

IMMIGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION. MEDIA'S ROLE IN FRAMING THE IMMIGRANTS

Elena NOVĂCESCU¹

ABSTRACT:

MASS-MEDIA IS A POWERFUL INSTRUMENT OF INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY ATTITUDES AND FOR PROVIDING INFORMATION ON IMMIGRANTS COMMUNITIES. THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE LIVE IS MORE AND DIVERSIFIED BOTH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DUE TO IMMIGRATION, BUT THESE CHANGES ARE NOT ALWAYS REFLECTED IN A TRUTHFUL MANNER. MASS-MEDIA IS INDEBTED TO USE HER INFORMATIVE, RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ROLE IN ORDER TO DELIVER INFORMATION CLEARLY ON THE POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF NOWADAYS SOCIETY.

KEY WORDS: IMMIGRANTS, EUROPEAN UNION, PUBLIC OPINION, MASS-MEDIA

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is currently the "engine" that puts the world in motion, the promoter of free movement of individuals, values and cultures. "It's obvious that the report migration-globalization is an implicit one, each component being influenced and influencing the other one, creating true evolutionary cycles with the most profound implications on the social dynamics at the level of the whole world, even if we speak about misaligned societies or about the ones who are the most affected by the present evolutions"². Thus we can say that globalization is the phenomenon which increased the connection between nations, precipitated the flow of goods, services or individuals across national borders. Even if „migration existed long time before the era of globalization, the speed, purpose, complexity and volume of current migration is unprecedented"³, migration now becoming one of the challenges brought by this new phenomenon of globalization. Migration is a term which derives from the word „mej", which in sanskrit language means „change". It describes the movement of the population within the borders of the state or outside. Usually, this term implies a permanent establishment or for a longer period in a certain area "generally an international migrant is defined as a person which changes his residency from country to country for a minimum period of time."⁴ This period is different from state to state. For

¹ MA Student, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania, E-mail: novacescu.elena@gmail.com.

² Adrian Cămărăşan, *Migrație și politici europene* (Cluj-Napoca: CA Publishing, 2013), 28.

³ Peter Li, "World Migration in the Age of Globalization: Policy Implications and Challenges", *New Zealand Population Review* (2009): 1, accessed June 3, 2014.

⁴ Octavian Floricel, *Migrația și criminalitatea* (Târgoviște: Bibliotheca, 2006), 13.

example in Belgium, Germany and Italy the specific duration is 3 months; in Holland there is a period of 6 months while in Great Britain and Ireland a person will be considered international migrant after a period of one year.

1. IMMIGRATION IN EUROPEAN UNION

In present, immigration is an important problem on the European policy agenda because of the large number of immigrants which are arriving in the EU space but also because of its extension. Although immigration involves many problems related with the security of states and their citizens, „immigration is necessary to maintain the numbers of young people entering the labour market in view of Europe’s ageing population”⁵. Also immigration is necessary because it helps to maintain the dependency report between active population, who works and inactive population. Immigrants may occupy the vacancies jobs, from those that require a high degree of specialization and from which does not exist enough qualified labor force in UE and up to the unqualified ones which EU citizens do not longer want. An advantage of immigration may be that these persons bring with them new and innovative methods and techniques, which can positively influence the development of EU states. In addition, the home states benefit from financial resources sent by migrants. These aspects of migration may be advantageous only if immigrants successfully integrate into their host countries.

In the last decades, industrialized states, same as states with high levels of living, recorded a large number of immigrants. The causes of this growth were in the imbalance caused by poverty, high unemployment level, conflict situations and also high accessibility to means of communication and transport. In the last period was recorded a major increase in the number of migrants who wanted to establish illegally in the EU. Increased migration and especially illegal migration represents an important problem which requires special measures. Therefore there is a need for adopting more organized and effective measures as far as concern migration problem. In an European Union with 28 states where persons can travel freely it is obvious the fact that migration can not be managed by a single state. Therefore is important that all member states to collaborate in order to control the phenomenon. Individuals from all social and political environments are characterized by their cultures, histories, traditions and events. All these elements contribute to the interaction between groups with different cultural identities and involve challenges to the political decision makers such as European Union „Various patterns of intercultural communication are played out between migrants from outside the EU and European citizens in EU member states, both within and more often outside structured policies aimed at managing issues dealing with migration, citizenship and cultural identity successfully”⁶, but mixing the immigrants cultures with the host state culture is not always easy. According to data released by the European Union, in 2011 of the estimated 500 million people living in the EU about 20 millions comes from third world country⁷. Lately western states, in general are characterized by multiculturalism which is continuously growing. Because migration flow in these countries is quite high, they began to adopt various measures for efficient integration of immigrants.

