

DOI: 10.24193/OJMNE.2024.45.04

DYNAMICS OF THE EU STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF UKRAINE¹

Serhii FEDONIUK, Ph.D.

Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University

sergii.fedoniuk@vnu.edu.ua

Nataliia KARPCHUK, Doctor of Political Science

Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University

natalia.karpchuk@vnu.edu.ua

Abstract: *This research covers the analysis of changes in the strategic communications of the European Union regarding the European integration of Ukraine during 2000-2023. Specifically, it pays attention to the reactions of key EU officials to significant political events and foreign policy challenges. Having used the semantic analysis of official documents and speeches, the study presents the evolution of approaches and perspectives, revealing the hidden strategies, intentions, and ideological influences that shape the EU policy. The analysis emphasizes the growing importance of Ukraine in the strategic plans of the EU, while the geopolitical context significantly affects the European integration process. Examining the communication activity of the main EU institutions since 2022, the study has revealed specific messages regarding Ukraine's prospects for becoming a member of the EU, recognizing the successes in carrying out reforms and the country's efforts to achieve the goals underlying its status as a candidate for membership.*

Keywords: EU strategic communications, EU public diplomacy, European integration, semantic analysis, sentiment analysis.

¹ This study was conducted in the framework of the Jean Monnet Module "EU Strategic Communications: Counteraction to Destructive Influences" (№ 101047033 ERASMUS-JMO-2021-MODULE) and the Jean Monnet Module "European Integration for Communities in the Context of Ukraine's Accession to the EU" (№ 101175264 ERASMUS-JMO-2024-MODULE).

1. Introduction

In the context of modern geopolitical processes, the European integration of Ukraine becomes crucial both for Ukraine and the European Union. In less than a year and a half, Ukraine went from applying to starting accession negotiations in June 2024. All this goes on against the background of armed aggression by the Russian Federation. For decades, Ukraine's efforts to obtain the prospect of membership have been unsuccessful. That was outlined in the statements of EU officials reflecting the Union's strategy. Understanding the dynamics and features of the EU's strategic communications regarding Ukraine's European integration will allow a deeper analysis of the political processes shaping the future of both Ukraine and the EU.

The research goal is to analyze the changes in the EU strategic communications as to the European integration of Ukraine in the period from 2000 to the beginning of 2023 when the formal process of obtaining membership was finally confirmed. Statements and actions of influential EU officials, their responses to foreign policy challenges are to be scrutinized taking into account the geopolitical context.

This study is aimed at filling the gaps in the scientific understanding of the interaction between the EU and Ukraine emphasizing strategic communications. In this article, we will focus on public diplomacy which the European Commission understands as delivering EU information and guaranteeing effective communication (EEAS, 2022). The main goal of the EU public diplomacy is to create an effective general image of the EU in the international system, to protect and realize the EU's interests, and to promote the universal EU's values and ideas.

Public diplomacy as a means of the EU's strategic communications is implemented in verbal statements of the leaders of the Community institutions on various issues, including the European integration of Ukraine. Close cooperation between Ukraine and the EU has been going on for a long time (at least since the early 2000s). It is determined by the Association Agreement (2014). Throughout the entire period, leaders of the EU institutions made official statements and commented on social networks. Their public rhetoric reflects the attitude towards the potential of Ukraine's European integration. We assume that the analysis of statements and comments will make it possible to follow how / whether the rhetoric of the EU institutions leaders has changed regarding the potential accession of Ukraine to the European Union and whether this serves as a kind of signal of readiness to accept Ukraine into the European family. Our research covers a

long period - from 1991, when Ukraine gained its independence, to 2023. This is a conscious decision to demonstrate the dynamics of strategic communications of high-ranking EU officials regarding the integration of Ukraine, because the very concept of “strategic” refers to long-term activities.

The analysis is focused on the following research questions:

RQ 1: How have EU messages regarding Ukraine’s European integration perspective changed since the beginning of the country’s aspirations for closer cooperation with the EU in the early 2000s?

RQ 2: How have the EU’s messages regarding Ukraine’s accession changed since Ukraine was granted candidate status?

RQ 3: What specific messages does the EU emphasize in its strategic communications regarding Ukraine’s accession to the EU?

RQ 4: How have the EU’s messages been influenced by the wider geopolitical context, in particular tensions between the EU and Russia and Russia’s large-scale armed aggression against Ukraine?

2. Research Context of the EU Strategic Communications

The development of the EU strategic communications dates back to the mid-2010s and to the period after the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014. After the annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine, Russia significantly increased its investments in a diversified toolkit of mass media aimed at foreign audiences. In its Conclusions in March 2015, the European Council sought to challenge Russia’s actions and reach out to people both in the EU and in neighbouring countries to convey the European Union’s narrative (European Council, 2015). The 2018 Disinformation Action Plan offered three main objectives: to support the EU’s policies and values towards its Eastern neighbours; to improve the regional media environment, and to raise awareness of disinformation campaigns while improving the EU’s response capacity (EEAS, 2018a). Among the key areas of activity, the Action Plan is aimed at expanding public diplomacy initiatives in the region and involving the local population, especially youth, academia and civil society.

The 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy states that the EU will strengthen strategic communications, invest and integrate public diplomacy in various areas, connect EU foreign policy with citizens and improve communication with other countries, especially communicating with local residents through social networks (Shared Vision, 2016). X (Twitter) is one of the main channels used by EU officials for public diplomacy as to international cooperation. EU officials often prefer X (Twitter) because it is real-time, public and interactive. This allows them to quickly spread information, interact with other users and promote their messages and initiatives on a global level. In addition, X has a wide user base that includes media, think tanks, NGOs and other stakeholders relevant to EU international cooperation (EEAS, 2021).

Strategic communications on the EU enlargement are an integral part of the EU accession process, helping to build support for enlargement both in the candidate countries and within the EU itself. Using a range of channels and platforms, including the Enlargement Package, social media and targeted public diplomacy efforts, the EU can engage a wide range of stakeholders and promote the benefits of EU membership. However, since Croatia's accession in July 2013, the emergence of illiberal democracies in the EU and the inability of EU institutions to effectively deal with these failures fueled reluctance to further enlargement and raised questions about the sustainability of reforms adopted before joining the Union. Therefore, there is a need to change the "traditional" bureaucratized approach to strategic communications regarding enlargement to demonstrate that the country's accession to the EU is a success story (Kyuchyuk & Loiseau, 2020).

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has changed the EU's calculus about the costs and benefits of admitting new states to the Union. European leaders long dismissed Ukraine's membership but opinions have shifted dramatically since the start of the war. Many EU officials and citizens saw Russia's invasion as their so-called 9/11 moment: a game-changing event that posed a catastrophic risk to their values and way of life. Securing Ukraine's place in Europe is now a top priority. Even enlargement skeptics, notably France, are now in favour (Besch & Ciaramella, 2023).

3. Theoretical and Methodological Background

Strategic communications are purposeful communications carried out by the organization to fulfill its mission. They combine all types of communication activities aimed at ensuring the mission and sustainability of the organization. Their meaning lies in the purposeful impact on key audiences related to the organization's activities (Hallahan, et al., 2007, Holtzhausen and Zerfass, 2015).

In the field of politics, strategic communications are used to achieve the strategic goals of states, international organizations, and associations and are implemented in the context of foreign and security policies. In the National Framework for Strategic Communications, former US President Barack Obama's Administration defines them as "the synchronization of our words and deeds as well as deliberate efforts to communicate and engage with intended audiences" (White House, 2010, 1).

Modern publications on strategic communications largely reflect the security concept of the problem. This approach is taken as a basis in the analytical study of EU strategic communications by Doyle and Desta (2020). Molnar et al. (2021), researching peacekeeping missions, claim the importance of strategic communications for the external legitimation of the EU. Márquez-Carrasco et al (2016) analyze the common foreign and security policy of the EU regarding challenges of Russian disinformation and manipulation relating to the war in Ukraine and point to the formation of a new communication paradigm. In the same context, the EU Institute for Strategic Studies analytical document outlined a new policy vision of EU information security which concerns strategic communications of the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2016). This issue is also developed by James (2015). Valenza (2021) offered a more systemic view of the EU's strategic communications: "Strategic communication – combining reactive messaging and proactive narrative-building – is a key element of the EU's response to increasing global contestation" (Valenza, 2021, 1). He claims that the strategic communications of the EU are focused mainly on Russia.

Hence, two main directions in the development of EU strategic communications issues have taken shape today: 1) security and 2) functional, related to the achievement of strategic goals in certain sectoral or horizontal policies. And while the second direction referred to the

sphere of public diplomacy and public relations of the Community's official institutions actually from the beginning of their formation, then the first became relevant only during 2010-2020.

Since 2019, when Ursula von der Leyen headed the European Commission, an approach connecting strategic communications with current strategic priorities in foreign policy has become increasingly apparent. Valenza (2021) emphasizes the geopolitical direction of EU strategic communications, arguing that against the background of such competitive and security challenges as the policies of the USA, China and Russia, the coronavirus pandemic, manipulation of foreign media information, instability in the region, geopolitics should become an integral part of the EU rules of the game. Preda and Chiriac (2021) define problems of a strategic nature that could be solved by the EU strategic communications.

