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**EU DIGITAL DEMOCRACY AND MEDIA POLICY:
INTEGRATING THE EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY ACTION PLAN
INTO POLISH EDUCATION, POLITICAL COMMUNICATION,
AND RESEARCH PRACTICES**

***Abstract.** The article analyses the specific features of integrating the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) into Polish education, political communication, and research practices in the context of EU digital democracy and media policy. It demonstrates that EDAP functions as a normative and conceptual framework combining counter-disinformation measures, media pluralism, political advertising transparency, and democratic participation. The study shows that EDAP already influences educational policy, digital political communication, and academic discourse in Poland, although this integration remains uneven. Particular attention is paid to the gap between the formal inclusion of media literacy in educational policy and the actual development of relevant competences. It is concluded that further implementation of EDAP in Poland requires stronger coordination among education, media regulation, research, and civic participation.*

***Key words:** digital democracy, EU media policy, Poland, media literacy, disinformation.*

***Івановська Б. Цифрова демократія та медіаполітика ЄС: інтеграція плану дій європейської демократії у польську освіту, політичні комунікації та дослідницьку практику.** У статті проаналізовано особливості інтеграції European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) у польську освіту, політичну комунікацію та дослідницькі практики в контексті цифрової демократії та медіаполітики ЄС. Показано, що EDAP виконує функцію нормативно-концептуальної рамки, яка поєднує протидію дезінформації, захист медіаплюралізму, прозорість політичної реклами та зміцнення демократичної участі. Встановлено, що в Польщі вплив EDAP уже простежується в освітній політиці, цифровій політичній комунікації та академічному дискурсі, однак ця інтеграція залишається нерівномірною. Особливу увагу приділено розриву між нормативним закріпленням медійної грамотності та реальним рівнем сформованості відповідних компетентностей. Зроблено висновок, що подальша імплементация EDAP у*

Польщі потребує тіснішої координації між освітою, медійним регулюванням, дослідженнями та практиками громадянської участі.

Ключові слова: цифрова демократія, медіаполітика ЄС, Польща, медійна грамотність, дезінформація.

Relevance of the Study. In the context of accelerating digital transformation, democratic processes in the Member States of the European Union are increasingly dependent on the quality of the information environment and the resilience of the media system [7], the transparency of political communication in digital environments [8; 20], and the level of citizens' digital literacy [16; 23]. For this reason, the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) should be regarded not as a narrowly institutional document, but as a strategic framework through which the European Union seeks to respond to the interconnected threats of the contemporary digital era: disinformation [1; 5; 11], manipulative influence on electoral processes and political advertising [8; 21], the erosion of trust in the media and democratic resilience [6; 15], and the growing dependence of the public sphere on online platforms [22; 25].

The significance of EDAP for EU member states lies in its integration of the political-legal, media, and educational dimensions of democratic resilience [11; 15; 23]. It is no longer concerned solely with the legal regulation of platforms or the narrow protection of electoral infrastructure, but also with shaping a public environment in which citizens can critically assess information, recognise manipulative messages, understand the logic of political advertising, and participate in digital public communication in an informed manner [8; 16; 21; 23]. In this respect, EDAP is closely linked to the broader normative architecture of the EU, including the Digital Services Act, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the European Media Freedom Act, and other instruments regulating the digital sphere [6; 11; 24; 25]. Therefore, EDAP makes it possible to trace how European policy is gradually shifting from fragmented responses to individual crises toward a more comprehensive model of democratic resilience [1; 11; 15; 21; 24].

The Polish case is of particular research interest because it clearly illustrates the complexity of translating the pan-European digital-democratic agenda into national practice. On the one hand, Poland participates in broader European processes of regulatory and educational adaptation to new digital challenges [4; 12; 15]. On the other hand, the Polish context reveals persistent weaknesses in media monitoring, vulnerabilities within the national information space, and uneven levels of digital and media competence [4; 12; 30]. Studies of the Polish education system show that digital and media literacy are actively discussed and normatively articulated in the country; however, the implementation of these competencies remains uneven, and some initiatives still remain at the level of programmatic

declarations rather than stable educational practice [4]. At the same time, research on media and democracy in Poland highlights the need to strengthen monitoring capacities and democratic resilience in response to disinformation and other distortions of the information environment [12; 15; 30].

