the European Union to which the European Commission issued a positive opinion (avis) in April 2004. In November 2003, the reformed HDZ, led by president Ivo Sanader, won the Parliamentary elections in Croatia, but to the surprise of many, the new government continued a clear pro-European and integration policy. Therefore, on June 18, 2004, Croatia acquired candidate status for membership in the EU. By that time 12 out of 15 countries had ratified SAA in their national parliaments and Croatia had already became a member of several EU programs. Due to the unsatisfactory cooperation with the ICTY, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands delayed the ratification of the SAA until 2005 when General Ante Gotovina was arrested and Croatia finally started its accession negotiations.

## METHODS

### The Public Agenda

This paper conducts a secondary analysis of public opinion survey data to assess the public agenda. The public opinion surveys were developed in cooperation with the Ministry for European Integration and the GfK Market Research Center. The surveys were conducted two times per year since July 2000 with a representative sample of 1,000 Croatian citizens older than 15 and stratified in concordance with the 2001 census. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews. For the purpose of this study only one question was used to elicit public agenda data: "What would you like to know about the EU? How important would certain information be to you?" It is a closed-ended question offering eight preset categories about the EU and Croatia's integration process. Respondents were asked to report on the importance of those topics using a four point scale ranging from "very important" to "fully unimportant." The eighth topic, "the influence of the associated membership in the EU on my everyday life" did not receive almost any attention in the analysis of the media. Consequently, I discarded it from the public agenda analysis. I use the following seven topics as variables for measuring the importance of the EU and Croatian Integration process on the public agenda:

1. The functioning of the EU
2. The conditions for joining the EU
3. The rights and obligations arising from associated membership
4. The influence of the EU on the sovereignty and the independence of Croatia as an associated member of the EU
5. The influence of the associated membership in the EU on the international position of Croatia
6. The influence of the associated membership in the EU on internal political life in Croatia
7. The influence of the associated membership in the EU on the economy

The data were collected during an internship at the Ministry for European Integration from October to December 2003. In December 2003, the GfK Market Research Centre made the data from the eight public opinion surveys directly available. I use the data from three consecutive surveys to represent the opinion of the Croatian public towards the EU and Croatia's Integration process over a period of one and a half years. The relationship between Croatia and the EU was not institutionalized until the signing of the SAA agreement in October 2001, thus the first four public opinion surveys (2000, 2001) are discarded from the analysis as well as the eighth survey (December 2003) since it was done immediately after Parliamentary elections in Croatia. I chose to use data from the 5th (July 2002), 6th (December 2002) and 7th (June 2003) public opinion surveys in this analysis, thus presenting the 1st, 2nd and 3rd research period. Each survey sample had 1,000 respondents.

## The Media Agenda

Many previous studies have assessed the media agenda through content analysis (Dearing and Rogers, 1996; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Roessler, 1999). Although respondents in the public opinion surveys mentioned television as the most important source of information and the daily newspapers as the second most important (MEI, 2005), this paper analyzes daily newspapers due to the financial and time constraints of the study. The analysis uses two Croatian daily newspapers, *Jutarnji list* and *Večernji list*, since the largest share of respondents rated them as the most important daily newspapers in Croatia. The unit of analysis is any article mentioning the EU in either *Jutarnji list* or in *Večernji list*. In accordance with previous studies (Roessler, 1999; Wanta and Hu, 1994; Winter and Eyal, 1981) the time span for the selection of articles was set to one month before the surveying began and until its completion for each of the three research periods. The final research sample for the content analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample of articles according to research periods

Research period	1	2	3
Time-span	01.06. – 10.07.2002	05.11 – 24.12. 2002	05.05 – 18.06.2003
Duration of period in days	40	49	44
Number of articles	42	100	46

I employ seven topics about the EU and Croatia's integration process used in the public opinion survey as the main categories in the content analysis. However, those main categories appear to be too broad to assure a precise coding. Therefore, I use subcategories for each main category, conceptualized as sub-topics that can be associated with and further explain the main categories. Since preliminary observations of the articles indicate that a single article referred to more than just one sub-topic, I code each article for the prominence of sub-topics. The prominence is measured according to the title and the amount of sentences and space related to a particular sub-topic. To obtain a more balanced presentation of the content within the articles, every sub-topic mentioned in an article is given scores from 1 to 3 according to the following criteria:

1 = sub-topic is mentioned in at least one sentence or more, but in less than one-third of the article,

2 = sub-topic is mentioned in at least one-third of the article and not mentioned in the title,

3 = sub-topic is mentioned in at least one-third of the article and mentioned in the title.