We should mention that the EU strategic communications research focus changes over time. During the formation of the security concept, the authors centered on countering negative information influences as a response to the challenge of Russian disinformation and hybrid threats (Doyle and Desta, 2020; Salnikova et al., 2019). Today, they also include the geopolitical dimension of the European Union's activities, so the study of EU public diplomacy is relevant and this area is considered as an integral component of StratCom.

A review of publications focused on the empirical analysis of public diplomacy documents proved the effectiveness of semantic analysis (Sevin and Ingenhoff, 2018; van Atteveldt et al., 2016). Yang et al. (2012) succeeded in investigating the use of public diplomacy for strategic purposes, namely solving a particular developing international situation (similar to the procedure for acquiring membership in the EU). EU public diplomacy is carried out by the strategic goals of the Union in the form of clearly defined documents (statements, communiqués, speeches of officials), messages on institutional accounts in social networks and on the official websites of the europa.eu portal. Yoon and Chung (2020) showed that in the study of EU strategic communications, the use of methods of semantic and sentiment analysis combined with quantitative calculation automation tools gives a relevant result.

The analysis of the semantics of documents as to the research of strategies is a separate issue. Fierke and Wiener (1999) analyze the parallel process of NATO and the EU enlargement and examine how changes in discourse contributed to the redefinition of institutional interests at the end of the Cold War. Through the strategic use of discourse which included appeals to pan-

European values and identity, the EU and NATO were able to reframe their approaches to enlargement, thereby overcoming material and ideological obstacles to the integration of new members. The study illustrates how semantic analysis can reveal the dynamics of political discourse and its influence on political processes (Fierke and Wiener, 1999).

Schimmelfennig (2001) analyzes how the EU used rhetorical strategies to promote its expansion to the East, particularly through appeals to liberal norms and values. The author shows how candidate countries were “caught in the community trap” (Schimmelfennig, 2001, 47) where they could not abandon integration without violating their commitments to the ideals of liberal democracy.

Fløttum (2010) applies linguistic analysis to reveal the polyphony and ambiguity in EU discourse, particularly in former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's speeches on Europe and European integration. The study demonstrates how different voices and perspectives interact to shape complex European political discourse (Fløttum, 2010).

Such studies provide the basis for an integrated view of the use of strategic communications in the context of EU enlargement, demonstrating how semantic analysis of official documents and speeches can reveal the hidden strategies, intentions and ideologies governing international relations and enlargement policies.

Hence, we may conclude about the limitations of studies that specifically focus on the semantics of documents and speeches in the context of EU enlargement. The insufficiency of the analysis of the relations between the EU strategic communications and their impact on the enlargement process is also noticeable. However, there are no comprehensive studies that would combine semantic analysis, theoretical understanding and practical consequences of strategic communications. In this aspect, our research is aimed at a deeper understanding of the EU strategic communications, especially in the context of its enlargement, to better comprehend the mechanisms of interaction between the EU and potential member states.

We focus on a detailed analysis of the semantics of official documents and speeches of EU politicians to understand exactly how strategic communications shape the EU enlargement process and what messages they convey to potential member states and society as a whole. Thus, our research aims not only to fill existing knowledge gaps but also to contribute to the practical

application of strategic communications to support effective and mutually beneficial EU enlargement processes.

In the study, we applied semantic analysis of public diplomacy documents posted on the EU official web resources and posts of officials (Enlargement Commissioners, leaders of the European Commission and the European Parliament) on social networks.

Content analysis online tools were used for quantitative semantic analysis of texts (<https://voyant-tools.org/>; <https://www.webtools.services/text-analyzer>; <https://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp>) which made it possible to find the most used phrases and words, the number of words, the semantic core of the text, that is all significant and keywords and the most used word combinations, semantic relations of the text core and related terms, correlation coefficients of words related in content, localization distribution of significant words by text segments, etc.

Sentiment analysis (<https://monkeylearn.com/sentiment-analysis/>) is a tool to analyze sentiments and detect emotions in text data. In the field of public diplomacy, it was tested by van Atteveldt et. al (2008) and successfully applied in the analysis of EU strategic communications by Yoon and Chung (2020). Sentiment analysis is the process of detecting positive or negative sentiment in a text, focusing on the polarity of the text with gradations from positive to neutral and negative expressed as a percentage.

4. Research Results

a. Communication by 2014

For the first time, the issue of Ukraine's potential accession to the EU appeared on the EU agenda during the great expansion of the Union in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries. In Ukraine, at the state level, this issue had already entered the list of priorities. However, EU institutions and officials did not formulate this problem and did not give a clear answer to the questions related to it. Thus, when in 1998, Ukraine adopted the Strategy of Integration into the European Union, stipulated "creating the prerequisites for Ukraine's acquisition of membership in the European Union" (President of Ukraine, 2000) and started the preparation on institutional, legal and public communication levels, the EU tried to ignore this issue.

In September 2000 in an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Günter Verhegen, the then European Commissioner for Enlargement, said that the EU had not yet decided on Ukraine but the overall goal was the closest form of cooperation, not EU membership (Odushkin, 2001, 365). Subsequently, he believed that the European prospects of Ukraine did not mean the prospects of membership in the EU, at least in the next 10-20 years (Solodky, 2002). In autumn 2002, Günter Verhegen, the Commissioner responsible for enlargement, and Romano Prodi, the EC President, tended to put Ukraine into one box with Belarus and Moldova and to create a category of “never-members” (Moshes, 2003, 40). However, in 2003, during a visit to Kyiv, he stated that for the EU, Ukraine was a priority country, because it could overcome the obstacles on its way to future EU membership (Amchuk, 2003). In 2013, when Verhegen was no longer a European Commissioner, in the context of preparations to sign the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, he said: “Our long-term interest is to organize step-by-step the integration of Ukraine into our structures. If the association agreement enters into force, it will mean that Ukraine has made an irreversible choice and will no longer be in a limbo between the EU and President Putin’s Eurasian Union” (EURACTIV.com., 2013). However, he expressed skepticism about Ukraine’s chances of joining the EU in the near future because of the country’s political instability and lack of progress on key reforms.

The next European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy (2004 – 2010), Olli Rehn, focused on the policy towards the Balkan countries and Turkey and avoided statements about the European prospects of Ukraine. Specifically, he stressed that the EU should avoid overexpansion, as “the current enlargement agenda is already quite full” (Beunderman, 2005).

Stefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy (2010 – 2014), spoke in favour of signing the EU-Ukraine AA while pointing out the need for Ukraine to continue reforms, particularly in the judicial system (RBC.UA, 2013). During the period of active discussions on the mentioned Agreement, Füle emphasized that the European Community would continue to support Ukraine on its path to Europe, despite the statements of the Ukrainian authorities that could cause concern (Ukrainska Pravda, 2013).

In March 2014, when the political part of the Agreement was about to be signed and Russia launched its operation to seize Crimea, Füle, perhaps for the first time among European

politicians, said that the EU should consider the issue of expansion because “it has unprecedented effective and stabilizing power” (Zaxid.net, 2014).

When Füle headed the EU enlargement and neighborhood policy sector in the European Commission, 163 documents related to Ukraine were adopted with his participation (the results of a search in EurLex). The issue of the accession prospects was widely discussed and eventually became one of the benchmarks at the beginning of the Euromaidan in 2013. However, if we compare the EU’s rule-making activity regarding the enlargement and neighbourhood policy about Ukraine, a much larger number of documents were adopted with the participation of European Commissioner Rehn (210), which is associated with the intensification of relations between Ukraine and the EU in 2005-2010 and the active period of preparation of the AA (for comparison, only 77 such documents were adopted with the participation of Verheugen).

Jose Manuel Barroso, the 2004 – 2014 European Commission President, spoke positively about the European integration of Ukraine, but only in the context of the AA and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. In his speech at the Ukraine-EU summit on February 25, 2013, he raised the issues of energy cooperation and visa liberalization and the need for Ukraine’s commitment to reforms and the rule of law (Barroso, 2013). During Barroso’s presidency, the context and tone of his statements changed, reflecting the evolution of the political situation in Ukraine and the region as a whole. For example, in the first years of his tenure, Barroso expressed optimism about the prospects of Ukraine’s European integration and highly evaluated the country’s progress in implementing reforms (Council of the European Union, 2007). Instead, after the pro-Russian government led by V. Yanukovich came to power in Ukraine in 2010, Barroso’s statements became more cautious and emphasized the need for Ukraine to continue progress on key reforms in the areas of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. In an interview with a Ukrainian newspaper, he stated that he would continue to use all his influence to try to convince the Ukrainian leadership that it needed to focus on the future rather than constantly look back at the past (LB.ua, 2011).

Unlike the EC, the European Parliament, represented by its leadership, disseminated broader statements regarding Ukraine’s potential membership in the EU. Already after the declaratively pro-European President V. Yushchenko came to power in 2005, the EP expressed support for the possibility of Ukraine’s membership in the European Union, calling on the new

Ukrainian political leadership to reform the country, restore free-market reforms, to develop an open democratic society and prosperous economy, which could lead to greater integration of Ukraine with the EU (European Parliament 2005). The EP Vice-President, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, speaking on behalf of the largest faction – the European People’s Party, stated the necessity to finally offer the prospect of membership for Ukraine. It would encourage Ukraine to continue and deepen the course of reforms and it met the interests of democracy in the whole of Eastern Europe (Drach, 2005). Jerzy Buzek, the 2009 – 2012 President of the European Parliament (and one more representative of Poland), spoke in favour of Ukraine’s step-by-step accession to the EU. He emphasized the importance of strengthening democratic institutions, improving the rule of law and fighting corruption as key steps on the way to Ukraine’s integration into the Union (Zaxid.net, 2010).

