



RE M I N D E R

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

Summary Report: Mapping Discourse

REPORT

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Summary Report: Mapping Discourse

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Abstract

This document summarises the key findings from Work Package 8 (WP8) of the REMINDER project. Work Package 8 explored the central discourses on EU mobility identifiable in political, social and mass media communications, and thus served as a descriptive cornerstone of the project as a whole. Different techniques of large-scale text analysis, such as automated coding of sentiment, topics or frames and corpus linguistic analyses, were employed. The analyses were based on data from social and traditional media outlets in Spain, the UK, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Poland, Hungary and Romania. The research was organized in four main steps: (1) a comprehensive review of the existing literature on media and mobility; (2) the creation of a large-scale text database of the discourse data to be analysed; (3) manual and computer-assisted content-analysis of said data; and (4) testing and refinement of the findings with stakeholders and other members of the REMINDER consortium. For extensive details about the different methodological approaches, as well as detailed discussions of findings and limitations of the individual analyses, please refer to the different outputs of the Work Package (Bajomi-Lazar et al. 2019; Eberl et al. 2018; Eberl et al. 2019; Galyga et al. 2019; Heidenreich et al. 2019; Herrero-Jiménez et al. 2019; Lind et al. 2019a; Lind et al. 2019b).

This Work Package had the following main objectives:

- Provide a systematic description of the content and tone of intra-EU mobility in four main domains: traditional print and online media; social media; political communications; and civil society discourse.
- Examine the extent to which intra-EU mobility and non-EU migration are distinguished in public discourses, differentiating between regions of origin within both categories.
- Track changes in how mobility is described over time, including in the periods before, during, and after EU accession rounds, and how the 2015 refugee movements affected discourses.
- Contrast discourses about EU mobility with statistical realities examined in earlier Work Packages.



- Provide inputs for the study of communication effects in Work Package 9, the public opinion survey.

The analyses in Work Package 8 confirmed much of what we already know about migration coverage more generally, e.g. how it tends to be more negative and focus on security framing (see Eberl et al. 2018). The WP also unveiled new information on intra-European migration coverage and how it differs from general migration coverage. The insights summarized in this final report focus upon less obvious and, in some cases, unexpected findings. This summary discussion is general, and aimed at a non-academic audience.

In this report, we will use the term “Intra-European Migration Coverage” to describe news articles that refer at least once to immigration or emigration between EU member states or within the Schengen area, as well as to free movement. We use the term “Migration Coverage” or “General Migration Coverage” to refer to any news articles that include at least one reference to migration-specific keywords (see Eberl et al. 2019).

The insights reviewed in this final report can be grouped into the following areas:

1. Data availability and data organization: WP8 works with large quantities of text data in up to seven different languages. Dealing with multiple different sources and archives, we have to conclude that big data analysis of mediated communication remains a challenging task in terms of data accessibility, particularly when it comes to Eastern European and Southern European countries.

2. The challenge: automated text analysis with text in different languages: Existing techniques for automated computer-assisted text analyses are well established for English language texts, but less so for other languages or across different languages. Hence, automated text analysis strategies for multilingual text data are currently undergoing further development. Working with migration-related text data in seven different languages, WP8 has been in the optimal situation to conduct several methodological experiments and to contribute to these efforts.

3: Media discourses about intra-European mobility differ between countries: Overall, intra-European migration news coverage tends to comprise only a small part of all



migration-related media discourse. Intra-European migration is more visible in the Eastern European countries compared to the countries in Western Europe. Generally, visibility of this type of migration tends to be related to key phases of EU enlargement and transitional labour market controls. In the UK in particular, the visibility sharply increased a few years before the eventual Brexit referendum.

4. Media discourses about intra-European mobility differ from other types of migration

coverage: While other migration coverage tends to be rather negative, coverage of intra-European mobility tends to be more positive (an exception here is Germany). Furthermore, in most countries migration coverage in general tends to be focused on security related aspects (i.e. security framing). This, however, is much less the case for intra-European coverage. The difference is strongest for Eastern European countries, where intra-European migration is much more strongly associated with economic and welfare frames than with security framing.