For precisely this reason, the triad of education, political communication, and research provides a productive framework for analysing the depth of EDAP implementation in Poland. Education is essential because it is through educational processes that basic digital, media, and civic competencies are developed; without them, sustainable democratic participation in the digital environment is difficult [4; 16; 23]. Political communication is equally important because it shows how these competencies operate in real digital settings shaped by platform logics, political advertising, algorithmically mediated visibility, and competing narratives [8; 20; 27]. Finally, the research dimension is indispensable, because without academic diagnosis, comparative analysis, and critical evaluation, it is difficult to assess the extent to which EU normative principles are translated into educational practice, media governance, and institutional mechanisms of democratic protection [11; 12; 15]. Comparative studies suggest that digital media can expand opportunities for civic and political participation [13; 27], but they can also facilitate populist and Eurosceptic mobilisation, especially where the educational and critical-literacy dimensions remain weak or unevenly developed [10; 23].

The relevance of the selected topic is further reinforced by its direct alignment with the objectives of the Jean Monnet Module ESPERIDTA. The project is oriented toward the integration of EU priorities, standards, strategies, and good practices supporting Polish education and research in the context of digital transformation. Consequently, the analysis of how EDAP is reflected in Polish education, political communication, and research practice is not external to the project, but constitutes an internally justified line of inquiry.

At the same time, contemporary scholarship suggests that the implementation of European approaches to digital democracy and media policy in Poland remains uneven. The literature points to vulnerabilities linked to disinformation in the Polish information space [30], limited monitoring capacities in the field of media and democracy [12], and a persistent gap between the formal inclusion of digital and media literacy in educational frameworks and the uneven development of these competencies in practice [4; 23]. In addition, recent work on platform and media regulation emphasises that new regulatory measures do not fully eliminate the concentration of power in digital infrastructures or the dependence of the public sphere on major platforms [11; 25]. For this reason, EDAP should be viewed not as a final solution, but as one stage in a broader process of European democratic and media restructuring [15; 21; 25].

Thus, despite the active development of the European Union's normative framework in the fields of digital democracy and media policy [11; 21; 24; 25], the question of how these initiatives are actually integrated into Polish education, political communication, and academic research remains insufficiently explored [4; 12; 15; 30]. It is precisely this tension between the normative ambition of European policy and the unevenness of its practical localization in Poland that determines the relevance of the present study.

Purpose of the Article. The purpose of this article is to analyse the specific features of the integration of the European Democracy Action Plan into Polish education, political communication, and research practice; to determine the extent to which the Polish experience corresponds to broader European benchmarks in the field of digital democracy and media policy; and to identify the main achievements, problem areas, and prospects for the further development of this direction.

European Democracy Action Plan as a Framework for Digital Democracy in the EU. The European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) should be regarded as one of the key strategic frameworks through which the European Union seeks to strengthen democratic resilience in the context of digital transformation [31; 1; 5; 11]. Its emergence was a response to a set of interconnected challenges, including the spread of online disinformation [1; 5; 31], manipulative influence on electoral processes and political advertising [8; 21; 31], the growing dependence of the public sphere on major digital platforms [22; 25], and concerns related to media freedom and pluralism [15; 24; 31]. In this sense, EDAP represents not only a political document, but also a broader governance model in which democracy is understood as requiring protection not only in legal terms, but also in informational, communicative, and educational dimensions [11; 15; 21; 31].

The key directions of EDAP combine several levels of democratic protection. First, they concern countering disinformation as a factor that can distort public debate and undermine trust in democratic institutions [1; 5; 31]. Second, they emphasize the protection of media freedom and pluralism, since a diverse and professionally responsible media environment is a fundamental condition for high-quality public debate [15; 24; 31]. Third, they stress the need for greater transparency in political advertising and communication, especially in digital environments where targeting, audience segmentation, and platform logics make it more difficult to assess the sources, purposes, and consequences of political influence [8; 20; 21; 31]. Finally, EDAP is linked to the broader objective of strengthening democratic participation, which presupposes not only access to political information but also the ability to critically assess digital content, recognize manipulative strategies, and participate in public communication in an informed way [9; 16; 17; 23; 31].