We should mention that since 2009, i.e., the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has been engaged in the sphere of active foreign affairs policy. Catherine Ashton held this position from 2009 to 2014. She was not an active participant in law-making activities related to Ukraine (10 documents for 5 years), but she made several statements regarding the progress in signing the AA and support to Ukraine during the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014 (Ashton, 2013).

Summarizing the 2000 – 2014 messages of EU officials directly related to the enlargement, we can identify two periods regarding the prospects of European integration of Ukraine: 1) by 2005, when the European leaders “had not yet decided”, and 2) from 2005 to 2014, when they repeatedly stated that Ukraine had a clear European perspective and could become a member of the EU in the future, provided that it met the necessary criteria and implemented the necessary reforms. The semantics of the European leaders’ statements corresponded to the trends in Ukrainian foreign policy, i.e., from the pro-European aspirations of V. Yushchenko’s administration (the beginning of conversations about the European perspective of Ukraine) to the generally pro-Russian policy of V. Yanukovych’s government (the caveat that everything depends on the Ukrainian people and government). Throughout the period, the importance of implementing political and economic reforms, fighting corruption, strengthening the rule of law and ensuring democratic governance was emphasized. The more optimistic position of representatives of Poland regarding Ukraine’s European integration prospects was demonstrated,

although they did not represent those EU institutions that had a real influence on the enlargement and neighbourhood policy.

b. *Communication from the Victory of the Revolution of Dignity to the Beginning of the FR's Large-scale Armed Aggression (2014-2022)*

During this period, the leading role of the institute of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs was established, in particular regarding relations with Ukraine and the prospects of its European integration. For example, during her visit to Kyiv in 2015, Federica Mogherini, High Representative/Vice-President of the EC (2014 – 2019), spoke almost exclusively about the current issues of the AA implementation, the need for reforms and the fight against corruption in Ukraine, as well as about supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine (EEAS, 2015). In September 2017, in her statement on the entry into force of the EU-Ukraine AA, Federica Mogherini stated: “It shows that we share the same objectives and that the Ukrainian people can count on the European Union’s support and cooperation for the years to come” (European Commission, 2017). In March 2018, speaking to the students of the Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University, Mogherini emphasized the prospect of Ukraine’s long journey to the European family: “I believe the path for Ukraine has just begun. <...> We will continue to be with you every step of the way – the easy ones, the not-so-easy ones, the ones that will require even more energy from your side, because we consider we are exactly on the same side” (EEAS, 2018b).

Thus, Mogherini supported Ukraine’s integration formally outlined in the AA but she never directly stated that Ukraine should become a member of the EU. Instead, she focused on encouraging the implementation of the Association Agreement as a basis for deepening cooperation between Ukraine and the EU.

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (2014-2019), spoke only about the AA (emphasizing the need for reforms) and signaled the long-term perspective of closer cooperation: “Generations of Ukrainian citizens to come will reap the benefits of closer association with the EU. <...> The European Union will continue its support for Ukraine’s reform efforts, with both expertise and financial support.” (European Commission, 2017).

Since the beginning of his term until Ukraine submits an application for accession in 2022, Josep Borrell, Mogherini's successor, has also consistently expressed support for Ukraine's European aspirations exclusively within the AA, without mentioning its potential EU membership. Borrell underlined the EU's commitment to the European future of Ukraine and assessed the country's progress in implementing key reforms and assured the EU's support for Ukraine in its reform efforts. As a High Representative, he emphasized the rapprochement of Ukraine and the EU, their common desire to strengthen political ties and economic integration based on the AA, but no more than that (European Pravda, 2021). His position on this issue remained consistent. By February 24, 2022, he had repeatedly stated that the EU supported Ukraine's European aspirations, but he had not considered membership as a realistic option. Moreover, he emphasized the troubles in anti-corruption in Ukraine. In September 2020, during his visit to Kyiv, he claimed that strong, independent and effective anti-corruption institutions and reform of the justice system were of key importance to meeting the expectations of the people of Ukraine (Sydorenko, 2020).

The European Commission leaders also spoke about Ukraine's integration aspirations. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the EC (2014 – 2019), did not express support for Ukraine's EU membership. Instead, he underlined the need to continue reforms, to fight against corruption and bolstered up the AA implementation aimed at deepening the political association and economic integration between the EU and Ukraine. In July 2017, in a joint briefing in Kyiv, Juncker emphasized the need for Ukraine to increase its efforts to combat corruption as it undermined the nation's progress and efforts in aligning with EU norms (Voice of America, 2017). Juncker's commentary around the EU-Ukraine AA reflected his support for Ukraine's reform agenda. He underscored the EU's commitment to assisting Ukraine with the necessary reforms for modernization and stabilizing the economy as part of the broader process of EU integration, a theme consistent throughout his tenure (Holub, 2017). Thus, Juncker's stance regarding Ukraine's accession fully complied with the framework of the AA and did not change during his tenure as the EC President.

Ursula von der Leyen, the EC President since 2019, made several statements regarding Ukraine and its EU prospects before the beginning of the RF's large-scale armed aggression against Ukraine. In December 2019, von der Leyen met with the President of Ukraine,

Volodymyr Zelenskyi, and expressed support for Ukraine's European aspirations. She stated that the EU sought to help Ukraine in carrying out reforms and strengthening democracy and expressed unconditional support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine (LB.ua, 2019). In October 2021, during the 23rd EU-Ukraine Summit, significant discussions regarding Ukraine's relations with the EU were documented. European leaders, including von der Leyen, reiterated the EU's support for Ukraine's reform process and its alignment with EU standards which are prerequisites for further integration and potential EU membership. These discussions are detailed in the joint summit statement (European Council, 2021).

Thus, although before Ukraine applied for accession, von der Leyen did not make any statements directly related to the prospects of Ukraine's EU membership, her general stance was oriented towards encouraging European integration and reforms in Ukraine. In general, von der Leyen was a supporter of Ukraine's European aspirations and emphasized the need for Ukraine to continue its reform efforts. However, she also acknowledged the challenges and complexity of the situation, especially in the context of ongoing Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine.

Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council (2014 – 2019), a representative of Poland, spoke quite differently as he repeatedly expressed his support for the European integration of Ukraine and its potential membership in the EU. In February 2019, in the Verkhovna Rada, Tusk said: "There can be no just Europe without an independent Ukraine. There can be no safe Europe without a safe Ukraine. To put it simply: there can be no Europe without Ukraine!". He assured that the doors of the EU were open for Ukraine (Laurenson, 2019). Having finished his powers as President of the European Council, in 2021, Tusk wrote on Twitter: "There is no safe and legal Europe without an independent, sovereign Ukraine" (Tusk, 2021).

Charles Michel, Tusk's successor as the head of the European Council, was not in favour of Ukraine's membership in the European Union until February 2022. Instead, he supported the EU's partnership with Ukraine through the AA and the provision of financial assistance to the country. For example, in March 2021, during the talks with President Zelenskyi, Michel emphasized the EU's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and expressed his belief in Ukraine's strong partnership with the EU. The Ukrainian side raised the

issue of revising the AA in terms of potential accession to the EU, but Michel did not mention the prospects of Ukraine's membership in the EU (President of Ukraine, 2021).

Therefore, from 2014 to February 23, 2022, the features of the EU strategic communications regarding the prospects of Ukraine's membership in the Union are as follows:

- a clear formulation of the integration goals within the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (primarily a deep and comprehensive free trade area), without the prospect of membership;

- providing signals about the potential possibility of opening the prospect of membership, provided that its criteria are met;

- the “encouraging” hints about the prospect of membership, but not in the speeches of the European Commission representatives (an institution that plays a decisive role in the implementation of EU strategies).

c. EU Strategic Communication after February 24, 2022: Analysis of Key Documents

The large-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, had a significant impact on the EU strategic communications regarding Ukraine. Immediately after the Russian invasion, EU messages took on a more urgent tone, stressing the need to support Ukraine. The EU condemned the invasion and imposed a series of sanctions against Russia. The EU also reaffirmed its commitment to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and emphasized the importance of democracy, the rule of law and human rights as European values.

The sudden migration wave of Ukrainians who arrived in the EU after the beginning of Russian aggression became a serious crisis that required a coordinated response from the EU institutions. The EU strategic communications focused on providing the public with accurate and up-to-date information about the situation, eliminating concerns, debunking rumors and emphasizing the EU's support for Ukraine and its people. The EU web portal became one of the main communication channels where information and the EU reaction were regularly updated. The heads of EU institutions also used social media to inform about the crisis and the EU's response. They stressed the need for a coordinated and compassionate approach to the situation and underlined the EU's commitment to supporting Ukraine and its people. The EU strategic communications also emphasized the need for urgent action, including the provision of

humanitarian aid, the supply of military equipment and the mobilization of financial resources. The EU also called for greater coordination with NATO and other international partners to support Ukraine's defense and deter further Russian aggression.