This coded prominence is weighted by the size of article (in cm<sup>2</sup>). In order to avoid cumbersome numbers in the results, the size of the article is first normalized from 0 to 1, by looking for the maximum size among all articles in all three research periods and dividing each article's actual size with that maximum value. Therefore to get the overall importance scores, the analysis first summarizes the weighted scores given to articles in each of the three research periods by sub-topic. Next, the sub-topic values are summarized according to the topic they belong to for each research period. Finally, the results are corrected for the difference in the research period duration by dividing the topic sums with the number of days in a research period and multiplying the result with the average number of days (44).

## RESULTS

### The Public Agenda

The public agenda is gauged through mean scores of respondents' ratings of importance of information about the seven topics. Table 2 shows that the mean scores of the seven topics are high, indicating that all topics are highly important to the public for their understanding of the EU and Croatia's integration process. The results present a stable distribution of importance scores between the topics. Information about the influence on the economy is the most important, while the information about EU functioning (EU general operations and activities) is the least important in all three research periods (Figure 1); however, a one-way ANOVA indicates significant differences in opinion over the three periods for: information about EU functioning ( $p<.05$ ), influence on sovereignty ( $p<.05$ ) and international position of Croatia ( $p<.01$ ). There is no significant difference in terms of importance among the other four topics between the three periods. Post-hoc comparison using a Tukey test suggest the change in the importance of these topics occurred only in a period of a year (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>), rather than among two consecutive periods.

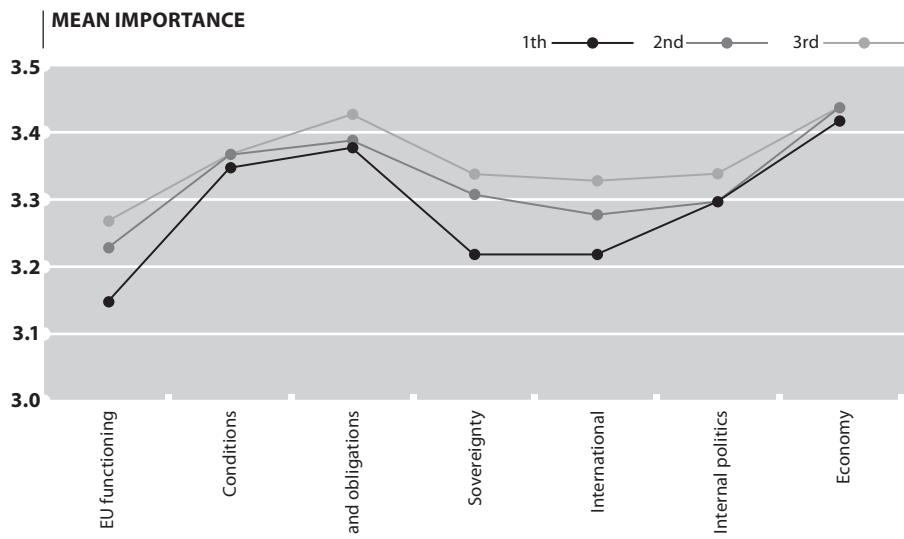
Table 2. Descriptive statistics and ANOVA\* results for the public agenda

Research period	Sample			Means (SD)			F	Significance**		
	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3		T1	T2	T3
<b>TOPICS</b>										
EU functioning	971	938	957	3,15(0,87)	3,23(0,78)	3,27(0,81)	5.519	x	x	
Conditions	970	935	963	3,35(0,81)	3,36(0,75)	3,37(0,77)	0.304			
Rights and obligations	969	930	961	3,38(0,79)	3,39(0,75)	3,43(0,71)	1.029			



Research period	Sample			Means (SD)			F	Significance**		
	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3		T1	T2	T3
Sovereignty	969	929	958	3,22(0,86)	3,31(0,77)	3,34(0,77)	5,425	x	x	
International	958	930	950	3,22(0,84)	3,28(0,76)	3,33(0,72)	5,011	x	x	
Internal politics	968	932	955	3,30(0,84)	3,31(0,76)	3,34(0,74)	0,6			
Economy	972	935	959	3,42(0,77)	3,44(0,70)	3,44(0,69)	0,211			

