

The Role of Media in Structuring the Social Representations of Romanian Immigrants in Germany

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Abstract: *The present article investigates the role played by mass-media in structuring the public discourse regarding the adaptive efforts of the Romanian immigrants in the German cultural space in the European Union and their relation to the host country. The problem of the immigrants from South-East Europe has become one of the main topics of the public discourse. The paper argues that the Romanians' migration to Germany has certain specific embedded features based on their cultural and historical past and, secondly, on economic motives. The article identifies the German media's social representation of the Romanian immigrants, in the context of the European cultural identity.*

Keywords: *mass-media, public discourse, Romanian immigrants, Germany, social representation.*

1. The context

After the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the citizens' desire to be free in these countries was manifested by a long process of migration, which signifies the strong valorisation given to the democratic regimes of the Western European countries, the high living standard, and the access to an elevated culture (especially the educational system). The sociologic surveys (ac-

ording to the Information Centre of the European Commission Delegation in Romania) achieved during the process of accession of these countries to the space of the European Union, indicated extremely high pro-European values. In Romania they reached values between 80-95% showing the Romanians' desire to be integrated in the EU and their belief in the improvement of their standard of living. These values were based on a strong valorisation of the social-political, economic and cultural West European space.

Romania's and Bulgaria's accession to the European Union in 2007, in the second wave of former Communist countries, has represented a reached goal for most of the citizens of these two states. From the point of view of the social analysis, this accession had a major stake because it represented the reward of over 50 years of accumulated frustrations especially regarding the freedom of circulation and the individual's possibility to improve their standard of living.

In this context, we can distinguish two major waves of the migration processes from Eastern to Western Europe (including from the theoretical point of view the North-American area: the USA and Canada and also the Australian continent: Australia and New Zealand).

The first wave of social migration was manifested during the period 1990-2008. The destination countries of the Romanian citizens were especially those where Latin languages were spoken (as an element of cultural identity and a supporting factor in the social adaptation and integration): France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, (French) Canada. Likewise, we also underline the linguistic element, but not as an identity factor but only as accessibility (the easiness to learn and speak) the following countries were aimed: the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain. The economic motivation was the basis of the migration towards some countries in Northern Europe and Germany. In this first phase, the migration to Germany, had as particularity, besides the economic and ethnical reasons, meaning the going back of Germans to their motherland, family reunion. From the regional proximity perspective, the migration of Romanian citizens was also manifested in such countries as Greece and Cyprus (Otovescu, 2012).

We can characterise this migration wave with a prevailing affective feature outlined on the one hand by the possibility of circulation freedom and on the other hand by the access to the western living standard.

The economic crisis, which started in 2008, brought in a major change in the orientation of the migration process. Starting with this period, the foundation of migration really had an economic characteristic: the salary as a possibility of increasing the standard of living. Unfortunately, the economic crisis has especially hit the countries in Southern Europe which were host-countries of the Romanian immigrants, a fact which determined a re-orientation of the social-economic migration towards the countries which succeeded to manage the economic crisis efficiently (Germany and Great Britain).

The new migration wave has certain distinct social-professional characteristics: this is formed by people with a higher level of education (university studies), from social-professional liberal categories (especially doctors, engineers, computer scientists, teachers). The economic crisis, which also affected Romania, caused a severe diminution of the salaries of these social-professional categories and the standard of living that was not correlated to their level of professional training. That, together with the dissatisfaction of the Romanian political class has determined the said social-professional category to join the migration wave. We can assume that if the first wave was formed generally by people with a mid-level education, from the category of workers and farmers, the second wave was formed by people from the middle class with higher education.

At the same time, a difference between the two migration waves is also manifested at the level of the desire to settle: with most people from the first wave, the salaries earned in the host country got invested in their mother country (where the other members of the family remained), showing a desire to come back, those from the second wave are characterised by the desire of permanent settlement in the host country (Otovescu, 2012).

Likewise, the liberalisation of the workforce market for the Romanian and Bulgarian citizens starting with 1 January 2014 has caused a series of fears and debates in some member states of the European Union (especially Great Britain). These debates have benefited from a promotion in the public space through the agency of mass-media. In this sense, we consider that in the migration process, mass-media plays an essential role in structuring social representations of immigrants in the host country, in the formation and keeping their cultural identity and the formation or the enhancement of European citizens' attitudes (the relation host-immigrant, we - the others) (Popescu, 2008).

