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MEDIA FOR DIVERSITY AND
MIGRANT INTEGRATION

**MEDIVA Thematic Report 2011/01:
*Migrants and Media Newsmaking***

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European University Institute



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ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

Thematic Report

Migrants and Media Newsmaking Practices

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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

MEDIVA PROJECT

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The MEDIVA Research Project

Media for Diversity and Migrant Integration: Consolidating Knowledge and Assessing Media Practices across the EU

The MEDIVA project seeks to strengthen the capacity of the media to reflect the increasing diversity of European societies and promote immigrant integration. To achieve this objective, the project will organize the knowledge produced so far and will create a searchable online database of all relevant studies on media and diversity/integration issues that will be made available for use by the media professionals as well as the general public. Building on the existing work and combining it with a series of in depth interviews with senior journalists across Europe, the MEDIVA project will generate a set of media monitoring indicators (which will be available in 8 languages) that can work for different media, in different countries, and that can provide the basis of a self- and other-assessment and future monitoring mechanism in the media. Four thematic reports will be written to reflect on how journalists and other media professionals deal with migrant diversity in five areas of their work: in recruitment/employment conditions; in training provided; as regards codes of ethics; in news making and programme production; in presenting diversity (news content). Finally, five Regional Workshops will bring together media professionals, NGOs and researchers to discuss the role of the media in promoting migrant integration.

The MEDIVA project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou (anna.triandafyllidou@eui.eu).

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Executive Summary

European societies are becoming increasingly multicultural and ethnically diverse as a result of immigration. This change, however, is not properly reflected in the European mass media, neither in the portrayal or representation of immigrants in the mainstream media. Although various studies on immigration and media have observed positive trends it is commonly accepted that the media continue to contribute to the reproduction of the negative image of immigrants and social racism. It has further been attested that the features of newsworthiness and the technical characteristics of the news making routine, on the one hand, intertwined with the unequal power positions of migrants and the native majority (and its elites in particular) and ethnic prejudice or stereotypes, on the other hand, create a self-fulfilling prophecy: migrants create problems and hit the news only by their negative impact or actions in the host society.

Indeed, it is the media that determine what will be news, thereby attaching importance to events and people. The media do not just passively report the news. They select what is to be covered. In this way they directly dictate social and political attitudes, shape ideas, and incite actions, for good and for ill, equally.

This thematic report provides a comprehensive critical discussion about the ways in which the production of migration related news takes place and the special factors that affect it. Drawing on the literature on the subject as well as on the analysis of the sixty-eight interviews conducted with journalists and media professionals from six European countries: Italy, Poland, Ireland, Great Britain, Greece and the Netherlands, we argue in favour of a fair and balanced portrayal of migrants in the media and also highlight the current tendencies in news-making and programme production practices adopted in the outlets in the six European countries under examination pointing to positive features as well as shortcomings.

For the purpose of this thematic report we adopt the view of Tuchman that making news is more of a meaning-making exercise from who observes and reports on them rather than a distortion of reality. Among the criteria of news-making adopted by media actors we actually identify a set of common dimensions that define the newsworthiness of a given event or piece of information:

- that it is easy to understand
- conveys a clear meaning (good or bad, black or white, rarely is news ‘grey’),
- it usually involves elites (political or other), and
- it has sense of surprise/unexpectedness.

At the same time, the news-making production on immigration issues is primarily related to news gathering on immigrants’ events; definition of newsworthiness of migration events; diverse source selection; the identification and contact with immigrant associations, representative spokespersons and experts of immigrant communities. It also incorporates issues of power relations, notably the group membership and/or political affiliation of either the people reported or of those who own a specific newspaper or TV/radio channel, and technical issues.

At the empirical level the present report looks at the extent to which the above comes true with regard to the coverage of such a contentious issue as migration by media outlets. It further investigates the perspectives from which migration news is looked upon and the sources the media rely on in the news-making process. Concretely, the empirical analysis of the data collected in the course of the interviews with sixty-eight journalists and media

professionals from six European countries investigated the following topics: Definition of Migration News; Migration News: Perspectives of Coverage; Political Agenda and Migration News. Migration News out of Political Agenda; Migration News and Sources; Migration News and Language.

The analysis has shown that despite the positive trends observed, migrant-related news-making practices remain bound up with several challenges. In particular the following issues have been highlighted:

- News on migration are gathered when something sensational and worth reporting happens. And this is usually something ‘bad’ related to migrants or migration.
- The general political agenda influences strongly how migration related issues are reported in the news.
- But many journalists that are concerned about the quality and even-handedness of their reporting go beyond the political agenda to cover issues that they see as worth reporting because people want to know more about them.
- Issues that are reported cover personalised, emotion-laden stories that can interest a wider public, stories that show the ‘human’ and ‘everyday’ aspect of migration (including families reunited, positive stories of integration, people fleeing conflict or also migrants using and abusing the welfare system)
- Journalists often consult migrants, migrant communities, NGOs and other non state actors which they consider most reliable for migration related issues. The rule of thumb is: you want to talk to people who are directly involved.
- However, accessing such ‘alternative’ sources of information instead of for instance national news agencies, government authorities or academic experts, is not always easy either because many migrants do not trust journalists and are afraid to talk or because the journalist may not have access to the relevant networks so as to build trust. Actually experts can play this role as people who can function as gatekeepers to migrant voices.
- The concern that migrant voices are not heard as much as they should even for issues that are of direct concern to them remains.
- In addition, media outlets do not cover immigration as a topic continuously. Media tend to flood the media space with instant coverage when something dramatic happens but quickly drop the subject at ‘normal’ times, thus prompting the public to think of immigration in the “problem/conflict/difficulty” framework.

Although our study shows an ambivalent picture with contrasting tendencies (reducing editorial budgets and number of full time professional journalists but also increase citizen participation and potential multiplication of news sources through smart phones and the social media), the last 5 years have also seen the set up of important initiatives promoting diversity awareness in the media. Among those we single out the Media4Diversity project, the Camden principles for freedom of expression and equality, the Ethical Journalism initiative and the Charter of Rome for reporting on migrants and refugees, and the Toolkit on Diversity for public television broadcasting.

Keywords

Migration news, news making, news gathering, news agenda, sources of news

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1. Introduction

European societies are multicultural and ethnically diverse as a result of immigration. Eurostat data for 2010 note that there are 49.7 million foreign born people residing in the EU27 of whom 2/3s were born outside the EU27 and one third was born in a member state other than the member state of her/his residence. Thus the foreign born correspond to nearly 10% of the total EU population but they are unevenly distributed across the EU, with more than 80% of the foreign born living in the EU15. These basic data suggest a significant ethnic and cultural diversity within EU countries even if they do not include second generation migrants or ethnic minorities.

The ethnic and cultural diversity of European societies is not properly reflected in the European mass media, nor in the portrayal and representation of immigrants in the mainstream media (Niessen and Huddleston 2010:28). Although various studies on immigration and media have noticed positive trends, it is commonly accepted that the issues of migration and integration are increasingly incorporated in mass media news-product under the general conceptualization of a ‘clash of civilisations’¹ (EBU-UER, 2006:18).

Often the media, although to different extents - depending on whether elite or tabloid outlets - tend to highlight controversial and conflict aspects of migration rather than opt for well researched, investigative and substantial reports of the social contexts of the relevant news occurrences. The reasons for this are manifold: the lack of specialised knowledge on migrant issues, the limited time that a journalist has to collect information, or the fact that a blunt piece of news has more news ‘value’ than an elaborate and nuanced account of a complex situation. Unfortunately, this has become a ‘*fixed repertoire*’ since news events coverage employs a repetitive chain of statements, actions and conclusions (Law 2010:208).

In general, one major characteristic is the media’s negative representations of immigrants, which is highly reflected in numerous negative news reports while interesting subjects such as their rights occurs much less frequently in the media (van Dijk 1988: 172; Niessen and Huddleston 2010:46). Even when positive reporting does occur, it tends to be presented as the ‘exception to the rule’ and reflects processes of cultural assimilation with migrant individuals portrayed as successful and socially integrated if their creativity and achievements can be framed within the dominant culture (Spoonley and Butcher 2009:4).

Drawing on the growing literature on the subject and the analysis of the 68 interviews with senior journalists and media professionals conducted by the MEDIVA partner research teams in six European countries (Italy, Greece, Ireland, Great Britain, Poland and the Netherlands) this report focuses on the current tendencies in newsmaking and programme production practices with regard to migrants, the practical difficulties and ways of their overcoming.

