

REPORT

Communicating refugee crises:

Media & Policy Debates in the EU 2015-2023

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Jean Monnet Communication, Facts and Regulation for European Democracy (FREuDe) Centre of Excellence

- stimulates new forward thinking with regards the role of facts and place of regulation for securing a future democratic Europe;
- generates new research and policy-oriented thinking about integration on the basis of informational rights and enabling informational environments across disciplines not traditionally involved in studying Europe;
- develops new agendas for research, policy and teaching across disciplines and across stakeholder communities;
- provides an impetus for future oriented thinking, by researching the needs and perceptions of Europe's future autonomous citizens, young people and in particular children for factual information in and about Europe;
- mobilises knowledges and competencies of a range of experts and especially aiming to "hear from" stakeholders which have historically been permitted least input to questions of right to accurate and comprehensive information as a civil and human right.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research report, "Communicating Refugee Crises: Media & Policy Debates in the EU 2015-2023," delves into a comprehensive analysis of the dynamic relationship between media framing, policy debates, and public perceptions in the context of the European Union's response to the refugee crisis. This report represents a significant contribution to the understanding of how media narratives and policy discussions have evolved over nearly a decade, shedding light on critical shifts in the way European nations have responded to the multifaceted challenges posed by the refugee crisis. The impact of this unprecedented arrival of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants is monumental, redefining Europe in ways that will resonate for generations, influencing central issues including security, national identity, human rights, and the foundations of liberal democracies.

The study consists of a legislative overview, a textual analysis of media coverage and a visual analysis of the representation of refugees. To investigate the European Union's policy initiatives regarding refugees and migration, a qualitative content analysis was conducted, examining 28 Policy Initiatives from the European Parliament and 30 from the European Commission. Qualitative Text Analysis as the methodology of choice enables the categorisation of policies and the uncovering of their underlying significance. The second part of this report concerns content analysis, where one quality and one tabloid newspaper were selected from each of the countries within the German-speaking region. The foundation for the comparative analysis in this study is derived from extensive literature research on media coverage of refugees from the MENA region in 2015. The content analysis comprised three distinct 2-week examination periods. The first, from February 24, 2022, to March 10, 2022, followed the Russian invasion of Ukraine, while the second and third periods, spanning from September 8, 2022, to September 22, 2022, and from April 1, 2023, to April 15, 2023, were selected randomly to avoid bias. The visual qualitative analysis is centred on how cover images portray refugees, focusing on the most prominent newspapers in the region, including Bild [DE,t], SZ [DE,q], Krone [AT,t], Standard [AT,q], Tagesanzeiger [CH,q], and 20 Minuten [CH,t].

- Research shows that each country constructs its own frames of refugees, influenced by historical factors and the extent of their involvement in the refugee crisis. As many countries faced challenges in managing the influx of refugees, a noticeable shift in framing occurred, transitioning from a broad welcoming approach to a more selective stance on refugee acceptance as exemplified by Germany. The identified frames align with previous research, revealing the portrayal of refugees as economic threats, security threats, and personal threats.
- However, the study also highlights the existence of empathetic frames when conveying personal stories of refugees and invoking a sense of European solidarity and compassion. Notwithstanding the valuable findings, several gaps in the literature are identified, including a lack of research on new developments, limited exploration of social media's role, and inadequate analysis of framing in relation to policies.
- EU legislative initiatives are increasingly criminalising and securitising asylum and migration, leading to the creation of a "Fortress Europe". The aim of this paper is to illustrate the extent to

which the EU is increasingly distancing itself from the values and commitment to fundamental rights that once formed the foundation of its existence.

- A major focus in the EU's migration and asylum policy lies on the cooperation with third countries. While some major agreements could be finalised, the outcome is far from satisfactory and widely criticised, especially for the attempts of the EU to force its interests on other countries.
- The media coverage findings reveal significant differences in the portrayal of refugees from different origins. Ukrainian refugees were largely recognised as quasi-European citizens, connected with predominantly positive attributions or associations in opposition to Non-Ukrainian migrants. In contrast, Non-Ukrainian were often depicted as "faceless masses," "de-individualised" people linked to public threat and societal decay. Ukrainian refugees, especially women and children, were portrayed as relatable individuals in close proximity to the viewer, eliciting empathy and positive attitudes.
- In 2015, the story of refugees only began when people arrived at the external borders of the EU, where they became a threat, a foreign force imposing itself on the EU (Bajt, 2018; Gruber, 2017). These refugees would become solely a matter of the policies to be implemented towards them, to contain them and to protect what was perceived to be threatened by them (Cinalli et al., 2021). In 2022, the situation of those fleeing Ukraine were described even before they would arrive in EU countries, a framing that helps to familiarise with their situation, making it easier to draw parallels and, in turn, to show solidarity and empathy.
- The news coverage often highlighted dangers, uncertainties, and criminal activities associated with MENA refugees. The focus was predominantly on negative consequences of their immigration, portraying refugees as burdens or even threats to the receiving countries. It is worth noting that news coverage primarily revolves around the challenges arising from their arrival in the receiving country, rather than focusing on the reasons for their displacement.
- Negative reporting on MENA refugees, some of whom are portrayed as "invaders", can therefore provoke both political and social debates, which are further amplified by biased reporting.
- The research highlights the contrasting narratives and attitudes surrounding Ukrainian refugees compared to refugees from the MENA region. By uncovering these differences and potential biases, it contributes to a better understanding of media coverage and its impact on public discourse. This knowledge is vital for promoting responsible reporting practices, fostering empathy, challenging stereotypes, and ultimately creating a more inclusive and informed society.
- The research highlights the importance of representation in the media, abstaining from extreme perspectives when portraying refugees. By highlighting personal narratives of individual refugees, showing them in everyday situations, media outlets can play a crucial role in fostering empathy, mitigating prejudices, and promoting greater support and understanding among the general public.

1 INTRODUCTION

At the time of finalising this report, a new armed conflict between Israel and Hamas broke out, with the potential to give rise to new waves of displaced people. By June 2023, almost six million Ukrainian refugees had been recorded across Europe (UNHCR, 2023). At the same time, almost seven million people originating from Syria and another 5,7 million from Afghanistan account for 52% of the world's displaced people (UNHCR, 2023).

“The unprecedented arrival of more than a million refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants – plus the political, public, and policy reactions to it – is redefining Europe. The repercussions will last for generations on such central issues as security, national identity, human rights, and the very structure of liberal democracies.” (Dell’Orto & Wetzstein, 2019, p. i)

While it is undeniable that a large number of people sought to enter Europe due to political instability, lack of protection, security in their home countries, and global inequality, labelling it as a “crisis” misrepresents the complexity of the conditions and reasons that give rise to the displacement of people (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2018). Media and political actors have a strong influence on public opinion as they shape narratives, influence public perceptions and impact policy discussions (Andsager, 2000; Hemmelmann & Wegner, 2016). Considering the power of mass media in framing and shaping the public and political debate, this report aims to provide a closer look at some of the aspects of the ways in which public debate has treated the issue of refugees, as an issue of democratic process, rule of law through the development of policy, as well as a matter of fair representation of people and situations for the public opinion. Information can be misleading, imprecise or imply and carry bias without being factually false. Our concern has been to investigate closer the ways in which public deliberation treats refugees, in the spheres of

research, policy and the media, three forms of public sphere that affect and shape a society's self perception about its own role in global affairs *is* and what *should be*.

Berg and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2018) emphasise that research on refugees is essential for advancing our understanding of displacement as a multidimensional phenomenon. It sheds light on various aspects, such as the social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions of displacement. This knowledge enables policymakers, practitioners, and organisations to design comprehensive responses that go beyond immediate humanitarian assistance and consider the long-term integration and well-being of refugees. The current study focuses on two historically concrete pivotal moments of human displacement that have been identified as such in the public debate: the arrival of refugees from the MENA region (referring to countries in the Middle East and North Africa (OECD, 2023)) in 2015 and of Ukrainian refugees after the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022. By analysing the ways in which different refugee crises are portrayed, researchers can identify media biases, consisting in variations in framing, language, and emphasis that may indicate bias or stereotyping (Protest & McCombs, 2016). This understanding helps uncover any disproportionate or distorted representations that can perpetuate misconceptions or reinforce existing prejudices (Visintin et al., 2017; Cook et al., 1983). Moreover, this way we can identify where responsible reporting practices can be improved, such as ensuring accuracy, avoiding sensationalism, providing diverse perspectives, and challenging harmful narratives (Baum & Potter, 2008). Understanding the agenda setting of mass media helps researchers comprehend how certain topics gain prominence while others are marginalised or neglected in public discourse (ibid.). Unproportioned agenda setting can lead to a distorted view on public discourse and thus shape political policy making and the allocation of public resources (Gandy, 2023).

This study consists of the following sections: review of scholarly knowledge of the subject of refugees and the media since 2015; analysis of public policy debate through policy initiatives at the European Union level; and textual content analysis and visual imagery analysis of the press in German speaking countries Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

2 European Media and Refugee Crises: the Scholarship

The “refugee crisis” whose first widely debated peak was in 2015 rapidly became a topic on the research agenda. The majority of refugee arrivals, accounting for 61%, embarked on their journey from the top refugee-producing nations, including Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan. The primary entry point for these arrivals was the Greek islands located in the Aegean Sea, specifically at the Greek-Turkish border, known as the eastern Mediterranean route. Additionally, a smaller number of arrivals were recorded along the Italian coasts in Sicily and Lampedusa, forming part of the central Mediterranean route. This influx of refugees triggered a complex policy landscape throughout the EU (EU) and led to major media reporting.

Over the past decades, immigration has become one of the main challenges for the governments of the EU member states and one of the most salient and controversial political issues in Europe. Although migration towards the EU has already been seen as an issue at least since the early 2000s, immigration has become an even more pressing issue as the number of people has been notably increasing since 2013 (Kovář, 2020). Ritter et al. put the crisis in a global perspective when they write: “Thus, from a European perspective, the migrant crisis, despite its global dimension, is also a crisis of the EU and its institutions” (2017, p. 14).

“It is impossible to analyze refugee policy with all of its inherent opportunities and risks without taking into consideration how it is depicted in the public discourse. Furthermore, in almost all countries of EU-ropo in which elections were held, the issue became a factor in campaign debates as well as party and candidate’s platforms.” (Filzmaier, 2017, p. 7).

Especially the different kinds of media play an important and vital role in this so-called refugee crisis.

“However, it is impossible to ignore the role of the mass media in influencing public and elite political attitudes towards asylum and migration. The mass media can set agendas and frame debates. They provide the information which citizens use to make sense of the world and their place within it.” (Berry et al., 2016, p. 5)

The field of research on refugees and migration has witnessed significant attention, particularly with the emergence of the European refugee crisis as a dominant focus from 2017 to 2018 (Eberl et al., 2018). The question of what frames have been used to represent refugees and migration and policies connected to it in the media emerged early, because for researchers it was important to understand not only what we think about, but how we think about it (McCombs, 1992). Numerous studies have explored news coverage of immigration, with a particular emphasis on issue-specific frames that delve into economic, welfare, cultural, and security considerations. The media employs a variety of terms to describe the actors involved in the refugee crisis. For example, "migrants" and "immigrants" are associated with the economic threat frame, such as increased competition in the labour market, while "refugees" and "asylum seekers" are associated with the economic burden frame, such as straining the welfare system (Baker et al., 2008). Studies on the terminology helped us to adopt a comprehensive approach by employing a diverse range of terminology and synonyms as key words. This strategy ensured that we encompassed a broad spectrum of relevant articles for analysis, thereby minimising the possibility of overlooking any important papers.

Generic frames, such as victimisation, conflict, and negativity are argued to transcend thematic boundaries and are commonly used in journalistic routines (de Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2011). On the other hand, issue-specific frames, such as the welfare frame or multiculturalism frame, are intrinsically linked to topics like immigration and, more specifically, the refugee crisis (de Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2011). Unfortunately, when migrant groups are featured in the media, they are often depicted as economic, cultural, or criminal threats, resulting in highly unfavourable coverage (Eberl et al., 2018). Moreover, the prevailing frame used to portray immigrants today is the security-threat frame, which surpasses other frames in its frequency and impact (Kovář, 2020).

The interplay of media and public discourse holds significant importance in shaping perceptions and influencing public opinion regarding immigration. The politically contested nature of immigration policy within the EU led to an 'intractable policy controversy' with divergent positions among member states (Dekker & Scholten, 2017). As issues related to the crisis gained high media visibility, the complexity of the situation provided ample space for the media to shape the understanding of who the incoming people are and the implications of their arrival (Dekker & Scholten, 2017). Traditional news media, comprising journalists, news organisations, and sources play a powerful role in constructing major events as public issues through their reporting (Entman, 1993).

Through the process of framing, news media shape how covered events are represented in news stories, exerting influence over public perceptions (Entman, 1993). In times of uncertainty and crisis, the media becomes the most significant arena for public debate on politically pertinent issues like immigration, indirectly shaping citizens' understanding beyond their everyday experiences (Bennett et al., 2004). Scholars emphasise the relevance of the media in shaping the political discourse surrounding immigration and its impact on public opinion (Boomgarden & Vliegthart, 2009). Eberl et al. (2018) highlight the influence of media representations, particularly negative coverage of immigration, on attitudes toward migrant groups and immigration in general. They suggest that repeated exposure to negative media messages over time can reinforce stereotypical cognition and influence perceptions of political actors and even voting behaviour (Eberl et al., 2018). Furthermore, news media sources have been found to dominate debates on social media platforms, amplifying their impact on shaping public discourse (Pöyhtäri et al., 2021). Thus, the interplay between media and social discourse plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding, attitudes, and behaviours regarding immigration.

The majority of the research conclusions are homogeneous in the EU: Refugee and migration framing is consistent in the media landscape for each analysed country. One example is the framing of refugees and the change in policies in Austria, Germany, Sweden. Those countries are often cited as the major or preferred destination for refugees especially during the peak of the crisis in the years 2015 and 2016 (Brändle et al., 2019; Šabić, 2017).

Several studies (Gruber, 2017; Greussing & Boomgarden, 2017; Zeitel-Bank, 2017; Rheindorf & Wodak, 2018) deal with the small country Austria, situated in the middle of the EU. Gruber (2017) shows the big change in refugee policy regarding the welcoming framing ('welcoming culture') which turned into a rather threatening framing of refugees over time. Greussing & Boomgarden (2017) deal with the prevalent framing of refugees in the media, which is dominated by security issues and economic concerns. Germany has also a variation of reporting on the topic. Von Nordheim et al. (2019) show the difference between right-wing and left-wing media, while Fotopoulos & Kaimaklioti (2016) concluded that the refugee crisis is mostly represented in numbers and Vollmer & Karakayali (2018) that the same change in refugee policies regarding the representation in media as in the neighbouring country Austria: from a positive welcoming to a negative opposing culture.

In Sweden, Hovden, Mjelde and Gripsruf (2018) showed that refugees are depicted more positively compared to other countries and that the humanitarian aspects of the crisis became less important over time. In general, the observations show the development of the framing of refugees as a positive development to framing refugees as a threat for the respective country. The media coverage of the topic differs across European countries depending on the involvement in the refugee crisis and is linked to the history and the national socio-cultural background of the specific country (Lichtenstein et al., 2017). Ritter and Rhomberg (2017, p. 366) point out a detail dealing with the crucial national context and background: "Although the definition as a crisis is shared by all authors, their perspective on the crisis is shaped by the national context and the country's involvement in this crisis." This quote points to the importance of the individual context of the EU

member states and that migration discourses are shaped through the individual historic developments of the particular countries. The EU consists of many fundamental different countries bound together by numerous supranational laws and treaties trying to harmonise certain areas. Ritter et al. (2017, p. 18) argue “The contributions approve the hypothesis that there is no single European perspective on the crisis but rather national perspectives, shaped by each country’s national background.”

Moreover, the more affected a country is or was by migration and the refugee crisis, the more media discourse was produced and more studies about the topic were conducted and published. Traditionally the most “affected” countries within the EU were Austria, Germany, Italy, Greece, Spain, Sweden (Berry et. al., 2019), who have hosted the most refugees, since 2015. Moreover, the majority of the research concerns large EU countries, such as Germany (19 research), Italy (9 studies) and countries which were strongly affected by the influx of refugees such as Greece (11 studies, situated at the border of the EU) and Sweden (10 research, a country which was the destination of many refugees).

The studies also describe a change in policy or framing of refugees in the media. Research cites one particular tragic incident as a major starting point of the increase in media attention and the emphasis of the humanitarian frame: the drowning of the child Aylan Kurdi in the Mediterranean Sea (Hovden et al., 2018; Vollmer & Karakayali, 2018; De Cock et al., 2018).

Regarding the change in reporting, Austria and Germany are prominent examples because there was a clear change observable. In general, during the peak of the crisis, there was an instant welcoming culture visible in the public discourse. This framing changed over time to framing refugees rather as a threat than an opportunity or humanitarian act. The welcoming culture has decreased. In this context, especially assaults against women in Cologne, Germany, have been described as a turning point in the German media reporting (von Nordheim, 2019; Vollmer & Karakayali 2018; Rheindorf & Wodak, 2018). Studies emphasise the economic effects (e.g., Hovden, Mjelde & Gripsruf, 2018), the security issues (Greussing & Boomgarden, 2017) or the humanitarian framing and reporting (Šabić, 2017). More than two thirds of the studies deal with newspapers – either print or online. Only a few studies are dedicated to social media (N=8) which can be described as surprising because it can be argued that social media reflects the public opinion and is the soil where public discourse can happen freely (Pöyhtäri et al., 2021). TV research (N=7) is not very popular among the researched studies, radio is not represented at all. It is worth noting that such media formats as TV or online media is in the majority of the cases researched in line with traditional print or online newspapers and does not present a separate field of study.

It is clear that the 2015 refugee crisis is the starting point of major developments regarding different aspects of European policies and the representation of refugees in the media (Dell’Orto & Wetzstein, 2019; Ritter et al., 2017; Filzmaier, 2017). This paper has chosen a similar introduction at the beginning of the report on the topic to show the important point in the history of Europe as a whole. When it comes to the question of interplay of the media framing of refugees and refugee policies in the media and the public discourse the findings are also consistent throughout the analysed studies and the previous research.

The majority of studies find that media framing of the refugee crisis shaped the public opinion and gave fuel to specific discourses (Futák- Campbell & Pütz, 2022). At the same time some researchers adopt a different perspective and see the role of the media more as a political tool helping to construct social perceptions of the crisis in favour of leading political parties (Jelínková, 2019; Tóth, 2021).

The majority of research on media framing of refugees and refugee policies is consistent, particularly in the context of Germany, the biggest and most influential country in the EU. However, the situation differs when it comes to the framing of the refugee crisis in Greece. Greece has a longstanding history with migration. In the refugee crisis that began in 2015, Greece, along with Italy, was a major entry point for people fleeing their homes (Berry et al., 2016). Greece faced significant national and international pressure in dealing with the refugee influx and was often seen as a case of EU policy failure (Serafis & Assimakopoulos, 2023). Previous studies examining media coverage of refugees in Greece during the years 2011 and 2017 found a more welcoming and empathetic portrayal of refugees in the local media. These studies highlighted the use of personal stories and a more humanitarian approach (e.g., Kaitatzi-Whitlock & Kenterelidou, 2017). However, more recent research investigating media coverage of refugees in Greece during the same period, but with a more retrospective approach, identified a dominance of negative frames in the Greek media. Migrants and asylum seekers were portrayed as a financial burden and an economic threat (Kalfeli, 2020; Serafis et al, 2023). The divergence in findings could be attributed to the different approaches taken in studying media and news articles. Another explanation could be the emergence of a negative frame towards refugees, which also influences the research framing. As evidence indicates, concerns about finances and the economy in Greece (as in other countries) have contributed to the rise of far-right anti-immigrant movements (Berry et al., 2016). Nevertheless, further research is necessary to draw any conclusive implications from these statements. Additional studies will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving dynamics of media framing and its impact on public perception and policy debates surrounding refugees in Greece and other contexts.

The studies discuss the coordination of the refugee crisis between the EU member states. For example, in the Czech Republic refugees were depicted as a security risk and a problem partly imposed by the EU (Jelínková, 2019). In Spain the refugee crisis was described as a problem which should be solved by the EU and Spain's role should be passive (Pérez, 2017). Lichtenstein (2017) found out that in the German media the crisis was framed as a German and not an EU crisis. Also, several countries have introduced certain measures of their own (Hungary's razor-wire fence) which were not coordinated internationally (Sicurella, 2018). One topic of interest regarding refugees in the media is the role of the media itself. Media is important when it comes to public opinion or the depiction of it (Panagopoulos, 2019).

This following section provides an overview of studies conducted on the media coverage of the refugee movements since 2015 in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland and aims to reveal similarities and differences across the German speaking newspaper landscape.

