



# REMINDER

ROLE OF EUROPEAN MOBILITY AND ITS IMPACTS  
IN NARRATIVES, DEBATES AND EU REFORMS

Media practices related to migration and intra-EU  
mobility in the EU-15 Member States

## WORKING PAPER

**Authors:** Eric Karstens  
Barbara Kuznik  
Robert McNeil

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### **Media practices related to migration and intra-EU mobility in the EU-15 Member States (D11.1)**

Authors: Eric Karstens (EJC), Barbara Kuznik (EJC), Robert McNeil (UOXF)  
{karstens@ejc.net; kuznik@ejc.net; robert.mcneil@compas.ox.ac.uk}

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Correspondence address:

European Journalism Centre (EJC)  
Oranjeplein 106  
6224 KV Maastricht  
The Netherlands



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## Executive summary

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This report presents the findings from a survey of journalists as well as a selection of their sources in government and civil society in Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. It aims to develop a clearer understanding of the commercial, institutional, practical, and technical factors that affect news production and shape media narratives and frames around EU mobility and Third-Country Nationals (TCN) in different EU countries.

Findings indicate that in all of the countries, journalists tend to have an idealistic view of their own profession. However, confidence in the sustainability of their jobs is much greater in the North than the South. Germans and Swedes acknowledge structural political and business influence on their work, but generally assert their editorial autonomy, whereas Italians are wary of built-in partisanship in their media sphere, and Spanish feel that the news are directly manipulated by the powers that be. The UK takes a middle position, where many journalists yield to the perceived political leaning or mission of their outlet.

Across the board, journalists look at migration through the prism of “otherness” or even “problem”, typically framed by their country’s most immediate current concerns or public agendas, such as the admission of refugees and other TCNs in Germany and Sweden, migration across the Mediterranean in Italy and Spain, and intra-EU worker mobility in the UK. Hence, skilled workers receive hardly any journalistic attention at all, while perceived “poverty migration” and refugees dominate journalists’ perception of news value and relevance.

The journalists claim to have educational and ethical intentions, yet at the same time they appear to be driven by topics and controversies raised by other social actors.

In Germany, Italy, and Spain, the sources expressed an educational and regulatory mission, trying to temper the public attitude towards all categories of migrants, and to mitigate issues arising from migration. In Sweden and the UK, on the other hand, the sources sampled saw themselves as political actors on either side of the spectrum: Pro-migrant and pro-integration, or the opposite. Outside the UK, though, there is a prevalent view that intra-EU mobility is hardly an issue at all, with the exception of migrants from countries such as Bulgaria and Romania.



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## **Common introduction to both reports (EU-15 and EU-10)**

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*Note: This section acts as an introduction to both reports.*

### **Rationale**

Work package 11 of the REMINDER project is an analysis of media practices, and the factors that shape them, in the reporting of migration and intra-EU mobility in 9 EU member states. It is part of the “perceptions” pillar of the REMINDER project, looking into public discourses related to migration and intra-EU mobility.

Its findings should, eventually, be considered alongside the findings of work packages 8-10 which look at media content and public attitudes, thus helping to develop a picture of the relationships between the practice of journalism, the content of media, public attitudes and policy outcomes. This overall approach of the REMINDER project – interviews with journalists compared to media content generated by their outlets – builds on methodological ideas suggested by Bruggemann (2014) to measure journalistic framing practices.

The framing of migrants in media worldwide is a highly contentious issue (Allen et al 2017). On the one hand, media organisations are often accused of inciting hostility toward migrants (FRA 2016) while on the other, media are accused of participating in pro-migration or globalist propaganda (West 2013).

This work package does not attempt to answer the question of how migration is framed by media – an issue which will critically depend both on which media are being considered, and on the specific political context at any given time – but rather to understand what factors affect the choices made by media professionals in the materials (and therefore frames) that they generate.

It addresses a gap between existing academic analyses of media frame-building (Bruggemann, *ibid*), which tend to privilege the role and power of political actors in shaping media frames (Hanggli 2012), and older work on the sociology of the newsroom (see Stonbely 2013), which highlights the role of institutional norms as well as editors’ and reporters’ indi-





vidual biases or conceptions of their professional responsibility (Schudson 1989) in the stories that are published.

Specifically, the work package was designed to develop a clearer understanding of the political, commercial, institutional, practical, and technical factors that affect news production and shape media narratives and frames around EU mobility and Third-Country Nationals in different EU countries.

These first two deliverables from WP11 (D11.1 and D11.2) provide a country-by-country analysis of media practices and narratives about migration:

- A. From countries that are part of the “EU15” - or “old” EU Member States (D11.1);
- B. from countries that are part of the “EU10” - relatively new EU Member States that have joined the bloc since 2004 (D11.2).

### ***Methodology***

This work package is built around a series of semi-structured interviews with 221 media practitioners and sources in the project’s core eight Member States, designed to analyse if, and how, differences in the cultures, objectives, and pressures in different news-generating and news-producing environments in EU countries affect the choices of news items reported, and narratives generated, about the subject of migration and intra-EU mobility. The countries chosen represent an economic, geographical and cultural cross-section of the EU: Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The work-package also added one further new EU Member State – Slovenia – to the analysis after undertaking a pilot project there, which provided suitable and interesting data. Interviews were supplemented by a written questionnaire. An online survey was also undertaken, though the results of this will not be published until Deliverable 11.3.

In each of the targeted EU Member States, the size and composition of the sample was adjusted to reflect the size and composition of the media in the specific country. The specific media outlets and sources chosen to participate varied from country to country and were selected based on the country’s population, their audience reach, and an assessment by



local media analysts of their influence in media debates about migration in the countries in which they operate.

Interviewees included those reporting on migration – including journalists, commentators, and high-impact online contributors - and key “sources” feeding stories to those news professionals. These included government workers and public relations teams, NGOs and civil society “voices” (activists or spokespeople). A majority of interviews (more than 70%) were with those reporting on migration, while a minority (a little under 30%) were with important “sources”. The majority (58%) of fieldwork came from individual interviews, while a smaller share (42%) of participants joined focus groups. Interviews and focus groups all followed the same structured questionnaire - though journalists and sources, by virtue of their different roles, received slightly different questions.

Interviews with journalists worked to understand their perception of the general “worldview” espoused by the media organisation(s) that they represented, and of the “worldview” of their consumers (i.e. readers, viewers, followers, target media, etc.). Analysis was also undertaken to help answer the following questions:

- What shapes choices of language used to describe migration?
- To which extent do interlocutors believe it is important to distinguish between EU/non-EU migration, and/or do they consider other distinctions more important?
- What do the subjects have in mind when they talk about migration, and what do they think their audiences have in mind?

Another line of questioning addressed the culture and practices of the newsroom or other working environment. This considered factors such as:

- Management style;
- Workforce diversity;
- Deadline pressures;
- Job security and casualization.

This allowed examination of how factors related to the institutional practices and norms of news organisations relate to the tone and approach of these organisations’ outputs on EU mobility. It also allowed the team to examine concepts of what constitutes a “good story”,



as well as the decision-making processes of journalists dealing with EU mobility and migration of third-country nationals in different EU member states. Moreover, it facilitated analysis of the differences between the different media environments across case-study countries.

Interviews with “sources” considered many of the same questions while also asking about overall organisational objectives; approaches to dealing with the press and aims in doing so; reflections on what media wants; and considerations on how media demands affect the production of materials or choice of publications/releases issued (by the source), the tone and content included in them, and the timing of interventions in the press.

In order to elicit the most natural and frank responses and not to exclude any relevant actors, the field work was conducted in the local languages; findings were, however, collected and aggregated in English to enable this analysis. Anonymity was guaranteed to all respondents.

#### *Practical constraints*

Recruitment of participants was undertaken by regional media analysts affiliated to the European Journalism Centre (EJC) (which also provides a publicly accessible database (EJC 2017) of European and third-country media landscapes), Budapest Business School and the University of Oxford. This recruitment was based on an understanding of the media landscapes in these particular countries and an assessment of key actors in media debates about migration. While efforts were made in each country to ensure that the sample represented the range of media and source types present – as well as political, social, hierarchical and demographic variation with the national media landscapes – the teams faced a number of practical constraints that should be considered in reading this analysis. These include both a limit on the number of participants who could realistically be interviewed, and a lack of any reliable metrics to measure the importance of various media or sources on migration debates in the countries surveyed.

As such, it is important that these findings are seen as useful insights into, rather than a comprehensive picture of, media practices in the surveyed countries, and considerably more detailed analysis will need to be done in the future to develop these analyses further.



Nevertheless, the team had the contacts and credibility to reach out to journalists, sources and newsrooms of all types in all of the surveyed countries.

It was also paramount that all subjects were confident they would remain anonymous and that all markers that might link specific statements to individuals would be removed from any document accessible by third parties. This means that some information from participants has been described rather than provided as direct quotes.

Some terms to describe media types – such as “broadcast”, “online”, “TV”, “magazine” and “radio” are essentially descriptive and neutral. However, for newspapers, terms such as “tabloid” and “broadsheet” may be perceived in different ways in different countries – as descriptive of a certain physical format, a certain reporting approach, or both.

Throughout this report, we use all of these terms (and others) to describe media as they are described by reporters and sources in their own countries; however, for consistency, in the allocation of quotes to individual reporters from newspapers we use the following terms:

- “popular newspaper” to describe any newspaper with more of a focus on celebrity, lifestyle or sensation;
- “quality newspaper” to describe any newspaper with less of a focus on the issues above.

These terms should not be seen to be making value judgements about these media.

Participants were offered the choice of participating in focus groups or individual interviews the majority chose individual interviews, but all were asked the same set of questions. Both approaches provided different benefits and limitations, with interviews yielding more detailed and varied statements than focus groups, but, focus groups providing a space for participants to challenge and discuss one another’s statements.

A key influencing factor affecting this research was the refugee crisis of 2015, which overshadowed all other topics of migration and mobility in several of the sampled countries and thus severely reduced the number of instances when media covered, for instance, intra-EU work mobility. The UK is a notable exception in this respect.



## ***Country overview***

As discussed above, these two reports look at a total of nine EU Member States. The countries were selected to capture a broad range of geographic, economic and cultural factors represented within EU Member States. The countries were divided into two clusters, one of long-time Member States in Western Europe (EU-15), and another one consisting of post-socialist nations that joined the bloc since 2004 (EU-10). This division was made to accommodate different media and political traditions and experiences.

Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom represent the “old” Member States – which tend to be countries of destination for both mobile EU citizens and non-EU migrants, while the “new” EU members are represented by Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia – these countries have, over the last century, tended to be migrant-sending, rather than receiving, countries.

### *Extended case study United Kingdom*

The Brexit debate and the high salience of migration and intra-EU mobility in the UK media necessitated an extended chapter dealing with UK issues.



## EU-15 countries – Political and media context overview

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The countries representing the EU-15 cluster are all stable democracies with, generally speaking, a high level of press freedom. Freedom House (2017) ranks Sweden (score 11), Germany (20), the United Kingdom (25), and Spain (28) as “free”, and Italy (31) as “partly free”. Reporters Without Borders (2017) essentially mirrors this order, but is more pessimistic about Italy, which it ranks in the same category as Poland at the 52<sup>nd</sup> place worldwide.

This country cluster has seen a number of disruptive situations over recent years, many of which directly or indirectly relate to the topic of migration. The decision of the UK to leave the European Union is the most fundamental among those. One of the dominant political sentiments underpinning “Brexit”, and one of the drivers of the referendum result, was opposition to intra-EU mobility (Cummings 2017).

Germany and Sweden, on the other hand, hosted a substantial number of refugees from Syria and neighbouring countries since 2015, and remain leading destination countries for African migrants. This has contributed to the rise of populist political parties such as the Sweden Democrats and the *Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)* in Germany; both parties achieved more than 12% cent of the vote in the most recent national elections 2014 and 2017, respectively.

Italy and Spain are both grappling with Middle Eastern and African migrants trying to reach Europe across the Mediterranean or via the Spanish enclaves in Morocco. Both have also seen significant immigration from EU-10 countries, are recovering from major economic crises, and have seen recent political turmoil – such as the Catalan autonomy issue in Spain.

### *Political and Media Landscape Germany*

According to a recent poll (Statista 2017), 44% of the German population see migration as a problem that needs to be solved, ranking it much more urgent than the education system (21%) and terrorism and climate change (both 12%). During the 2017 election campaign, the populist AfD took a stand against immigration. The party has also positioned itself against the media which was criticising their statements by coining the term “Lügenpresse” (lying



press). Both the AfD's recent successes and their attacks against opinion-forming media organisations have been a matter of debate in Germany ever since.

The German news media landscape is characterised by the “dual” system of regional public service broadcasters and privately owned and operated outlets with a print legacy. Public television and radio are among the country's most trusted news sources (Infratest Dimap 2017), supplemented by an economically embattled, but still varied selection of regional and national level newspapers and news magazines – these also dominate German online news, in which only few “online-only” sites attract substantial attention. There is one popular tabloid with nation-wide distribution, as well as a handful of urban tabloids.

Practically all opinion-forming and agenda-setting news outlets in Germany are relatively centrist – if leaning towards one of the mainstream political persuasions – and relatively moderate; even tabloids tend not to use their sensationalistic approach in the interest of radical politics. Hard-left and hard-right outlets exist, but play a marginal role in the public debate. The increasing diversity, fragmentation, and polarisation of the German public sphere is not necessarily reflected in traditional news media, but finds its outlet on social media (Kollanyi et al 2017).

Political influence on media outlets is generally moderate as well (Maurer 2017), and all outlets maintain strong editorial independence even when they exhibit a political leaning. Public service broadcasters are legally required to produce impartial coverage. They are funded through a mandatory license fee rather than taxes or government subsidies, and their governance is organised at arm's length from the state. That said, high-ranking posts in public service media organisations tend to be filled with a proportional representation of the main political parties in mind.

Despite the decline of traditional print titles, the German news media landscape is well funded by a combination of public service license fees, subscription revenues, advertising, and other revenues. Commercial news media are less lucrative than they used to be, but remain economically viable on their own (cf. also Thomaß and Horz 2017).



### *Political and Media Landscape Italy*

High migrant flows into Italy across the Mediterranean in recent years (see Crawley et al 2016) have shaped the Italian policy and media response to the issue of migration (Colombo 2017) – including during Italian field work included in this report. Media responses highlight both concerns over the humanitarian aspects of this crisis (accommodation and healthcare, migrants suffering shipwrecks in transit, and the conditions in camps on the Libyan coast) and fears of an “invasion” and increasing crime risks, with populist movements such as the Lega Nord making efforts to capitalise on more negative sentiment (Observer 2015).

In Italy, television plays the dominant role in the public’s opinion-forming processes, while press circulation is relatively low and primarily addresses educated political élites rather than a broader swath of the population. Notably, print tabloids do not exist in Italy, but parts of the television coverage approximate this category. The public service media organisation RAI is owned by the Treasury Ministry, while the most relevant free-to-air commercial channels belong to former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s company Mediaset (cf. also Mancini and Gerli 2017).

Even as partisanship has decreased due to the overall commercialisation of the media landscape, political influence remains deeply engrained in the polarised Italian news ecosystem (Esser and Umbricht 2013). Traditionally, each of the three main public TV channels is associated with one of the country’s key political movements, and the whole organisation is directly controlled by the government. At the same time, commercial competitor Mediaset is owned by one of the country’s major political figures. Similarly, newspapers either receive state subsidies or are backed by economic interests.

While the television sector financially thrives, attracting substantial advertising and subscription revenues as well as, in the case of public service media, a mandatory license fee, print and online news are financially precarious and often not viable on their own.

### *Political and Media Landscape Sweden*

In Sweden, migration was a major topic at the time of the field work for this study (see, for example, Krzyzanowski 2017), driven by issues relating to the Syrian civil war and refugee





crisis, “Brexit”, and domestic policy concerns over crime, terrorism, and the “alt right” movement.

The Swedish news ecosystem has traditionally been characterised by the strong position of local subscription newspapers. However, with the increasing importance of online media, national papers have become dominant. Here, the market is mainly divided between two tabloids (*Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*) and two quality newspapers (*Dagens Nyheter* and *Sydsvenskan*), all of which have developed a strong digital presence supplementing their print editions. Public service broadcasting is also a significant factor in in Swedish media, despite comparatively lower television audiences than in many other European countries (cf. also Wadbring and Ohlsson 2017).

Swedish political parties have traditionally strong connections with newspapers. Despite newspaper ownership moving from parties to commercial companies and foundations, political parallelism, i.e., the alignment of media outlets with political parties (Hallin and Mancini 2004, p. 21), still lingers. Some parties also run their own or closely affiliated online media outlets. Public broadcasters (*Sveriges Radio* and *Sveriges Television*), however, are required to observe standards of impartiality and political proportionality.

Economically, the local newspaper landscape has come under increasing pressure, with both advertising and subscription revenues moving to titles with national distribution. Those, however, do well. Public broadcasting is funded through a mandatory license fee and banned from developing advertising or other service revenues.

#### *Political and Media Landscape Spain*

Despite the dominance of the Catalan issue in Spanish media during the fieldwork, migration remained a prevalent topic – primarily because the steady arrival of migrant boats on the Spanish coast (Frontex 2018), a high number of attempts to cross over into the Spanish exclaves Ceuta and Melilla, and the government’s struggle to handle the new arrivals (Guardian 2017).

Since Spain’s adoption of democracy in the early 1980s and its accession to the European Union, government-controlled media outlets have been replaced by a range of commercial and public service media organisations. Following the economic crisis between 2008 and



2012 a proliferation of new online-only media organisations emerged, which have attempted to address the economic as well as trust-related issues of the Spanish news ecosystem (EJC 2017).

A key characteristic of the media landscape is its alignment along two axes: across the political spectrum, and along the lines of regional autonomy movements vs the quest for national unity. This goes with an editorial focus on opinion rather than information, and a “revolving door” phenomenon between politics and news media. This situation has contributed to the public perception that most outlets – and in particular the legacy ones – are partisan and biased, and that they are heavily influenced by national and regional governments as well as corporations. Independent digital news start-ups are considered a response to this situation.