The report starts with a short section on definitions of relevant terms. After this section our analysis is organised around some fundamental questions that follow the process of news making, notably: What constitutes news when migrants are concerned? To what extent does the political debate influence what is reported on migrants? What are the main sources of migrant news and which voices are ‘heard’ in the media? In our analysis we present the main

¹ This specific phrase is used to illustrate how the migration/integration news/debate is framed in mass media news-product, which mostly perceives migration events/news as social and cultural «*crises*» or «*conflicts*» as for instance in the case of Danish cartoons or the hijab conflict in France.

findings of our qualitative interviews and contrast or complement them with the results of previous studies. The report concludes with some key messages for media professionals on how to adopt a more diversified practices in news gathering and news making. We also highlight some ongoing projects that promote ethical journalism and diversity in the media.

2. Definitions

For most citizens, news is presumably the type of discourse which they deal with most frequently in their everyday lives (van Dijk 1986: 156). In reality, most of people's knowledge and beliefs about the world are shaped primarily by the plethora of news reports that they use to read, listen to or watch every day. It is commonly accepted that news is probably the only "*discursive practice... that is engaged in so frequently and by so many people as news in the press and on television*" (van Dijk 1991:3).

But, how exactly is news defined? According to Tuchman news is a "*product that must be made fresh daily*" (1978:179). For Fuller, however, "*news represents at most a provisional kind of truth, the best that can be said quickly*" (1996:6).²

But, on the other hand, not everything new happening in the world can be qualified as newsworthy from the point of view of applicability and relevance to the general audience (Brighton and Foy 2007:5). In this context, Bauder observes that "*news is the material reference point, on which journalists act to construct meanings of objects and people*" (2010: 16). Others adopt the approach which sees "*news as a report of what a news organization has recently learned about matters of some significance or interest to the specific community that news organization serves*" (Fuller 1996:8).

In fact Schudson (1997) distinguishes notes that the production of news is a social process and that news is the outcome of a routine bureaucratic system that takes place in a large organisation such as a media outlet. Already 30 years ago, Gans (1979) identified the role of journalists as "*constantly [seeking] to exploit or outmanoeuvre the media's routines and operations that primarily, involve summarizing, refining and altering what becomes available to them from source*" (cited in Preston, 2009: 51).

Indeed, the idea of news as a "*manufactured product*" according to which news constitutes "*a construction of reality rather than a picture of reality*" (Whitney et al., 2004:402) predominated during the 1970s. Similarly, Tuchman (1978) and others suggested that media routines and professional procedures systematically construct what is considered as news by selecting and promoting a highly partial range of daily current affairs or issues to the status of newsworthiness³ (Preston, 2009: 51). Schudson (1997) distinguishes between **making news** (information is shaped and given a certain meaning by the person that organises and interprets it) and **making up news** (where reality is presented in a distorted manner).

In this report we adopt the view of Tuchman and others that making news is more of a meaning-making exercise rather than a distortion of reality. In other words, while events exist

² Whilst Jacomelli, on the contrary, believes that "*there is no ultimate self-explicable truth, but only the object that words and images contribute to build, in a constantly dynamic process that by moving, conceals its own making*" (2010:91).

³ Tuchman, however, tried to distance her analysis from prior studies of news '*distortion*' on the grounds that '*each socially constructed reality necessarily has meaning*'. Indeed, she pointed out distortion was itself a socially constructed concept...*it might be valuable to think of news not as distorting, but rather as reconstituting the everyday world* (1978:129). She advanced the notion of the '*news net*' as a device designed to '*catch*' news in order to conceptualise the newsmakers' imposition of order on the social world. Her analysis suggested that the '*newsbeat*' among other things, is also a social process, '*a network of social relations*' involving reporters and sources that frequented particular places or locations (Preston, 2009: 51).

their meaning is not independent from who observes and reports on them. Thus, the selection of which events to report and the meaning attributed to them (e.g. relating a piece of news to specific other events, people or ideas) is a necessary process.

In relation to this distinction between making news and making up news, we should also distinguish between the news gathering process and the news making process. News gathering concerns mainly the collection of information from various sources. News making takes place subsequently by selecting and organising the information, presenting not only facts but also attributing a certain meaning to them.

News gathering is an important part of the reporting. Until a few years ago, news gathering was structured as a network but there was one point in the network that acted as the hub of information. Thus people working for national or international news agencies would feed their reports, text, pictures or other news materials to the agency which would then re-distribute it to media outlets that had a subscription with that particular agency. While the speed of information transfer has considerably increased during the last 2 decades; fax and telex have been replaced by email and internet. Those technological changes affected the time and place dimension of the information: it was possible to gather and re-distribute information including pictures, videos, live interviews from far away places in almost real time, they did not change qualitatively the organisation of news gathering: reports on the ground were still professionals who were linked to a media agency or outlet. News agencies remained the central hub for gathering and re-distributing information.

The most recent developments in ICT technologies however have brought important qualitative changes in the field of journalism and in particular in news gathering. On one hand, the development of smart phones, wireless internet networks, small laptops and digital cameras, and their commercialisation at affordable prices has given a potential journalistic tool to many citizens who can now gather some information and make it readily available to other users and/or to journalists. At the same time the development and quick spread out of the social media has also provided a platform where the user can upload their news items without even the interference of a journalist or a media outlet. The social media such as Facebook but also You Tube provide for the multiplier effect: they help exchange and share information in a split second with users in other parts of the world without necessarily having this information filtered by the media. Of course such news items that appear in the social media are in their raw form, without a sophisticated news making process invested upon them.

The big change in news gathering practices brought about by the new ICT and social media development has changed the role of the audience. Bruns (2005: 23) analysed collaborative online news production already in 2005 highlighting the emergence of participatory journalism. Media users have partly transformed themselves into information providers, amateur journalist, freelance amateur reporters.

The experience of Arab Spring news reporting last year has marked a turning point in this respect as the cutting edge news, minute by minute, of what was happening for instance in square Tahir in Cairo were transmitted through smartphone videos and their uploading on social media such as Facebook rather than by frontline war reporters of the major news agencies and TV channels from across the world. Similarly the Concordia cruise ship wreck in January 2012 in the Tyrrhenian sea, near the tiny island of Il Giglio in Italy has shown how unexpected dramatic events can now be filmed by the people involved in them: people running to enter the life safety boats as the boat was slowly sinking also had the time to film the scenes and send them (apparently as soon as they were on the shore) to facebook or youtube so that they were quickly shown on prime time evening news not only in Italy but all around Europe.

These new trends have profoundly transformed **news gathering** making it more polyphonic, less professional, less institutionalised: the former network structure with a hub in the middle is breaking down to some extent, especially when there are breaking news that only participants can transmit in real time. We may claim that there is a democratisation of the news gathering process taking place as people who are participants or direct observers of an event can give information about it. Such democratisation defies embedded structures of power as even if big media outlets may select their materials, all materials are directly available and quickly diffused through the social media. These features of participatory news gathering are particularly relevant in the case of migrant related news as they allow a bottom-up pluralisation of news sources. We shall return later to the issue of sources of migrant related news.

Making news: Paschal Preston in his recent study (2009) adopts the idea of news-making as “*a standardized routine*”⁴. The criteria that frame this standardized news-making routine were firstly identified by Galtung and Ruge (1965). They include: *Relevance, Timeliness, Simplification, Predictability, Unexpectedness, Continuity, Composition, Elite peoples, Elite nations, Negativity*. Later on, Harcup and O’Neill’s (2001) study further elaborated these criteria (earlier introduced by Galtung and Ruge) and instead proposed the following ones: *Power elite, Celebrity, Entertainment, Surprise, Bad news, Good news, Magnitude, Relevance, Follow-ups and Media agenda*. Among those, we actually identify a set of common dimensions that define the newsworthiness of a given event or piece of information:

- that it is easy to understand,
- conveys a clear meaning (good or bad, black or white, rarely are news ‘grey’),
- it usually involves elites (political or other), and
- it has a sense of surprise/unexpectedness.

What is defined as news production practices? The news production is considered to be the outcome of a concrete process which “*puts into play the knowledge of the interests and needs of the public, and the ability of the journalist to deliver and process information without distorting reality, selecting and ranking what is news*” (De la Torre and Téramo, 2009: 84)⁵.

