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Coverage of Migration in the Most Visited Slovak Online Medium in the First Half of 2021

ABSTRACT

This article deals with the presentation of migration as a theme on the most visited Slovak media website *aktuality.sk* during the first half of 2021. Through qualitative and quantitative content analysis of texts and photographs, it determines the frequency of information, names the topics and analyzes the content that the medium presented from January 2021 to the end of June 2021. Because of the smaller volume of news and politicians addressing the topic, it may seem that migration has disappeared. However, the number of valid stays of third-country nationals in Slovakia in June 2021 was not way below average since 2015 when the so-called migration crisis began. This article summarizes the migration discourses that have been promulgated in Slovakia since 2015. At the same time, the analysis focuses on covering the topic of migration at present, we determine how much space the selected medium devoted to migration and what topics it reported on. In terms of identified discourses, in the analysis of 2021, we noted the persistence of cultural threat discourse, security risk discourse and more discourse of effective solidarity. It turns out that the overall setting of the media sentiment of the migration discourse in the Slovak Republic is relatively stable in the long run, inclined to the negative connotation of the terms migrant, refugee and the migration process itself, with a significantly weak representation of positive sentiment.

KEY WORDS

Discourse. Media. Migration. Politics.

1 Introduction

The process of media framing (which contributes to how the recipients evaluate a particular problem and understand the facts) is closely related to the conventionalization or standardization of image and text content, which the media use to portray various rare topics and problems, including the phenomenon of migration.¹ The media debate on migration has been taking shape since 2015 when more than a million migrants arrived in the European Union and the media and political discourse on migration was transformed significantly.² “Migration has not been intensely debated as a topic in Slovakia unlike in some other countries of the European Union. This is certainly also due to the incomparably lower number of migrants and people with a migrant background.”³ The migration issue moved from the periphery to the center of public and political discussions in 2015.⁴ The media all over Europe were keenly following the topic of migration in 2015, and the frequency of journalistic contributions on this topic was high especially after the crisis in the Mediterranean.⁵

In this context, the issue of migration is framed in various media discourses, which have changed and developed over time in the media and political discourse from the initial and outright negative security risks and cultural threats associated in particular with the framework of Muslim invasion and crime⁶ to the more positive discourse, such as “we are all migrants”.⁷ “In the first migration wave (2015) the security risks and cultural threats were a dominant communication strategy, in the second wave (2016, 2017) the discourse on migration management was highly relevant, and in the third period (2018), an alternative concept of “effective solidarity” emerged – this idea was first presented in 2016 during the Slovak Presidency of the EU Council.”⁸

¹ GREENWOOD, K., SMITH, C. Z.: How the World Looks to Us: International News in Award-winning Photographs from the Pictures of the Year, 1943-2003. In *Journalism Practice* 1, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 84.

² LETAVAJOVÁ, S. et al.: *Novodobé migrácie vo verejnej, mediálnej a politickej diskusii*. Nitra : Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, 2020, p. 7.

³ ANDROVIČOVÁ, J.: Sekuritizácia migrantov na Slovensku – analýza diskurzu. In *Sociológia*, 2015, Vol. 47, No. 4, p. 319. [online]. [2022-02-20]. Available at: <<https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/08190914Androvicova%20-%20OK.pdf>>.

⁴ KUCHARCZYK, J., MESEŽNIKOV, G.: Migration Debate in Central Europe: Between Real Challenges and Imaginary Threats. In *Phantom Menace the Politics and Policies of Migration in Central Europe*. Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 2018, p. 9.

⁵ LETAVAJOVÁ, S. et al.: *Novodobé migrácie vo verejnej, mediálnej a politickej diskusii*. Nitra : Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, 2020, p. 26.

⁶ See: GREUSSING, E., BOOMGAARDEN, H. G.: *Shifting the Refugee Narrative? An Automated Frame Analysis of Europe's 2015 Refugee Crisis*. [online]. [2022-02-20]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1282813>>; BUSUTIL, R. O., MARQUEZ, Y. P.: The Migration Crisis in the Mediterranean and the European Union: Main Politics and Measures Anti-immigrants. In *Novedades en Poblacion*, 2017, Vol. 13, No. 26, p. 7.; TKÁČOVÁ, H. et al.: “Media Invasion” Against Islam in The Context of the Slovak Republic. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 165-179.

⁷ See: SPÁLOVÁ, L., PETROVÁ, E., BALÁŽIOVÁ, I.: Humanization of Migration Through Art - Discursive Contexts of Digitization, Participation and Solidarity: (WE ALL ARE MIGRANTS). In *IJournals: International Journal of Social Relevance & Concern*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 7, p. 56.; SPÁLOVÁ, L., SZABÓOVÁ, V.: Migration as an Insight in the Creative Marketing Campaigns. In COSTA, M., CEROVIC, L. (eds.): *Rethinking Management in the Digital Era: Challenges from Industry 4.0 to Retail Management*. Varazdin : Varazdin Development and Entrepreneurship Agency, 2019, p. 219-229.

⁸ SPÁLOVÁ, L.: *Politický branding*. Bratislava : Európska Akadémia Manažmentu, Marketingu a Médii, 2021, p. 127.

2 Media Discourse on Migrants/Migration under the Conditions of the Slovak Republic

2.1 Media Discourses as a Mediation of Rare Topics

Despite the fact that we marked no considerable interest of foreigners to move to Slovakia and the arrival of more than one million migrants to Europe did not affect Slovakia, the public debate on migration since 2015 can be evaluated as very heated. One of the consequences is the polarization of society,⁹ which has persisted, and is still manifested in many spheres of society “both in the lay and professional circles, and in political and media discourses.”¹⁰ G. Mesežnikov concludes that the so-called migrant crisis did not manifest itself by an increased number of refugees in Slovakia, but by the strengthening of pathogenic phenomena in our society, such as radicalism and xenophobia.¹¹ Hate speech is mainly based on fear of the unknown and the lack of knowledge and personal experience. Negative public attitudes towards migrants have been present in the Slovak and Czech public for a long time. The public opinion surveys carried out during the period of the so-called first and second wave of migration (2015/2017) suggest that most Slovak citizens are rather afraid of refugees and do not support their arrival in Slovakia.¹² The above is also supported by the *Focus Agency* survey from June 2020 showed that almost every second citizen of the Slovak Republic does not personally know any foreigners living in Slovakia. Thus, a large portion of the population forms their opinion on foreigners based on mediated personal and media content.¹³ According to the Milan Šimečka Foundation survey from the 2020, these opinions are, for example, formed by information from friends and acquaintances, or from sources such as the media.¹⁴ The above testifies to the critical importance of the media in providing an objective coverage of topics in the field of social exclusion, discrimination and human rights.