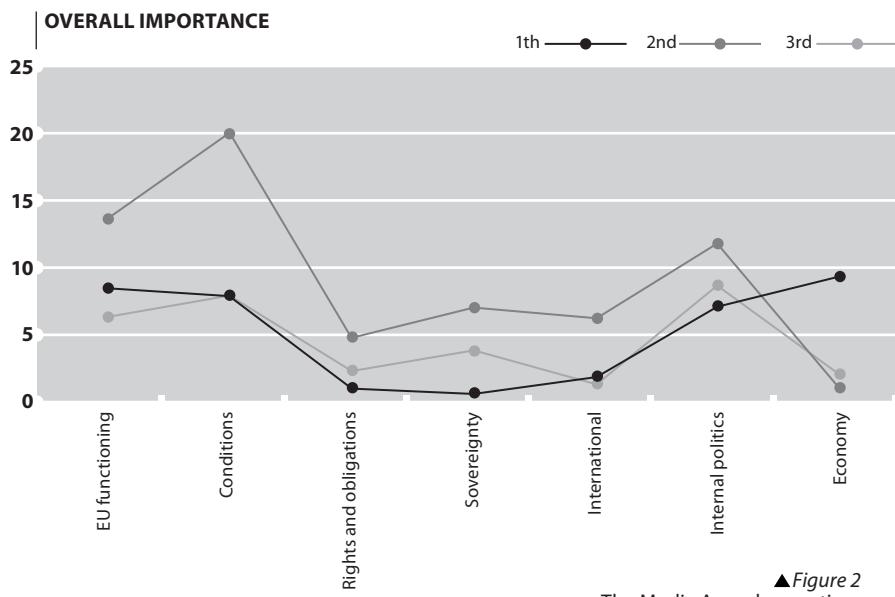
\*df=2 in one-way ANOVA analysis \*\* significance determined at 0.05 level



▲ Figure 1  
The Public Agenda over time  
(1=fully unimportant, 4= very important)

### The Media Agenda

The results of the media agenda and its change over time suggests an increase in importance scores for all topics, except economy in the second period in comparison to the two other periods (Figure 2). This can be attributed to the increase in the number of articles dealing with the issue in that period (see Table 1). The results show that conditions, internal politics and EU functioning were continually the most important topics over time; however, while a clear distinction between the most and the least important topics was stable over time, the economy shifted from the most important topic during the first period ( $\Sigma=9,2$ ), to the least important in the second period ( $\Sigma=0,92$ ) and slightly improved in the third period ( $\Sigma=1,91$ ), but kept a low level of importance. This 'downsizing' of the economy's importance in later periods corresponds with the increased tendency of the media to focus attention on the political criteria for Croatian membership in the EU, primarily because advancement in the integration process depended on their fulfillment.



▲Figure 2  
The Media Agenda over time

More details about the importance of topics are visible from the results of the contribution of each sub-topic to its topic in each of the three periods. Contribution, as presented in Table 3, is calculated by dividing a sub-topic score with its topic's overall importance score in a period.

In all three periods, enlargement and EU institutions contribute to more than 70% of the overall importance of the EU functioning. While EU institutions' contribution are almost unchanged in the two later periods, results indicate a significant increase in the prominence score of enlargement, being at its peak in the second and slightly decreasing in the third period. This is expected since the daily newspapers mentioned the countries presiding over the EU, as well as referred to enlargement process of the EU, which was consequently related to the time estimations for Croatian accession.

Regarding conditions, it is interesting that cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), minorities and media were not at all mentioned in articles during the first period; however, the most prominently presented conditions for Croatian entry in the EU in the same period were: regional cooperation (46.78%), economical (28.25%) and harmonization of Croatian legislation with EU legislation (23.86%). In the second period results show a significant increase in prominence scores for the cooperation with the ICTY and procedure, a moderate gain for minorities and a slight increase for the media, which consequently leads to the lower prominence of the other three conditions.

Table 3. Percentages of sub-topics per period

Sub-topics	T1	T2	T3
EU institutions	28.72	25.27	28.29
Enlargement	43.68	63.60	56.82
EU economic	18.74	5.32	0
EU foreign	8.86	5.81	14.89
<b>EU functioning</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Court for war crimes	0.00	28.71	19.33
Minorities	0.00	7.23	15.89
Media	0.00	1.37	10.52
Regional cooperation	46.78	11.91	33.36
Harmonization	23.86	4.45	12.10
Economical	28.25	11.20	3.24
Procedural	1.10	35.13	5.56
<b>Conditions</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Funds & help	8.44	43.26	37.34
SSA implementation	84.51	51.18	33.83
Administrative reform	7.05	5.56	28.83
<b>Rights and obligations</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Western Balkans	10.73	58.63	45.88
Individual accession	89.27	41.37	54.12
<b>Sovereignty</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Reactions	100.00	100.00	100.00
<b>International</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Parliament	31.27	16.55	14.65
Political parties	0.00	48.42	5.54
Government	68.73	32.09	68.13
President	0.00	2.94	11.68
<b>Internal politics</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Investments	14.76	74.45	19.69
Economical effects	85.24	25.55	80.31
<b>Economy</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

These results are consistent with the media coverage during this period. Many articles focused on the discussion of whether Croatia should submit the request for membership and the expectations about the EU's reaction to it. Such media coverage consequently led to more prominent coverage of conditions, as the criteria for the assessment of Croatia's integration process, and influenced the increase of importance of information on the international position of Croatia, which was characterized as EU officials or experts' reactions to Croatian integration (see Table 3).