5. Salience and interactions of intra-European mobility discourses on social media:

On Facebook, political actors address intra-European mobility distinctly less often than other migration-related issues. There are shared dynamics of visibility across most countries in our sample between 2015 and 2018. However, from 2016 onwards, there is a sharp increase in the salience of intra-European mobility in the social media accounts of UK political actors (probably related to Brexit). While migration posts are a driver of interactions on social media, intra-European mobility appears to draw less attention from users on Facebook, with posts on this topic receiving, on average, fewer interactions than other migration-related status posts.

6. Othering in migration-related media discourses: Migrants are the subject of different effects of othering in the construction of their discursive representation in the media. Both intra-European migrants from Eastern Europe and non-European migrants from the Middle East are often described as “illegal” or “different”. Such tendencies become even stronger for both groups during crisis periods, such as the European refugee movements of 2015.

7. The influence of media outlets’ political leaning on migration framing: Right-leaning media outlets frame general migration coverage much more strongly in the context of



security concerns than do left-leaning outlets. This difference can still be seen for intra-European mobility coverage, but differences between outlets of different political positions are much smaller in this case.



1. Data Availability and Data Organization

WP8 set out to create a large-scale database of media texts drawn from both traditional news outlets online and offline and political social media communication. In total, the final database spans a period of up to fifteen years and includes more than seven million text units from up to 37 news outlets and more than 35,000 posts from 1,590 social media accounts from seven European countries. While it was clear from the outset that the research periods would inevitably differ across countries and domains due to the availability of data, extensive efforts were made to include as much data as possible. Eventually, we were able to collect media data starting in 2003 and social media data starting in 2015 for all target countries except for Hungary, for which the media data only reaches as far back as 2013.

During the collection of the material and the creation of the database we encountered two main methodological challenges. For one, the availability of the different media outlets varies significantly across the countries in our selection. While media data from Western European countries such as Germany or the UK are fairly well archived and can be accessed without too much effort or resources, newspapers from Eastern European countries such as Romania or Hungary are far less easily accessible. Yet, after an extensive period of research and review of available sources, we were able to accumulate a sufficient number and variation of different media outlets from the target countries and standardize the different forms of texts arising from different archives employing differing formats. For a more in-depth explanation of our approach and a detailed list of media outlets, databases and search terms, see previous deliverables in this Work Package (see Eberl et al. 2019). However, we can conclude that a big data analysis approach to the study of multilingual mediated communication remains a non-trivial task in terms of data availability and accessibility.

In a next step, we annotated all this data with regards to a variety of phenomena of interest in an automated way (described in the next section). While the data cannot be made public in its raw form (i.e., the collected articles and social media posts themselves), the annotated database, without any actual article content, will be stored in a public archive, the Austrian Social Science Data Archive (AUSSDA). Thus, it can be accessed by



researchers from any country for secondary data analysis. See [doi:10.11587/IEGQ1B](https://doi.org/10.11587/IEGQ1B) for access to the data starting Spring 2020.



2. Automated Text Analysis with Text in Different Languages

Prior to the analysis of the data, we conducted a comprehensive review (Eberl et al. 2018) of the academic literature from the fields of communication, political science and migration studies to bring together existing research on mobility and give a detailed account of how the topic is portrayed and discussed in various domains. We made an effort in this review to differentiate between intra and non-EU mobility where possible. Yet, comparative research is still scarce in Europe and intra-European migration in particular has been largely neglected in the literature thus far. On the basis of this review of the existing body of literature we began the concrete development of the schemes and measures to be used for the empirical analysis of texts.

Eventually, we applied different methods of systematic analysis to gather and quantify meaning from textual data, simultaneously enabling an in-depth assessment of the material for a potentially large number of texts. Key discourse elements of interest we analysed included topics, tone, actors, recurring patterns ('collocation') that are related to both EU mobility and non-EU mobility, as well as the 'framing of EU mobility', illustrating how this form of mobility and its impacts are discussed. With the aid of human coders, we created and validated several complex dictionaries capturing narrative frames in the news coverage, such as crime and security, welfare, and economic framing. We further applied existing sentiment tools and corpus linguistic techniques to capture the tonality of the texts and analyse the language patterns and narratives respectively.