Commercial television remains financially lucrative, while newspapers are facing severe economic problems, which are exacerbated by their declining circulation. Public-service broadcasting is state-owned and funded by subsidies (CJEU 2016).

#### *Political and Media Landscape United Kingdom*

Throughout the 2000s, sharp rises in net migration occurred due to relatively open migration policies and a sustained period of economic growth. This contributed to a vocal response from organisations and media opposed to high levels of immigration, which continues to this day (see Migration Watch, 2011; Crawley et al., 2016).

In 2004, the UK became one of only three EU member states – along with Sweden and the Republic of Ireland – to open its labour market at the same time as its borders to workers from the new EU member states (Migration Observatory, 2017a). This resulted in a rapid increase in the UK’s EU migrant population, which rose from 1.2 million in 2003 to 3.6 million in 2016 (UK Office for National Statistics, 2017). Many of the workers from new member states were working in lower skilled and lower paid jobs (Migration Observatory 2017b).

Despite a policy commitment to reduce net migration to the “tens of thousands”, net migration continued to increase under David Cameron’s Conservative-led coalition from 2010, with annual net migration of EU citizens playing an increasing role. High levels of EU net



migration became a central theme of the Leave campaign during the UK's 2016 referendum on EU membership (Cummings 2017, *ibid*).

The Leave campaign's success in 2016, and the UK's subsequent commitment to leave the EU, created a period of political turbulence and a set of social and economic repercussions – from a decline in the value of the pound to a number of high profile xenophobic attacks on EU migrants. The immediate effects include a dip in overall net migration, with a particular reduction in net migration from EU accession states from the 2004 enlargement (Migration Observatory, 2017c).

The UK media landscape is “large, complex and mature, arguably ranking second globally to that of the USA.” (EJC 2009).

The UK's broadcast media is dominated by the publicly funded BBC. The BBC provides TV, Radio and online content at numerous international, national and regional levels. It had a 32% share of TV viewers in 2016 (BARB 2017) and a 52% share of radio listeners in Q3 of 2017 (RAJAR 2017) and offers both entertainment and news coverage. It is governed by a charter and agreement designed, among other things, to ensure editorial independence from government and to uphold political impartiality (DDCMS 2016). Other terrestrial TV providers include ITV – the country's second largest after the BBC – which received a 21% share of TV audiences in 2016, Channel 4 and its subsidiaries (10%) and Channel 5 (4%) (BARB 2017, *ibid*). These commercial broadcasters are subject to rules on political impartiality, overseen by the broadcast regulator, Ofcom, and this neutrality is a prerequisite for broadcast licences to be issued or renewed (Ofcom 2017). As such, broadcast media in the UK is broadly apolitical in its outputs and did not advocate for Leave or Remain in the referendum. However, migration stories and themes that emerge in the more politicised print (and to a lesser extent online) media are often prominent in follow-up stories appearing in broadcast media.

The UK maintains a large and politically impactful national print media sector. In the UK's devolved nations – Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – UK national newspapers often have special regional editions though a number of significant sub-national newspapers also exist. Many larger cities and English regions also have significant regional newspapers.



The UK's newspaper sector can be broadly split into three categories:

- broadsheet/quality – newspapers including the Financial Times, the Times, the Daily Telegraph, the Guardian and The I, as well as Sunday editions of these newspapers;
- middle market – which is largely made up of the Daily Mail and the Daily Express, and their sister Sunday papers;
- tabloid – which includes The Sun, The Daily Mirror, The Daily Star and their Sunday counterparts.

Ownership of the UK's main newspapers is concentrated in the hands of a small number of people and organisations with analysis from the Media Reform Coalition in 2015 estimating that 71% of the UK national newspaper market is owned by three companies – News Corp. (33.6%), which owns the Times and The Sun; Associated Newspapers (24.1%), which owns the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday; and Mirror Group (13.6%), which owns the Daily and Sunday Mirror newspapers, and The Sunday People. Sales of the UK's tabloid and mid-market newspapers greatly exceed those of broadsheets.

A number of regular national news magazines – such as the Economist, the Spectator and the New Statesman –, and business publications such as the Financial Times also feed a more elite or policy focussed news audience.

Most tabloid and mid-market newspapers take a broadly right-of-centre position on policy issues – including migration – and have traditionally tended to support the Conservative party, with the exception of the Labour-supporting Mirror – though these political alignments have fluctuated over the years (Yougov 2017). Most also backed the Leave Campaign during the referendum on EU membership – with the exception of the Mirror and the Mail on Sunday (Reuters Institute, 2016).

The UK's online news media is dominated by existing news brands – including the BBC, Mirror Group, Daily Mail, Telegraph, Guardian, and Sky (Similarweb 2016). The lines between online and print or broadcast coverage can be blurred with journalists often working across multiple platforms. Various digital-only platforms, such as BuzzFeed and the Huffington Post, and specialist policy websites such as Politico or Politics.co.uk have a following among cer-



tain – often younger - groups, while some previously print-based publications have now become online-only – notably the Independent.



## Media practices in Germany

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### **Journalists**

#### *1. Demographics and background*

The journalists surveyed in Germany cover the spectrum of the political centre, including centre-right as well as centre-left publications; both hard-right and hard-left declined to take part. However, this is in keeping with the German news market, which is generally characterised by political and partisan moderation. Broadcast, newspapers, and online outlets were represented equitably; about 60% worked for commercial outlets, the rest for public or non-profit media. Around 60% of the media organisations addressed nationwide audiences, while roughly 27% were regionally oriented.

Of the 22 journalists, 7 specialised in migration and mobility issues – some full-time, but most as just an element of their political or economic beats. They constitute a balanced mix of permanently employed editors (who also produce stories themselves), permanent freelancers working mainly for one specific outlet, and freelancers with multiple clients. Most were in mid-career or middle management positions, while three participants were at the senior/management level. They were between 29 and 53 years of age, with most in their thirties and forties. The German respondents also asserted that their newsrooms featured an equitable proportion of the genders, that more than half employed disabled journalists, and that staff was pretty diverse in terms of social backgrounds. Still, they felt that minorities were under-represented in their workplaces, compared to the composition of German society as a whole.

#### *2. Professional environment*

The subjects agreed that the profession of journalism still is highly regarded in Germany, but less so in recent years: *“In my personal surroundings, I receive a lot of positive feedback, but we have also reactions from our readers and observe that the tone has changed a lot over the recent years and has become more aggressive and destructive”* (GEJO16, magazine).

There is no perception among the sample of a dramatic loss of trust or a general downgrading of journalism, but it is quite clear that the historically almost unassailable reputation of



journalists has deteriorated and there is more open hostility towards them, which most experience at one point.

Subjects mainly ascribed this to the ascent of social networks, the rise of hard-right political party AFD, and the divide between the Western and Eastern parts of Germany.

However, two subjects also found that the quality of journalism has dropped because of time and budget pressures, and that this has contributed to its lesser image. One participant suggested that the adversarial tendencies were always there, but merely found an outlet today: *“I think that if we would have had 10, 20, 30 years ago the same extremely fast possibilities to react as we have them today, it would have been the same”* (GEJO21, Quality newspaper).

Generally speaking, all German participants with permanent employment felt secure in their jobs and were confident about the future, while the freelancers said they were facing much higher levels of insecurity. This is in part a direct function of their professional role, but also results from their inability to command sustainable fees.

One freelancer observed: *“I work like crazy but just cannot get into a safe situation. If you have a break (like going on a holiday) you feel this instantly and drastically”* (GEJO14).

Another added that as a consequence: *“I have seen many very good people go to work, for example, in public relations when they started a family, as they had no long-term perspective”* (GEJO12). Choices of freelance careers therefore appear to be somewhat idealistic and – out of necessity – an often temporary engagement with journalism.

All journalists describe their work environment as pleasant, friendly and collegial. In Germany, this, however, involves maintaining a certain professional distance, where it would be unusual to consider a manager as a personal friend. This does not have a negative connotation; on the contrary, the journalists often note that they prefer a friendly professional relationship which implicates respect and appreciation first on the professional level, but includes kindness and friendly interaction on a personal level as well. There is generally a high level of mutual trust and respect.

All participants clearly negated that any external factor dictates the contents or bias of their coverage. They acknowledged that lobbyists, politicians, but also their own audiences, tried



to influence them, yet claimed that they were in a position to make up their own minds about any information they encountered during their journalistic research. One participant, however, observed that advertisers had a small amount of influence.

### 3. Professional self-perception

All participants said that they liked their job as journalists – often because it allowed them to immerse themselves into new issues every day, and satisfied their innate curiosity. At the same time, they were also motivated by idealistic values, namely the wish to perform a job that is useful to society and democracy as a whole by holding power to account and delivering quality information to citizens. One subject summarised the prevailing self-image like this: *“It’s a mix of being a detective, a writer, and a politician, as one also comments and offers an opinion”* (GEJO08, Quality newspaper).

All unambiguously highlighted the provision of relevant information as a key professional objective, even though many claimed the prerogative to decide what topic or angle is relevant and to put that on the agenda – regardless of how strongly they perceived the public demand for any given theme. At the same time, several participants conceded that they also follow topics that are on the current news agenda, and that their audiences may also expect to be entertained, at least to some degree. Almost two thirds of the sample denied that they let commercial considerations dictate their choice of topics; conversely, more than two thirds wanted to educate their audience and admitted that, to this end, they sometimes or even frequently tried to create an emotional appeal. They overwhelmingly described the choice of what to report as a collective decision within their organisation.

German journalists interviewed also assigned relevance as a high priority when it comes to the building blocks of a good story, combined with the classic virtues of journalism, in short: *“Good background research, good initial question, well written”* (GEJO07, Quality newspaper).

Several subjects also stress that a story should have real-life implications by addressing a concern that affects a substantial part of the audience, or by highlighting something that should be changed. One journalist added: *“We naturally report about problems in our society – that’s the job –, but if we only look for the negative points, it can also result in a distorted picture of our society”* (GEJO06, Quality newspaper).





The journalists claimed that they used the various types of sources pretty evenly. However, they expressed the greatest amount of trust in academics, while they had moderate concerns about the credibility of domestic think tank and NGO spokespeople as well as their press releases. In fact, the German government enjoyed, in their eyes, much greater trust than domestic think tank and NGO spokespeople. International NGOs and think tanks were trusted more than domestic ones, and press releases were regarded with some suspicion across the board – once again with the notable exception of academia.

The majority of the subjects imagined their audiences as middle-class, middle-aged, and well educated, more often male than not. However, one interlocutor points out that their perception may be biased because it is precisely this target group that gets in touch with them most frequently: *“The readers one gets contacted by are not necessarily a reflection of our total readership, they are, I would say, the older men, a bit pedantic”* (GEJO11, Quality newspaper)

All concede that there is likely an age differential between demographically older users of legacy print and broadcasting channels and the younger-skewing audiences of online offers, even where the latter are the digital outlet of the very same legacy news organisation. Hence, the journalists indicated that, for practical purposes, they are typically working for both online and legacy channels and thus cannot possibly address a very specific demographic.

#### *4. Attitudes towards migration and mobility in general*

The German journalists taking part in the survey were personally clearly in favour of intra-EU mobility. Almost all of them agreed with the statement that it was a general benefit, and about two thirds felt that it was not an economic nor general problem for host societies, even as more than 40% acknowledged that such migration may cause issues in both the country of origin and the destination country.

About three quarter of participants stated that migration in general was a very important issue for them. Intra-EU mobility, however, did not rank as high, with only slightly more than one quarter characterising it as very important, and almost half assigning it a moderate amount of importance.



##### 5. Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration

The German participants were highly aware of issues related to the definition of migrants, with the topic present in their newsrooms on an everyday basis: *“People who just look different can be exposed to racism, even if they are German, so for us it is important to be very clear”* (GEJO05, Quality newspaper). They recognise that there are many different categories of migrants, and also aspire always to use the appropriate and non-judgemental terminology for refugees, asylum seekers, work migrants, those who benefit from intra-EU mobility, and persons with a parental link to migration.

Still, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the available vocabulary, for instance: *“By definition [a person has a migrant background] as soon as one parent is from outside Germany, but for me this terminology is not perfect, as there are such big differences, if for example both parents are from another country or just one, starting with language abilities. Somebody who is born and went to school somewhere else has a different background than somebody who is born and went to school in Germany”* (GEJO06, Quality newspaper).

Generally, the first term that comes to mind for the journalists is “person with a migration background” (“Person mit Migrationshintergrund”), which is all-encompassing – covering 22,5% of the German population (DESTATIS 2016) – and neutral, yet does not allow a conclusion on what specific kind of migration plays a role in a person’s life.

Participants, however, also acknowledged that popular understanding of what constitutes a migrant may well be less discerning and focus on non-EU migrants and refugees in particular from the Arab world or Africa.

The journalists surveyed unanimously identified the legal difference between intra-EU mobility and migration from outside the EU, as well as the consequences for the people concerned. At the same time, they stated that the legal difference was somewhat meaningless for reporting purposes, because many stories arose from appearance and culture rather than formal status. One participant said: *“Sinti and Roma are not treated the same as French or British, they are more treated like migrants from non-EU-countries. Difference is that 1. they are easily ethnically identified as ‘not German’, and 2. it is assumed that they don’t respect the same culture and values and are more perceived as a threat”* (GEJO19, Online). Several subjects also mentioned that the motivation for migration was a more important



defining factor than legal status, for instance: *“EU-Migrants [...] go somewhere because they want to be there, while the others have more often a reason to leave. There is no war in any of the EU-countries at the moment”* (GEJO13, magazine).

In keeping with this observation, the journalists stated that they covered EU mobility primarily with a view to the job market, and most recently to Brexit as well, but that EU citizenship was not a major angle: *“Given the fact that the biggest group of migrants in Germany is from EU-countries, they are close to non-existent in the reporting. EU migration became a topic in connection with poverty-driven-migration when Romania and Bulgaria became part of the EU”* (GEJO05, Quality newspaper). Brexit appears to have heightened the awareness, and subsequent coverage, of structural and multilateral issues of intra-EU mobility, though.

While the journalists said that they covered non-EU migration also mostly from a job market and poverty-driven migration perspective, cultural differences played a role more frequently. However, they felt that the topic was rather differentiated and would be covered accordingly. *“This group is huge and disparate – some are associated with high skilled professions, others, for example with Turkey, with the politically problematic situation in the home country”* (GEJO03, Online). A recurring topic is the debate about a potential German immigration law that has picked up in recent years. This law, if enacted, would set out a proactive policy on the qualifications as well as numbers of immigrants that were expressly desired by the country, as opposed to the current rules which are largely reactive (e.g., Die Zeit 2017).

According to the journalists interviewed, only the category of refugees received a specific and fairly consistent treatment in German coverage, primarily as an echo of the acceptance of high numbers of Syrian and other war refugees from 2015 onwards.

Here, media report on a complex series of topics including humanitarian issues, practical and bureaucratic challenges with the acceptance and housing of refugees, and crimes – both committed against, and by, refugees. The situation in countries of origin moves into focus as well, which is mentioned by almost 60% of participants.

The implications of cultural and religious issues play a major role in the coverage, but, as one participant asserted: *“The main topic is, what are the effects on Germany. How is the*



*society changing, how do laws have to be adapted to be fair to the migrants/refugees, but also that the German society can accept and handle it” (GEJO09, magazine).*

Participants also observed a clear shift in both the public perception and the media coverage of refugees: *“I think it is interesting to see how the whole discourse in the media in general has changed when reporting about refugees, how at the beginning emphasis was on the ‘welcome culture’, and today examples of crime committed by people who were already supposed to be deported are making the headlines, and the topic is deportation not integration” (GEJO11, Broadcast).*

#### *6. Conclusion*

Our survey participants paint a picture of a German media environment characterised by moderation. This moderation seems to seep into most dimensions of the journalistic process including the commercial, institutional, practical, and technical factors that then shape coverage of migration.

Specifically, the institutional culture in German media organisations seems characterised by a broad sense of job security (with the exception of freelancers); a sense of respect, broadly speaking, from both audiences and colleagues, and high levels of job satisfaction. While there is gender diversity in the workforce, however, a perceived lack of cultural or ethnic diversity may have some impact on the way that migration issues are covered (Triandafyllidou 2013, Markova and McKay 2013).

The practical, day-to-day working environments of German media professionals surveyed are characterised by a strong sense of autonomy and freedom from outside influences – both from management, making attempts to affect or shape stories, and from outside bodies either political or commercial. This is not to say that these journalists are *not* influenced by frames constructed by political, commercial or other organisations (see Hanggli 2012, *ibid*), but they do not perceive that they are being manipulated. Indeed, the findings suggest that the public agenda has a stronger impact on journalists’ decision-making process on what to cover than they care to admit.

From a technical perspective, the broadly moderate language used by our German sample to describe migrants– such as the very anodyne “Person mit Migrationshintergrund” –, and



the broadly technical focus on the status of refugees may also shape the migration frames they produce. The sample's technocratic and labour-market focussed descriptions of high-income EU migrants and skilled non-EU migrants contrast, however, with a recognition that descriptions of groups perceived as poorer – including ethnic minorities and EU migrants from lower-income EU member states – may be considerably more negatively loaded.

In any case, the refugee crisis of 2015 appears to have very substantially raised the critical awareness of German journalists for migration and mobility issues. The sample exhibited a clear understanding of the various nuances of migration itself, and of the intricacies of migration-related vocabulary. This is indicative of intensive discussions and self-reflection in the country's newsrooms

Finally, the commercial considerations of the media professionals sampled suggest that they broadly focus on generating materials for middle-aged, educated, professionals. This ties in to their general focus on education, rather than sensation, but also to the lack of more radical voices – which may be a facet of our sample, but does appear to be characteristic of the German media as a whole. However, the sample also suggested that a move toward more negative depictions – with a focus on cultural differences and negative impacts of the “welcome culture” – may now be starting to take root.



## Sources

### 1. Demographics and background

The 13 sources interviewed in Germany represent a good cross-section of the relevant actors in the country, comprising the political foundations of the two biggest parties, a representative of a hard-right party, a business organisation, and scientific as well as political think tanks. Participants represented the genders in a balanced fashion, and were between 31 and 61 years of age, with most in the mid-thirties to mid-forties bracket. The majority held middle positions, while less than one third were senior persons. Their organisations are funded through various means, ranging from membership fees and statutory dues to direct state funding, to the German parliament and federal ministries, and to the assets of a private foundation.