Results for the sub-topics characterizing importance of internal politics show that the government was seen as the most prominent actor in the first and the third period. This is expected since Croatian integration into the EU was one of the Government's main

policies; however, political parties which were not at all mentioned in the first, or poorly mentioned in the third period, were presented most prominently in the second period. Articles from the second period covered a dispute among the two biggest political parties about the "ownership" over the idea that the Resolution on the Accession of the Republic of Croatia should be adopted in the Parliament. At the same time, the National program for the integration of the Republic of Croatia for 2003 was to be adopted in the Parliament too, which resulted in a number of articles devoting the coverage to the different parties' views over the whole integration process. The results also suggest an increase in the level of the President's involvement with Croatia's integration process in the third period, since the President was not at all mentioned in the articles from the first period and was poorly mentioned in the second period. Parliament was mostly mentioned when new laws were to be adopted as part of the SAA implementation or the harmonization of Croatian legislation. As the results show, this was mostly the case during the first period.

The importance of sovereignty is presented through the sub-topics by coding the issue of whether Croatian accession should be dependent on the progress of other countries in the Western Balkans, or based on its individual accomplishments. The results indicate that in articles from the first period the idea of individual accession was predominant; however, in the second period, The Western Balkans idea was more prominent in the articles than that of individual accession. The contribution was reversed in the third period.

Last, but not the least, the results indicate that the economic effects predominantly contributed to the importance of the economy in the first and the third period, but were replaced by investments in the second period.

### **The Media Agenda and the Public Agenda**

A general view of the relationship between the media and the public agenda is obtained by comparing the results in Figure 2 with those in Figure 1. While a change in each topic's importance in the media agendas is observed over time, the importance of topics is almost unchanged on the public agenda. This suggests that there was no influence from the media on public opinion with regard to the seven topics over time.

In order to test the relationship between the media and the public agenda, I calculate a Pearson correlation coefficient between the overall importance scores of the seven topics in the media and the mean scores of those topics in the public opinion surveys for each research period.

**Table 4. Pearson's correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda in each research period**

Research periods	Correlation coefficients	Significance*
T1	0.2	ns (.67)
T2	-0.41	ns (.36)
T3	-0.43	ns (.34)

\* significance tested at p<.05 level / ns= not significant

As results in Table 4 show, there is a minimal and positive correlation between the topics on the media and the public agenda in the first period, while the correlation is moderate and negative in the two later periods; however, none of the found correlations are significant at  $p < .05$  level.

In terms of agenda setting, the results for the first period suggest a minimal effect of the presentation of seven topics in the media on the perceived importance of those topics, but the negative correlation coefficient in the two later periods, suggests that the increase of importance of topics in the media agenda is associated with the perception of lower importance of those topics among the public. Such results give no support for agenda setting about the EU and the Croatian integration process in those periods.

These results are confirmed when the relationship between agendas is tested using Spearman's rank order correlation analysis. On the media agenda, ranks are assigned to the topics according to their sums, while the rank on the public agenda are given to topics whose mean scores are found to be significantly different by using a one-way ANOVA analysis with Bonferroni and Tukey post-hoc. The results indicate a minimal and positive correlation between the topics on the media agenda and the public agenda in the first period ( $\rho = 0.21$ ,  $p = 0.66$ ), while the correlation is moderate and negative in the two later periods ( $\rho = -0.63$ ,  $p = 0.13$ ;  $\rho = -0.19$ ,  $p = 0.70$ ); however, none of the correlations are significant at  $p < .05$  level.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has examined the existence of agenda setting for the issue of the EU and Croatia's integration process by using public opinion survey data and a content analysis of daily newspapers to assess the importance of seven topics related to the issue on the media and the public agenda in three subsequent periods.

Since the results of the correlation analysis are insignificant, there is no support for agenda setting in any of the periods. However, as a positive correlation coefficient is a necessary indication of agenda setting, it can be assumed that the minimal occurrence of the agenda setting effects is found only in the first period and not in the two later periods. A comparison between the topics' importance scores on the media agenda and public agenda show that the occurrence or absence of agenda setting is associated with either extensive or minimal coverage of the economy in the media during each period. Therefore, the positive correlation coefficient, although insignificant and low, is observed only for the first period when the economy was the most prominently presented topic in the daily newspapers, thus being the most important topic.