AUSTRIA

Despite initial solidarity in civil society regarding the 2015 influx of refugees, the discourse surrounding immigration turned increasingly hostile as time went by (Steinmayr, 2017). The term 'refugee crisis' has been found to be used interchangeably to describe the 2015 refugee movement within media reports (Lehner & Rheindorf, 2018). It is thus not surprising that studies on media coverage of Austrian newspapers found out that the overall tone of reporting on refugees/asylum seekers during the 2015 refugee movement was predominantly negative (Zeitel-Bank, 2017; Lehner & Rheindorf, 2018; Pandeya, 2021), even when featuring calls for donations (Pandeya, 2021). Austrian newspapers frequently use frames that highlight dangers and uncertainties while reporting on migrants and refugees. This has the ability to amplify audience members' already-existing concerns about immigration (Gottlob & Boomgarden, 2019). According to research, readers are exposed to diverse narratives about migration based on the type of source (on the political spectrum from left to right and from quality to tabloid journalism) (Berry Garcia-Blanco & Moore, 2016). For instance, tabloids have a higher propensity to use "problem-oriented frames" like the criminality frame (Greussing and Boomgarden, 2017). They also frequently employ terminology that suggests a more unfavorable view of refugees, suggesting that they pose a burden or a threat (Berry, Garcia-Blanco & Moore, 2016).

The usage of uncertainty frames has been seen to occur regularly in both tabloids and quality media, with the tabloid Kronen Zeitung using them most frequently. However, there is a significant distinction that can be seen in terms of how these uncertainties are addressed in terms of providing a reaction or solution (Gottlob & Boomgarden, 2019).

Lehner and Rheindorf (2018) discovered that migrants are frequently described as the "cultural other," Muslims who do not adhere to "our" western norms, and this is not just due to the fact that they might pose a danger to their host cultures (Esses, Medianu & Lawson, 2013). In addition, they are characterised as 'undesirable' due to their illiteracy and lack of education (Lehner & Rheindorf, 2018). Further, Wetzstein (2018) outlines the "young, male, criminal migrant/refugee" (p. 61) as one of the most prominent actors in the Austrian media's portrayal of migrants between 2015 and 2016. These representations by the media are characterised as not only a threat to western values, but also as potentially violent and (sexually) frustrated men in search of social status with nothing to lose (Wetzstein, 2018).

In press coverage, this depiction of refugees as young men without restraint is also brought as a political argument to justify restricting immigration (Lehner & Rheindorf, 2018). In the context of the young, male, criminal refugee frame they do not appear as individuals, but as a faceless mass (Wetzstein, 2018). In contrast, female migrants and refugees are portrayed as oppressed and objectified, their appearance and religion – in the form of headscarves - become subjects of discussion (ibd.). Nonetheless, they remain heavily underrepresented in media coverage (ibd.). Wetzstein defines a third archetype "the local ('western') woman, in need of protection" (ibd.: 62). She occurs as helpless and humiliated in stories about sexual assault, further enforcing the idea that refugees from the backward, uncivilised orient are a threat to the progressive and civilised west, whose gender values remain unquestionably superior (Wetzstein, 2018).

There are of course exceptions. The few articles within the Kronen Zeitung that evoked sympathy either featured children or personal narratives (Pandeya, 2021).

All in all, it can be concluded that studies examining Austrian media coverage of the 2015 refugee movement find that reports utilise language that reinforce the 'crisis' framing and look upon them as a dehumanised mass. Instead of being depicted as a group of people they are portrayed as a 'storm' that is 'breaching' or 'tricking' its way past borders. Media coverage frequently discusses refugees in relation to borders and offer narratives that attempt to deny the legitimacy of displaced individuals from MENA countries seeking asylum, dubbing them as 'Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge' (economic refugees) who are not truly in danger (Lehner & Rheindorf, 2018).

Emotionalisation is used frequently within the Kronen Zeitung. Most reports evoked anger, fury, fear and sparsely sympathy. Outrage inducing media coverage got shared a lot more. Articles concerning Austria tended to be more emotionalised than those that dealt with the situation in Syria and Afghanistan. Crime was a major topic, not crimes and violence committed against refugees (Pandeya, 2021), instead the focus lied on describing crimes as only being committed because refugees had arrived in Austria (Zeitl-Bank, 2017).

GERMANY

The literature published to date on German media coverage of refugees established that during the year 2015 the examined news media outlets mostly shared the welcoming viewpoint of the German government towards refugees (Haller, 2017). Positive narratives dominated the media discourse until incidents of sexual assault against women on New Year's eve in Cologne moved into the centre of public debate (Haller, 2017). Cinalli et al. (2021) similarly identify the events of New Year's eve 2015 as a turning point in the tone of German news coverage towards refugees. These incidents and the following public outrage created room for anti-refugee concerns to be voiced and subsequently influenced the tone of public debates in a negative manner. The findings indicate that the public discourse about refugees is affected by external events, and thus shifted from an overwhelmingly positive stance at first to a decidedly negative stance after the events in Cologne in 2015. Maurer et al. (2021) correspondingly note that the news coverage in German media was not only strongly influenced by current events, but also by political decisions, and political institutions. Moreover, there was increasingly less coverage on refugees and their portrayal became predominantly negative across all media outlets over time (ibid.).

Immigration is mostly framed from either an economic, a security, or an humanitarian perspective. When immigration as an abstract phenomenon was being mentioned, the media framed it as a security risk and emphasised more so its negative consequences than its positive consequences (Maurer et al., 2022). Additionally, the relationship between refugees and the local population was portrayed as confrontational and exclusionary measures were covered more frequently than inclusionary measures (Maurer et al., 2021). German news coverage mostly shared the humanitarian frame of their government when personal narratives were being used and refugees were shown as human beings (Maurer et al., 2022). From this humanitarian perspective news outlets advocated for protection of refugees and stated that they should be integrated (ibid.).

Regarding the balance of news media coverage, refugees from MENA states are underrepresented in comparison to individuals from other countries (ibid.). Cinalli et al. (2021) argue that refugees

were not very visible in the public discourse and were often being framed in a negative manner as passive objects or being referred to in pure numbers (Cinalli et al., 2021). Overall, the news coverage about immigration is led by reports on political actors who share the German government's view on immigration, while the perspective of refugees themselves is almost never voiced (Maurer et al., 2022). Moreover, a disproportionate portrayal of men compared to women and children was observed in German news coverage (Maurer et al., 2021).

As for the tone of media coverage towards refugees, news outlets mainly portray refugees in negative terms, with refugees who are Muslim being characterised as particularly hostile (Maurer et al., 2022). Cinalli et al. (2021) showed that the news coverage was consistently biased towards the alleged negative traits of refugees, who mostly were referred to as criminals or a threat and a burden to the German welfare system (Cinalli et al., 2021). More than every tenth contribution in German news outlets addressed crime and terrorism in relation to refugees (Maurer et al., 2021).

Finally, it should be mentioned that there is a difference in the way tabloids and quality newspapers are reporting on the issue. Maurer et al. (2021) showed that there are indeed contrasting narratives about refugees between the news coverage of the BILD Zeitung and the Süddeutsche Zeitung. While the BILD frequently reports on violent and sexual crime committed by refugees and is using mostly negative frames to report on refugees and refugee movements, the Süddeutsche Zeitung is using significantly fewer negative narratives (Maurer et al., 2021). To summarise, German news outlets initially portrayed positive narratives towards refugees. However, incidents of public outrage marked a shift in the tone of media coverage, which became predominantly negative across all media outlets over time. Additionally, imbalances of news coverage were found. Negative consequences of immigration were emphasised, individuals were mostly portrayed in negative terms, and men were portrayed more often than women and children. Lastly, a difference was observed between tabloids and quality newspapers, with tabloids frequently using negative frames, while quality newspapers employed significantly fewer negative narratives in their coverage on refugees.

SWITZERLAND

The study "Solidarity in the media and public contention over refugees in Europe" examines newspapers from a total of eight different countries in Europe using a claims-making content analysis. Within the study, Switzerland is the only non-EU country. In the period from August 1st 2015 to April 30th 755 articles from a total of five newspapers (Le Temps, Le Matin, Neue Züricher Zeitung, Tages-Anzeiger and La Regione Ticino) were examined. No tabloid newspapers were included (Cinalli et al., 2021). Another study, published by Bonfadelli (2017) provides an overview of multiple studies, which have been already published in connection to media coverage of refugees from the mid-1990s onward in Switzerland. This includes a study that focuses on media coverage in the newspapers NZZ, Tages-Anzeiger and Blick in the year of 2015.

Cinalli et al. (2021) show that there is a quantitative increase of articles in August 2015, the peak being in September. Already after one month the number of published articles flattens out. In the news, mainly national state actors as well as political parties have their say and make most of the

claims related to the solidarity of refugees. However, these show a negative character. Quite in contrast to supranational organisations, such as the EU or the UN, which show solidarity with refugees. The proportion of demands that show a positive character, however, outweigh the unsolidary ones. The dominant topics in the media are mainly the migration- tax, political solutions to challenges related to the refugee crisis, and questions regarding housing. Justifications are mostly interest-based, which means that emphasis is built on a cost and benefit calculation and less on human rights. Almost half of the claims are not based on arguments, but on opinions.

Bonfadelli (2017) also shows that the publication of articles reached its peak in September. At this time, there were a lot of stories written about the drowned boy Alan Kurdi and numerous images, showing overcrowded boats and refugee-routes. However, the focus was placed no longer on migration issues and policy, but on refugees, fleeing from the war in Syria and seeking asylum, mainly in Germany. In 2016, the so-called “welcome culture” was spotlighted in the media. This led to a discussion, in which refugees were seen as a social issue for Europe. In this context, the media have created an image that shows an immigration- and refugee system in crisis.

The study by Cinalli et. al. (2021) showed that state actors focus on crisis management and show significantly less solidarity with refugees than civil-society actors. The latter focus on personal needs and issues related to the care and rights of refugees and show greater solidarity with refugees.

A summary of all the studies presented by Bonfadelli (2017) has shown that there is not much media coverage about refugees in general. However, the media create certain frames that embed refugees in a negative context and portray them as a social challenge. Therefore, suggestions were made to improve the way the media is talking about refugees.

Studies concerning the 2015 MENA refugee situation uncovered multiple similarities in media coverage in the DACH-region (Germany, Austria and Switzerland). Even though German newspapers showed a rather positive attitude towards fleeing individuals at first, after the New Year’s Eve happenings, public outages led to a more negative and concerned reporting in the news media - an approach that was already in use in Switzerland and especially Austria. The framing of refugees as passive objects, as well as a focus on religious concerns towards Muslim believers became a regularly referenced topic in various news outlets, often in combination with the need for protection in the West. Connotations such as a ‘storm’ or ‘wave’ of refugees, as well as the implication of individuals ‘tricking’ their way past borders illegally led to a solidifying image of “othered” MENA refugees in news articles and public opinion. In comparison, the reports on fleeing individuals in 2015 had different focuses in German speaking countries. Austrian media prioritised frames of dangers and uncertainties, as well as evoking anger and fear rather than sympathy towards refugees, whereas German news outlets gave a much more neutral opinion in the beginning of the refugee situation, after the New Year’s Eve happenings, frames of migrants’ danger to society were dominating the media coverage. Swiss media relied on negative characterization as well. What is of special interest is the focus on economic aspects of the migration period, such as taxes, as well as political solutions to these problems.

The general tone in DACH-states was shown to be sceptical or outright negative towards MENA refugees. Even though the tone of reporting showed changes over the years, the general concern

expressed in the articles and reports has been a shadow to the Media Coverage and public opinion in the years following 2015.

Research Gaps

Our analysis of the existing body of research points to several noteworthy gaps which warrant further investigation. Firstly, a significant proportion of modern research on the subject has predominantly concentrated on the years 2015 to 2018 and thereby overlooking the more recent developments and ongoing influx of refugees. This limited temporal focus may be attributed to the absence of a comparable sudden surge of refugee arrivals in recent times. However, it is imperative to extend the scope of research to encompass the current situation, as refugees continue to seek asylum, in order to comprehensively understand the evolving dynamics and implications.

Secondly, an apparent void exists in research specifically examining the experiences and challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees. Despite the protracted Ukraine-Russia war, which has persisted for the past 1.5 years, the scholarly discourse on this particular crisis remains sparse. This dearth of high-quality studies investigating the framing and implications of the Ukraine-Russia conflict in the context of refugee movements within Europe represents an evident research gap. Such an investigation would not only shed light on the specific nuances of this crisis but also provide valuable insights into the lessons learned from prior crises and the potential application of different approaches by the EU.

Furthermore, there is a striking underrepresentation of research exploring the role of social media in shaping the discourse surrounding the refugee crisis. While existing studies have focused primarily on far-right forums, which inherently exhibit hostility to the refugees' perspectives, there is a clear need for more comprehensive and nuanced research in this domain. The current dearth of research fails to adequately address the broader landscape of social media platforms and their influence on public opinion, policymaking, and public sentiment regarding refugees. Highlighting the significance of this research gap, noteworthy studies, such as one done by Pöyhtäri et al. (2021) emphasise the pivotal role of social media in shaping narratives and perceptions. The majority of the studies focuses on newspapers (either online or print) to show the public discourse regarding the representation of refugees in the EU. But it can be argued that a lot of public discourse takes place on social media and it is important to shine a light on this discourse.

Furthermore, an intriguing observation emerges from the analysis of the existing research, indicating a significant gap in the exploration of the role of radio as a medium in shaping the discourse on the refugee crisis. Surprisingly, none of the 86 studies examined in the analysis focused on researching the influence and dynamics of radio in this context. While the significance of radio as a medium may have diminished in some regions, it remains an important source of information for certain segments of the population, particularly the elderly. Therefore, investigating the role of radio in the dissemination of information and its impact on public perceptions and narratives surrounding the refugee crisis would be crucial for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the informational landscape.

In addition, the geographical representation of European countries in the research analysed exhibits an imbalance. The majority of studies have predominantly focused on larger or highly affected countries, thereby marginalising the experiences and perspectives of Eastern European countries. Despite the recent surge in the number of studies conducted in smaller EU countries such as Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, they still remain underrepresented in the scholarly discourse. This was named as the problem of a “small EU country” (Tóth, 2021). This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that countries serving as primary destinations or experiencing the most significant impact of the crisis conducted the majority of research on the topic of refugees and migration. Consequently, there is a need to address this gap by including a broader range of European countries in future research endeavours to obtain a more holistic understanding of the refugee crisis and its implications across diverse contexts.

Lenette and Miskovic (2018, p. 111) point out that “The emotional reaction and outrage following the publication of photographs of Alan Kurdi who drowned while crossing borders in September 2015 highlighted the major impact visual representations of refugee deaths at border crossings can have on public opinions and political will. The impact of these photographs also shows that depictions of deaths as a result of border crossings are relatively rare in the media; analyses of such representations and their potential impact on policy are also neglected in the literature.”

Lastly, an important research gap lies in the limited attention given to examining the specific presentations of EU policies in the media. While there is a wealth of research exploring the framing of the refugee crisis itself, there is a noticeable lack of studies delving into how EU policies addressing the crisis are framed and the interconnectedness between policy discourse and political dynamics. The multifaceted nature of this topic, which encompasses aspects of social sciences, communication studies, and political science, may contribute to the relative scarcity of research in this area. However, it is crucial to elucidate the comprehensive impact of EU policies by exploring their representation and public reception in the media.

The identification of these gaps within the current research landscape underscores the urgent need for further scientific inquiry into the ongoing refugee crisis. Addressing these research gaps will contribute to a more robust understanding of the multifaceted dimensions and implications of the crisis. Moreover, such investigations have the potential to inform evidence-based policy formulation and decision-making processes, ultimately fostering more effective and humane responses to the challenges posed by the refugee crisis.

Existing research on the refugee crisis reveals several significant gaps that warrant further investigation. These include a limited temporal focus on the years 2015 to 2018, overlooking the ongoing developments and influx of refugees in recent times. Additionally, there is a dearth of research specifically examining the experiences of Ukrainian refugees, despite the protracted Ukraine-Russia war. The role of social media in shaping the discourse surrounding the crisis is also underrepresented with a particular emphasis on far-right forums and a need for more comprehensive research. Furthermore, the influence of radio as a medium has been largely neglected, despite its continued significance for certain segments of the population.

Geographically, there is an imbalance in the representation of European countries with a focus on larger or highly affected nations while Eastern European countries remain underexplored. Lastly, the specific presentation of EU policies in the media has received limited attention despite its interconnectedness with political dynamics. Addressing these gaps through further research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the refugee crisis and inform evidence-based policies and decision-making processes.

We analysed only the European and EU (EU) context, excluding research conducted outside the EU. The exclusion of research conducted in non-EU countries, may limit the generalizability and comprehensiveness of the findings, as these regions may offer valuable insights and experiences that could contribute to the overall understanding of the refugee crisis.

Lastly, the study's methodology employing a quantitative literature analysis and a matrix framework introduces a degree of subjectivity and interpretation into the analysis. While efforts were made to create a clear and objective matrix, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, as well as the categorisation and synthesis of data, involve subjective judgments.

One major theme is the national versus the supranational response of each country and the EU as a whole. The refugee crisis has shown the imminent problems of the EU handling an international crisis on a supranational level. Many countries implemented their own policies or measures regarding the topic. The discussion about the 'Fortress Europe' has been renewed or even expanded although this discussion is not only a European problem but rather a global phenomenon (Wodak, 2015). The policies changed and keep changing. The research on refugees' media representation and policies plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the refugee crisis and its impact on society. By examining the portrayal of refugees in the media and analysing the policies governing their treatment, this research sheds light on the prevailing narratives, biases, and public perceptions surrounding refugees. Moreover, it provides insights into the political, social, and cultural implications of these representations and policies. The findings from such research can inform public discourse, policy formulation, and advocacy efforts, ultimately contributing to more informed and compassionate responses towards refugees. The following section investigates the debate visible in policies in the EU.

3 Methods

The study consists of a legislative overview, a textual analysis of media coverage and a visual analysis of the representation of refugees. The following describes the methods used to answer the questions: What are the policy initiatives that were taken by the European Union in relation to refugees and migration between 2015 and 2023 and what does this mean for the EU's humanitarian and democratic claims? How does the press in German speaking countries treat refugees in 2023 and what are the differences to 2015? How are refugees depicted in visual portrayals by the media in German speaking countries?

To explore the policy initiatives taken by the European Union in relation to refugees and migration we carried out a qualitative content analysis for 28 Policy Initiatives from the European Parliament and 30 from the European Commission. Qualitative Text Analysis was chosen as our preferred method because it allows us to create categories and find out the deeper meanings behind the policies. In this approach, we systematically analyse and interpret the textual content of the policies to gain a comprehensive understanding of their objectives, components, and implications (Mayring, 2010). In the initial phase of data collection, we tried to find as many policy initiatives as possible using three main data collection approaches. Firstly, we used keywords to identify policies tackling refugees in the Legislative Observatory of the European Parliament, an online portal which lists all types of initiatives and also their progress in the legislative procedure. Secondly, we used the Legislative Train online portal, which also lists policies, but these are grouped together in European Union Agendas on a specific subject. Thirdly, we read through Annual reports from different NGOs and Organisations, to further narrow down the policies. After assembling our data sample, we set

out to categorise the policies. As part of any qualitative content analysis, building categories is essential. We define these categories as “thematic categories”, which refer to a specific topic (Kuckartz, 2014).

We defined 7 thematic categories of policies and focused our research in these areas:

1. Border Control
2. Cooperation with third countries
3. Harmonisation of asylum practices
4. Ukraine
5. Human rights protection
6. Standards for international protection and legal entry
7. Integration of refugees

To address the research question and gain insights into the implications of these policies on the EU's humanitarian and democratic assertions, we aimed to answer the following sub-questions:

1. Who provides this initiative?
2. Who benefits from the policy?
3. What is new? What challenges the status quo?
4. What does the policy call upon?
5. What objections/agreements do we see from the parties involved?

Additionally, we researched NGO response to the policies, to see what different actors have to say with regard to a specific legislation or initiative.

The second part of this report concerns content analysis, where one quality and one tabloid newspaper were selected from each of the countries within the German-speaking region. The foundation for the comparative analysis in this study is derived from extensive literature research on media coverage of refugees from the MENA region in 2015. To conduct the analysis the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What language and literary devices are used in reporting about the refugee movement from Ukraine?
2. In what context do the selected media outlets cover the refugee movement from Ukraine?
3. How are Ukrainian refugees portrayed in the selected newspapers?
4. In what ways does the media coverage of refugees from the MENA region in 2015 contrast with the portrayal of refugees from Ukraine?

Considering the sensitive nature of the research project centred around the topic of refugees, it is imperative to emphasise a continual examination of ethical considerations. The authors recognise that the study is rooted in Western perspectives. While acknowledging the privilege of examining this particular topic from an observer’s viewpoint, the research team actively embraces self-reflection. The study adopts the United Nations' glossary on migration (UNHCR Master Glossary, o. D.), as the use of sensitive language is of great importance particularly when exploring written reporting on refugees.