The newsroom productive routines are defined as “*the processes and patterns of production and work put into practice daily by journalists...everything a journalist does since he or she starts thinking of certain information until it is published in any medium of communication*” (Sabés and Verón, 2008, cited in Tumo 2010:2)⁶.

In reality, the production of news is constrained by numerous routines, practices and organisational limits which influence the contents and presentation of reports in press, TV and radio programmes. The newsmaking approach assumes that the selection and presentation of news topics, actors and events is constrained by several conditions (ERCOMER 2002:430).

Among the most central factors commonly identified in the literature⁷ are: News values; News scripts & genres; Ownership, Control and political affiliation; Background, Socialisation and Ethnic group membership of journalists; Differential access (of sources and news actors); The relations between press and politics; Editorial policies, including relations between journalist and editor-in-chief. Finally the news-making production on immigration issues is primarily

⁴ a definition introduced by Lippmann in 1922

⁵ See http://www.revistalatinacs.org/10/art/881_UAB/RLCS_art881Eng.pdf

⁶ ibid

⁷ ERCOMER 2002, 429-430

related to news gathering on immigrants' events; definition of newsworthiness of migration events; diverse source selection; the identification and contact with immigrant associations, representative spokespersons and experts of immigrant communities (van Dijk 2011: 29).

The news production process does not take into account only the newsworthiness criteria outlined in the previous paragraph but also incorporates issues of **power relations**, notably the group membership and/or political affiliation of either the people reported or of those who own the specific newspaper or tv/radio channel, and **technical issues** (the way in which the news genre is constructed before publication and the relationship between an editor and her/his staff). These issues are of special relevance when considering how news on migrants are produced because migrants are politically 'weak' since they have limited or no political rights and belong to a national/ethnic/religious minority group, rather than the majority.

3. News gathering and news making on migrants and migration-related issues

This study concentrates on the processes of news gathering and news making concerning migrants and migration, i.e. both as regards migration-specific topics but also as regards the representation of migrants and their voices in general news. The results presented here are based on 68 semi structured qualitative interviews conducted in six European countries: Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the U.K. Interviewees (for a list see the Annex at the end of this report) were senior journalists or newspaper/TV channel directors, diversity managers and/or programme directors in these six countries in television channels or newspapers. Our interviews covered both the public and the private sector, quality and more populist newspapers, left- and right-wing oriented media outlets. Interviews were conducted in the national language but interview protocols were created in English. The interviews covered a range of issues including the thematic representation of migrants in the media, the existences of specialised programmes or time zones, the news gathering and news making practices in the different media, the relevant recruitment and employment practices (including anti discrimination but also positive action schemes aiming to recruit young migrants in the journalistic profession) as well as training programmes.

3.1. Definition of Migration News

It has been systematically observed that the majority of media coverage on migration is presented and reported in the news format, whereas editorial articles on the matter and investigative and/or background analysis are almost inexistent. This fact can lead to the hypothesis that the subject of migration is considered as appropriate primarily for the news genre and only from the perspective of information (Tumo, 2010: 6).

It might well be the case that this is partly due to the limited migrants' access to the media – either because of the limited number of migrant journalists employed or the endogenous organisational problems of migrants' communities themselves. They have actually less power to influence the sources and mechanisms fuelling the public discourses on which daily news-making is generated (i.e. press conferences and documentation) and also have fewer chances to provide the necessary framework for routine news gathering (The Brookings Institute 2008:74).

Furthermore, as various scholars have noted, their opinions are intentionally ignored or found less credible or newsworthy (van Dijk 2000:5). This is partly related to what Koopmans conceptualizes as "*the selection process by the mass media*" which indeed constitutes *«one of the central mechanisms by which citizenship regimes impinge on patterns of public claims-*

making” (2004:449). Undoubtedly, in societies where migrants and their associations are not considered part of the political community, it is difficult for them to overcome the selection barriers of the news media - which indeed privilege powerful actors with high status and legitimacy (ibid).

As van Dijk (1991) argues, the media have the tendency to draw on and give preference to “pre-formulations” of concepts and categories articulated by powerful social and political elites. This is how they report migration news, rather than searching for details and the background of migration current news occurrences (van Dijk, 1991:41). It is exactly the views and definition of the dominant class - naturalized through media coverage - which ultimately make them seem “normal”. They dominate and direct public discourses until they become “common sense” (Jacomelli 2010:91). Presumably, this is why in news reports on immigrants and ethnic minorities issues it is commonly the institutions, such as the government, the local or the police authorities, that are accounted for and quoted, and to a lesser extent the representatives of the migrants’ associations (van Dijk 1989:6). Therefore, the general prediction of the classical theory on news values seems to corroborate the argument that *news is about the elite, especially the political elite* (van Dijk 1988:57).

At the same time, this media’s approach conveniently leaves out the immigrants’ voices, which indeed seem unable to challenge the negative definitions that are systematically attributed to them by media news reports. Consequently, immigrants, by definition, are broadly represented in the news as speechless actors involved in negative acts (ter Wal 2002: 428).

Jacomelli (2010) argues that “*the issue of migration is defined by a discourse which, in turn, is built upon voids and absences...Information is often concealed, if not distorted or bent in order to fit into a specific ideological approach*” (ibid, 2010:91). Similarly, van Dijk (1989) provides fundamental insights into the media ideological orientation particularly in association with ethnic or racial dimensions. According to his formulation “*white journalists ... represent ethnic minority groups in terms of ‘them’...and since ethnic minorities are also predominantly working class, are less organized in powerful institutions, and have little political influence, the two dimensions of race and class combined produce social cognitions and therefore social practices among journalists that tend to ignore these out-groups or to represent them in a consistently negative framework*” (van Dijk, 1989:6).

As it has been stressed above, the media determine what will be news, thereby attaching importance to events and people. The media do not just passively report the news. They select what is to be covered. In this way they directly dictate social and political attitudes, shape ideas, and incite actions, for good and for ill, equally.

In our conversations with journalists we made an attempt to investigate to what extent the above comes true with regard to the coverage of such a contentious issue as ‘migration’, **when and what falls under the journalists’ scrutiny when migration comes into play**. We specifically asked them if they consider that there is such a thing as ‘objectivity’ in reporting migration news and whether they have a specific perspective from to look on migration news.

‘Migrant related news is first of all news.’(int.67)

It is common understanding that news is what is timely and different, not routine. The interviewed journalists (int. 37, 38) repeatedly stressed that the media are news driven, they are event driven (int. 37):

... news is event driven, you know? (...) Nobody says: Oh we haven't done a story on such a thing for weeks, we need to do one. It doesn't work like that. Not if you want to sell papers (...). (int.38)

Newsmaking on migrants seems to be following this general pattern. Migration news is event driven. It is therefore on most occasions a reaction on what is going on at the moment. (int.38, 43, 53, 54, 60, 67) So it will generally pick up any stories that are currently happening and will thus be more reactive than proactive. (int. 37) As an Irish journalist stressed: *'We are not deciding today that I want to do a story about Nigerians in Dublin'* (int.37).

Migrant related news will however also depend on what makes a story from the newsroom, on the extent to which this or that piece of news is found 'meaningful' by the editors (int.43, 56, 68): *'If the editor-in-chief or the director see no interest to it, then it doesn't "play"'*. (int.56)

In sum, **the news on immigrants is linked with the events of the moment**. If nothing extraordinary occurs, there is no emergency with respect to immigrants, little is actually said about the immigrants. (int.55, 56, 60) This is even more so in view of a certain 'migrant fatigue' (int.29, 28, 33, 36, 37, 41) and loss of interest in the migration topic observed even in countries traditionally dedicating much attention to diversity issues, including Great Britain, Ireland and the Netherlands.

To become news a migration story has to meet several criteria. It has to be spectacular! (int.18, 28). By the same token, events which are not pictorial in nature may be relatively neglected by the media. In line with what constitutes 'news' (discussed earlier), migrant news must be interesting (int.51), important and of high visibility (int.38), challenging to people (int.56) and sudden. It must be news that 'touches' the society, changes everyday life (int.58) and impacts on the overall situation. (int.44). Even more importantly, migrant news has to attract public attention and it must sell well (int.12). As one journalist noted, reporters always ask themselves 'do people want to read that?' (int.38) Migration news needs therefore to be tailored to be interesting and entertaining, if you want, to the average viewer or reader.

What is more, as one Dutch journalist noticed, when migrants are concerned, the story of one migrant has to be representative of something, it needs to be broadened and appeal to a wider audience. (int.27) Interest seems to be much stronger once a 'national' element is introduced while stories that "only" refer to migrants would normally get less attention (int.36, 59).

