

MIGRANTS AND THE MEDIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Obstacles and opportunities for the media to reflect diversity and promote integration

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This themed issue of *Journalism Practice* addresses the role of the media and their capacity to reflect diversity and promote migrant integration. Migrant integration here is understood both in its loose term – when the media promote a positive view of migration or at least a fair view, including migrant voices in their sources, as well as how this might facilitate the integration process – and in its strict term concerning the inclusion of migrants as professionals in the media sector and the specific diversity policies that different media sectors and media outlets adopt in their recruitment, employment and training schemes.

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, or in the portrayal and representation of immigrants in the mainstream media (Niessen and Huddleston 2010: 28). Although various studies of 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’ (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).

This themed issue proposes to study at the European level the four main aspects that condition how the media (newspapers, TV and news web sites) represent diversity and may (or not) contribute to migrant integration. These four aspects are: the content of news; the news gathering and news making practices of the media; the recruitment and employment practices of the media; the diversity training and ethical guidelines provided by the media to journalists.

Methodology

This themed issue draws from the research project MEDIVA, co-funded by the European Integration Fund for Third Country Nationals. The MEDIVA project (full title: Media for Diversity and Migrant Integration: Consolidating Knowledge and Assessing Media Practices across the EU, <http://mediva.eui.eu>) reviews the relevant scholarly and policy related literature on the four aspects covered in this issue and combines it with a series of in-depth interviews with senior journalists across six member states (Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, the UK) with a view to understanding better how journalists and other media professionals assess the tools they have so far in dealing with migrant diversity (recruitment/employment conditions, training provided, codes of ethics, knowledge about diversity and how all these are combined in everyday work in news making and programme production).

We have selected these six Member States for a more qualitative in-depth study with a view to combining and comparing within the project, two immigration countries with a long term experience in managing diversity, such as the Netherlands and Britain; three immigration countries that have recently started developing diversity integration policies (Greece, Italy and Ireland), and one country that is still caught between the centrifugal forces of emigration (mainly to other EU countries) and immigration (from East-Eastern Europe), notably Poland.

The primary empirical data for the project consist of interviews with senior journalists and other media professionals in six Member States of the European Union: Italy, Greece, Ireland, Britain, Poland and the Netherlands. A total of 68 people were interviewed (15 Greece, 12 Poland, 11 Ireland, 10 Netherlands, 10 UK, and 10 Italy, see also the Appendix at the end of this brief introduction). The 68 interviewees were drawn from a variety of media organisations and held various positions. Amongst those interviewed were editors-in-chief, programme directors, reporters, senior journalists, presenters, an archivist, an assistant editor, a columnist, a creative head of productions, a creative producer, a head of HR, a head of diversity and a number of newsreaders.

Most participants were aged between 30-59 years and had worked in the media industry for approximately 19 years. More than half were male (62%) and 11 were of migrant origin (16%). Thirty-nine of the selected media organisations are owned privately (or have mixed-ownership), 30 are public media organisations and nine are not defined. The 68 interviews were conducted by six teams in the aforementioned Member States using identical interview protocols.

The interviews covered both the public and the private sectorⁱ, quality and more populist newspapers, left- and right-wing oriented media outlets. They were conducted in the national language but interview protocols were created in English. The interviews were based on a questionnaire informed by the literature review on news-making and news production. It was structured in such a way as to enable us to identify patterns related to how often, in which context, and in what way the media talk about migrants, which sources are presented and quoted in the media, how and from which perspective the information is presented, to what extent migrants are given the opportunity to have their voice heard in the news that concerns them, and whether they are treated as reliable sources. The fieldwork was conducted in a time span of 3 months, from May to July 2011.

From a demographic perspective, most of respondents were male (62%), whilst almost half of them (44%) were in the 41-50 age range following by the age group of 31-40 (31%)

Insert Table 1 here

With regard to the work experience 37% of respondents belong to the group 11-20 years employed in the field of journalism and 31% of them had work for around 30 years.

Insert Table 2 here

Lastly, among the interviewees, eleven (16%) were of migrant origin.

Insert Table 3 here

Contents

This Themed Issue includes four papers, each paper addressing one of the main aspects that characterise the role of the media with regard to migrant integration. The first paper (Bennett, ter Wal, Lipinski, Fabiszak and Krzyzanowski 2011) concentrates on the content of news concerned with migration. The representation of migrants in news content is vital to the public perception of, and hence to the reproduction and challenging of, attitudes and beliefs about migration and migrants in ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse societies. This in turn is part of a mechanism by which the interaction with and treatment of migrants in society is also influenced by what is reported upon in the media.

Decades of research in the area have consistently found that the contents of media reports typically fail to fairly represent diversity and migrants. On the other hand, it is believed that a fair and balanced representation of migrants in the media can support the integration of migrants, and vice versa. While most existing research has focused on national coverage of migrant issues, this themed issue presents an innovative approach by combining a review of the existing research in Europe with fieldwork among journalists in six EU countries. This paper verifies current developments and latest research results and identifies indications and possibilities for improved portrayal of and reporting about migrants.