For the content analysis, three distinct examination periods were established, each spanning 2 weeks. The initial examination period was specifically selected to take place from February 24, 2022, and March 10, 2022, immediately following the invasion of Ukraine. To prevent any potential

influence on the results, careful consideration was given to excluding important events (such as anniversaries) related to the invasion within the examination periods. Hence, the second and third examination periods were chosen randomly, spanning from September 8, 2022 to September 22, 2022, and finally from April 1, 2023, to April 15, 2023.

The randomised selection of the latter allows for a comprehensive analysis of the changes in the media coverage over time, particularly in relation to the media coverage immediately following the invasion.

The detailed review of the data gave a number of 79 articles that were considered irrelevant and subsequently excluded from the analysis, leaving a total of 279 articles. These remaining 279 articles, therefore, serve as the sampling unit, representing the subject of investigation in this content analysis, while an unit of analysis refers to the individual articles.

The measurement instrument employed for the following content analysis is a codebook, which conforms to the guidelines outlined by Mayring (2015). The categories are formed using a dual approach that combines both deductive and inductive methods. According to Mayring (2015), deductive category determination is generally established through theoretical framework and supported by existing literature. In this analysis, the study by Zeitel-Bank (2017) was utilised for the purpose of creating categories. Inductive category determination is derived directly from the subject of investigation (ibid.) and was accomplished by multiple pre-tests with randomly selected articles from the research subject.

According to Mayring (2015), each individual content analysis must adhere to different quality criteria. To ensure reliable findings, it is essential to evaluate the validity, reliability, and objectivity of the research method. Reliability examines whether the measurement conditions are accurate and reliable (ibid.). In the case of a content analysis, a distinction is also made between inter- and intracoder reliability. The concept of intercoder reliability is employed to check whether multiple coders analyse the same content in the same way or not (ibid.). To ensure the reliability of this content analysis, the codebook was evaluated by conducting multiple pre-tests within the research group, by comparing the results of the coding-process. In case of any discrepancies the codebook was adjusted accordingly. To ensure intracoder reliability, measurements with respective time intervals were performed (re-tests). By employing these procedures, the objectivity was simultaneously assessed (ibid.) and, additionally, functions as the premise for the validity of the study (ibid.). Overall, the validity of a measurement instrument (codebook) is established when it effectively captures the intended variables or constructs in accordance with the research question.

The following section provides an overview of the codebook used in the content analysis, which aims to ensure a differentiation between the individual categories by conducting an overall examination of each main and subcategory. Generally, the codebook is sectioned into both Quantitative Data and Qualitative Data.

Quantitative Data

The section Quantitative Data includes ID (V=01) and Date (V=02) as well as the category, both categories only allowing one input per article. Examination Period (V=03) consists of the three subcategories Period 1 (V=03a), Period 2 (V=03b), and Period 3 (V=03c), whereas the following

category Country (V=04) is subdivided into the examined countries Austria (AT) (V=04a), Germany (DE) (V=04b) and Switzerland (CH) (V=04c), while Newspaper refers to the media outlet the article was published in. Here, a categorization is applied to distinguish between Kronen Zeitung (V=05a), DerStandard (V=05b), BILD (V=05c), Süddeutsche Zeitung (V=05d), 20 Minuten (V=05e), and Tages-Anzeiger (V=05f). A further distinction is made regarding the Type of newspaper (V=06) being examined, either Tabloid (V=06a) or Quality (V=06b) as well as regarding the Type of publication (V=07), with News article (V=07a), an Interview (V=07b), an Opinion piece (V=07c), a Headline/short news message (V=07d) or none of the previous mentioned types and therefore Other (V=07e). Generally, only one subcategory can be selected for the categories 03 to 07.

Qualitative Data

This section is further divided into Language and Literary Devices, Content Characteristics, and Focus: Representation of Refugees in order to address the research questions presented in Chapter 1.2. With the intention of achieving a simple structured codebook, the following section uses the two different abbreviations Pos. and Neg. were used as subcategories: Pos. meaning positive implications, while Neg. represents negative implications towards (situation of) refugees.

Language and Literary Devices

Overall, the section Language and Literary Devices serves as a basis for addressing Research Question 1 (Chapter 1.2). First, this section examines the Overall Tone (V=08) of the article, where the tone can be manifested as either Pos. (V=08a), Neg. (V=08b) or Neutral (V=08c). Furthermore, the language and literary devices Emotionalisation (V=09), Dramatization (V=10) as well as Synonyms for either a Refugee Movement (V=11) or Refugees in general (V=1). Each of the aforementioned categories can be further divided into Pos. and Neg. (as indicated above), which may be coded multiple times per article. In cases where no device is utilised within the article, the subcategory None is employed for each respective category.

Content Characteristics

On the contrary, the section Content Characteristics serves as the fundamental framework for addressing Research Question 2 and consists of the category Main Topic (V=13), which analyses the overall subject of the article. While the individual topics do not need to be directly named, references must be clearly identified. Generally, only one of the following subcategories can be applied: War (V=13a), Legislature Related (V=13b), Criticism Government (V=13c) or Personal Narratives (V=13d). If the article primarily focuses on a different topic, the subcategory Other (V=13e) should be selected. Furthermore, the article is analysed in respect of its potential Unbalanced Reporting (V=14), with the possible selection options being Pos. (V=14a) or Neg. (V=14b) and an examination is conducted to determine whether the article addresses Help/actions (V=15), either on a Civilian (V=15a) or on a Political/Governance Level (V=15b). Additionally, this section examines whether the article includes a Political Statement (V=16) made by a politician. The statement can either be Pos. (V=16a), Neg. (V=16b) or Neutral (V=16c). If the article mentions challenges that may arise from the refugee movement to the respective country, the category Challenges (V=17) offers the selection between the subcategories Political level (V=17a) and Civilian Level (V=17b). Within the categories 14 to 17, multiple subcategories can be

indicated for each main category (multiple response variables). However, if none of the subcategories listed are applicable, the subcategory None is to be applied for each category.

The visual qualitative analysis is centred on how cover images portray refugees, focusing on the most prominent newspapers in the region, including Bild [DE,t], SZ [DE,q], Krone [AT,t], Standard [AT,q], Tagesanzeiger [CH,q], and 20 Minuten [CH,t].

To ensure a comprehensive examination, this research covers three distinct time periods: from 24th February 2022 to 10th March 2022, 8th September 2022 to 22nd September 2022, and 1st April 2023 to 15th April 2023, selected through a random sampling approach. The following randomised time periods were chosen:

24.02.2022-10.03.2022, 08.09.2022-22.9.2022 and 01.04.2023-15.04.2023.

The keywords “Flucht” (displacement), “Geflüchtete” (Refugee) and “Flüchtling” (Refugee) were applied. From the time frame it was already clear that most of the search results will be revolving around Ukrainian refugees, but it was not intended to limit it just on those, since the difference in representation was supposed to be examined as well.

To reduce and refine the findings, we concentrated on pictures showing people. This decision was not only made to align with the research question "How are refugees depicted in popular German-speaking newspapers since the war in Ukraine?" but also to make the number of images manageable.

In the end, the research consisted of 75 pictures depicting refugees from the three time-frames, 54 of which depict people from Ukraine and 21 from other origins. We ordered the 75 pictures into Ukrainian and Non-Ukrainian countries due by headline and underlying article.

The following analysis focuses on how refugees are depicted, so the technical side of photography is not the point of interest. The approach of qualitative text analysis (Mayring & Gläser-Zikuda, 2008) was used as an inspiration, developing inductive categories while working through the journalistic photographs. The theoretical sampling of the grounded theory was furthermore guiding the development of categories and types (Glaser and Strauss, 1998).

4 European refugee policy development and its foci

Due to geopolitical challenges such as war, hunger and violence, recent years have brought the sharpest increase in refugee migration since World War II. Most notably, the war in Syria and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have led to a large number of refugees and displaced persons trying to reach Europe. The EU, as one of the key global players in this political arena of migration and asylum, plays an essential role in shaping the political and media agenda. However, the EU, with its binding decisions in this domain, also has an enormous responsibility over the individual fates and of refugees. A trend towards securitisation of migration policy becomes apparent in recurring themes on the political agenda of EU institutions, i.e. border security, distribution, upper limits and deportations, which is often referred to as “Fortress Europe” in academic and media discourse.

Border Control

Examining policies of the European Union with regard to its refugee and migration policy, it is necessary to examine specific measures at the external borders of the EU. After all, when people talk about flight and migration to Europe, terms like border controls, smugglers and the Mediterranean route are immediately on their minds. In the following, we will look at the extent to which the EU carries out controls at its external borders.

EU policy initiatives since 2015

In the motion for a resolution 2015/2833(RSP), the European Parliament says that it approves of the support provided by EU agencies such as Frontex to European countries with external borders, including Greece and Italy. This mainly concerns assistance with the arrival and resettlement of those who have fled. At the same time, Parliament emphasises that the repatriation of persons must take place under human rights standards. Furthermore, Parliament notes the tripling of two Frontex operations and the expansion of sea rescue and calls for the creation of a permanent search and rescue in the Mediterranean. In addition, Parliament condemns the arrest of migrants, as well as the criminalisation of their actions. This is Parliament's response to the high number of people who fled in 2015. A final point calls on the Commission and Member States to stop illegal immigration and improve border controls. Parliament adopted this resolution (European Parliament, 2015a).

Resolution 2015/2095(INI) builds on this and, in Parliament's view, sees rescue, especially of children, on the Mediterranean as a top priority. However, according to Parliament, distinctions must be made between the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings. Migrant smuggling must be combated at all costs. Parliament also noted that the Commission was proposing a European Border and Coast Guard as an extension to Frontex, thus launching a European border guard. Parliament also addressed the concern of some Member States that border controls of individual Member States were taking place within the Schengen area. Parliament adopted this resolution. In another resolution 2015/2095(INI), Parliament welcomes the expansion of maritime search and rescue by Frontex. This adopted declaration also supports the fight against trafficking in human beings (European Parliament, 2015b).

Parliament adopted the Commission's initiative 2015/0310, which stipulates that the European Border and Coast Guard will be given the mandate to promote integrated border management and the extension of Frontex's remit. This also involves the technical repatriation of migrants. This initiative was amended by the EU Commission at the insistence of the Parliament. Through this superordinate border protection, it will also be possible to better coordinate and regulate emergency operations in acute emergency areas. The initiative also stipulates that the agency is accountable to Parliament and the Council (European Commission, 2015a).

In the adopted initiative 2015/2527(RSP), Parliament advocates further action on Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office. This mainly concerns the extension of visa controls, agencies and EU bodies. Furthermore, Parliament decided on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) (European Parliament, 2015c). In Regulation 2016/0106, which has already been adopted, the institutions agree on an Entry/Exit System, or EES for short. With the help of this system, it is possible to collect entry and exit data as well as entry refusal data of third-country nationals. This is done at the external borders of the EU Member States. Furthermore, the Regulation regulates access to the EES for security and law enforcement purposes. This regulation brings far-reaching changes to measures at the external borders into force, which have direct effects on border controls. The measures are intended to speed up border controls. In addition, the EU hopes for more reliable identification and better combating of terrorism (European Parliament, 2016a).

The Parliament also agrees on temporary border controls at internal borders with the Commission initiative 2017/0245, if a Member State considers this measure appropriate. These border controls are intended to protect the Member States from acute threats. In addition to the appropriateness of the controls, the Member State must also analyse the proportionality of the measure. If the Commission has doubts about the measure, it can take a position on it, which may result in meetings or unannounced visits. However, the initiative has not yet entered into force (European Commission, 2017a).

In the European Commission's initiative 2018/0249(COD), the Commission is negotiating financial support for border management together with the Parliament. The aim is to effectively strengthen and improve integrated border management through a financing plan from 2021 to 2027. Above all, it is about the duality of strengthening border protection and simplifying legal travel. At least 5,241,000,000 euros have been earmarked for the implementation of these measures. The agencies will have the task of evaluating the measures. This Commission initiative has entered into force (European Commission, 2018a). Initiative 2018/0330A(COD), later also Regulation 2019/1896, is considered one of the most important regulations in the field of border management since 2015, because it equips Frontex with a "permanent reserve of border guards" in a strength of 10,000 persons by 2027" (Kasperek, 2021). These are employed both directly by the agency and by the member states (ibid.). Furthermore, the regulation is mainly about further developing border controls, repatriation to third countries and upgrading the equipment of the personnel (European Commission, 2018b). Initiative 2020/0278 is waiting to be processed in Parliament. It deals with strengthening and intensifying border controls at the EU's external borders. This is to find out whether persons pose a threat to internal security and public health. However, the welfare of the persons must not be harmed in the process (European Commission, 2020a).

Parliament's initiative 2020/2116(INI) deals with the protection of human rights, especially those of children. Parliament expects the Commission to oblige the agencies to respect fundamental rights at the borders. In addition, an independent monitoring body is to be set up to supervise agreements with third countries. Frontex should also disclose reports on all its activities (European Parliament, 2020a). Commission initiative 2021/0427, which is still waiting to be implemented, at the time of writing, deals with the challenge to the Schengen area posed by instrumentalisation, i.e. the irregular instigation of migration flows, by third countries. Therefore, the regulation provides for specific measures to be implemented at the borders in such a case. In doing so, member states can extend application deadlines or receive assistance from partner countries. However, the state concerned also receives legal powers to repatriate those same illegal migrants (European Commission, 2021a). The parliamentary debate in the course of Regulation 2022/2950(RSP) on the need for a European solution with regard to search and rescue at the borders was concluded (European Parliament, 2022a).

A close look at the individual initiatives covering this area reveals that there are several concerns.

It emerges from the initiatives that both the protection against illegal immigrants and the fight against illegal smugglers are among the main tasks of border control. It is also interesting to note,

especially in the first few years, massive increases in the number of personnel involved, as well as in the financial area. Furthermore, since 2015, various restructuring processes have been carried out in the area of the agencies, through which better cooperation with the Member States should be achieved, but certainly also the prestige of the EU as an independent institution should be increased. It is also exciting that a strict separation between external borders and borders within the Schengen area is important to the EU, and that immediate security and reversal measures have been stipulated for the restriction of internal borders. The EU therefore weighs its borders differently - open on the inside and closed on the outside. The issue of border control, also under the aspect of still open initiatives, does not seem to be concluded and is in a constant process of optimisation.

Regarding European border management, it should be noted that the EU and its agencies are not the only actors in this field. NGOs and other organisations also play a decisive role. They do so primarily in rescue at sea operations and in the humanitarian care of refugees at the external borders. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), for example, is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and is responsible for the above-mentioned tasks at the borders. NGOs, such as Amnesty International also deal with the issue of border protection. They see a current turning away from European countries with regard to refugee protection and call for solidarity-based solutions and refugee protection instead of outsourcing to third countries (Amnesty, 2023). The non-governmental organisation Human Rights Watch also draws attention to actions of the Frontex agency that violate human rights. These are so-called illegal "pushbacks", in which people who have fled are deported to a third country (Cossé, 2022).

In general, it can be seen that NGOs hold different opinions on many points with regard to the work at the EU's external borders than the EU itself. Not only through actions on the ground, but also by making problems and possibly illegal actions visible, NGOs help to ensure the well-being of people who have fled and enable them to be received in a humane manner. Thus, they formed a necessary counterbalance to the EU in order to make the situation at the EU's external borders as positive as possible.

Cooperation with third countries

The cooperation between the EU and third countries was a priority for European institutions from the very beginning of the timeframe this study analyses. The analysis has shown that especially African countries and Turkey were in the centre of attention of migration policies of the EU. Furthermore, the study showed that the main areas that were addressed throughout almost all official documents were the fight against illegal migration, development programs for countries of origin and the readmission of third country individuals who did not receive a residence permit in the EU. Two examples for the importance of this field from the very beginning of the timeframe analysed are the "European Agenda on Migration" and the "New Partnership Framework". The "European Agenda on Migration" in 2015 lists under immediate actions to take the cooperation with third countries (European Commission, 2015d). These actions include the establishment of

development programs, further cooperation with countries of origin and a “common security and defence policy” with a focus on border management (European Commission, 2015c). The “New Partnership Framework” of 2016 proposes further financial assistance for third countries, new instruments of support and steps against migrant smuggling. (European Commission, 2016a)

One key part in the cooperation with third countries was the Valletta summit on migration in 2015. The outcome of this summit between African and European leaders was a political declaration, an action plan and a trust fund (Knoll, 2015). In the political statement the participants expressed their concern about the increasing flows of refugees, agreed to respond to this development together and recognised the interdependence between Europe and Africa (Valletta summit, 2015a). The trust fund consisted of 1.8 billion € from the European Union and contributions of member states (European Commission, 2015b). The action plan involved five main fields, containing 16 initiatives (Valletta summit, 2015b). The first area was “Development benefits of migration and addressing root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement”, which generally was implemented to combat the causes of migration in the home countries of refugees, the second area was “Legal migration and mobility”, which should enable easier ways for nationals of the cooperating countries to enter the EU. The third part was “Protection and asylum”. In this area the focus lies in humanitarian assistance. The fourth field was “Prevention of and fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings” which consists of agreements on how the cooperating countries could tackle illegal migration from Africa to Europe. The last point was “Return, readmission and reintegration”. This area was supposed to ensure easier and quicker readmissions of third country nationals who did not receive a residency permit or asylum in the EU (Valletta summit, 2015b).

Another important part of cooperation with third countries our analysis has shown was the EU-Turkey statement in March 2016. This statement was reached after several meetings since 2015. The main contents of this agreement were that all migrants arriving in Greece would be returned to Turkey and that for every person brought back to Turkey, a Syrian refugee would be relocated to the EU (Perchoc, 2019). Moreover, Turkey assured that it would prevent migrants from crossing the border to the EU illegally (Perchoc, 2019). In exchange, Turkey received visa liberalisations and 6 billion € to support Turkey with the accommodation of refugees (Amnesty International, 2017). The European Parliament (2016) welcomed this agreement but highlighted that the outsourcing of migration will not be a sustainable solution. The “New Pact on Migration and Asylum” in 2020 proposed by the Commission showed once again how important the cooperation with third countries had become in migration policies for the EU. In this new pact, partnerships with third countries play a key role (Andrade, 2022). A whole section of the “New Pact on Migration and Asylum” is centred around “working with our international partners”. The focus lies in support for countries of origin, addressing irregular migration, readmission and reintegration and the establishment of legal pathways into the EU (European Commission, 2020b).

These actions by the European Union were criticised immensely over recent years. Human Rights Watch (2018) for example criticised that the EU would “outsource its responsibility”.

The Center for Africa-Europe relations stated in a commentary that the Valletta summit was dominated by European interests from the very beginning and that African issues were only addressed on the side (Knoll, 2015). Bob van Dillen, an expert on migration and development, criticised in a blogpost that “the Declaration and Action Plan are full of vague language and repeating agreements that have already been signed elsewhere” (van Dillen, 2015). He also mentions, much like the Center for Africa-Europe relations, that European interests, like readmission, dominated the summit (van Dillen, 2015). The EU-Turkey statement was also seen critically. Amnesty International criticised that major parts of the agreement, like safe and legal ways out of Turkey, would not be fulfilled over 1,5 years after the statement (Amnesty International. 2017).

Harmonisation of asylum practices

In its communication “A European Agenda on Migration” on May 13, 2015, the European Commission announced its reform plan for the harmonisation of EU migration and asylum policies (European Commission, 2015e). The declared objective of this agenda is to shape EU migration and asylum policy in a fair and sustainable way. Given the limited scope of this paper, not all the legislative initiatives can be discussed. Thus, the main focus of this section will be on policies regarding the CEAS reform that constitute a sub-package of the Migration Agenda, as well as on the Commission’s revisions and additions of migration policies within the framework of the New Pact on Migration.

Arguably the most important pillar of the 2015 Migration Agenda is the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which consists of five legislative instruments and one agency: the Receptions Conditions Directive, the Qualification Directive, the Asylum Procedure Directive, the Dublin Regulation, the EURODAC Regulation, and the EU Agency for Asylum (European Commission, n.d).

The EC proposed the Reception Conditions Directive 2016/0222(COD) with three objectives: to harmonise reception conditions for EU applicants, reduce secondary movements, and increase self-reliance and integration. This is to be ensured by the application of the residence obligation and, under certain conditions, exclusion of material benefits. A positive aspect here is the envisaged facilitated access to the labour market (European Commission, 2016b). Despite criticism concerning the restriction of freedom of movement and multiple breaches of international, European and constitutional law by excluding refugees from material benefits (Pro Asyl, 2016a), the EP’s LIBE Committee adopted the proposal and it was debated in the Council. The plenary confirmed inter-institutional negotiations, but no progress has been made since October 2019. Currently, the directive is on hold.

The Qualification Directive 2016/0223(COD) proposal aims to harmonise asylum qualification criteria for third-country nationals or stateless persons. The directive requires applicants to cooperate with authorities and provide all relevant information for the application. The

amendment makes it mandatory, while the previous directive left this decision to the Member States. The proposal also includes the convergence of asylum decisions based on common analysis on respective countries of origin conducted by the EUAA (European Commission, 2016f). Pro Asyl (2016a) expressed concern about the removal of the ability for Member States to adopt favourable standards for deciding upon the recognition of protection applications. The proposal is currently on hold and has not progressed in years.