Based on the results of her survey, E. Gallo Kriglerová et al. noted a slight increase in the number of respondents (14.1% in 2009 and 17% in 2021) who have had a personal experience with migration in 2021.¹⁵ However, public opinion is still largely formed by factors such as the media or political discourse on migration, as well as by indirect experience with migration or possible meetings and contact with foreigners.¹⁶ In light of the above, there is a need for high-quality journalistic outputs in terms of truthfulness and objectivity. The importance of the media for society is unquestionable and their power is significant. Ideally, the media should employ and observe ethical principles, be impartial and provide balanced and objective information.¹⁷ In the case of tabloid media, the conditions for quality journalism often vary. Editors in the tabloid media often add positive or negative assessments to their news reports, for example, by using expressive

⁹ LETAVAJOVÁ, S. et al.: *Novodobé migrácie vo verejnej, mediálnej a politickej diskusii*. Nitra : Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, 2020, p. 8.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ MESEŽNIKOV, G., BÚTOROVÁ, Z.: Refugee Crisis in Europe: Public Opinion, State Institutions and Party Politics in Slovakia. In KUCHARCZYK, J., MESEŽNIKOV, G. (eds.): *Phantom Menace the Politics and Policies of Migration in Central Europe*. Bratislava : Institute for Public Affairs, 2018, p. 53.

¹² GAŽIOVÁ, I., RAPOŠOVÁ, T.: *Protipól k strachu: občianske aktivity na pomoc utečencom*. [online]. [2012-02-23]. Available at: <<http://cvek.sk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Protipol-k-strachu-1.pdf>>; See also: CORBU, N. et al.: Fake News Going Viral: The Mediating Effect of Negative Emotions. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 58-87.

¹³ RAPOŠ BOŽIČ, I.: *Cudzinci žijúci na Slovensku – do akej miery sa od nich dišancujeme?* [online]. [2022-02-19]. Available at: <<https://fjuzn.sk/cudzinci-zijuci-na-slovensku-do-akej-miery-sa-od-nich-distancujeme/>>.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ GALLO KRIGLEROVÁ, E. et al.: *Cudzie nechceme, svoje si nedáme*. [online]. [2022-02-18]. Available at: <http://cvek.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Cudzie_nehceme_Analyza_final_edited.pdf>.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ LETAVAJOVÁ, S. et al.: *Novodobé migrácie vo verejnej, mediálnej a politickej diskusii*. Nitra : Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, 2020, p. 63.

linguistic means and devices, simplicity of expression, action in the topics etc.¹⁸ It is well known that the tabloid media are characterized by sensationalism, human disasters, natural disasters and other phenomena that easily attract the recipient's attention. However, it is not only the tabloids that have the ability to influence the recipients of their content. *"Even in the case of serious news outlets that use a notional dictionary without emotionalizations and drama, journalists can influence the perception of events in their percipients, whether through the selection of the news, information arrangement, use of verbal expressions, etc. When presenting various social groups, especially the minorities with real or perceived cultural differences, the media can create or reinforce a stereotypical view. This doesn't necessarily have to be an intentional act by the journalists or a reflection of their own prejudice, but rather the philosophy of the medium, the need to create symbols and simplify information."*¹⁹ There can be many intentions, and the journalists must be extremely rigorous and adhere to the journalistic code in case of sensitive and lesser-known topics in society. The above can also be documented by older research by M. Vašečka who used semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of public policy, state administration experts in the field of migration, as well as experts from the non-governmental and academic environment to study the public attitudes towards foreigners and foreign migration in the Slovak Republic. The failure of the media in the migration discourse was attributed to the tabloidization of the media, lack of interest in the topic and its complexity. They also blamed it on the absence of pressure from the professional public in the media space.²⁰ Very similar reasons persist in the migration discourse in the media a decade later. As stated by T. Freidingerová, P. Ivanič and P. Chalupková, the media play an important role in creating and maintaining the frameworks in which we perceive the phenomenon of migration.²¹ These authors give examples of media framing from the theoretical meta-analysis of the research findings of Tkaczyk, Kriglerová and Chudžíková, Nolan and Walker, and Price. They use the Hungarian pro-government media (in 2019 they accounted for up to four-fifths of the local media market) as an example, which among other things received a manual on how to cover the topic of migration, what vocabulary or photographs to use, and how to frame the news. By presenting the refugees and migrants as a danger or threat in their outputs – at the government's request – the media could have contributed to Viktor Orbán's victory in the 2018 elections.²²

*"The discursive field of migration encompasses a wide range of actors, such as politicians and civil servants, the media and various experts on migration, representatives of non-governmental organizations and, of course, the migrants themselves."*²³ It is a large number of people who create a discourse on a complicated topic such as migration with their opinions and attitudes, which also directly concerns unknown people. Therefore, the discourse on migrants disseminated by the media is important *"in the creation of implicit attitudes to them by members of the general public, and may adversely affect the integration process of the refugees in the EU and contribute to the increasing prejudices against them."*²⁴

¹⁸ VEVERKOVÁ, V.: *Bulvár a bulvarizácia dennej tlače*. Ljubljana : KUD Apokalypsa, 2014, p. 79-81.

¹⁹ LETAVAJOVÁ, S. et al.: *Novodobé migrácie vo verejnej, mediálnej a politickej diskusii*. Nitra : Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, 2020, p. 63.

²⁰ VAŠEČKA, M.: *Postoje verejnosti k cudzincom a zahraničnej migrácii v Slovenskej republike*. Bratislava : IOM, 2009, p. 92.

²¹ FREIDINGEROVÁ, T., IVANIČ, P., CHALUPKOVÁ, P.: *Ludia medzi riadkami: Príručka o migrácii (nielen) pre budúcich novinárov*. [online]. [2022-02-22]. Available at: <https://slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ludia_medzi_riadkami_WEB.pdf>; See also: WIDERA, W.: Attracting and Pre-integrating Migrants Using Digital Media in the Local Labour Market. In *Communication Today*, 2021, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 28-42.