Normatively, EDAP does not exist in isolation, but forms part of a broader EU architecture of digital and media governance. Within this architecture, an

important role is played by the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) [32], the Digital Services Act (DSA) [33], the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) [34], and the Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising [35]. While the AVMSD provides a framework for the coordination of national rules on audiovisual media services and video-sharing platforms, the DSA strengthens obligations related to transparency, accountability, and systemic-risk management for online intermediaries and, in particular, very large platforms [32; 33]. The EMFA, in turn, emphasizes media pluralism, editorial independence, and protection against undue political interference [34]. Taken together, these instruments form a wider ecosystem of European digital governance in which democratic resilience is increasingly protected through the regulation of the infrastructures of public communication [11; 21; 24; 25; 31; 32; 33; 34; 35].

Thus, EDAP functions not as a separate initiative, but as a normative-conceptual node linking democratic theory, media policy, platform regulation, and the educational agenda [11; 15; 21; 23; 31]. For this reason, its analysis requires an interdisciplinary approach: outside its connection with digital literacy, media pluralism, and platform accountability, EDAP cannot be fully understood either as an EU political project or as a practical instrument for strengthening digital democracy [11; 15; 23; 25; 31].

Integrating EDAP into Polish Education. In the educational dimension, EDAP acquires particular significance because democratic resilience in the digital age increasingly depends on citizens' ability to critically assess information, distinguish reliable content from manipulative messages, understand the mediated character of platform communication, and recognize their own role in the digital public sphere [16; 18; 23; 28; 31]. In the Polish context, this logic is visible in the growing attention paid to digital and media literacy within the education system [4]. More broadly, contemporary research on media and information literacy shows the importance of integrating the safe and responsible use of digital media, the critical evaluation of information, and resilience to disinformation into educational practice [23; 31].

Substantively, such integration implies an expanded understanding of educational competence. It is no longer limited to the technical use of digital tools, but includes the critical evaluation of sources, the recognition of manipulative techniques, an understanding of the logic of platform communication, safe behaviour in digital space, and the principles of digital citizenship [16; 18; 23; 28]. In this sense, the logic of EDAP is consistent with an approach that combines civic, media, and digital education [23; 28; 31]. This approach is especially important in a context where political communication increasingly takes place online and participation in public life requires not only knowledge of democratic institutions, but also the ability to function within a complex information environment [8; 20; 27; 31].

However, it is precisely at the level of practical implementation that the gap between normative principles and the actual condition of the educational system becomes visible. Research on the Polish case shows that digital and media literacy is widely declared an important educational objective; however, the development of the corresponding competencies remains uneven [4]. In particular, studies discussed in the Polish literature often rely on self-diagnosis-oriented questionnaires, which capture students' perceptions of their skills rather than objectively verified competences [4]. This may create an overly optimistic picture of preparedness even where substantial gaps remain in the critical evaluation of information, the recognition of disinformation, and the understanding of mechanisms of digital influence.

In addition, the broader literature on media and information literacy shows that its curricular integration is frequently fragmented and weakened by insufficient evaluation systems, limited evidence collection, and unstable implementation mechanisms [23]. From this perspective, EDAP's influence on education in Poland can already be described as significant at the normative and competence-oriented level, but not yet fully institutionalized [23; 31]. It provides an important framework for linking civic, media, and digital education; however, the transition from the declarative inclusion of media literacy in educational policy to the systemic development and assessment of verifiable skills remains incomplete [4; 23].