⁵Antonio Martin Artiles, Oscar Molina, „Crisis, economic uncertainty and union’s members attitudes towards immigration in Europe” , Sage Publication (2011): 454, accesed June 3, 2014.

⁶ Karsten Xuereb, *European cultural policy and migration: Why shoul cultural policy in the European Union Adress the impact of migration on Identity and Social integration?* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 29.

⁷Comisia Europeană, “Să înțelegem politicile Uniunii Europene: Migrație și azil”, Direcția Generală Comunicații (2013): 3.

1.1 MIGRATION IN EUROPE AFTER 1960

History of Europe is marked by migration. Millions of people have crossed the continent to start a new life. Others have gone from Europe to more developed countries in America. In fact, history of Europe is also known by the waves of forced migration: from the expulsion of the Jews from Spain to the refugees who arrived here because of the conflict between Russia, Austro-Hungary or Ottoman Empire. Large-scale immigration is more evident now than in past centuries. Between 1960-1973, immigration of labor force in Europe had grown from 3% to 6% being much higher in countries such as Great Britain or France. The growth of this type of labor migration ceased in 1973 once with the oil crisis. However, the birth rate of the immigrant population has continued to grow, because most states were providing residence permits to family reunification purposes. So, about 80% of the 58 700 people who accepted to settle in Britain were wives and children⁸. EU states offers annually thousands of work permits most of them heading towards seasonal workers. After 1980 the number people seeking asylum began to grow, so in 1990 number of applicants reached 400,000. Obtaining asylum is in fact the main cause of immigration in EU. This increase was caused mainly by the ethnic conflicts that emerged after the Cold War because civil population was the main target of combat troops. In 2013, in a European Union of 28 countries, the number of people seeking asylum has reached about 435,000 with approximately 100.000 more than in the previous year, most of them coming from Siria⁹. Of all EU countries, Germany is the country with the highest number of applicants for asylum. Here, were recorded in 2013 with about 50,000 more applications compare with previous year.

In Italy the main problem is represented by the large number of illegal immigrants already in the country or those who arrive illegally especially from Albania. Also there is a danger that these immigrants are involved in illegal activities with links to mafia structures or use Italy as a gateway to other countries such as Germany and Great Britain. In France or Spain this asylum issue is not so important because actions to deport illegal immigrants decreased their number. To reduce the negative impact of migration, the EU should pay more attention to common foreign policy and security policy and contribute effectively to prevent and resolve conflicts.

1.2 IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON SECURITY

The intensification of globalization has produced a series of negative effects which currently have a major impact on states from the international environment. Migration is causing clashes of civilization and helps on shaping the insecurity feeling of citizens from host states.

The end of the Cold War marks the fall of Iron Curtain and rebuilding a new world order in which USA will play a primary role. To this purpose, Samuel Huntington in his book called "The Clash of Civilizations and restoring world order" consider's that the main cause of future conflicts will not be differences between ideology, but between the ones cultural or religious: "in this new world the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts will not be those between social classes, rich and poor or other economically

⁸Ben Hall, "Immigration in European Union: Problem or Solution?", *OECD Observer*, June, 2000, accesed June 5, 2014, http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/archivestory.php/aid/337/Immigration_in_the_European_Union:_proble_m_or_solution_.html.

⁹Alexandrous Bitoulas," Population and social conditions", *Eurostat*, March 2014, accesed June 5, 2014, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-QA-14-003/EN/KS-QA-14-003-EN.PDF.

defined as groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities. Tribal wars and ethnic conflicts will occur within civilizations"¹⁰. So we can observe the impact that immigrant groups can have on society that receives them. To ensure the security of the state and to reduce the impact that immigrants have it, it must be watched the ensuring of an a secure environment according to the existence and development of them. This can be achieved through in three major interest¹¹ that characterizes both states and societies . These interests relate to the sovereignty and territorial integrity, economic interests and not least the national and cultural identity.