With its initiative on the Asylum Procedure Regulation (2016/0224 (COD)), the EC has proposed transforming the previous directive on asylum procedures into a regulation, aiming to create a common procedure and reduce incentives for "asylum shopping" and secondary movements within the EU (European Commission, 2016h). A key change is the introduction of a list of so-called safe countries of origin, which has drawn much criticism for its disregard of the right to individual examination for asylum (Pro Asyl, 2016a). The proposal also sets time limits for registration and examination of applications and requires applicants to cooperate with authorities. Procedural tools to sanction abusive behaviour are mandatory, and lists of grounds for rejection are provided. Some of the envisaged measures have faced opposition from Member States and criticism for undermining legal protection for asylum seekers. The EC revised the proposal in 2020, and on June 8, 2023, the interior ministers of the EU member states agreed on the regulation on the asylum procedure, which includes accelerated border procedures for migrants who are unlikely to qualify for asylum.

The EC proposed a permanent relocation mechanism in 2015 (2015/0208(COD)) to ensure fair sharing of responsibilities between EU member states for large numbers of asylum seekers and a proper application of the Dublin system. Under this legislation, refugees from countries under extraordinary pressure (i.e. Greece and Italy) would be eligible for allocation in times of crisis. Protection seekers from hotspots would be relocated based on a distribution key according to the population size and economic performance. On June 21, 2019, the EC withdrew the proposal (European Commission, 2015d).

The need for a reference key was also expressed in the proposal for the Regulation on the criteria and mechanisms for determining responsibility for protection applications 2016/0133(COD), which was also initiated by the EC and proposed amendments to the Dublin III Regulation to transfer new applicants from countries under pressure to other EU member states and strengthen guarantees for unaccompanied minors. Other suggested amendments refer to the (1) prohibition of transfer of high-risk individuals as well as of low-risk individuals unlikely to receive international protection; (2) processing family applications together; (3) guaranteed protections for minor applicants; (4) prioritising individuals with links to specific countries for relocation, and (5) implementing a system of incentives to prevent absconding. The parliamentary LIBE Committee adopted the report and voted to enter inter-institutional negotiations in 2017. However, the legislation is currently on hold as no progress was made ever since (European Commission, 2016c).

These two initiatives were initially considered positive for achieving a fair distribution of responsibility among European countries. However, critics argue that the previous Dublin system is

not completely being replaced by a distribution key as originally promised. Under the envisaged regulation, asylum seekers will only be redistributed if a country exceeds 150 percent of its designated quota, and automatic distribution will only occur if there is an increase at the EU's external borders. This ignores the interests and preferences of refugees, and fails to consider their existing connections to specific member states. The system would only guarantee family reunification (Pro Asyl, 2016b).

The Commission proposed to strengthen and expand the EURODAC database system of migrants' fingerprints as a supportive measure in implementing the reformed Dublin system and to combat irregular migration (2016/0132(COD)). This is to be achieved by allowing Member States to store and retrieve data on third-country nationals who have migrated irregularly to the EU. In the event of non-compliance, the draft also provides for punitive measures at the discretion of the Member States and even envisages detention as a last resort. Given the violations of fundamental rights resulting from such measures, this plan also met massive criticism. The LIBE Committee recommended retaining additional data (i.e. alpha and biometrical data), facilitating Europol's access, and lowering the age for obtaining minor's fingerprints and facial images from 14 to 6 years. The revised EURODAC is part of the New Pact on Migration and Trilogue negotiations are ongoing (European Commission, 2016d).

Within the framework of the reform of the CEAS, the EC proposed to strengthen the mandate of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) to ensure its effective implementation (2016/0131(COD)). The EP has declared the main objective as promoting best practices, protecting vulnerable groups, and providing training and evaluations. Under the new legislation, EASO monitors reception capacity and enforces the correct implementation of the Dublin system. It also introduces a complaint mechanism and a commissioner to safeguard fundamental rights. After years of negotiations, the final act was signed on December 15, 2021 (European Commission, 2016e).

The EC proposed the Screening Regulation 2020/0278(COD) to set up new border procedures for non-EU citizens without authorisation, aiming to identify their identity, health, security risks and select those who are unlikely to receive protection in the EU (European Commission, 2020b). Pro Asyl (2020) criticised the regulation, fearing that protection seekers would be detained for 5-10 days, representing a breach in their freedom of movement. Also, the procedure is considered insufficient to identify hidden vulnerabilities and appeals against decisions in the border procedure would be heavily restricted. Despite these objections, the LIBE Committee confirmed approval to enter inter-institutional negotiations on April 20, 2023.

With its proposal on Asylum and migration management the EC initiated a legislative reform to replace the current Dublin Regulation with a new system that includes a solidarity mechanism, but maintains the first entry principle for the responsibility of asylum applications. The initiative aims to provide a fair sharing of responsibility and create a more efficient process for examining asylum applications. To prevent abuse and secondary movements, the regulation requires applicants to

remain in the Member State responsible for them, with material benefits reduced or suspended in the case of non-compliance (European Commission, 2020c).

Pro Asyl (2020) criticise the maintenance of the first entry principle for not easing the burden on countries at the EU's external borders and the shortening of time limits that may disadvantage refugees in family reunification and other areas. Also, the proposed measures are deemed too complex and difficult to apply in practice. On June 8, 2013, the Council reached an agreement according to which states have the possibility either to accept a fixed number of refugees or, in case of refusal to accept them, to financially with 20,000 Euros per applicant.

The Crisis Regulation was initiated by the EC as an instrument that allows Member States to react flexibly and grant immediate protection in crises or situations of force majeure, with an accompanying solidarity mechanism in crises with high numbers of irregular migrants. The Asylum Procedures Regulation and Return Directive will be adapted for this purpose, including temporary rules to ease pressure on Member States, ensure legal protection for applicants, and prioritise vulnerable groups for resettlement with transfer of material benefits. Asylum and return procedures would be extended by four weeks (European Commission, 2020d). The Parliament confirmed inter-institutional negotiations in April 2023. The regulation was also the subject of the Council negotiations of June 2023, but no concrete results were presented in the working paper. Critics fear deviation from the standards and arbitrary reactions to crisis situations by Member States (Pro Asyl, 2020).

What do these developments imply? Over the past eight years, the implementation of reform plans has been slow. Only one legislation, regarding the extension of the EASO mandate, has been successfully implemented. Proposals for reforming the Dublin system, which aims to distribute responsibilities among member states fairly, have either failed or been suspended. In June 2023, an asylum agreement was reached by EU interior ministers, but its implementation has yet to happen. While there is confidence that these initiatives will not fail in the Trilogue round, the agreement focuses more on strengthening asylum procedures rather than promoting the rights of refugees. This undermines the values and principles that once formed the foundation of the European Union, outweighing the limited progress made towards achieving a fair distribution of responsibilities.

Policies adopted in light of the armed conflict Russia- Ukraine

We identified five policies following the invasion of Ukraine. Most of these policies call upon basic human rights as a basis for the initiatives. For example, 2022/2618(RSP) invokes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are written in a way that stresses the protection of Ukrainian nationals and third country nationals fleeing the war (European Parliament, 2022b). All of these proposals have passed the legislative procedure. We will discuss in greater detail the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive, as this represents the biggest shift in common policy since 2015.

The European Commission has proposed to activate the Temporary Protection Directive, aiming to establish a coordinated approach in meeting the protection requirements of individuals seeking refuge from the war in Ukraine. This proposal meant to ensure a cohesive response to the situation (European Commission, 2022a). The directive, established in 2001, was designed to offer a tangible solution to handle large-scale arrivals of displaced individuals (EUAA, 2022). Temporary protection is an extraordinary measure aimed at offering immediate and temporary shelter for individuals displaced from non-EU countries who cannot go back to their home country. The directive becomes applicable when the Council, based on a proposal from the Commission, determines the presence of a mass influx that could strain the regular asylum system and potentially disrupt its efficient functioning (European Commission, n.d).

The break with the status quo is that member states must implement the following rights and protections immediately to persons fleeing Ukraine (immediate access to employment, housing and suitable accommodation, social welfare and subsistence means, equal access to education by minors and family reunification rights). In contrast with other refugee policy, the commission emphasises the fact that Ukrainians can travel visa-free to the EU, therefore can choose the member state they choose to move to (Carerra & Ineli-Ciger, 2023). Moreover, the activation of the TP Directive shows a commitment by the EU to adopt a coordinated approach, discouraging individual Member States from implementing ad hoc measures.

We see the difference between the final document approved by the Council and the Commission Proposal, in regard to who can benefit from the directive. The final Council decision gives member states free rein over how to handle third country nationals fleeing Ukraine. Although the Council recommends the opposite course of action, Member States can choose to freely exclude third country nationals who have fled Ukraine from the scope of temporary protection (Carerra & Ineli-Ciger, 2023). A report published one year after, described that most states avoided this and ensured the same treatment of all people fleeing Ukraine (European Commission, 2023a). Objections came from the European Parliament's LIBE committee, which argued to guarantee non-discrimination and equal treatment for everyone fleeing Ukraine (Nielsen, 2022). Researchers argue there is a contradiction between the activation of the TP Directive and the political deadlock among Member States regarding the proposed reforms to the EU asylum system (Carerra & Ineli-Ciger, 2023).

Michael Spindelegger, director of the ICMPD, finds the decision to be a bold but wise one, given the large number of refugees from Ukraine. He believes a discussion is needed on the end of temporary protection, on the integration of Ukrainian refugees in the host countries and also how to organise the return of Ukrainian refugees once the situation allows (ICMPD, 2023). Carrera and colleagues argue that the EU's approach is biased in favour of Ukrainian Refugees. The EU's 'protection friendly' response to the Ukrainian displacement contradicts its stringent and containment-oriented asylum policies towards asylum seekers from non-European countries. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) sees flaws in the directive in regard to Ukrainians returning home for visits. These visits can, in some member states, lead to the loss of rights for Ukrainians

regarding their TP status. ECRE stresses the need for individual assessment to avoid the automatic cessation of status and/or withdrawal of rights (ECRE, 2023). Overall, the policy dimension when it comes to Ukraine shows a clear departure from EU's recent asylum policies that are based on contained mobility, responsibility shifting, and externalisation (Carerra & Ineli-Ciger, 2023).

Human rights protection

According to the European Commission's website on the Common European Asylum System, the European Union (EU) serves as a place of refuge for individuals fleeing persecution or serious harm in their home countries. Asylum is recognised as a fundamental right and an international obligation by the 1951 Geneva Convention. Within the area of Human Rights Protection, there are several initiatives that were taken between 2015-2023. Our analysis on the theme of human rights protection revealed several key findings.

Our analysis on human rights protection identified seven policy initiatives put forth by the European Commission and European Parliament. These initiatives address the situation of women refugees, criminalisation of humanitarian assistance, effective protection throughout the migration policy cycle, humane treatment of migrants, saving lives, expanding Eurodac's scope, and preventing facilitation of smuggling and trafficking (European Parliament, 2016b, 2018a, 2020a, 2022c, 2023a; European Commission, 2016d, 2021b).

Main points are:

1. The above-mentioned initiatives primarily focus on ensuring humane treatment for migrants, providing additional protections for women, and addressing the issue of humanitarian assistance.
2. In EU policies, the issue of protecting the human rights of migrants is one of the areas that lacks adequate representation. While the EU has made efforts to address migrant rights through various policies, there have been ongoing challenges and areas of improvement. Some critics argue that the EU's policies on migration and asylum do not adequately prioritise and protect the human rights of migrants, particularly in relation to issues such as detention conditions, access to healthcare, and the right to seek asylum.
3. The initiatives mostly benefited refugees, with only one initiative identified that benefitted NGOs, initiated by Parliament and titled 2018/2769(RSP): Resolution on guidelines for Member States to prevent humanitarian assistance from being criminalised. Parliament stated that the EU should ensure that helping migrants for humanitarian reasons is not punishable as a crime and the Members urged the Commission to adopt guidelines for Member States specifying which forms of facilitation should not be criminalised, in order to ensure clarity and uniformity in the implementation of the current acquis. They believed that clarity of parameters would ensure greater consistency in the criminal regulation of facilitation across Member States (European Parliament, 2018a).

4. One of the most significant ongoing policies we have come across is the proposed regulation 2021/0387(COD). The objective of this Commission initiative is to prevent transport operators from facilitating the smuggling of migrants or trafficking in persons into the European Union. (European Commission, 2021b).

The European Agenda on Migration sets a crucial objective of addressing irregular migration and combating smuggling (Prpic, 2023). According to Europol, more than 90% of the over one million irregular migrants who entered the EU in 2015 relied on some form of assistance provided by smuggling networks. Tragically, many migrants are coerced into working illegally during their journey to repay their debts to these smugglers. Frontex estimates that in 2015, there were over 1.8 million irregular border crossings into the EU, representing a staggering 546% increase compared to the previous year. Furthermore, the Mediterranean Sea witnessed the loss of over 3,770 migrant lives in 2015. In response to this pressing issue, the European Commission swiftly introduced an EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2015-2020) on May 27, 2015. This comprehensive plan encompasses various measures aimed at countering and preventing migrant smuggling, such as revising smuggling legislation, dismantling smuggler vessels, and intensifying the confiscation of criminal assets, all while ensuring the full respect and protection of migrants' human rights.

The action plan focuses on four key areas: strengthening the police and judicial response, improving the collection and sharing of information, enhancing preventive measures and support for vulnerable migrants, and seeking stronger collaboration with third countries. The European Parliament, through several resolutions, has called for cooperative efforts between EU agencies like Europol, Frontex, EASO, and Eurojust to combat criminal smuggling networks and disrupt their sources of funding. Recognising the importance of financial investigations, including the tracking and seizure of profits derived from smuggling operations, the dismantlement of these criminal networks becomes an imperative. Additionally, the adoption of a holistic approach to migration should involve the implementation of a unified EU legal migration policy, which can effectively undermine the business models of smugglers and combat human trafficking. To support EU Member States in dismantling these criminal networks, Europol established the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) on February 22, 2016. Meanwhile, the Council's conclusions on migrant smuggling, adopted on March 10, 2016, emphasise the necessity of addressing all forms of migrant smuggling in countries of origin and transit. The Commission is called upon to cooperate closely with Member States to ensure the successful implementation of the EU action plan against migrant smuggling. Additionally, it should leverage relevant financial instruments, such as the Madad Trust Fund, the emergency Trust Fund for Africa, and the Turkey Refugee Facility, to address the root causes of migrant smuggling. Supporting the establishment of a network of single contact points for operational cooperation and engaging in a comprehensive dialogue with Member States and the private sector are also vital steps toward developing effective best practices and guidelines for preventing migrant smuggling. Overall, these actions reflect the commitment of the EU to tackle migrant smuggling, protect human rights, and ensure safe and legal migration pathways.

The 2018 ICMPD report on Trafficking along Migration Routes to Europe highlights critical issues in combating trafficking and protecting migrants. Problems include inadequate time and resources for investigation, insufficient recognition of migrants' rights, inadequate protection for unaccompanied children, confusion between smuggling and trafficking, weak international cooperation, neglect of risk factors, limited legal pathways, unsafe accommodation, detention of children based on immigration status, and lack of information campaigns for awareness and support (ICMPD, 2018).

Arrouche, Fallone, and Vosyliute (2021) in their study also criticise the Renewed EU Action Plan Against Migrant Smuggling (2021-2025). They argue that the new plan fails to acknowledge the counterproductive effects of European Union counter-smuggling efforts. It relies on narratives lacking evidence and promising unrealistic outcomes. The criminalisation of migration has been criticised for increasing risks to the safety of refugees and migrants, as well as undermining their livelihoods and transit routes. The previous Action Plan's focus on vessel destruction led smugglers to use cheaper and less seaworthy vessels, resulting in heightened risks and increased arrivals and fatalities in the Central Mediterranean. Additionally, the intensified border control and limited safe migration opportunities fostered irregular migration and the adoption of more dangerous smuggling techniques. Critics argue that the plan's reliance on return practices and failure to address underlying corruption contribute to its ineffective approach. They also highlight the lack of human rights impact assessments, accessibility to justice, and attention to the structural causes of irregular migration in the Renewed Action Plan. The failure to consider protection needs while criminalising mobility is seen as a failure to fulfil international obligations.

The standards by which third-country nationals qualify for asylum in the EU and the rights they receive with this protection are defined in the Qualification Directive that was first established in 2004 and reformed in 2011 (Nagy, 2022). It distinguishes between two types of protection: "refugee status" and "beneficiary of subsidiary protection." The "refugee status" is defined in the Qualification Directive as follows:

„‘refugee’ means a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Article 12 does not apply.“ (Directive 2011/95, Article 2d)

In the mentioned "Article 12" of this definition the exclusion grounds are specified under which one cannot qualify for asylum in the EU. These reasons include, among others, if the applicant already possesses the rights attached to citizenship of the country they are applying in, the committal of serious crimes, crimes against humanity or war crimes (Directive 2011/95, Article 12).

The second possibility to receive humanitarian protection in the European Union is the status of a „beneficiary of subsidiary protection“ for individuals who do not fall under the definition of a refugee in the Qualification Directive but nevertheless would face „serious harm“ in their country of origin (Directive 2011/95, Article 2f).

Developments since 2015

In a policy package to reform the Common European Asylum System in July 2016, the Commission proposed a policy initiative that would replace the current Qualification Directive by new standards for international protection (European Commission, 2016e). Key parts of this new regulation would be the further harmonisation of asylum practices to ensure equal admission rates, stricter rules concerning secondary movements within the EU, regular reviews of the situation in the countries of origin to assess the need for protection and the strengthening of integration incentives for member states (Orav, 2023). In October 2016, the Justice and Home Affairs Council raised several points that needed to be discussed in this proposal. The subjects in question were financial and administrative challenges, the choice of the legal instrument, namely a Regulation and not a Directive, and several definitions, for example „social security, „family member“ and more (Orav, 2023).

In June 2017, the European Parliament entered the negotiations and proposed several amendments. Among those were that protection should be combined with integration, the review of granted residence permits should be amended to lessen the administrative burden for member states and the evaluation of the situation in the country of origin should remain an option (European Parliament, 2017b). The negotiations between the Council and the Parliament started in fall 2017. On important points, like qualification criteria and the rights of individuals granted international protection, the negotiations produced a satisfactory outcome for both sides, while in other areas, like the review of residence permits, several definitions and the duration of residence permits, a compromise could not be found (Orav, 2023). Nevertheless, in June 2018 an informal agreement had been reached, which however did not receive final support from the Council. After bilateral meetings between the Presidency of the council and Member states in July that year, new proposals were presented to the European Parliament. However, the European Parliament was not interested in renegotiating the compromise found in June 2018 (Orav, 2023). Due to the stalemate between the parliament and the council the reform of the Qualification Directive is still awaiting finalisation.

Legal entry in the EU for individuals in need of international protection

After a recast of the Visa Code in 2014 failed and an own-initiative report regarding humanitarian visas in November 2018 found no majority in the European Parliament, a slightly adapted version of the own-initiative report demanding the Commission to act in terms of humanitarian visas was presented to parliament in a second try (Atanassov, 2019). The second attempt, unlike its predecessor, was amended by the European Parliament (Atanassov, 2019). The proposal contained the possibility for third country nationals to submit their application for international protection at a consulate or embassy in combination with an interview of the applicant and recommends that a decision on an application should be made within 15 days and suggested financial support for member states to be able to handle these kinds of procedures (European Parliament, 2018b). The

Commission responded to this report by highlighting that its own Union Resettlement Framework proposal would be adequate and cover the intentions of the report, so no further action would be necessary from their side (Atanassov, 2019).

The mentioned Union Resettlement Framework is an attempt, proposed by the Commission in July 2016, to harmonise the resettlement programs of its member states by establishing common EU rules. This proposal includes the resettlement of third country nationals in need of international protection to the EU, the establishment of regions from which these resettlements should occur and outlining the criteria under which individuals are entitled to relocation (European Commission, 2016g). The European Parliament in its report on the proposal stated that member states should focus on long-lasting solutions for resettled individuals and that resettlements should be independent from other policy objectives and should not depend on third countries (European Parliament, 2017a). The first trilogue started in December 2017, coming to an agreement in June 2018 (Atanassov, 2023). However, the Council once again did not support the reached agreement with a majority. In the beginning of 2019, the Council discussed compromises to be negotiated with the Parliament but finally chose not to enter further negotiations. The matter remains unsolved so far (Atanassov, 2023).

The current Qualification Directive is seen critically by several institutions. The “Asylum Information Database” (AIDA), part of the “European Council on Refugees and Exiles” (ECRE), criticises that residence permits under the current Qualification Directive are only temporarily granted and a long-term permit can only be received after five years, in contrast to asylum systems in other parts of the world (ECRE, 2016). The incorporation of the exclusion grounds in the definition of refugees in the Qualification Directive is also seen critically since member states may deny international protection on exclusion grounds without considering other factors (Nagy, 2022). Moreover, the current directive is criticised for its extension of exclusion grounds and for creating situations, where refugees might lose their protection while still being in danger (Nagy, 2022). A second policy briefing of AIDA on the Qualification Directive mentions the distinction between “refugee” and “subsidiary protection beneficiaries” and elaborates on the currently stuck negotiations on the reform of the Qualification Directive (ECRE, 2017). They welcome the first signs of the co-legislators to potentially deviate from the proposal of the Commission and no longer distinguish between these two categories. They argue that the unification of these two categories would have many advantages including the reduction of costs and administrative resources due to one universal procedure (ECRE, 2017a).

