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## **Immigrants and Media in Greece: An Empirical Investigation for the Period 2002-2008**

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***Abstract:***

*In Greece, since immigration is a very recent phenomenon, the rise of nationalist and racist speech through the media as well as the reproduction of negative stereotypes of immigrants is a serious issue that should be investigated. Especially after 2004, significant changes occurred regarding the recording of current news. The aim of this research is to present the treatment of immigrants by the media in Greece, to analyze the role that they play in formulating public opinion on immigration and to identify any changes that have occurred in the attitude of the media towards immigrants in recent years. A key tool was the systematic recording, of the Greek news (Greek-speaking, English-speaking) in the E Centre from 2002 until 2008.*

***Key Words:*** *Immigration, Media*

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## 1. Introduction

Since the Dorians' descent in the antiquity in Greece until the "barbaric" invasions in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD in Europe and the transplantation of Europeans in the new continents overseas, immigration act as a catalyst in formulating the societies with the big cultural changes it brought in every era, in all widths and lengths of the planet. In today's globalized environment immigration once again radically changed the international scene and caused rapid transformations. At the macroeconomic level, the liberalization of goods, capital and people is essential for transforming the planet into a global village (*Kontis, 2005*). At microeconomic level, this means that immigration is an integral part of the political, social, economic and broader cultural life and concerns us directly.

At the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the daily life of the Greeks and the prospects of the Greek society are inextricably intertwined and attached organically, more than ever before, to the developments taking place within the framework of interdependence and commitment with international organizations, particularly towards the European Union. Part of this European perspective according to Norbert *et. al.* (2005) is the process of conformation of a single supranational institutional entity and the foundation of the "European citizenship", which focuses on residency and not on nationality and origin of the citizens (*Papadopoulou, 2006*).

In Greece, as immigration is a very recent phenomenon, the rise of nationalist and racist speech through the media and the reproduction of negative stereotypes of immigrants comprise a serious problem. Besides, after 2004 significant changes occurred during the recording of current news.

However, stereotypes and prejudices in the wider society have not been eliminated while the image often presented by the media maintain and even strengthen these prejudices instead of removing them.

The under-representation or the poor representation of immigrants, refugees and returnees has a particular impact on the general public. Broadcasting, news and films shown by the media, promote obvious or veiled racism, cultural stereotypes or "snapshot", confirm and often reinforce existing prejudices, which may cause or aggravate social attitudes that lead to discrimination, racism and social exclusion.

Furthermore, the "public" represented by the increasing number of the social groups, maintains relationship "mistrust" with the national media: there are few personalities, articles, stories and issues that concern them. This leads to further social exclusion and marginalization.

The introduction of the concept of "diversity" in the media every day has a significant impact on the perceptions and attitudes of viewers and listeners. It will provide to the members of "different" social groups positive roles models and will offer a greater and more balanced picture of these groups, as well as a more accurate view of society in which they live.

Both aspects are important to ensure a more respected position in Greek society for the immigrants and refugees and limiting outbreaks of racism and

xenophobia. Furthermore, the presentation of “public persons” of “different” social groups will motivate positively the young people who come from families of immigrants or refugees (*Vrakopoulou, 2004*).

## **2. Media and Immigrants in Greece**

Observing the media, since the phenomenon of immigration became part of the social reality of our country, a fundamental conclusion was derived. This conclusion is that the press, broadcasting and the news about immigrants and their lives in our country, can be classified into two broad categories.

The first group relates to airings and reports that predict calamities regarding the presence of immigrants in our country. The prediction of impending calamities regarding immigrants is the main characteristic of the programmes that: (a) present the increase in crime as a result of the increasing number of immigrants and (b) consider immigrants as the main cause of the increasing unemployment in Greece, because they steal the jobs from Greek workers. This widespread feeling that without immigration everything would go well, there is only a psychosocial mechanism that transfers responsibilities to the outside world; it is a dangerous xenophobic fantasy that misleads people from identifying the real causes of the current social crisis. This view of media affects the way people experience immigration in their daily activities. Moreover Greek people begin to suspect their immigrant neighbour; even he or she has not given any reason, and recommends their children to avoid accompanying immigrants' children. The second type of broadcasting and publications referred to discrimination against immigrants. Most of the programmes and publications do not intent to inform people and raise awareness, but to present the living conditions of immigrants in a tragic way. Many publications and broadcasts describe the queues of immigrants in public services, disregarding that the same public services also afflict Greek citizens. Furthermore, there are programmes that support reactions against immigrants' children who are the best students in their classes, have the best grades and keep the flag in the parades that took place in national celebrations. There are also programmes that give the floor to immigrants, in order to expose the discrimination made against them and their oppression by their Greeks co-citizens.