However, any attempt at comparative analysis faces the problem of commensurability, comparing potentially or initially incomparable things. For comparative media and discursive analyses, one of the major obstacles is that comparing different countries often means comparing across different languages. While existing techniques for automated computer-assisted text analyses are well established for English language texts, the situation is different when it comes to other languages. The development of any tool or application for automated text analysis, including not only the creation but also the testing and validation of it, is always time and resource intensive. This is the main reason why we see an abundance of efforts invested in English language applications and a lack of functioning tools for other and especially for smaller languages.



It becomes even more difficult when comparing across different languages. Automated text analysis strategies have to deal with the challenge that languages differ, as regards, for example, the richness of the language (e.g., the number of synonyms) or the structure of words (e.g., word stems, compound words). Yet, given the amount of data to be analysed in the context of this Work Package, the application of computer-assisted measures becomes somewhat inevitable. To account for the differences between the target languages, automated text analysis strategies for multilingual text data are currently being further developed. Working with migration-related text data in seven different languages, WP8 has been in the optimal situation to conduct several methodological experiments and to contribute to these efforts. One major methodological result was that, for the concepts studied, here the best approach to multilingual automated analyses seems to be the translation of text into a target language followed by the application of a monolingual instrument (Lind et al. 2019a).



3. Media Discourses about Intra-European Mobility Differ Between Countries

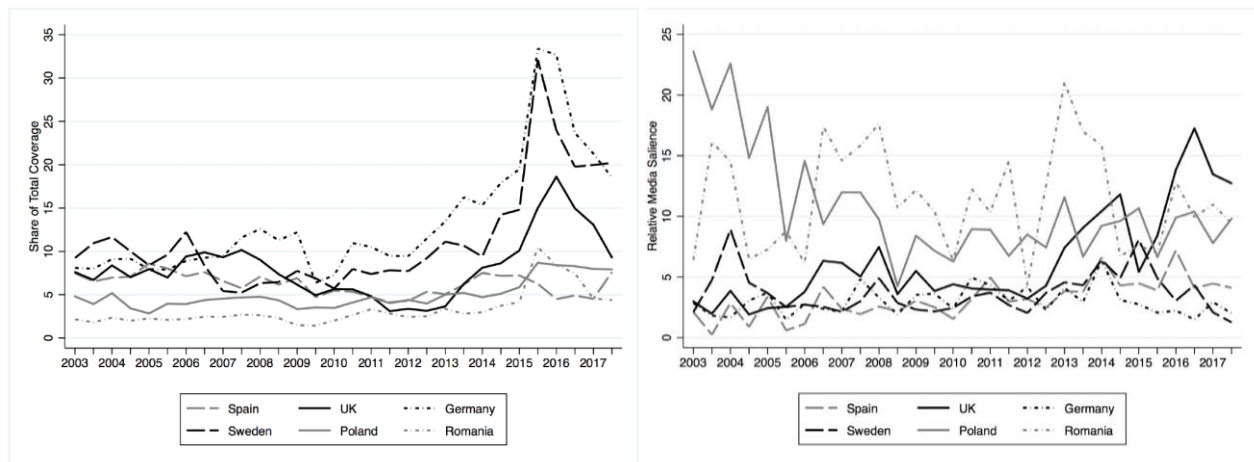


Figure 1. Left panel: relative visibility of migration coverage; right panel: relative visibility of intra-European migration coverage; both between 2003 and 2017.

While the previously-summarized main outcomes of the work of WP8 have been mostly methodological, all following sections are concerned with the results of the analyses described above. The results in the following sections are based on our findings presented in D8.3.

For one, intra-European migration news coverage tends to be only a small part of all migration-related media discourses. Only 4.8% of all articles related to migration in general are concerned with intra-European migration in particular. However, the share varies between countries. Intra-European migration tends to be more visible in the Eastern European countries compared to the countries in Western Europe. Intra-European migration was most present in the media discourse in Romania, where it comprised 11.2 % of all migration news coverage. Conversely, intra-European migration was least present in the media discourse in Germany and Spain, where it represented 2.9% of migration-related coverage. We do not see a pattern related to the net migration figures and a country's status as either sending or receiving regarding migration. For migration in general, however, this pattern can be observed, in that migration in general is much more salient in the news coverage in receiving countries than it is in sending countries.

