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Series Historia et Sociologia, 30, 2020, 4





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A PARADIGM SHIFT FRAMED BY A CRISIS: RECENT DEBATES ON IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN SIX EU COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The article examines recent public debates on migration and integration in Austria, Denmark, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, and the UK. Shifts in public opinion relate to the 2015 mass migration termed as a crisis, while recent years have seen a substantial move of immigration policy and public debates from proclamations of democratic values towards a recently much harsher approach to immigration and integration. We argue that a gap exists between public opinion, policies, and discourses formulated at the EU and national levels. This gap might indicate that it is not the public opinion which influences public policies but rather the established legal and policy “crisis” frameworks, coupled with media landscapes that considerably affect the majority’s perception of immigrants’ rights and their prospects for integration.

Keywords: integration, crisis, reception communities, media representations, public opinion and attitudes

UN CAMBIAMENTO DI PARADIGMA NEL CONTESTO DELLA CRISI: RECENTI DIBATTITI SULL’IMMIGRAZIONE E L’INTEGRAZIONE IN SEI PAESI DELL’UE

SINTESI

L’articolo esamina i recenti dibattiti pubblici sull’immigrazione e integrazione in Austria, Danimarca, Polonia, Slovenia, Spagna e nel Regno Unito. I cambiamenti nell’opinione pubblica si ricollegano alla migrazione di massa del 2015 designata con il termine “crisi”, mentre negli ultimi anni si è assistito a un importante spostamento nelle politiche di immigrazione e nei dibattiti pubblici dalla proclamazione di valori democratici a un approccio all’immigrazione e all’integrazione divenuto recentemente molto più severo. Sosteniamo che esista un divario tra l’opinione pubblica, le politiche e i discorsi formulati a livello comunitario e quello nazionale. Questo divario potrebbe indicare che non è l’opinione pubblica quella che esercita un’influenza sulle politiche pubbliche, ma piuttosto che sono le strutture giuridiche e politiche “di crisi” istituite, insieme al panorama mediatico, a incidere profondamente sulla percezione dei diritti degli immigrati e delle loro prospettive di integrazione da parte della maggioranza.

Parole chiave: integrazione, crisi, comunità di accoglienza, rappresentazioni dei media, opinione pubblica e atteggiamenti

INTRODUCTION¹

Research and EU policies underline that integration practices and inclusion of immigrants are to be understood as a bidirectional process (Ager & Strang, 2008; Korteweg, 2017). Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016, 14) define integration plainly as “the process of becoming an accepted part of society”, but recent reconceptualisations highlight that integration is actually “an issue of relational inequality” (Klarenbeek, 2019, 1). While migration and integration policies notably frame the integration process, integration is not only about policies but about people’s acceptance of immigrants based on degrees of personal proximity and rates of inter-ethnic interactions. Reception communities play a significant role in the experiences of immigrant groups in a particular country and influence the potential success of integration. Moreover, supportive climate and acceptance are of particular weight for the success and wellbeing of immigrants. Countries differ in the number and structure of immigrants, laws and rules of admittance, migration, and integration policies and objectives, integration systems, etc. The “climate” towards immigrants is continually negotiated between inclusion and exclusion demands. Media, politicians’ and policy discourses in receiving countries work as a significant stakeholder in this negotiation while framing the public opinion and people’s attitudes towards immigration. Moreover, the 2015 “refugee crisis” and the 2016 Brexit referendum have re-opened several questions concerning migration policies, including the question of free movement of people in the European Union (Goodfellow, 2019; Fekete, 2018a).

While in 2016, almost 60 per cent of Europeans supported inter-European migration, much smaller percentage had a positive attitude towards non-EU migration (Boomgarden et al., 2018; see Eurobarometer, 2016). As such attitude seems to become a trend, this article is addressing topical shifts in the debates about immigration and integration, in attitudes towards immigrants and refugees and their representations in the six reception communities across the European Union: Austria, Denmark, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, and the UK. These countries had different but somehow typical immigration histories and developments in integration policies and can be considered representative in the view of their diverse sizes and compositions of the popu-

lation, the EU membership period (old, new, exit), and geographical positioning (North, South, West, East) regarding the Schengen border.

The findings presented here are based on data on immigrant integration collected in these countries and on the followed analyses of trends in integration policies and public and media attitudes towards immigration.² The main foci were public debates between 2014 and 2019. In the research on the reception communities, we focus on three sets of data: first, statistics on immigration and integration; second, an overview of public policies; and third, an overview of political and media discourses and public opinion polls about immigration and integration. This article is aggregating the findings from the third point where the research questions concern the following: the central debates on migration, changes in public attitudes towards migration, politicians’ attitudes towards migration, the main ways of representations of migrants and refugees in the mainstream and social media, the stereotypes and prejudices that occurred, the main positive representations of migrants and refugees and the categories used in these representations.

This article applies descriptive and comparative cross-country perspective to demonstrate the main common trends, differences and particularly shifts in these processes across the countries. The findings are presented in the light of the recent literature on political and media discourse, and public opinion polls on integration in the EU and on the national levels. We first discuss the main frameworks in the newer public debates of these six EU Member States, such as securitisation and crisis and the rise of anti-immigration. Then we signify the importance of the refugee crisis and Brexit, which opened the space for populist and conservative political parties and governments to bluntly promote anti-immigrant attitudes. Lessons from trends in public opinion polls are drawn in the third section and from the media representations in the fourth. The last section is summarising insights about some dominant and non-dominant discourses and categories used in the debates.