The media tend to objectify certain migrants who fit certain patterns and portray them through the eyes of a homogenised 'national' type. Migrants should thus figure as part of a general, preferably large-scale, news story. Migrants per se will not be the focus of the story but rather they would be pictured as one of the elements of a much bigger story (e.g., thousands of refugees fleeing a country because of civil unrests there) (int.1). If there is a big story (e.g., the publication of the cartoon of Prophet Mohammed in Denmark), then there would be a room for other supporting stories, including migration issues, e.g., Muslim integration in Denmark. (int.1) The size and the number of migrants concerned and the impact of the event are all decisive (int. 25). Good examples of such news are recent events in Libya. The current movement of populations or natural disasters; large scale environmental refugee movements would also be most newsworthy (int.1).

Migrant 'good news is bad news of course' (int.13)

The economic interests of the media in gaining and keeping viewers and the current political agenda in most of the European countries under analysis frequently create a bias pushing the migrant-related news toward sensationalism:

News on immigrants is sometimes associated with criminal news or it becomes news when something extraordinary happens... migrant related news is always only something sensational, both in positive and negative terms, and not a normal phenomenon characteristic of our age. (int.64)

As a result, there is a disproportionate (to their actual frequency of occurrence or actual importance for the overall issue of migration and migrant integration) coverage to events involving migrants in episodes of crime, violence, conflict, scandal, scares. (int.9) Negative coverage and ‘jump on negative stories’ constitute ‘news’ when migrants are concerned (int.10, 34, 44). Immigrants are thus perceived as a bad thing, especially in those media whose agenda is ‘immigration sells newspapers’ (int.4). This is for example the case when we look at the common journalistic practice to mention the national origin of a person who has committed a crime (int.59).

News when immigrants are concerned can be anything that is shocking (int.7), anything that goes along the lines of ‘migrants are swamping the country’. (8) Immigration is then often perceived as an unfair concurrence and migrants as nothing less than destabilizers of the labor markets of the host countries. Headlines often speak for themselves ‘More unemployed British people than foreign-born’ (int.7).

Immigration is also perceived as a security problem with stories of migrant involvement into crime, prostitution, black market (int. 34, 52, 54, 61), e.g. foreigners breaching visa regimes (int.36), committing homicides (int.47), etc. Immigration is also an economic problem with migrants being intruders into the welfare of the receiving countries (e.g., migrants receiving social welfare payments in the middle of a recession (int.36)), a health threat (e.g. foreigners are using the health system for free, or Aids as a disease threat to public health brought by immigrants) (int.7) or ‘the conflict of cultures’ issue. (int.14)

Most frequently⁸ anti-immigration rhetoric, alarmism and consequently a constant drone of hostility are used consciously. “Anything that a migrant does will be construed as negative; all effects of migration will be presented as negative” (int.9). At times this can be done to the extent that when a report is ready and edited, it is edited not to avoid discrimination but rather to ‘exacerbate the way the news is presented’. (int.59) It then comes as no surprise that local populations may blame migrants for taking their jobs or for jeopardizing their security and welfare. We can thus assume that many of these discussions are based on emotions and false perceptions about migrants that the media encourage by omitting their voice or the ‘other side’ of the story that is normally full of abuses, desperation, violent acts at the hand of the police or criminal organisations.

Interestingly, as a senior journalist from Ireland points out, the coverage of immigrants can be in two extremes: very negative and kind of tokenistic, as the examples above demonstrate; and it can be so positive that it becomes unreal (int.34). Some journalists portray migrants only from a positive perspective, and often uncritically, without reflecting “unofficial ordinary discourse” that is going on:

⁸ Two informants argued that some of their colleagues are not aware of their own prejudice (int.38) and/or do not have enough knowledge about the issue they are reporting on and expressing opinions about (int. 8) so they do not realise the concrete repercussions of their work, of the stereotypes they reinforce, of the ammunition, in effect, that they provide to those in the political arena who do push forth policies of exclusion and xenophobia. It is however difficult to believe that this is the case given that journalists’ work is all about news, being read and actually thus inform and shape public opinion. It is difficult to believe that there are journalists that are not aware of this crucial aspect of their work.

“Any evidence of migrants’ inclusion and integration is touted, is probably exaggerated or is celebrated, perhaps rightly so, but perhaps being exaggerated as well. You know, the first black Major, first child in third level.” (int.33)

Framing migrants in an overly positive, uncritical way, showing only ‘the perfect examples’ (int.34) journalists provide a distorted portrayal of migrants and fail to deal with the more difficult kind of issues (int.33):

I suppose most of our coverage has been very positive of immigration in terms of it has been a boom to the economy... We actually maybe not covered the other side so much. In fact probably we should’ve covered some opinion articles on well, you know, questioning whether immigration was a good thing, you know. But I would say it would predominately have been the other way, that it is a good thing. (...) (int.41)

While sincere advocacy of the wellbeing of immigrants and interest in immigrant lives with which media reply to alarmism are undoubtedly positive in themselves caution should be taken, in our opinion, not to simplify complex issues to the level of anecdotal evidence and not to use these positive instances as a distraction from pressing social issues. Indeed, a balanced view point should be found between the unavoidable negative migrant news and too positive a presentation of migrant reality.

3.2. Perspectives of Coverage

The mass media have long been seen as an important mechanism in constructing and mediating relations between host and immigrant minorities. Their role has typically been portrayed as endorsing, if not, initiating racist imagery (Spoonley and Butcher 2009:2). The relationship between natives’ attitudes and news on immigration has shown that natives’ perceptions depend significantly on the presence of newsworthy events which crowd out news on immigration (Jacomelli 2010:12).

Many authors have attributed responsibility to the mass media for promoting negative images of the immigrants. For instance van Dijk’s (1993) study shows how the media contribute to the reproduction of racist imagery. As Ian Law (2010) put it

“journalists provided a reading of the events which shaped hostility and was markedly different to the perceptions of inhabitants of neighbourhoods that had become the focus of reporting and that they did not recognise themselves... in the way their problems or lives were shown in the media” (Law 2010:208).

In reality, only when immigration is associated with deviance behaviours such as crime it makes news. News items usually involve sensationalist and selective reporting which indeed influence, if not, shape the general public prejudices towards immigrants. For example, the plethora of news stories about immigrants’ committing crimes inevitably reinforces the public perception that equalizes immigrants with criminal activity. At a given point, and in relation to the increasing of public concerns over particular issues, the media play a critical role in transforming negative stereotypes, prejudices and discourses into a heightened sense of crisis, a moral panic (Spoonley and Butcher 2009:4). The impact of moral panic on public opinion is best illustrated in the study of Law, who notes that *“in Italy and Greece news coverage was found to be fuelling hysteria or alarm about (the settlement of) immigrants, an alarm which was then appeased by police operations”* (Law 2010:208).

Practically, media provide a dominant form of ‘*imaging and story-telling*’ and exercise a ‘*control over mediated narratives and representations*’. This is achieved by virtue of media status as the dominant institution in conveying information to the largest variety of audiences,

whilst at the same time its role is considered absolutely crucial to the management of everyday life (Silverstone and Georgiou 2005: 434). Public opinion largely relies on the mass media for its social representations of the world. Thus, the diversity of such models will depend on the diversity of information in media discourse (van Dijk 1995:9).

More extensive studies interestingly observe the influence of ethnic ideologies in media representation of immigrants that is considered to be largely top-down orientated, especially when it comes to issues about which the general population has no knowledge and no clear attitudes and ideologies (van Dijk 1995:11). For example, what most of the public audiences of the West countries know and believe about Islam is largely due to and shaped by the mass media, rather than to personal experiences and opinions. As Silverstone and Georgiou explain, *“it is through these various media that our relations with others, both neighbours and strangers, are facilitated, or, indeed, denied”* (Silverstone and Georgiou 2005: 434).

Again, increasingly emphasis in media discourse is lately drawn to ethnic and cultural specific characteristics which are supposed to substantially differentiate “others” from “us”. This symbolic construction of in-group versus out-group’s identities promoted by media is directly connected with Triandafyllidou’s (2000) hypothesis that immigrants disrupt the political and cultural order of the nation by putting a threat to its “purity” and “authenticity”. Therefore, they have to be kept ‘outside’, if not physically then at least symbolically (Boukli 2009:14). As further elaborated by Ximena Póo (2009)

“it should not be forgotten that the media (symbolic) constructions ... pass to the public debate, become institutionalized and circulate once again, and cause serious effects on the ways citizenships are understood and exercised” (cited in Tumo 2010: 7).