2. MEDIA'S ROLE IN FRAMING THE IMMIGRANTS

In the century of globalization, the media is the first source of information about the surrounding reality and the outside world. Perception about the world is heavily influenced by the messages that are transmitted through the media or on the contrary, those which are omitted by it. „Mass media thus provide important information for the shaping of public opinion and influence the awareness of people who construct social reality through their media consumption”¹², therefore we can say that the media goes beyond purely informational role that should have it. If mass-media will present immigrants as a threat, rest of the population will tend to develop negative attitudes towards these groups and support policies to exclude these groups from their society.

Once with the EU enlargement in 2007, with the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, the issue of freedom of movement and migration has become more intense on the EU agenda. In the first place „the UK faced the decision on freedom of movement for work for the new EU members, complicated by the number of EU workers arriving in the country post-2004 and other immigration related scandals (foreign prisoners, sex for asylum etc.)”¹³ and in the second place is noticed that the media is responsible for portrayal of immigrants and minorities because it combines these two categories with security problems, illnesses, drugs, crime and terrorism. The way media transmits information regarding immigrants is very important because it contributes to decisions taken by the EU in shaping its policies on migration. In addition, these decisions have become more important now with the expansion of the European Union than they were years ago “The way the media deals with issues of migration and integration varies from active support and compassion and from occasional and unintentional biases to willful xenophobia¹⁴”. However, mass-media can be encouraged to provide accurate and transparent information about immigrants, but it will not do this unless it will have this interest.

“The combination of economic and physical insecurity and widespread immigration is sufficient to produce a dose of prejudice and hostility against immigrants and people of immigrant origin and also traditional targets of racism, such as Roma and Jews”¹⁵. This hostility has been often fueled, most of the times by the active involvement of the media. In various parts of Europe this has been focused on demonizing immigrants and minorities by amplifying stereotypes about this groups or by creating new myths, real or imagined. Most of the times, media exaggerates the number of immigrants, refugees or persons who seek

¹⁰ Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea civilizațiilor și refacerea ordinii mondiale*, (Oradea, Ed. Antet, 1997): 36.

¹¹ Adrian Cămărășan, *Migrație și politici europene* (Cluj-Napoca: CA Publishing, 2013), 142.

¹² OECD, „What can the media do to promote the interaction of immigrants and their children?”(2009):3

¹³ Ekaterina Balabanova, Alex Balch, „Sending and receiving: the ethical framing of intra –EU migration in the European Press”, *Sage Publication* (2010): 383, accessed June 10, 2014.

¹⁴Jan Niessen, Thomas Huddleston, Manual privind integrarea pentru factorii de decizie politică și practicieni (Luxemburg: Oficiul pentru informații al Uniunii Europene, 2010): 28.

¹⁵ Raportul Grupului al Persoanelor Eminente al Consiliului Europei, “Cum să trăim împreună. Diversitate și libertate în Europa secolului XXI” (Strasbourg, 2011): 32.

asylum. It looks like „31 percent of headlines and 53 percent of text about asylum across all newspapers has negative connotations. Language used to describe immigration is highly hostile across all newspapers types with <illegal> and <bogus> the most commonly used terms to describe immigrants and asylum seekers”¹⁶. A report realized by the Migration Observatory of Oxford University in 2010-2012 revealed that from 43 million words relating to immigrants in 20 major newspapers in the Great Britain, the most used word to describe immigrants was "illegal". Also for description immigrants there were often used „water based metaphors such as <flood>, <influx> and <wave>”¹⁷. In addition in 2002, 25% of Daily Mail articles and 24% of Daily Express articles referred to the people who wanted to obtain asylum.

Images and pictures of immigrants most of the times have a greater impact on public than the articles or the television programs because these are seen by every reader who can not read the entire text on immigrant and refugee groups. The images often say or create a story: “airport scenes, for example, may signify borders and the infringement of these borders”¹⁸. Recent studies reveal that images of suspects belonging to immigrant or minority groups are more prevalent in the media, than the residents of the host state. It also adds that the offenses, crimes committed by members of immigrant or minority groups upon the residents/inhabitants have a greater impact in the media than the crimes committed in these groups.

With the evolution of technology, traditional media has been replaced by the Internet. Because it has a huge number of users it is very difficult to control and many of these users abuse it to convey xenophobic or racist ideas and to instigate hatred. „To make situation worse new interactive web 2.0 services allow extremists to use technologies such as blogs and video-sharing services to promote their agenda on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, My Space and YouTube. According to the <Hate Digital Report> from 2010 the Internet has become with 20% more <ugly> in 2009, terrorists and racists heading more towards social media sites and one of their main target are childrens”¹⁹.