Unlike many studies which demonstrate the influence of the media agenda on the public agenda (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 1977; Sheaffer and Weimann, 2005), the findings of this study do not support this theory. Nevertheless, this study contributes

to the understanding of agenda setting with regard to the use of secondary public opinion data and the influence it has on the study's design and the final assessment of the occurrence or absence of agenda setting. Here I review some other limitations of this study. The first one concerns the use of the closed-ended questions to assess the public's perception of the importance of the seven topics related to the issue, which consequently led to the indirect assessment of those topics in the media by using the sub-topics. There is a possibility that the respondents' perception of the association between the sub-topics and the topics is not the same as outlined in this study, which in turn can lead to the lack of correspondence between the topics' importance on both agendas. This problem can easily be resolved with the use of open-ended questions instead of close-ended ones. The next point to consider in reviewing the reasons for the findings of this study refers to the use of just one media to assess the media agenda. As the public opinion surveys consistently showed that television was the most important source of information about the issue (MEI, 2005), future research should include television, but other media too, in order to test the validity of this study, allowing for more arguments on agenda setting about the issue of the EU and Croatia's integration process. Additionally, a longer time frame for the assessment of the media agenda should be considered in future analyses in order to provide more insights on the association between the topics and their corresponding agendas.

The final consideration is related to the need for orientation. Judging from the overwhelmingly positive public attitude towards the EU and positive expectations from the accession (MEI, 2005), the EU seemed to be a very much acceptable reality to the public. The results also show that the public was highly interested in all the aspects of the integration process in general and its influences on the Croatian economy in particular. This high interest on the side of the public can be understood as a lack of knowledge and understanding about the issues, which in turn can be seen as an indication of the high uncertainty among the public when it comes to the issues. In that regard, it is expected that the public will turn to the media to fill in the gap in their understanding and reduce the uncertainty about a certain issue. The analysis of this period reveals a strong tendency in the daily newspapers to focus on the political aspects of the EU and Croatian integration process, since the most important topics over time were the EU functioning, conditions, and internal politics. Their importance was mostly characterized by the prominent coverage of: the enlargement process and the EU institutions for the EU functioning; the regional cooperation and the cooperation with the ICTY among other conditions; and finally, the government's internal politics. Therefore, it seems interesting to consider studying agenda setting on just these few sub-topics, as they, in essence present issues on their own. Such a study would require the use of a more detailed public opinion survey. Finally, it can be concluded that this study provides a very general indication of the relationship between the media and the public's opinion regarding the issue of the EU and the Croatian integration process. It points out the need for future research in order to validate its findings and suggests the use of the open-ended questions for measuring the salience of the issue among the public.

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# DNEVNE NOVINE I JAVNO MNIJENJE O EUROPSKOJ UNIJI I HRVATSKOM INTEGRACIJSKOM PROCESU – AGENDA SETTING-PRISTUP

Monija Ivanković

**SAŽETAK** Teorija nametanja dnevnog reda (agenda setting theory) nalaže da količina pozornosti koju mediji daju različitim temama određuje količinu pozornosti koju javnost daje tim istim temama. Ovaj se članak oslanja upravo na tu teoriju kako bi se utvrdila veza između medijskih prezentacija i javnog mnenja kada je riječ o Europskoj uniji i hrvatskom integracijskom procesu. Promatra se važnost sedam tematskih cjelina koje se odnose na to pitanje tijekom tri uzastopna perioda. Važnost sedam tematskih cjelina određena je analizom podataka istraživanja javnog mnenja i analizom sadržaja dnevnih novina. Rezultati korelacijske analize pokazali su samo naznaku nametanja dnevnog reda u prvom periodu, dok za to nije bilo dokaza u periodima koji su uslijedili. Usporedba važnosti tematskih cjelina na obje agende pokazala je da je nametanje ili nenametanje dnevnog reda povezano s intenzivnom ili minimalnom medijskom zastupljenosću tema koje se tiču ekonomije tijekom svakog perioda. Rezultati ovog istraživanja u suprotnosti su s drugim istraživanjima koja su dokazala utjecaj medijske agende na javnu agendu.

## KLJUČNE RIJEĆI

AGENDA SETTING, DNEVNE NOVINE, ISTRAŽIVANJE JAVNOG MNIJENJA, EU, HRVATSKI INTEGRACIJSKI PROCES

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