However, the Russian invasion created new challenges for the EU's strategic communications regarding Ukraine's accession. The war underscored the urgency of Ukraine's European aspirations but also raised concerns about the risks and challenges of EU enlargement in a region of heightened geopolitical tension. The war also highlighted the importance of countering Russian disinformation and propaganda, which has intensified since the invasion. The EU increased its efforts to counter Russian disinformation with the help of the East StratCom task force of the European External Action Service.

Since February 28, 2022, when Ukraine applied for membership in the EU, the countdown to official communication as to acquiring membership has begun.

We analyzed the Twitter (X) activity of EU officials and institutions that directly relate to the expression of the Union's position on the issue of Ukraine's accession up to the end of 2022.

Table 1
Twitter activity of EU officials and institutions on the accession of Ukraine
(number of tweets with keywords)

	Ukraine		Ukraine + Membership		Ukraine + EU	
	2022	Before	2022	Before	2022	Before
Ursula von der Leyen, President of the EU Commission	91 (36 popular)	1 (since July 2019)	6	0 (since July 2019)	61 (44 popular)	0 (since July 2019)
Josep Borrell, HR/VP	86 (31 popular)	0 (since June 2018)	0	0 (since June 2018)	75 (42 popular)	0 (since June 2018)
European Commission	85	2 (since June 2010)	1	0 (since June 2010)	85	0 (since June 2010)
European Council	60	42 (since October 2010)	4	0 (since October 2010)	58	27 (since October 2010)
European Parliament	52	56	2	0	19	13

		(since April 2009)		(since April 2009)		(since April 2009)
Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement	61	0 (since March 2016)	3	0 (since March 2016)	48	0 (since March 2016)

Rhetoric of Ursula von der Leyen

We can see, Ursula von der Leyen is the most active politician in discussing issues related to Ukraine and its path to EU membership. In 2022, she was (Lüfkens, 2022) and remains the most subscribed EU official on Twitter. Three tweets with the semantic core “Ukraine, Accession” were published in 2022 starting in September 2022. These were short messages about events involving von der Leyen, like her trip to Kyiv on September 15: “So much has changed. Ukraine is now a [EU flag] candidate. I’ll discuss with @ZelenskyyUa and @Denys_Shmyhal how to continue getting our economies and people closer while Ukraine progresses towards accession” (von der Leyen, 2022).

We explored the social network response, specifically the semantics and sentiment of comments. The above tweet received more than 17,700 likes, no less than 2,364 retweets and 330 first-order comments. Regarding the comments,

- 23 were unrelated to the message content,
- 15 referred to EU relations with other states (mainly with Armenia regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict),
- 67 expressed unequivocal support for Ukraine,
- 32 demonstrated a positive reaction,
- 47 can be assessed as constructive (paid attention to procedural, economic and social issues of accession),
- 91 demonstrated a negative attitude towards Ukraine and the EU,
- 46 objected to Ukraine’s accession to the EU (“Not my problem”, references to corruption in Ukraine, etc.). It is important to mention that among those who left negative comments, most of the accounts appear to have fictitious names, while the authors of positive comments appear under names that are more likely to belong to real people.

Considering the high level of von der Leyen’s communication activity regarding the accession of Ukraine to the EU, we analyzed the documents published on her behalf in detail. Statement by President von der Leyen on the Commission’s Opinions on the EU Membership Applications by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia was the first document formulating the perspective of membership (European Commission, 2022b). The document concerns the applications of three states, but its semantic core consists of a combination of terms around the words “Ukraine”, “European”, “country”. The words “important”, “perspective”, “path”, “deserves”, “understanding” and others carry a significant semantic load. (Fig. 1). The combination of the two most frequent words – “Ukraine” and “European” is present in 7 out of 10 selected segments of the text (the word “Ukraine” is in all ten) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Semantic relations of the most frequent words in Statement by President von der Leyen on the Commission’s Opinions on the EU Membership Applications by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia (June 17, 2022).

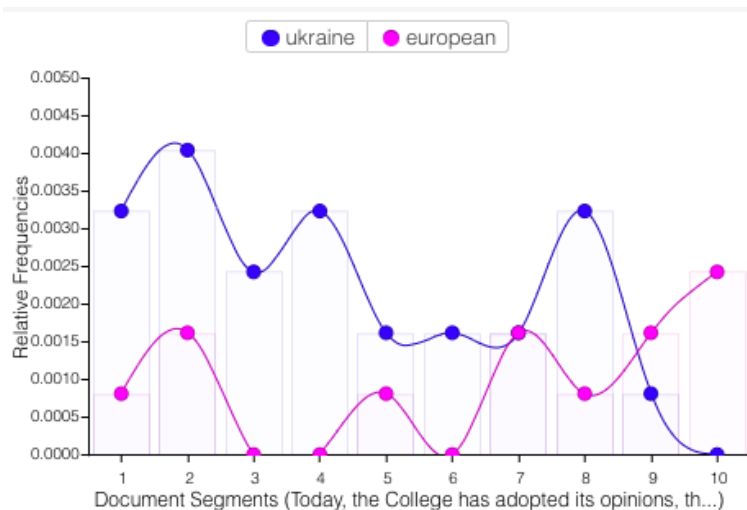


Fig. 2. Distribution by document segments of the most frequent words

The key message is best reflected by a quote from the concluding paragraph: “We have one clear message, and that is: Yes, Ukraine deserves a European perspective. Yes, Ukraine should be welcomed as a candidate country. This is on the understanding that good work has been done, but important work also remains to be done” (European Commission, 2022b). Its essence generally corresponds to the terms of the AA implementation but with the perspective of membership. We will remind that the Ukrainian side has insisted on including such a perspective in the text of the Agreement since 2007. In total, the document contains 1,239 words, its “mood” is rated as positive with an index of 57.1%, which is typical for official documents. Overall, the text orients the audience to a generally positive perspective.

We draw attention that the word “corruption” occurs 6 times in the document (0.0048%) which was typical for EU documents in the sphere of relations with Ukraine in previous years. Instead, the word “membership” occurs only twice, and both times outside the main context of the document. In addition, this statement is filled with insignificant words (the “wateriness” index is 70.1%) which is typical for documents of a declarative nature.

President von der Leyen’s statement at a joint press conference with President of Ukraine Zelenskyi following the results of the EU-Ukraine summit in February 2023 has a completely different semantics (European Commission, 2023).

The text has 1,880 words, its wateriness is 54.3%, the mood is distinctly positive (the index of “positivity” is 87.7%). This document also contains the word “corruption”, but its frequency is three times lower than in the June 2022 statement (0.0016% (2 occurrences) vs. 0.0048% (6 occurrences)). The word “membership” is used twice in direct connection with the topic of the document (0.0016%). Fig. 3 presents the semantic relations of keywords which help us conclude the importance of security, energy, and Russian aggression for European-Ukrainian cooperation. The figure reflects the level of correlation between the terms. The proximity of the terms “Ukraine”, “start”, “join” and “prepared” may indicate preparation for the start of the procedural phase of admission. There is also a high level of correlation between the most frequent words “Ukraine” and “European” by document segments (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3. Semantic relations of the most frequent words in Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with Ukrainian President Zelenskyi (February 2, 2023)

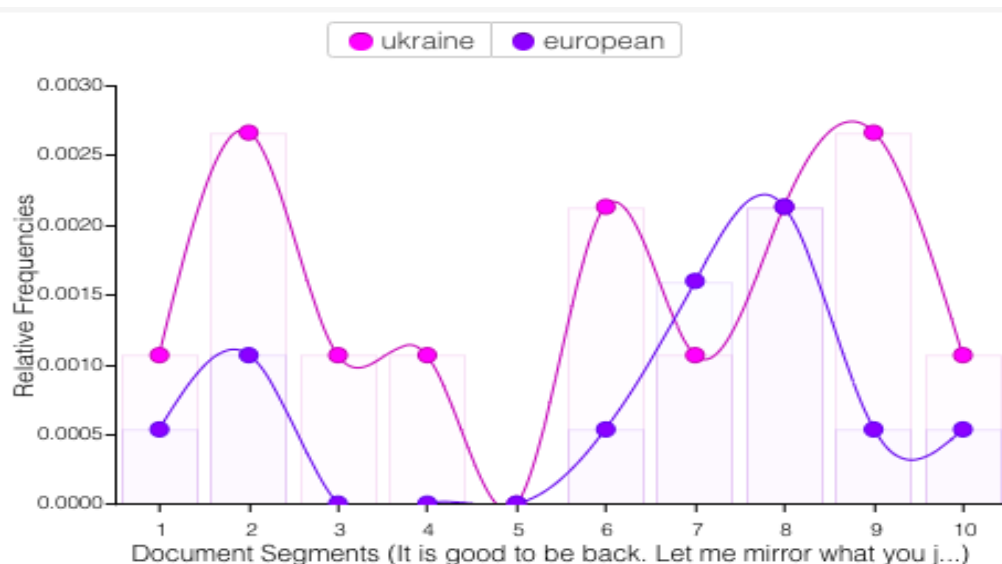


Fig. 4. Distribution of the most frequent words by document segments

We compared this statement with a similar formal document, i.e., von der Leyen’s statement at a joint press conference with Volodymyr Zelensky following the results of the EU-Ukraine summit in October 2021 (European Commission, 2021). The keywords include “Ukraine”, “energy”, “gas”, “cooperation”, “European Union”, “reforms”, “level” (Fig. 5). This semantics fully reflects the rhetoric of EU officials typical for 2014-2021 period, related to the integration exclusively within the Association Agreement emphasizing the need to strengthen reforms in Ukraine, as well as assurances of all possible support. There is no mention of Ukraine’s membership in the EU in any context. The peculiarity of this document is the stress on the words “energy” and “gas” which can be explained only by the concern of European officials about the current situation in the European energy market because of the sharp increase in the price of natural gas due to the export policy of Russia as the main supplier of the resource to the markets of EU countries. European officials closely link Europe’s energy security with Ukraine’s foreign policy, particularly regarding its cooperation with the EU. The distribution of words by segments of the text indicates the central position and clear accentuation of “gas” and “energy” messages in combination with the mention of “Ukraine” (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5. The most frequent words and their visualization frequency in Ursula von der Leyen’s statement at a joint press conference with Volodymyr Zelenskyi following the results of the EU-Ukraine summit in October 2021.