In terms of the establishment of legal channels for refugees, the EU has been widely opposed. SOLIDAR (2020) for example, a network of civil society organisations, criticised the restrictive visa policies, especially for African countries, for hindering refugees from having safe and legal ways into the EU. ECRE criticised the EU by calling procedures to arrive in Europe an “obstacle course”. Like SOLIDAR, they also criticise restrictive visa policies and further mention carrier sanctions and the cooperation with third countries as reasons that prevent legal and safe ways into the EU (ECRE, 2017b). The Red Cross notes in a position paper that legal and safe ways into the European Union are very limited and see little improvement in this matter. Furthermore, they argue that “the lack of clarity on the scope, procedure and selection criteria makes it difficult for the vast majority of people seeking international protection to access these pathways.” (Red Cross EU Office, 2023).

The recommendations of the Red Cross are the establishment of resettlement programs, community sponsorships to help civil society be part of the solution and the granting of humanitarian visas. Overall, the EU is lacking behind in crucial policy areas to ensure legal and safe pathways into the continent and to guarantee fast and straightforward asylum procedures. The current regulations require an update to cope with modern challenges. Especially in the field of resettlement programs, there seems to be an universal agreement among NGOs that this area should be extended immensely.

Integration of refugees

When it comes to policies initiated by the EU bodies since 2015 regarding the integration of refugees, our keyword search of the Legislative Observatory yielded few results. This could be attributed to the well established status-quo, that integration of Refugees is a matter best left handled by each member state individually. It is important to note that the EU lacks legislative competence in the field of integration. While the EU can provide support and coordination, harmonisation of laws and regulations is explicitly excluded (Treaty of Lisbon, Article 63a). The possibility of the EU bodies to act is limited to supporting and coordinating. As a result, there is no harmonisation of laws and regulations among the Member States.

The EU has predominantly utilised intergovernmental mechanisms, like the open method of coordination, as well as soft law instruments such as agendas and action plans, along with EU funds, to address this issue. Even though the EU's authority on immigrant integration is limited, it doesn't mean that EU Bodies can't create rules that affect the integration of third-country nationals. For example, the EU has included integration measures in laws about long-term residence status and family reunification for third-country nationals (Vittiello, 2022).

Two policies involve the integration of migrants, one initiated by the Commission discussing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund to allow states to transfer amounts to national programs tackling asylum, and another by Parliament, calling on States to ensure a solid integration policy for refugees (European Commission, 2018c, European Parliament, 2015d).

Refugees: social inclusion and integration into the labour market (2015/2321 INI) is the only policy by the European Parliament taken after 2015 that specifically mentions integration and inclusion in the title. This resolution addresses the challenges and benefits of the inclusion of refugees in the labour market and society. It calls for the EU and its Member States to ensure successful integration through solidarity and equitable burden-sharing. Furthermore, it emphasises the need for safe and legal migration pathways and highlights the importance of preventing isolated refugee communities. The resolution rejects the establishment of special markets for refugees and instead advocates for fair minimum wages aligned with their needs. It also emphasises the priority of policies and investments in quality employment for vulnerable individuals and groups, while

providing language courses and comprehensive orientations for refugees (European Parliament, 2016d).

There were no NGO Responses found specifically for these policies. However, critiques were voiced on the general approach of the EU in matters of integration. Scholars stress that the situation is far from satisfactory. There are major differences in refugee integration policies in EU countries, and there is a lack of information about the skills and competences of refugees in different countries. This is a problem because this information is a necessary first step for an integrated welcome policy that might transform a challenge into an opportunity for ageing European economies (Bordignon and Moriconi, 2017).

Overall, the integration of migrants remains primarily the responsibility of member states, with limited EU-level initiatives. Over time, the EU Institutions have only acted in recommending and setting up Action Plans to tackle integration. However, it is important to note that the EU lacks legislative competence in the field of integration. (Treaty of Lisbon, Article 63a, Point 4). We think that it's in the interest of all parties involved that the EU acts with a unified voice and that the institutions make the Member States aware of the financial instruments available to them.

Conclusions

The trend that emerges from the analysis of EU migration policies between 2015 and 2023 raises concerns about the union's democratic and humanitarian claims. Despite the EU's rhetoric on upholding democratic values and its commitment to humanitarian principles, several aspects of its approach to migration and refugee management contradict these claims. Firstly, the EU's efforts to keep refugees out through stricter border control measures and its heavy reliance on Frontex suggest a shift towards prioritising security concerns over humanitarian considerations. The emphasis on border control and surveillance, while necessary to ensure security, can create barriers to the entry and protection of those seeking refuge. This approach raises questions about the EU's commitment to providing safe and legal pathways for migrants and refugees. Secondly, the lack of harmonisation in asylum practices among states further challenges the EU's democratic claims. The absence of a unified approach and the slow progress in reforming the Common European Asylum System demonstrate a fragmented response to the refugee crisis. This lack of harmonisation not only undermines the EU's credibility, but also results in uneven treatment and protection for asylum seekers across member states. Furthermore, the EU's emphasis on border control and external cooperation in managing migration raises concerns about the outsourcing of responsibilities and the imposition of European interests on other countries. Agreements such as the EU-Turkey statement have faced criticism for prioritising European concerns while disregarding the human rights and well-being of migrants. These practices undermine the EU's commitment to humanitarian values and contribute to a perception of the union as more concerned with protecting its own interests than with addressing the humanitarian needs of refugees.

In light of these trends, we believe it is essential for the EU to reassess its policies and practice regarding migration and refugee integration. The union should strive for a more balanced approach that upholds democratic values, respects human rights, and ensures the protection and inclusion of migrants and refugees. This requires a coordinated effort that combines effective border control measures with robust integration policies, legal pathways for migration, and a commitment to solidarity among member states. By addressing these challenges and aligning its actions with its democratic and humanitarian claims, the EU can strengthen its position as a leader in promoting human rights and providing protection for those in need.

5

Media textual and visual portrayals of refugees: in the press of German speaking countries

Understanding the ways in which the media portrays refugee crises provides insights into how these issues are framed in the public's eyes. Moreover, it allows for an analysis of the bridge between policy formulation and public perception. By examining newspapers' textual and visual content, the report can trace how policy discussions are translated and disseminated to the general public, potentially impacting public support or opposition to the refugee topic as a whole, as well as specific policies.

For the analysis, german-speaking newspapers were chosen based on four specific criteria: to conduct a detailed examination of the topic, (1) two newspapers from each Austria, Germany, and Switzerland should be included. Additionally, to capture a diverse range of media characteristics, (2) one quality newspaper and one tabloid newspaper should be selected for each country. To capture the prevailing narratives and perspectives at a national level (3) exclusively national newspapers were considered for selection and ultimately, ensuring a broad representation of audience coverage, the newspapers (4) with the largest reach within the pool of potential media outlets were chosen. Finally, as this study aims to draw on existing studies in order to make a comparison in the discussion section more comparable, the newspapers should also have been included in the literature review (5). Meeting all the criteria, the following newspapers could be identified: Kronen Zeitung and Der Standard (Austria), BILD and Süddeutsche Zeitung (Germany), as well as 20 Minuten⁴ and Tages-Anzeiger (Switzerland).

AUSTRIAN NEWSPAPERS

The newspapers used for conducting the research in the state of Austria were the tabloid Kronen Zeitung and the Der Standard. Both were chosen because of their superior reach compared to other Austrian media outlets, with the Kronen Zeitung undoubtedly being the most far-reaching newspaper (Statista, 2023). The tabloid was founded in 1900 by Gustav Davis and became well received for its up-to-date news coverage. After renaming followed by discontinuation in 1944 it was republished in 1958, with a clear focus on social grievances and citizen interests. Today, the Kronen Zeitung has an approximate reach of two Million readers a day, surpassing even free newspapers by far. The Austrian tabloid acts as a substitute for the “Blick” newspaper researched in the studies concerning the refugee movement in 2015 in Switzerland (Bonfadelli, 2017) uses often exaggerated headlines and takes great interest in current polarising topics to further strengthen its position in the locally offered news media (Pandeya, 2021).

Der Standard, a newspaper founded in 1988, was created in resemblance to standards of the New York Times by its founder Oscar Bronner. The goal was to present well researched, objective and high-quality news to Austrian newspaper recipients. Der Standard managed to become Austria’s quality newspaper showing the biggest reach, featuring in depth-reports, interviews and reports while still implementing the standards set about 40 years ago (Medialab, 2012).

GERMAN NEWSPAPERS

For the purpose of this study, the two daily newspapers with the highest reach for both tabloid and quality newspapers on the German Newspaper market were examined. The BILD with approximately 7,35 Million readers per issue is by far the most read daily newspaper in Germany across all genres of newspapers (ma Pressemedien II, n.d.). The Süddeutsche Zeitung with approximately 1,33 Million readers per issue represents the daily newspaper with the highest reach among the quality newspapers and the second highest number of readers in total in 2022 (ma Pressemedien II, n.d.).

Daily quality newspapers with a claim to national reach include the Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ), Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), Frankfurter Rundschau (FR), Handelsblatt, Die Welt, Neues Deutschland, die tageszeitung (taz), and the small-circulation newspapers Junge Welt and Tagespost (Pürer, 2015). The German quality newspaper market can be differentiated according to the publisher’s orientation on the political spectrum, even though most follow a liberal-pluralistic understanding of journalism as is the case for the Süddeutsche Zeitung (Beck 2018). The Newspaper published issues for the local Munich, regional Bavarian, as well as for the nationwide market. These publications cover current events and provide in-depth coverage on politics, business, feature articles, panorama, media, sports, and science.

A total of eight over the counter or tabloid newspapers are currently being published in Germany with the BILD claiming by far the highest reach amongst its competitors and being the only daily nationwide distributed tabloid newspaper in Germany (Beck, 2018). Most German tabloid newspapers are published on a local or regional level. The BILD Zeitung on the other hand publishes a nationwide edition in addition to its 28 regional issues (Beck, 2018). The BILD distinguishes itself

from quality newspapers through a high proportion of mostly coloured and often large-format photos, coloured highlighting of articles, graphically designed and large letter headlines, and lastly through a lower proportion of words per article and a more colloquial style of writing (Beck, 2018).

Sports and local news dominate most issues, with the addition of entertaining coverage on celebrities, sensations, and scandals (Beck, 2018). For the present study only Articles which were published as part of the nationwide issues of both the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *BILD Zeitung* were included in the analysis.

SWISS NEWSPAPERS

Switzerland is the only country in this study that is not part of the European Union. Neighbouring Austria and Germany, Switzerland has strong direct democratic characteristics, giving citizens a great deal of direct influence on political decisions. In addition, Switzerland has a high degree of political, cultural and linguistic diversity (Cinalli et. al., 2021). Nevertheless, neutral Switzerland applies the Geneva Refugee Conventions as well as the Dublin procedure within the framework of asylum laws (Swiss Confederation, 2019) and is part of the Schengen area (SWI, 2022). Refugees from Ukraine are granted the so-called "protection status S" in Switzerland. This offers a quick deletion to residence rights and does not require an asylum procedure (SWI, 2022).

With almost 326,000 copies in 2021/2022, the free newspaper *20 Minuten* has the highest circulation and the strongest opinion power throughout Switzerland (Statista, 2023; Medienmonitor Schweiz, 2021). In 2021, more than 3 million Swiss people read either the print edition or online content every day (*20 Minuten*, 2021). In addition to soft news, the tabloid and commuter newspaper also conveys news about the war in Ukraine (MQR-22, 2022a). The newspaper is available in all three linguistic regions of Switzerland. In this paper, the focus is only on the German-language editions of the e-paper version.

The *Tages-Anzeiger* is the national daily newspaper with the highest reach in German-speaking Switzerland (Frei, 2022). The quality medium reaches around 838.000 readers (Lüthi, 2023). It is the most subscribed daily newspaper in Switzerland and is thus one of the leading media around Zurich. In addition to a strong national orientation, the topics focus on politics and human interest (MQR-22, 2022b).

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

For the purpose of the systematic examination of the media coverage on the refugee movements following the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the first aspect of this study will analyse and compare six different German-speaking newspapers using the method of content analysis. Generally, this structured analysis is based on Mayring's framework (2015) and ultimately employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative elements: the qualitative aspects include the formulation of research questions, the identification of concepts and the development of categories for the analytical instrument (codebook) that will be subsequently applied in a quantitative manner. The resulting findings need to be interpreted in relation to the

research questions through additional qualitative analysis steps (Mayring, 2015). The use of this research design is based on both the size of the research subject and the research questions.

In order to ensure the quality and reliability of the data collected, the upcoming section will provide detailed exploration of the methodology applied in this part of the study. The presentation of the results will be conducted separately in chapter 4 as well as discussed with reference to the results of the previously presented studies in chapter 5.

To address Research Question 3, the third component focuses on the Representation of Refugees. The initial category examines the Number of refugees (V=18), investigating whether a specific Number is given (V=18a) or Not mentioned (V=18b) in the referenced article. Moreover, the category Demographic Data (V=19) examines the presence of any demographic information relating to refugees, including the subcategories Gender (V=19a), Age (V=19b), Religion (V=19c), Occupation (V=19d), Education Level (V=19e), Regional connection (V=19f), Other (V=19g) or None (V=19h). In addition, an examination is conducted to ascertain whether potential Reasons for Displacement (V=20) of the mentioned refugees are referenced, offering the subcategories of being explicitly Mentioned (V=20a) or Not Mentioned (V=20b). Furthermore, an examination is conducted to determine whether the article incorporates Quotes on refugees (V=21) or not. The options include a Passive (V=21a) and an Active (V=21b) quote, or None (V=21c) at all. Lastly, the analysis explores the categories of References to the refugee movement in 2015 (V=22) and References to refugees from the MENA region (V=23), each encompassing subcategories of Pos. (V=22a/23a), Neg. (V=22b/23b), Neutral (V=22c/23c), or None (V=22d/23d). These categories are utilised to examine potential disparities in the depiction of the refugee movement from MENA countries in 2015 and the movement originating from Ukraine, thereby addressing Research Question 4.

AUSTRIA

The Austrian press examined Der Standard (quality media) and Kronen Zeitung (a tabloid). The articles subjected to analysis amounted to a total of 129. Period 1 was characterised by a significantly higher volume of articles, with Der Standard contributing 75 pieces and Kronen Zeitung 36. In Period 2, the total number of articles diminished. Der Standard contributed 7 articles and Kronen Zeitung 5. Finally, Period 3 yielded the fewest articles wherein Der Standard accounted for 5 articles while Kronen Zeitung contributed 1 article.

In the realm of media representation, both quality and tabloid media outlets maintain a positive overall tone towards the situation regarding refugees. Quality media achieves this by contextualising refugee stories with the reasons for their displacement, particularly war, and emphasising what they have endured. For instance, an article from Der Standard paints a vivid picture: "Vor zehn Tagen war ihre Welt noch in Ordnung. Dann startete Wladimir Putin seinen brutalen Angriffskrieg auf die Ukraine, und stellte das Leben von Millionen Menschen auf den Kopf" (*"Ten days ago their world was still in order. Then Vladimir Putin launched his brutal war of aggression on Ukraine, turning the lives of millions of people upside down."*)

(ATSTP1_056). Furthermore, tabloid media also shares a positive tone towards refugees. Kronen Zeitung for example made a statement in the beginning saying that "Es geht um Menschen. Um Kinder, Familien, Alte und Junge. (...) Krieg in der Ukraine bedeutet Krieg in Europa, in unserer unmittelbaren Nachbarschaft" (*It's about people. About children, families, old and young. (...) War in Ukraine means war in Europe, in our immediate neighbourhood*) (ATKRP1_006) which can be read as a positive implication towards refugees from Ukraine.

Emotionalisation plays a significant role in both quality and tabloid media. Quality media frequently employs positive emotionalisation, narrating stories that depict the refugees' suffering and highlighting the need for empathy. During the first period Der Standard wrote about the displacement: „Doch die Evakuierungszüge sind zum Bersten voll, viele müssen auf den nächsten Zug hoffen. Tränen fließen, es herrschen Fassungslosigkeit und Erschöpfung.“ (*But the evacuation trains are full to bursting, and many have to hope for the next train. Tears flow, there is bewilderment and exhaustion*) (ATSTP1_004) This can also be seen in tabloid media. The Kronen Zeitung utilises emotionalisation to generate sympathy, also for refugees still in Ukraine: "(The pictures from Ukraine break your heart) (...)" (ATKRP1_028).

Both, tabloid, and quality media outlet, used forms of dramatisation in their articles. For instance, an article from Kronen Zeitung declares that „Millionen Menschen aus der Ukraine sind bereits auf der Flucht vor Kriegstreiber Putin, an den Grenzen spielen sich humanitäre Dramen ab“ (*Millions of people from Ukraine are already on the run from warmonger Putin, and humanitarian dramas are taking place at the borders*) (ATKRP1_033). Another example written in Der Standard is: "Die Stimme am anderen Ende der Whatsapp- Sprachnachricht bricht: 'Ich habe Angst, mein Leben zu verlieren.'" (*The voice on the other end of the WhatsApp voice message breaks: 'I'm afraid of losing my life*) (ATSTP1_049)

Regarding the use of synonyms for movement of refugees, quality media predominantly utilises positive and reassuring terms. They describe it as a "Fluchtbewegung" (ATSTP1_054) over an extended period, rather than an overwhelming and sudden influx. In contrast, tabloid media tends to employ negative connotations when discussing movements of refugees, often using terms like "Flüchtlingswelle" (ATKRP1_027), which implies an overwhelming and potentially negative impact. However, the portrayal of movements of refugees in tabloid media tends to be more negative overall. An article from Kronen Zeitung states, "Also werden wir uns wieder einmal auf eine 'Flüchtlingswelle' einstellen müssen." (*So we will once again have to prepare for a 'wave of refugees'*)(ATKRP1_027). Additionally, displacement was portrayed as an adventurous journey in one tabloid article which, while using a positive term, undermines the experiences and suffering of Ukrainians: "Die beiden wissen nicht, wohin ihre abenteuerliche Reise geht, als ihr internationaler Waggon am Freitag im Chaos Kiew verlässt" (*The two of them don't know where their adventurous journey is going when their international train car leaves Kiev in chaos on Friday*) (ATKRP1_012).

Synonyms for refugees also diverge between quality and tabloid media. Quality media primarily uses positive synonyms such as "Vertriebenen" *Displaced people* (ATSTP1_064) and "Flüchtende Zivilisten" *Escaping civilians* (ATSTP1_067), emphasising the forced displacement and lack of alternatives. Moreover, quality media often refers to them simply as "Ukrainer" (ATSTP1_065) or "Menschen" *People* (ATSTP1_057) providing a more inclusive and humanising perspective. In

contrast, tabloid media predominantly uses variations of the negative term "Flüchtling" (ATKRP1_026) when referring to Ukrainian refugees. This terminology choice potentially contributes to a more negative perception overall.

The examined articles can be predominantly assigned to the main topic personal narratives. These narratives portray the relationships of refugees and the circumstances surrounding their need to flee, often mentioning specific individuals. For instance, one article recounted the displacement of a family of six, enduring four days confined in a vehicle, while their younger children struggled to comprehend why their older brother was forced to disembark in Mukachevo instead of accompanying them to Romania (ATSTP1_018). The impact of war frequently intertwined with the coverage, particularly in *Der Standard*, where it served as a logical concomitant to the refugee movement. Tabloid media also featured personal narratives, often partially, alongside the topic of war. Notably, legislative matters in Austria were scarcely covered.

The reporting on Ukrainian refugees exhibited a significant lack of balance, as it predominantly adopted a positive perspective towards refugees in the tabloid newspaper as well as in quality newspapers. The reporting on help and actions displayed a compassionate and broad portrayal of civilians. Media narratives shed light on why these refugees were more openly welcomed, and the gratitude expressed by the refugees themselves. Such accounts were predominantly found in quality media. For instance, an article depicted a family donating a shopping cart filled with food and beverages, with the parents emphasising the importance of helping others and ensuring their son witnessed such acts of compassion. Along the border, people held signs in Ukrainian, offering to drive the refugees wherever they wished to go, highlighting the impressive solidarity demonstrated by the community (ATSTP1_041). Quality media also addressed the policy aspect of granting protection, reporting on the EU decision to provide temporary shelter for Ukrainian refugees. In one article from the first period it is said: "Die geflohenen Ukrainer und Ukrainerinnen würden in allen Mitgliedstaaten die gleichen Grundbedingungen vorfinden: Aufenthaltsrecht für vorerst ein Jahr, verlängerbar auf bis zu drei Jahre, soziale Absicherung in Gestalt einer Krankenversicherung, die zumindest akute Gesundheitsrisiken abdeckt, Zugang zum Arbeitsmarkt." (*The Ukrainians who have fled would find the same basic conditions in all member states: right of residence for initially one year, extendable to up to three years, social security in the form of health insurance that at least covers acute health risks, access to the labor market*) (ATSTP1_003). Conversely, tabloid newspapers commonly emphasised civilian or NGO assistance, frequently featuring calls for donations. One article highlighted the collaboration between Caritas and Volkshilfe Wien, which offered 40 private care spaces for refugees' pets (ATKRP1_023). Urgent pleas for assistance and donations were prevalent, appealing to readers' sympathy for the victims of the war (ATKRP1_006).