The common feature of all these is that immigrants are presented as dangerous or unfortunate persons. However, another dimension of immigration in our country is unfortunately overlooked. According to this dimension the economic immigrants have come to Greece with the vision of a better future for them and their family. They are happy for the opportunities that the Greek state provides to them and would not have in their country of origin. They live in harmony with their Greek neighbours and maintain better relations with their Greek friends, than with people that have come from the same place. These elements do not belong in the sphere of imagination, but they are elements that immigrants welcome. The examples are

much more than we imagine and reveal another dimension of immigration, which has not been noticed enough by the media (Zavos, 2007).

The press, with the exception of a small number of Athenian and local newspapers, are referring to immigrants with racist and xenophobic stereotypes while the broadcast media, with the exception of public radio; do not include programmes for immigrants.

A more dispassionate recording of immigration from the media, which would comply with equal distances between the negative and positive side of this phenomenon could contribute decisively to the social awareness about this phenomenon and its implications to our country. The press has already begun moving towards this direction, making in-depth and objective presentation of each dimension of this phenomenon. On the other hand, the electronic media and most notably the private broadcasting media, present the issues related to immigration in a skin-deep, recycling the stereotypes that have become accustomed. The reasons electronic media have this attitude towards immigration have not been studied yet, but it is impossible, this attitude to be attributed to the fact that officers working for these broadcasts not to be sufficiently informed about the reality of immigration and its actual size. Therefore, the media should present to people another approach of immigration, by highlighting its influence on the global economy, education and culture, in order the phenomenon of immigration to be placed in a proper perspective. How many of Greek citizens know that immigrants do not deprive jobs, as is widely believed today, but have contributed to the creation of over 115,000 jobs (Zavos, 2007)? How many people know how immigrants can help pension funds? All these are parts of the true picture of immigration that is not shown from the vast majority of electronic media.

Therefore, media lose the opportunity to be a fruitful channel of communication within the framework of social dialogue about immigration and its benefits to the Greek society. In this way, the debate about the consequences and benefits of immigration could be facilitated in many ways: Firstly, Greek citizens could be informed about the effects of immigration on their daily lives. Secondly, the media could inform immigrants themselves about their rights and obligations. For example news and some other informative programmes could inform immigrants (Zavos, 2007).

The Greek television does not exclude immigrants or make special efforts to include them. More and more Albanians are displayed in television broadcasts, and there is some evidence that their social integration has begun. On the other hand, there are TV programs that are referring to immigrant communities in particular. A small television station, Channel 10, has regularly news in Albanian and Russian. The radio coverage is more extensive, the channel 984 of the Municipality of Athens is addressed regularly in immigrant communities, Sky Radio has an Albanian program once a week, and Radio Friendship, department of broadcasting of the National Radio of Greece (NRA) is broadcasting in foreign languages.

Greek newspapers seem to follow the same line with television: neither exclude nor include immigrants. There are two English-speaking newspapers (the Athens News and the English edition of Kathimerini) aimed at English-speaking communities, although read by Greeks. There is a wide range of foreign press in different languages and different nationalities. These papers are issued primarily in Greece, are volatile, have temporary type and do not target at any particular market.

The media have made much progress in the acceptance of immigrants in relation to the situation at the early and mid 1990s. But they do not pay a special effort to include immigrant communities (Baldwin, 2006).

It also should be noted that apart from the Greek-speaking media there are some newspapers which are issued by the immigrants themselves in their mother language.

The Albanian community, apart from the Albanian newspapers imported daily from the neighbouring country can be informed by the *Gazeta e Athines*, an Albanian weekly newspaper which is issued in Athens.

The Russian-speaking immigrants, as well as many Greeks from the former USSR are informed by the weekly *Athenian Courier*, *Athenian Sun*, *Omonoia*, and *Athens-Plus*, while immigrants from Bulgaria by the weekly newspaper *Today Bulgaria*, *Bulgarian Voice*, *Becth* and *Kohtakth*. Of course Russian and Bulgarian daily newspapers imported from those countries.