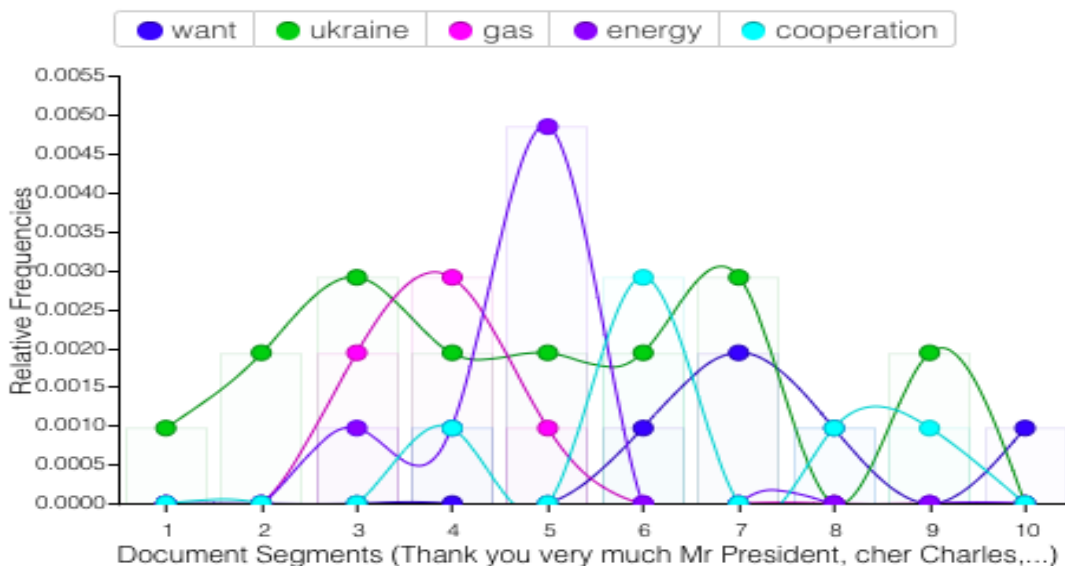


Fig. 6. Distribution of the most frequent words by document segments

Fig. 7 shows the interrelations of words where the basis of the semantic core includes the combination of “Ukraine”, “gas”, “energy” with related words that form a word combination.

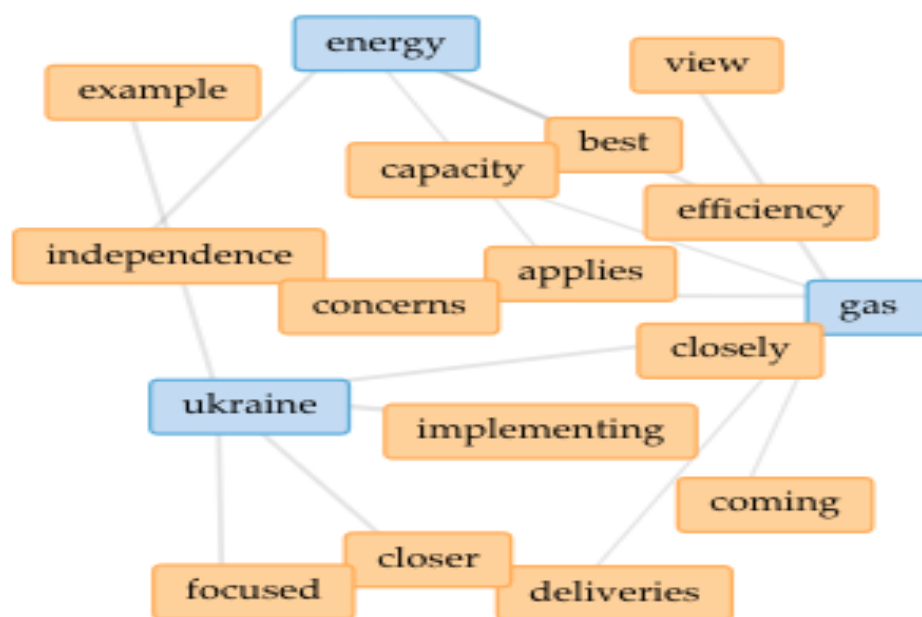


Fig. 7. Semantic relations of the most frequent words in Ursula von der Leyen's Statement (October 2021)

So, the text semantics is fully oriented to conveying several utilitarian messages to the audience as to current challenges and sectoral policy of the EU. The strategic communication message remains unchanged and corresponds to the position formulated in 2014, i.e., maximum possible cooperation, its level depends on the success of democratization in Ukraine, but no more than within the AA. This is illustrated, e.g., by the following quote from the document: “How can we improve our cooperation and take it to the next level? By tapping into the potential of the Association Agreement. It still has a lot to offer – we have been discussing that – for example in the digital area.” (European Commission, 2021).

We also compared von der Leyen’s speech after the summit on February 2, 2023, in Kyiv (European Commission, 2023) with her speech in the autumn of 2021 discussed above and the statement regarding the conclusions of the European Commission on Ukraine’s membership in the EU (European Commission, 2022b). The 2023 document is comparatively less loaded with keywords, indicating its more pragmatic and less declarative nature. Moreover, the number of

such words as “reform”, “agreement”, “to do” is significantly lower which indicates a shift in focus from the previously emphasized problem of reforms and implementation of the AA.

The key phrases that differ the 2023 document from the previous two are the following: “how to build a future for Ukraine in the European Union”, “You continue to make impressive progress”, “Ukraine to join key European programmes”. The following fragment best reflects the main message of von der Leyen's speech: “I am comforted to see that your anti-corruption bodies are on alert and effective in detecting corruption cases. I also commend you on reacting so rapidly at the political level to make sure that the fight against corruption is delivering tangible results and is further stepped up. And while Ukraine advances on the European path, we are tearing down barriers between our economies and societies even further” (European Commission, 2023).

The semantics of the joint statement by Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel on February 3, 2023, was more restrained, but contained the following phrases (European Council, 2023): “to recognise Ukraine’s European perspective”, “Ukraine underlined its determination to meet the necessary requirements”, “considerable efforts that Ukraine demonstrated in the recent months”.

Hence, we can draw a conclusion about a significant change in semantics in the rhetoric of the chief executive officer of the EU which may indicate compliance with the new strategy. The general tone is focused on constructive work in the direction of Ukraine’s rapprochement with the European Union, and the key messages are approval of Ukraine’s success in carrying out reforms which were emphasized in previous years, and Ukraine’s determination to realize its goals. We can claim that the EU no longer formulates previously “insurmountable” obstacles to Ukraine’s integration into the EU in the form of unfinished reforms and the need to “go a long way” to cultivate European values and strengthen democracy.

Charles Michel’s rhetoric

We analyzed the joint statement of the European Council President, Charles Michel, the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyi, on the results of the EU-Ukraine summit on February 3, 2023, in the part related to the European integration of Ukraine. The semantic core includes such words: “EU”,

“Ukraine’s”, “Ukraine”. For the first time, the term “membership” was included in the semantic core of the EU public communication document. Fig. 10 shows that the semantic relations of the core with the term “application” form a semantic cluster of the terms: “acknowledged”, “alignment”, “efforts”, “determination”, “reiterated”, “acquis” (EU legal act). Accordingly, “European”, “membership”, “determination”, “EU” are associated with the word “Ukraine's”.