Positive political statements regarding refugees were predominantly found in quality media. For example, the Vorarlberg Governor Markus Wallner (ÖVP) was quoted in *Der Standard*, "[er] betonte als aktueller Vorsitzender der Landeshauptleutekonferenz die Bereitschaft der Bundesländer, Flüchtlinge aufzunehmen: "Falls notwendig, werden alle Bundesländer ukrainische Kriegsflüchtlinge aufnehmen." (*As the current chairman of the State Governors' Conference, [he] emphasized the federal states' willingness to accept refugees: "If necessary, all federal states will accept Ukrainian war refugees.*) (ATSTP1_053). Tabloid media also presented neutral or positive

political statements. For instance, President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, was quoted in one article: "‘Alle, die vor Putins Bomben fliehen, sind in Europa willkommen’, erklärte gestern Kommissionspräsidentin Ursula von der Leyen" (*All those fleeing Putin’s bombs are welcome in Europe,*” said Commission President Ursula von der Leyen yesterday) (ATKRP1_015).

The utilisation of direct quotes was a common feature in tabloid media. For example, readers were exposed to emotionally charged statements such as, "Mir kommen die Tränen, wenn ich daran denke, dass sie ihren Vater womöglich nie wieder sehen" (*I tear up when I think about the fact that they may never see their father again*) (ATKRP1_018) and "Ich hoffe, dass der, der den Krieg angefangen hat, ihn rasch wieder stoppt. Wir haben doch niemandem etwas getan." (*I hope that whoever started the war stops it quickly. We haven't done anything to anyone.*) (ATKRP1_012). Der Standard also used direct quotes from refugees. An example of this is a quote intended to further explain the experiences of the displacement. "Noch am Morgen sei, so erzählt Danik, ein Auto an ihnen vorbei in die andere Richtung gerollt. 'Der Fahrer ist stehengeblieben, hat aus dem Fenster gerufen, dass wir Feiglinge sind, dass wir zum Kämpfen in die Ukraine fahren sollen. Aber bei der Übermacht ist das ja ein Abschlachten.'" (*That morning, Danik says, a car rolled past them in the other direction. The driver stopped and shouted out the window that we were cowards, that we should go to Ukraine to fight. But when you're outnumbered, it's a slaughter.*) (ATSTP1_036).

The reason for displacement, attributed to the war, was addressed in both tabloid and quality media. Phrases such as "1,5 Millionen Menschen aus der Ukraine sind bereits auf der Flucht vor Kriegstreiber Putin" (ATKRP1_033) were used to depict the gravity of the situation. Additionally, synonyms related to actual combat situations and war tactics, such as "Invasion," (ATSTP1_056) "bombardieren," (ATSTP1_056) and "von Russland überfallenen Staat" (ATSTP1_066) were employed to describe the circumstances.

Demographic data, specifically age and gender, were frequently mentioned in the articles. Women and children were often featured. Furthermore, older people were also referenced in both tabloid and quality media. For instance, phrases like "Es sind meist Frauen und Kinder, die zu Fuß ankommen" (ATKRP1_025) and "Jetzt sind Inna (38), ihre Schwester Liliane (28) und deren Tochter Sophie (11) auf der Flucht!" (ATKRP1_022) were deployed to highlight the composition of the refugee population. Occupation was deemed significant in quality media, with a particular emphasis on occupations associated with higher pay and prestige. The news coverage predominantly portrayed refugees as CEOs, artists, athletes, or students, while ordinary workers were seldom mentioned, if at all. Noteworthy quotes include "Vor vier Tagen wurde ich als Dirigent des Stadttheaters engagiert" (*Four days ago I was hired as a conductor of the city theatre*) (ATSTP1_056), and "ukrainische Spitzen-seglerinnen und -segler aus den olympischen Klassen" (ATSTP1_057). Religion did not receive any explicit mention in the articles in either, Der Standard or Kronen Zeitung.

Quality and tabloid media often provided precise numbers regarding refugees. Approximately half of the tabloid articles included such figures, demonstrating a tendency to quantify the scope of the situation accurately: "Zumindest 500.000, vielleicht auch eine Million oder mehr haben bereits die Flucht ergriffen." (ATKRP1_031).

Mentions of MENA

In some tabloid articles the refugee movement in 2015 was sometimes brought up to show similarities or differences between the situations. However, these comparisons were not explicitly framed as positive or negative. For example, an article states: "Anders als beim Krieg in der Ost-Ukraine 2014 ist die Versorgungslage noch in Ordnung" (*Unlike the war in eastern Ukraine in 2014, the supply situation is still okay*) (ATKRP1_009). In the discourse surrounding refugee aid, Ukrainian refugees were perceived as more deserving of assistance compared to refugees from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in the quality newspaper. This sentiment can be observed in a statement made by Nehammer, as reported in Der Standard: "Bei der Ukraine verhält es sich anders als bei Ländern wie Afghanistan. Da reden wir von Nachbarschaftshilfe" (*The situation is different in Ukraine than in countries like Afghanistan. We're talking about neighbourly help*) (ATSTP1_53).

In Der Standard, there are mentions of MENA refugees within the context of discrimination they face at the border compared to Ukrainian refugees who are predominantly white. Reports indicate instances where non-Ukrainians were not allowed to leave or were forcibly removed from refugee routes by either the Ukrainian government or certain host countries. Discrimination in the host countries, such as being denied entry by government officials, is also highlighted. The following quotes exemplify these references: "Nichtukrainer haben aber – sofern sie es rüber schaffen – auch auf der anderen Seite der Grenze mit Problemen zu kämpfen" (*But non-Ukrainians – if they make it across – also have to struggle with problems on the other side of the border*) (ATSTP1_068), "Sogar aus Bussen soll man dunkelhäutige Flüchtlinge gezerrt haben, berichten NGOs" (ATSTP1_073), and "Doch da gebe es noch andere, erzählt Pluciennik, ältere Männer, die zwar behaupten würden, sie seien Studenten, aber keinen Studierendenausweis dabei hätten, die nicht Ukrainisch sprechen würden. Die würden nun die Chance nutzen, über die Grenze zu kommen, nachdem sie zuvor an den EU-Grenzen festgesteckt seien, sagt sie" (*But there are others, says Pluciennik, older men who would claim that they are students but don't have a student ID card with them, who don't speak Ukrainian. They would now take the opportunity to get across the border after previously being stuck at the EU borders, she says*) (ATSTP1_068). In contrast, tabloid media often portrays MENA refugees in a negative light. They were negatively described and compared to the situation in 2022. A quote from a tabloid article regarding Ukrainian refugees coming to Austria underlines this perspective: "In diesem Fall haben wir es tatsächlich mit Kriegsflüchtlingen zu tun. Junge, kräftige Kerle sind da nicht dabei, die bleiben daheim und verteidigen ihr Vaterland" (ATKRP1_027).

A form of meta discussion on the treatment of different refugee groups, specifically MENA and Ukrainian refugees, is important to mention as well as the issue of ethnicity and racism towards People of Colour fleeing from Ukraine. This discussion was observed in quality media sources. The meta discussion highlighted the portrayal of "good" and "bad" refugees, with skin colour being one aspect, although not the sole determinant. It was noted that praise was often directed towards Ukrainians who were perceived as knowing what to do, with men staying in the country to defend it while pre-dominantly women and children fled. This observation was made in an article: "So will man Bilder von 'guten Geflüchteten' schaffen, die man akzeptieren könne und denen man helfen

wolle – während auf der anderen Seite die anderen, die bösen Flüchtlinge stünden, die Männer, die sich vor einem Krieg 'drücken' wollten" (*So one wants to create images of 'good refugees' who you can accept and whom you want to help - while on the other side there are the other, the bad refugees, the men who want to 'avoid' a war*) (ATSTP1_011). Quotes found in Der Standard further reinforced the existence of a divisive human perception that determines who is deserving of help and recognition as a person.

The following quote exemplifies this sentiment: "Hinter dem derzeit vielerorts geäußerten Impuls 'Das könnten wir sein!' steckt ein Menschenbild, das unterscheidet, wer Hilfe verdient und wer nicht. Oder anders gesagt: wer als Mensch anerkannt wird und wer nicht" (*Behind the impulse currently being expressed in many places, 'That could be us!' There is an image of humanity that differentiates between who deserves help and who doesn't. Or to put it another way: who is recognized as a human being and who is not*) (ATSTP1_011). Additionally, the article highlighted the signing of an open letter by over 90 NGOs and more than 5,000 individuals demanding protection for all Ukrainian refugees. The discussion also touched upon the need for people to even consider whether they can accept Ukrainian refugees based on their skin colour, indicating the structural nature of racism. The article quoted Tanja Wehsely from Volkshilfe, who stated, "wie strukturell der Rassismus ist" (ATSTP1_073).

GERMANY

The following discussion focuses on the two German publications, Süddeutsche Zeitung (quality media) and BILD (tabloid). The total number of articles examined is 154. It is to be mentioned that Period 1 had a higher volume of articles, with Süddeutsche Zeitung publishing 77 pieces and Bild 51. In Period 2, Süddeutsche Zeitung addressed the topic in 9 articles, BILD in 3 articles. Period 3 had the fewest articles, with Süddeutsche Zeitung contributing 13 articles and the tabloid newspaper provided only one article.

The analysis reveals an overall positive or neutral tone towards refugees in the media coverage of refugee movements across both quality and tabloid publications. No negative articles regarding refugees were coded in the time periods. Emotionalisation plays a significant role, with a strong emphasis on positive emotionalisation towards refugees. Quotes such as "Frauen und Kinder müssen allein in die Fremde. Überall Abschiede und Tränen" (*Women and children have to go abroad alone. Farewells and tears everywhere*) (DESZP1_009) and personal narratives of individuals leaving their family behind exemplify the emotionalisation observed in the coverage. Tabloid media exhibit strong emotionalisation, especially during the displacement phase. Negative emotionalisation is consistently avoided.

Regarding dramatisation, was used in a mostly positive or neutral way in Süddeutsche Zeitung and BILD. The dramatisation was used in a negative way in very little cases. One example for the use of dramatisation in a positive way towards refugees can be found in the first Period in BILD: "Hunderte Tote, Hunderttausende auf der Flucht, ein Krieg, dessen Ende nicht absehbar ist" (*Hundreds dead, hundreds of thousands on the run, a war with no end in sight*) (DEBDP1_010).

Synonyms for the movement of refugees are mainly not used, although occasionally mentioned in a negative context, such as "Migrationsströme" (DESZP1_36) in quality media and "Flüchtlingswelle innerhalb Europas" (DEBDP1_002) in tabloid media. Regarding synonyms for refugees, a balanced approach is observed in both quality and tabloid media. Even though in quality media, more positive synonyms like "Geflüchtete" (DESZP1_015), "Schutzsuchende" (DESZP1_033), "aus der Ukraine flüchtende Menschen" (DESZP1_039), and "Nachbarn aus der Ukraine" (DESZP1_012) are used, while tabloid media tend to employ more negative terms like "Flüchtlinge" (DEBDP1_023).

Quality media articles primarily focus on topics other than refugee movements, such as unrelated subjects, before addressing refugee-related issues. Among the refugee-related topics, a balanced distribution is observed between personal narratives, criticism of government and legislature, and the war. In contrast, tabloid media predominantly covers the war and personal narratives, with a greater emphasis on war-related articles and a relatively smaller portion dedicated to refugees. Criticism of government and legislation relevant to refugee movements receives less coverage in tabloid media compared to quality media.

Both BILD and Süddeutsche Zeitung demonstrate a tendency towards unbalanced reporting with a positive bias. This bias is evident in their exclusive focus on presenting refugees in a positive light and expressing sympathy towards them. The majority of articles on refugee movements by Süddeutsche Zeitung and BILD addressed various forms of help and actions. Almost all articles incorporated methods of aiding refugees or ways in which the readers could contribute. The portrayed actions were primarily organised by civilians, showcasing their efforts in providing support. For instance, the following quote exemplifies the collaborative initiatives: "Menschen, die Essen spenden, Kinderwagen, Kleidung. Die ihre Türen öffnen für die Ukrainer, die Gästebetten aufstellen, Zimmer freiräumen" (*People donating food, strollers, clothing. They open their doors to Ukrainians, set up guest beds, and clear out rooms*) (DESZP1_038). While political actions were mentioned, they received comparatively less attention. Help and actions undertaken by companies and organisations were also highlighted in the tabloid media. An article portrays the act of a young girl, who donates her winter clothes to children: "Ich habe eine Winterjacke, die mir nicht mehr passt. Mützen, Schals und Handschuhe. Die spende ich an Kinder in der Ukraine, die kein Zuhause mehr haben." (*I have a winter jacket that no longer fits me. Hats, scarves and gloves. I donate them to children in Ukraine who no longer have a home.*) (DEBDP1_019) Additionally, it is mentioned that special trains operated by Deutsche Bahn were arranged to transport Ukrainian refugees between Frankfurt (Oder) on the Polish border and Berlin: "Für ukrainische Flüchtlinge pendeln seit gestern sechs Sonderzüge der Deutschen Bahn zwischen Frankfurt (Oder) an der polnischen Grenze und Berlin." (*Since yesterday, six special Deutsche Bahn trains have been commuting for Ukrainian refugees between Frankfurt (Oder) on the Polish border and Berlin*) (DEBDP1_025) In tabloid media, notable attention was given to help and actions initiated by celebrities and well-known individuals in Germany. For instance, a singer expressed her emotional response to the suffering of Ukrainian war refugees. She announced her intention to donate and offer accommodation for refugees at her estate stating, "Wir haben Platz für 15 Personen" (DEBDP1_033).

The majority of articles in Süddeutsche Zeitung did not extensively address challenges. When challenges were mentioned, they primarily pertained to individual-level difficulties, such as individuals requiring assistance from the government to organise their efforts. An example quote

reflects this perspective: "Noch stemmen die Freiwilligen das, aber sie brauchen Hilfe, sagt einer von ihnen." (DESZP1_049) Regarding challenges at the political level, there were some mentions concerning the expected number of refugees and related problems of coordination between authorities and civilians:

“Die Koordination zwischen den Verantwortlichen scheint in München noch nicht richtig zu funktionieren. In einer internen Mail der Regierung heißt es, es werde chaotisch, Hauptsache die Leute seien erst mal untergebracht. Auch bei Hilfsorganisationen und Helfern fällt immer wieder das Wort ‘chaotisch’ ” (*The coordination between those responsible does not yet seem to be working properly in Munich. An internal email from the government states that it will be chaotic, the main thing is that the people are accommodated first. The word ‘chaotic’ is also mentioned again and again by aid organizations and helpers*) (DESZP1_057).

In tabloid media, there were only a few mentions of civilian challenges. These references were often linked to the need for assistance or actions, aligning with the overall focus on help and actions in the context of the coverage. Political challenges were not mentioned with one exception: In Period 1, a challenge was reported, but it pertained to refugees from the MENA region. The report described a raid "in einem Zug, der am 3. März in Freilassing (österreichische Grenze) angekommen ist," in which approximately 130 out of 160 refugees were "Drittstaater mit ukrainischem Sichtvermerk." Consequently, there was a call for the federal minister of the interior Faeser to advocate for border controls with Poland and the Czech Republic (DEBDP1_022).

The clear majority of articles in Süddeutsche Zeitung do not include any quotes from refugees. If active quotes were used, they were mostly regarding stories about the displacement: "Wir wollten unser Zuhause nicht verlassen, aber der Krieg wurde immer schlimmer." (DESZP3_006) These quotes talking about the refuge were also present in BILD. For example: "Wir mussten schnell weg", sagt Anna, "ich konnte Tom keine Winterschuhe mitnehmen" (DE- BDP1_008).

Most quality articles in the beginning explicitly mention the reasons for displacement. Examples include: "Wegen des russischen Angriffskriegs auf die Ukraine" (DESZP1_015), "Flucht vor der russischen Invasion" (DESZP1_038). In the more recent articles, the war is not directly mentioned in connection to the displacement. But in some of these cases, there are in-depth discussions about the war, implying that the readers understood the reasons nevertheless. Articles in BILD mostly do not mention the reason directly in all three time periods with some exceptions like: "Sie mussten vor dem Terror der russischen Armee fliehen - so wie Hunderttausende andere Ukrainer" (DEBDP1_005).

Regarding the demographic data, the focus is on gender, age, and regional connections, in both tabloid and quality media. Gender is frequently mentioned, with references to "mothers," "unaccompanied children," and "exhausted grandmothers." Age is often indicated in brackets as well as through phrases like "Teenager, Freunde, Mütter, Kinder. Ein älterer Herr mit Barrett, er wird um die siebzig sein, ist schlicht und elegant gekleidet." (DESZP1_049). Regional connections are also highlighted, with references to friends, relatives, and neighbors. For example: "Ukrainer sind Freunde, Verwandte, Nachbarn" (*Ukrainians are friends, relatives, neighbours*) (DESZP1_038), "Ein Freund aus Berlin werde sie gleich abholen" (DESZP1_045). In BILD, people are mostly reported in reference to their names.

In most quality media articles, the exact number of refugees is given, although the numbers often vary. In contrast, in Bild, the number of refugees is mostly not provided. Some articles in Bild use recent numbers, but they also vary. Examples include: "Mehr als 64 000 Kriegs-Flüchtlinge aus der Ukraine sind mittlerweile in Deutschland" (DEBDP1_043) and general statements such as "Hunderttausende auf der Flucht" (DEBDP1_010).

Mentions of MENA

Mentions of the refugee movement in 2015 were mostly absent in the articles. When they were mentioned, it was predominantly in a negative or sometimes neutral context in Süddeutsche Zeitung. For example: "Anders als während der Flüchtlingskrise 2015 und 2016, als vor allem Menschen aus dem Irak, aus Syrien und Afghanistan, aber auch aus afrikanischen Ländern Richtung Europa flohen, sind es diesmal Menschen aus einem Nachbarland der EU, die vor der Tür stehen." (DESZP1_009). Also, numbers of refugees are being compared, mostly in a neutral way: "Zusammen mit etwa 115 000 erstmaligen Asylantrag-Stellern aus anderen Ländern sind das vermutlich mehr Ankömmlinge als im Flucht-Sommer 2015. Kein Wunder, wenn es in den Flüchtlingsunterkünften eng wird." (DESZP2_006) Furthermore the help of civilians from 2015 was portrayed in a positive manner and related to the current situation in one of the articles. It was said that the civilians bring food to the train station or offer refugees shelter in their apartments, like back then, during the Syrian war. (DESZP1_058) In tabloid media the topic of the refugee movement in 2015 was mainly not mentioned with some exceptions, which can be perceived as more neutral statements like: "Allein am Hauptbahnhof Berlin kommen täglich rund 11 000 an - mehr als zum Höhepunkt der Flüchtlings-Welle 2015. "Die größte Flüchtlingskrise dieses Jahrhunderts", so UN-Hochkommissar Filippo Grandi" (DE- BDP1_040).

Similarly, mentions of refugees from MENA did not occur extensively. They were mainly not mentioned in the articles. When they were covered, it was mostly in a negative or sometimes neutral tone in the Süddeutsche Zeitung. For instance: "Natürlich fällt es den Polen leichter, Solidarität mit den Nachbarn aus der Ukraine zu zeigen als mit Menschen aus Nahost oder Afrika." (DESZP1_012) In BILD, the situation was similar, with MENA refugees mainly not mentioned. In these few cases their portrayal was more negative. The use of words to describe refugees from MENA and Ukraine also differed. "Dabei suchen mehr Migranten als ukrainische Flüchtlinge Zuflucht in Deutschland" (DEBDP3_001).

Additional observations were made regarding Germany that do not fit into specific categories but have a more general nature, as discovered during the analysis of the articles. One noteworthy finding is the presence of Holocaust references within tabloid media. The displacement experienced during the National Socialist era is linked to the current displacement, emphasising the responsibility of German-speaking countries. An example quote illustrating this connection is as follows: "Denn Zoe flieht vor dem Krieg, vor den Bomben von Putins Armee, um ihr Leben zu retten. So wie sie sich als jüdisches Kind vor 80 Jahren in einem anderen Krieg vor den Nazis versteckte, um ihr Leben zu retten" (*Because Zoe is fleeing the war, from the bombs of Putin's army, to save her*

life. Just as she hid from the Nazis as a Jewish child 80 years ago in another war to save her life) (DEBDP1_050).