The Arabic-speaking immigrants can also be informed by the weekly *Athens Weekly Report* and the newspaper *Panorama* which is edited twice a month, immigrants from Pakistan by the weekly *Athens Aawaz* and there is a monthly newsletter entitled "Hearts" for immigrants from the Philippines.

Finally, the weekly newspaper *Kurier Atenski* has a significant impact on immigrants' information as it is one of the first newspapers that addressed to immigrants coming from Poland.

The public broadcasting radio broadcasts special programs for immigrants in 12 languages, but there is always the problem of low ratings, on the other hand, there is not any systematic TV program for immigrant communities (Avramoudis, 2004).

### **3. Empirical Research**

#### ***3.1 Purpose of Research***

This research, classifying, indexing and reviewing news about immigrants that have been recorded during the period 2002-2008 in 7 newspapers and 3 news agencies (*Athens News*, *Kathimerini English Edition*, *Ta Nea*, *To Bima tis Kiriakis*, *Elefterotipia*, *Avgi*, *Kathimerini*, *British News Agency* *BBC News*, *Athens Agency*, *Macedonian Press Agency*), attempts to present the issues that are related to

immigrants and to identify the changes that have been occurred in the attitude of medias towards immigrants during the examined period (2002-2008).

The degree of immigrants' integration and the smooth adaptation of both immigrants and the Greek society are the big bet for the future. The process of integration consists of the interaction relationship between: (a) the efforts of immigrants to be accepted by the community and adapt to the circumstances of society that they want to join, and (b) the efforts of the society to welcome them. In other words, it is about a relationship between transmitter and receiver, the development of which depends on the extent of the reversal of roles where the transmitter transformed in the political, social and cultural life to receiver and vice versa (Pavlou, 2006). This relation affects persons, organizations and institutions and more widely the whole Greek society at a local, national and international level (Papadopoulou, 2006).

In this context the questions raised by this research are:

- 1) What immigrants of stakeholders can find in the pages of the current Greek news?
- 2) Have any changes occurred in the attitude of medias towards immigrants during the period 2002-2008 and after the completion of coordinated projects and initiatives (e.g. the Community Initiative EQUAL) and the new information and communication tools that have been derived (Internet, etc.)?
- 3) What can be done in order immigrants not to be faced piecemeal and opportunistic by the media, but as potential citizens of Greece?

### **3.2 Research Methodology**

The first step of this research was to gather news about immigrants for the period of 2002-2008. The reports were drawn from the website [www.migrantsingreece.org](http://www.migrantsingreece.org). In this website are posted news that have been published in the following 7 newspapers and news agencies 3: Athens News, Kathimerini English Edition, Ta Nea, To Bima tis Kiriakis, Eleftherotipia, Avgi, Kathimerini, British News Agency BBC News, Athens Agency, Macedonian Press Agency.

In this website ([www.migrantsingreece.org](http://www.migrantsingreece.org)), there were available reports that have been originally posted since 2002 until today, but in the autumn of 2008 the news referring to the period 2002 -2005 have been removed from the site. Hence there was available access only to the news since 2006 until today, which consists of some restrictions on qualitative analysis and in-depth review of primary data/news.

The stage of news' collection for the period 2002-2008, followed by indexing and reviewing the news in accordance with the categories E Center classifies them. The categorization of the news was based on the following topics: All the news, refugees, education, illegal immigration, labour market, population, agriculture and rural area, legitimating process, citizenship, immigration policy, Greek immigrants abroad, returning Greeks, crime, Greek Orthodox Church, religion (Islam, Hinduism, etc.), public health, security, book review, arts and culture. In the next stage news of each category in each year can be counted.

Moreover, they were reviewed in order any possible changes occurred in the subjects within the time to be identified.

Furthermore, a comparison of the volume of news per year took place in order to determine if the emphasis the media gives on issues concerning immigrants has increased or decreased in recent years. The changes observed in each category separately, tried to be combined with several initiatives in recent years, as the projects funded by the EQUAL and DREAM initiatives and programmes, aiming in this way, to identify the changes observed in the attitude of media towards immigrants from 2004 until today.

As mentioned before, data collection using the site [www.migrantsingreece.org](http://www.migrantsingreece.org) were used as a tool for recording.