Most participants agreed that well-established nationwide media of record, in particular television and print media, were the most substantial contributors to the debate about migration in Germany; one participant specifically pointed at the largest tabloid. At the same time, several respondents also acknowledged that social media were playing an increasingly important role and were now quoted by conventional media; however, they also felt that social media communication was riskier, as it could easily get out of control.

### 2. Professional environment

The sources surveyed overwhelmingly experienced positive and constructive feedback for their work and felt highly respected (around 70%) – in fact, in some cases simply mentioning the name of their employer would do the trick. However, as a political party representative pointed out, this can also go the other way: *“I am representing a party in Germany which is seen very controversial. For example, I have lost my oldest friend due to that, he doesn’t talk to me anymore, but I have also very positive responses from people”* (GESO13). Some interlocutors also mentioned that their jobs and their employers’ objectives required a lot of explanation and therefore did not get much spontaneous public attention: *“I think that our profession – social science – is not always fully understood, and that people expect that we should have more influence on politics, but our role is more that of an advisor or even one step back that of an observer”* (GESO02, think tank). Another one added: *“Economy studies*



are regarded slightly sceptically: *Do we need this and for what, aren't especially economic studies influenced by lobbies?*" (GESO05, think tank).

### 3. Professional self-perception

Most of the sources interviewed are motivated by their personal interest in their work areas, albeit to different degrees. The responses range from *"I like to present complex circumstances in a way that everybody can understand"* (GESO01) to *"I am driven by an extreme curiosity [...]. As a person, I am a total activist – I am burning for my topics"* (GESO02), with a range of perspectives in between. In general, the survey suggests that there is a strong educational impetus and that the subjects strive to be competent mediators between the spheres of science, politics, and the public debate. Several respondents also state that their motivation is political, and their objective to contribute to change.

This range of job motivations is reflected in the subjects' statements on their objectives when communicating with the media. Some, primarily the science and think tank representatives, want to provide the public with more comprehensive information. One respondent summed up that they wanted to *"bring more objectivity into debates, offer scientific results, data as a basis for journalists to work from, explaining background"* (GESO01, Information platform). Others were more intent on promoting the work of their organisation: *"We hope to have positive reactions, positive coverage of our activities, putting our company in a good light and become more known"* (GESO12, Business association). About half saw their media work primarily as a means to instigate change and to influence the political sphere, as encapsulated in this statement: *"We want the information and results of our studies to be getting recognised, getting discussed, and leading to an ongoing debate in society"* (GESO03, Foundation).

Where the building blocks of a good journalistic story were concerned, many respondents referred to canonical news values (Lippmann 1922; Galtung and Ruge, 1965), e.g.: *"Overall typical factors like relevance and proximity, personally I also favour stories which bring a surprise, which are out of the mainstream"* (GESO01, Information platform).

The sources knew how to leverage those factors, as one elaborated: *"Nobody is interested in a study about Syrian refugees in Turkey – it is too far away, but, for example, we did a study on if and how job applicants wearing headscarves are disadvantaged, that received a lot of*



*interest*” (GESO05, think tank). But one participant also expressed their mistrust in news media: *“There are journalists and publications we don’t want to communicate with anymore as they don’t quote or report a conversation fairly or correctly, but are just looking for the one remark which feeds the prejudice and puts the interview partner into a very bad light”* (GESO13, Political party).

Several interlocutors referred to the importance of data, for instance: *“If we can provide a number, every journalist is happy, even if our angle is not based on numbers”* (GESO10, Foundation), and noted: *“It helps to present the information with interviews and graphics which can be easily used by the media”* (GESO03, Foundation). Other sources contradicted and put the emphasis on giving a story a *“human touch”* (GESO11, Business association), something tangible that the journalist’s audience could easily relate to: *“Personal stories are the real stories”* (GESO02, think tank). They also noticed the ups and downs of media interest in specific topics: *“It depends what is on the agenda. Then, journalists come to me and ask for background information, not the other way round. It is not us who make the topics”* (GESO08, think tank).

#### 4. Attitudes towards migration and mobility in general

The German sources expressed a positive attitude towards migration and mobility. Almost 80% see it as a general as well as economic benefit, while the same percentage of participants disagrees with the statement that migrants pose an economic problem. When looking at the social costs of migration, however, the picture is less clear: Almost half of the subjects acknowledge that it is a mixed bag both for host societies and migrants themselves; more than 60% agree that migrants may run into difficulties in the process.

More than four fifths of participants stated that migration was a very important topic for them. When asked about intra-EU mobility, the share of respondents claiming it was very important went down to less than half, though, and only about one fifth felt it was only of minor or even no relevance to them.

#### 5. Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration

Sources interviewed identified two common key definitions related to migrants in Germany: (1) *“Persons with a migration background”*, i.e., persons whose parents or grandparents immigrated from another country, but who were born in Germany and in many cases also



have German passports, and (2) “migrants” without further qualification, which means persons who have crossed a national border themselves and now live in Germany for an extended period of time. On top of these two, there is also the special case of “Spätaussiedler” (late resettlers), which are persons with a right to German citizenship who, however, lived in Eastern European countries after the end of World War II and not necessarily had German as their native language. The term “refugee” was only mentioned once and in passing. There was a general consensus, though, that pinning down a definition was difficult and required a careful case-by-case decision.

There was also a clear understanding that intra-EU migrants benefitted from EU citizenship rights and various entitlements coming with it, whereas the same was not true for migrants from outside the European Union. This statement is exemplary for also recognising the limitations of this situation: *“For EU citizens, inner-European movement is easier, but on the job-market it doesn’t make a big difference. There, qualification and knowledge of the language are more important”* (GESO05, think tank). One participant also acknowledged that *“generally, migrants from Eastern Europe have a bad image”*, mentioning specifically Romania, Bulgaria, and Roma, and stated that the *“term ‘migrant’ is associated with the Turkish population”* (GESO08, think tank). Once again, refugees were not expressly mentioned in the response to this question.

The German sources also showed clear awareness of issues related to the choice of language when talking about migrants. This statement stands for the majority of responses: *“We are trying to use accurate terms, be clear about what we speak, question widely-used terminology and definitions, be as most exact and neutral as possible”* (GESO01, Information platform). Someone else added: *“It is important to point out the legal differences between asylum seekers, recognised refugees, tolerated refugees, etc. Especially when talking to the press it is necessary to explain the differences”* (GESO06, Foundation). One respondent felt that the common term for “refugees”, “Flüchtlinge”, had deteriorated towards negative connotations, and was looking for a non-tainted alternative, in their case “Geflüchtete”. Another participant claimed that they were *“avoiding terminology which can lead to misinterpretation, or which has a negative connotation, but when it goes too far into political correctness, we don’t follow”* (GESO05, think tank).



The sources were framing EU migrants in different ways, largely depending on the mission of their respective organisations. Several looked at intra-EU mobility from a job market perspective – with a specific focus on the Eastern European Member States, while others viewed it through the lens of Brexit and what it meant for the European Union as a whole. However, all agreed that it was not a big topic to begin with.

Migration from outside of the EU that was not related to flight from war situations or applications for political asylum was framed almost unanimously in the context of the job market, including the difficulties of recruiting highly qualified talent: *“If non-EU citizens are coming to the EU (and they are not refugees) then they are normally highly skilled, and one of the topics would be the blue card and the high obstacles to get it”* (GESO04, Business association). One participant said that members of this group *“don’t stand out, they pay their taxes, send their kids to school, they don’t attract attention”* (GESO13, Political party).

From the sources’ statements – more specifically from the lack of mentions related to the questions discussed above – it appears that refugees and asylum seekers are effectively seen as an entirely different category than other types of migrants. The reason may be that *“since summer 2015, it is a main topic in our communication”* (GESO01, Information platform). Most participants agreed on the frames they were using, and saw a development over time: *“In the beginning mainly about accommodation, now more about integration, access to the job market and to the school system”* (GESO01). An association between refugees and crime was only mentioned once; more important were topics such as the EU’s refugee policy as well as, to a lesser extent, the situation in the countries of origin.

## 6. Conclusions

The sources on migration topics in Germany generally feel that they enjoy a good reputation and identify strongly with their work; many have an educational impetus and aim to improve the migration debate first, and then to facilitate actual change. They understand quite well how journalism works; while some try and leverage this knowledge proactively, others see themselves as the on-demand supply side of the information market.

It is noticeable that the respondents seem to differentiate rather strictly between migration on the one hand, and refugees and asylum-seekers on the other hand. The former, with the deeply rooted Turkish community and the resettlers from Eastern Europe, appears as a kind



of “historical” and borderline irrelevant issue in today’s Germany, whereas the refugee situation is on top of the current agenda. Communication efforts are primarily about the integration of refugees into society and in particular the labour market, while cultural differences and crime only play a minor role. However, this is likely due to the nature of the organisations represented in this survey: They are all close to the state or to employers, and mostly try to play a constructive part vis-à-vis integration. The only dissenting statements in this circle came from the representative of a right-wing political party, which can be seen as a key reason for their strong recent election outcomes, but still remains a minority position.



## Media practices in Italy

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### *Journalists*

#### *1. Demographics and background*

The journalists surveyed in Italy cover, primarily the political centre, but also include publications that represent particularly conservative and also left-leaning opinions; more radical outlets at either end of the spectrum declined to take part. The selection of outlets, however, does represent the opinion-forming and agenda-setting media of record in Italy, including broadcast, newspapers, online and hybrid formats; half of the outlets were private commercial enterprises, while the rest was divided between public and independent non-profit media. Nationwide outlets were in the majority.

Of the 28 journalists, 13 specialise in migration and mobility issues – some full-time, others as a relevant part of their wider political or economic beats. They constitute a balanced mix of permanently employed journalists and editors, including several senior figures (circa one fifth), and freelancers who work for various outlets. In the latter case, the commissioning outlet with which the journalists identified most strongly was counted as their primary organisation. The genders were balanced, with a slight bias towards males, and the ages ranged from 27 to 68, with the majority between their mid-thirties and mid-forties.

#### *2. Professional environment*

The journalists interviewed generally felt that their profession is regarded favourably by the Italian public (two thirds), but in spite of this, their overall assessment was somewhat mixed. Survey participants perceived a gradual loss of reputation from two different angles: On the one hand, some felt that journalism as a whole was suffering from an increasing lack of credibility, trust, and public support; one even went so far as to claim that *“journalism is involved in the decline of our culture”* (ITJO03, Broadcast). Adding to this, several participants differentiated between their profession’s reputation at large and the profession-related esteem they personally experience. While they thought that the former were in decline, they still felt respected and secure in their personal working environments and social circles. But there was also some general pessimism, such as in this statement: *“I have the feeling that no one understands what I write. Journalists are no longer capable of communicating to the people.”* The same participant added: *“I am the last survivor of a defunct idea*



*of journalism*” (ITJO25, Quality newspaper). On the other hand, many of those journalists who specialised in migration felt that their particular beat put them into a difficult professional spot. This is encapsulated in the following quote: *“Compared to the past there is less solidarity with the issue of migration. The journalists seem to be perceived as ‘agents of migration’”* (ITJO04, Online).

The vast majority (almost two thirds) of the Italian interviewees stated that they felt secure in their jobs, even as some added qualifications such as *“Generally all Italian journalists have unstable contracts but I don’t feel at risk of losing my job”* (ITJO26, Quality newspaper), or *“I think my job is secure but the news world changes so quickly that I could lose it in a year’s time, who knows”* (ITJO24, Quality newspaper). However, several participants noted that there was a certain amount of insecurity related to their working conditions, e.g., that specific countries banned them from travelling, or that they took risks in war zones; one subject had actually been kidnapped in Libya while reporting from there. Another one mentioned a *“generational clash”* (ITJO24, Quality newspapers) that impeded the career prospects of young journalists, where incumbent job holders tried to seal off lucrative and managerial positions from newcomers.

The question about the workplace environment yielded a similarly nuanced picture. A majority of participants stated that they maintained good – if not necessarily in all cases great – relations with their colleagues as well as their superiors. Several journalists stated that their newsroom cultures were based on mutual trust and/or shared values, or that they just seemed to work without much friction. Personal friendships in the professional sphere were, however, rarely mentioned, with the exception that *“it must be noted that freelancers are beginning to develop mutual solidarity”* (ITJO16).

Several subjects expressed critical views, which are mainly related to management. These remarks fall into two categories: A lack of understanding at the professional level, and the repercussions of the business interests of their outlets. Examples for the former position are the statements *“sometimes I have to face different points of view with the Rome HQ, which sometimes undermines the validity of stories”* (ITJO04, Online), and *“[my relationship is] generally good with bosses, but I struggle to explain how you work in the field”* (ITJO27, Broadcast). The latter aspect is encapsulated in the following quotes: *“I often argue with*



*managers who have no experience*” (ITJO06, Quality newspaper), *“sometimes I get requests that are far from reality”* (ITJO09, Press agency), and *“I can’t stand when they are just after a sensationalist story”* (ITJO27, Broadcast). Two subjects also mentioned changing standards. One claimed: *“There used to be more meritocracy, the crisis has created scores of favouritism”* (ITJO21, Quality newspaper), while another criticised that newsrooms increasingly used inexperienced and underpaid young journalists rather than professionals at the top of their games.

The subjects stated that their newsrooms on average had a balanced proportion of female and male journalists, but there were outliers: some mentioned 70-100% female staff, while others only reported 10% - this was because the sample had a high density of female freelancers without a permanent newsroom to go to. Hardly any outlet had disabled personnel, but the participants claimed that, other than that, the composition of staff was socially and geographically diverse (more than four fifths), even though more than half felt that this did not match the Italian society’s actual diversity.

Only few subjects categorically denied that there was external influence on their newsrooms, outlets, and the contents of their coverage. On the contrary, one characterised the situation as follows: *“[Political influence] is obvious and taken for granted, but it’s like this in Italy”* (ITJO21, Quality newspaper), while another participant felt that *“in general, Italian media never challenge the version of authorities. There is maybe a problem of self-censorship”* (ITJO07, Online). Yet another journalist pointed out: *“At [names public broadcaster], the influence of politics is structural”* (ITJO20, Broadcast). Several participants were convinced that there was influence, but could not pinpoint it, or ascribed it to varying pressure groups – from the government to industrialists to trade unions and the Catholic church. According to the subjects, decisions on what to cover were primarily made by editors-in-chief, directors, and publishers.

### 3. Professional self-perception

Practically all Italian participants stated that they became journalists out of passion for the job. As key motivational factors, they quoted *“a mission for truth”* (ITJO05, Press agency), attested to their personal curiosity as well as to their love of *“the adrenaline rush and the adventure”* (ITJO20, Broadcast), and/or said they *“would like to change the world”* (ITJO07,



Online) and were *“providing a public service”* (ITJO12, Broadcast) by delivering accurate information and sharing reasoned opinions. Several subjects also noted that journalism afforded them the freedom to choose their own topics and work environments, and thus to follow specific missions, such as: *“I wish to give voice to the voiceless and record the unrecorded”* (ITJO18, Quality newspaper).

These statements also chime with the participants’ stated objectives when producing a story. One journalist gave a summary of what most of his peers expressed: *“My objective is to discover new stories to stimulate public debate and discussion”* (ITJO06, Quality newspaper), and several others emphasised that they aimed at *“spreading the truth”* (ITJO01, Broadcast) as well as knowledge and comprehension. Commercial considerations were widely denied. Several subjects also emphasised that they wanted to instigate change by *“transmitting the emotional side and trying to move consciences”* (ITJO22, Broadcast). Others highlighted traditional journalistic values such as accuracy, independent verification, explaining the bigger picture, digging up previously unknown facts, etc. Close to half of respondents testified to a moral obligation to share relevant facts, irrespective of whether there was a palpable demand for any given topic.

The very same concepts also surface in discussion of the elements of a good story, but here, participating Italian journalists went a little deeper into the choices they have to make in their everyday work. For instance, several subjects stressed that a story requires a certain emotional appeal to be successful, and that first-hand reporting, a good narrative, relevant interlocutors and engaging characters, as well as compelling images (photos or video). Overall, constructive journalism (more than two fifth), objectivity (more than half), and accurately representing the situation of both migrants and local populations (well above 80%) scored high. In some cases, this went along with a pessimistic take on the audience’s wishes, namely: *“There is no interest for journalistic news”* (ITJO22, Broadcast), or self-reflective and critical statements such as these: *“As an agency we must report facts. If I get emotional about a story I then write about it”* (ITJO04, Press agency), and *“the journalist should avoid emotional mainstream”* (ITJO03, Broadcast).

The journalists stated that they used the entire spectrum of sources on a regular basis, with a preference for domestic and international NGO and think tank spokespeople (more than



half and close to two thirds, respectively). Academics were only used sometimes. Trust was afforded mainly to all three aforementioned entities and to primary sources, with values above 70%, whereas government press releases as well as spokespersons were met with concerns – from nearly four in five respondents – about their credibility.

The imagined audiences of the survey participants depended very strongly on their main outlet, i.e., left-leaning media go along with a similarly inclined audience, Catholic outlets address Catholics (if with different political stances), etc. Journalists also differentiated pretty clearly between print, broadcasting, and online: Broadly speaking, they assumed that print readers were older and included more decision-makers and other influencers, broadcast tended to reach low-to-middle-class, less-highly educated persons, and online skewed younger. Several participants also specifically mentioned a wide spectrum of female audiences, ranging from catholic-conservative to young and educated. There are two statements that stick out in particular. One participant said: *“I imagine my audience as made of left-leaning Catholics who are confused by the current situation”* (ITJO16, Quality newspaper), and a TV journalist explained that their audience was *“aged 60, education of the first years of high school, bored, tired of politics, outraged, but not willing to take direct action to change things, ‘armchair managers’ who are capable of changing opinion if things are explained to them”* (ITJO23, Broadcast).