SWITZERLAND

The focus of the findings pertains to the two Swiss publications, the quality newspaper Tages-Anzeiger and the tabloid newspaper 20 Minuten. A total of 75 articles were sighted. Notably, during Period 1, a greater number of articles were published, with Tages-Anzeiger contributing 35 articles and 20 Minuten writing 31 articles.

In Period 2, the number of articles decreased with Tages-Anzeiger accounting for 4 articles. 3 articles were found in 20 Minuten. Finally, Period 3 exhibited the fewest articles with Tages-Anzeiger contributing 2 articles and 20 Minuten none.

In the case of quality media, the overall tone towards refugees is positive, reflecting a supportive stance. This is evident in a statement from the Swiss quality media source (CHTAP1_001) which emphasises Switzerland's solidarity with refugees, stating, "Solidarisch werde die Schweiz auch diesmal sein. Wir reden hier von Mit-Europäerinnen und Mit-Europäern, wir werden sie nicht im Stich lassen." Similarly, tabloid media also maintain a positive tone towards refugees, as indicated by a statement from an article (CHZMP1_028) discussing the Swiss Federal Council's intention to integrate displaced individuals into the job market, highlighting the potential benefits for Switzerland, particularly from skilled professionals. Negative portrayals of refugees are relatively rare in both Tages-Anzeiger and 20 Minuten.

Negative emotionalisations regarding refugees' opinions about Russia or its leader, Putin, can be found in media sources. Positive emotionalisations, on the other hand, are employed in personal narratives published in Tages-Anzeiger. These narratives shed light on individual experiences, evoking empathy and compassion in the readers. An example (CHTAP1_002) illustrates the exhaustion and vulnerability of a refugee, highlighting the limited possessions they could bring along, including baby food. In tabloid media, positive emotionalisations are as well utilised to provide vivid descriptions and elaborate on stories involving refugees.

Dramatisation, if present in quality media, is typically positive in nature. A dramatic scenario is outlined in a statement from the first period: "Zwei Kugeln schlagen bei ihm ein, zwei im Nebensitz. Wäre einer mitgefahren, er wäre jetzt tot." (CHTAP1_028) Although dramatisations occurred sporadically in 20 Minuten, they were never lurid or exaggeratedly incorporated.

Regarding the language used to describe the movement of refugees, synonyms vary in their usage across media sources. In tabloid articles, there is infrequent use of synonyms, and when employed, some can have negative connotations. For instance, a negative synonym "Flüchtlingsstrom aus der Ukraine" (CHZMP1_023) is used. In quality media, synonyms used to describe the movement of refugees often highlight its uncontrollable nature. Some negative synonyms, such as "Fluchtbewegung" (CHTAP1_023) and "Flüchtlingsstrom" (CHTAP1_023), were made use of, reflecting the challenges posed by this movement.

Furthermore, when referring to refugees themselves, quality media tends to employ a high number of negative synonyms. The term "Flüchtling" (CHTAP1_003) is frequently used. Contrarily, in 20 Minuten, a considerable number of positive synonyms are utilised. Terms like "Ankommenden" (CHZMP1_024), "Schutz suchende Menschen" (CHZMP1_002), and "Familien aus der Ukraine" (CHZMP1_009) are employed to convey a more positive portrayal. However, it is noteworthy that negative synonyms, such as "riesige Fluchtkolone" (CHZMP1_001), are also present in this media source.

The Swiss media coverage on refugees encompassed various topics, including personal narratives and war-related issues, in both tabloid and quality newspapers. There was a notable presence of personal stories featuring refugees, with their full names being disclosed. Examples include statements such as "Noch vor ein paar Tagen hätte Irina Prichina nicht für möglich gehalten, dass sie noch einmal vor Wladimir Putin davonlaufen muss" (CHTAP1_002) and "Während auf Kiew und andere Grossstädte der Ukraine die ersten Bomben fallen, liegt Gerek Geldijewa in der Entbindungsstation der Frauenklinik Nummer 3 in Kiew und bekommt ein Baby." (*While the first bombs are falling on Kiev and other major cities in Ukraine, Gerek Geldiyeva is lying in the maternity ward of the number 3 gynecological clinic in Kiev and is having a baby*)(CHTAP1_010). Tabloid media also covered other refugee-related topics, such as articles on assisting refugees, like "So helfen sie Menschen auf der Flucht" (CHZMP1_006) and "Verein ruft auf, Flüchtende aufzunehmen" (CHZMP1_005).

The reporting on refugees displayed an unbalanced nature, with a predominance of positive coverage in tabloid and quality newspapers. Statements in support of refugees were broadly featured in quality newspapers.

Additionally, quality media provides coverage on help and actions, with a relatively equal distribution between governmental and civilian help. However, there were instances where volunteers were portrayed as obstacles rather than helpful, as exemplified by the statement "Grösseres Chaos verursachen die Hunderten Helferinnen und Helfer aus dem Ausland. Sie sind aus Deutschland, den Niederlanden, aus Österreich oder der Schweiz angereist, in endlosen Nachtfahrten, manche im eigenen Auto, andere in gemieteten Kleintransportern" (*The hundreds of helpers from abroad are causing greater chaos. They arrived from Germany, the Netherlands, Austria or Switzerland in endless night journeys, some in their own cars, others in rented vans*) (CHTAP1_022). In tabloid media, references to help and actions were less frequent, but when present, a balance between civilian and governmental help was observed. Examples include political assistance, such as the Ukrainian embassy in Bern collecting medical supplies for people in Ukraine, as stated in "Die ukrainische Botschaft in Bern sammelt für die Menschen in der Ukraine medizinische Güter (unter anderem tragbare Defibrillatoren, sterile Handschuhe, chirurgische Instrumente, Schmerzmittel und Erste-Hilfe-Sets)" (CHZMP1_006).

Political statements were not extensively featured in both tabloid and quality media. However, when present, they were predominantly positive, focusing on the help and solidarity offered by European politicians or political organisations towards Ukrainian refugees. An example of a positive political statement is "Es braucht hier eine europäische Solidarität, und die Schweiz wird sich an dieser beteiligen" (*European solidarity is needed here, and Switzerland will take part in this*)

(CHTAP1_001). Positive political statements were also found in tabloid media as illustrated by the statement "FDP-Nationalrat Andri Silberschmidt sieht darin jedoch eine unnötige Bürokratie. 'Die geflüchteten Ukrainerinnen und Ukrainer sollen in einem vereinfachten Verfahren eine Arbeitsbewilligung erhalten" (*However, FDP National Councilor Andri Silberschmidt sees this as unnecessary bureaucracy. 'The Ukrainian refugees should receive a work permit through a simplified procedure'*) (CHZMP1_013).

Challenges related to the refugee situation were not extensively addressed in tabloid media. Some challenges were mentioned, referring to both political and civilian levels, but their frequency was low. Quality media also covered challenges, with a relatively higher frequency of political challenges. These challenges were mainly presented in the context of the future integration of Ukrainian refugees, considering the difficulty of determining the exact number of refugees.

An example statement is "'Wie lange können sie bei ihren Verwandten in Polen bleiben? Irgendwann wird es zu eng. Dann würden Wohnungen gebraucht, Arbeit, Plätze in Schulen und Kindergärten. Und trotz aller Ähnlichkeiten auch Sprachkurse" (CHTAP1_009).

The portrayal of refugees in quality media often includes quotes expressing despair towards Russia or Putin. For instance, an example quote states, "Sie bomben und schießen, sie töten eine friedliche Bevölkerung, sagt sie" (CHTAP1_010), illustrating the sentiments of refugees. These quotes also shed light on their experiences during displacement. Tabloid media also make use of active quotes, which are present in more than half of the articles and typically pertain to individual stories or events that occurred during the displacement. For instance, an article states, "Alle Züge waren voll. So haben wir entschieden, mit dem Bus über die Grenze zu kommen, erzählt sie" (CHZMP1_014).

In quality media outlets, the underlying reasons for the displacement were occasionally mentioned directly in relation to refugees. An example statement highlights the connection: "Der Angriff Russlands auf die Ukraine hat Millionen von Menschen in die Flucht getrieben" (CHTAP2_003). Tabloid media did not frequently mention the reason directly.

Demographic data, particularly gender and age, were the most commonly cited elements in Tages-Anzeiger. Women and children were mentioned in relation to their displacement, while men were often associated with military service. For example, "Vor vier Tagen ist Switlana mit ihrem Sohn, ihrer Schwägerin und deren Söhnen von zu Hause aufgebrochen. Die Männer blieben zurück, sie dienen jetzt in der territorialen Verteidigung der Stadt" (*Four days ago, Switlana left home with her son, her sister-in-law and their sons. The men stayed behind and are now serving in the territorial defense of the city.*)(CHTAP1_022). Other demographic information such as religion, educational level, or occupation was not frequently mentioned. In 20 Minuten, demographic information was mostly absent. When it was mentioned, gender and age were the primary demographic elements provided.

The number of refugees was mostly estimated in quality articles, and these estimates varied across different time periods. An example statement mentions, "Hunderttausend Menschen, sagen die ukrainischen Behörden, seien bereits auf der Flucht" (CHTAP1_002). Tabloid media frequently reported specific numbers of refugees, with only a few articles lacking such information. For example, "1,7 Millionen Menschen sind schon geflohen" (CHZMP1_020) is mentioned to illustrate the scale of the displacement.

Mentions of MENA

The refugee movement 2015 received only a few mentions in Tages-Anzeiger, which were predominantly neutral or negative in tone. One statement highlighted the contrast between the current situation and the refugee situation of 2015-2016: "Anders als während der Flüchtlings-krise 2015 und 2016, als vor allem Menschen aus dem Irak, aus Syrien und Afghanistan, aber auch aus afrikanischen Ländern Richtung Europa flohen, sind es diesmal Menschen aus einem Nachbarland der EU, die vor der Tür stehen" (CHTAP1_002). In contrast, tabloid media did not make any references to the 2015 situation.

Regarding the mention of MENA refugees, they were also not mentioned in 20 Minuten. Quality media outlets similarly had limited references to refugees from 2015. However, one positive statement was found in the third period, which criticised the differential treatment of refugees: "Gleichzeitig höre ich oft, mit kritischem Unterton: Ukrainer sind uns ähnlich, kommen aus einer christlichen Kultur - sie werden bevorzugt. Im Gegensatz zu anderen Flüchtlingen, die eine andere Hautfarbe oder Religion haben" (*At the same time, I often hear, with a critical undertone: Ukrainians are similar to us, come from a Christian culture - they are preferred. In contrast to other refugees who have a different skin colour or religion*)(CHTAP3_001). This statement reflects a concern about the differences based on factors such as ethnicity or religion.

Press Photographs: Visual Representations of Refugees in 2022-2023

The massive displacement of people in 2015, which led to massive influx of people from MENA-Countries into Europe, was rooted in several interrelated wars and conflicts in Libya Civil, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. At the end of the year 2016 Europe had already over 5.2 million sea arrivals by refugees, mostly over the Mediterranean Sea (UNHCR Report), or in routes over Greece and the Balkans. Until today an increasing number lost their lives in perilous journeys in search of safety on the European continent (ibid).

On the policy side the huge displacement led to the Implementation of various measures in response to the influx of refugees and migrants. These included relocation and resettlement programs, Turkey EU Agreement in 2016 to stop irregular migration and to take back migrants who crossed its territory to Greece, strengthened border control through Frontex and other measures on the policy side (Wagner, 2015). The European refugee crisis sparked contentious discussions and exposed a rift between Eastern and Western European countries regarding the acceptance and allocation of refugees. This division resulted in the construction of barriers at multiple borders, both within and outside the Schengen area, along with the reintroduction of border controls. Furthermore, the tragic attacks in Paris in November fueled a public debate on migration and terrorism, despite the absence of a clear connection. At the national level, several EU member

states implemented changes to their asylum legislation, generally imposing stricter regulations and limiting the rights of asylum seekers (Wagner, 2015).

Nonetheless Refugees from Ukraine had the chance to make a different experience with EU Policy, than Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, or North Africa etc., as the following quotes of the Detention Project (2022) show

1. “The EU is also proposing to simplify border controls and entry conditions for people fleeing Ukraine. Ukrainian refugees can travel for 90 days visa-free throughout EU countries, and many have been moving on from neighbouring countries to join family and friends in other EU countries.[13] Throughout Europe, the public and politicians are mobilising to show solidarity and support for those fleeing Ukraine“ (GDP 2022)

2. Across Europe, free public transport[9] and phone communication[10] is being provided for Ukrainian refugees. The EU is proposing to reactivate the Temporary Protection Directive, introduced in the 1990s to manage large-scale refugee movements during the Balkans crisis. Under this scheme, refugees from Ukraine would be offered up to three years temporary protection in EU countries, without having to apply for asylum, with rights to a residence permit and access to education, housing, and the labour market. (GDP 2022)

For examination the biggest tabloid newspaper and the biggest quality newspaper from each German-speaking countries were chosen: “Die Bild” and “Süddeutsche Zeitung” from Germany. “Der Standard” and “Kronen Zeitung” from Austria and “Tages-Anzeiger” and “20 Minuten” from Switzerland.

This process revealed descriptive categories such as surroundings, people depicted, gender, origin, or whether they are shown as big groups or individuals. Connotative impressions were analysed as well, such as whether the people are depicted as victims, threats, or benefits for the welcoming society (see 4.1). The data corpus was searched for repeating patterns to categorise and sort the photographs. We have distinguished between close-ups (portraits, small groups, recognizable faces) and wide shots (landscapes, large groups, blurred or unrecognisable faces). We have used the categories "no individuality" and "individuality" to describe this phenomenon. "No individuality" refers to pictures in newspaper articles where refugees are shown but not recognizable as individuals due to various factors (blurred faces, distant shots, large unrecognisable groups, etc.), and vice versa.

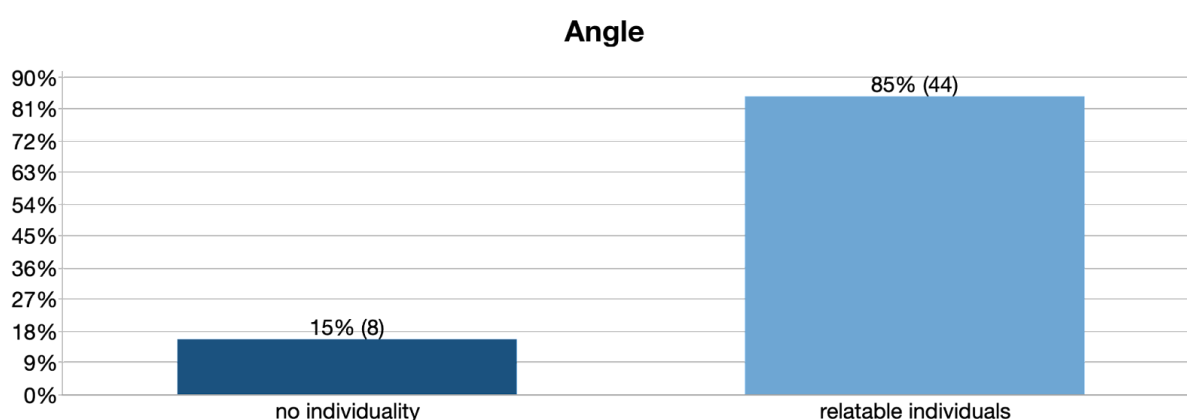


Figure 1.3 Non-Ukrainian

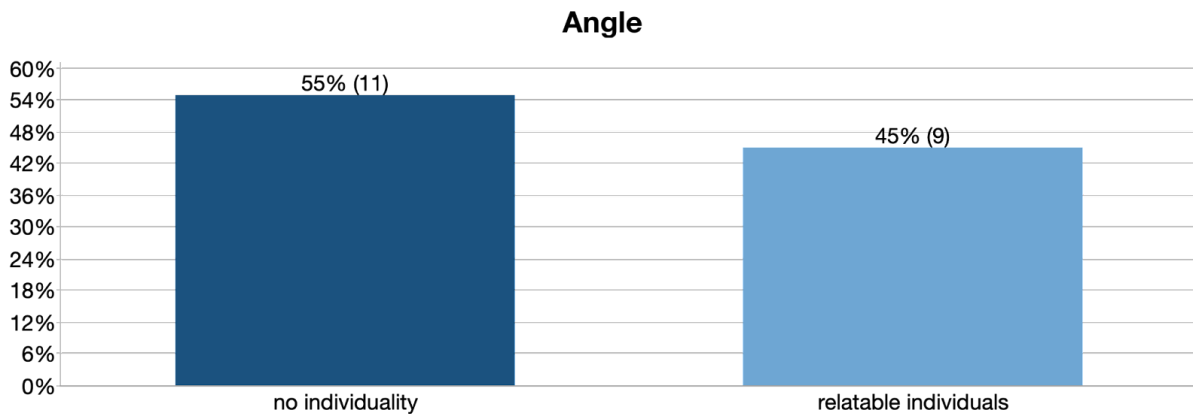


Figure 1.4 Ukrainian

As shown in Figures 1.3 (non-Ukrainian) and 1.4 (Ukrainian), Ukrainian refugees are portrayed as relatable individuals in 85% of press photos, while in 55% of all cases, non-Ukrainian refugees are depicted with a lower degree of individuality. To gain a better understanding of the underlying sentiment concerning refugees, we worked with three main codes that are equivalent to broad media narratives. Since interpretations of leading media narratives are hard to evaluate based solely on pictures, we always worked with a combination of pictures and titles to grasp the essence of the underlying narrative.

1. Migrants as a benefit for the receiving community (social progress, boosting the working population, improving demographics, sharing skills & knowledge, etc.). We have included personal stories of successful migration and other success stories, as well as positive contributions by individual people or groups highlighted for their special achievements. On the visual level, close-ups and portraits are often used, along with quotes in the titles and portrayals of personal items or pets, etc.
2. Migrants as a threat on different levels (social, cultural, religious, economic, etc.). The visual representation of the threat is subliminal, often showing distant pictures of people on boats or in long queues. We have noticed specific combinations of pictures and titles that often depict de-individualised people or faceless masses, implying "wrong" or "failed" policy decisions leading to "overcrowded" places or social, economic, or religious "decay."
3. Migrants as victims (war, socio-economic factors, political reasons, etc.). Emotions play a central role in representing victimhood. We have observed large portraits of suffering people that depict very intimate situations. The media coverage of Ukrainian refugees has been dominated by assigning them the role of victims (Figure 1.2). By examining the collected data, grouping the pictures, categorising and repeating that process over and over the following inductive categories were developed:

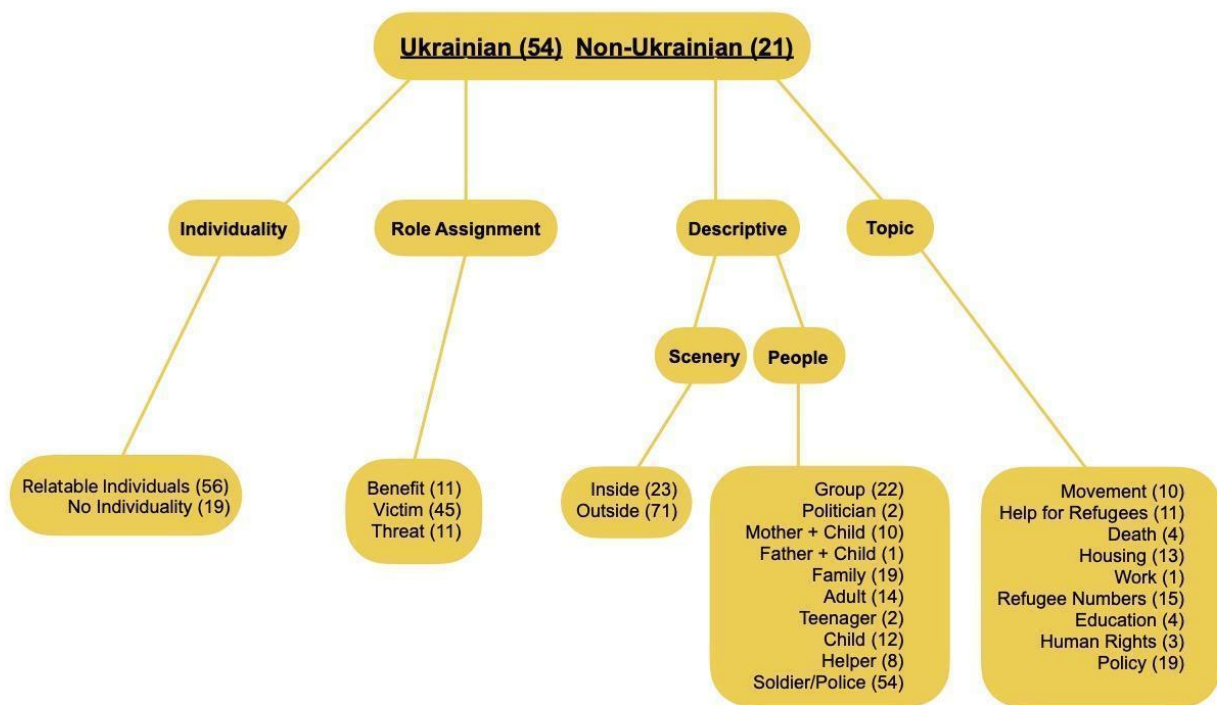


Figure 1: Overview of the categories

It should be noted that the boundaries of the categories are rather blurred, they overlap and of course are mutually dependent. If a mother with her children is depicted she will most probably be perceived as an “relatable individual” and therefore more likely to get the role assignment of a “victim”.