EDAP and the Transformation of Political Communication in Poland. One of the most visible consequences of digital transformation has been the reconfiguration of political communication. In Poland, as in other EU member states, social media and digital platforms have expanded the channels through which politicians, parties, media actors, and citizens communicate and participate in public debate. Earlier research on the Polish case stressed the civic potential of new media, especially their capacity to widen opportunities for participation and less formal involvement in European political communication [29]. More recent comparative studies likewise suggest that digital political talk and online media can support political participation and mobilization, although these effects vary across democratic contexts and depend on the quality of the digital environment [13; 19; 27].

At the same time, the expansion of digital participation has not automatically improved the quality of public debate. Comparative scholarship shows that digital media may simultaneously facilitate political engagement and intensify polarization, distrust, and populist mobilization [10; 19]. Research on platform communication also indicates that visibility, virality, and engagement are shaped by platform-specific and algorithmically mediated logics, which can privilege reactive, emotionally charged, and highly amplified content over more deliberative forms of communication [19; 20]. Under such conditions, digital communication can broaden

participatory opportunities while also deepening socio-political fragmentation [10; 19; 20].

In the Polish context, this ambivalence is particularly important. Research on media and democracy in Poland points to ongoing social and media polarization, including divisions between conservative and liberal media and broader weaknesses in media accountability and monitoring capacities [12]. At the same time, studies of disinformation in Poland draw attention to the manipulative use of the information space and to the intensification of such practices during election campaigns [30]. For this reason, the problem of disinformation in Polish digital political communication should not be reduced to false messages alone; it should also be understood in relation to targeted influence, manipulative communication strategies, and platform-mediated amplification [1; 8; 20; 30].

EDAP provides an important normative framework for protecting democracy: it promotes free and fair elections, greater transparency in political advertising, stronger media freedom and pluralism, and action against disinformation [21; 31]. However, the Polish digital communication environment suggests that the existence of a pan-European framework does not automatically resolve structural tensions within the public sphere. Current scholarship indicates that EU regulation still leaves important blind spots regarding platform dependence and concentrations of infrastructural power [22; 25], while research on Poland points to persistent vulnerabilities linked to disinformation and to limited monitoring capacities in the field of media and democracy [12; 30]. Therefore, in the Polish case, EDAP should be analysed not as a finished solution but as a normative resource whose effectiveness depends on national institutional adaptation, the level of digital and media literacy, and society's capacity to critically assess manipulative political communication [4; 23; 31].

Polish Research Practices and the Academic Understanding of EDAP. The academic understanding of EDAP in Polish and broader European scholarship is developing at the intersection of political science, media and communication studies, legal studies, educational research, and broader studies of digital society [5; 11; 17; 21; 23; 25]. This is unsurprising, since EDAP itself connects platform regulation, democratic participation, media pluralism, disinformation governance, and civic empowerment [31]. Contemporary studies examine not only the content of individual European initiatives, but also the broader question of how digital infrastructures and platform power reshape the public sphere, journalism, and the conditions of democratic communication [11; 17; 21; 25]. In the Polish context, this issue acquires additional salience because research on media and democracy highlights the need to strengthen monitoring capacities and to better understand the links between media change, politics, and broader societal tensions [12].

In recent years, scholarly interest in such areas as fact-checking, information resilience, platform governance, and media literacy has intensified. Researchers increasingly analyse how national systems can strengthen resilience against disinformation [7], how the EU seeks to counter disinformation through journalistic and regulatory responses, including fact-checking [21], and how platform governance can strengthen democratic resilience while still leaving blind spots related to platform dependence and media concentration [25]. Alongside this, growing attention is being paid to the role of public service media in a platformized environment [6], to the relationship between media literacy education and digital political participation [16], and to the curricular integration of media and information literacy as part of a broader preventive response to the risks of the digital media ecosystem [23].

Nevertheless, the Polish research field in this area cannot yet be considered fully consolidated. Existing studies suggest that research on media and democracy in Poland reflects technological and political change, but also broader path dependencies and tensions between democratic media theory and media practice [12]. For this reason, issues related to EDAP appear in the academic field through several only partly connected trajectories, including media and democracy monitoring [12], disinformation and information security [30], platform governance and EU responses to disinformation [21; 25], and digital and media literacy [4; 23].