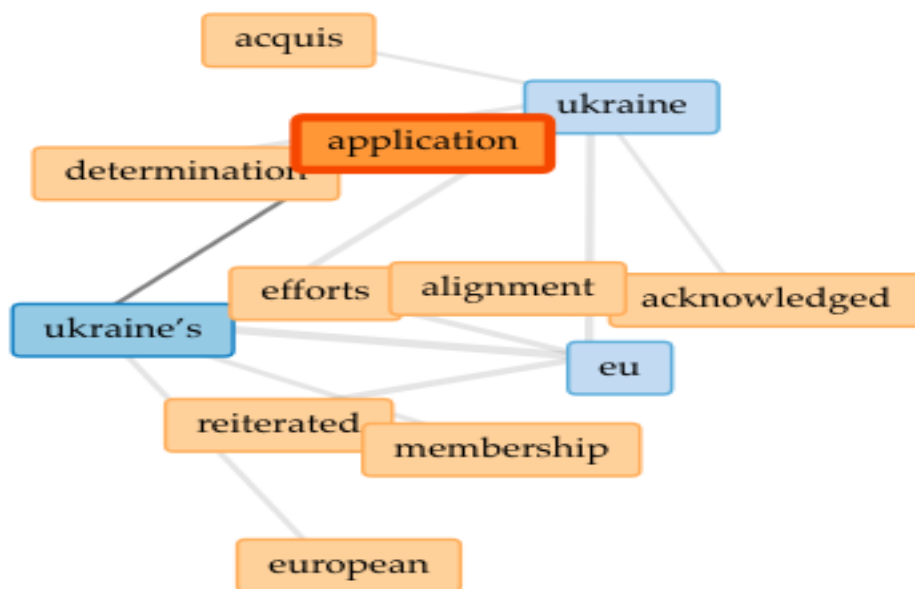


Fig. 10. Semantic relations of the most frequent words in the Joint statement following the 24th EU-Ukraine Summit (February 3, 2023).

Fig. 11 shows the values of pairwise correlation coefficients of the localization of some words in the text array. We underline that a high or close to a high level of correlation is determined for such pairs: “membership – reform” (0.81) and “EU - ukraine's” (0.73) (for the last pair, the frequency by text segments is also given in Fig. 12). On the other hand, for such significant pairs as “enlargement – ukraine’s” and “accession – ukraine’s”, the coefficient values are about 0.42 - 0.45.

Term 1	←	→	Term 2	Correlation...
membership			reform	0.81325006
eu			ukraine's	0.731066
application			ukraine's	0.5921565
commission			ukraine's	0.5921565
enlargement			ukraine's	0.45226702
order			ukraine's	0.45226702
recalled			ukraine's	0.45226702
report			ukraine's	0.45226702
accession			ukraine's	0.42379344
process			ukraine's	0.42379344

Fig. 11. Pairwise correlation coefficients

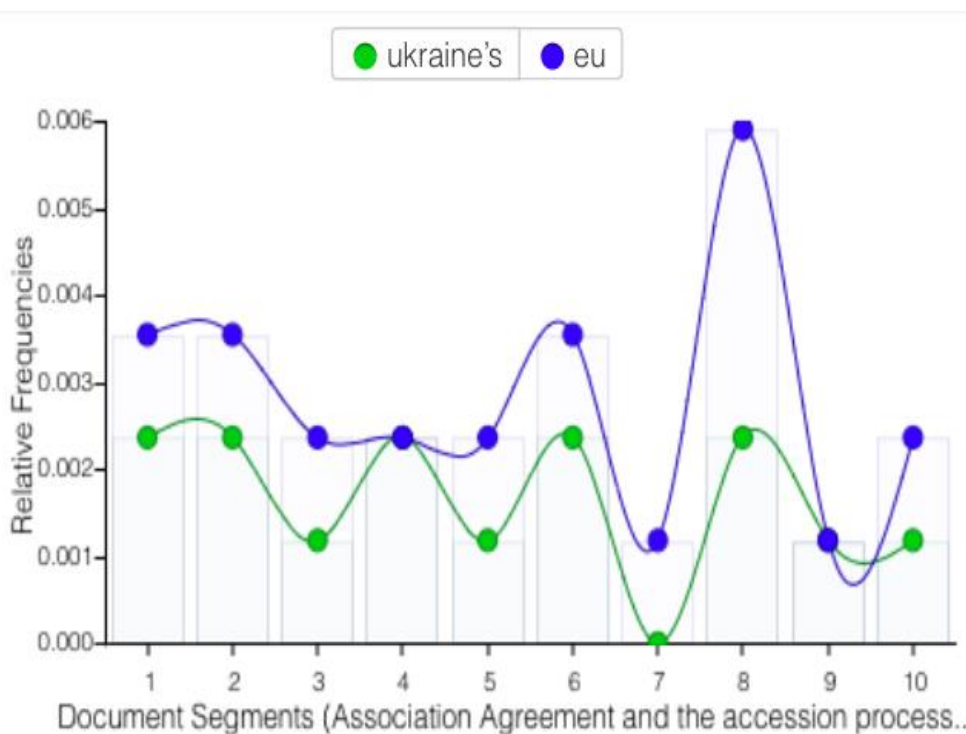


Fig. 12. Frequency of the two most used words by text segments

The interpretation of the semantic characteristics of the above document enables us to state that, compared to previous EU documents on relations with Ukraine, for the first time, this

statement contains specific messages regarding the prospects of Ukraine acquiring formal membership in the EU. In particular:

1) the document semantic core consists of terms related to the procedural aspects of the accession (“recognize”, “determination”, “acquis”), eg., “The EU welcomed Ukraine’s intention to prepare the National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) based on the Analytical Report on the preparedness of Ukraine in the acquis chapters following the Commission’s Opinion on Ukraine’s application for membership of the European Union”;

2) in contrast to all previous statements in the history of EU-Ukraine relations, here the success of Ukraine in carrying out reforms is affirmed (“effort”, “determination”), eg., “The EU acknowledged the considerable efforts that Ukraine demonstrated in the recent months towards meeting the objectives underpinning its candidate status for EU membership, welcomed Ukraine’s reform efforts in such difficult times, and encouraged the country to continue on this path and to fulfill the conditions specified in the Commission’s opinion on its membership application to advance towards future EU membership”;

3) the EU’s comments regarding the need to continue reforms foresee a clear perspective of membership and are formulated as a specific list of “homework” measures contained in paragraph 5 of the document.

To study civil relations with the public, we conducted a semantic analysis of the “EU Solidarity with Ukraine” web page – a second-level page of the EU web portal Europa (europa.eu), which appeared already on February 25, 2022. The page is localized under the title “In Focus”. The EU position is formulated in the first sentence of the text block: “The EU is united in its solidarity with Ukraine and will continue to support Ukraine and its people together with its international partners, including through additional political, financial and humanitarian support.” (European Union, 2022).

Using Voyant online analysis software (<https://voyant-tools.org/>), we established that the most frequent words on the page include “Ukraine” (105), “EU” (86), “2022” (75), “Commission” (59), “support” (32), “Russian” (29), “European” (27), “activities” (24), “sanctions” (23), “billion” (22), “assistance” (22).

Semantic relations of words that make up the semantic core of the page are given in Fig. 13. “Ukraine” is in the center of the core, it is semantically most closely related to “EU”, “2022”,

“support”, “fleeing”. In turn, “EU” is directly related to “Ukraine”, “2022”, “solidarity”, “Commission”; and through the word “solidarity” - to “European” and “support”. “2022” is directly related to “support” and “Commission”.

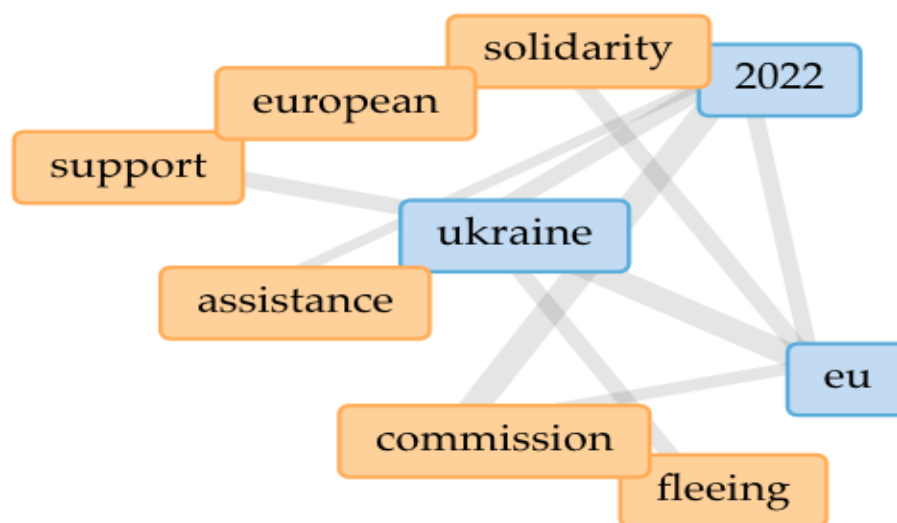


Fig. 13. Semantic relations of the most used words on the EU Solidarity with Ukraine web page

“Ukraine” as the central word of the semantic structure is most closely related to “eu” (37); “2022” (18); “support” (17); “fleeing” (15); “solidarity” (14); “people” (12); “assistance” (15); “aggression” (9); “Commission” (9). In combinations it correlates with the following phrases “ukraine how the eu is supporting”, “ukraine eu solidarity with ukraine”, “ukraine how the eu is”, “ukraine and its people”, “ukraine eu solidarity with”, “ukraine how the eu”, “ukraine and in”, “ukraine and its”, “ukraine as the”, “ukraine eu solidarity”, “ukraine how the”, “ukraine the eu”, “ukraine these measures”.