#### 4. Attitudes towards migration and mobility in general

The journalists exhibited a strongly favourable attitude towards migration. More than four fifths agreed that free movement inside the EU was a great benefit, while only few felt that it also engendered problems in terms of, for instance, living conditions and economic development. Close to two thirds stated that it was an opportunity for the host societies, and almost 70% claimed that it was a very important topic for them. Migration in general was ranked very important by an overwhelming majority of respondents, i.e., by practically everybody in the sample.

#### 5. Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration

The definition of migrants by the Italian journalists taking part in this survey can be summed up broadly with this quote: *“Somebody who, for choice or need, is trying to improve his condition or save himself”* (ITJO01, Broadcast). This rather generic catch-all was further quali-





fied by some more differentiated statements, which, however, mixed a critical reflection of current media habits with descriptive aspects: *“Media only focus on refugees”* (ITJO03, Broadcast), *“for TV, migrants are either poor people or lone heroes”* (ITJO07, Online), or even *“it’s an object of morbid curiosity who is deprived of his identity”* (ITJO17, Broadcast). Others characterised migrants as *“a problem, an invader, a ragtag who steals our bread”* (ITJO23, Broadcast), while making it clear that this was the perspective of their outlet, and not necessarily their personal opinion. The most fine-grained definition was *“On one side the poor, derelict migrant. On the other side the migrant who has been here for a while and stands out for having achieved something excellent (a positive example). Finally, the crime-committing migrant”* (ITJO24, Quality newspaper). Several participants noted that over recent years, common word use had shifted from “clandestines” to the more neutral “migrants”.

The majority of interlocutors claimed that they were using terminology with great care, many of them referring to the Charter of Rome, or even with the stated goal to avoid ostracising the people concerned: *“I refuse to use the word migrants and prefer to use ‘people or guests’. Especially for long-term migrants”* (ITJO11), or *“I try to portray people in their normality, e.g. by addressing the surname of the migrants”* (ITJO11, Quality newspaper). Several participants also mentioned that they preferred to use the legally correct term in each given case.

The subjects understood intra-EU mobility primarily as a privileged legal situation that went along with a lesser degree and probability of discrimination and other issues, even as one participant mentioned that Roma, despite having EU citizenship, are often considered in similar terms as migrants from outside the European Union. However, almost two thirds claimed not to make any difference between EU and non-EU migrants to begin with. One participant added that *“the colour of one’s skin is still important in the perception”* (ITJO05, Press agency). Another journalist noted that the definition of a migrant was frequently dictated by situational circumstances: *“In the nineties it was about migrants from the east [of Europe]; in this political phase, the migrants are those who come from Africa”* (ITJO21, Quality newspaper).



This is also reflected in the answers related to the angles applied to reporting on intra-EU mobility versus other forms of migration. Most respondents were adamant that they did not make any difference per se between intra-EU migrants and other migrants, or said that intra-EU mobility in the current situation simply was not a newsworthy topic they would deal with. A few point out the particular vulnerability of refugees, though.

#### *6. Conclusion*

The Italian journalists surveyed were characterised by something of a contradiction – both a passionate belief in their work and its fundamental value, and a pessimism and cynicism about their industry. Both sides potentially affect the commercial, institutional, practical, and technical factors that then shape their coverage of migration.

Institutionally, and despite anecdotal evidence suggesting that journalism is highly precarious and under-funded in Italy (especially where freelancers are concerned) the journalists taking part in this survey felt relatively secure in their jobs. Most are in journalism out of passion rather than as a means to make a living, and though they feel personally respected, they highlight a decline in public trust in journalism more generally. While the respondents are generally content with their working environment, few describe it as very good, friendly, or particularly constructive, and several raise significant concerns about the actions and professionalism of their management. Gender and social diversity are apparent, but, as with Germany, there is limited cultural and ethnic diversity in the industry, possibly with ramifications for migration coverage (Markova and McKay, 2013, *ibid*)

From a day-to-day practical perspective, a number of Italian journalists surveyed highlighted a high degree of managerial direction – sometimes to the point of interference – as well as significant influence from both internal (such as proprietors) and external (such as political parties, the Catholic church, commercial bodies and trades-unions) sources. This may affect their autonomy in both the choices of and shaping of stories.

Technical factors highlighted by the Italian journalists sampled which may affect the framing of migrants include an emphasis on generating emotional impact in audiences and the dynamics, role and importance of the issue of Mediterranean migration in Italy more broadly. This factor also meant that, as a whole, journalists' focus was on poverty or refugee related



migration issues rather than other types of migration, including intra-EU mobility. Journalists displayed very low levels of trust in government sources. In fact, the Italian survey suggests that Italian journalists tend to be sympathetic to migrants and in particular refugees, no matter the political leaning of the outlets they produce coverage for. Overall, this stance appears to be less like a reflected journalistic work ethic than a natural tendency to side with disadvantaged groups

The group also identified a broadly pro-EU agenda, and was largely supportive of intra-EU mobility and focussed on delivering societal impact and protecting the interests of disadvantaged groups.

As noted above, the journalists sampled described a situation where their autonomy was somewhat constrained by a wide range of interest groups and managerial direction. On top of the practical implication for the reporters, this might also be seen through a commercial lens – these choices are often related to the audience being targeted by profit-seeking outlets, keen to maximise audiences, but also wary of alienating their advertising clients or corporate owners. However, the dynamics of the relationship between the demand for particular content by the audience, and its supply by Italy's significantly politicised media organisations is less clear.



## Sources

### 1. Demographics and background

The nine sources interviewed in Italy represent a broad cross-section of EU mobility and migration actors in the country, comprising one political party representative, civil society organisations, research, and international and multilateral, organisations. Men and women were represented roughly in the same proportion. Ages ranged from 33 to 65, with most in their late forties and fifties. This went with the fact that close to four fifths of the respondents were at senior level. The primary funding source for all of them is public money at EU, country, and local level, which in some cases is supplemented by donations.

Most participants agreed that public communication around migration was conducted first through social media, second through television, and third through newspapers. Several pointed out, however, that the dependability ranking was pretty much the other way around, with trolls influencing social media, and that *“traditional media are more correct. New media have to take into account trolling and similar phenomena”* (ITSO09, Non-profit organisation). One respondent spoke for many when they opined that *“the debate is generating the feeling of an emergency where there isn’t one”* (ITSO03, Academic), and another added: *“The media are not contributing to the debate in a positive sense”* (ITSO04, governmental institution). On the opposite end, one participant felt that *“the issue of migration is exploited”* (ITSO01, governmental institution) for political reasons.

### 2. Professional environment

The Italian sources’ sense of their own reputation and appreciation by others was somewhat mixed. While most respondents answered that they were generally well regarded, several issues became apparent. One of those is that some people either felt that they always needed to explain their jobs to others, or that there was a general public misconception of their jobs and positions: *“People rarely know what my job is about”* (ITSO02), and *“there is a lot of confusion about my work in the general public”* (ITSO02, NGO). Others testified to a pre-existing bad image they had to cope with: *“As a public servant I am considered part of an unnecessary entity”* (ITSO04, governmental institution), and *“many people don’t even consider it a job”* (ITSO02, NGO).



### 3. Professional self-perception

Nonetheless, most of the persons surveyed said they chose their jobs out of passion and/or to improve society and effect change. This was true across the political spectrum and the scope of organisations represented. A typical answer was: *“I am driven by passion and was moved by hoping to be able to change things from within”* (ITSO07, Public agency). Responses related to the participants’ own objectives when communicating with the media revealed that the majority had a technical relationship with the press – talking to reporters was just part of their jobs, but had no particular prominence. A few, however, gave slightly more differentiated answers, citing academic communication as their main goal, or stating that *“our performance is also judged based on the media coverage”* (ITSO04, governmental institution).

Most respondents felt that *“the exceptional event is the most successful story”* (ITSO06, Non-profit association). Some further qualified that truth and impartiality played a major role, too, or pointed out that *“having a real narration”* (ITSO08, Civil society) was important. Several also stated that stories needed to be emotionally appealing in order to make an impact on audiences. With respect to impact, there were two camps: One said, a good story *“is something showing the faults in norms and laws and the system”* (ITSO03, Academic), while a couple of others insisted on a constructive approach: A story *“must also bring forward a positive message according to our vision”* (ITSO02, NGO), *“and make some actual proposals”* (ITSO07, Public agency).

### 4. Attitudes towards migration and mobility in general

The source representatives in Italy expressed a generally favourable attitude towards migration. They unanimously agreed that it was a general benefit, and almost 90% also saw it as an economic benefit, while two thirds disagreed with the statement that it was an economic problem. Similarly, more than half saw migration as an opportunity rather than an issue for the host society.

Almost four fifths of respondents stated that migration was a very important topic for them, and they did not differentiate between migration in general and intra-EU migration.



##### 5. Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration

The Italian sources offered rather vague definitions of migrants, such as *“anyone who leaves their hometown”* (ITSO02, NGO), or *“someone who lives in a foreign country”* (ITSO07, Public agency). Some qualified that *“the official definition makes less and less sense”* (ITSO03, Academic), and that *“there is no accepted definition internationally, and that is a problem”* (ITSO05, International organisation). Another participant insisted that *“migrants should be considered people first of all”* (ITSO08, Civil initiative), while one put it in a philosophical way: *“A migrant is a human being who is forced to clash with the human belief of rightful borders”* (ITSO01, governmental institution). In fact, the participants debated the topic amongst each other very earnestly.

A similar political polarity came across in the responses to the question of what differentiated intra-EU mobility from other forms of migration. Several respondents made comments such as: *“There should be no difference, but the current situation creates it”* (ITSO07, Public agency), *“Migrants are both those who are forced to move and also those who chose to do it”* (ITSO05, International organisation), or *“having less barriers is a positive factor”* (ITSO01, governmental institution). That said, all were fully aware that EU citizenship comes with freedom of movement; nobody singled out specific groups of EU citizens from the rest.

Somewhat in contrast to the vagueness of the definition of migrants, the participants mostly claimed that they tended to use technical language and legal definitions when talking about them, saying *“definitions are crucial”* (ITSO05, International organisation), yet complaining that *“there is a lack of definitions and terminology”* (ITSO08, Civil society). And while one participant said that *“being aware of differences can be a good tool for social progress”* (ITSO04, governmental organisation), another plainly stated: *“I just take into account EU and extra-EU origin”* (ITSO09, Non-profit organisation). One even emphasised: *“I have an ideological opposition to any technical distinction between migrants”* (ITSO08, Civil society). Recent Italian neologisms such as *“dublinati”* were mentioned, too.

The sources said that intra-EU mobility was no big topic for them, and if it was, they were primarily framing them with education and skills in mind. As before, the topic was politicised. One participant said: *“We want to avoid the perception of non-EU migrants as irregu-*



*lar people”* (ITSO02, NGO), and another stated: *“As an activist I am always promoting the abolition of differences”* (ITSO08, Civil society).

Romanian and other Eastern European migrants were mentioned only once, and only by one respondent, when the discussion turned to non-EU migrants. Overall, migration from outside the EU as well as refugees and asylum seekers elicited roughly the same response, with a strong focus on the education and skills frame; two participants also mentioned human rights.

## 6. Conclusions

The Italian sources surveyed projected a rather political image of the migration debate in their country. They were not particularly precise in their own definitions of the various groups of migrants, and at the same time felt that there was a lack of commonly agreed definitions and terminology. Still, they generally insisted that there should not be a differentiation between migrants, but that they should be viewed and framed to the public as human beings first. This view was probably enhanced especially by their perception of social media as incendiary and hostile towards migrants, but they also felt that regular media were dramatizing the issue.

The respondents also pointed out that their jobs’ and organisations’ reputation was not necessarily very good and they were regarded as freeloaders or lobbyists. One emphasised that, however, how they presented themselves in the media was a factor that had consequences for how their work was evaluated internally by their respective employers.



## Media practices in Sweden

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### *Journalists*

#### *1. Demographics and background*

The journalists surveyed in Sweden covered the full spectrum of the country's media landscape, including hard-left and hard-right publications, as well as centrist ones such as the public broadcasters. Broadsheet newspapers had a particularly strong showing among participants, but there also was a tabloid included. Two thirds of respondents worked for commercial outlets, the rest for public and non-profit media organisations, and almost three quarters had a nationwide reach, while less than one third targeted specific regions.

Of the 11 journalists, two specialised in migration and mobility issues. Most are permanently employed journalists and editors, including several high-visibility commentators and editors-in-chief. At three quarters of respondents, senior managers were over-represented in the Swedish panel, which is also reflected in the age group. Only one participant was below 30 years of age, whereas most were in their late forties or early- to mid-fifties. Genders were balanced.

#### *2. Professional environment*

The journalists surveyed in Sweden paint a mixed picture of their professional reputation, stating that appreciation (or not) largely resided in the eye of the beholder: *"[I feel] both respected and criticised because of the nature of [my] position as well as [of the] overall media outlet"* (SEJO07, Popular newspaper). This suggests that the political dividing lines in Swedish society also strongly affect a person's stance towards journalists and journalism. Still, none of the respondents felt generally threatened; rather, they experience a good job-related reputation in their immediate personal and professional environments, or are even highly regarded: *"I enjoy great respect. People listen to what I say and want to hear my opinion"* (SEJO02, Quality newspaper). The question of job reputation appears to be closely linked to the bigger discussion of the role of, and trust in, news media that was, in fact, boosted by the Swedish public's controversy around migration: *"My position is respected by people who follow the broad debate and are politically active or interested, or other journalists. There is also a parallel development, where my role is criticised for being part of the establishment or a lying media sphere"* (SEJO06, Online). Journalists as a group seem to be





increasingly viewed against the backdrop of migration, no matter whether they take an active stance towards the issue or not.

Most of the Swedish journalists interviewed felt entirely secure in their jobs and did not even anticipate any trouble if they rubbed somebody the wrong way: *“I can be fired from one day to the next, if I happen to write something bad. But no, I feel secure anyway”* (SEJO03, Quality newspaper), or *“of course it is an exposed position to be a leader editor at a paper, but I feel secure”* (SEJO05, Popular newspaper). This holds true even for freelancers and temporary workers. There is only one notable exception, which refers to a highly respected liberal-centrist outlet: *“Covering migration is not very interesting for management. Instead I have to struggle or even fight for my stories to be published”* (SEJO11, Quality newspaper).

With respect to the workplace environment, the vast majority of respondents stated that they enjoyed great independence and autonomy, and that their news organisations had flat hierarchies that strived to empower each individual. However, this position may be slightly biased because the survey caught many editors-in-chief and department heads. Only one respondent describes their experience as *“hierarchic and elitist. Elitist, but from time to time with a human element”* (SEJO11, Quality newspaper), but this appears to be an outlier. Relations with colleagues and managers are described as informal and collegial, but personal friendships were not expressly mentioned. The respondents said that newsrooms had a balanced proportion of female and male journalists, and two thirds attested to having disabled colleagues. The same proportion felt that staff was pretty diverse in terms of social background and regional affiliation, but close to three quarters agreed that newsrooms did not accurately reflect the overall political diversity of the Swedish society.

The question of external influence on news coverage was considered particularly carefully by the respondents, and the range of answers was very differentiated. One, representing several participants, plainly stated: *“Nobody interferes with me. If they try, I become even more of a rebel”* (SEJO03, Quality newspaper). Others acknowledged that there is what could be called “soft influence”, which is exerted by various interest groups, or even by the editorial policy of their outlet proper. For example, one said: *“Our company is owned 50% by two labour unions. They don’t interfere with our writing, but it makes us take an interest*



*in their issues*” (SEJO06, Online), whereas another journalist stated: *“Our chief editor is political in the sense that he has loyalties to particular interests, and there are debates on whether that influences our news coverage. I can’t prove that at all. I assume this person has contact with politics, and by that, I mean political parties”* (SEJO11, Quality newspaper). One participant described external influence as *“The Sphere”*, consisting of various political parties, think tanks, and the liberal-conservative establishment: *“You do not become chief editor at [my paper] without this background. There is no coercion or threat, but influence by appointment to position”* (SEJO02, Quality newspaper). This subject claimed that relevant information on migration was actively suppressed by that very *“Sphere”*.

### 3. Professional self-perception

Practically all Swedish journalists expressed that they chose their jobs in order actively to help shape, and change, reality. A typical statement is: *“I want to change society. It is fun, interesting and important. I want to influence when things are wrong. I have the capacity to write and communicate, it is like a calling”* (SEJO03, Quality newspaper). One participant even enthused: *“I have the best job in the world to get to do that: To write policy recommendations is among the most difficult one can do. It is a challenging and interesting job with much freedom”* (SEJO05, Popular newspaper). Another respondent added: *“[The] reward for my work is bigger if someone has changed their opinion on something because of good reporting”* (SEJO08, Quality newspaper). Hence, impact and even activism appear to be the key motivational factors for Swedish journalists. The love of writing or satisfying one’s own curiosity were mentioned only as secondary points.

In keeping with this mission-driven understanding of journalism, participants described their professional objectives when preparing stories as educational, *“wanting the reader to feel wiser and describe the different perspectives of a given issue. Not revealing or unfolding, but to give background information or history, and understanding”* (SEJO04, magazine). Another journalist stated that they wanted *“to inform, try to provide more knowledge. My role is as an educator. It is delicate to avoid going from facts to opinion”* (SEJO10, Broadcast). Especially the self-confident commentators also mention a political impetus: *“The objective is to influence the public debate, but also to inform the readers and let them know more about the topics we cover. Often, we need no political angle, because our choice to cover something is in itself politically interesting enough”* (SEJO06, Online). Many of the subjects feel



that journalism best serves its purpose through a combination of facts and opinion, while still sticking firmly to the truth. Moreover, several of the participants also mention an aesthetic aspect: *“I want truth and beauty. [...] I want to tell that truth as elegantly as possible”* (SEJO02, Quality newspaper), and assert that their job is about *“writing a text that has style as well as relevant information. The text in itself has value”* (SEJO07, Popular newspaper).

Almost three quarters of the respondents said that they never considered commercial considerations when deciding what to cover, while over 90% claimed that they sought to educate their audiences. All admitted to employing emotions to this end at least every once in a while. The editorial decision-making was overwhelmingly attributed to the editor-in-chief and to the desk editors in charge of any given thematic area.