SECURITISATION AND CRISIS AS MAIN FRAMEWORKS IN THE RISE OF ANTI-IMMIGRATION

The discourse of security and the discourse of crisis are identified as two main frameworks of

1 The research for this article was conducted with the financial support of the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 822664 (MiCREATE: Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe), and by the Slovenian Research Agency under grant agreement No. P5-0413 (Equality and Human Rights in Times of Global Governance) and grant agreement No. J5-1749 (The Break in Tradition. Hannah Arendt and Conceptual change).

2 The article is drawing on six national reports and a comparative research report produced within the MiCREATE project. For more, see <http://www.micreate.eu/>.

public debates about immigration in Europe (Bigo, 2002; Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002; Huysmans, 2000; Ibrahim, 2005; Kluknavská, Bernhard & Boomgard, 2019; Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou & Wodak, 2018; Rheindorf & Wodak, 2018). As put by R. Koselleck, the essence of crisis is a necessity to take the decision which is not yet clear and is supposed to end the critical situation. Moreover, the main framework of crisis is the general insecurity before taking the right steps, followed by the rise of expectations towards ending it (Koselleck, 1973, 105). Both the crisis and security discourse are, therefore, intrinsically connected. This is probably the reason why they can be ideologically charged and associated in an attempt to justify the seeming urgency and exceptional measures (Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou & Wodak, 2018). Securitisation of migration is documented as an ongoing trend since the 1990s.³ The crisis framework was added to this either as part of the rhetoric of the austerity measures or later during and after the so-called long summer of migration in 2015. For the trend towards securitisation (Huysmans, 2000), the structural development of the EU integration which is increasingly becoming a security project, is as vital as the abolishment of internal border control and the subsequent categorical differentiation between EU and non-EU (or Western and non-Western) citizens. Such development has gradually framed immigration as a critical problem in public and political debates, as “*a danger to the public order, cultural identity, and domestic and labour market stability*” (Huysmans, 2000, 752). This trend had various dynamics in different EU Member States. Simultaneously, a specific dialectics transpired between a) restrictive policies on immigration control and migration management, and b) the primary debates and public discourse on migration, which was connected with the use of migration issue as an electoral weapon.

Austria was among the “trendsetters” in shaping migration as a security issue with the emergence of the Free Austrian Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* – FPÖ) and its late notorious leader Jörg Haider who promoted the slogan “Austria first” already in 1992. The increased number of foreign pupils with non-German as a first speaking language and different religion (especially Islam) in schools was regarded as the emergence of “a parallel society” and a threat to national values.

The discursive shift that took place moved the integration debate from the social and labour policy field to the realm of national security and public order (Dursun et al., 2019, 4). The emphasis was on the protection of the native population against the security threats posed by immigration. The rise of international asylum applications after 2015 was additionally portrayed as “crisis” and paved the way for symbolic politics in both political campaigning and policymaking.⁴ State responsibility for the integration of newcomers was replaced with the individual duty of migrants to pursue the integration goals successfully (Dursun et al., 2019, 8). The assumption about immigrant’s “*unwillingness to integrate*” (Wodak, 2015), which was the invention of the right-wing populism, finally became a normalised base for mainstream public policies and “migration crisis” frame turned into “integration crisis” (Dursun et al., 2019, 12). Other countries endured similar changes of previously liberal immigration regimes regulated by the social and labour policies. Denmark, a country with the most liberal asylum system in Europe (Jacobsen et al., 2019, 16), changed its policies in the 1990s when a populist right-wing Progress Party and later the Danish People’s Party introduced harsher tones into the debate on migration. In 1999, the Danish integration strategy too assigned the responsibility for integration to the individual immigrants who were supposed to adapt to the fundamental Danish values (Mouritsen & Olsen, 2013, cited in Jacobsen et al., 2019). Already from 2001 onward, the Danish election was dominated by the theme of immigration and the existing naturalisation regime soon departed from the common Scandinavian model to become highly restrictive (Jacobsen et al., 2019).

In Poland, where the main population lacks daily engagement with foreigners as it is the country with the lowest statistically registered number of immigrants among the discussed reception communities, the level of dislike of foreigners has risen significantly already between 1990 and 1999 (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019, 34). While discrimination and xenophobia first played at the symbolic level, they soon evolved to action as hate speech and violence. In 2016, hate crime occurrence in Poland was four times higher than a year before (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019, 40). Both public media and government used narratives

3 By securitisation we refer to amplified application of military-style rhetoric and resources, as well as factual rise in border surveillance and policing of migration. Securitisation has been defined as a process of social construction that pushes an area of regular politics into an area of security by resorting to a rhetoric of discursive emergence, threat and danger aimed at justifying the adoption of extraordinary measures (Waever et al., 1993).