Figure 1 above shows the relative visibility of migration coverage within all media coverage and intra-European migration within all migration coverage over time (see Eberl et

al. 2019 for more details). We see that, generally, the topic tends to be related to key phases of EU enlargement and transitional labour market controls. For many countries, we see clear peaks in the visibility of intra-European migration in 2004, the year of the first EU enlargement during our period of analysis. However, peaks for the enlargements in 2007 and 2013 are not as clear – however, in these cases the list of new member states was also considerably smaller.

The countries that joined the European Union during our period of analysis – in particular, Poland, Hungary and Romania – tend to exhibit higher media attention to intra-European migration, with the topic being most visible in Romania and Poland. The only clear outlier here is the United Kingdom in the context of Brexit. In the UK, the visibility sharply increases a few years before the eventual Brexit referendum.



4. Media Discourses about Intra-European Mobility Discourses Differ from Other Types of Migration Coverage

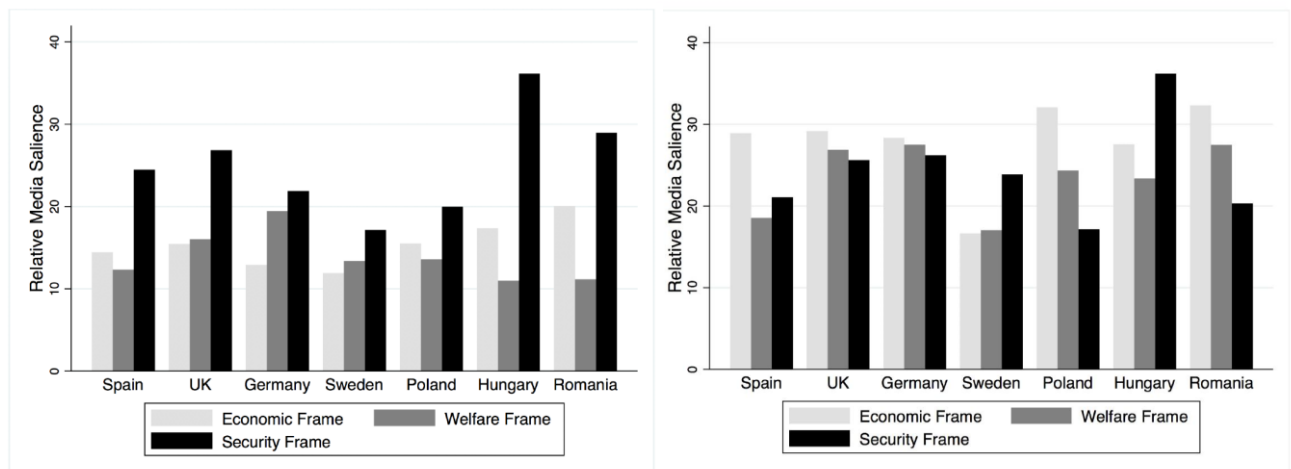


Figure 2. Left panel: migration-related frames; right panel: intra-European migration-related frames; both between 2013 and 2017.

As stated above, any sort of comparative analysis has to consider the comparability across countries. While this is less of a problem for the visibility of a topic, the question is less trivial for a phenomenon such as sentiment. A discourse within a specific country might be generally more negative than in another country. Therefore, comparing the sentiment of migration coverage between those two countries has to factor in this potential country-specific tonality of the discourse. We attempted to do so by calculating relative sentiment, which is based on an index of positive and negative words in migration-related sentences compared to non-migration-related sentences. This benchmarking (also standardization) allowed us to compare sentiment across countries.

While other migration coverage tends to be rather negative, coverage of intra-European Mobility tends to be more positive across the different countries. An exception, however, is Germany, where intra-European migration is portrayed most negatively in comparison to the other countries. This finding indeed corresponds with the migration figures of Germany, which saw by far the highest rate of immigration from other European countries.