The respondents valued the building blocks of journalistic stories accordingly. Next to citing the canonical news values as identified by journalism research (Lippmann 1922; Galtung and Ruge, 1965), most journalists stressed a goal-driven four-step structure: journalistic “hook” (i.e., enticing angle), thorough information, assessment, and future outlook. This statement encapsulates the majority opinion: *“Account or description of an event, development or potential future development. Argues why this is good or bad. And best case, it also contains a proposal for a solution or how to change it”* (SEJO06, Online). In fact, this constructive or solutions-oriented approach is not common in other European journalism landscapes. Another participant added that there also needed to be an emotional element: *“If it is a very good story, it affects both on a human level and a structural”* (SEJO11, Quality newspaper). Some also point to a deliberative, pluralistic aspect, in which *“the topic is interesting and illustrates a variety of perspectives and voices”* (SEJO04, magazine), and insist on advancing well thought-through arguments. Finally, one interlocutor comes back to truth: *“All cases need a core of truth that has not previously been uncovered”* (SEJO02, Quality newspaper).

The respondents reported that they were using the range of sources rather evenly, but there was a noticeable preference for academics and primary sources, whereas government and NGO or think tank spokespeople ranked lower. This was a bit at odds with the trust indicators, though: Government government press releases and academics, as well as spokespersons were regarded particularly reliable by four fifths, respectively three quarters of the



participants. In contrast, NGOs and think tanks as well as primary sources were regarded as worthy of particularly extensive double-checking and verification.

The educational impetus mentioned above surfaced again in the journalists' imagination of their audiences. Most conceived of them as medium- to highly educated persons who are hungry for information and socially engaged: *“Well-off middle or upper class. They have a good overview and understanding, want analysis. They want to know a little more and get some facts. With a smile”* (SEJO02, Quality newspaper), or *“intelligent, but maybe does not know everything, but would like to learn”* (SEJO05, Popular newspaper). Several respondents expressly refer to all age groups and a balanced gender mix, while some acknowledged that their audience skews older. Others mention decision-makers, namely *“people in power with deep knowledge in particular fields: academics, civil servants”* (SEJO05, Popular newspaper), as well as activist groups. An outlet that is connected to a trade union and a public broadcaster also anticipate low-wage and/or low-skilled workers in their audience.

#### 4. Attitudes towards migration and mobility in general

The Swedish journalists agreed that European mobility was a general benefit; many also thought that it worked to the economic benefit of the entire European Union. On problems caused by intra-EU migration, the respondents remained neutral, conceding that there were some issues, but none of them overwhelmingly great.

More than four fifths of subjects characterised migration overall as a very important topic. However, less than one fifth said the same specifically for intra-EU mobility. The rest claimed off-and-on interest in the topic.

#### 5. Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration

The Swedish participants expressed a range of definitions of migrants. For instance, some described the nature of migration by way of the migrants' intention and how recent the act of migrating: *“A person who crosses borders for the purpose of starting a new life – not a tourist, student, or seasonal labourer”* (SEJO04, magazine), and *“born overseas. [...] Not a migrant after ten years”* (SEJO01, Quality newspaper). Several respondents readily acknowledged that even as the term migrant was a catch-all, they were usually referring to, and reporting about, *“somebody from Syria, Afghanistan, or Romania. More rarely from Germany or Belgium”* (SEJO06, Online). One journalist stated that, typically, *“the migrant is there-*



*fore somebody who has a problem or is in a difficult situation”* (SEJO11, Quality newspaper), even as they claimed that their own outlet tried to avoid this cliché. Key for the overall definition, therefore, appears to be that the person’s status is legally, economically, or otherwise contentious. Only one Swedish participant cited a (somewhat vague) legal definition at this point.

When asked about their choice of terminology, the Swedish journalists’ answers also mirrored the “migrant as a problem” narrative that was mentioned before. One diagnosed: *“EU-migrant has become a word associated with Romani people from Bulgaria or Romania, but it could also mean a French literature student. One has to be very specific”* (SEJO04, magazine), and another participant added: *“There is a battle of the language on how to describe migrants, because the issue is controversial. The best example is young asylum seekers from Afghanistan: are they described as children, youth, young adults or ‘bearded children’. This is influenced by the level of conflict around that particular group”* (SEJO06, Online). Two respondents felt that they should avoid ostensibly neutral terminology, for instance: *“The problem is EU-migrants who don’t come to work: criminal networks, beggars. How should they be named? Some say ‘poor EU-migrants’, but there is a risk that an EU-migrant is perceived to be the same as a beggar”* (SEJO05, Popular newspaper). Others insisted that their use of language was expressly intended to reduce prejudice and to focus on the human behind a story rather than their affiliation with a group: *“It is of great importance, for example, not to use the word illegal. There is no neutral description of this. [We need] to focus on the individual humanity and be aware of the words and concepts one uses at all times”* (SEJO08, quality newspaper), and one states: *“I try to portray [migrants] as individual persons primarily, [...] so the reader can see them as unique individuals”* (SEJO11, Quality newspaper).

When asked specifically about intra-EU mobility, the legal aspects come to the fore in a more pronounced way. This statement stands for many: *“EU-citizens have a right to be in Sweden. Migrants are a different category. There are civil rights and human rights. Which ones apply depends on whether you are Swedish citizen, EU citizen or otherwise”* (SEJO02, Quality newspaper). Another participant added that *“non-EU migrants are asylum-seekers or illegal aliens”* (SEJO09, Broadcast).



According to the persons surveyed, EU migrants are framed primarily in terms of either labour mobility or poverty, while personal motivations such as cross-border relationships also play a role. One participant admitted that they covered mostly *“their situation in Sweden, more often than their situation in Romania or Bulgaria. Their position in the labour market, access to care and welfare, often about racism against them”* (SEJO06, Online), thereby conceding that intra-EU mobility usually only becomes a topic when persons from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe are involved. Another big topic are Romanian/Romani beggars in the context of a discussion of a law to prohibit begging. However, some respondents also emphasised that they framed EU mobility positively.

Migrants from outside the EU who are not asylum seekers appear not to be a substantial topic for Swedish journalists. Many said that they hardly ever covered this kind of migration, and that when they did, the needs of the labour market were in focus: *“Globalisation is a positive force. We rarely write something negative. Labour force migration is positive”* (SEJO02, Quality newspaper). Some also remarked on legal and administrative issues with this group, from difficulties to attract and house them, to their wrongful extradition due to formal mistakes, and to the use of labour migration as a cover for poverty-related migration.

This response summarises how most Swedish reporters frame asylum seekers and refugees: *“One central perspective is the flight itself. The process of going to a safe country and have one’s asylum application tried. Another central perspective is the debate around the number of refugees that should or should not be accepted in Sweden. The third is the economic discussion around costs for migration”* (SEJO06, Online). Additional answers refer more directly to conflicts around the refugee situation: *“Sweden has had an unsustainable migration policy, so we have focused on the problems. We have gone beyond our capacity [as a country]”* (SEJO05, Popular newspaper), and to covering the domestic debate itself, the so called *“åsiktskorridor”*, i.e., the range of opinions and attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers that are generally accepted in Swedish society.

## 6. Conclusion

The picture painted by Swedish journalists is of a stable environment reminiscent of the German situation outlined above, but with a greater sense of campaigning objectives among



those sampled. The sample comprised rather more senior staff than the other groups, which may have some bearing on the findings.

Institutionally, journalists in Sweden appear to be very secure in their jobs and to feel, broadly speaking, but by no means universally, respected. Newsrooms are considered pleasant working environments and relatively diverse as far as gender and social strata are concerned, but, again, lack ethnic and cultural diversity (Markova and McKay 2012, *ibid*).

Practical issues affecting the sampled journalists in Sweden include the indirect influence of media owners – which can include trade unions and other organisations – as well as the personal connections between senior staff and political parties. Senior staff are also highlighted as key figures in the choices of which stories are pursued and run. Despite these observations, the sampled journalists claim a high degree of autonomy and a strong sense of the importance and value of objective news.

Technical factors that may affect the way that stories are constructed include a focus on the aesthetic dimension of journalism and a common educational – if not activist – motivation. This can be seen in the context of a desire among a number of the sampled respondents to reduce negative attitudes toward migrants. Nevertheless, problem themes appear to be common in reporting on migration of both EU citizens – which is often characterised as driven by the relative poverty of some new member states – and refugees. Some seemingly Sweden-specific terminology – such as the phrase “bearded children” to describe certain asylum seekers – may also impact on national understanding of certain issues. Swedish journalists displayed generally high levels of trust in government.

Commercial considerations were not high on the agendas of the Swedish journalists sampled, who described work based, rather, on journalistic research and the transmission of knowledge, and in particular truthful information, to their audiences. Nevertheless, these audiences were specific – mostly conceptualised as the country’s élites; only public and trade union-owned outlets intentionally and expressly target a broader social spectrum.



## Sources

### 1. Demographics and background

The five sources interviewed in Sweden cover a good range of the spectrum of stakeholders, including academia, an enterprise-friendly think tank, a law firm specialising in asylum, a left-leaning trade union, and a hard-right party. All were male and aged between 35 and 59, most of them in senior career positions. The organisations are variously funded by the Swedish government, state subsidies, membership fees, foundation grants, and their own business activities.

Participants were divided about the question of which media were shaping the Swedish migration debate in particular. Several pointed to social media as the dominant channel, not least because pundits of all stripes (journalists, politicians, etc.) use them, others mentioned digital media in a more general sense, meaning websites of political movements and activists, while others accorded the highest priority to newspapers and television. One respondent stated that there was a *“pent-up need to discuss migration, both intellectually and emotionally”* (SESO02, think tank) in the country.

### 2. Professional environment

The sources surveyed all said that they were well respected and stood in high esteem in their working environments. Only one pointed out that they also noted the political polarisation around the topic in public responses to their work.

### 3. Professional self-perception

As for their professional motivation, the sources stated a mix of personal interest in the topic and the wish to influence politics and society. One said that their job *“suits me incredibly well, and I can’t see what else I would do”* (SESO01, Private organisation), while another emphasised the freedom that academia afforded to them. On the influencer side, one participant stated: *“I am engaged in influencing society in a particular direction”* (SESO02, think tank), and another source said that their work *“is also a way to pose a political question”* (SESO04, Civil society).

In a similar vein, the majority of respondents expressed that their intention when communication with the media was to exert influence and to moderate the public discussion: *“It is to promote my position on an issue”* (SESO01), and *“it is my duty as tax funded scholar to share*





*information and knowledge and participate in the debate and give balance to more extreme debates” (SESO03, Academic). The participant representing a right-wing political party elaborated that their organisation was “critical towards traditional media, but they exist and need to be related to. They influence, but can also be influenced” (SESO05, Political party). The same source also pointed out that “digital media are more extreme as they are often a reaction to what is discussed in traditional media”.*

What the participants considered the building blocks of a good story coincided pretty much with the canonical news values, even though none of them was a professional journalist: *“Recency, proximity, conflict, connected to publicly well-known names” (SESO02, think tank), and a “break with expectations” (SESO03, Academic) figured high on the list. One participant leaned more towards movie-style dramatic composition, stating that “stories need presentation, conflict, turning point, realism. Not fancy celebrities” (SESO04, Civil society).*

#### *4. Attitudes towards migration and mobility in general*

Four fifths of the Swedish respondents were generally positive about migration. However, almost two thirds felt that it was not an opportunity for host societies, and the same proportion of sources was uncertain whether migration posed an opportunity for the migrants in the first place.

When asked whether migration was an important topic for them, about two thirds said that it was very much so. However, only one fifth classified intra-EU mobility in the same way; the majority of participants saw this aspect as moderately or slightly relevant.

#### *5. Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration*

While some participants stuck with simple and straightforward definitions of a migrant, such as *“a migrant has left his home country, simply. In order to seek a new life someplace else” (SESO01), it was, however, clear that they all associated migrants immediately with non-EU nationals and in particular refugees and asylum-seekers: “Migrants come from outside EU. Syria. Guest-workers are not migrants, but temporary workers. Asylum seekers, undocumented aliens are migrants” (SESO04, Civil society). One source specifically hinted at the highly concentrated immigrant population from the Middle East and Africa in specific Stockholm suburbs.*



The participants either did not conceptualise intra-EU mobility as migration to begin with, or made a clear rights-based distinction: *“Migrants from outside the EU have no right to be here. EU-migrants have free movement and the right to be here”* (SESO01, Private organisation). One source added: *“Many EU-migrants are frictionless. Non-EU are mainly refugees”* (SESO02, think tank), expressly mentioning Roma beggars as an example of problematic intra-EU migrants. The representative of a right-wing party specifically focused on the cultural aspect, stating that the more different the culture, the more problems were created by any kind of migration.

All but one respondents said that they were guided in their choice of language by *“established terminology”* (SESO02, think tank) and wanted to be *“always clear [about] what type of migration or immigration”* (SESO03, Academic) they were talking, or about what their intention was: *“If I want to underline the need for protection, I say refugee. If it’s broader and contains different reasons why one comes to Europe, I say migrant”* (SESO01, Private organisation).

The sources were divided when asked how they typically framed intra-EU migrants. Three of them focused on the right to free movement, with one even pointing out: *“[I] try to remind of the reason for free movement, to be able to move where you can lead a better life within in Europe. This is what has happened, but the debate does not really reflect that”* (SESO01, Private organisation). The other two primarily had negative aspects of EU mobility in mind. One said that migrants from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe *“create a mess in the labour market”* (SESO04, Civil society), while the other stated that they did *“not so much focus on EU migrants except if they are beggars on our streets or burglarise our summer houses”* (SESO05, Political party).

The subjects did not express a particularly clear differentiation between non-EU migrants that are not refugees or asylum-seekers, and those that are. On both questions, answers overlapped. One key frame was border control at the level of the European Union, and migration policy in general: *“[This is] often discussed as an issue of the future of the Union. How the EU should deal with its border control”* (SESO01, Private organisation). The same respondent added that there was a *“big change in migration policy in Sweden and Europe 2015, the need for protection remains outside of the EU-borders, how to deal with that?”*



But labour market perspectives also played a role. One participant said: *“[We] focus on people being in Sweden illegally, which we are absolutely against. If we are talking about labour market migration, such as in the IT sector or medicine (for example from India) then we are positive”* (SESO05, Political party), while another one looked at qualified non-EU immigrants through the union lens, mentioning collective bargaining rules in Sweden.

For refugees and asylum-seekers, the above frames were supplemented with slightly more complex ideas. For instance, a political party representative said: *“I believe that help is best served on site, where the conflict is, not by housing refugees in bunkhouses on a field”* (SESO05), whereas the subject with a trade union background suggested that poverty-driven migrants should be considered separately from war refugees.

## 6. Conclusions

The statements by the Swedish sources indicate that the political environment around migration is quite polarised. Even as they do not appear to feel that this puts a burden on their work and personal lives, they certainly notice it. The participants take part in the debate primarily with the goal to steer it in a particular direction – which one obviously depends on their respective professional missions – and exhibit an awareness of how traditional as well as social media work in this context.

According to the subjects, migration in Sweden is primarily associated with refugees, but also with other immigrants in particular from the Middle East and Africa, irrespective of political leaning. The main difference is then how it gets framed: As a question of free movement, humanitarian needs, and positive labour mobility, or as a matter of illegal entry, border security, and labour market disruption.



## Media practices in Spain

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### *Journalists*

#### *1. Demographics and background*

The journalists surveyed in Spain cover the spectrum of the political centre as well as left-leaning outlets; hard-right and radical outlets were not covered. However, the selection does cover the opinion-forming media in the country and notably also includes several new-generation independent journalism organisations. Almost 40% of participants worked for broadcasters, close to 30% for tabloid newspapers, with the rest divided between broadsheets, online, and hybrid formats, and a non-profit media organisation. Close to three quarters had commercial enterprises as their employers, while the others were working in the public and non-profit ecosystem. Practically all outlets addressed nationwide audiences; only two were regionally oriented.

Of the 18 journalists, most either specialised in migration and mobility issues, or considered the topic a regular part of their everyday beats. All but one were permanently employed at their respective organisations, with many in middle management positions such as department head or deputy editor. Ages ranged from 27 to 59; most were in their forties and fifties, commensurate with their positions. The genders were represented equitably.

#### *2. Professional environment*

The reputation of journalists in Spain, according to the journalists taking part in this survey, is rather low, and the outlook pessimistic. One respondent described journalism as a *“discredited profession”* (SPJ12, Broadcast), and another added: *“I believe that, overall, we are quite frowned upon”* (SPJ13, Broadcast). One participant felt that there was *“curiosity, morbid fascination; respect is becoming less and less”* (SPJ03, Quality newspaper). Some reflected on the reasons for this situation. According to them, journalism ran into the *“trap of becoming simple-minded on social networks. Everyone can give their opinion, it’s not replaceable. Twitter [is] dangerous, discredited and [contributed to the] irrelevance of the profession”* (SPJ11, Broadcast), and *“it is difficult that people value the profession, because it is necessary to fight against the ‘rubbish’ of the fake news, and anyone can give his or her opinion on social networks”* (SP05, Quality newspaper). Others felt that there was a general loss of credibility of journalism, which, in turn, had several causes. Participants said that audiences



*“are afraid that you distort the reality”* (SPJ04, Quality newspaper), because *“public media has often become a sort of transmission belt for governments”* (SPJ13, Broadcast), and that journalism is *“too politicised; people have the feeling that we lie”* (SPJ08, online). A few respondents indicated, however, that they felt appreciated in their immediate personal and professional environment.

The feeling of job security was not very strong amongst the respondents. Most thought they were fairly likely to keep their positions, but were quick to add that there is a high level of uncertainty to begin with. Some had already survived several rounds of job cuts by their employers. Those who felt stability and had a positive job outlook either work for relatively new, independent organisations or public broadcasters.

