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## DIVERSE, NOT DIVIDED?

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# THE COMMUNICATION OF THE EU IN THE ITALIAN NEWSPAPERS: AN ANALYSIS OF MARCO ZATTERIN'S ARTICLES AND THE METAPHOR "EU-AS-SUPERVISOR"

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**M**arco Zatterin is the only correspondent in Brussels for *La Stampa*. He won the "Altiero Spinelli" award in September 2014. This award was handed to him personally by the President of the Italian European Federalist Movement, Lucio Levi, at the end of the 33<sup>rd</sup> National Seminar on Federalism. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2013, he wrote on his blog about the Ilva case. Ilva's plant in Taranto is the biggest European industrial complex for the production and transformation of steel. In September 2013, the European Commission brought its first default action against Italy because of Ilva's bad pollution management. The EU measures against the Italian government soon became a case of EU interference in domestic affairs and all the national media have been talking of it for months.

By analysing his article of May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, entitled "Ilva's wrong calculations" (my translation), I brought to light and shared with the CIDOB seminar participants the use of the metaphor "EU-as-supervisor". Later I linked this metaphor to the European North-South divide perception. This means that by conveying the EU as the supervisor of the southern European member states the North-South divide perception can increase. We know that the idea that the northern member states are better than the southern member states (PIGS) goes far, but the perception of the EU as the supervisor of all its member states is more recent.

"We – the Italians – have taken on commitments which we haven't then fulfilled. Now we have to renegotiate them by paying again with our credibility" (my translation) (Zatterin, 2013).

Moreover, frequent titles such as "EU tells Italy what to do" and "EU applies sanctions to Italy" are front-page news in Italy, thereby reinforcing a negative perception of the EU in the citizens. For example, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2014, some days before the second default action against Italy regarding the Ilva case, Zatterin's article was entitled: "Ilva, EU urges Italy: 'Taranto remains unlawful'" or some days before Jyrki Katainen's visit to Rome<sup>2</sup>, he entitled his daily article in *La Stampa* (March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015, p.8) "EU mission for monitoring judiciary reform".

1. The author was awarded this Master's degree thanks to his thesis entitled "The Communication of the European Foreign Policy: a Linguistic Corpus-Based Analysis of the Catherine Ashton Speeches from 2010 to 2014".
2. Katainen has been the European Commissioner for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness since November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

The European opinion leaders can change perception by transforming the 'EU-as-supervisor' metaphor into the 'EU-as-supporter' metaphor.

This way of narrating the EU as supervisor through our media risks deepening the gap between the southern EU citizens and their European institutions, which are perceived as northern institutions because of their strictness. In this regard, Zatterin unconsciously strengthens the belief that Italy is the “bad guy”, while Europe is the “good guy”. He stresses his Europeanism through the lack of trust in the local institutions. His intention to build a common sense of European belonging in his readers by underlining the EU institutions' correctness becomes an argument for Eurosceptic readers. Therefore, in spite of positive communication, the perception of the EU is negative, especially in the southern countries, because of the well-known inferiority complex.

We maintain that the gap between the southern EU citizens and the EU institutions is also an effect of the work of the national press. In fact, Italy is part of the EU as are the other 27 Member States. Nevertheless, our journalists describe the EU as apart from the national states, as different institutions and foreign compared to the member states. Zatterin, like the majority of European journalists, describes the EU as something different from Italy. This generates the contraposition between Italy and the EU. He states in his article: “The wrong calculations of Ilva” that “Europe has tried to fix what Italy has ignored for years” (my translation). This expression divides two parts of the same whole, because Italy is part of Europe. In other words: the use of the metaphor “EU-as-supervisor” increases the inferiority complex of the southern EU citizens which influences the perception of the positive communication of the EU and deepens the gap between the citizens and the institutions.

Could we communicate the EU as a helper for the local institutions instead of a judge of the national political decisions? We need other expressions and headlines instead of the well-known/criticised “being their supervisor”. The EU can be communicated to its citizens as the supporter of their national states, as the coach of a 28 member-state team. Nowadays it happens that the communication of the EU is positive by identifying it as a fair judge of the member states, but its perception among the citizens is negative. We think that in times of economic crisis it is more realistic to change the communication than the perception. Therefore, the European opinion leaders can do it by transforming the “EU-as-supervisor” metaphor into the “EU-as-supporter” metaphor.

## Reference

Zatterin, Marco. “I conti sbagliati dell’Ilva”. *La Stampa* (15 May 2013) (online) <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/05/17/blogs/straneuropa/i-conti-sbagliati-dell-iva-pPKdt5tIC8gH6XRS6PM8iO/pagina.html>