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PAVING THE WAY: POLICY INITIATIVES TO ENABLE AND EMPOWER MIGRANT JOURNALISTS IN THE EU

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Who is this aimed at

- EU media policy makers
- Journalists and migrant journalists
- Media outlets, organisations and institutions

Key messages

- The insufficient representation of migrant journalists contains the risk of creating prejudice and stereotypes.
- Lack of policies on migrant journalists hampers their employment prospects and contribution to the European media landscape, impacting diversity and inclusion.
- It is essential not only to train new journalists, but also to enable migrant journalists to find employment in Europe without having to re-acquire the education they have already received`

Introduction

Comprehensive regulations and frameworks are essential for supporting migrant journalists in Europe. The current lack of such policies hampers their employment prospects and contribution to the European media landscape, impacting diversity and inclusion. With only 4-5% representation in German media, migrant journalists need to be authentically represented to align with diversity policies and reflect society's diverse composition (Pöttker, 2016). This policy brief highlights the importance of addressing the challenges of migrant journalists and proposes solutions to ensure inclusion and representation of migrants on a European level.

By addressing key areas such as qualification recognition, language support, network access, legal protections, and diversity initiatives, European countries can create an enabling environment that fosters professional growth and integration. This policy brief aims to highlight the specific challenges faced by migrant journalists and propose recommendations to address these issues, promoting a diverse and vibrant media landscape that enriches European society.

What challenges do migrant journalists face?

Migrants living in the EU face a number of obstacles hindering them from joining the journalistic field, including the recognition of qualifications, language barriers, and a lack of access to networks and resources. According to an article from the International Labour Organization (2020) migrants in general face difficulties in having their qualifications recognised in their host countries. This can prevent them from finding suitable employment opportunities and limits their professional growth.

Language barriers can be another significant hurdle for migrant journalists trying to establish themselves in a new country. Lack of access to language courses and translation services tailored to the needs of journalists make it challenging to integrate and prevents them from effectively pursuing their work (Kaltenbrunner & Lugschitz, 2021).

Building professional networks and accessing resources within the media industry is also crucial for journalists. Migrant journalists, as they arrive in a completely new environment, often face limited possibilities to access such networks, which can impede their career advancement and opportunities for collaboration.

Underrepresented: Lack of migrant voices in the European media landscape

The lack of diversity among journalists creates a homogenous media landscape, where different voices and narratives are not adequately represented. This absence of perspective is particularly noticeable when it comes to migrant experiences, as the scarcity of migrant journalists hinders a comprehensive understanding of their realities. It is crucial to bridge the gap between the number of migrants in Europe, their representation in media, and the presence of migrant journalists (Anders, 2021).

The lack of migrant journalists perpetuates stereotypes and biases, reinforcing a distorted narrative. Moreover, the insufficient representation of migrant journalists exacerbates the issue, leading to a disconnect between the media and the realities faced by migrant communities. As a result, the media can lose touch with the complexities and nuances of the experiences of migrant communities, further contributing to a distorted perception. Addressing these gaps is crucial for promoting a more accurate, inclusive, and empathetic representation of migrants in the media (APA, 2021).

According to an article from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (2017), a decreased media usage of migrants is often a consequence of one-sided media. It leads to migrants feeling alienated from mainstream media when their perspectives and stories are not adequately represented, leading to decreased media engagement, limited access to information and making integration more difficult.

Underrepresented: Lack of migrant voices in the European media landscape

Although the EU lags behind in supporting migrant journalists, there are isolated projects that address this issue. The research revealed two measures the EU has taken over the last years to enable migrants to join journalism.

First, the European Commission announced in its "Media and Audiovisual Action Plan" under point 8, among other things, a campaign to increase diversity in front of and behind cameras. With this campaign, the Commission aimed to promote representation and bring new ideas and perspectives to media outlets (European Commission, 2020).

Probably the largest project aimed at bringing migrants into journalism was "Re:framing Migrants in the European Media", which was co-funded by the EU. This pilot project started in February 2022 and ran for 15 months. "Re:framing Migrants in the European Media" aimed to include migrants' perspectives in the public discourse. In addition, the project aimed not only to provide a voice for migrants, but also to raise awareness of lack of representation in media houses and to create proposals that can provide solutions to this problem (Re:framing Migrants in the European Media, 2022c).