²² NOLAN, D., WALKER, S.: *Hungarian Journalists Admit Role in Forging Anti-migrant 'Atmosphere of Fear'*. [online]. [2022-02-20]. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/13/hungary-journalists-state-tv-network-migrants-viktor-orban-government>>.

²³ ANDROVIČOVÁ, J.: *Sekuritizácia migrantov na Slovensku – analýza diskurzu*. In *Sociológia*, 2015, Vol. 47, No. 4, p. 320. [online]. [2022-02-20]. Available at: <<https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/08190914Androvicova%20-%200K.pdf>>.

²⁴ SPÁLOVÁ, L.: *Politický branding*. Bratislava : Európska Akadémia Manažmentu, Marketingu a Médii, 2021, p. 125.

2.2 Changes in the Frequency and Sentiment of the Media Reports on Migration in 2015-2020

Compared to 2015 when the topic of migration significantly affected the public, political and media discourse, we are currently observing a quantitative drop of interest in this topic, but the phenomenon is ongoing. Two years after the outbreak of the so-called migration crisis, it has dropped by about a half. In an unsorted media monitoring, 33,264 news reports were recorded in 2017, 63,451 in 2016 and 61,908 in 2015. The monitoring also included some marginal or irrelevant reports.²⁵ In 2018, the topic continued to feature in the media.

In 2018, the Slovak migration discourse was still gaining traction. *"In 2018, the topic of migration of third-country nationals was again part of the political, media and social debate in Slovakia."*²⁶ In the political sphere, there were topics such as labour migration of people from third countries to our territory and cooperation of the V4 countries on this issue. In 2018, Slovakia adopted the *UN Global Framework for Refugees*, however, the *UN Global Framework for Safe Managed Legal Migration* was not adopted. The growing extremism and violence of Slovaks against foreigners, but also labour migration, were some of the hot topics that appeared in the media. Based on the results of the *Annual Report on Migration and Asylum Seekers in the Slovak Republic for 2018*, we conclude that the journalists specialize in clarifying disinformation, hoaxes and myths about migration in their contributions. Before the municipal elections, some media informed the foreigners about the possibility of active participation.²⁷

In the 2020 publication *Slovak Elections 2020 in the Information Space*, the apolitical non-governmental organization GLOBSEC created a ranking of the *top topics in the mainstream media* based on the cumulative number of articles on the following websites: *Aktuality*, *Denník N*, *Hospodárske noviny*, *Nový Čas*, *Pluska*, *Pravda*, *SME* and *Topky*. Based on the data, migration ranked seventh. In the *Top topics on the disinformation websites* ranking, in which the authors included *Hlavné správy* and *Hlavný denník*, migration ranked sixth.²⁸ Although the topic was not dominant, it was still among frequent electoral topics. In general, the topic of labour migration from third countries to our country and mixed migration prevailed in the media.²⁹ *"The issue of increasing migration is still a topic after years of international efforts to solve and stabilize the socio-economic increase in migration in the European context (in 2018 it was partially overshadowed by the dominant media topic of climate change, and in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic)."*³⁰ The pandemic has affected many of the processes that were common and prevalent up to that time, including the area of migration management. *"For this reason, various changes and measures related to e.g. the opening hours at the foreign police departments, simplification of acts related to processing the applications for residence and visas and handling of foreigners in person at the foreign police departments or embassies of the Slovak Republic, permits for the entry into the territory of Slovak Republic or border management, have been adopted."*³¹

²⁵ MĚSZÁROSOVÁ, S., OBOŇOVÁ, S.: *Výročná správa o migrácii a azyle v Slovenskej republike za rok 2018*. [online]. [2022-02-17]. Available at: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyročne-spravy-emn-o-migracii-a-azyle/item/download/2551_9ac3898beaccf74a754d91fcc6045517.html>.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ KLINGOVÁ, K. et al.: *Slovenské voľby 2020 v informačnom priestore*. [online]. [2022-02-19]. Available at: <<https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Slovenske-volby-2020.pdf>>.

²⁹ MĚSZÁROSOVÁ, S., OBOŇOVÁ, S.: *Výročná správa o migrácii a azyle v Slovenskej republike za rok 2018*. [online]. [2022-02-18]. Available at: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyročne-spravy-emn-o-migracii-a-azyle/item/download/2551_9ac3898beaccf74a754d91fcc6045517.html>.

³⁰ SPÁLOVÁ, L.: *Politický branding*. Bratislava: Európska Akadémia Manažmentu, Marketingu a Médií, 2021, p. 125.

³¹ BEHŮŇOVÁ, K., OBOŇOVÁ, S.: *Výročná správa o migrácii a azyle v Slovenskej republike za rok 2020*. [online]. [2022-02-18]. Available at: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyročne-spravy-emn-o-migracii-a-azyle/item/download/2865_fbbf50a0506edf17e0ba8476496cb864.html>.

The global pandemic has had a significant impact on the mobility of people in Europe. Due to the containment of the Covid-19 virus, many countries have significantly reduced national, cross-border and international travel. Since mid-June 2020, 25% of land border crossings have been closed.³² *The Frontex Agency* noted the lowest numbers of illegal migration since 2013. As a result, the media interest in migration has subsided. Analyst Milazzo reports that over the period from January to October 2020, only half of the main broadcasting time in Italy was devoted to migration compared to 2019 and 2018.³³ Due to the above decrease in illegal migration, we considered it relevant to mention the specific number of valid stays of third-country nationals in Slovakia. We present these numbers to illustrate how migration has affected the Slovak Republic since the summer of 2015. In the below table, we have only listed those third-country nationals who were mentioned several times in the text, and were most often present in the migration discourse.³⁴

Year	Number of valid statuses for third-country nationals (30.6. of the specific year)	Year	Number of valid statuses for third-country nationals (30.6. of the specific year)	Comparison
Jun 2015	31.043	Jun 2016	37.217	increase of 6,174
Jun 2016	37.217	Jun 2017	44.747	increase of 7,530
Jun 2017	44.747	Jun 2018	54.293	increase of 9,546
Jun 2018	54.293	Jun 2019	73.870	increase of 19,577
Jun 2019	73.870	Jun 2020	88.245	increase of 14,375
Jun 2020	88.245	Jun 2021	97.020	increase of 8,775

TABLE 1: Number of valid stays of third-country nationals in Slovakia³⁵

Source: own processing, 2022, according to: *Ročenky*. [online]. [2022-02-19]. Available at: <<https://www.minv.sk/?rocenky>>.