### **3.3 The Results of Research and Analysis**

From early 2002 until the end of 2008, more than 11,600 news were included to 582 pages with each page containing 20 news on average. Some were classified to specific categories, although their classification was often very difficult to be made either because they were referring to both issues or because they did not fit not to any category of the site. From the categories were used the most popular was the “illegal immigration”, with 103 pages of news followed by:

- The Crime with 64 pages
- The Migration Policy with 57 pages
- Training with 39 pages
- Art and Culture with 38 pages
- The Refugee with 32 pages
- The labour market with 31 pages
- The regularization procedure with 27 pages
- Security issues with 17 pages
- Greek immigrants abroad with 15 pages
- Religion (Islam-Hinduism, etc.) with 13 pages
- Greek returnees with 8 pages
- Greek Orthodox Church with 7 pages
- Demography with 6 pages
- Book Review with 6 pages
- Citizenship with 5 pages
- Public Health with 5 pages and
- Agriculture and Rural Development with 2 pages

However, the reviewing of news for each category and each category for every year identified that most of news concerning illegal immigration and crime occurred in 2002-04, and since 2004 they tend to fall. Moreover 50% of the news listed in these two categories from 2004, while today is referring to crimes against immigrants and to immigrants that were victims, while before 2004 rarely recorded

news regarding crime where immigrants were victims (the majority of news had to do with crimes committed by immigrants).

Unlike the categories of illegal immigration and crime, the categories associated with social - cultural integration of immigrants into Greek society (Education, Arts-Culture, Religions, etc.) show a significant increase since 2004. For example, the category "Education" included 22 pages of news for the period 2002 - 2006 while within the next two years they nearly doubled, reaching a total of 39 pages (17 pages in 2006-08).

Topics: This categorization means that if someone reads a newspaper, the first news that he will meet is the illegal immigration or crime and the difficulties the immigration policy will face because of the bureaucracy. The first two categories have the most entries, mostly from the police bulletin both of them. This indicates that almost daily there are news about illegal entry of new immigrants or about criminality regarding immigrants already living in Greek territory. In this way, negative stereotypes (*Petronoti and Triandafyllidou, 2003*) are presented in the Greek citizens and hence negative thoughts and correlations are made by them and caused negative associations in readers. There are no other categories of issues or subjects that are not registered and are usually referring to political or free reports.

A common new is the personal drama of a refugee or an immigrant, and not the problem in its broader dimensions that may concern other immigrants or refugees, or even the Greeks, such as the black labour or the lack of protection against labour accidents. Furthermore, issues such as public health are rarely addressed and they usually are presented in times of outbreak of epidemic disease such as influenza.

Reporters: In addition, journalists who are mainly concerned with immigration issues are the authors of the police statements and "free reports" covering fragmentary some news. On the other hand, most reporters cover the issues in accordance with the experience they have obtained and therefore is not easy for them to cover an issue comprehensively and from all its dimensions, as such covering often requires knowledge of various sectors.

Also, the huge opportunities offered by the information revolution, not only lead but also force journalists to use modern media and communication. The use of cross-network are combined with the modern methods used by the journalists for having feedback from the reading public, stakeholders and active immigrant communities in Greece (*Ta Nea, 2006*).

Hellenic - centricism: However, the Hellenic – centricism tendency of news remains. The daily news are characterised by the Hellenic – centricism addressed to Greek readers only. In contrast, the English language press, as the English Edition of *Kathimerini* or the *Athens News*, is covering broader issues than the Greek newspapers. The *Macedonian News Agency* consists of an exception which includes an overview of the *Balkan Press*, covering issues that concern the societies of the origin countries of many immigrants. These news are not presented by the daily journals.

In addition, rarely are subjects that concern the daily activities of the countries of origin of the immigrants as well as the news that will interest immigrant in Greece and more particularly about what happens at home. Perhaps Greek readers, will be interested in these news since it will help them to learn and see from another view the family of immigrants living in their next door.

Incomplete information: The information about the activities of immigrant communities and bodies dealing with immigrants and refugees are often incomplete. The coverage of cultural events usually takes place the day of the press conference. In this way, an accurate planning of the event is not possible to happen neither a valid notification about the exact content of an event and a participation in it. The on time information is coming through immigrant communities and stakeholders and not by the daily press.

After the event, the information provided are already known, while no accurate information is given regarding the presented in the event views presented and which could cause an open public debate on migration issues.