The participants’ perspective on their workplace environment was divided. About two thirds of the journalists indicated that the atmosphere was friendly, relaxed, encouraging, and provided them with a good deal of editorial independence. However, some qualified that this held true in particular amongst colleagues, but not necessarily in relation to management: *“Strikes and collective redundancies unify”* (SPJ10, Broadcast), and *“colleagues [are] very united”* (SPJ05, Quality newspaper). The remaining third reported a climate of fear and insecurity that was created by management and policy changes. This ranged from a *“total disconnection of the company, mistrust, drifting, lurches in ideology”* (SPJ05, Quality newspaper), to *“the management [...] has just changed and interns are replacing editors”* (SPJ04, Quality newspaper), and to the statement that *“affinity with the management [is more important] than professionalism and experience”* (SPJ06, Broadcast). Wage discrepancies between old and new staff were also mentioned, as were the strains of negotiating possible redundancy buy-outs. Respondents observed a high proportion of women in their newsrooms, in most cases at least 50% and up to 70% female journalists. Over four fifths answered that their outlets featured a diverse composition of staff by social class, regional background, etc., but slightly less than three quarters conceded that the newsrooms still not adequately mirrored the reality of Spanish society. Only one third of the organisations employed disabled persons.

Most journalists, and in particular those working for well-established media, stated that there was substantial external pressure, if not necessarily on themselves as individual re-



porters, but certainly on their outlets as a whole. This statement stands for the majority: *“There are pressures. We should care for advertisers and the political party in the government”* (SPJ11, Broadcast). In fact, the government as well as the largest Spanish corporations are mentioned frequently, by journalists working for both commercial and public-service media; one respondent also pointed to the business and political interests of one of the major shareholders in their outlet. One participant expressly accused the government of suppressing coverage of refugee issues. Notably, the representatives of recently founded, independent journalism organisations denied any external influence.

### 3. Professional self-perception

Practically all participants described their decision to work as a journalist as a calling or a passion, citing an *“obsession with the truth”* (SPJ07, Quality newspaper), the wish to *“control the power of the politicians”* (SPJ16, Online) and expressing a keen interest in telling stories. One adds that *“it is necessary to give voice to people who don’t have it”* (SPJ09, Online), and another one elaborates their social mission: *“Because we have things to say, we can create mental frames that, with principles and honesty, can help improve things. They can provide the tools for decision-making to the people so that they are able to choose with more aspects and information”* (SPJ13, Broadcast).

Journalists’ professional objectives were described as a mixture of educational and affective, with many participants actively reflecting the appropriate equilibrium between the two aspects: *“I always try to be loyal to reality and not to abuse emotions. I look for the balance between coldness and the narrative appeal. That the reader faces himself, and that he or she thinks”* (SPJ07, Quality newspaper). Participants stated that it was necessary *“to give arguments, to remove the lies and to generate responsibility in the citizenship”* (SPJ09, Online). Several emphasised that they wanted to uncover new information and bring new aspects to the public’s attention, such as *“topics that haven’t been covered by other media, and the aim is to highlight problems that aren’t evident in the public debate”* (SPJ14, Online). Another adds a more solutions-oriented notion: *“The goal is to focus people’s attention on other things. To explain the reasons. To solve the problems before they blow up. To give the information and not to hide it among piles of anecdotes”* (SPJ06, Broadcast). Over 60% of the journalists claimed not to have commercial motives when deciding which topics to cover, and more than four fifths testified to an educational objective. The use of emotional appeals



featured high on the agenda in Spain: Close to 60% admitted to do so very often or even always. Pretty much everybody agreed that thematic decisions were made by editors-in-chief and publishers.

As for the building blocks of a good story, subjects referred to the canonical news values (Lippmann 1922; Galtung and Ruge, 1965), but also laid a strong emphasis on the emotional aspects of journalism, in order *“to stir consciences, inform about the realities that make us think, reflect, stir consciences, look for a better world, more supportive, more empathic”* (SPJ02, broadcast), and looking for *“information that fosters empathy, always related with the Spanish reality and [that is] easily understandable”* (SPJ17, Quality newspaper).

The Spanish respondents asserted that their preferred sources were primary ones (close to three quarters), followed by spokespersons of domestic think tanks and NGOs (close to two thirds), as well as government press releases (more than half), followed by academics (half). International NGOs and think tanks ranked slightly lower than Spanish ones. Where trust in the credibility and accuracy of sources was concerned, academics received the highest score (almost two thirds), whereas the contents of official press releases and statements by government spokespersons deserved additional scrutiny (both around two thirds).

Participants' ideas of their audiences were very varied and usually not very well defined. The journalists typically considered print audiences as older and highly educated, whereas they expected online audiences to be younger and more representative of the broader population. One put emphasis on comprehensibility, stating: *“I write for people who don't understand newspapers, and for the next-door neighbour”* (SPJ04, Quality newspaper), while another one stated: *“I identify my audience above all with the people who interact with me through social networks”* (SPJ05, Quality newspaper). However, several interlocutors expressly stated that they were never thinking about a specific audience while producing their coverage: *“I don't consider who I am addressing, I want to know the truth and tell it”* (SPJ10, Broadcast).

#### 4. Attitudes towards migration and mobility in general

The Spanish participants overwhelmingly considered intra-EU mobility a general (almost all) as well as economic benefit (two thirds) for Europe, and consequently strongly disagreed with statements describing it as a problem or an economic detriment (more than 60% on



both counts). At the same time, about three quarters acknowledged that mobile European citizens faced non-welcoming environments and other troubles while away from their countries of origin.

Almost three quarters of the respondents said that migration in general was a very important topic for them, and more than half also saw intra-EU mobility as a high priority. One third felt it was moderately important.

##### *5. Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration*

The definition of the various forms of migration in Spain follows a country-specific pattern. The journalists interviewed explained that “migrants” or “immigrants” were considered to be persons who came to Spain mainly for economic reasons – to escape poverty in their countries of origin – while refugees were seen as people fleeing from war and human rights violations. They also asserted that “migrant” and “immigrant” had negative connotations and were often associated with Muslims, while refugees were more favourably viewed by the public. Some also referred to “migrants” very specifically as only those who benefited from the Spanish government’s 2005 initiative to give a legal right of residence to undocumented migrants that at the time had been living in the country and had jobs. Several respondents also mentioned that the use of the word “illegal” had effectively been banned and replaced with “sin papeles” (undocumented). Others went for more generic definitions such as: *“I consider that the migrant is the one that has to give an explanation”* (SPJ13, Broadcast), i.e., someone who is perceived as having no legal right to reside in Spain, or *“people that are not visitors, but want to settle in the country”* (SPJ16, Online).

Respondents were divided on the question of what guided their choice of language. Some stated that they used style guides and glossaries provided by their own organisations or third parties, while others were not aware of such guides. Others stated simply: *“I have engaged in a deep reflection about terminology and I use it [accordingly]”* (SPJ14, Online), or claimed that they were using technical terms as appropriate. One remarked: *“If you call some of them ‘refugees’ and you call ‘economic immigrants’ to others, it is like sending the message that we have to accept some of them, but not the others. [...] We have been talking about it in the newsroom”* (SPJ13, Broadcast). This suggests that there is a high awareness of terminological issues, but not a common approach shared by the majority of outlets.





All participants confirmed that they clearly differentiated between intra-EU mobility and migration from outside the European Union, and conceded self-critically: *“We should use the same word whether they come from the EU or not, but if someone comes from the EU we call him or her foreigner”* (SPJ09, Online) or *“expat”* (SPJ02, Broadcast). However, they also acknowledged that there was a perception of two classes of EU and EU candidate country migrants: *“It is very different if somebody comes from France than if he or she comes from Albania or Romania. We create categories by colours. We, as journalists, are suspicious depending on their origin and have prejudices”* (SPJ08, Online). And there was a widespread perception among participants that “migrants” are usually considered as people engaging in a problematic activity.

Respondents said that they only rarely produced coverage of intra-EU mobility, but when they did, typically framed it in a positive way, as an economic or cultural exchange. Reporting on non-EU migrants who are not refugees or asylum-seekers, on the other hand, was seen in a more negative light. This statement summarises what many expressed: *“Impacts on national security and on the state. Also, how this affects the economy, and what are the migrants’ abilities. Sometimes we address the problems in their countries, the reasons”* (SPJ08, Online). One remarked: *“A broad context is very necessary because they are seen with suspicion”* (SPJ04, Quality newspaper), while another stated that they specifically intended to foster *“respect and mutual understanding”* (SPJ16, Online) with their work.

The framing of refugees and asylum-seekers has many of the same qualities as the treatment of other migration from outside the EU, but practically all respondents said that they were closely looking into problems in the country of origin, and that domestic Spanish viewpoints, including the management of refugees, were secondary. *“However, it is now starting to have negative connotations because it is also linked to terrorism”* (SPJ05, Quality newspaper).

## 6. Conclusion

From the statements of the participants in this survey, it appears that traditional, established journalism in Spain is in a crisis that combines the economic distress of many outlets, as well as the resulting job cuts and management changes, with issues of perceived or real partisanship and suspicions of manipulation by the government and big business.



Institutionally, this is characterised by a perception of a loss of credibility of, and confidence in, journalists, which has rendered working conditions in many newsrooms difficult and negative. However, there is a new wave of independent outlets that seem to have managed to steer clear of all those issues – though many of these organisations lack the reach of the more established “legacy” media. Many journalism jobs are precarious. Working environments are described as relatively diverse as far as gender and social situations are concerned, but, again, lack ethnic and cultural diversity (Markova and McKay 2012, *ibid*).

Practical factors that may affect approaches to reporting include significant concern among several participants about external pressure from advertisers, government and political parties, but with the exception of an accusation that the Spanish government proactively tried to minimise coverage of the refugee crisis, it is unclear how the political and business pressure applied on mainstream outlets overshadows the good-faith efforts of the reporters. Despite this, and the institutional challenges outlined above, the journalists expressed pride in their profession and aspired to high ethical standards.

From a technical perspective, Spanish journalists interviewed were particularly likely to focus on using emotive and emotional approaches to stimulate a response from their audiences – with a recognition that this needs to be balanced with factual reporting. There is also a strong focus among many of the participants on educating the audience, supporting public debates with dependable information, and at times a desire to be agents of change. Terminology is considered important, with a recognition from some that the term migrant has become synonymous with both cultural difference – notably that it can be seen to denote Muslim –, and problems. There is low trust in government, and strong support for the EU among the sample.

Again, respondents suggested that commercial considerations played little role in their work. Many of the journalists surveyed were somewhat unclear about who they perceived their audiences to be.



## Sources

### 1. Demographics and background

In Spain, seven sources were surveyed. They come either from public authorities at national to municipal level, or from research institutes, think tanks, and academia one multilateral aid agency represents the only other category. However, all participants were also active in political networks or actions related to migration, and could thus be assumed to speak knowledgeably for their job roles as well as for civil society. Accordingly, funding for the respondents' organisations comes primarily from the state, but to a certain extent also from foundations and donations from the private sector. 70% of the participants were female. The respondents ranged in age from 26 to 63, with the largest group of people in their forties. Most held senior positions.

Participants in Spain did not identify any media organisations as shaping the migration debate in the country. Rather, they suggested that Spanish citizens, the courts, the Ombudsman, the migrants themselves, academics, and European stakeholders were the key figures facilitating and driving the discourse forward. This may have been a result of a particular interpretation of the question, rather than a sense that media played no role.

### 2. Professional environment

Despite their majority answer (close to 90%) that they felt valued, the respondents painted a rather mixed picture of their perceived public reputation. The civil servants in particular complained that the public tended to regard them in a negative way by default; all involved in social issues also reported that their work *"is not valued as a profession"* because *"people only think about the goodness"* (SPS02, International organisation), and that their experience taught them not to refer to terms such as *"poverty"* or *"social exclusion"* (SPS05, Public institution) in order not to prejudice or alienate members of the public. One said: *"Before, no one valued my job, but the refugee crisis means that now people are interested in what I do"* (SPS06, NGO). Others noted that they felt valued in their personal and work environments, but experienced conflicts with people who had different opinions and attitudes.

### 3. Professional self-perception

The respondents in Spain unanimously and enthusiastically declared that they had chosen their jobs out of passion and engagement for the cause. This statement stands for the entire



group: *“I believe in change, in non-conformism, in rights, in empowerment. [I have] a personal conviction to change things around me”* (SES02, International organisation). Two participants shared their idealistic view of the public service: *“The public administration is the company that works in the life of everyone. [...] You get hooked because it touches people’s lives”* (SES01, governmental institution) and *“my work allows me to combine rigorous social intervention at the local level and public service”* (SES05, Public institution). One confessed that they were *“obsessed with the migration topic. I think it is the major issue of the 21st century”* (SES07, think tank).

As a consequence, the sources also stated that their main objective when communicating with media was change – both a change in public awareness of, and knowledge about, the topic of migration, and consequently a change in public attitudes. One respondent said: *“I don’t try to convince, but to inform and teach, to provide substantiating evidence, [and] insist on terminology”* (SES03, Academic), while others expressly aimed for a *“positive view of migration”* (SES01, governmental institution), or claimed: *“I try to change the view people have about migration through language and positive communication”* (SES05, Public institution).

When asked what they considered the building blocks of a good story, the Spanish sources exhibited a critically differentiated view. In their statements, they rather implicitly focused on what they felt was the right approach, than on what they felt usually worked, namely emotionalised content. One participant spoke for many when they said that media should be *“presenting the reality as it is. Emotions are temporary and don’t achieve a change in reality”* (SES05, governmental institution). Another participant acknowledged that media *“stories need to be ‘sexy’, and this includes testimonies and context with data”* (SES07, think tank), and yet another one observed: *“We try to balance the needs of the media – which always ask for testimonies – and the protection of the people we are working with”* (SES06, NGO).

#### 4. Attitudes towards migration and mobility in general

Without exception, the Spanish source representatives expressed that they saw migration as a general benefit, and almost all categorically denied that it was a general problem. The



same proportion saw it as an opportunity for the host society, whereas more than half acknowledged that it may pose a problem for the migrants themselves.

Of the respondents, close to 90% claimed that migration as well as intra-EU mobility were very important topics for them.

##### 5. Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration

With respect to the definition of migration, the Spanish respondents, once again, appeared to differentiate between what they perceived as the common usage of the term and what they considered the correct, or better, definition: *“Migrants can be refugees and/or have economic motivations. We call [them] migrants only if they come from far away”* (SPS04, Academic), and *“people migrate for economic or political reasons. They can be legal or illegal, but from out of the EU. They are defined for their residence rights”* (SPS06, NGO).

The sources surveyed broadly agreed that intra-EU mobility normally did not count as migration. However, *“migrants from Romania, Ukraine [sic] – the poorest countries in the EU in general – are not considered [to be] from the EU”* (SPS05, Public institution), while *“there is a tendency to treat migrants from the richest countries in the EU as foreigners or expats rather than as migrants”* (SPS06, NGO).

The participants largely agreed that Spanish media were not particularly discerning in their choice of terminology when covering migration, nor were showing the intention to improve it: *“Migration has always been addressed as a problem in the media. We have to be careful with the word ‘refugee’, because it evokes Syria automatically, and refugees come from everywhere. [There is an] inappropriate use of terminology in the press”* (SPS05, Public institution). Accordingly, many saw it as their mission to exert a corrective influence on the public discourse: *“Our challenge is to defeat the discourse of fear and insecurity that migration creates. We try to add terms such as integration of cultures”* (SPS06, NGO). To do so, they *“make an effort to use appropriate legal terms in each case, and that the information includes economic or cultural facts, among others”* (SPS07, think tank) and *“use a very technical language, very carefully”* (SPS02, International organisation). Another respondent insisted that *“specific terms must be used in each case. It is difficult to transfer them to the media. Some years ago, migration had only economic connotations. From 2015 refugees are referred as something more political”* (SPS04, Academic).



In their day-to-day work, almost none of the sources ever dealt with intra-EU mobility and/or did not consider it migration. The only one who did, framed them as a *“cultural enrichment”* (SPS05, Public institution), while another one observed that this *“group is usually treated according to economic and labour issues it raises”* (SPS06, NGO). Similarly, non-EU migrants outside of the categories of refugees and asylum-seekers hardly played a role. If any frame was applied, it would be a *“cultural and integration perspective”* (SPS03, Academic).

According to the sources, the latter aspect also holds true for refugees and asylum-seekers, which typically raised the question of *“how to integrate them in society and in the labour market in order not to have discrimination”* (SPS02, International organisation), combined with the *“economic and employment assistance they receive upon arrival”* (SPS05, Public institution). Through all the above questions, the respondents made it clear that they were careful never to make a distinction between different categories of migrants, but rather to treat them all equally.

## 6. Conclusions

The Spanish group of sources was biased towards official government representatives who also identified very strongly with their roles as impartial and fair public servants. While they generally felt somewhat under-valued in their jobs, they also recognised that the refugee crisis had heightened their public visibility and influence. All of them expressed a strong attachment to, and engagement with, their jobs in general and the topic of migration in particular. At the same time, they were quite critical of the media, accusing them of emotionalising the topic and using too much inappropriate or incorrect terminology.

The respondents agreed that EU citizens were not considered migrants, even as some acknowledged that South-Eastern Europeans were not generally considered in terms of EU citizenship. They did not see much difference between the various categories of migrants from outside the European Union either, being adamant that they all deserved the same treatment, were worthy of help, and should be integrated into Spanish society as well as the labour market. As such, they were representatives of the unanimously pro-migration faction of the Spanish public.



## Media practices in the UK

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### *Journalists*

#### *1. Demographics and background*

The sample was particularly male dominated, with 19 men and only seven women in the total sample of 26 journalists surveyed. This male bias reflects the extent to which men dominate reporting on topics related to home affairs – the most common area in which migration is covered. It is also dominated by journalists in their 40s (9 of the 26 surveyed) while significant numbers were also in their 50s (7 of 26) and 30s (also 7 of 26). Two journalists were in their 60s and one was in their 20s.

Political leanings were mixed, though a majority of newspaper staff interviewed saw their outlets as right-leaning (eight of 14, compared to four who identified their newspapers as left-leaning and two for centrist publications). Journalists working for tabloid/mid-market newspapers were both more polarised in their descriptions of their media outlets – with no centrist or neutral publications identified - and considerably more likely to identify as working for a right-leaning publication than left-leaning (5 right leaning to 2 left leaning). The majority of magazine journalists surveyed identified as working for either left-leaning (2) or centrist publications (2), with only one identifying as right-leaning. The broadcast journalists surveyed all identified as working for either centrist (3) or neutral (1) organisations. Finally, the online journalists surveyed also all identified as either centrist (2) or neutral (1). The majority of tabloid/mid-market journalists interviewed saw their outlets as socially conservative, but the majority of journalists interviewed from all other publication types saw their publications as socially liberal or neither liberal or conservative.