3. ROMANIAN IMMIGRANTS IMAGE IN EU MEDIA

Great Britain is one of the EU countries where xenophobic feelings against Romanians are very strong. According to online newspaper "The Telegraph", the first stereotype refers to the number of Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants in Great Britain. According to some estimations of some political figures, anti-immigration NGOs and the media, the number of immigrants in the UK is settled somewhere around 29 millions²⁰. These data circulating in the media are obviously way too big, it is estimated that the actual number of Romanian immigrants in the UK is approximately 20.000. Another stereotype

¹⁶ Chitra Nagarajan, “How politicians and the media made us hate immigrants” (2010), accessed June 14, 2014, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/chitra-nagarajan/how-politicians-and-media-made-us-hate-immigrants>.

¹⁷ Chitra Nagarajan, “We need to change the very language we use to talk about immigrants”, The Staggers (2013), accessed June 14, 2014, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/08/we-need-change-very-language-we-use-talk-about-immigrants>.

¹⁸ Sara Buchanan, Bethan Grillo, Terry Threadgold, “What’s the story? Results from research into media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK”, *Article 19*, accessed June 14, 2014, <http://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/publications/refugees-what-s-the-story-.pdf>.

¹⁹ Raportul Grupului al Persoanelor Eminente al Consiliului European, “Cum să trăim împreună. Diversitate și libertate în Europa secolului XXI” (Strasbourg, 2011): 33.

²⁰ Ion Jinga, „Romanians in Britain are just like you”, *The Telegraph* (2013), accessed June 14, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/10069274/Ion-Jinga-Romanians-in-Britain-are-just-like-you.html>.

regarding romanian immigrants refers to the financial benefits offered by the British state, which according to romanian ambassador in the UK, Ion Junga, do not exceed the taxes paid by them to British state. Another stereotype about romanians is linked with crime. Mass-media associates romanian immigrants with stealing or begging. Nevertheless, british prime minister David Cameron said that they „work hard, pay taxes and are valued by their employers”²¹. The fourth stereotype refers to gipsy population (Romany population) Mass-media often associate romanians with gypsies (romanian population with romany population). Even if they were often confused, it seems that from 12 millions gypsies in Europe only 600.000 live in Romania. Finally there is the stereotype that immigrants have a much lower level of education than the host population. A study conducted by the British government shows that about 40% of romanian immigrants in Britain hold a undergraduate degree, the population with the highest degree level of education of all other immigrants. If stereotypes regarding romanian immigrants in the EU are numerous, those on gypsies population are more strange. Some of them refer to the fact that romany population lives in caravans, they make abundant weddings and wear provocative clothes, are lazy and do not want to work or they like to live on social benefits.

France is another country with a high number of immigrants from Romania. According to Daily Mail one of ten felon is a romanian immigrant. This article is also taken by the romanian newspaper “România Liberă” which states the fact that 28% of people involved in criminal cases in Belgium in 2010 are Romanians²². These statistics contribute to the development of xenophobic sentiments against Romanians and Roma people in the EU and to the appearance of discrimination and stereotypes. A recent example is found in a story published in the online newspaper “Adevărul” on 17.06.2014, which reports that a 16 year old gipsy boy was beaten by 12 people which suspected him for broking into more houses in the town Pierrefitte-sur-Seine in France. Regarding to this attack, Thorbjorn Jagland, the general secretary of the Council of Europe stated that “This attack against the biggest community in Europe are embarrassing and can not be excused. I am glad to see that french government and so many leaders from France and Europe have adopted a ferm position against discrimination and attacks against roma people”²³.

CONCLUSION

Mass-media has a major responsibility in shaping the images and perceptions about immigrants groups and their families. The question now is why media often uses this responsibility so negatively? One answer would be that journalists are always looking for sensational news which draws the audience, even if they are not truthful or presents these minority groups in an incorrect manner. The way how immigrants are seen, characterized and treated must change. A first step for this purpose may be the change of language in which they are characterized, because a person can never be “illegal”. How society characterized immigrants reflects an alarming number of existing stereotypes against them. Print and broadcast media are those that have contributed to the idea that immigrants "draining" the system, from broadcasting news and reports that this abuse of social benefits. The media should promote social diversity, tolerance, differences between cultures and opinions and

²¹ Junga, „Romanians in Britain are just like you”.

²² Cătălina Felicia Comăneci, „Imaginea imigranților români în presa internațională: mit sau realitate?”, *Sfera Politicii*, nr.166, accesed June 15, 2014, http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/166/art17-Comaneci.php#_ftn32.