The media (together with the political elites) play an important part in “manufacturing” (using van Dijk’s expression) the public perception and attitudes towards immigrants that prevail today in European public discourse. This symbolic construction of migration and migrants by the media and the elites legitimizes ethnocentric, nationalist, and xenophobic rhetoric, as immigrants and ethnic minorities are seen to be the cause of all social problems in European societies.

Indeed our interviews with media professionals confirm that certain (albeit not all) media outlets send their journalists out to find negative stories about immigrants (int.10). They want to have someone who confirms the image of the radical Muslims who are anti-Western, who set up forced marriages for their daughters (int.28), etc. in order to sell their product. In this case the news tends to be biased.

The overriding bias is toward stories that will draw the largest audience, such as criminal stories, stories with conflict, violence, disaster, or scandal. If the only objective of a media outlet is to sell their product at any cost, it is not surprising to find that when migrant-related news is transmitted it often lacks the depth and the voice of the immigrants themselves is not heard at all. So, in the Italian context, for example, the recent Lampedusa events regarding the arrival of refugees from Libya clearly showed the reluctance on the part of the media to present the refugees’ point of view. In fact, we basically never heard what they thought about what was happening (int.64). It is thus not surprising that often the news is presented from the point of view of the judiciary, authorities, and not those directly involved in the events. At the simplest level, this deprives the coverage of essential context. Audiences exposed to this kind of coverage can readily view immigrants as villains and themselves as victims.

Alternatively, migrants can be just left out as if non-existent (int.35) or even worse a positive instance can be presented as something negative:

For some Greek media migration news means a bloody conflict between Greeks and Albanian migrants. Such kind of news can be 'played' for day. ... But when an Albanian migrant film director won a prize in the Berlinale on behalf of Greece no media covered that news. On the contrary, certain extreme right newspapers accused the Greek Film Center for giving money to Albanians whilst Greece is going through an economic crisis'. (int.46)

In this sense media professionals have a primordial role to play towards public opinion: to stimulate and guarantee a pluralism of points of view and opinion, susceptible to ensure a real democratic debate over migration issues and their impacts.

Despite these rather gloomy findings concerning the perspectives of making migrant news as bad news and of migrants' relative powerlessness to contribute to the news gathering themselves, our interviewees note that the perspective of the coverage is very much dependent on the general line of a media outlet and the type of news at issue (int.8, 60, 67). Thus, if the general line of a media outlet is liberal, open to Europe and the world and critical towards chauvinism and nationalism (int.19), oriented on objectivity and neutrality of the information and avoids taking antagonistic stance (int.22), then the media outlet is more likely to adopt a positive, bridge-building approach towards migrant issues and problems. The resulting product is then likely to be the full, detailed picture of the immigrant image which aims to weaken the strength of the stereotypes still present in different European countries (int. 3, 20).

In this case, reporting is not systematically biased toward migration issues. Consequently, most stories would present opposing views and reporters would practice journalistic objectivity in the presentation of the events (int.60, 62, 63, 66, 68) with the media outlet trying not to take sides. In practice, as journalists explained, in order to offer the audience the account as complete as possible they search for testimonials, for 'voices': via the network of their correspondents, by contacting the protagonists of the stories, trying to make people from different sides talk (victims, culprits, authorities, cultural mediators, associations supporting migrants, etc.).⁹ (int. 61) The rhetoric and tone of such reports change and enable to highlight the immigration and the role of immigrants in a more 'cross-cutting' way where immigrants appear as people who share social concerns, challenges, etc. of the society. (int.39)

In short, while past studies point to the overall negative and pejorative bias of migrant news, our study suggests that media perspectives can vary and contain a strong political element into them. Indeed this last point is underscored in the section that follows where we consider the impact of the political agenda on migration news making.

3.3. Political Agenda and Migration News

Political debate does play key roles in setting the media agenda and influences what news is to be covered, how, how much, and in what context (int. 33, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65). This regards not only migrant-related news but news in general (int. 64).

The political agenda is important because readers and viewers have a right to know about the political debate surrounding the topic. (int.46, 62) It is also important because when something discussed there is an issue, it stimulates journalists to investigate more bringing to the fore the hidden side of unresolved legal, social and political aspects of migration and see why and whether it is that serious (int.65). It can result in a new story, debates, an interesting interview or analysis, that digs deeper into a certain question (int.31, 20, 50). Our informants however emphasized that it is equally important though for journalists to maintain journalistic independence and not to be overly led by the political agenda (int.22, 31) since it is the

⁹ See a more detailed analysis of the sources journalists make use of in the newsmaking process.

political debate that very often links immigration to security, emergency issues accentuating moments when integration does not function properly (int. 65).

On the other hand, the media do influence the political debate as well. It is an interactive rather than a one-way process (int.44). The topics which are taken up by the media become the focus of interest of political forces. Thus, in the Polish context, for example, the conflict over a Chechen refugee centre in Lomza was initially covered by the media and only subsequently became an issue for the politicians (int.14). Journalism can thus pose a 'threat' to politicians and bureaucrats, potentially uncovering ineffective policies (e.g. bad condition in refugee centers, discrimination, xenophobia, unfair deportation, delays on absorption of EU social funds for migrants' needs etc.) (int.11, 53), performing, as one Polish journalist called it, an 'interventionist' function (int.11). Conversely, media inattention can allow governments to continue ineffective policies or worse.

Migrant News out of the political agenda.

As it has been mentioned previously, often journalists go for stories that are easily sold, rather than search for stories objectively depicting migrants (int.9). In general, there still remains a negativism in the migrant related news, biasing it toward bad news as more newsworthy. "Good news" stories are less frequently reported. As one journalist put it, they 'get drowned by political agendas' (int.8) and there still remain journalists who do not really make enough use of their right to say whatever they want (press freedom) but rather play it safe because they think that's what the listeners want to hear (even if that might not be true) or what the political agenda dictates (int.34).

The limited coverage of migration issues in the news is very much linked to the lack of immigrant journalists. So 'even when there is space, there is not the will. (...)' (int. 35). Moreover, it is more difficult to promote 'positive' articles on migration than those negative ones also because by the nature of the news positive news is not immediately obvious and one needs to discover it and to get to it first. (int.66) However, it may well be worth recalling that the news profession itself holds investigative reporting in high esteem, creating media pressure toward muckraking. Reporters often see themselves as "watchdogs" of the public interest or even as adversaries of government. Such journalistic activism enables new topics to pop up, including in connection with migration (int.13, 28). Thus, there seems to be a tendency for media in most of the examined European countries to go beyond the agenda set by politicians, find new topics, undeveloped issues, areas, undertake various initiatives to make "the other" (the migrant) seen and heard.

Interestingly, 45 out of the 68 journalists interviewed answered affirmatively to the question '*Does your media outlet produce news stories which go out of the political agenda?*'; 7 indicated that while there are instances of such reporting, not much space is given to them; 6 answered in the negative; 1 noted that this type of coverage is more characteristic of printed media and not television; 7 journalists did not give a clear answer.