The sample was also dominated by journalists with a national rather than a local or regional focus, with only five of the 26 reporters working for local/regional media, and the remaining 21 working for media with a national focus.

#### *2. Professional environment*

Descriptions of social environments in UK media organisations were broadly positive, but with some notable exceptions. All non-newspaper journalists, with one exception, identified their workplace social environments as broadly positive. The most heterogeneous results



came from newspapers. Half (7) of the 14 newspaper journalists surveyed identified the social environment as broadly positive while the other half gave equivocal responses. Journalists working for broadsheets were the least likely to identify their workplace social environments as broadly positive. A slim majority of the seven tabloid/mid-market journalists surveyed identified their workplace social environment as broadly positive (4), with the rest giving equivocal answers.

Among newspaper journalists surveyed, results also indicated the possibility of some gendered split in newspaper journalists' experiences of the newsroom. Of the three women newspaper journalists surveyed (two broadsheet, one tabloid), none identified their working environments as broadly positive or positive/neutral. In contrast, only two of the twelve men surveyed in this group did not identify that their workplace social environment was either positive or positive/neutral.

*"There's a clique of laddy, white men, who go for a drink, pass around big jobs between them. Women try to oppose it, with varying degrees of [trails off] ... The hours are horrific ... so when you have kids ... women in particular go part time, [and] diminish their power. ... 15-hour days - [the] people that survive best are psychopaths [laughs]...or don't have other outside interests, or family. [It] maintain[s] a kind of toxic structure ... Whoever stays the longest, gets the final say."* (UKJO07, Popular newspaper)

The four other women interviewed (2 working for magazines, 1 for broadcast, 1 for online) all reported broadly positive social environments.

Most journalistic environments were depicted by the journalists surveyed as relatively respectful/laid-back environments – often providing significant freedom.

Some of the newspaper environments were described as highly authoritarian: *"Newspapers are like the military. When you send the troops out to capture the flag, you can't have a discussion about whether you want to capture the flag..."* (UKJO01 - Quality newspaper)

Others were described as aggressive, to the extent that the tone or content of stories may be adjusted to placate senior staff. *"Management approach is, basically, the editor says what gets done, and they [management] do it – and if they don't they get shouted at ... it is fairly relentless ... The problem with that is that then there is this kind of dialogue with the news editor who says 'The boss wants this, and I want this' and you have got to go and say*





*‘you can’t have that’ because that’s not how the story is... if we do it that way it’s not accurate... then you’ve got this ‘how far can we go, how far can we go?’ and it’s particularly uncomfortable.”* (UKJO14 - Popular newspaper)

A trend that was apparent throughout the interviews was that most journalists felt that they were respected and taken seriously by people who mattered to them – notably friends, family, contacts and often policy makers –, but that the wider public was cynical about the profession. This meant that it was rare for journalists to consider that they were viewed emphatically positively or negatively. Several also highlighted that their self-perception as *“fearless seeker of truths”* was often at odds with public perceptions of them as *“muckrakers and people who might have a semi-detached relationship with the truth when it comes to getting a good story.”* (UKJO22 - Quality newspaper).

However, some journalists highlighted extremely negative responses to their profession, usually from the general public, but in one case, also from friends: *“Even my own friends hate the fact that I work here and think I’m a disgrace, but I’ve just learned to ignore it and I just get on with my work and if challenged I’ll say, ‘well, [states readership of paper] people buy it every day, and they’re not so stupid as to believe everything uncritically’, and it’s just lazy and silly to assume that people have no beliefs about the world until they pick up a copy of the paper.”* (UKJO17, Popular newspaper)

In terms of potential influence by people or bodies outside their newsrooms, journalists were broadly dismissive of the concept that direct influence might be exerted – suggesting that news was considered *“sacrosanct”* (UKJO03, Broadcast) in their organisations. Several noted that the speed and pressure of their day-to-day work made the idea of direct meddling in stories by external forces an almost laughable concept.

A very small number did note that advertisers make occasional attempts to exert influence, but usually without success. In some newspapers, the indirect influence of owners or figures known to have a relationship with senior staff – such as editors – was apparent.

In terms of job security most UK journalists did not identify any immediate threat to their jobs, but many identified that journalism is an inherently precarious career.



### 3. Professional self-perception

Nearly all UK journalists feel that their profession is interesting and/or enjoyable and most believe it to be important, with a significant number expressing a real passion for their work. Only one journalist identified that it was a mundane choice. Key motivations for doing the job include: a love of storytelling and producing ‘history as it happens’; advocacy-type objectives (or ‘changing the world’); a democratic objective of informing debate; an enjoyment of the variety of the profession; and an “insider” motive where access to otherwise hidden worlds is relished.

*“It’s not boring. It’s fascinating, it’s always different every day and it’s a great chance to just talk to people and get their voices out there. And the second [reason] relates to that – its perhaps an old-fashioned view of journalism, but I do want to try and – all the really basic stuff – hold power to account and try to make things a little bit better.”* (UKJO12, Online)

There is significant heterogeneity in UK journalists’ perceptions of their audiences, depending on their markets and media format. Newspaper journalists interviewed were very aware of the aging nature of their audiences, but some also noted that the online consumption of their products involved a different demographic. Very few identify the political leanings of their audience.

While there was a great deal of heterogeneity in their responses, the professional objectives of most UK journalists interviewed could be characterised as containing either one or more of the following four criteria:

- Instrumental – to generate a successful product;
- Breaking news – to reveal new information;
- Transactional – to inform and/or entertain the audience;
- Force for change – to facilitate better decision making or improve society.

Several journalists identify instrumental objectives – where a key priority was to successfully please their editor/bosses in one way or another. This was particularly visible in newspapers, and especially tabloids, though it is not always explicit. *“My objective, when I sit down is to please the editor, and his objective is to sell papers – and to write stories that he thinks*



*will entertain the audience.... So I'm always thinking 'will the editor choose a story from my list'" (UKJO02, Popular newspaper)*

Another common objective was simply finding and breaking news – to reveal new information. Again, this was particularly visible among journalists from newspapers, but also from those working in broadcast.

A third common objective was transactional – to provide a service to the consumer of the product such as to inform or to entertain them. Journalists working for magazines, online and broadcast made this point explicitly. *"I see my role as providing people with the perspective on news stories... trying to help people understand the complexities and difficulties of achieving goals – the trade-offs that are required – and I see that as absolutely central to my job description and my role..." (UKJO03, Broadcast)*

A fourth theme that emerges is that the journalist hopes to be a force for change – which is evident in journalists working for both broadsheet and tabloid/mid-market newspapers, and online: *"For myself it is to reach the maximum possible audience and therefore to have most influence on the way that the country goes... I would like to think there would be greater freedom overall in this country of a higher quality by virtue of the journalism that I have produced over however long my career lasts."* (UKJO18 - Online)

There seems to be a broad consensus among the journalists surveyed that the building blocks of a good story include that it is: new (has not been seen before by the consumer); compelling (shocking, surprising or otherwise dramatic); human/personal (places people at the heart either as protagonists, or by relating the story to the life of the consumer); and/or revealing (contains new data or other evidence of trends that tell a bigger story). These positions seem broadly consistent across the various media types.

When offered the choice of generating commercial, educational or emotional impacts when reporting a story, most (24 of 26) journalists identified educating their audience as either their primary, or joint-primary consideration, and 17 of 26 prioritised educating their audience above the other two choices. The only journalists who did not prioritise educating their audience as a primary consideration were two tabloid/mid-market journalists, who prioritised generating emotional impact.



Generating emotional impact was more important for the tabloid/mid-market journalists surveyed than any other group. The majority (4 out of 7) of tabloid/mid-market newspaper journalists prioritised eliciting an emotional response as either their primary (2) or joint primary (2) considerations in reporting a story.

Only one journalist – a senior editor – identified commercial considerations as being a priority, and even this was a joint-primary consideration alongside the objective of educating the audience.

#### *4. Attitude toward migration and mobility in general*

Most journalists surveyed (18 of 26) selected responses to questions about EU freedom of movement that inferred a generally positive attitude toward it. However, a majority (4 of 7) of tabloid/mid-market journalists selected responses that suggested neutral/negative attitudes toward free movement.

Journalists were not asked to specify whether they were supportive of, opposed to or neutral about EU freedom of movement, but were, instead, asked to support, remain neutral or oppose certain statements about freedom of movement. Broadsheet newspaper journalists surveyed were more likely to support broadly positive statements about free movement (5 of 7) with the remainder (2 of 7) supporting statements that inferred a neutral attitude. Conversely, tabloid/mid-market newspaper journalists were the only group where a majority did not support broadly positive statements, and the only group where any journalists selected broadly negative statements (3 of 7). However, an equal number (3 of 7) also supported broadly positive statements and one supported statements that inferred a broadly neutral position.

The majority of other (magazine, broadcast, online) journalists supported broadly positive statements about EU freedom of movement. All online journalists supported broadly positive statements. Three of the four broadcast journalists supported broadly positive statements – with one supporting statements that infer a neutral position. Four of the five magazine journalists supported statements that were broadly positive, while one supported statements that infer a neutral position.



All journalists interviewed, with a single exception (a journalist for a tabloid/mid-market newspaper with a specific regional focus), considered migration to be of high or medium importance.

5. *Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration*

There was broad consensus among most of the UK journalists interviewed that the term “migrant” applied to citizens of both EU and non-EU states – with some nuance within a small number of journalists who identify EU migrants as a distinct group. There was also broad consensus that anyone who crosses an international border with the intention of living in another country for any reason counts, officially, as a migrant. Journalists generally include asylum seekers and refugees as migrants – but several clarify that they may also use specific terminology to describe them.

*“First, people coming from afar – poor or war-torn places, in search of safety and a better life. Places like Africa or the Middle East or South-East Asia or wherever. The second part of that would be migrants from within EU... I wouldn’t typically think of someone who is working for [Oxford] university from Spain as a migrant, whereas I would tend to think – and this might be completely wrong – but I would think of someone coming from Romania to pick strawberries as a migrant worker.”* (UKJO10, magazine)

A key differentiation between journalists is whether they consider the term “migrant” neutral or loaded – (invariably loaded negatively). A number of tabloid/mid-market journalists surveyed gave answers that indicated that they loaded the term with negative connotations, or felt that it was a broadly negative term.

*“To be brutally honest, it’s more likely to be people who are a burden on society than those who are a benefit to society, because there is more newsworthiness in a foreign criminal or a teenager who’s being looked after by the council than, say, a brilliant academic who’s come here to further their career... so from our perspective it’s more newsworthy if people are abusing the system or exploiting loopholes or abusing the hospitality being extended to them by British society... because that triggers a reaction in readers.”* (UKJO17, Popular newspaper)



The majority of broadsheet, broadcast and online journalists surveyed indicated that they felt the term was neutral. Magazine journalists surveyed were evenly split, with one identifying that the term 'migrant' was too broad and imprecise, and so did not use it.

A number of journalists who did identify the term as loaded with negative meaning considered that it *should not* be, but believe that in general use in the media, it is.

A clear theme across UK journalists interviewed from most media types was that there was little objective difference between EU and non-EU migrants, but that the key difference was between the legal rights of EU migrants and those of non-EU migrants. This is characterised in two similar, but slightly different ways:

1) As a factor that affords greater freedom for EU citizens:

*"I think the major difference is in the way they're treated by the UK immigration system – and because of freedom of movement, EU migrants can come and go as they please... On the other hand, over the past 7 years, non-EU migrants have been subject to a very high level of scrutiny... from a political perspective, they have been treated as people who really had to prove their worth to get into this country."* (UKJO04, Quality newspaper)

2) And as a factor that limits the UK government's control of these migrants.

*"Speaking purely objectively, there is not a difference between someone who comes from Poland and someone who comes from Pakistan, but because of the government policies in place there is a perceived difference between them – if you're from Pakistan you have to jump through several more hoops to get here – if you're from Poland you can just turn up..."* (UKJO14, Popular newspaper)

Some journalists also highlight a concern that there may be racial subtexts in public and media narratives about non-EU migrants, while some tabloid/mid-market newspaper journalists highlighted particular concerns from their newspapers about the use of welfare benefits by EU migrants: *"As a way of promoting the Brexit agenda we would look at the issue of EU migrants because that was what the editor saw as a key factor for voting to leave the EU... The issue of child benefit being sent abroad was one that we came back to again and again... If I was promoting the Brexit agenda, the Nigerians and the Syrians were not a part of that."* (UKJO02, Popular newspaper)



Other media highlight their, or public, concern or perceptions that EU migrants may be too numerous, and low-skilled.

In making choices about what language to use about migrants, many of the journalists surveyed said their aim was to enhance clarity – though this is less prominent in answers from tabloid/mid-market newspaper journalists. Journalists from several media types, including broadsheet and tabloid/mid-market newspapers also described a desire to avoid inflammatory language.

Reporters from some tabloid/mid-market newspapers highlighted the role of “media convention” – what Bruggeman (2014 *ibid*) refers to as “collective sense making” - and expectations from editors and in their choices of language. Several journalists, including from tabloid/mid-market newspapers, online and broadsheet newspapers, reported that they were guided by a desire to ‘humanise’ the subjects of their stories.

*“I think it’s guided by media convention... it’s not a conspiracy, it’s not a discussed process, but I think people fall into the sort of homogenised language around not just migrancy, but around any number of issues. Because I think it means there’s a sort of uniformity around sort of meaning, intention and so on. So, I think that media outlets kind of mirror each other in terms of language, and you can see changes in language and terminology coming in.”*  
(UKJO13, Popular newspaper)

There are noticeable patterns in UK journalists’ descriptions of their coverage of EU migrants, which seem consistent across all media types: work, numbers, Brexit, public services and finances. The consistency of these themes recurrence suggests they may be fundamental frames for the UK media debate on EU migration:

*“Often, it’s about the economic impact of EU migrants on Britain, partly because we think that the evidence is quite clear, that migration from Europe has been of economic benefit to Britain, so finding new ways of showing that, to challenge narratives that say that they’re a drain on Britain.... [since the Brexit vote] more of our stories about European migration have taken into consideration – even if they haven’t been exclusively about – the cultural experience of a rapid growth in migration in various places in Britain.”* (UKJO09, Magazine)

A number of journalists surveyed struggled to identify any clear themes they would use relating to non-EU migrants who were not refugees or asylum seekers. Those that did, howev-



er, tended to focus on themes that broadly correspond to UK government migration policy focus: Work – with a focus on skilled migration; study and family migration routes; and then enforcement/security issues, which were often linked to irregular migration and integration issues. *“...They’re quite invisible, that cohort – I don’t know who they are. If you asked people ‘what’s an EU migrant?’ [they would say] ‘it’s a Pole in the coffee shop, it’s a Romanian picking cockles,’ whatever, but [if you ask] ‘what’s a non-EU migrant, then?’ I don’t think the average [person would know]”* (UKJO01, Quality newspaper)

National tabloid/mid-market newspaper journalists surveyed often gave answers depicting refugees and asylum seekers in negative terms – frequently questioning the legitimacy of their claims, though they were not the only group to do this. *“I think what people want to know... is what they are seeking refuge or asylum from?... People in the Calais camp are not actually, at that moment, fleeing from the original conflict that they fled from – they are trying to leave France, which is, I think, a very different public policy question, a very different emotional question.”* (UKJO23, Magazine)

Journalists focusing on humanitarian issues of the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers by the state tended to focus on human stories. *“[I try to] show what they have come from. To awake human comradeship in readers so they think ‘what would I do if bombs were falling on my kids?’. I look for details that show that people are the same.”* (UKJO07, Popular newspaper)

But the introduction of geopolitics appeared to abstract issues and move journalists away from a human focus. *“We’ve covered... what’s happened in Europe, with massive flows of people particularly from Syria... and the impact on politics [in the EU] and the rise of right-wing parties in Europe because of the dissatisfaction these things have been handled.”* (UKJO10, Magazine)

A final notable trend was that journalists from regionally focused outlets tended to focus on personal stories and those that were broadly supportive of refugees and asylum seekers: *“[We are] generally sympathetic. We like to cast ourselves as welcoming people [in this region]... we stand up for vulnerable people.”* (UKJO25, Popular newspaper)





## 6. Conclusion

This analysis demonstrates that UK media and journalists have an array of motivations and approaches – both to the issue of migration and to the broader work that they do – that are highly varied and nuanced. Working practices in the UK are highly professionalised, but sometimes aggressive.

Institutional factors that were apparent from the survey, and may shape the ways that journalists deal with the issue of migration include:

*Working environments* – The most striking finding in this area was the difference between the often highly autocratic and even aggressive environments depicted in some newspapers, and the more laid-back and respectful attitudes in all other media. The degree of positivity felt by journalists toward their working environment was noticeably lower in newspapers than other media types, and in particular, there may be an indication that women working in newspapers are less positive about the environments than men. However, with such a small sample of women, establishing whether this is a genuine concern is not possible.

Nevertheless, reporting on migration in the UK sample is dominated by men, and while there is some limited ethnic diversity in the sample, this is not representative of the UK as a whole – this lack of diversity may be an issue (Markova and McKay 2013 *ibid*). Broadly speaking, the UK journalists surveyed felt relatively secure in their jobs.

*Self-perception* – Journalists tend to be highly motivated and enjoy their jobs, despite a broad recognition that others may feel the profession is problematic. Many identified that they-themselves felt respected, but that the wider picture of journalism was more negative. Several also expressed a concern that their jobs are misunderstood and that those who are critical are unaware of the pressures and difficulties that they face. The pressures identified include the speed with which they are expected to turn stories around, and the level of detail and nuance that they are able to introduce to short pieces – which also have to hold the attention of the audience and be adequately ‘newsworthy’.