4 Symbolic politics refers to processes of creating mutually excluding and hostile group narratives that draw on (national, ethnic, cultural, etc.) symbols as alleged markers of group membership and difference. Habitually, symbolic politics means a publicly displayed deception that detracts from actual political reality.

of historic victimhood of the Polish people—not only in relation to Germany and Russia but also the EU—increasingly perceived as a source of evil (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019). Conspiracy theories were used to blame the political agents who did not share a belief that a secret plan exists in the EU to open the borders and let hundreds of thousands of Muslims enter Poland. Migrants' contagious diseases were told to endanger the health of the native population (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019, 41). A local election campaign too was built on conspiracy theories claiming that opposition politicians were “welcoming” dangerous immigrants, which was in stark contrast with the factual numbers and situation of immigrants in Poland. Such symbolic politics and the conflict with the EU concerning asylum seekers quotas additionally increased Euroscepticism and strengthened the demands for the return of the competences to the nation-state (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019, 42).

In Slovenia, immigration had turned into one of the most salient topics during the 2015 “refugee crisis” when the Western Balkans migration route was redirected to Slovenia due to Hungarian border closing and erecting a razor-wired fence (Žagar et al., 2019). Slovenia thus became the main gateway to the EU. While the EU institutions remained passive, most of the work was done at the national levels. Thus Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria soon followed the Hungarian example (see Kogovšek Šalamon, 2017). Slovenia increased border controls and even considered introducing the state of emergency due to an alleged threat to national security. Framed almost exclusively as a security issue and crisis, migration became something that was dealt with by the police and law enforcement, and the restriction of migration and curbing of asylum applications became the key political task. The main framings in the debate were anti-immigrant, which—going to the extreme—sounded as “*Let's stop the migrants and Islam*” (Zavratnik et al., 2017, 858).

In Spain, however, the ideas of social cohesion, non-discrimination, and equality prevailed longer than in other countries (Estalayo et al., 2019, 76). Across the political spectrum, there was an assumption that the irreversible migratory processes will lead to a multicultural prospect representing a historic opportunity and a challenge for the future. It was only after the economic crisis that the primary tones started stressing security, state's interests and national citizenship (Estalayo et al., 2019). Debates on migration have varied considerably across decentralised administrative autonomous communities, between multi- and monocultural frame. Integration debate has community nuances and can be in

tension with nationalist tones (Estalayo et al., 2019, 80). Anti-immigration became an issue in the Spanish electoral debate only in the 2019 elections (Estalayo et al., 2019, 78). Increased arrivals of immigrants through Spain's southern border were followed by polarisation and openly populist voices. Moreover, far-right political party (VOX) entered the Congress for the first time after the fall of the dictatorship with over ten per cent of votes. The party advocates for “*the expulsion of all illegal immigrants, as well as those who have committed crimes, prioritising the interests of Spanish citizens over migrants, in addition to building another wall at the borders of Ceuta and Melilla*” (Fundación porCausa, 2019, 40, cited in Estalayo et al., 2019). It rejects multiculturalism and defends Spanish nationalist culture and the Catholic religious framework. It builds on Islamophobia, proposes the closure of mosques and categorising of migrants according to cultural and linguistic proximity (Estalayo et al., 2019).

THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE BREXIT: A NEW SPACE FOR POPULIST PARTIES

The 2015 “refugee crisis” is a significant cut-off point in the radicalisation of the anti-immigrant discourse for some of the discussed countries (especially Slovenia and Austria), but not for the others, where the EU policies and other nationally relevant events and developments played a much more significant role. For the UK, for instance, Brexit signifies a highly relevant point of departure. For Poland, the 2015 election which brought to power new populist and the conservative government of the Law and Justice were more important than the “refugee crisis”. The government not only directly promoted anti-immigrant discourse but also associated the image of “proper Poles” with anti-communism, cultural identity, ethnicity, and conservative Catholicism. This additionally fuelled anti-immigrant sentiment coupled with anti-Semitism, homophobic and racist dimensions. Foreigners categorised as Muslims, immigrants, and Russians were perceived as the principal threat. The media represented immigrants as dangerous, pictured them as terrorists and as those who fail to integrate, all the while alleging Muslims to invade Europe (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019). This reflects a broader perception of Muslims, and especially Muslim immigrants as suspect citizens (Bajt, 2019). Muslims, namely, have been constructed as an “ideal enemy” (Kundnani, 2015) across Europe and the West; hence mistrust toward Muslim immigrants is common and intended to “*inferiorise and marginalise*” them (Perocco, 2018, 25).

Immigration debates in Denmark focus on “non-Western immigrants”, an official concept in Danish statistics and policies (Jacobsen et al., 2019). The dominant themes are Muslim immigrants, cultural differences, habits and religion, and the newcomers’ obligation to assimilate to the Danish culture, to learn the language, to be financially independent, i.e. employed. The advertising posters in a campaign by the Social Democratic Party promoted the slogan “*If you come to Denmark, you must work*” (Jacobsen et al., 2019, 17). After the 2015 election, the new minority government launched “symbolic politics” while reducing social benefits and restricting the issuing of residence permits and family reunions for asylum seekers. Simultaneously, notorious measures such as confiscation of valuables from asylum seekers or banning the hijab were introduced (Jacobsen et al., 2019, 18). In 2018, the government launched the initiative “*One Denmark without parallel societies*” (carried on by social-democratic government elected in 2019), which brought integration to the core of the migration debate. While new restrictive measures targeting “non-Western” (usually Muslim) inhabitants were planned and introduced, including the demand to issue only temporary residence permits to foreigners, some other debates started to pay attention to discrimination and problematic rhetoric as well (Jacobsen et al., 2019, 19). In 2019, the anti-immigration actors in Denmark blatantly announced a “paradigm shift” in the approach to asylum and integration:

You have to get used to the fact that when you come to Denmark, you are here temporarily, and when you have had temporary shelter, you will go back again [...] This means that we are turning around the whole policy in this area—from today being about integration, to being about repatriation (Danish People’s Party Member of Parliament, Jacobsen et al., 2019).