What is then featured outside the political agenda? Topics include an impressive variety of mostly positive news about migrants such as:

- personal issues (int. 20, 22),
- human stories (e.g. a story of granting citizenship to a sportsman of migrant origin (int.16)),
- stories on whatever people face in their new home country being parted from their own families, how things are working out for them in business terms (int.43);

- some stories showing how migrants have naturalized and integrated into the host society (int.36),
- stories on migrants' accessing social welfare and stories on how migrants are going through the recession (int.41),
- success stories of when immigrant families have been re-united, stories that focus on the positive contributions migrants make to society,
- stories when the 'mixing of different nations' brings positive results (int. 60),
- stories showing the human side of migration (e.g., showing how people are fleeing conflicts, i.e., the reasons behind the migration movement) (int.3),
- cultural news (e.g. a reportage on a 'mixed' hip hop group made of Albania, Bulgarian, Italian and Greek musicians). (int. 51)

Some TV, radio stations and newspapers prepare separate programs or pages devoted to immigration issues and immigration people. For example, the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* offers to its readers a separate weekly page '*Metropoli*' treating all kind of news, information useful both to migrants and Italians who want to know more about migrant-related issues (int.63). *RAInews* has some in-depth programmes dedicated to immigration related issues (int.64), Dutch NTR offers to its viewers *Primetype*, a primetime show with historical perspectives for the first generation migrants. (int.24)

While these initiatives are no doubt positive, they seem to have one recurrent problem. The coverage of immigration remains episodic, producing spikes of coverage and then periods when attention falls off. When a 'different' story is brought to the public's attention, it becomes an issue for a while but is soon forgotten (e.g. suicide of a number of asylum seekers caused by conditions they live in) (int.34) and the news tends to be sporadic rather than regular. (int.67) The surges in coverage of migration news condition the public and policymakers to think of immigration as a sudden event, often tinged with the air of crisis. What seems to be necessary is to cover immigration as a topic in a more continuous, consistent and regular way. Noteworthy in this respect is the initiative which has been undertaken by an Irish TV channel. The RTE has committed itself to producing a series of 6-8 programmes annually on multiculturalism, including migration issue. (int.43)

3.4. Migration News and Sources

In an attempt to present a variety of opinions and find new angles in developing stories what are the sources that the journalists use most of the time? Do journalists challenge themselves to find new sources to guarantee objectivity of reporting? Our interviews with senior journalists from six European countries have evidenced that the sources of migrant-related news are indeed numerous but at the same time similar in the countries under analysis.

News agencies as a wholesaler of news play a key role in the agenda setting of the media outlets under examination (int.59, 62, 68). Depending on the type of programme/article in which the news is transmitted, the news from a news agency might or might not be given additional elaboration. If it is minor news or a brief news update, the news provided by a news agency remains intact. Sometimes there may be a short preliminary control of the information or some telephone calls to the persons/institutions who might know/be responsible for the described events. If, on the other hand, there is intention to develop the news received from the agency into a bigger story, journalists then verify its contents meeting the protagonists, giving the floor to different actors, and presenting different points of view. (int.61)

Among the most reliable and most frequently resorted to sources journalists pointed out migrants themselves, migrant communities or people informed about these groups or representing them (int.10, 25, 32, 33, 39, 49, 51, 53,57, 58), migrant and civil society associations (int.36, 45, 46, 48, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67). In this case migration news stories would come directly from the ground, from people connected to migration issues and would entail a lot of original reporting rather than relying on news outlets (int.5).

Indeed, not all journalists rely on news agencies as their main sources (int.8, 65). Thus, sharing her experience, a British journalist noted that: *“I speak to people. I tend to go digging. I found out that about 40% of the printed information is not accurate”*. She would thus challenge some negative migration story in the press by doing her own research to test it. She would read something she agrees with, something she does not agree with it and then find the balance. (int. 8)

However, journalists should be also careful not to choose the sources only because they are migrant sources. Their relevance to the story is what really matters. As a Dutch journalist rightly points out:

‘The first thing in journalism is to have the people speak who are directly concerned. And not so much ... the white experts who talk about the groups. Not that it is not important, sometimes experts, because of their expertise and contacts, because of their constant involvement can have a good opinion. It is not a matter only of skin color, but with specialisms. It is not: once you have a Moroccan or Surinamese editor, then you know everything about that community. It depends how this person is informed, his network, and so on. The newsroom needs the diversity to have a diversity of opinions. But you should not give the Moroccan all the Moroccan stories. Search for different sources.’(24)

Furthermore, migrant and civil society associations (int.36, 45, 46, 48, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67) play a fundamental role especially in drawing attention to some positive experiences that migrants might have. They serve as a kind of a filter for the promotion of the presence of migrants. In most cases it is they themselves who approach media outlets in order to draw the attention of the society to some burning or positive migration issues which otherwise might be left unattended (int.67).

Various NGOs, human rights/ refugee organizations ((int.7, 9, 18, 35, 37, 41, 48, 56), respective embassies are institutions which provide journalists with the information needed for a migration-related reportage. Yet, another important source is governmental organizations (law enforcement agencies, immigration offices, department of justice, agencies that act on their behalf, etc.) (int.11, 13, 17, 25, 33, 44, 46, 49, 58, 61, 63).

Then, there are trade unions (int.47, 53, 65), lawyers specialised on migration law or the protection of migrants’ rights (int.55), church bodies. (int.33, 67)

Personal contacts of journalists (int.13, 15), journalists’ activism in the area (int.33, 34) may well be useful. Also journalists’ colleagues of migrant origin usually have the first-hand required knowledge on migrant-related issues and, additionally, they normally have contacts with people competent to speak about immigrant issues. (int.16)

International bodies like the UNHCR (int.33), international media, press agencies, foreign correspondents (int.19), Internet resources (int.22, 49) are also among the sources that provide information on migration issues.

For television outlets an important news source is newspapers (int. 56, 61). As journalists remarked, it may be an outstanding story which was brought to the fore by a daily newspaper which they later try to look at in more detail.

Journalists both search for the news and receive the news from various sources, depending on the needs they have (int. 60, 63, 66). As it has already been mentioned, negative news always becomes public while positive news requires some additional effort on the part of a media outlet and additional investigation into the matter is needed. (int.60)

In sum, journalists seem to have adopted a pluralistic approach in gathering news information. Interestingly none of our interviewees notes as a significant factor the emergence of new technological developments that allow of grassroots gathering of news in real time. Probably they consider this as part of their everyday job (using smart phones, hence recording audio and video files) not worth mentioning.

Several concerns have been voiced with regard to the information provided by the different sources that journalists consult. Among the biggest problems journalists encounter in search for information are, on the one hand, reluctance/ inability to provide information on the part of migrants themselves and, on the other hand, reluctance to reveal any information on the part of the official institutions (int. 21). The validity of what is said on both sides of the argument (int.52) is yet another issue of journalists' concern.

Reluctance of migrants to talk, reluctance to talk on the record, reluctance to give full facts, reluctance to give accurate facts is primarily dictated by the specificity of the immigration issue itself. Fear of repression, fear for the outcome of the citizenship/residency application, worries about how speaking out might affect their asylum seeker claim, etc. prevent migrants from talking honestly to the journalists (int.21, 33, 35, 39, 45) or require a journalist to be particularly cautious about the anonymity of the sources due to their ambiguous legal status. These problems can be avoided though if migrants know the journalists personally and even more importantly trust them and know that their message will be transmitted correctly to the public (int.11-17, 34, 44,49, 50, 51, 53, 68):

Our problem is not migrants but the journalists themselves. They are not properly informed and their minds are full of stereotypes and cliché and therefore, when they go to cover a theme they face problems. (int.51)

The problem is with us: how we reproduce the message that they wanted to convey to the public opinion (int.44)

As an Irish journalist pointed out, when migrants know that it's safe to talk to a journalist, that a journalist will not necessarily present them in a negative light, but rather on the positive side, will not "ambush" them (int. 34), migrants will speak freely about everything. This is even more true of 'migrant-related' associations which have as their objective making some of the migrant-related instances public and thus are easily approachable and eager to share the information (int.68). The problem might arise though when the level of migrants' representation is weak (int.54), or when communication is only possible through mediators (especially in the case of first generation migrants) (int.55).

The limited ability of migrants to provide information is primarily due to language and culture barriers. Indeed, immigrants who are likely to have the most pressing social or economic problems are also likely to be those who cannot communicate in the language of the country they find themselves in. While translation with the help of activists and volunteers from NGOs (int. 46, 47, 48, 66) is an effective remedy, several journalists have pointed out that it is sometimes difficult to find somebody to translate who is really trusted by the migrants (int. 39, 41, 45, 48, 57, 61). Moreover, the language barrier poses a technical problem: it necessitates all the interviews to be done in person (while it is common practice in the journalistic profession to use telephone interviews) which requires extra time, resources and effort on the part of the journalists. (int.61)

Concerning official authorities' sources, worries arise as to the validity of the information provided, especially in press releases. A Greek journalist remarked that the ministries' official information is normally formulated in such an ambiguous or obscure way that it is impossible to get any really valuable information from them (int. 53). That is why more information is normally obtained through personal contacts of journalists within ministries than from press releases. Moreover, social workers who on many occasions might be an important source of information are either not allowed to talk to the media or do not have the right skills to do so (int.31). Then doubts also arise as to their independence and their neutrality. In many cases it turns out that they are too committed to the issues they work with and thus neither independent nor neutral in their views. (int.31)

3.5. Migration News and Language¹⁰

The neutrality of the language used (together with completeness of coverage and independence of sources) is yet another fundamental component contributing to the objectivity of event reporting. Sensitiveness to language use in migration newsmaking seems to be the priority, at least theoretical, or is viewed as a given fact by the majority of the European media outlets for which the interviewed journalists work. The means through which language neutrality is achieved vary a lot in different media outlets even within the same country. However, two common patterns can be traced down.