The analysis of the sentiments on migration in the Slovak digital media during the period 2018-2020 (the data from digital media analysis was processed by *Monitora s.r.o.*) showed that sentiment polarity is relatively stable, and a slight increase in both negative and positive sentiment (neutral sentiment decreased) can be observed.³⁶ The period under review was preceded by a predominantly negative media discourse on migration. Despite a drop in media outlets compared to the years 2015 and 2016, the Slovak media still dedicated a considerable amount of attention to the topic of migration of third-country nationals even in 2017. In addition to the continuing mixed and irregular migration into the EU and the EU measures in this area, the Slovak media were vocal in 2017 about relocations to Slovakia, formation of common positions of the V4 countries on migration issues, and the so-called global compacts on migration and refugees. The media also echoed the theme of labour migration to Slovakia from third countries, mainly concerning the citizens of Serbia and their working conditions, the situation at the Foreign Police Department in Bratislava, and the case of detained smugglers with a larger group of migrants. Some media outlets have focused on busting myths, misinformation and hoaxes

³² BEHŮNOVÁ, K., OBOŇOVÁ, S.: *Výročná správa o migrácii a azyle v Slovenskej republike za rok 2020*. [online]. [2022-02-18]. Available at: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyrocne-spravy-emn-o-migracii-a-azyle/item/download/2865_fbbf50a0506edf17e0ba8476496cb864.html>.

³³ ALIU, M.: *Migrations, Media, and the Pandemic*. [online]. [2022-02-18]. Available at: <<https://www.balkanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Bosnia-Herzegovina/Migrations-media-and-the-pandemic-208911>>.

³⁴ A third-country national is any person who is not a Slovak or EU citizen (a third-country national also means a stateless person) (for more information, see: Statistical overview of legal and illegal migration in the Slovak Republic).

³⁵ The average number of stays after rounding is 11,000. The situation in Slovakia was well above the average in the year from 30 June 2018 to 30 June 2019. Also from June 2019 to the end of June 2020. Period until the end of June 2021, which is also the period we analyzed, is the 4th highest among the years and is about 3000 stays below average.

³⁶ SPÁLOVÁ, L. et al.: *Media – Migration – Politics*. Berlin : Peter Lang, 2022, p. 175.

in relation to various migration issues.³⁷ This could have been reflected by the relatively high proportion of neutral sentiment in the media discourse in the period under review. “Although the Slovak outlets news did not provide much space to the voice of migrants, they focused to a significant extent on the people and their fate (human interest frame) and provided neutral news.”³⁸

Development of digital media outputs on the topic of migration by sentiment, Slovakia, 2018-2020

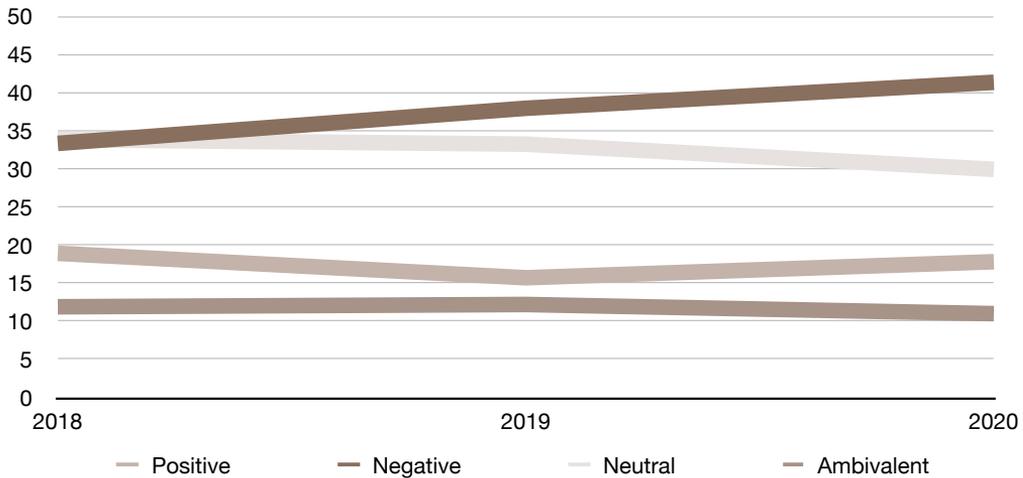


TABLE 2: *Topic of migration by sentiment*

Source: SPÁLOVÁ, L. et al.: *Media – Migration – Politics*. Berlin : Peter Lang, 2022, p. 183.

The results of sentiment analysis may have several reasons, one of them being the currently most protracted global issue of public policies. While migration was undoubtedly an issue in 2015 and 2016, climate crisis became a dominant theme in 2018, followed by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and the war in Ukraine in 2022. It is interesting to see that the topics discussed in the media also contain a certain degree of threat to the population and the planet. The “danger” discourse remains, but the “threat” theme has been replaced by a new and current one, which displaced older topics from the media discourse.³⁹

3 Identification of the Media Discourse in the Online News Outlet *aktuality.sk* in the First Half of 2021

3.1 Research Problem

The media-driven discourse has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the issue of migration/migrants and its perception and evaluation by the receiving end of the media content. Media discourse is shaping public opinion, it activates and positions political mobilization and legal

³⁷ MĚSZÁROSOVÁ, S., OBOŇOVÁ, S.: *Výročná správa o migrácii a azyle v Slovenskej republike za rok 2018*. [online]. [2022-02-17]. Available at: <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyrocnne-spravy-emn-o-migracii-a-azyle/item/download/2551_9ac3898beaccf74a754d91fcc6045517.html>.

³⁸ POSPĚCH, P. et al.: *Ve středu pozornosti. Mediální pokrytí tématu migrace v České Republice, Estonsku a na Slovensku*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.clovektisni.cz/ve-stredu-pozornosti-mediální-pokrytí-tematu-migrace-v-ceske-republice-estonsku-a-na-slovensku-1320pub>>.

³⁹ SPÁLOVÁ, L. et al.: *Media – Migration – Politics*. Berlin : Peter Lang, 2022, p. 183.

aid by providing specific interpretive perspectives, in which offers a cognitive shortcut for the recipients of media content.⁴⁰ Based on the theoretical meta-analysis of the research findings in the Slovak context, which continue to emphasize the prevailing negative media sentiment when presenting the media content on migration, we were interested in the discourse in the Slovak media space even after the media interest in the topic faded away. We have defined our research goal as an effort to identify the media discourse on migration in the most visited Slovak online medium *aktuality.sk* in the first half of 2021.