The crisis framework, therefore, soon provided space for populist and conservative political parties and governments to openly promote anti-immigrant discourse and employ symbolic politics as direct electoral propaganda. In the UK, this fuelled Euroscepticism and was the main driver of the whole Brexit debate and campaign. Notably in 2015 and 2016 (general election and the referendum on the EU membership), the immigration issue shifted from the margins to the centre of the debate on Britain’s membership in the EU and framed most of the arguments for leaving the EU (Popan et al., 2019, 95). The media played an

important role here, while increasingly covering migration topic since 2010 when the Conservative-led coalition government started introducing measures to reduce net migration (Popan et al., 2019, 94). The debates preceding the 2014 EU elections intensified negative tones in the media, and anti-immigrant rhetoric fostered a general climate of hostility, especially against the so-called East-Europeans (e.g. Poles, Romanians). Immigrants—though coming from the fellow EU Countries—were perceived as those who only search for benefits when entering the labour market in the UK territory. In the given framework, the Conservative campaign of reducing immigration in the post-Brexit situation “*to tens of thousands*”, has shown more significant mobilisation potential than the oppositional approaches (Migration Observatory, 2017, 4–5).

Many current debates in the six countries under review are circling the economic aspects of migration or the benefits immigrants allegedly receive in the reception countries. The criteria of deservingness are assessing whether immigrants contribute to the national economy, whether they represent a threat to the local population and whether they follow gender and sexual norms in the host society (Holzberg et al., 2018). In the UK, despite the positive view on the economic contribution of migration, debates surrounding immigration are still focusing on economic aspects (Popan et al., 2019, 91). Immigrants can, accordingly, be used in the discussions as both those who bring economic benefits or represent an economic threat to the host society (Popan et al., 2019, see also Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019, 43). In all six countries, for instance, there were attempts at the criminalisation of organisations that provide support to refugees (Fekete, 20018b; Jalušič, 2019).

Also, in all the examined countries, counter-movements and alternatives to the restrictive policies and hateful debates emerged. In Denmark, Austria, and Slovenia, for example, volunteers organised to welcome refugees, mostly from September 2015 onward. The movements grew via social media and mobilised many individuals. In Denmark, the *Venligboerne* (friendly neighbours) movement reached 150,000 people in 2019 and became an important voice in the debates. In Poland, especially in local communities, where the immigrants reside, activists and initiatives emerged providing shelter from the national propaganda and hatred that exists both in the governmental institutions and the media (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019). In Slovenia too, other framings, though minor, less visible and heard, such as Refugees Welcome surfaced (Zavratnik et al., 2017, 858). Refugees Welcome, a transnational initiative, started offering

legal advice, assistance and information to asylum seekers, especially along the Western Balkans migratory route.

Symbolic politics, pressure on immigrants and asylum seekers, a shift of responsibility for integration from the reception community to the newcomers, hatred and exclusionary speech, erecting razor-wire fences and closure of borders have been, therefore, the main tones in the public debates in the last five years. This was coupled with a substantial paradigm shift in politics and policymaking. Symbolic politics was used as discursive means to win elections (e.g. nationalist and populist parties such as Law and Justice Party in Poland, Progress Party and People's Party in Denmark or the Brexit campaign in the UK) and became a real material force which transformed the traditional parties' attitudes and policies. In all the countries, the migration policy and debates in the last decades, and especially in the earlier five years, have moved substantially from the earlier proclamation of liberal and democratic values, pursuing equal rights of refugees and immigrants, towards a much harsher approach to immigration. Migrant women and children and their specific needs are frequently absent and utterly marginalised in these debates, as are all the nuances on nationality, class, education and so on. This is because immigrants are portrayed as a homogenous group, especially when vilified in populist rhetoric. While official discourses still draw on liberal values, these build much more on the nationalist and racist ideology; a framework that puts pressure on newcomers to fulfil demands and obligations that are often impossible to meet.

PUBLIC OPINION ON IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

The attitudes towards immigrants are influenced by several dimensions, such as historical and social circumstances and depend on demographic, economic, and cultural factors. They also reflect more longitudinal values, moral foundations, interiorised norms and paths of socialisation of individuals, ideologies and political orientations. Beside these complex sets of relationships, the overall climate in a particular country and the way migration is treated by public actors, the perception of immigrants is also strongly influenced by the media. This, in turn, affects the quality and content of public debate and the policy formulation process (Rolfe et al., 2016). Such complex background is probably the reason why, as newer research on public attitudes demonstrates, in terms of favourability the stance toward immigration in Europe is, in fact, stable or in recent years even

increasingly positive (Dennison & Dražanova, 2018, 5). Yet the perception of the weight of immigration is significantly different than before. The results of the 2017 European Barometer survey on attitudes to immigration and integration suggest that the perception of a positive or negative impact of immigrants on society seems to correlate with the actual share of immigrants in a country's total population and that the higher the actual share, the more positive impact, and vice versa, the lower, the more negative impact is perceived (European Commission, 2018, 10).