The Greek public faces daily issues that are new and is called to solve them immediately. The sense of the “new” and the “different”, the “ignorance” and the “uncertainty” due to the “unknown” are not good advisers for the smooth progress of a society. The documentation that the Greek society (as reflected in the press), that shows clear xenophobic or racist syndromes on a large scale is not sufficient and therefore can neither confirm nor rule out (*ANTIGONI Center, 2004*). The Greek newspapers used in this research rarely make a direct negative reference to immigrants, apart from extreme cases such as the issue of the flag, even isolated incidents condemned by the commentators in newspapers and the whole political world.

Moreover, apart from Gkazment Kapllani there is no other journalist or commentator of Albanian or other origin. The immigrants journalists are usually employed by the press of the immigration community they belong. But, it is not possible to ignore the testimony of Gkazment Kapllani, who admits that accept racist messages with clear designations of his origin because of the comments he made in his column “exist live” (*Kapllani, 2006*). However, it is difficult to identify negative news presented by commentators and journalists that attack immigrants. On the other hand, in the period after 2004 there are reports that focus on the positive effect of immigrants into Greek society, for example news entitled “breath funds for new members” or “The 100% English Albanian film a”, where the reference to nationality has positive connotation.

After 2004 significant changes occurred during the recording of current news mainly due to projects funded from the Community Initiative Program Equal, as for example after the conference that took place in December 2004 at Zappion about Racism, Xenophobia and the Media, where the slogan “media are giving the message” has extensively used (European Community Initiative EQUAL, 2004). Gradually words and clichés in the titles of news as “Wave of illegal immigrants” or “Arrests of illegal immigrants”, began to be avoided. Today, in order someone to

find news and articles about immigration is not sufficient enough to use the key words: immigrants, illegal immigrants, Albanian, alien, but a more comprehensive research should be needed (KE.M.ME.PA. P-IFESTOS, 2004). Several reports included in the current news and it is difficult for someone to identify news regarding immigrants. Often the nationality is referring in the end of an article or not at all, while most news do not give emphasis to the illegal entry of immigrants, but to the traffickers and their activities with titles such as “notorious team of immigrants’ transformation was caught” or “punishments of Turkish traffickers”.

The news concerning immigrants and crime are gradually reducing and most entries were mainly related to the period before 2004. During the period 2006 – 2008, 7 pages per year were registered in the news site regarding crime, while there were 8 pages in 2004 and 10 pages in 2003. This happened partly because the news have been reduced, but also because articles or reports do not explicitly mention the nationality of people with criminal behaviour and therefore these news can not be easily identified and classified in a special category.

Thus, effective information is too important for journalists and necessary for the coverage of migration issues and for the quality of news reaching the public. In today's globalized environment the information revolution and new technologies, especially Internet, provide tremendous opportunities in information and communication as the number of people using Web as source of their information is continuously increasing (*Giannara 2006*). However, new information tools, such as the E-Center, conferences and lectures in fact are not addressed in the average reader, but to academic audience and journalists (*Giannakopoulos and Kodellas, 2005*).

Therefore, is vital for the public to be informed by the traditional press. Simultaneously, the new information tools form a two-way communication channel, in other words a new approach and ability in order to inform public, journalists and stakeholders dealing with immigration (*Kathimerini, 2006*). Obviously, the gap between “our” press and “their” press, where one party does not respect the other, does not make a solution, if the case is a future harmonious integration of the immigrants (*Bolzman and Boucher 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006*).

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

Immigration should not be treated as a phenomenon out there, but as an interacting relationship within the civilized and modern societies seeking the necessary cohesion for higher development and better welfare in the future. Immigrant is not an attacker, but a modern and dynamic citizen and his smooth integration to the environment that chooses to live is inevitable and necessary for the future of human civilization and harmonious societies in the future.

The possibilities appeared are many. The media in countries with similar immigration experience, for example Portugal, made a multidimensional

presentation of the phenomenon, contributing in this way to the social integration of immigrants. Greece is among those countries that are called to manage the phenomenon of immigration, maximizing the cultural, social and economic benefits of the phenomenon. In this effort, all the stakeholders and the media should cooperate each other. Experience has also shown that social consensus and cooperation of all involved stakeholders is the only way to implement an immigration policy with a human face for the Greek citizens and immigrants.

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