3.2 Research Method and Research Material

When analyzing the text published in the media on the topic of migration, we relied on the theoretical and methodological concept of discourse analysis by N. Fairclough, M. Foucault and J. Potter.⁴¹ We understand discourse more widely within both approaches – interactive and socio-political – social knowledge is created and maintained through social interaction, but at the same time it leads to social interaction; the texts/discourse (in this context, even an image/ photograph is considered to be text) also exhibits the abuse and misuse of power in various political and social situations. In our analysis, we used qualitative research and a bottom-up approach, with the aim of identifying/unmasking the discourse strategies related to migration. In our research, we used the case study method. A case study belongs to the methods of qualitative research.⁴² It differs from other types of studies (biographical, phenomenological, ethnographic) in that it includes an intensive analysis and description of a separate unit or system bounded by time and space. As recommended we used a so-called collective case study, which is a case study of multiple cases, aimed at exploring the similarities and differences between several instrumental cases.⁴³

The research material consisted of media texts (including photographs) published on the <https://www.aktuality.sk/> website in the period under review (from 1.1.2021 to 30.6.2021). The medium was selected based on the fact that *aktuality.sk* has been the most visited Slovak website for several years.⁴⁴ Additionally, *aktuality.sk* is identified as a news medium, which was a relevant prerequisite for us in terms of objectivity.⁴⁵

We have searched for the units of analysis by means of the following keywords: migrant, migrants, refugee, refugees and migration. Subsequently, we filtered the selection based on the selected time interval (see the results in Table 3).

⁴⁰ GREUSSING, E., BOOMGAARDEN, H. G.: *Shifting the Refugee Narrative? An Automated Frame Analysis of Europe's 2015 Refugee Crisis*. [online]. [2022-02-20]. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1282813>>.

⁴¹ See: FAIRCLOUGH, N.: *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysing for Social Research*. London : Routledge, 2003, p. 35; FOUCAULT, M.: *Archeologie věděni*. Prague : Herrmann & synové, 2016, p. 128; POTTER, J.: *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction*. Loughborough University, UK : Sage Publication, 1996.

⁴² See: HANCOCK, D. R., ALGOZZINE, B.: *Doing Case Study Research: A Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers*. New York : Teachers College Press, 2006.

⁴³ YIN, R. K.: *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage, 2009, p. 219.

⁴⁴ KARPELOVÁ, D.: *Koľko Slovákov je online a koľko z nich chodí na slovenské stránky?* [online]. [2022-02-26]. Available at: <<https://strategie.hnonline.sk/blogy/2328009-aka-bola-navstevnost-slovenskeho-internetu-v-roku-2020>>.

⁴⁵ BARTOŠEK, J., TUŠER, A.: Teoreticko-praktické východiská mediálnej tvorby. In TUŠER, A. et al.: *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Bratislava : Bratislavská vysoká škola práva, 2010, p. 30.

	Date	Keyword	Media text title	Genre	Relevance
1.	1/20/2021	Migrants	<i>Young People May Be Vaccinated Earlier, Says Krajčí</i>	News report	Yes
2.	1/24/2021	Refugee	<i>Some Remember Compulsory Military Service with Nostalgia. Others Have Resorted to Desperate Actions.</i>	News report	No
3.	1/27/2021	Migrants	<i>The MPs of Do-Gooder Pellegrini Showed Their True Colours about Soros</i>	Commentary	Yes
4.	1/31/2021	migration, migrants	<i>An Iron Monster, Destroyed Nature and a Wall that Isn't. Why the Trump's Project Never Made Sense</i>	News report	Yes
5.	5/25/2021	migration	<i>The Doctor Was Vaccinated Twice, and One Vaccination Record Is Missing in the State Certificate</i>	News report	No
6.	6/11/2021	migration	<i>The Legends of the Alternative Music Scene Will Play at Počúvadlo</i>	News report	Yes
7.	6/17/2021	migration	<i>Following Russia, Orban Used Gay People Yet Again. He Is Driving them Out of Television and Links Them with Paedophiles</i>	News report	Yes
8.	6/18/2021	refugees	<i>Coronavirus ONLINE: The Medical Council Issued Travel Recommendations to Prevent the Spread of the Delta Variant</i>	News report	Yes
9.	6/19/2021	refugees	<i>Refugees from Auschwitz Vrba and Wetzler Will Have a Memorial Room in Žilina Where They Have Written Their Testimony</i>	News report	No
10.	6/29/2021	migrant	<i>The Murder of a 13-year-old Girl in Vienna Unleashed Passions against Migrants</i>	News report	Yes

TABLE 3: Analyzed journalist texts

Source: own processing, 2022

3.3 Results

Article 1 titled “*Young People May Be Vaccinated Earlier, Says Krajčí*” was published on January 20, 2021. It is a summary of the pandemic situation in several cities. A rather long overview is complemented by numerous statements, such as statements by the President, government information on unemployment, or the fact more vaccines will be imported to Slovakia. The information related to migration is mentioned in a short paragraph. The news report was about the Czech police who started to check compliance with quarantine measures at certain border crossings. One of the reasons was increased illegal migration.⁴⁶ It is the only mention of migration in the information feed from this day. The actual numbers, increase in the percentage or specific persons are not mentioned in the news report. The information in this particular case is counter to the European statistics on the decline of illegal migration during the pandemic. There is no cover photograph in the article, the text is accompanied by graphics informing about the possibilities of testing in individual cities and about the side effects of the vaccine and the Covid-19 disease.

⁴⁶ VÝBEROVÁ, P., KOVÁČIKOVÁ, J.: *Koronavírus: Mladých možno začnú očkovať skôr, pripustil Krajčí*. [online]. [2022-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/857281/koronavirus-online-slovensko-20-január-2021/>>.

Article 2 “Some Remember Compulsory Military Service with Nostalgia. Others Have Resorted to Desperate Action” written by editor I. Hečková on 24.1.2021. The word “refugee” in the text is used in connection with a military trainee who deserted the army with a machine gun.⁴⁷ This article is therefore irrelevant for our study.