Notably, only 37 per cent of Europeans consider themselves to be well informed about migration and integration. Yet, despite the evidence, opinion exists that immigrants are causing the crisis and not contributing to the EU economy. This might explain the existence of a rather poor and biased public understanding of the impacts of migration in most of the examined countries. On the EU average, 61 per cent of respondents interact weekly with migrants, 57 per cent feel comfortable having any type of social relations with migrants, and 40 per cent have friends and family members who are migrants. Moreover, 54 per cent of Europeans believe that the integration of immigrants is successful. It should be highlighted that the size of the immigrant population is often distorted in the eyes of the general population. Europeans seem to greatly overestimate the number of immigrants in their countries: the proportion of immigrants is overstated by 2.3 to 1 on average in the EU, and an exaggeration of numbers exists in 19 out of 28 Member States.

Among the six studied countries, Spain has the highest percentage of respondents who feel comfortable with having social relations with immigrants (83 per cent), followed by the UK (74 per cent), Denmark and Slovenia (64 per cent), Austria (44 per cent) and Poland (41 per cent). In Denmark, Spain, the UK, and Slovenia, the proportion of those who believe that more vigorous measures should be introduced to tackle discrimination against immigrants is higher than the EU average, while the figures for Austria and Poland are below the EU average. Austria, Poland, and Slovenia stand out for the proportion of respondents who disagree with the idea of granting equal rights to immigrants in the areas of health care, education, and social security: 29 per cent of Austrians and 20 per cent of Poles and Slovenians reject this idea. In other countries, this proportion is much lower and ranges from 9 per cent (Denmark), 11 per cent (the UK) to 14 per cent in Spain.

The Eurobarometer results revealing the attitudes to integration in terms of who is responsible for integration and how the whole process is perceived

indicate that, in general, a broad agreement exists about the significance of potential integration measures to be taken by the EU, national governments, local communities, and civil society actors. Also, over half of the EU populations understand in principle that integration is a two-way process (69 per cent of Europeans). At the same time, there are still variations on the percentage of those who believe that it is rather the responsibility of individuals. While thinking that different actors play an important role in the integration of immigrants, there is a substantial majority underlining, in particular, the responsibility of immigrants themselves (93 per cent), the education institutions, the authorities at the local and regional levels and the national government—all 90 per cent (European Commission, 2018). Half of the respondents believe that governments are doing enough, and almost 40 per cent have the opposite opinion.

Significant differences exist between the countries concerning attitudes towards EU and non-EU immigration. Individuals in Spain and the UK show a high percentage of positive attitudes towards non-EU immigration, more than 50 per cent (Spain even over 60 per cent), while the polled populations of other four countries are not in favour of non-EU immigration (all between 30 and 40 per cent with the lowest share in Poland). Slovenia has the highest percentage of negative attitudes toward non-EU immigration, even though over 80 per cent of its immigration is from former Yugoslav states, now classified as third-country nationals. On the other hand, the UK has the lowest percentage of those with positive attitudes towards EU immigration, followed by Slovenia and Austria (65 and 68 per cent, respectively), while Spain, Poland, and Denmark have over 70 per cent of those with positive attitudes towards the EU immigration. Overall, Spain has the highest degree of positive attitudes both to EU and non-EU immigration. The reasons for such distribution are probably multifaceted. Still, they might also indicate how the recent public debates and media discourses reflect the attitudes towards immigration, for example in the UK with the significant degree of negative attitudes towards the EU and positive towards non-EU immigration.

Despite evidence of the positive contribution of immigration to the national economies, most of the public do not hold that view. Indicative is the UK where immigrants are net fiscal contributors to the economy. Yet around 40 per cent of the British public between 2006–2011 had felt immigration is generally bad for the economy. The public perception of the relationship between immigrants and welfare is determined by the belief that immigrants receive more than they contribute and are

privileged when receiving social benefits (Duffy & Frere-Smith, 2014). Similarly, in other countries, especially after 2015, a trend emerged to see immigrants more and more in light of the threat to the national economy and welfare.

Alongside a change in political debates towards widespread anti-immigrant attitudes and xenophobic tendencies, also public opinion polls reveal a shift, yet here the modification is diversified. Significant discrepancies exist between acceptances of different nations or immigrants from different regions. Notable differences exist in how immigrants are perceived based on their country of origin or whether they are EU or non-EU nationals. In the UK, at the preferred end of the scale are the immigrants who are white, English-speaking, Europeans and from Christian countries (such as France, Australia, and Poland) while at the least favoured end are non-whites, non-Europeans and from Muslim countries (such as Pakistan, Nigeria but also Romania) (Blinder & Richards, 2018). Religion too plays a vital role in how immigrants are perceived by the public. The acceptance or non-acceptance is also associated with the representations of different groups of migrants in the media.

MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

A burgeoning body of research exists on media representations of migration (e.g. Maneri, 2011; d'Haenens et al., 2019). In the last five years, the already existing representations of immigrants, those that occurred in the public debates and the media, have been strengthened in terms of stereotypes, while depictions of immigrants started to be more negative and aggressive than ever before, especially in online social media (Titley, 2019). A correlation between media coverage of immigration and political agenda is observed in all the countries also in our study. Media influence the perception of migration by the public and contribute to the shaping of political agenda in the EU Member States (Dennison & Dražanova, 2018, 8; Jacobsen et al., 2019, 24f; Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019, 34, 47; Žagar et al., 2019; Vogrinc & Smrdelj, 2020; Estalayo et al., 2019, 79).

