



Ad-Hoc Query on immigration and media coverage

Requested by UK EMN NCP on 28 May 2010

Compilation produced on 26 July 2010

Responses from [Belgium](#), [Germany](#), [Italy](#), [Portugal](#), [Spain](#), [Sweden](#), [United Kingdom](#) (7 of requested 9 in Total)

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1. Background Information

Studies have shown that the UK has among the highest levels of public concern in Europe regarding immigration, but that this is not linked to any demographic factors.

Colleagues in UK Border Agency would like to test the hypothesis that it is in part the media environment in each country which drives levels of anxiety.

We would therefore request your assistance by responding to the following questions on media coverage of immigration in your country:

- 1. In your opinion is the overall tone of media coverage of migration in your country positive, neutral or negative?**
- 2. How frequently is immigration raised in your national press and media? (Less than once a month? At least once a month? About once a week? More than once a week?)**
- 3. Are there any data protection or legal restrictions in place in your country which restrict immigration authorities commenting on individual cases?**
- 4. In your country are there any legal or data protection restrictions which restricts the press and media in the reporting of refugee or migration individual cases?**

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2. Responses

	Query	Wider Dissemination? ¹	
	Belgium		<p>1. In your opinion is the overall tone of media coverage of migration in your country positive, neutral or negative?</p> <p>Both Asylum and migration have been very hot topics on the political agenda of the last few years in Belgium. Logically this is reflected in the media as well. Media coverage differs largely according to the topic (asylum versus migration) according to the approach (policy versus individual cases), according to the profile of the media (leftist, central, rightist) and also geographically (regional/local versus national, ... etc). Tones differ therefore from negative over neutral to positive.</p> <p>2. How frequently is immigration raised in your national press and media? (Less than once a month? At least once a month? About once a week? More than once a week?)</p> <p>More than once a week (almost on a daily basis)</p> <p>3. Are there any data protection or legal restrictions in place in your country which restrict immigration authorities commenting on individual cases?</p> <p>4. In your country are there any legal or data protection restrictions which restricts the press and media in the reporting of refugee or migration individual cases?</p> <p>In Belgium there is the so called Privacy Law (December 8 1992). A general disposition (art. 2) of this law stipulates the right to protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of every individual, including the protection of his/her personal living atmosphere. Article 3 specifies that certain dispositions of the Privacy Law are not applicable in cases where personal data are used for solely journalistic reasons and where these personal data are made public by the concerned individual or in case the data are closely linked to the public profile of the individual or public character of facts to which the individual is linked.</p> <p>The Belgian Immigration authorities, as a public administration has to implement this legislation in its daily organization and contacts with the press.</p>

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			<p>For instance, the asylum instance (The Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons) will, for obvious reasons, never pro-actively disclose publicly any information about an asylum applicant and the content of his asylum application. In case the individual situation of an asylum seeker is made public by certain media, including information on his/her identity, there will be no comment (as by commenting you confirm that the person lodged an application for asylum which is, in se, already a breach of the Privacy Law). The only exception to this internal policy is the case in which an asylum seeker himself attracts attention of the media to his personal story. If the asylum seeker would spread incorrect or biased information about the asylum procedure, the examination of his application or the decision taken, then the Commissioner General will reserve himself the right to publicly comment on his case.</p>
	Germany	Yes	<p>1. Media coverage on migration/migrants tends to be negative and is often connected to social problems. However, this tendency has declined in recent years. Increasingly, the potentialities of migration and successful, i.e. “discreet” examples of migration are addressed (under the caption “normal situations of integration”).</p> <p>2. In general, migration is addressed comparatively rarely (however, at least once a month); in the last years, the focus has shifted to the “brain drain” of qualified German nationals and other foreigners and to the immigration of highly qualified migrants which is desired, albeit small in numbers. Integration topics are covered several times per week. One major focus in Germany is the topic of Islam and all related issues.</p> <p>3. Yes, due to provisions regarding both data protection and protection of the individual’s privacy, no comments on individual cases are released.</p> <p>4. For television and radio broadcasting there are general rules set forth in the Interstate Treaty on Broadcasting and in the media legislation of the individual Federal <i>laender</i>. These provisions oblige in particular the public broadcasters to promote social cohesion and a “non-discriminatory community”. For the print media, the German Press Council, a self-monitoring body, has drawn up the “German Press Code” which, however, is not legally binding. According to this code, the press should perform their journalistic tasks fairly and refrain from inappropriately sensational reporting. Vituperating against religious, philosophical or moral convictions is to be avoided, as is discrimination against a person because of his/her membership of an ethnic, religious, social or national group. Besides, when reporting crimes, it is not permissible to refer to the suspect's religious, ethnic or other minority membership unless this information can be justified as being relevant to the readers' understanding of the incident.</p>
	Italy		<p>1. The general tone is mostly negative, also fuelled by the economic crisis (although not in all the newspapers).</p> <p>2. Immigration is a topic that returns on average every day, mostly in negative tones.</p> <p>3. We are not aware that the immigration authorities have restrictions in commenting on an individual case, when this has become public and has general relevance.</p>

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			4. Even for journalists and the mass media there is no limit to the merits of individual cases when they concern the community.
	Portugal	No	This EMN NCP has provided a response to the requesting EMN NCP. However, they have requested that their response is not disseminated further.
	Spain		<p>1. The treatment given to immigration related topics by the media in Spain is generally positive. However, occasionally the subject is reported negatively, as for example, when discussing the percentage of domestic violence victims or the failure rate in schools caused by a high percentage of immigrants in a particular school.</p> <p>2. Immigration related issues appear in the media practically every day, even at the present time when the migratory pressure has fallen considerably due to the economic crisis.</p> <p>3 & 4. Yes, as regards immigration, the Spanish authorities avoid giving out information on individual cases where this could endanger the safety or privacy of immigrants. A clear example is the information policy in the Temporary Residence Centres for Immigrants and the Accommodation Centres. In those cases, information on what the Government does and how the centres operate is given out, but no information is given about individuals (e.g. it is not allowed to record immigrants in these centres, but this is allowed outside the facilities, provided those involved consent).</p>
	Sweden		<p>1. The overall tone is mostly neutral. Local media have a more negative tone. National media is either neutral or positive. When the Migration Board does participate in any media coverage, the tone tends to be more neutral than negative.</p> <p>2. More than once a week. This applies for all media coverage!</p> <p>3. Yes, we have legal restrictions which make it difficult to comment individual cases, but we can always try to respond in a more general matter. Our policy is to be as open as possible.</p> <p>4. No. But if a journalist wants access to an individual's dossier, he or she has to get a power of attorney.</p>
	United Kingdom		<p>1. In your opinion is the overall tone of media coverage of migration in your country positive, neutral or negative?</p> <p>Negative.</p> <p>National print media are hostile. Broadcast and local media are neutral.</p>

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			<p>2. How frequently is immigration raised in your national press and media? (Less than once a month? At least once a month? About once a week? More than once a week?)</p> <p>More than once a week.</p> <p>Most days there will be immigration coverage in multiple print media titles or broadcast programmes.</p> <p>3. Are there any data protection or legal restrictions in place in your country which restrict immigration authorities commenting on individual cases?</p> <p>Yes, data protection and asylum restrictions limit our ability to rebut claims made against us.</p> <p>4. In your country are there any legal or data protection restrictions which restricts the press and media in the reporting of refugee or migration individual cases?</p> <p>No.</p>
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