Article 3 is dated January 27, 2021, and it is a write-up by Editor-in-Chief of *aktuality.sk* Peter Bárďy with the title: “The MPs of Do-Gooder Pellegrini Showed Their True Colours about Soros.”⁴⁸ In the introduction, the author briefly mentioned how Robert Fico referred to Peter Pellegrini as a do-gooder. In Fico’s parlance, this term means: “someone stupid, naive, welcoming migrants and a threat to Christianity and European values, a dirty thing.”⁴⁹ He even assigned them roles: Fico is a bad policeman and Pellegrini is a good one. However, the dispute between the two politicians is not the main point of the write-up; it is rather the vote in favour of the new head of the Migration Office. According to Bárďy, Robert Fico views the candidate as an anti-Slovak, and links it to his pro-migration views and experience as a boss of the *Open Society Foundation* (NGO) for several years. “He then arranged a vote because of his concerns about the nomination of Ján Orlovský, and all that because of Soros and the do-gooder. Together with Fico, even the vast majority of Kotleba’s and Pellegrini’s MPs voted in favour of this resolution...”⁵⁰ Bárďy admits that Peter Pellegrini was not present at the vote, but thinks that Fico’s subjects showed their faithfulness into the future. In the conclusion of his write-up, Bárďy is guessing the motives behind the split of Smer. He is also cracking jokes and asking whether Pellegrini suffers from Stockholm syndrome, or whether it is Pellegrini himself who is afraid to vote in favour of migration. Nothing is said about migration in the last paragraph; it only deals with the calculation and strength of Robert Fico, including his low preferences at that time.



PICTURE 1: Comentry by Peter Bárďy

Source: BÁRDY, P.: *Komentár Petra Bárďyho: Poslanci „slniečkara” Pellegriniho sa pri Sorosovi vyfarbili.* [online]. [2022-02-22]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/859399/komentar-petra-bardyho-slnieckar-pellegrini-sa-pri-sorosovi-vyfarbil/>>.

The photograph to the commentary is illustrative, and it shows the face of Peter Pellegrini and his party colleague Richard Raši who left Smer-SD. Pellegrini brandished a T-shirt with the logo of the party he currently presides over. It is probably a photo from a presser because there are microphones in front of Pellegrini and he is staring somewhere into the crowd. This photo is probably just further proof that Peter Pellegrini is not in Robert Fico’s party. Richard Raši is

⁴⁷ HEČKOVÁ, I.: *Niektorí na povinnú vojenčinu spomínajú s nostalgiou. Iných dohnala k zúfalým činom.* [online]. [2022-02-24]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/858066/niektori-na-povinnu-vojencinu-spominaju-s-nostalgiou-inych-dohnala-k-zufalym-cinom/>>.

⁴⁸ BÁRDY, P.: *Komentár Petra Bárďyho: Poslanci „slniečkara” Pellegriniho sa pri Sorosovi vyfarbili.* [online]. [2022-02-22]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/859399/komentar-petra-bardyho-slnieckar-pellegrini-sa-pri-sorosovi-vyfarbil/>>.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁰ *Ibidem.*

standing in the background, and is also looking into the crowd, probably at the journalists. He makes no other contribution to the photograph, and is rather a reminder that Peter Pellegrini did not switch parties alone. The photograph itself does not evoke any attitudes of the politicians to migration or the candidate in question who was put to the vote. Peter Pellegrini's lips are tight and Richard Raši is frowning; this body language could mean that they have been asked a direct question but we cannot verify it, and the body language of politicians may also mean that they are focused on the questions themselves.

The last contribution from January 2021 is Article 4 with the title *"An Iron Monster, Destroyed Nature and a Wall that Isn't. Why the Trump's Project Never Made Sense"* about the wall on the border between US and Mexico, which helped Donald Trump win the elections.⁵¹ It contains much information, including historical, about whose idea it was to build the wall and how Trump changed the original idea of the wall. The idea was to clearly demarcate the border, and from the onset of Trump, the former President of the United States of America, it has nationalist and anti-migratory connotations. Some sections of the article dealing with migration discuss how this wall helped Trump win the elections. This strategy, which was automatically linked to migrants, helped him talk about migration and take firm action. The topic of migrants was used by President Trump in the debate on migration into the United States, especially from Muslim countries.⁵²



PICTURE 2: *The wall that divided America*

Source: ŠTRBA, P.: *Železné monštrum, zničená príroda a múr, ktorý neexistuje. Prečo Trumpov projekt nemal nikdy zmysel.* [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/860697/usa-trump-mur-mexiko/>>.

In the next two paragraphs devoted to Trump and his attitude to migration, the author of the article mentions the opinion of an activist: *"It is unlikely that the wall as such will have any fundamental effects on (migration),"* says David Donatti. *"The government is building it at places where it is easier to build. Instead of building it where people cross the border."*⁵³ The author also added that the wall had no impact on the migration of drug cartels.⁵⁴ The article is information-based and it does not defend Trump, but quite the opposite. It uses several citations that degrade Trump's idea. The wall is a symbol of division and polarization. The photo on the first page shows the wall built from high steel columns that resemble bars. There are several men in the photo who are probably responsible for the construction. The photo is documentary and does not express any views on the wall shown in the photo. The description reads as follows: *"The wall on the border with Mexico is in fact huge bars."*⁵⁵

⁵¹ ŠTRBA, P.: *Železné monštrum, zničená príroda a múr, ktorý neexistuje. Prečo Trumpov projekt nemal nikdy zmysel.* [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/860697/usa-trump-mur-mexiko/>>.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

Article 6 of June 11, 2021 “*The Legends of the Alternative Music Scene Will Play at Počúvadlo*” is a notice that the multi-genre festival will also host public debates. One of these was a debate focused on the subject of our study, i.e. the topic “*Migrants and refugees, or facts on migration*”.⁵⁶ Four experts on migration and integration of foreigners were participating in the debate. In this case, it was a way to promote the festival and we appreciate the reference to the debate with experts. This is mainly because migration is a difficult topic, as we have mentioned above. We do not provide the cover photo in this case because it only shows the names of the bands, the festival and the date of the event.⁵⁷ The photo is therefore a promotional poster for a particular festival, and is therefore irrelevant for our contribution.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán stands at the heart of Article 7 by P. Štrba titled “*Following Russia, Orbán Used Gay People Yet Again. He is Driving Them Out of Television and Links Them with Paedophiles*.”⁵⁸ The article contains political actions by the Prime Minister of Hungary for whom homosexuals have become the main topic after migrants. “*Last elections were about migrants, these elections will be about homosexuals. This is how some analysts assess the current tactic of Viktor Orbán before the Hungarians elect a new Parliament*.”⁵⁹ The parliamentary elections in Hungary should be held by no later than 2022. In addition to the mention above, migration is not further developed on in the text. The article informs about Viktor Orbán’s policy. The author is objective in the text and does not defend the minorities.