An additional difficulty is that the available literature is much stronger at identifying challenges and mapping normative responses than at measuring long-term effects. The review literature on media and information literacy points to persistent weaknesses in evaluation systems and in the collection of evidence about implementation and impact [23], while research on media and democracy in Poland underscores the continuing challenge of translating scholarship into sustained applied knowledge-sharing among academia, policymakers, and media actors [12]. This suggests that the field is already thematically significant, but still only partly integrated at the methodological and institutional levels [12; 23].

It is precisely in this context that the interdisciplinary design of the ESPERIDTA project acquires additional scholarly value. As an Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Module focused on the study and integration of EU priorities, standards, strategies, and good practices supporting Polish education and research in digital transformation, ESPERIDTA provides a useful framework for approaching EDAP not as a narrow legal-political document, but as a multi-level framework affecting education, communication, and research practice [36]. Consequently, further academic understanding of EDAP in the Polish context requires not merely a greater number of separate publications, but a higher degree of conceptual and methodological coordination among existing lines of research [12; 23; 25].

Conclusions. The analysis carried out shows that the European Democracy Action Plan should be regarded as one of the key normative-conceptual frameworks of the European Union in the field of digital democracy, as it combines measures aimed at countering disinformation, protecting media freedom and pluralism, increasing the transparency of political advertising, and strengthening democratic participation in the digital environment [21; 31; 34; 35].

Together with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the Digital Services Act, the European Media Freedom Act, and the Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, EDAP forms part of a broader European model of democratic protection in which special importance is attached not only to institutional mechanisms, but also to the quality of the information environment, the resilience of the public sphere, and citizens' digital competences [31; 32; 33; 34; 35].

The Polish experience demonstrates that this framework is already visible in national debates and educational priorities, but its implementation remains uneven and incomplete. In the educational sphere, growing attention is paid to digital and media literacy, the critical evaluation of information, safe behaviour in digital environments, and digital citizenship [4; 18; 23; 28]. At the same time, a substantial gap persists between the normative recognition of these competences and their consistent, verifiable development among learners [4; 23]. This makes it possible to argue that EDAP's influence on Polish education is conceptually significant, but still insufficiently institutionalized and methodologically consolidated [4; 23; 31].

In the sphere of political communication, the Polish context clearly illustrates the dual nature of digital transformation. On the one hand, social media and digital platforms broaden opportunities for civic participation, political mobilization, and the public expression of political positions [13; 27; 29]. On the other hand, the same environment may intensify polarization, manipulative forms of political influence, the circulation of disinformation, and the vulnerability of some audiences to populist and Eurosceptic narratives [10; 12; 19; 30]. Consequently, EDAP provides an important framework for democratic protection through its emphasis on transparency, media pluralism, and action against disinformation [21; 31]. However, it cannot by itself remove the structural sources of conflict or fully overcome the asymmetries of the digital public sphere, especially those linked to platform power and broader media dependence [22; 25].

The analysis of research practices indicates that Polish and broader European scholarship has developed sustained interest in digital democracy, media policy, fact-checking, information resilience, platform governance, and media literacy [6; 7; 11; 12; 21; 23; 25]. However, this field remains marked by fragmentation, limited interdisciplinary coordination, and an insufficient number of instruments for assessing the long-term effects of normative and educational reforms [12; 23]. This

means that further study of EDAP integration requires not only an expansion of the thematic body of research, but also greater methodological coherence across legal, political science, media, and educational approaches [12; 23; 25].

Thus, the integration of the European Democracy Action Plan into Polish education, political communication, and research practice has already become a visible element of ongoing digital transformation; however, its results cannot yet be regarded as fully realized [4; 12; 23; 31]. Further progress depends on stronger coordination among educational policy, media regulation, academic research, and civic participation practices, as well as on more precise mechanisms for assessing digital and media literacy, resilience to disinformation, and the effectiveness of platform governance [4; 21; 23; 25; 31]. In this respect, the Polish case has both scholarly and practical value and also confirms the relevance of the research logic of the ESPERIDTA project [36].

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