Regarding the framing of migration coverage, we analysed three different frames by means of a dictionary-based annotation. The three frames we focused on are economic

framing, welfare framing and security framing. Figure 2 shows the relative salience of these frames across the seven target countries. Here we also find that coverage of intra-European migration appears to be concerned with more positive aspects. While migration coverage in general in most countries tends to be focused on security and crime related aspects, welfare and especially economic framing are more prevalent in media coverage on intra-European migration. The difference is strongest for Eastern European countries, where intra-European migration is much more strongly associated with economic and welfare frames than it is in Western European countries. Regarding the sentiment of the individual frames, the security frame is also the most negative out of the three frames measured.

Concerning overall migration coverage, it appears that journalists in receiving countries tend to emphasise the welfare frame more strongly (compared to the economic frame) than journalists in sending countries. In coverage on intra-European migration, the economic frame tends to be more visible than the welfare frame, and the difference between the two furthermore tends to be higher in sending countries – i.e., countries where the economy actually profits most from intra-European migration.



5. Salience and Interactions of Intra-European Mobility Discourses on Social Media

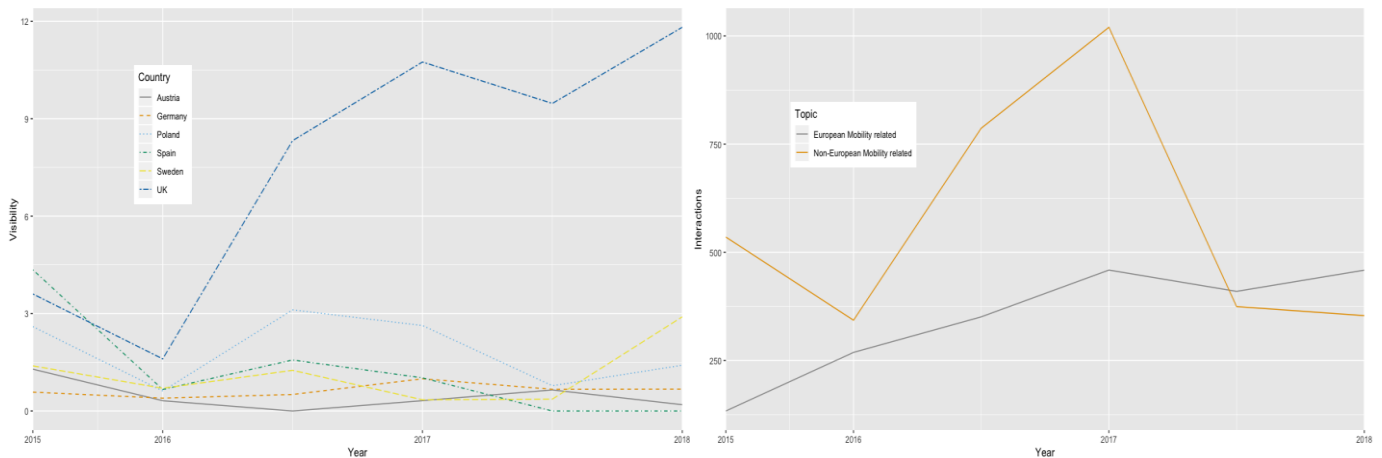


Figure 3. Left panel: visibility of intra-European migration on social media; right panel: interactions of intra-European and non-intra-European migration on social media; both between 2015 and 2017.

In addition to the mediated discourse in traditional media we also investigated the public political discourse on European mobility on social media. To be more precise, the texts for this domain of discourse in our database are the Facebook status posts of 1,590 politicians from seven European countries. In particular, we analysed the visibility of the mobility topic in the public political discourse on Facebook and the level of user interactions. The results in this section are based on our findings presented in detail in D8.4.

Figure 3 shows the relative visibility of intra-European migration in migration status posts on Facebook. We find that political actors address intra-European mobility distinctly less than other migration-related issues on Facebook. There are shared dynamics of visibility across most countries in our sample between 2015 and 2018, though on a very low level. European Mobility appears almost to be not an issue for political actors on social media. The two notable exceptions are Poland and the UK. We can observe that intra-European mobility receives slightly more attention in Poland overall, and especially in 2016 and 2017. Furthermore, from 2016 onwards, there is a sharp increase in the salience of intra-European mobility in the social media accounts of UK political actors. This strong increase is arguably a consequence of the prevalence of Brexit in the UK and the linkage to the question of free movement and particularly immigration from Poland (see Heidenreich et al. 2019 for more detail).