PICTURE 3: LGBTQ+ in Hungary

Source: ŠTRBA, P.: *Orbán po vzore Ruska opäť vytiahol homosexuálov. Vyháňa ich z televízie a spája s pedofilmi*. [online]. [2022-02-20]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/900360/orban-po-vzore-ruska-opat-vytiahol-homosexualov-vyhana-ich-zo-skol-aj-z-televizii/>>.

As stated in the caption, the cover photo shows a crowd of people protesting against the law against homosexuals. People are holding LGBTQ+ flags, including gay flags, which Orbán and the Hungarian Parliament speak against.

In Article 8 of June 18, 2021, “*Coronavirus ONLINE: The Medical Council Issued Travel Recommendations to Prevent the Spread of the Delta Variant*”, the authors summarized the most important events of the day in the countries of Europe and in Slovakia.⁶⁰ Migration is mentioned in a short snippet at 9.23 AM: “– *REFUGEES: The number of displaced persons and refugees has increased again despite the pandemic. (TASR) “refugees”,*” is the only part

⁵⁶ Na Počúvadle odznejú legendy alternatívnej hudobnej scény. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/898770/na-pocuvadle-odzneju-legendy-alternativnej-hudobnej-sceny/>>.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

⁵⁸ ŠTRBA, P.: *Orbán po vzore Ruska opäť vytiahol homosexuálov. Vyháňa ich z televízie a spája s pedofilmi*. [online]. [2022-02-20]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/900360/orban-po-vzore-ruska-opat-vytiahol-homosexualov-vyhana-ich-zo-skol-aj-z-televizii/>>.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ DEBNÁR, J., VÝBEROVÁ, P.: *Coronavirus ONLINE: Koronavírus ONLINE: Konzílium vydalo cestovné odporúčania, aby sa zamedzilo šíreniu delta variantu*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/900596/koronavirus-online-slovensko-18-jun-2021/>>.

of the Article which could be linked with migration.⁶¹ The reference from the snippet in the article – a quick news item of informative value – is that migration didn't stop with the pandemic. This is similar to quick news from January 20.

Although Article 9 “*Refugees from Auschwitz Vrba and Wetzler Will Have a Memorial Room in Žilina Where They Have Written Their Testimony*” of June 19, 2021 reports on the refugees, it is the refugees who managed to escape from Auschwitz. These two refugees, as the author of the Article calls them, will have a memorial room in Žilina. They wrote about their experience from the concentration camp.⁶² Although the report contains one of the key words, it does not concern migration in the sense of our study.

The last news article 10 is dated June 29, 2021. The report deals with an extremely violent act and two Afghan suspects.⁶³ The report is taken from the Slovak Press Agency, and it reads: “*The Murder of a 13-year-old Girl in Vienna Has Launched a Sharp Political Debate in Austria on Asylum Seekers. Two young Afghans are the key suspects in this act, APA agency informed on Tuesday.*”⁶⁴ The report cites Austrian Chancellor Kurz who promised that the perpetrators would be punished. At the same time, the report presents Kurz's position that it is unacceptable that: “*people come to us, seek protection and commit such cruel and barbaric crimes.*”⁶⁵



PICTURE 4: Murder in Vienna

Source: WÁCLAV, B.: *Vražda 13-ročného dievčaťa vo Viedni rozpútala vášne proti migrantom*. [online]. [2021-06-31]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/903981/vrazda-13-rocneho-dievcata-vo-viedni-rozputala-vasne-proti-migrantom/>>.

The Article mentions a number of positions of the political parties which have expressed their support for stepping up the expulsion of asylum seekers, and some call for a complete abolition of asylum applications and a revocation of the asylum status of the prosecuted.⁶⁶ The report is informative and it starts with the act that was committed. It then mentions the statements of political parties but does not touch on migration in Austria. The cover photo is illustrative and it shows an Austrian police officer in a uniform with a gun standing next to a police car. The photo serves as a reminder that a crime has been committed but does not evoke any emotions or anti-migratory moods.

⁶¹ DEBNÁR, J., VÝBEROVÁ, P.: *Coronavirus ONLINE: Koronavírus ONLINE: Konzílium vydalo cestovné odporúčania, aby sa zamedzilo šíreniu delta variantu*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/900596/koronavirus-online-slovensko-18-jun-2021/>>.

⁶² PALÚCHOVÁ, M.: *Utečenci z Auschwitzu Vrba a Wetzler budú mať v Žiline, kde písali svedectvo, pamätnú izbu*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/900628/utecenci-z-osviencimu-vrba-a-wetzler-budu-mat-v-ziline-kde-ich-ukryvali-pamatnu-izbu/>>.

⁶³ WÁCLAV, B.: *Vražda 13-ročného dievčaťa vo Viedni rozpútala vášne proti migrantom*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/903981/vrazda-13-rocneho-dievcata-vo-viedni-rozputala-vasne-proti-migrantom/>>.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ Ibidem.

3.4 Discussion

Based on our analysis, we conclude that we have not identified the establishment of the above agenda in the observed medium in the first half of 2021. The migration topic was approached in various ways. Out of a total of 10 news report searches on aktuality.sk through Google in the period January-June 2021, 7 media texts were relevant to our research study. The photographs used in the news reports did not give a tabloidized impression and did not directly refer to any prejudices or myths about migration. The journalist articles did not carry any elements of sensation or dramatization of events. All this despite the fact that in the last news report dealing with the murder of a 13-year-old girl, or the article about the wall on the border of Mexico and the United States, or the increasing number of illegal border crossings, the journalists could have used a different and more drastic and anti-migratory tone in the photo attached to the report. The photographs were of an illustrative nature and they were only used to paint an additional picture about the subject. The quick news items, i.e. short news in real time, were not accompanied by cover photos. This wasn't the case in the expert debate on migration either – the author of the article used a poster instead of a photograph. The single comment, and thus the journalistic genre among the news, preserved the notional character of the photograph. The depiction of two politicians was nothing specific or prominent. Of the seven relevant reports, four had cover photographs.