First, news reports are carefully edited for language use before the news is actually released (int. 1-4, 11, 13, 14; 17, 20, 25, 28, 35, 37, 46, 47, 48; 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 61). This can be done following a formal practice or through an informal procedure, with or without specific codes or guidelines. On most occasions texts are edited following the outlet's hierarchy: a journalist writes an article, it is seen by the editor-in-chief, and then it goes to the correction sector (int.53) or alternatively an editor responsible for specific programmes/ pages, etc. edits the article. (int.11) The language of the reportage can be also be in the focus of the journalists' meetings (int.17) or can be given to a specific person whose sensitivity on certain words and expressions is known to be particularly high (int.17). Expressions unwillingly or thoughtlessly used by journalists are corrected and more neutral words are employed (int.11, 65). In some cases a specific language committee is instituted. As a Dutch journalist clarified, during the meetings of the journalists such committees act as the motor behind the discussions on language use on the basis of concrete cases. Then together with the editors-in-chief the language committee elaborates the rules that journalists should follow with regard to the language use. For example, as a result of such discussions, a decision has been taken not to use the Dutch word *allochtonen*, unless someone else who is quoted uses it, in a specific context where you can't avoid it (int.25).

Second, in many media outlets news reportages are not specifically edited for discriminatory language. It is the case when there is no extra treatment of immigrant issues and except the guidelines and conventions of best journalistic practices, no specific rules of checking the outgoing product are applied. (int.16, 63) Or, as some respondents noted, language editing is not deemed necessary because the outlet has an anti-discrimination profile with anti-discriminatory language being its integral part (int.18). And even when the text is edited it is not because the editor-in-chief would assume the reporters would deliberately or even accidentally put something in it but because it is part of a normal checking process. (int.33, 63) Still more commonly, the judgment on the political correctness and discretion of the

¹⁰ It is important to stress that this part of the paper does not aim to analyse the terminology employed in describing migrants (the focus of another thematic report within the framework of the MEDIVA project) but rather the editing procedures used by various media outlets.

language used with regard to migration issues is left to the discretion of the journalists themselves (int.33, 45; 49; 60, 62-68).

4. Concluding Remarks and Good Practice Examples

The analysis of the 68 qualitative interviews with senior journalists as well as our critical review of the relevant scholarly literature on the question of how information about migrants (or the views of migrants for mainstream topics) are gathered and constructed into ‘news items’ has shown that migrant-related newsmaking practices remain bound up with several challenges even if there is a general recognition that news gathering and news making on migrants and migration-related issues or actors should be more even-handed.

Our report highlights the following main features of news gathering and news making on migrant-related issues:

- News on migration are gathered when something sensational and worth reporting happens. And this is usually something ‘bad’ related to migrants or migration.
- The general political agenda influences strongly how migration related issues are reported in the news.
- But many journalists that are concerned about the quality and even-handedness of their reporting go beyond the political agenda to cover issues that they see as worth reporting because people want to know more about them.
- Issues that are reported cover personalised, emotion-laden stories that can interest a wider public, stories that show the ‘human’ and ‘everyday’ aspect of migration (including families reunited, positive stories of integration, people fleeing conflict or also migrants using and abusing the welfare system)
- Journalists often consult migrants, migrant communities, NGOs and other non state actors which they consider most reliable for migration related issues. The rule of thumb is: you want to talk to people who are directly involved.
- However, accessing such ‘alternative’ sources of information instead of for instance national news agencies, government authorities or academic experts, is not always easy either because many migrants do not trust journalists and are afraid to talk or because the journalist may not have access to the relevant networks so as to build trust. Actually experts can play this role as people who can function as gatekeepers to migrant voices.
- The concern that migrant voices are not heard as much as they should even for issues that are of direct concern to them remains.
- In addition, media outlets do not cover immigration as a topic continuously. Media tend to flood the media space with instant coverage when something dramatic happens but quickly drop the subject at ‘normal’ times, thus prompting the public to think of immigration in the “problem/conflict/difficulty” framework.

Our study shows that there are of course professionals who do an excellent job (diversify their sources, edit their language, present different view points, go beyond the political agenda, are aware of their own preconceptions and seek to present balanced and comprehensive information. However, they are not the majority. At the same time the media are facing a historical turning point as technological developments in media and communication as well as free market competition lead to important structural changes (White 2008). Thus on one hand there is more democratisation of the information gathering process and more participatory,

citizen journalism (anyone can report events and send audio or video files with smart phones, loading files on the internet and distributing them through the social media in real time). On the other hand, editorial budgets are cut down, the numbers of professional journalists are being reduced while most media professionals are willy nilly converted to part time freelance workers. There is little investment in training and/or recruitment let alone diversity awareness training. The polyphony of the grassroots sources is met by centralised decisions however as to what is ultimately published, where and when.

In this moving context with strong contrasted trends, there are a few recent projects that fight for increasing journalists's awareness and providing them with guidelines to meet the challenges of migration related news gathering and reporting.

There have actually been several initiatives regarding the promotion of diversity in the media with a special concern for balancing the principle of equality with that of the freedom of expression.

The **Diversity Tool Kit for factual programmes in public service television** was published in 2007 by the European Broadcasting Union with the support of the European Commission and the Fundamental Rights Agency. This toolkit is addressed to public TV broadcasting and provides advice and practical guidelines for equitable reporting on migrants and minorities.

The **Media4Diversity: Taking the Pulse of Diversity in the Media** study looked at the relationship between media and diversity in the EU member states and in 3 European Economic Area countries in 2009. That study paid particular attention to pointing not only to challenges and gaps in media and public policy but also to highlighting good practices across Europe. Indeed, 30 good practice media for diversity projects were presented and their innovative ways of reflecting diversity and promoting migrant and ethnic minority integration was praised. The aim was to provide media outlets and journalists with ideas on how to convert diversity into a business opportunity and also on how to put into practice an ethical mode of conducting journalism respectful of equality and diversity.

More recently the emphasis has been on how to reconcile respect for equality with freedom of expression. Indeed cases like those of the Mohammed cartoons in the Danish and other European media in 2006 had brought to the fore the possible contrast between the two principles and the difficult to chose between the two. **The Camden principles on freedom of expression and equality** promoted by the NGO Article 19 provide answers to this challenge. As stated in the introductory statement of the Camden¹¹ Principles;

- These Principles are founded on the understanding that freedom of expression and equality are foundational rights, whose realisation is essential for the enjoyment and protection of all human rights. They are also mutually supporting and reinforcing human rights. It is only when coordinated and focused action is taken to promote both freedom of expression and equality that either can effectively be realised.
- Pluralism and diversity are hallmarks of freedom of expression. Realisation of the right to freedom of expression enables vibrant, multi-faceted public interest debate giving voice to different perspectives and viewpoints. Inequality results in the exclusion of certain voices, undermining this. The right of everyone to be heard, to speak and to participate in political, artistic and social life are, in turn, integral to the attainment and enjoyment of equality. When people are denied public participation and voice, their issues, experiences and concerns are rendered invisible, and they become more vulnerable to bigotry, prejudice and marginalisation.

¹¹ For the full text see: <http://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/standards/the-camden-principles-on-freedom-of-expression-and-equality.pdf>

- Too often, the rights to freedom of expression and equality have been construed as being in opposition to one another, or as being in direct conflict, with attention focused on the potential for tension between them. The Principles assert the affirmative relationship between freedom of expression and equality, identifying the complementary and essential contribution they make to the securing and safeguarding of human dignity, and the fact that together they are key to the indivisibility and universality of human rights. Observed and upheld they enable and strengthen respect for human rights for all.
- The Principles also affirm that respect for freedom of expression and equality has a crucial role to play in ensuring democracy and sustainable human development, and in promoting international peace and security.

More recently, in 2008, the International Federation of Journalists has launched **the Ethical Journalism Initiative** with the support of the European Commission.¹² It aims to contribute to quality journalism that provides the analysis, context and commentary that keep citizens informed and allows them to play their part in the life of society. This initiative aims at counteracting the general media market tendencies which driven also by technological developments have adopted important budget cuts, driving down investment in staff recruitment and training, reducing the numbers of professional journalists and converting most media professionals to part time freelance workers.