While we did not include comments or status posts by non-political actors, we took into consideration the level of interactions for the status posts in our database. This includes the number of likes, reactions, and shares in response to a given status post and can be seen as a measure of discursive impact. While posts on general migration are a driver of interactions on social media, intra-European mobility appears to draw less attention from users on Facebook (see Figure 3).



6. Othering in Migration-related Media Discourses

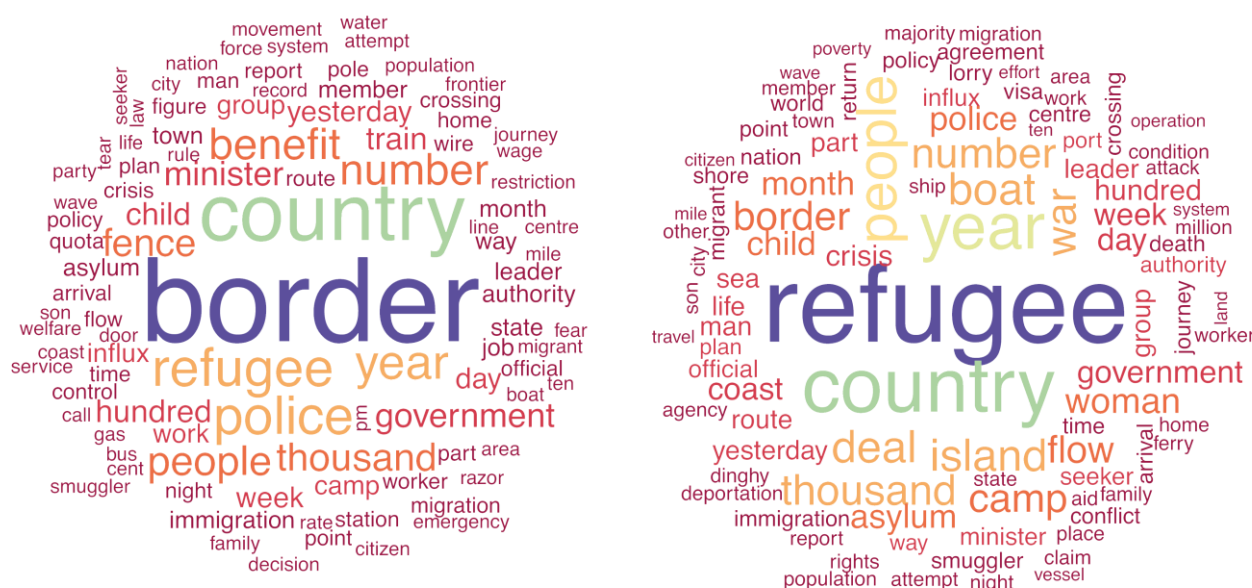


Figure 4. 100 nouns most commonly co-occurring with migrants in British media coverage, between 2013 and 2016; left panel: for migrants from eastern Europe; right panel: for migrants from the Middle-East.

We further investigated aspects of the language use surrounding migrants in media discourse. The aspects of discourse described above can be considered as being more global ones. Analyses of sentiment or frames are more directly concerned with grander themes. Yet, language itself can be considered as a more local and much more granular phenomenon. We applied corpus linguistic techniques to our database of media text to analyse the most common modifiers of, and the nouns most commonly co-occurring with, references to migrants. The results in this section are based on our findings presented in D8.6.

Figure 4 shows a word cloud of the hundred nouns most commonly co-occurring with Eastern European migrants in the British media coverage in our database. It appears that this semantic field of nouns is somewhat related to concrete problems. Words such as “border” or “fence” refer to a literal line of separation and have a very clear and concrete meaning. But also, words such as “police”, “government” or “minister” refer to actual institutions and thus relate to more or less practical regulatory and legislative aspects. It appears that individual and immediate events are less the driver of the semantic surrounding of Eastern European migrants (see Galyga et al. 2019 for more detail).