Role assignments: Victim, Threat or Benefit?

An examination of the photographs plus the article titles has revealed recurring role assignments as already developed as a narrative in McCann et al. (2023). The requirement of attribution differs from their study, since the analysis focuses on photographs and their title and not the content in form of text of the article.

The role attribution “Victim” is strongly connected to the emotions which the picture of people are creating in the viewer. As well the emotion shown by the person in the picture. When the individual is relatable and empathy is easily acquired and the person is shown in a situation of need one is more likely to perceive the person as a victim. The role assignment of “Victim” was most prominent in the depiction of Ukrainian Refugees.



Figure 2: Ukrainian Refugees at the central station of Vienna (Kronen Zeitung)

Figure 2 with the title “Chaos um Schutzsuchende am Wiener Hauptbahnhof” (Chaos regarding protection seekers at the central station of Vienna) is showing a clear attribution as “Victim”. Mainly children are shown, under blankets apparently trying to sleep on benches on the Viennese central station. The “Chaos” named in the title is shown in the picture too. The word “Schutzsuchende” (protection seekers) is portraying the Refugees as in need of help and as victims entitled to it. Women and children dominate the pictures of Ukrainian Refugees and by that strengthening the role of victims and it is highly unlikely they will get perceived as a threat. The subcategory “victim” is formed by title and picture equally.



Figure 3: Ukrainian Refugees on a job convention (Kronen Zeitung)

For the attribution of Refugees as a “benefit” for the host society the title of the article plays a big role. The positive depiction in the photograph alone doesn’t prove the category itself, but a further explanation on what the benefit actually is is necessary. The category was found in Ukrainians and Refugees from other origins alike. Mainly on the level of an individual as being beneficial to the society as a workforce.

As the title of Figure 3 “Suchst du noch oder arbeitest du schon?” (Are you still searching or already working?) implies the benefit for a society with plenty of open positions is to find competent applicants. The photo focuses on a group of women at a job convention in eager exchange. The tonality is positive, supported also by the colorfulness and suggests that the Ukrainian Refugees “give back” to the host society by working and paying taxes. A prominent example is discussed and shown in “4.5 Success Stories”, where the story of a Syrian Refugee who became a mayor in a German village is depicted. The findings are mostly showing the benefits for the economy, but are not referring to eventual enrichments of culture.



Figure 4, Refugees searched by Austrian Army (Kronen Zeitung)

Like “benefit” the assignment of “threat” can be felt in different fields. Jealousy can develop when other people get financial support from the state, when newcomers have a different religion, by cultural differences or by others “taking the jobs”. The visual representation of the threat is subliminal, often showing distant pictures of people on boats or in long queues. The “threat” frame is also supported by the finding about the loss of individuality in groups (see 4.3). An undefinable mass of people is more likely to be received as a threat than the identifiable individual.

Not surprising that the threat frame was found when Non-Ukrainian Refugees were shown and not by the Ukrainian Refugees. The latter was only implied concerning a threat on the Refugees (“Fleeing Ukrainian women threatened with human trafficking”, standard9) but never triggered by them. The association of danger or to criminals, which fall under threat, are not far when certain groups of Refugees often are depicted with police or army forces.

In Figure 4 not only is the picture creating the “threat” frame, but the title “Neue Rekordmarke: Migranten strömen Zu Tausenden ins Land“ (New record: thousands of migrants flock to the country”) amplifies it. Especially because the German word “strömen”, literally translates to “flooding” which evokes associations to a natural disaster. Using this language for people contributes to the dehumanisation already referred to by Azevedo et al. (2021).

Ukrainian Refugees depicted as relatable individuals

When examining the collected data, it is noticeable that the majority of articles and their accompanying pictures focus on refugees from Ukraine (n=54), while a smaller number are about

refugees from other origins (n=21). This is not surprising since the Russian invasion and subsequent refugee streams from Ukraine occurred during the period of investigation. Ukrainian refugees are often depicted as families, predominantly women and children, but rarely as large groups where their individuality gets lost among the masses.

The photographs are taken at close range, creating a sense of spatial proximity. This makes it easy to recognise the faces of the refugees, interpret their expressions, and get an idea of their emotional state. Viewers are inclined to relate to the depicted situation and may even imagine themselves in the same position. This has a high chance of evoking empathy and fostering a positive attitude towards the refugees.



Figure 5.1: Family on the search for an accommodation belongings



Figure 5.2: Refugee with all her belongings

The pictures show families with all the belongings they could carry, including animals in transport boxes, a dog on someone's arm (Figure 5.2), or children in matching pink jackets. The articles focus on personal stories, which, for other origins, only happen when they are considered 'exceptional success stories' (see 4.5).

Children are portrayed up close, conveying that they are taken seriously and often play an important part in the overall image. Out of the 54 pictures of Ukrainian refugees, only 7 show larger groups. However, due to their demographic and the absence of police or army personnel, they are less likely to be perceived as a threat. Moreover, the titles tend to be more positive, such as 'Ukraine-Krise: Wien ist 'bereit für Flüchtlinge' (krone2, Ukraine crisis: Vienna is 'ready for refugees'). All of these points characterise refugees from Ukraine as more relatable and closer to 'us,' in contrast to the 'others,' who are mainly refugees from other states and are mostly depicted as groups.

Refugees from other origins represented as a group

Refugees from other origins, mainly MENA, central africa, are frequently depicted as large groups of people (12 out of 21 cases). Most often, they are shown on boats (7 cases).

The individuals get lost in the masses, and it is difficult to recognise their faces or emotions. In some cases, even the eyes are censored, which might be for protecting the privacy of the person shown, but it also reinforces the alienation of the individuals.

This creates a "faceless mass," as Azevedo et al. (2021) already pointed out, "the removal of individuality (...) enhances the dehumanisation of refugees" (Azevedo et al., 2021, p. 14). By not having one person or family to empathise with, but rather a mass of people, viewers can react with fear, especially in the case of male-dominated groups. The pictures of these groups often feature security forces, such as the police, army, or garde nationale detaining or interacting with the refugees, thereby reinforcing the perception of threat.

As seen in Figure 6.1, the picture clearly shows hierarchical differences. The Italian police are standing and giving orders through hand signs, while the group of refugees sits on the ground, seemingly awaiting orders. If the hierarchy wasn't already clear due to their occupation, it is further emphasised by their posture.



Figure 6.1: Refugees under police surveillance (SZ)

Figure 6.2 represents refugees depicted on boats. Viewers can only guess the presence of people by their tiny shapes, further reinforcing the sense of alienation by erasing individuality.

Figure 6.2: Refugees on a boat (20 Minuten)

The people depicted from Ukraine are mostly women and children, in contrast to other origins in this study that only show men. Before the war in Ukraine, the study by Amores et al. (2020) established that female refugees are underrepresented in European media. The demographic of Ukrainian refugees differs since President Volodymyr Zelensky banned men between 18 and 60 years from leaving the country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Ukraine Situation - Global Report 2022, 2023) estimates that 90 percent of Ukrainian refugees in 2022 were women and children. This can strengthen the perception of refugees as victims and, therefore, build up the willingness to help in the receiving society.

When it comes to showing individuals from Arabian, Middle Eastern, or African backgrounds, press photos often depict them either as hardly identifiable (blurred faces, Figure 4), as "faceless" masses, e.g. groups in boats, in police custody or queues. But on the other hand some cases of portraits connected to exceptional personal success stories on the professional, social or scholarly level.



Figure 7, From Refugee to Mayor (20 Minuten)

Portraying exceptional success stories can have a positive impact on the perception of refugees, since it shows them in an environment, where common prejudices are refuted. One example (Figure 7) portrayed a Syrian refugee, who became a mayor of a village in the south of Germany. While on the first glance, it's a fascinating and inspiring "story" it can also lead to further distortion of the real-life experiences of common refugee groups. The success of an exceptional individual can lead to unfair judgments of groups in public discourse, because it is fostering unrealistic expectations. Public narratives tend to present black-and-white views of migrants, either categorising them as heroes or security threats, victims or exceptional contributors. This oversimplification fails to acknowledge the diverse experiences and motivations of individuals seeking humanitarian protection (Banulescu-Bogdan, 2022, p. 1). In reality migrants come from various backgrounds, possess different skills, and have unique stories. Their contributions and needs cannot be easily classified into these extreme categories (ibid.). It is crucial to understand the complexity and nuance of their situations and avoid falling into simplistic narratives.

Conclusions

Analysis of media coverage of Ukrainian refugees in German-speaking countries has brought to light significant differences in the portrayal of this group compared to refugees from the MENA region during the 2015 refugee movement. The findings highlight the power of mass media in shaping public opinion, influencing political discussions, and potentially perpetuating prejudices and stereotypes. These findings demonstrate the importance of responsible reporting to ensure accurate, diverse, and unbiased coverage of refugee crises. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing policy discussions (Hemmelmann & Wegner, 2016). By examining differences in media coverage, we can identify areas for improvement, such as avoiding sensationalism, providing diverse perspectives, and challenging harmful narratives.

Understanding the agenda-setting power of the mass media is important for understanding how certain issues gain prominence while others are marginalised or neglected in public discourse. Disproportionate agenda-setting can distort public perceptions and influence policymaking, affecting the allocation of public resources.

The analysis has demonstrated, above all, that Ukrainian displaced people are mostly referred to as „Flüchtlinge“ in all newspapers that have been analyzed. Potential naming alternatives such as the positively connotated “Schutzsuchende” (*Those seeking protection*) or “Flüchtende” (*Seeking refuge*) that takes gender into consideration are mentioned in lower frequencies. The neutral to positive connotation to “Schutzsuchende” or “Flüchtende” emotionalises the flight of the Ukrainian refugees. Moreover, unlike refugees in the 2015 refugee movement, Ukrainian refugees have never been considered “immigrants”. This may be partly because the term is often associated with negative and criminalised prejudices and is therefore deliberately not used for Ukrainian displaced persons. In the *Tages-Anzeiger* there is a direct quote from a politician who describes the Ukrainian refugees as “fellow Europeans”, which is suggestive of the geographical and socio-economic proximity of European countries to Ukraine in contrast to the MENA-countries. This is also underlined by the studies of Zawadzka-Palucka (2023, 105): “The avoidance of less legitimising terms – such as (im)migrant – in the coverage of Ukrainian refugees already suggests that their construal is different and potentially more positive than the construal of MENA refugees.”

The studies conducted on media coverage of MENA refugees revealed a concerning trend in the German-speaking media. Over time, the overall tone became increasingly hostile towards refugees. Negative frames were predominantly employed, portraying individuals from MENA states as a social and political challenge and emphasising the negative aspects and consequences of immigration.

In stark contrast, media coverage of Ukrainian refugees since the onset of the war in 2022 has followed a vastly different trajectory. From the start of news coverage on the issue, the media has maintained an overall positive tone towards Ukrainian refugees, consistently providing neutral to positive narratives. Both the media and politicians have predominantly used supportive terms when discussing the displacement of Ukrainian individuals. During this analysis, rare exceptions were found in which negative statements were made, but they were not prevalent.

Moreover, political statements, when referenced, have overwhelmingly been positive, highlighting the assistance and solidarity offered by European politicians and political organisations in response to the war in Ukraine. This stark difference in media tone and political discourse between MENA and Ukrainian refugees showcases the contrasting narratives and attitudes surrounding these two groups of displaced individuals.

Personal narratives have been found to have a profound influence on readers, as they facilitate identification and foster emotional connections between individuals featured in the stories and the readers themselves (Igartua & Guerrero-Martín, 2022). In terms of the topics discussed in the individual articles, there is a high number of personal narratives, such as stories about the life of a person before the war, the escape route or life in the destination country. Here, we can again fall back on Lippmann's argument of news values, specifically the identification of the reader with the person in the report.

Personal stories allow readers to identify with the people in the stories by reading other people's experiences and drawing parallels to their own lives. Here, it is important that they can identify with the challenges, successes, or emotions of the characters, which creates a connection between the reader and the events described in the story. Generally, stories from an individual's point of view add a human touch to news stories by bringing individual voices, experiences and perspectives to the forefront, rather than just presenting abstract facts and information. This gives stories an authenticity and makes them more tangible to readers. By illuminating the human side of a news story or issue, personal stories can create a stronger resonance with readers.

In 2015, the story of refugees only began when they arrived at the external borders of the EU, where they became a threat, a foreign force imposing itself on the EU (Bajt, 2018; Gruber, 2017). These refugees would become solely a matter of the policies to be implemented towards them, to contain them and to protect what was perceived to be threatened by them (Cinalli et al., 2021). In 2022, the situation of those fleeing Ukraine were described even before they would arrive in EU countries, a framing that helps to familiarise with their situation, making it easier to draw parallels and, in turn, to show solidarity and empathy.

The news coverage often highlighted dangers, uncertainties, and criminal activities associated with MENA refugees. The focus was predominantly on negative consequences of their immigration, portraying refugees as burdens or even threats to the receiving countries. It is worth noting that news coverage primarily revolves around the challenges arising from their arrival in the receiving country, rather than focusing on the reasons for their displacement.

In contrast, German-speaking media extensively emphasises the reasons for the displacement of Ukrainian refugees and expresses deep concern about the war in Ukraine. The situation is presented from a humanitarian perspective, shedding light on the profound impact of the war on individuals and their personal experiences during displacement. The use of phrases highlighting the gravity of the situation and the desperate circumstances faced by Ukrainian refugees contributes to their positive emotional portrayal.

Challenges related to the integration of MENA refugees are often portrayed confrontationally and in a negative light. Conversely, challenges regarding the integration of Ukrainian refugees are depicted in a more positive and solution-oriented manner. Both quality and tabloid media showcase acts of solidarity and community support towards Ukrainian refugees, with various ways of providing help and support being discussed that go beyond only giving shelter.

When mentioned, the majority of refugees are female, often portrayed as mother and child. This evokes sympathy in the reader. In contrast, men are mentioned (almost) exclusively in connection with staying behind or fighting in the army. This is because Ukrainian law requires men between the ages of 18 and 60 to stay in the country and fight in the front lines of the war, resulting in the case that most people fleeing are women. These circumstances are also the reason why many of the personal narratives refer to the separation of families, specifically the flight of the mother with the children, while the father and adult sons remain in the country to serve in the military. Other than women and children, elderly people fleeing Ukraine are emphasised in the media coverage.

The fact that it is mainly women and children or the elderly who are fleeing Ukraine is also used as a means to dispel doubts that extremists might exploit the refugee movement, as reported in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (DESZP1_059):

“Auf die Frage, wie die Bundesregierung verhindern wolle, dass mit der großen Zahl Geflüchteter auch Gefährder oder Extremisten einreisen, entgegnete der Sprecher des Innenministeriums, man habe es ganz überwiegend mit Frauen und Kindern zu tun.“ (*When asked how the federal government wanted to prevent dangerous people or extremists from entering the country along with the large number of refugees, the spokesman for the Interior Ministry replied that they were mostly dealing with women and children.*)

This can be seen in contrast to the portrayal of people fleeing to Europe in the 2015 refugee movement, where MENA refugees were often under general suspicion of being terrorists (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017a), criminals (Wetzstein, 2018) or sexual predators (Maurer et al., 2021). Rather than the fear-inducing coverage of 2015, the coverage of Ukrainian refugees highlights the vulnerability of people forced to flee their country.

Furthermore, the occupation of displaced Ukrainian people is often being mentioned in personal narratives. This can also be traced back to the intention to create a feeling of identification and socioeconomic proximity to the affected people. This fact is being underlined by the news value theory by Lippmann (2017) in which proximity in terms of parallels to the reported people is a factor due to which certain topics and narratives are more likely to be portrayed in the news than others. In the 1960s, Lippmann's news value theory was restructured by Galtung and Ruge (1965), adding the dimensions of reference to elite nations and personalisation as further factors. Based on these values, a clear pattern of reporting in both quality and tabloid newspapers can be discerned, which relates to the cultural and geographical proximity of the actors mentioned there and is thus intended to captivate the audience.

The mentions of their occupation and their high education in their home country also emphasises that they lost an already established life and don't look for perspective in the new host country, since they already have one (where they at the moment can't return to). This excludes the motives often attributed to MENA refugees, that they are only entering the EU to exploit the Government, as they want to enrich themselves, like the phrase “Wirtschaftsflüchtling” (*economic immigrant*) denotes (Lehner & Rheindorf, 2018), which is in turn is not to be feared from Ukrainian refugees.

In contrast to the reporting of the refugee movement of 2015, many articles about Ukraine refugees focus on their future settlement and the connection to the location. A large number of these articles contain references to family members, friends or acquaintances who have already migrated abroad, thus legitimising the permanent residence of the refugees from Ukraine. Text passages such as “Geflüchtete aus Syrien, Afghanistan oder afrikanischen Ländern leiden zwar auch oft unter der Unsicherheit, wie über ihren Aufenthaltsstatus entschieden wird. Trotzdem haben sie sich auf die häufig lebensgefährliche Flucht begeben mit dem Ziel, langfristig in Deutschland zu bleiben” (*Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan or African countries often suffer from uncertainty about how their residence status is decided. Nevertheless, they embarked on the often life-threatening escape with the aim of staying in Germany long-term*) from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (DESZP3_009) testify to a clear distinction between Ukrainian refugees and MENA refugees, mainly with regard to remaining in the destination country. While a large proportion of MENA refugees have no relation to the

country of their choice and are therefore mostly accommodated in asylum centres or emergency shelters, those from Ukraine mostly find accommodation with relatives, which plays down concerns about reduced housing for the local population. Negative reporting on MENA refugees, some of whom are portrayed as "invaders", can therefore provoke both political and social debates, which are further amplified by biased reporting.

In connection with public narratives, the dimension of active and passive voice also plays a central role, as certain narratives are legitimised by whom a voice is given (Chouliaraki et al., 2017b). The personal stories mainly feature women who had to leave their husbands behind in the war and are now on the run alone with their children. The active quotes give them the opportunity to frame their own narrative and thus not be subject to representation by the media. In connection with governmental as well as civic aid operations, it is mainly organisational leaders of non-governmental organisations or senior volunteers who have their say, bringing their impressions into the narrative and making the subjective stories of the refugees appear more factual to the reader. In the research on the opinions expressed by political decision-makers, there was a balance between male and female political actors. Here it was noticeable that especially the political dimension was actively quoted. One possible reason for this could be their influence on local as well as national refugee policy, which is why their statements are perceived as relevant voices in the public refugee discourse.

This research further highlights the contrasting narratives and attitudes surrounding Ukrainian refugees compared to refugees from the MENA region. By uncovering these differences and potential biases, it contributes to a better understanding of media coverage and its impact on public discourse. This knowledge is vital for promoting responsible reporting practices, fostering empathy, challenging stereotypes, and ultimately creating a more inclusive and informed society. This study examined how refugees are depicted in popular German-speaking newspapers, focusing on the portrayal of refugees from different origins, including Ukraine and Non-Ukrainian (Middle East/North Africa, India etc.) countries. The research aimed to understand the visual narratives presented through photographs and their accompanying titles, and the impact of these portrayals on public opinion.

The findings revealed significant differences in the portrayal of refugees from different origins. Ukrainian refugees were largely recognised as quasi-European citizens, connected with predominantly positive attributions or associations in opposition to Non-Ukrainian migrants. In contrast, Non-Ukrainian were often depicted as "faceless masses," "de-individualised" people linked to public threat and societal decay. Ukrainian refugees, especially women and children, were portrayed as relatable individuals in close proximity to the viewer, eliciting empathy and positive attitudes.

The research highlights the importance of representation in the media, abstaining from extreme perspectives when portraying refugees. By highlighting personal narratives of individual refugees, showing them in everyday situations, media outlets can play a crucial role in fostering empathy, mitigating prejudices, and promoting greater support and understanding among the general public.

The study emphasises the need for cautious and mindful portrayals, recognizing the influential power of visual narratives in shaping public perceptions and even influencing policy decisions

regarding refugees. Nonetheless it is clear that the style in which refugees are portrayed differs massively between Refugee groups from different countries. In order to understand the suffering of refugees, portraying them, making them visible seems like the first step. But if we look at the blurred faces, the “faceless” masses of Non-Ukrainian Refugees, a different attitude towards these groups seems to become visible: Portraying them and at the same time silencing their voices and unique experiences. This demonstrates the significant influence of mass media in shaping public opinion and political discussions, which can perpetuate biases and stereotypes. Responsible reporting is crucial to ensure accurate and unbiased coverage of refugee crises. The findings highlight the need to include diverse perspectives, and challenge harmful narratives in media reporting. Understanding the power of media framing is important for recognising and addressing biases in coverage. By promoting responsible reporting, we can foster empathy, challenge stereotypes, and create a more inclusive society.

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