

IEPS MASTER THESIS OPPONENT REVIEW FORM

STUDENT NAME: Angela Sirbu

THESIS TITLE: Effects of EU Integration on Media Sector in Moldova

OPPONENT NAME: PhDr. Todd Nesbitt, Ph.D.

OPPONENT GRADE: 1

REVIEW

Angela Sirbu chose to write her Master's thesis on the subject of the effects of the implementation of EU regulations concerning media on the mass media in Moldova. The topic seems to be a very valuable one, and it is pleasing to see not only the choice of a media focus (too often are the media overlooked in the area of international political/economic studies), but also the choice of focusing on the student's home country in the context of a program with a decidedly international focus. At times it does happen that the choice of focusing on an explicit cultural context while studying in another can result in a degree of superficiality (if not due to a lack of local experts than due to accessibility problems), however in Miss. Sirbu's work this is clearly not the case.

The paper is divided into five basic chapters, excluding introduction and conclusion. The first chapter provides a comprehensive overview of social, political, and particularly media development in post-1990 Moldova. Following this the paper moves into the area of EU regulations and the preparation of Moldova's media sector for accession - particularly focusing on transparency and market rules, followed in the next chapter by more discussion of the particularities of the Moldavian media market. At times the reader wonders if it wouldn't have been more effective for the flow of the paper to have the fourth chapter coming before the third, since the tone and approach in these two chapters are quite similar; however the paper does not suffer for this. At times chapter three seemed a bit dense with details, bringing about the question of whether or not some of the content could have been delegated to an

appendix, leaving more space for discussion of at times cumbersome directives. In this light subsection 3.1.3., (*'Why are these directives important'*) is a welcome addition, and perhaps a similar expanded section later in the chapter might have provided additional commentary. Chapters five and six nicely flow together, and the final conclusions section serve to provide a reasonable overview.

In terms of scholarly content, the format and the tone (voice) of the paper are very strong. There are some minor problems with register, most unfortunately the lack of a routine spell-check putting a black mark on an otherwise laudable command of English (e.g. *'jurnalists'*, pg. 26), and perhaps proofreading in general (pg. 13 + abstract: *'..in April 1009 succeeded to disputably win the general elections'*). There are also some minor problems with in text citations, again, more cosmetic than academically intolerable (e.g. pg. 59, para. 2). At times the objective nature of the paper is brought into question when it seems the author's personal views override a sense of detachment (e.g. pg. 27, *'genuine market mechanisms do not work'*), however again, although the reader has a sense of a lack of balance concerning the issues at times, this is not overly intrusive.

The methodology used in the paper seems entirely appropriate (content analysis of major press), and the trigger for the research excellent (run-up to election). The connection to the hypothesis seems somewhat blurred as it is stated in the introduction (pg. 13, *'the goal of this thesis was to analyze the chances and some of the possible effects of the EU regulations in the field of media implementation in Moldova...'*), however as the reader progresses the aims become clearer.

In terms of resources, a vast majority of them make up EU directives on related subjects. The major academic resources making a strong presence in the work (indeed contributing a great deal to the theoretical base) are the very popular Hallin/Paolo (2004) and Jakubowicz (2007), but also (perhaps surprisingly due to its heavily Western-oriented nature) McPhail (2006). It does seem that perhaps a broader range of texts might have served to give the author a broader range of background for the

normative approach used in the paper. There are a couple of questionable sources, one being BBC news for a discussion on the Transnistria issue on page 15 (a fair amount of academic sources of the conflict exist), and the use of Freedom House archives and articles (not only has FH's association with neoconservative players in the USA been brought under scrutiny, but also allegations concerning direct US government funding of FH's operations in various countries make it a less than objective source). Otherwise, the list of resources and the comprehensiveness of them especially for the empirical part seem very appropriate.

In sum: The paper submitted by Miss. Sirbu is a very strong dissertation on a very relevant topic. It contains a great deal of useful original content, and the paper as a whole is approached in a very effective, scholarly manner. It was a pleasure to read and I will be happy to recommend it to other students interested in related areas.

Recommended grade: 1