Research in Austria confirms that the media coverage representing migration as threatening for the host community influences audiences' political attitudes (Eberl et al., 2018, 217), particularly if these threats are organised around economy (migrants as an economic burden), culture (often connected with issues of democracy and gender equality) and security (potential terrorists). Immigrants often appear as "lazy", and not as real

refugees and asylum seekers, but those who tend to misuse welfare regimes in the Western countries and only search for benefits (Rheindorf & Wodak, 2018, 18; Jacobsen et al., 2019; Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019; Jalušič et al., 2019; Popan et al., 2019). This representation is, especially after the 2015 “crisis”, gaining the European-wide support in the public debates and the media. In the UK, in the context of the opening of the labour market, Hungarians, Bulgarians and Romanians, in particular, have been subject to the most negative stereotypes, even racism (cf. Fox et al., 2012).

Discourses on migration are often expressed as concerns and criticism of immigrants which widely entail stereotypes. Both tabloid and mainstream media contribute to portraying immigrants as a threat by reporting on their deviant behaviour, or (alleged) acts against the law, which connects them to criminality and reinforces negative stereotypes. Immigrants are rarely presented as those who bring economic benefit but are rather depicted as a menace. Homogenised cultural stereotypes about individual nations or religions prevail. Especially Muslim immigrants are constructed as potential terrorists, a security risk—an image legitimised with reference to terrorist attacks in European metropolises in the last decade. They are perceived as intruders and thus unwelcomed. Culturally different (male) migrants are perceived as gradually “infiltrating” the Western societies and are believed to ruin democracy and gender equality with their patriarchal cultural habits. The Danish political and media landscape encompasses a widespread focus on “non-Western” immigrants and their descendants, often with an emphasis on Muslims. In Spain, according to the analysis of the Maghrebi representations in the newspapers, this group, which has a majority presence in the country, is often connected with the topics of delinquency and conflict (Estelayo et al., 2019). In Poland, public hate speech, primarily oriented at sexual minorities and Jews, now also increasingly affects Muslims, and racism is often connected with Islamophobia and aimed at people of Asian or Arabic origin (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019).

Stereotypes exist in educational practices, which originate in state policies and legal definitions. When teachers talk about migrant children and children with the migrant background they use concepts such as “foreign children”, “bilingual children”, “children with different background”, or “Muslim children”. The category of immigrant children is often related to discourses of deficit and low expectations. Hence, in their reporting, media is usually mirroring the already existing classifications and hierarchies. In Slovenia, after 2015, apparent differences came to the fore between

en refugees and economic migrants. The “illegal” migrants were framed as those who definitely do not deserve integration since they had broken laws to reach a particular territory. They were perceived as the most significant disturbance to the security of the state and its peace (Jalušič et al., 2019). Yet media representations of immigrants most likely do not relate so much to the individuals or groups in question but are instrumentalised by those in power. In Poland, the created fear against immigrants is used by the government for re-election. Voters are warned that the eventual winning of oppositional parties would lead to Islamisation of the country, importing terrorism, destruction of Polish families, homosexual marriages and adoption of children by gays and lesbians (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019, 46). There is a political interest in constructing the immigrant as a problem and not as an equal human being or as a subject contributing to society.

The refugee crisis, national elections and the Brexit have been, therefore, widely exploited by the media, politicians and governments. On the one hand, the migration topic has become a leitmotif and useful scandal to activate sentiments and mobilise people. On the other hand, the immigrants and ethnic minorities are not given a voice and suffer considerable statistical underrepresentation in the news. In Slovenian media, mainly politicians speak and share opinions and strategies, whereas the immigrants’ and refugees’ stories and arguments are mostly deemed irrelevant and disregarded (Jalušič et al., 2019). In Spain as well, despite being the protagonists of the news, immigrants’ voices as a source in the journalistic story are marginalised. When immigrants appear in the media coverage, they much more often play roles in stories on crime and terrorism (cf. Bajt, 2019; Maneri, 2011). As Dursun et al. (2019, 11) conclude, the “*exposure to media coverage influences voting behaviour and assumes a link between the underrepresentation as well as bad representations of migrants in media coverage and the political success of right-wing parties*”.

The emerging negative stereotypes were strengthened by representations of immigration in the state of panic that occurred in the time of migration “crisis” in 2015. Metaphors of natural disaster or war were used when describing people on the move: in Slovenia, people were presented as “flood”, “wave”, “stream”, “river”, “invasion”, “swarm”, “tsunami”—all implying something threatening, unstoppable, impossible to control and as something that we need to protect ourselves from (Jalušič et al., 2019). In the Spanish media, as well, there was a trend to represent immigration by natural metaphors such as birds alluding to

movements, trees alluding to roots and uprooting, or as “currents”, “torrents”, “avalanches”, and to associate immigration with military vocabulary: “battle”, “crisis”, “exploitation”, “war”, “hostility”, “invasion”, “conquest” and so on (Estalayo et al., 2019). In the UK, the language used in the media has portrayed migrants as a “threat” or used “villain” frames (Popan et al., 2019). Romanians were often framed by crime and anti-social behaviour (“gang”, “criminal”, “beggar”, “thief”, “squatter”).