In general, the content of the page is aimed at conveying the message that the EU stands in solidarity with Ukraine and provides it with European support, and the activities of the European Commission in 2022 are related to assistance to Ukraine.

Similar results were obtained after the semantic analysis of the Factsheet on the website of solidarity with Ukraine, which contains the main factual data regarding the EU support of

Ukraine (European Commission, 2022a). The document is intended for communication with a wide audience, although according to the readability index (readability index=15.848), it corresponds to professional or scientific literature. Fig. 14 shows that the semantic core consists of the chain “Ukraine-EU-million” and terms connected with them, namely “solidarity”, “assistance”, “support”, “budget”, “billion”.



Fig. 14. Semantic relations of the most used words in the Factsheet: EU Solidarity with Ukraine”

Such semantics in an information-rich document for PR communication claim that its author(s) intended to convey constructive messages based on a significant factual ground to the target audience. We can assume that in this case it reflects a strategic approach and is not just a reflection on current challenges.

5. Conclusion

The European Union first publicly acknowledged Ukraine's aspiration for membership following the 2004 Orange Revolution, during the EU 2004-2007 extension and the initiation of the Association Agreement. At that time, Ukraine began implementing a state program to inform the public about European integration.

Over time, however, EU communications shifted in response to Ukraine's evolving political landscape. Optimistic rhetoric in 2007 regarding integration prospects and reforms gave way to more cautious statements, emphasizing the need for continued progress in key areas. Before 2005, the EU made no explicit statements about Ukraine's membership prospects. Between 2005 and 2014, the EU consistently recognized Ukraine's European trajectory, noting that membership would depend on meeting specific criteria and implementing reforms.

From the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 until Russia's large-scale invasion in 2022, EU officials refrained from making direct statements about Ukraine's membership prospects. Instead, the EU's communications focused on supporting Ukraine's reform efforts under the framework of the Association Agreement, emphasizing the challenges posed by ongoing Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine. Signals about membership remained tentative and came primarily from non-decisive EU institutions, which hinted at a potential future opening for membership if Ukraine met the necessary criteria.

Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 profoundly influenced the EU's strategic communications. The EU's messaging underscored its unwavering support for Ukraine, reaffirming its commitment to Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. European values, such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, were central to the EU's communications, as it condemned the invasion and imposed sanctions on Russia. In response to the rapid influx of Ukrainian refugees, the EU focused on delivering accurate, up-to-date information to the public, addressing concerns, dispelling disinformation, and emphasizing solidarity with Ukraine and its citizens. The EU's communications highlighted the need for urgent action, including humanitarian aid, military assistance, financial mobilization, and enhanced coordination with NATO and other international partners to support Ukraine's defense and counter Russian aggression.

The heads of key EU institutions, particularly the European Commission, played a leading role in communications concerning Ukraine's potential accession to the European Union. Prior to Russia's invasion in 2022, EU rhetoric, typical of the 2014-2021 period, focused on integration within the framework of the Association Agreement, emphasizing the need for Ukraine to strengthen reforms. During that period, Ukraine's EU membership was not actively discussed, and cooperation was framed within the context of immediate EU challenges, such as energy policy. Communication primarily centered on practical messages addressing current issues and EU sectoral policies.

However, after Ukraine's formal announcement of its intention to join the EU, the tone of EU documents became more pragmatic and less declarative. Key messages highlighted Ukraine's progress in implementing reforms and its commitment to achieving its goals. The EU no longer emphasized previously insurmountable obstacles to Ukraine's membership, such as the need for extensive reforms to uphold European values and democratic principles, signaling a shift toward a more favorable stance on Ukraine's integration.

By early 2023, EU communications began including specific messages regarding Ukraine's potential for formal membership. Their semantic core consists of terms related to the procedural aspects of accession. The EU recognized Ukraine's reform efforts and outlined clear steps toward membership. Those messages increasingly framed membership as achievable, contingent upon Ukraine's completion of specific reform "homework."

Public relations efforts, particularly through the europa.eu website, have been a central tool for communicating EU solidarity with Ukraine. These communications emphasize the EU's support for Ukraine, particularly through European Commission activities aimed at aiding Ukraine during the ongoing conflict. The content signals a commitment to constructive, supportive messaging aimed at the general public.

Hence, the EU's enlargement strategy has historically been adaptive and reactive to both geopolitical conditions and internal developments within candidate countries. The EU's cautious approach to eastern enlargement, especially in the early 2000s, reflected uncertainty about Ukraine's membership prospects. However, from 2005 onward, as Ukraine pursued reforms and declared a European integration course, EU messages became more specific regarding Ukraine's potential membership, while consistently emphasizing the need for continued reforms.

External political challenges, such as the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine, significantly influenced the EU's rhetoric and prompted more active support for Ukraine. The turning point occurred immediately after the start of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine. That is, the geopolitical context, relations with Russia and other international challenges often forced the EU to adjust its approaches to enlargement.

We deliberately covered a long period (1991 – 2023) and several EU decision-makers to show exactly the dynamics of changes in EU discourses on Ukraine. The following studies may relate to the discourse of one EU leader, perhaps with a special emphasis on their Twitter activity, and thus can demonstrate an individual trajectory of strategic communications regarding Ukraine.

References

1. Ashton, C. (2013). Remarks by EU High Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton at the end of her visit to Ukraine. European Commission - Press Corner, December 11, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_13_1141
2. Amchuk, L. (2003). Hyunter Ferkhoyhen – khreshchenyy vitchym yevropeys'koho vyboru Ukrayiny [Günther Verheugen – The Godfather of Ukraine's European Choice]. *Ukrainska Pravda*, September 13, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2003/09/13/2995403/> (in Ukrainian)
3. Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part. (2014). *EUR-Lex*, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1413961918333&uri=CELEX:22014A0529%2801%29>
4. Barroso, J. M. (2013). Statement by President Barroso following the 16th EU-Ukraine Summit. European Commission, February 25, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_13_157
5. Besch, S., & Ciaramella, E. (2023,). Ukraine's Accession Poses Unique Conundrum for the EU. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, October 24, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/10/24/ukraine-s-accession-poses-unique-conundrum-for-eu-pub-90838>

6. Beunderman, M. (2005). Blow to Kiev as Brussels closes door to further enlargement. *EUobserver*, November 9, <https://euobserver.com/eu-political/20289>
7. Council of the European Union. (2007). Joint statement: EU-Ukraine Summit, Kiev, 14 September (12927/07 Presse 199), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/d-ua20080221_05/d-ua20080221_05en.pdf
8. Doyle, K., & Desta, T. (2020). An analysis of Common Security and Defence Policy's (CSDP) Strategic Communication (StratCom). *Journal of Politics and Law*, 14(2), 56-73, <https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/jpl/article/view/0/44469>
9. Drach, M. (2005). Yevropeys'kyy parlament khoche bachyty Ukrainu v YES [The European Parliament wants to see Ukraine in the EU]. *Radio Svoboda*, January 13, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/925521.html> (in Ukrainian)
10. EURACTIV.com. (2013). Verheugen slams Berlin's handling of EU-Ukraine relations, July 26, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/verheugen-slams-berlin-s-handling-of-eu-ukraine-relations/>
11. European Commission. (2017). EU-Ukraine Association Agreement fully enters into force, September 1, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_17_3045
12. European Commission. (2021). Statement on the preparation of the Environment Council, October 12, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_21_5222
13. European Commission. (2022a). Factsheet: EU solidarity with Ukraine, https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/factsheets-eu-solidarity-ukraine_en
14. European Commission. (2022b). Statement by President von der Leyen on the Commission's opinions on the EU membership applications by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, June 17, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_22_3822
15. European Commission. (2023). Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy, February 2, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_23_546

16. European Council. (2015). European Council conclusions, 19-20 March, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21888/european-council-conclusions-19-20-march-2015-en.pdf>
17. European Council. (2021). Joint statement following the 23rd EU-Ukraine summit, 12 October, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/12/joint-statement-following-the-23rd-eu-ukraine-summit-12-october-2021/>
18. European Council. (2023). Joint statement following the 24th EU-Ukraine Summit, February 3, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/02/03/joint-statement-following-the-24th-eu-ukraine-summit/>
19. EEAS - European External Action Service. (2015). Mogherini stresses importance of EU-Ukraine relations in visit to Kyiv, November 9, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/2184_en
20. EEAS - European External Action Service. (2018a). Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Action Plan against Disinformation, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/action_plan_against_disinformation.pdf
21. EEAS - European External Action Service. (2018b). Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Taras Shevchenko University, March 13, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/41259_fr
22. EEAS - European External Action Service. (2021). EEAS Strategic Communications Annual Report 2020, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eeas_strategic_communications_annual_report_2020.pdf
23. EEAS - European External Action Service. (2022). Public Diplomacy. Building bridges between the European Union and the rest of the world, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/public-diplomacy_en
24. European Parliament. (2005). The European Parliament's support for the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine is a step towards an ambitious Wider Europe - Neighbourhood policy, August 19,

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/presse/pr_focus/2005/EN/03A-DV-PRESSE_FCS\(2005\)08-19\(00984\)_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/presse/pr_focus/2005/EN/03A-DV-PRESSE_FCS(2005)08-19(00984)_EN.pdf)