To achieve these objectives, "Re:framing Migrants in the European Media" was taking several approaches. For once, they published the magazine "Shift". "Shift" is written and edited by the members of "Re:framing Migrants in the European Media" and is supposed to function as a guide for others on how to include migrants into

their media houses. Moreover, "Re:framing Migrants in the European Media" organised city assemblies to promote their cause, conducted a study on media representation and ran an online platform where the interested public could inform themselves and share their thoughts on the topic (Re:framing Migrants in the European Media, 2022b).

Apart from these initiatives, there are no noteworthy projects at the European level that support migrants entering journalism. This is a situation that undoubtedly needs to be resolved.

Policy implications and recommendations

In order to solve the systemic problems described above, some solutions are presented here, which could help migrants to enter local journalism easier.

Support structures

Journalists from a migration background often require more support than native journalists. For once, financial support for migrants entering journalism would be essential. The countries, supported by the European Union, could provide financial support in the form of housing, scholarships, and tuition grants (Borchardt et al., 2019).

Second, linguistic support is often required for third country nationals who must adapt to a new language. Offering targeted training programs to assist migrants in achieving fluency and providing on-site editorial assistance would effectively eliminate any language-related obstacles at the workplace (Borchardt et al., 2019).

Moreover, support organisations, funded by the EU, could help migrants find jobs in journalism, conduct workshops on migrant journalism and help with legal issues, as well as dealing with situations of discrimination and disadvantages based on ethnicity (Borchardt et al., 2019).

Training programmes

The EU could also create special programmes to provide migrants with the necessary skills and knowledge needed in journalism. In particular, providing additional knowledge about the European Union, their country of residence and its media landscape, as well as mentoring programmes which offer additional support for aspiring migrant journalists (Borchardt et al., 2019; Somani & Tyree, 2021; Nelson & Scott, 2008).

Since one of the main goals of hiring migrant journalists is diversity in newsrooms, EU-supported collaborative journalism projects could also be an important step

towards addressing the shortage of migrant journalists. Collaborative journalism allows journalists from different countries to cooperate, share experiences and information, and improves reporting, thus gaining more trust from different stakeholders (Gupta, 2017). This exchange among journalists can serve as a model of collaboration between individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. It has the potential to foster greater teamwork and understanding within newsrooms and encourage further cooperation in future endeavors (Nelson & Scott, 2008; Gupta, 2017). It could also include collaboration with bloggers and other popular social media personalities with a migrant background. A cooperative approach to training programmes can therefor help tailor curricula to journalists with foreign backgrounds and allow them to turn their uniqueness into an advantage rather than an obstacle (Somani & Tyree, 2021; Gupta, 2017).

Support for established foreign journalists

However, it is essential not only to train new journalists, but also to enable migrant journalists to find employment in Europe without having to re-acquire the education they have already received. Thus, comprehensive regulations should be developed to streamline the process of recognising qualifications obtained in third countries, ensuring that migrant journalists can utilise their skills and experiences to the fullest (International Labour Organization, 2020). Policymakers should moreover develop initiatives that facilitate networking opportunities and other resources specifically targeted at supporting migrant journalists.

Conclusions

Many immigrants who want to join journalism in the EU face a number of obstacles. A lack of recognition of qualifications, language support and access to networks and resources are often hindering migrants from taking up journalism. These problems raise the barriers for their participation in the media industry in the EU. Only a few migrant journalists are currently representing their community. This insufficient representation contains the risk of creating prejudice and stereotypes.

The EU has taken only limited action on this issue so far. The pilot project "Re:framing Migrants the European Media" was one of the very few measures the EU has taken to promote the engagement of migrants in journalism. Future initiatives to enable migrants to join journalism more easily could include financial and linguistic support, journalistic training programs and support programs to facilitate the entry into journalism. Overall, the current situation is far from satisfactory. Solutions are undoubtedly needed because the voices of migrants should not go unheard.

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