The Ethical Journalism initiative has led to the adoption of the Charter of Rome¹³ (see below) which offers ethical guidelines (a code of conduct) for journalists reporting on migrants and asylum seekers.

¹² Also supported by the European Commission, Citizenship and Fundamental Rights programme, DG Home, <http://ethicaljournalisminitiative.org>

¹³ For the full text see: <http://ethicaljournalisminitiative.org/assets/docs/068/223/47dfc44-3c9f7df.pdf>

CHARTER OF ROME

CODE OF CONDUCT REGARDING ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES, VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANTS

The National Council of the Journalists' Association (Consiglio Nazionale dell'Ordine dei giornalisti, CNOG) and the Italian National Press Federation (Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana, FNSI), sharing the concern voiced by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as regards media coverage of asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants; recalling the principles regarding journalists' professional ethics laid out in the Journalist's Charter of Duties (Carta dei Doveri del Giornalista) – especially as regards the fundamental duty to respect each and every person and his/her dignity and to not discriminate against anyone on account of their race, religion, gender, physical and mental conditions and political opinions – and the principles enshrined in national and international law on the subject; reaffirming the special safeguards to be taken when dealing with minors as established by the United Nations Convention on children's rights and by the principles laid out in the Charter of Treviso (Carta di Treviso) and in its additional Manual; on the basis of the fundamental principle stressing the importance of adhering to the truth as regards all events which are the subject of media coverage (art. 2 of the Law establishing the Journalists' Association), invite Italian journalists to exercise the highest care in dealing with information regarding asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants living in Italy and elsewhere and, in particular, to:

- Adopt an appropriate terminology which reflects national and international law so as to provide readers and viewers with the greatest adherence to the truth as regards all events which are the subject of media coverage, avoiding the use of inappropriate terms;
- Avoid spreading inaccurate, simplified or distorted information as regards asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants. CNOG and FNSI call all their colleagues' – and those responsible for editorial content in particular – attention to the negative effects of superficial or unprofessional behaviour on those who are the object of news coverage, on readers/viewers and, as a consequence, on media professionals' credibility. Superficial behaviour may include associating different news items in an inappropriate manner and may engender unwarranted apprehension among the public.
- Safeguard those asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants who choose to speak with the media by adopting solutions as regards their identity and image so as to ensure that they are not identifiable. Asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants who are identifiable – as well as the latter's relatives - may face reprisals on the part of the authorities in their country of origin, of non-state entities or of criminal organisations. Moreover, individuals who belong to a different socio-cultural context, where the press plays a limited role, may not be aware of global media dynamics and may thus not be able to foresee all the consequences of their decision to appear in the media.
- Whenever possible, consult experts and organisations with a specific expertise on the subject so as to provide the public with information which is clear, comprehensive and also analyses the underlying roots of phenomena.

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ANNEX

Profile of Respondents

No	Country	Media	Gender	Age	Years in media	Role in media	Ethnic origin
1	UK	News agency	Male	44.0	9.0	reporter	White British
2	UK	News agency	Female	47.0	7.0	archivist	Mixed
3	UK	TV	Female	40.0	17.0	creative producer	Northern Irish
4	UK	Radio	Male	52.0	30.0	radio producer	White British
5	UK	Magazine	Male	34.0	13.0	editor	White British
6	UK	TV	Female	49.0	22.0	creative head of productions	White Caucasian
7	UK	TV	Female	42.0	10.0	documentary film producer	South African
8	UK	TV& radio	Female	47.0	8.0	radio presenter	English-Italian
9	UK	TV	Female	43.0	18.0	investigative journalist	Romanian
10	UK	TV & radio	Male	51.0	15.0	investigative journalist	White British-Romani Gypsy
11	Poland	Radio	Female	48.0	20.0	editor-in-chief	Polish
12	Poland	TV & radio	Female	45.0	20.0	journalist	Polish
13	Poland	TV	Female	34.0	14.0	reporter	Polish
14	Poland	Newspaper	Male	40.0	17.0	deputy editor-in-chief	Polish
15	Poland	Radio	Male	48.0	18.0	deputy director	Polish
16	Poland	Radio	Male	38.0	21.0	newsreader, reporter	Polish
17	Poland	Newspaper	Male	63.0	29.0	commentator	Polish
18	Poland	Newspaper	Male	35.0	15.0	columnist	Polish
19	Poland	Magazine	Male	51.0	30.0	editor-in-chief	Polish
20	Poland	Radio	Male	53.0	30.0	deputy editor-in-chief	Polish
21	Poland	TV	Male	38.0	15.0	manager	Belarusian
22	Poland	Radio	Male	42.0	23.0	editor-in-chief	Russian
23	Netherlands	Newspaper	Female	42.0	16.0	editor	Dutch
24	Netherlands	TV	Male	45.0	15.0	head of diversity	Dutch
25	Netherlands	TV	Female	50.0	29.0	assistant editor	Dutch
26	Netherlands	TV & radio	Female	30.0	4.0	diversity manager	Dutch
27	Netherlands	TV& radio	Female	56.0	13.0	head HR	Dutch
28	Netherlands	Newspaper	Male	42.0	18.0	reporter	Moroccan
29	Netherlands	TV & radio	Male	45.0	24.0	reporter	Surinamese
30	Netherlands	Newspaper	Male	54.0	27.0	editor-in-chief	Dutch

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31	Netherlands	Newspaper	Male	33.0	11.0	reporter	Surinamese
32	Netherlands	TV	Male	49.0	28.0	diversity manager	Surinamese
33	Ireland	Newspaper	Male	48.0	20.0	reporter	Irish
34	Ireland	Radio	Female	37.0	5.0	presenter	Italian-Shrilankan
35	Ireland	Newspaper	Female	30.0	7.0	reporter, sub-editor, proof-reader	Irish
36	Ireland	Radio	Female	30.0	7.0	reporter	Irish
37	Ireland	TV	Male	0.0	6.0	reporter	Irish
38	Ireland	Newspaper	Male	55.0	36.0	editor	Irish
39	Ireland	TV & radio	Male	56.0	34.0	correspondent	Irish
40	Ireland	TV	Female	44.0	0.3	HR	White European/Irish
41	Ireland	Newspaper	Male	38.0	12.0	correspondent	Irish
42	Ireland	TV	Male	44.0	20.0	editor	Irish
43	Ireland	TV	Male	63.0	46.0	editor	Irish
44	Greece	Newspaper	Female	46.0	26.0	reporter	Greek
45	Greece	TV	Female	47.0	25.0	editor-in-chief	Greek
46	Greece	Newspaper	Female	33.0	10.0	editor-in-chief	Albanian
47	Greece	News agency	Male	50.0	17.0	senior journalist	Greek
48	Greece	Newspaper	Male	42.0	5.0	reporter	Albanian
49	Greece	Magazine	Male	38.0	9.0	director	Greek
50	Greece	Newspaper	Male	51.0	22.0	editor-in-chief	Greek
51	Greece	Radio	Male	49.0	24.0	director	Greek
52	Greece	Newspaper	Male	50.0	28.0	senior journalist	Greek
53	Greece	TV& radio	Female	34.0	11.0	journalist & reporter	Greek
54	Greece	Newspaper	Male	45.0	24.0	editor-in-chief & radio producer	Greek
55	Greece	TV & radio	Male	49.0	25.0	senior journalist & editor-in-chief	Greek
56	Greece	TV	Male	31.0	11.0	journalist & reporter	Greek
57	Greece	Newspaper	Male	30.0	7.0	journalist & reporter	Greek
58	Greece	Radio	Male	28.0	7.0	journalist & reporter& editor-in-chief	Greek
59	Italy	Radio	Male	37.0	5.0	correspondent	Italian
60	Italy	TV	Male	41.0	31.0	director	Italian
61	Italy	Radio	Female	41.0	16.0	journalist	Italian
62	Italy	Radio	Female	47.0	29.0	journalist	Italian
63	Italy	Newspaper	Male	55.0	30.0	journalist & director	Italian
64	Italy	TV	Female	40.0	15.0	correspondent	Italian

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65	Italy	Newspaper	Female	51.0	30.0	journalist	Italian
66	Italy	Newspaper	Female	37.0	14.0	journalist	Italian
67	Italy	Newspaper	Male	56.0	40.0	journalist	Italian
68	Italy	TV	Male	56.0	40.0	journalist	Italian