²³ Elena Dumitru, „Franța: Un rom de 16 ani din România în comă după ce 12 persoane au vrut să-l linșeze. Președintele și premierul denunță <actul incalificabil>”, *Adevărul* (2014), accesed June 18, 2014, http://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/franta-rom-16-ani-romania-coma-fost-linsat-1_53a001ec0d133766a8a6071b/index.html.

contribute to the effective integration of immigrants. This can happen in the case of which is ensured an effective communication between the majority and minority.

REFERENCES

1. **Artiles, Antonio Martin and Molina Oscar**, „Crisis, economic uncertainty and union’s members attitudes towards immigration in Europe” in *Sage Publication*, 2011.
2. **Balabanova, Ekaterina and Balch, Alex**, „Sending and receiving: the ethical framing of intra –EU migration in the European Press” in *Sage Publication*, 2010.
3. **Bitoulas, Alexandrous**, ”Population and social conditions”, *Eurostat*, March 2014, accesed June 5, 2014, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-QA-14-003/EN/KS-QA-14-003-EN.PDF.
4. **Buchanan, Sara; Grillo, Bethan and Threadgold, Terry**, “What’s the story? Results from research into media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK”, *Article 19*, accesed June 14, 2014, <http://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/publications/refugees-what-s-the-story-.pdf>
5. **Cămărășan, Adrian**, *Migrație și politici europene*, Cluj-Napoca: CA Publishing, 2013.
6. **Comăneci, Cătălina Felicia**, „Imaginea imigranților români în presa internațională: mit sau realitate?” in *Sfera Politicii*, nr.166, accesed June 15, 2014, http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/166/art17-Comaneci.php#_ftn32.
7. Comisia Europeană, “Să înțelegem politicile Uniunii Europene: Migrație și azil”, Direcția Generală Comunicații, 2013.
8. **Dumitru, Elena**, „Franța: Un rom de 16 ani din România în comă după ce 12 persoane au vrut să-l linșeze. Președintele și premierul denunță <actul incalificabil>” in *Adevărul* (2014), accesed June 18, 2014, http://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/franta-rom-16-ani-romania-coma-fost-linsat-1_53a001ec0d133766a8a6071b/index.html.
9. **Floriceș, Octavian**, *Migrația și criminalitatea*, Târgoviște: Bibliotheca, 2006.
10. **Hall, Ben**, “Immigration in European Union: Problem or Solution?”, *OECD Observer* accesed June 5, 2014, http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/archivestory.php/aid/337/Immigration_in_the_European_Union:_problem_or_solution_.html.
11. **Huntington, Samuel**, *Ciocnirea civilizațiilor și refacerea ordinii mondiale*, Oradea, Ed. Antet, 1997.
12. **Jinga, Ion**, „Romanians in Britain are just like you”, *The Telegraph* (2013), accesed June 14, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/10069274/Ion-Jinga-Romanians-in-Britain-are-just-like-you.html>.
13. **Li, Peter**, “World Migration in the Age of Globalization: Policy Implications and Challenges” in *New Zealand Population Review*, 2009.
14. **Nagarajan, Chitra**, “How politicians and the media made us hate immigrants”: 2010, accesed June 14, 2014, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/chitra-nagarajan/how-politicians-and-media-made-us-hate-immigrants>.
15. **Nagarajan, Chitra** “We need to change the very language we use to talk about immigrants”, in *The Stagers*, 2013, accesed June 14, 2014, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/08/we-need-change-very-language-we-use-talk-about-immigrants>.
16. **Niessen, Jan and Huddleston, Thomas**, *Manual privind integrarea pentru factorii de decizie politică și practicieni*, Luxemburg: Oficiul pentru informații al Uniunii Europene, 2010.
17. OECD, *What can the media do to promote the interaction of immigrants and their children?*, 2009.
18. Raportul Grupului al Persoanelor Eminente al Consiliului Europei, *Cum să trăim împreună. Diversitate și libertate în Europa secolului XXI*, Strasbourg, 2011.
19. Raportul Grupului al Persoanelor Eminente al Consiliului Europei, *Cum să trăim împreună. Diversitate și libertate în Europa secolului XXI*, Strasbourg, 2011.
20. **Xuereb, Karsten**, *European cultural policy and migration: Why shoul cultural policy in the European Union Adress the impact of migration on Identity and Social integration?*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009.