Representations of migration and immigrants in social media are similar to the traditional ones. Yet social media tend to be even more negative and aggressive towards immigrants. Fake news is frequent. Stereotypes and prejudices are flourishing. They can be “hardcore” and are often exploited for mobilisation. In Poland, for example, Arabs are portrayed as brutal killers or zoophiles (“sheepfuckers” or “goatfuckers”), “paedophiles” or “cowards” who use women and children as shields (Bulandra & Kościółek, 2019, 46). The British online space, too, is more vicious than the tabloid media, making effective use of dehumanising metaphors (Popan et al., 2019, 97). Depictions of immigrants as “parasites”, “leeches” or “bloodsuckers” became common (Musolf, 2015). The press overwhelmingly framed the migrant issue as a problem and as a “crisis of borders” (Popan et al., 2019, 96). In Spain, immigration in the Mediterranean is similarly framed by the European Union’s logic of the externalisation of borders and irregular migration status. Migrant collectives are most often portrayed as passive agents, “as victims of the mafias or as objects of assistance [...] and as actors who make use of violence to achieve their purpose” (Fajardo-Fernández & Soriano-Miras, 2016, 142, cited in Estalayo et al., 2019).

Other voices and differentiated reporting exist in the media as well, where particularly migrant children may be portrayed amicably and their plight used in “personal angle” stories, especially when refugees are in question. Yet there is an absence of pro-immigration discourse, meaning a discourse which would consider migration as a usual human practice that is beneficial for the reception communities. In the political discourse, immigrants are sometimes represented as filling in the shortages of working force at the labour market and, for example, as real estate buyers—in cases of migrants from wealthier Western countries. Stories of achievements and positive representations of migrants are rare, and they are often connected with sports, NGO activities, and social activism. On some occasions, migrants are portrayed in a way to invoke compassion, emphasising the existence of vulnerable groups among migrants,

such as families or children, or the stories about violence and horrors they have faced were shared.

Notwithstanding the critical features of representations in the public and media landscape, the discursive constructions and perceptions of migration and immigrants are complex. While the media discourse is dominantly biased towards negative representations of immigrants, the public opinion surveys, as already discussed above, do not paint a monotonous picture. The issue of migration is used to set off mobilisation in certain circumstances, and it is becoming increasingly divisive. The rhetoric is divided between the perspective of openness and being hostile towards immigrants. Among the six countries, Danish citizens are the most disturbed by the negative media representations. Ambivalences exist regarding the political discourse and increasingly restrictive immigration policies that are practised in some countries.

Interestingly, the surveys reveal that the population gets more positive towards a multicultural society over the years (Jacobsen et al., 2019, 21). Therefore, even though research agrees that there are negative representations of migrants as a problem, public opinion data (i.e. in Spain) indicate that they might have a lesser influence on people’s perception than one would expect, although they are not unimportant (Estalayo et al., 2019). Those spreading negative stereotypical images and dehumanising categorisations are strongly present and visible in the public space and hence also dominating in the media generating a general feeling that everybody is increasingly anti-immigrant, whereby social media have the lead. But many initiatives also exist that try to influence and change the trend of negative representations of immigrants as well as help refugees with support in the integration process.

However, alternative practices together with a differentiated picture in the public opinion polls should not mask a general trend in all the countries in policymaking, public debates and in media representations, which is straining the relations on receiving of newcomers. Media representations do matter, especially if they target “ideologically” divided publics: “[M]edia reports that frame migration in the value-and attitudinal-based terms that align highly with pre-existing dimensions of political conflict are likely to activate pro- and anti-immigration attitudes” (Dennison & Dražanova, 2018, 8). Therefore, one should not underestimate them, especially not the prevalent negative trends in social media. These influence the opinions and the way policies are formed. Research confirms that attitudes to migration vary between individuals according to the type of media they use (Dennison & Dražanova, 2018). While the media

discourse is dependent on the type of media and their ownership, at least the public media's primary role is supposed to be in supporting the existence of democratic public and polity and not producing divisions and exclusions.⁵

CONCLUSIONS

The article looked at recent public debates on migration and integration in Austria, Denmark, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, and the UK. Addressing changes in attitudes towards immigration and representations of immigrants and refugees, we examined how these reception communities influence their integration. Applying a comparative cross-country perspective in the analysis of policy and media discourse, the article pointed to a gap between public opinion and national policies. The results show shifts in the public representation of immigrants and refugees during and after the 2015 refugee crisis when the issues of migration and integration became the most debated topic in the media and political sphere. In all the researched countries, the immigration policy and public debates have moved substantially from the previous proclamation of liberal and democratic values, pursuing equal rights of refugees and immigrants, towards a much harsher approach to immigration and integration.