25. European Parliament. (2016). *EU strategic communications with a view to counteracting propaganda: In-depth analysis*. European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/578008/EXPO_IDA\(2016\)578008_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/578008/EXPO_IDA(2016)578008_EN.pdf)
26. European Pravda. (2021). Ukrayina vzhe duzhe blyz'ka do YES – Borrel' [Ukraine is already very close to the EU – Borrell], October 12, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2021/10/12/7128903/> (in Ukrainian)
27. European Union. (2022). *European Union official website*. Archived from the original on February 25, https://web.archive.org/web/20220225194616/https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en
28. Fierke, K., & Wiener, A. (1999). Constructing institutional interests: EU and NATO enlargement. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6, 99-119, <https://doi.org/10.1080/135017699343342>
29. Fløttum, K. (2010). EU discourse: Polyphony and unclearness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42(4), 990-999, DOI: [10.1016/j.pragma.2009.08.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2009.08.014)
30. James, W. (2015). Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), *CIVITAS Institute for the Study of Civil Society*, http://www.civitas.org.uk/content/files/EX.4.CSDP_.pdf
31. Hallahan, K., Holtzhausen, D. R., van Ruler, B., Verčič, D., & Sriramesh, K. (2007). Defining strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1(1), 3–35, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15531180701285244>
32. Holtzhausen, D. R., & Zerfass, A. (2015). Strategic communication: Opportunities and challenges of the research area. In D. R. Holtzhausen & A. Zerfass (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of strategic communication*, New York: Routledge, 3-17.
33. Holub, V. (2017). EU-Ukraine Association Agreement ratification: European reforms without the European perspective. Razumkov Centre, June 6, <https://razumkov.org.ua/en/articles/eu-ukraine-association-agreement-ratification-european-reforms-without-the-european-perspective>

34. Kyuchyuk, I., & Loiseau, N. (2020). EU enlargement needs better strategic communication. *Euractiv*, March 12, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/opinion/eu-enlargement-needs-better-strategic-communication/>
35. Laurenson, J. (2019). There is no Europe without Ukraine, Tusk says in speech at Rada. *Kyiv Post*, February 19, <https://archive.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/there-is-no-europe-without-ukraine-tusk-says-in-speech-at-rada.html>
36. LB.ua (2011). Barrozu: Ukraine nuzhno yeshche rabotat' nad verkhovenstvom prava, svobodoy SMI i bor'boy s korruptsiyey [Barroso: Ukraine needs to continue working on the rule of law, freedom of the media, and fighting corruption], August 20, https://lb.ua/news/2011/08/20/111341_barrozu_ukraine_nuzhno_eshche_rabot.html (in Russian)
37. LB.ua. (2019). Zelens'kyi poznayomyvsya z holovoyu Yevropeys'koyi komisiyi Ursuloyu fon der Lyayen [Zelensky meets with the new head], December 3, https://lb.ua/news/2019/12/03/443818_zelenskiy_poznakomilsya_glavoy.html (In Ukrainian)
38. Lüfkens, M. (2022). The most followed EU leaders on social media 2022. *Digital Diplomacy*, May 10, <https://medium.com/digital-diplomacy/the-most-followed-eu-leaders-on-social-media-2022-d44fb7af1645>
39. Márquez-Carrasco, C., Churruca Muguruza, C., & Alamillos Sánchez, R. (2016). *Case study: Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)*, https://www.academia.edu/80893368/Case_study_Common_Security_and_Defence_Policy_CSDP
40. Molnár, A., Takács, L. & Urbanovics, A. (2021), Strategic communication of EU CSDP missions – measuring the EU's external legitimacy, *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 319-334, <https://doi.org/10.1108/TG-11-2020-0314>
41. Moshes, A. (2003). Ukraine in tomorrow's Europe. FIIA Report 4, <https://www.fiaa.fi/en/publication/ukraine-in-tomorrows-europe>

42. Odushkin, O. (2001). The Acceptance of Ukraine to the European Union: Integrating and Disintegrating Factors for the EU. *Polish Sociological Review*, 136, 365–378, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41969419>
43. Preda, A., & Chiriac, D. (2021). Strategic communication process in the European Union. *Strategies XXI - Security and Defense Faculty*, 17(1), <https://doi.org/10.53477/2668-2001-21-15>
44. President of Ukraine. (2000). Pro zatverdzhennya Stratehiyi intehratsiyi Ukrayiny do Yevropeys'koho Soyuzu [On the approval of the Strategy for the Integration of Ukraine into the European Union] (Decree No. 587/2000), April 12, https://ips.ligazakon.net/document/view/u615_98?an=1&ed=2000_04_12 (in Ukrainian)
45. President of Ukraine. (2021). Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Charles Michel discussed energy security, vaccination and bilateral cooperation, March 3, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/volodimir-zelenskij-i-sharl-mishel-obgovorili-energetichnu-b-66921>
46. RBC.UA (2013). There can be no doubt about the EU's interest in signing the AA with Ukraine (2013). March 13, <https://daily.rbc.ua/ukr/show/ne-mozhet-byt-sommeniy-v-zainteresovannosti-es-podpisat-13032013225000>
47. Salnikova, O., Sivokha, I., & Ivashchenko, A. (2019). Strategic communication in the modern hybrid warfare. *Social Development and Security*, 9(5), 133-142, <https://doi.org/10.33445/sds.2019.9.5.9>
48. Schimmelfennig, F. (2001). The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union. *International Organization*, 55, 47 - 80. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081801551414>
49. Sevin, E., & Ingenhoff, D. (2018). Public diplomacy on social media: Analyzing networks and content. *International Journal of Communication*, 12, 3663-3685, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/8726>
50. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. (2016), https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf

51. Solodky, S. (2002). One European official cannot imagine Ukraine as EU member. *Day*, September 24, <https://day.kyiv.ua/en/article/day-after-day/one-european-official-cannot-imagine-ukraine-eu-member>
52. Sydorenko, S. (2020). Vizyt iz natykom na bezviz: shcho skazav i pro shcho promovchav u Kyyevi shef dyplomatiyi YES [Visit with a hint of visa-free: What the EU's chief diplomat said and kept silent about in Kyiv]. *European Pravda*, September 23, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2020/09/23/7114603/> (in Ukrainian)
53. Tusk, D. [@donaltdusk]. (2021). [Tweet]. X, December 2, <https://x.com/donaltdusk/status/1466471524861366285?s=20>
54. Ukrainska Pravda. (2013). Fyule: zobov'yazannya YES shchodo Ukrayiny ye nezminnymy [Füle: The EU's commitments to Ukraine are unchanged], November 21, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2013/11/21/7002680/> (in Ukrainian)
55. Valenza, D. (2021). The Trap of Geopolitics: Rethinking EU Strategic Communication. *CEPOB*, 3, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350107787_The_Trap_of_Geopolitics_Rethinking_EU_Strategic_Communication
56. van Atteveldt, W., Kleinnijenhuis, K., & Schlobach, S. (2008). Good news or bad news? Conducting sentiment analysis on Dutch text to distinguish between positive and negative relations. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 5(1), 73-94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19331680802154145>
57. van Atteveldt, W., Sheaffer, T., & Shenhav, S. (2013). Automatically extracting frames from media content using syntactic analysis. *WebSci '13: Proceedings of the 5th Annual ACM Web Science Conference*, 423–430, DOI: [10.1145/2464464.2464504](https://doi.org/10.1145/2464464.2464504)
58. Voice of America. (2017). Corruption undermining Ukraine's progress, EU's Juncker says, June 13, <https://www.voanews.com/a/corruption-undermining-ukraine-proress-eu-juncker-says/3943379.html>
59. von der Leyen, U. [@vonderleyen]. (2022). [Tweet]. X, September 15, <https://x.com/vonderleyen/status/1570299106781794304?s=20>

60. White House. (2010). National Framework for Strategic Communication. Washington, DC: White House Strategic Communications Report to Congress, March 17, <https://man.fas.org/eprint/pubdip.pdf>
61. Yang, A., Klyueva, A., & Taylor, M. (2012). Beyond a dyadic approach to public diplomacy: Understanding relationships in multipolar world. *Public Relations Review*, 38(5), 652-664, DOI: [10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.07.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.07.005)
62. Yoon, S.-W., & Chung, S. W. (2020). The EU's Public Diplomacy in Asia and the World through Social Media: Sentiment and Semantic Network Analyses of Official Facebook Pages of European External Action Service and EU Delegation to the Republic of Korea. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, 19(2), 234-263, <https://doi.org/10.17477/JCEA.2020.19.2.234>
63. Zaxid.net (2010). V Ukrayini velyke svyato, - holova Yevroparlamentu [Ukraine has a great celebration, - the head of the European Parliament], February 25, https://zaxid.net/v_ukrayini_velike_svyato__golova_yevroparlamentu_n1097020 (in Ukrainian)
64. Zaxid.net (2014). Fyule: Yevrosoyuz maye pryynyaty Ukrayinu do svoho skladu [Füle: The European Union should accept Ukraine into its membership], March 18, https://zaxid.net/fyule_yevrosoyuz_maye_priynyati_ukrayinu_do_svogo_skladu_n1304780 (In Ukrainian)