Generally, we find that migrants experience different tendencies of othering in the construction of their discursive representation in the media. Both intra-European migrants from Eastern Europe and non-European migrants from the Middle East are described as "illegal" or "different" and as "arriving" or "coming". Rather collective aspects of the group are stressed, less individual human ones, they are quantified through words such as "thousand" or "percentage" and thus dehumanized to a certain degree. Such tendencies become even stronger for both groups during crisis periods such as the European refugee movements in 2015.



7. Framing Differences in Left- and Right-Leaning Media Outlets

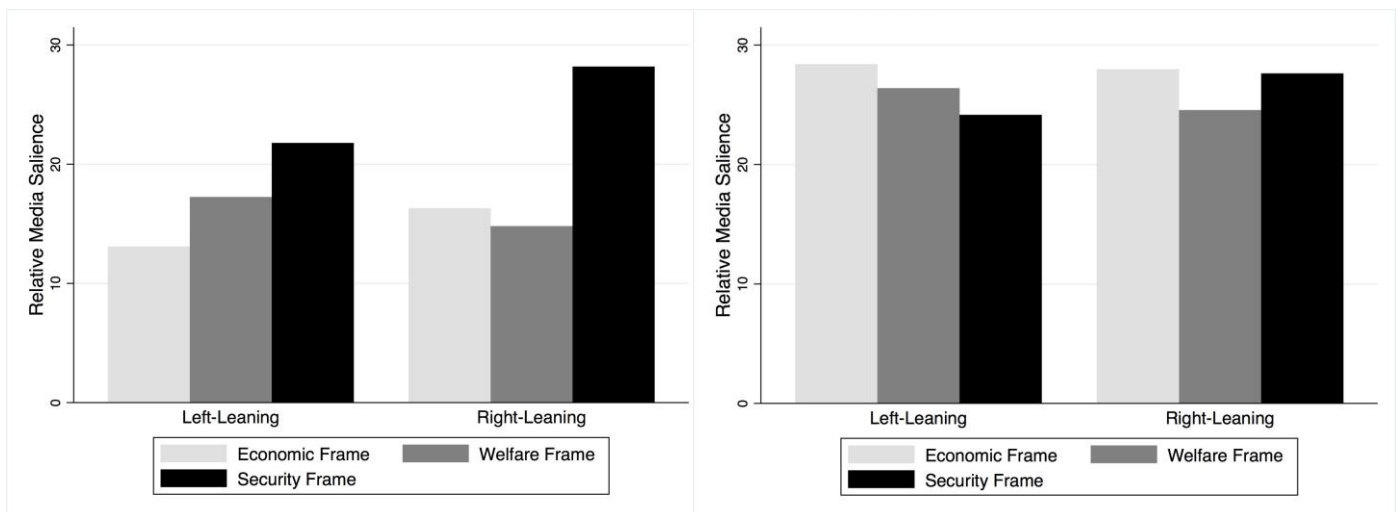


Figure 5. Left panel: migration-related frames; right panel: intra-European migration-related frames; both between 2013 and 2017 and differentiate between left-leaning and right-leaning news outlets

Previous research has also shown that political preferences of media outlets or media audiences may influence migration-related framing (Aalberg & Beyer, 2015). Liberal newspapers have been found to exhibit more positive portrayals of immigrants than their conservative counterparts (Geißler, 2000).

Some scholars prefer to use the concept of *political balance* rather than *bias*, since *bias* suggests that the distortion of media reporting is caused deliberately. More generally, however, the concepts of *political balance*, *political bias*, *news bias*, *ideological bias*, *partisan bias*, or simply *media bias* (see Eberl, Boomgaarden and Wagner, 2017 for an overview), are often used interchangeably and all refer to a misbalance of media reporting based on ideological proximity and political favoritism.

Our data suggests that right-leaning outlets do indeed have a stronger focus on more negative frames, such as the security frame, when it comes to migration more generally as well as intra-European migration in particular. However, the political leaning of a news outlet is much less a factor when it comes to intra-European media coverage that for migration coverage more generally (see Figure 5).

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The REMINDER project is exploring the economic, social, institutional and policy factors that have shaped the impacts of free movement in the EU and public debates about it.

The project is coordinated from COMPAS and includes participation from 12 consortium partners in 8 countries across Europe



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research & innovation programme under grant agreement no 727072