Most of the texts belonged to the news category and the values of this category were preserved. The analyzed media texts maintained their informative and objective character. The aktuality.sk daily did not advocate for migration, criticize it, nor did it explain the phenomena related to it. Two reports reported increased numbers related to the migration of persons. However, in this case, these were the articles from January and June 2021, which were only an overview of the events from the day. The information on migration was very brief. The news reports did not mention the reasons for migration, specific migrants or refugees. The political report on Orbán's campaigns in the past was only a brief reminder of his anti-immigration campaigns. It did not explain Viktor Orbán's position or migration itself. The mention of the festival was rather a publicity article, but we emphasize the reference to the discussion on migration. Due to the way the media elaborated on this rare topic; such information is relevant in the available medium. Thematically, the seven relevant media reports on migration/migrants could be divided into political topics,⁶⁷ news about pandemic migration,⁶⁸ educational topics on migration⁶⁹ and criminal law topics.⁷⁰ The low frequency of the topic in the daily under review is surprising despite our assumption that the topic of migration would be marginalized in the media in the period under review. From the point of view of discourses identified in our sample, we noted a persistent occurrence of the following discourses: cultural threats, security

⁶⁷ See: BÁRDY, P.: *Komentár Petra Bárdyho: Poslanci „slniečkara“ Pellegriniho sa pri Sorosovi vyfarbili*. [online]. [2022-02-22]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/859399/komentar-petra-bardyho-slnieckar-pellegrini-sa-pri-sorosovi-vyfarbil/>>; ŠTRBA, P.: *Železné monštrum, zničená príroda a múr, ktorý neexistuje. Prečo Trumpov projekt nemal nikdy zmysel*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/860697/usa-trump-mur-mexiko/>>; ŠTRBA, P.: *Orbán po vzore Ruska opäť vytiahol homosexuálov. Vyháňa ich z televízie a spája s pedofilmi*. [online]. [2022-02-20]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/900360/orban-po-vzore-ruska-opat-vytiahol-homosexualov-vyhana-ich-zo-skol-aj-z-televizii/>>.

⁶⁸ See: VÝBEROVÁ, P., KOVÁČIKOVÁ, J.: *Koronavírus: Mladých možno začnú očkovať skôr, pripustil Krajčí*. [online]. [2022-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/857281/koronavirus-online-slovensko-20-januar-2021/>>; DEBNÁR, J., VÝBEROVÁ, P.: *Koronavírus ONLINE: Konzílium vydalo cestovné odporúčania, aby sa zamedzilo šíreniu delta variantu*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/900596/koronavirus-online-slovensko-18-jun-2021/>>.

⁶⁹ *Na Počúvadle odznejú legendy alternatívnej hudobnej scény*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/898770/na-pocuvadle-odzneju-legendy-alternativnej-hudobnej-sceny/>>.

⁷⁰ WÁCLAV, B.: *Vražda 13-ročného dievčaťa vo Viedni rozptala vášne proti migrantom*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/903981/vrazda-13-rocneho-dievcata-vo-viedni-rozptalavasne-proti-migrantom/>>.

discourse and effective solidarity. The latter, however, only concerned the promotion of debates with the migration experts at the festival. The other two can be described as dominant given the low number of contributions.

4 Conclusion

The media debate on migration has been taking shape since 2015 when more than a million migrants arrived in the European Union and the media and political discourse on migration was transformed more significantly. In the first migration wave (2015) the security risk and cultural threats were the dominant communication strategy, in the second wave (2016, 2017) the discourse on migration management was highly relevant, and in the third period (2018), an alternative concept of “effective solidarity” emerged – this idea was first presented in 2016 during the Slovak Presidency of the EU Council.⁷¹ Migration was one of the main topics of the parliamentary election campaigns in 2016, and its media coverage was much more frequent. There were no electoral campaigns in the first half of 2021. Migration is a common feature of political agendas and campaigns in which political parties present their plans to address migration.⁷² The topic had been alive in Slovakia for six years, and no shocking events had occurred that could have been attributed to migrants or refugees. Based on the identified news reports, the depiction of migration in the half-year of 2021 on *aktuality.sk* was rather inconsistent. It did not have regular coverage or matching topics that the medium would address, for example, through continuous coverage.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, the top 10 migration problems in 2021 were: uneven opening of the borders due to the various variants of Covid-19, broadening of the protection of countries in South America and the Caribbean for Venezuelans, vaccination as a travel pass, crises around the world that deepen the humanitarian crisis, the new president of the United States who corrected the restrictions imposed by the previous president Trump, the situation in Afghanistan, Belarus and the refugees and the migration flows across the Western hemisphere, the focus of the United States and Europe on the causes of migration, and rising numbers of remittances despite the pandemic.⁷³ These topics were absent in the analyzed news reports. Quite the opposite should be the case as the topic of migration is still a rare topic and “*the media are the key area where one can meet refugees and migrants in Europe.*”⁷⁴ At the same time, however, it seems that the overall media sentiment in the migration discourse is relatively stable in the long run, with prevalent negative connotations of the concepts such as “migrant”, “refugee” and the migration process itself, and with a significantly weak representation of positive sentiment.

In 2022, we expect the rather rare topic of migration to be more current due to the arrival of war refugees from Ukraine, increased solidarity of the Slovak population and the implicit changes in the attitude towards migration and positive sentiments.

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⁷¹ SPÁLOVÁ, L.: *Politický branding*. Bratislava : Európska Akadémia Manažmentu, Marketingu a Médií, 2021, p. 127.

⁷² NOVÁK, M., KOHOUTEK, J. et al.: *Politická kultura mocenských elit v éře globalizace*. Kolín : Nezávislé centrum pro studium politiky, 2012, p. 62.

⁷³ *Top 10 Migration Issues of 2021*. [online]. [2022-02-15]. Available at: <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/migration-information-source/top-10-migration-issues-2021>>.

⁷⁴ CHOULIARAKI, L.: *The European “Migration Crisis” and the Media*. [online]. [2022-02-19]. Available at: <<https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/projects/media-and-migration/Migration-and-media-report-FINAL-June17.pdf>>.

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Lucia Spálová regards the transdisciplinary nature of the research anchored in the social sciences, in critical social psychology and in discursive linguistics. The main topic of this research in the field of media and communication studies is the social responsibility of media discrimination in the media, media portrayals of stereotypes, ethnocentrism and depiction of different sexual orientation, and the effectivity of persuasion techniques in digital communication.

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