The second paper (Gemi, Ulasiuk and Triandafyllidou 2011) looks at news gathering and news making practices. 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 of 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 paper 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.

The paper 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 where migrants are concerned? To what extent does 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 findings of our qualitative interviews and contrast or complement them with the results of previous studies. The paper concludes with some key messages for media professionals on how to adopt a more diversified practice in news gathering and news making. We also highlight some ongoing projects that promote ethical journalism and diversity in the media.

The third paper (Markova and McKay 2011) in this themed issue looks at migration and recruitment/employment practices in the media. A number of researchers in recent years have focused on the changes in employment patterns within the media industry that have resulted in the decline of relatively secure full-time employment and an increase in informal, temporary and freelance work (McKinley and Smith 2009; Christopherson 2009; Sengupta et al. 2009; Baumann 2002). Concerns have been expressed about the increased precariousness of media work, with a growing polarisation between core and peripheral jobs. These developments have signalled a departure from traditional concepts of the labour market and the arrival of a new paradigm characterised by informality and an increased reliance on personal contacts. Yet there has been very little research into the impact of these changes on the recruitment of migrant workers and on the cultural diversity of the workforce.

The paper examines the issue of workforce diversity in the European media, with specific reference to migrants. It highlights the many aspects of the recruitment process which can pose barriers to those outside the mainstream of society. Respondents in the sample were interviewed in detail, among other issues, about their knowledge of any anti-discrimination measures in recruitment adopted by their companies; the way such schemes were monitored and evaluated; the existence of a diversity department or a person specifically dealing with diversity issues in their outlet; whether the company employed migrant workers and the jobs they were doing; the existence of any formal equality or diversity policy; general barriers to employment in the media industry and specific barriers to migrant workers; the issues of discrimination in the industry and the existence of outreach schemes that target people with a migrant background.

The paper is organised in the following way. It first presents the state of the art and the theoretical background against which the findings of the study are then tested. The next section looks at workforce diversity in the media examined through the prism of barriers and enabling factors to recruitment, with reference to migrant workers. Do anti-discrimination policies in media recruitment matter for migrant employment? Do equality policies make a difference? What are the general barriers to media recruitment and what are the specific barriers to migrant workers? Is there discrimination in the media? How diverse is the media workforce? These are some of the questions discussed in the text. The last section sets out the main conclusions from the research.

Last but not least, the fourth paper (O'Boyle, Fehr and Preston 2011) in this Themed Issue investigates training challenges and practices in the media. A considerable body of scholarly

research has developed over the past three decades, which examines representations of migrants in European media. However, considerably fewer studies have investigated the limits, possibilities and experiences of migrants working in media organisations, as well as efforts (or the lack thereof) to encourage and foster ethno-cultural diversity in the European media sector. This paper examines attitudes towards diversity training amongst a selection of European media organisations and assesses if, and to what extent, such training is provided and encouraged. Our research examined, *inter alia*, the extent to which journalists and other media professionals are made aware of potentially discriminating practices; if and how they are sensitised to the use of certain language and images; what opportunities are offered to develop their intercultural skills and; how they are generally guided and advised on all matters relating to ethno-cultural diversity.

NOTES

¹ Concretely, two third of the surveyed media outlets were privately owned.

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ANNEX

Table 4 about here

Tables

Table 1

Interviewees' Demographic Profile

	Gender		Age Group				
	M	F	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70
Nr.	42	26	1	21	30	14	2
%	42%	26%	1%	31%	44%	21%	3%
Total	100%		100%				

Table 2

Interviewees' Work Experience

	Years in Media				
	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50
Nr.	16	25	21	5	1
%	23,5%	37%	31%	7%	1.5%
Total	100%				

Table 3

Interviewees' Ethnic Background

	Ethnic Background	
	Native	Migrant Origin
Nr.	57	11
%	84%	16%
Total	100%	

Table 4 – for Annex
Profile of Respondents

No	Country	Media	Gender	Age	Years	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	managing editor	Dutch
24	Netherlands	TV	Male	45.0	15.0	head of diversity	Dutch
25	Netherlands	TV	Female	50.0	29.0	managing 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	editor, anchor, columnist	Surinamese
30	Netherlands	Newspaper	Male		54.0	27.0	editor-in-chief	Dutch
31	Netherlands	Newspaper	Male		33.0	11.0	reporter	Surinamese
32	Netherlands	TV	Male		49.0	28.0	editor	Dutch
33	Ireland	Newspaper	Male	48.0	20.0	reporter	Irish	
34	Ireland	Radio	Female	37.0	5.0	presenter	Italian-Sri-Lankan	
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	30.0	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
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

NOTES

ⁱ Concretely, two third of the surveyed media outlets were privately owned.