Effective integration of immigrants hinges on the level of acceptance among the reception community. Here, the stakes are higher, especially considering the many adverse developments in the last years. Closing the borders (e.g. in Austria, Slovenia, and Denmark), the rise of far right, policies that deter immigration and preclude migrants from submitting asylum claims, these processes are not conducive to a welcoming environment for immigrants. Recent debates open up harsh tone approaches, and public opinion tilts toward negative. Children who speak a different language than the standard of the host society are often not perceived as enriching the school environment by their bilingualism, but as a problem to be addressed in segregated language classes. In the last decade, and particularly after 2015, a discursive shift occurred as a result of the politicisation of migration and a general mediatisation of politics, which transforms the political debate and decision making into a constant media arena where attention-seeking is much more important than other issues in the political process. The debates among many political players indicate worrying

features while they misuse the theme of migration for electoral campaigns and populist triumph. The media space is teeming with many disturbing images of migration and immigrants. Central debates about the immigration in all of the studied countries were framed particularly in terms of a crisis: they pointed to migration as a crisis needing to be managed, decisions should be made quickly, while the so-called migration "flow" should be limited, contained and kept away to preserve safety, well-being and the culture of the reception state. A strong security discourse that emerged enabled immigration to be overall presented as a primary national security issue, which affected both public opinion and policy and legislation changes. Moral panic was instigated by several actors, from political and government to various media.

Portraying immigrants either as a humanitarian or security issue takes away the opportunity for migrants to express themselves as political subjects, demanding their rights (Jalušič, 2019; Vogrinc & Smrdelj, 2020). By not being able to see or hear the migrants, but constantly seeing and hearing the news about their crimes and deviant behaviour, only normalises the criminalisation of migration, hence making it easier to legitimise their persecution. In all of the six countries, evidence exists of poor and biased public understanding of migration impacts. Very significant dimension in the public opinion is the perception of the share of immigrants present in the EU (both regular and irregular), which in many countries, compared to the actual number, is greatly exaggerated. Integration is increasingly represented as preserved for those who "deserve it" and are "legitimately" present (or, in other words, have a status which does not differ from the formal EU framework). While in several sectors employers are aware of the necessity of foreign labour, the opposition to immigration—as revealed by several recent EU public opinion analyses—emerges mainly while political players talk about migration *en général*, which is typical for the populist misuse of migration issue for various political goals. Such a shift toward negative sentiment creates a climate in which anti-immigration political parties benefit and become more popular since they are addressing the migration issue. This leads to a belief that the nation-states and the whole EU are not doing enough to control the external borders. Although the majority of people does not have very strong feelings towards immigrants, they are forced to choose since they are faced with a polarised public discourse (Dennison & Dražanová, 2018, 10–11).

5 See, for instance, decisions of the European Court of Human Rights that underline the vital role of the media as public watchdog, i.e. they are key and trusted resources for officials and the public to make sense of unfolding events, as well as facilitators of public communication and discourse. As such, mainstream media are widely viewed as "an important tool for managing the increasing diversity in society and promoting inclusion" (Council of Europe, 2020).

The attitudes of reception communities also depend on the economic prosperity of a particular state. In times of economic crises, immigrants are a convenient scapegoat. Framing the whole migration phenomenon in almost exclusively economic terms is conducive to vilifying of immigrants. Yet the notion of “crisis” can also emerge regardless of real economic basis. It is employed by media and politicians in extremely trivialised discussions to present immigrants as a security threat to the economy, offering the strategy to limit and regulate migration as a solution to “economic” and other “crisis” (Zavratnik Zimic, 2011). One of the core conclusions drawn here

is that there exists a clear gap between public opinion and media and policy debates, which indicates that citizens might not be as anti-immigrant as it follows from the representations in the media and policies—of course with differences among the countries. This, in turn, re-opens the question about the importance of the influence of political party agendas, policies and discourses that are operating within the frame of “crisis” at both the EU and the nation-state levels (see Bohman, 2011) for the way how the majority of the population understands the rights and position of immigrants concerning their prospects of integration.

SPREMEMBA PARADIGME SKOZI OKVIR KRIZE: RAZPRAVE O PRISELJEVANJU IN INTEGRACIJI V ŠESTIH DRŽAVAH EU

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POVZETEK

Članek obravnava spremembe v odnosu do priseljencev in beguncev v javnih razpravah o migracijah in integraciji v šestih državah članicah Evropske unije: Avstriji, Danski, Poljski, Sloveniji, Španiji in Veliki Britaniji. Poleg primerjave specifičnih nacionalnih razmer posebno pozornost namenja javnim reprezentacijam priseljencev in beguncev v političnem in medijskem diskurzu v kontekstu »krize«. Ugotovitve kažejo na premike v javnih reprezentacijah priseljencev in beguncev med in po t. i. migracijski krizi leta 2015, ko je vprašanje migracij in integracije postalo najbolj razpravljana tema v medijih in politiki. V zadnjih desetletjih, še posebej pa v zadnjih petih letih, so se migracijske politike in javne razprave v vseh proučevanih državah bistveno odmaknile od prejšnjega razglasanja bolj liberalnih in demokratičnih vrednot, ki so si prizadevale za enake pravice beguncev in priseljencev, do precej strožjega pristopa k priseljevanju in integraciji. Članek ugotavlja, da obstaja razlika med javnim mnenjem / stališči in politikami ter diskurzi, ki so oblikovani tako na ravni EU kot na ravni nacionalnih držav. To nakazuje, da ima javno mnenje manjši vpliv na javne politike, kot se običajno domneva. Vzpostavljeni pravni in politični »krizni« okvir, skupaj z medijsko krajino, bi lahko močnejše vplival na to, kako večina prebivalstva razume pravice in položaj priseljencev glede na njihove možnosti za integracijo.

Ključne besede: integracija, kriza, sprejemne skupnosti, medijske reprezentacije, javno mnenje

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