Practical factors evident from the analysis that may affect journalists reporting on migration issues include:



*Objectives* – The survey shows that journalists’ objectives are often driven by a sense of moral purpose and/or an instrumental drive for various forms of success. The ‘moral purpose’ element can be seen when journalists expressed objectives such as exposing wrongdoing, standing up for underdogs, increasing freedom, helping people to make better democratic decisions or ‘making the world a better place’ in some other way. Instrumental desires to achieve forms of success are evident in objectives such breaking news/exclusives, getting stories published (as far forward as possible), having the biggest possible impact or pleasing a news editor. Some journalists described balance between these objectives, while some were more focused on one or the other.

*Autonomy/influence* – In explicit answers, most (but not all) journalists expressed a sense that they had autonomy and were not pushed to do things in particular ways. However, in their more detailed responses, a number of factors that may shape both the types of stories covered, and the content of them, became evident – more in newspapers than in other media types. Some identified that the imagined figure of the proprietor wielded power in a way that the actual proprietor did not. Others identified an almost instinctive knowledge of an outlet’s position or objectives, and a recognition that producing stories that were in opposition to that position would not be received well. The direct influence of the perspectives – and sometimes biases – of other senior figures, such as the editor or other senior production staff was also noted by some journalists.

Technical factors evident from the analysis that may affect journalists reporting on migration issues include:

*Terminology* – The broad concept of a “migrant” was generally agreed by participants to mean anyone who moves from one country to another for any reason. This usually included both mobile EU citizens and refugees and asylum seekers. Journalists from tabloid newspapers were more likely than other media types to characterise migrants, as a broad category, negatively. The prevailing view among journalists in the survey was that there is no objective difference between EU and non-EU migrants, other than the rights afforded to EU migrants. One comment also highlighted the role of ‘media convention’ – where regular use of a term or theme normalised it, making it more likely to be used again.



*Themes* - Key themes that journalists identified in their reporting on EU migrants in the UK were - work; numbers (generally the question of whether there were too many); Brexit; impacts on public services and impacts on public finances. These themes may be interpreted as containing a subtext relating to perceived low-incomes of EU migrants. Some journalists from tabloid newspapers identified EU migrants' access to welfare benefits as an issue their newspapers were particularly concerned about.

Themes relating to non-EU migration were less immediately clear, but key themes included work – with a focus on skilled migration; study and family migration routes; and then enforcement and security issues –, which were often linked to irregular migration and integration issues. National tabloid/mid-market newspaper journalists surveyed often gave answers depicting refugees and asylum seekers in negative terms – frequently questioning the legitimacy of their claims, though they were not the only group to do this. Those writing about refugees and asylum seekers from a geopolitical context appeared to move away from a human focus.

*Speed and space* - Several also expressed a concern that their jobs are misunderstood and that those who are critical are unaware of the pressures and difficulties that they face. The pressures identified include the speed with which they are expected to turn stories around, and the level of detail and nuance that they are able to introduce to short pieces – which also have to hold the attention of the audience and be adequately 'newsworthy'.

Commercial factors:

In the questionnaire, almost no journalists identified commercial factors as direct or major influences over their work. However, commercial factors were often identified, at least indirectly, as elements that journalists were aware of in the background of their work. These indirect commercial factors sometimes took the form of a recognition that what they were producing had to be approved by other – often senior – staff, whose focus on sales/audience figures was more direct. A small number of respondents also raised the possibility that advertisers attempted to directly influence stories.



## Sources

### 1. Demographics and background

The six representatives of sources were selected based on three criteria – that their position involved participation in the UK’s media debate on migration; that the individual or their organisation was significant in the UK’s media and policy debate on migration; and that their participation allowed for a representative sample of participants in the debate. To fulfil this, participants were invited from think tanks, NGOs and government departments, and from organisations that supported more open and more closed positions on migration, and bodies that were broadly supportive of Brexit and bodies that were broadly opposed to it.

All of those spoken to worked directly with media and, half (3) worked as communications professionals, while the other half worked on broader policy and analysis issues as well as media and communications. Four were men, and two were women.

Those working for organisations with a broad aim of reducing migration were funded mainly by individual donors, while those working toward less restrictionist approaches to migration were funded by philanthropic organisations, grants and trusts. One was a government employee.

All identified newspapers as key players in the UK’s media debate on migration, with several noting, in particular, the impact of the UK’s tabloid and mid-market papers.

*“I guess in terms of driving perceptions... you’ve got to say that the tabloids are a large part of that... and that’s the Mail and the Sun principally, and the Express – to a smaller extent the Telegraph perhaps, but there’s also a sort of counterpart to that on the other side which is the Guardian, the Independent, Channel 4 News, which tend to put a more positive gloss... on the pro-immigration arguments, but in terms of the man in the street and how the narrative has evolved, I think the influence of the tabloids is considerably greater.” (UKSO05, think tank)*

### 2. Professional environment

All of the UK sources interviewed described pleasant working environments and consider that they are respected and taken seriously in what they do:



All sources identify that they prioritise “quality” media over “popular” media in their outreach, with the exception of the representative of a government department, and one of the pressure groups – who identify that they target popular and quality media equally. This is at odds with the questionnaire answers provided about which media the sources considered are shaping public debate on migration.

All sources identify press releases as a key means of reaching media, with all other than one think tank also identifying that they use online press materials distributed via social media, too. All sources with the exception of the representative of a government department also identify that they make direct contact with individual journalists as a part of their press outreach.

### 3. *Professional self-perception*

Both sources representing pressure groups and one of the sources from a think tank are driven by ideological objectives and a sense of how Britain should be; the government source does the job for instrumental reasons – it is interesting and reasonably paid – but enjoys it; the remaining two think tank sources are communications professionals who were looking for a challenge and found roles that chime with their world-views. *“There’s this strong feeling of belonging and belief in what Britain is – and that, I do see threatened by the huge number that are coming here.”* (UKSO02, pressure group)

The sources are all looking to influence public debates. Beyond that, the specific objectives are fundamentally linked to aims of the organisations they represent.

In terms of what makes a good story, three of the sources – one from each group – identify data; three identify ‘newness’ or timeliness (two think tanks, one pressure group); two identify ‘human’ stories (one pressure group, one think tank); the government source identifies matters ‘of genuine public interest’ while one think tank identifies issues that allow journalists to challenge the government.

*“It’s clearly got to stimulate interest... either an intellectual interest, which is more the case with a broadsheet, perhaps... with the tabloids, it’s more of an emotional reaction to the information provided that makes it a good news story... and I would think that is also the case with some broadsheets... there’s also the newness... [there is also] the ‘crunchy data’ that is the new bit.”* (UKSO05, think tank)



#### 4. Attitudes towards migration and mobility in general

With the exception of one representative of a think tank, both migration and intra-EU mobility were considered very important as an institutional issue by the sources.

Four of the six sources – two from think tanks, the one source from a government department and one of the sources from a pressure group – indicated that they felt that EU freedom of movement was broadly positive. One source from a pressure group indicated they felt it was neutral, and one source from a think tank identified it as broadly negative.

#### 5. Framing of, and attitudes towards, mobility and migration

There is little disagreement about who the sources count as a migrant in their communications with media, with sources all broadly identifying anybody who has changed their country of residence for any reason, including EU and non-EU citizens. One think tank and one pressure group specify that they also include asylum seekers and refugees in the definition while the government source excludes people who have become British citizens in some definitions. One think tank notes that their focus tends to be on labour migration.

All sources agree that the fundamental difference between EU and non-EU migrants is the rights afforded to them. One pressure group source highlights the relative poverty of some EU migrants who have free movement – which is unlike the relationship we have with other countries – and the scale of recent EU migration. The government source highlights the more transient nature of EU migrants as a result of free movement and the higher skill levels of non-EU migrants. One think tank notes that free movement gives the state less control over EU migrants.

*“The very obvious difference is that EU migrants have freedom of movement, and non-EU migrants don’t... That then affects other aspects of those two groups, so... EU migrants will rarely bother to get British citizenship where the majority of non-EU migrants who come here probably do... EU migrants will tend to be younger; quite often there’s a large proportion that are coming here to get a bit of work experience but they’re more temporary ... non-EU migrants are more highly skilled, and again, that’s by design because we have a restrictive immigration system.”* (UKSO03, governmental institution)

There is broad agreement among sources that language used to describe migrants should not be pejorative. Both pressure groups focus on the need to recognise migrants’ humanity.



The government source and one of the think tanks is focused on using technically correct language. Two of the think tank sources are keen to focus on simplicity and clarity, with one also keen to ensure their language is persuasive.

*“My job is being persuasive, so the persuasiveness of the language is important... Talking in a language that people understand... so I would use the language that would be accurate in terms of what people would understand... Clarity is important – I don’t think that ‘mobile EU citizens’ would be understood by an ordinary member of the public.”* (UKSO04, think tank)

There is a very mixed set of responses to the question of what angles, perspectives and contexts the sources use when communicating with the media about EU migrants. Two sources – one from a pressure group and one from a think tank – are focused on EU migrants’ rights after Brexit. One pressure group is focused on the economic impact of large groups arriving in particular areas. One think tank source is focused on positive messages about both leave and remain voters’ support for specific types of continued EU migration, one think tank source is fundamentally Eurosceptic, and the third think tank source is focused on the needs of the UK labour market, and the role of the EU in filling gaps. The government source did not express a view.

The angles, perspectives and contexts the sources use when communicating with the media about non-EU migrants (who are not refugees or asylum seekers) are also mixed. Three of the sources (government and two think tanks) identified study migration and skilled workers as key issues. One pressure group identified the negative consequences of UK government policy and family migration issues, while the other pressure group identified the negative consequences of rapid inflows of migrants and illegal immigration – highlighting the need for controlled flows. This position was also shared by one of the think tanks.

*“A lot of people end up feeling aggrieved, rightly or wrongly, because there’s a perception that nobody’s in charge, or ‘they’re giving my job away’... these are all things that undermine that sense of social solidarity, or that sense of people being in it together.”* (UKSO05, think tank)

In considering the kind of angles, perspectives and contexts they might use when communicating with the media about refugees or asylum seekers, there was agreement by all the sources interviewed that asylum policies are morally right, but disagreement on implemen-



tation. One pressure group is focussed on the harmful nature of policies on individuals, while the other pressure group is concerned about abuse of the system undermining support for it. This concern about abuse is also present in the government source's answers. Among think tanks, one is focussed on telling stories of successful integration, one is pushing for a more generous offer, one is not focussed on the issue at all.

*"...current asylum policies are harmful – whether it be detention or refusals, or access to legal advice, and we would, of course, need to describe it in terms of international law, protection and our duties and responsibilities."* (UKSO01, pressure group)

*"We're often highlighting stories of successful integration... [people] who have gone on to make a contribution to Britain... partly because we know that public support for refugee protection is quite fragile, and that stories of contributors makes a difference... we often focus on positive stories about Britain... [as] a way of reinforcing the norm that Britain is positive about refugee protection."* (UKSO04, think tank)

## 6. Conclusions

While the sources interviewed came from a range of organisations, with differing perspectives on migration, the UK's membership of the EU and other political issues, certain commonalities were present. Most identify that their motivation is a hope that Britain becomes the best country it can be. The organisations' different conceptions of how Britain should be, drove their interventions with the media. Both of the organisations that represent positions in favour of more restrictive immigration policies note that they are not entirely opposed to migration, but wish to protect certain values and characteristics of the nation, which they see as under threat from high levels of migration.

The government source identifies a broad belief in ensuring that the UK's migration system is well managed with controlled flows and rules being adhered to. Two of the three organisations that represent broadly 'pro-migrant' perspectives identify a need for a more thoughtful and open-minded debate about migration to ensure the UK remains the best country it can be. The final pro-migrant advocate is driven more by a desire to fight inequality than to shape Britain, particularly.

The sources interviewed, like the journalists, see EU and non-EU migrants as essentially the same. All sources agree that the difference between migrants from the EU and from outside





the EU is fundamentally the rights afforded to them. The sources all agree that newspapers are the key media source in the UK media debate on migration – with most singling out tabloid/mid-market papers in particular as having significant impact.

This may be an important point. Nearly all professionals working to affect migration policy in the UK, or those working directly on migration policy in government, recognise the impact of the UK's newspapers on the overall shape of the debate. These media outlets are not governed by regulations – like those of the broadcast media – that demand political neutrality, and are often highly autocratic environments, in which the power of particular individuals – notably editors and proprietors – is dominant. This, then, raises the question of the extent to which these individuals may have influence over policy outcomes.



## Conclusions for the EU-15 country cluster

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As demonstrated throughout this report, journalists are affected by a number of institutional, practical, technical and commercial factors in their day-to-day work. These differ from country to country and depend on the political and economic environments. To ignore these factors – or, indeed the role of key sources including government, NGO, think tanks, commercial or other actors – in considering how and why certain frames become prevalent in media debates around migration seems remiss at best.

### *Journalism*

In all Western European, “old” EU Member States, journalists tend to have an idealistic view of their own profession. They often describe themselves as driven by an educational impetus, high ethical standards, and, in several countries, even the intention to effect change in their respective societies. At the same time, they almost all perceive a decline in the public’s trust in their work and the reputation of the news sector as a whole.

However, there are various notable outliers in the EU-15 country cluster. Looking at the economic viability of journalism first, the cluster of Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom generally offer good working conditions and stable employment prospects – with the exception of the UK’s tabloids, which are described as high-pressure, aggressive working environments. In Italy and Spain, in contrast, the news ecosystem appears to be fuelled primarily by journalists’ passion for their jobs and readiness to make sacrifices, rather than by dependable finances and a sustainable public demand for news.

This goes along with a range of assessments of external influence on journalists. While the Germans and Swedes acknowledge that the political and business spheres exert some indirect influence both on individual journalists, chief editors, and news outlets, they generally assert their editorial autonomy. The UK takes a middle position; journalists claim a high level of personal autonomy, but defer to the political leaning of the outlets, their editors-in-chief, or their proprietors – in particular in the tabloid sector. In Italy, there is a palpable wariness of the built-in partisanship of relevant outlets, based on political or business affiliations, whereas the Spanish journalists feel that the news are directly and expressly manipulated by government and corporations.



Where migration is concerned, Italian journalists appear to identify strongly with migrants as “underdogs”, no matter the framework conditions and circumstances. The Swedes, in contrast, exhibit a particularly lofty perspective on the topic, regarding migration first and foremost as a political matter. In a similar vein, only much more pronounced, the UK media appear to cover migration in a politicised way – essentially, any coverage is assumed to take sides to begin with.

In all countries apart from the UK, we observed – if at varying degrees – among journalists a three-tiered classification of migration:

- 1) Skilled worker mobility, whether within the EU or from third countries, as well as mobility of sought-after workers;
- 2) Migration driven by the quest for better individual living conditions, no matter if from developing countries, North Africa, or from EU Member States such as Bulgaria and in particular Romania (commonly referred to as “poverty migration”);
- 3) Refugees from countries with war and violent civic unrest, in particular Syria, and asylum-seekers whose liberty and life is in danger because of ethnic, religious, or other discrimination. This is the only group where all subjects assume third-country origins.

This goes along with a differential in media attention. The first group receives hardly any coverage at all, even where there are large constituencies present, while the other two groups dominate media reporting and journalists’ perception of news value and relevance. Which of the latter prevails seems to depend on the country’s most direct concerns: Refugees still figure high on the German agenda, whereas cross-Mediterranean migration is a key issue for Italy and Spain. Sweden has currently developed a specific interest in so-called “poverty migration” and its relation to crime rates and public nuisances. Emigration from either of the North/Western European countries was never mentioned at all.

While the application of the above classification does not necessarily indicate whether the respective coverage is sympathetic, impartial, or adversarial, it still permits the conclusion that journalists’ primary consideration tends to be if and how migrants stick out as different and/or a problem in their societies. Motivations, background, and rights-based perspectives



come second, if at all. That said, refugees tend to be regarded with more sympathy than those defined as “poverty migrants”; the Spanish journalists pointed out that they had a strong interest in reporting about the situation in the refugees’ countries of origin.

The major outlier is, as previously noted, the United Kingdom. Broadly speaking, UK journalists exhibited a tendency to measure any and all migrants by the same yardstick: How do they affect the country’s labour market, welfare system, and cultural identity? The subtext of this definition is, however, that worker mobility from other EU Member States, primarily from the EU-10, constitutes the main focus. Refugees and other TCN come in second, but also frequently framed around the question of the legitimacy of their claims. In the UK, differentiation from the rest of the European Union in general appears to be a higher-order motive of many journalists than from perceived “otherness”.

Across the board, our findings raise questions about the interrelation of journalism and the public agenda. The vast majority of journalists claim to have educational and ethical intentions, yet at the same time they often appear to be driven by topics and controversies raised by other social actors – namely politicians, but also prevalent public moods and perceptions. It remains unclear to what extent the journalists see themselves as agenda setters in their own right, or as simply reflecting and amplifying the public sphere. Once again, though, UK tabloids are a marked exception: Reporters from these organisations regularly express an expectation that they should drive public opinion, not the other way around.

#### *Sources*

The relatively small sample of sources across the target countries is divided into two factions: In Germany, Italy, and Spain, the sources expressed an educational and regulatory mission, trying to temper society’s and the media’s attitude towards all categories of migrants, and to mitigate issues arising from migration. They frequently mentioned that the human angle should be in focus, no matter the background or legal situation of the individual migrant. Interestingly, public sector sources in Italy and Spain mentioned that they generally had as public servants an unfavourable image, but that the recent boom of the migration topic lent them a renewed professional purpose and at the same time raised their profile as subject-matter experts and actors in the area of migration.



In Sweden and the UK, on the other hand, the sources sampled saw themselves as political actors on either side of the spectrum: Pro-migrant and pro-integration, or the opposite. In the United Kingdom, some sources expressly mentioned that their interest was to preserve the values and identity of the indigenous population.

With respect to migration, the German sources clearly differentiated between refugees, respectively asylum-seekers, and other migrants, while the Spanish, Italian, and UK respondents tended to lump together all categories of migrants. In Sweden, the borderline ran rather between refugees and poverty migrants. Outside the UK, though, there was a prevalent view that intra-EU mobility was hardly an issue at all, once again with the exception of migrants from poorer countries, particularly Bulgaria and Romania.



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# REMINDER

ROLE OF EUROPEAN MOBILITY AND ITS IMPACTS  
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