2. Current state of research

The problem of immigrants from South-East Europe has become one of the main themes in the public discourses in the West European public space. It was amplified especially in the liberalisation process of workforce by lifting the restrictions for the European citizens from Romania and Bulgaria, starting with 1 January 2014. By the agency of media, this situation brought about an increase of the xenophobic level, certain racial attitudes and there were recorded even some violent incidents against the immigrants. These negative connotations were amplified by the mass media, especially the island press (Great Britain) which has raised a series of debates regarding the possible negative consequences of the workforce liberalisation for Romanians and Bulgarians, menace of negatively interfering with the way of life, of the loss of jobs and the increase of the unemployment in the context of the perpetuation of the economic crisis. Some researchers (Tryandafyl-

lidou, 2000) by the analysis carried on „the others“ proves that the experience of some Southern European countries (Greece, Italy and Spain), which changed from emigrant countries to host countries, did not help the governments of these states to manage the social-political and economic problems which the immigrants wave from Europe (but also from outside it) have raised after 1990.

A particular situation regarding the intra-European migration is represented by Germany. The analysis achieved from the historical and social-cultural point of view (Dietz, 1999) shows that after the Second World War, the successive immigrant waves had a strong affective weight. These waves were substantiated by a political decision regarding the readmission of German ethnic people (*Aussiedler*) from countries from the former Soviet Union and Central and South-Eastern Europe, intending to relocate in their homeland or to reunite with their families. In contrast to the migration to other countries in Western and Southern Europe, Germany played a special role. The main reasons were especially of an ethno-national origin, less of an economic one; the political decision underpinned the migration process (the governmental assistance for migration, 1993 law - the right to return). These elements encouraged migration during the communist period, but after the collapse of communism, the migration process experienced a drastic decrease of the number of immigrants with the introduction of the language test (1996, 1999) for ethnic Germans (*Aussiedler*) as a proof of their affiliation to the German community. The new migration wave would manifest towards Germany after 1 January 2014 having this time a very powerful economic connotation under the conditions when, due to the fact that the economic crisis massively hit the south of Europe and it caused a reorientation towards the centre of Europe which was less affected. From this point of view we can state that there are only scientific interpretations of this social phenomenon, there are no profound or recent studies. Likewise, the problems of the immigration of Romanian citizens within the European Union, towards Germany, after Romania's accession to the European Union, was less analysed, with the exception of researches which regarded the diaspora or the analysis of statistical data within Romania (Otovescu, 2012). Having in view the understanding of the wider perspective, highlighting the history of the migration trend, E. Honekopp, researcher at The Research Institute of the Federal Employment Agency (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung), achieves a detailed analysis comparing the different migration trends of the workforce towards Germany from Central and Eastern Europe based on the statistical data relevant until 1996. These data offer a wider picture to frame the specificity of migration from Romania to Germany, as compared to other countries in the region (for example, Poland).

According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, there are 454,000 people from Bulgaria and Romania living in Germany in 2014. The number of Bulgarian nationals living in Germany almost quadrupled from 2004 to 2013 (+275

percent). The number of Romanian nationals rose to 265 percent, too. A further increase was observed over the first few months of 2014. By the end of April 2014 there were 159,000 Bulgarians and 295,000 Romanians living in Germany. (Hanganu, Humpert, Kohls, 2014). How many of those are Roma is not documented.

The research regarding the problem of social migration within European Union or the social-cultural European space is fragmentary and atomized by the punctual studies on a certain topic or on a certain group of immigrants (Tryandafylidou, 2000; Otovescu, 2012.) This refers especially to local problems and consists especially of statistical data interpretations provided by national organisations or European institutes. These studies do not present a more ample vision having in view the profound understanding of social-cognitive, economic and politic mechanisms that have determined the contemporary migration waves as well as a psycho-sociologic understanding of the historic context of the European space. Consequently, the above-mentioned studies have an increased punctual and individual value but from the point of view of the present research, we have to identify and explain the main reasons of the migration process and the role of mass-media in the assumption and amplification of the immigrant's social representations and keeping the cultural identity of the European immigrant.

3. Theoretical framework

The mass-media represents the main vector by which the immigrants' social representations and their cultural identity are structured and formed. Consequently, there are two theoretical concepts that I will operate within the present research: that of social representations and that of cultural identity.

Furthermore, for a working definition I will adopt the definition provided by the OECD (2007), an immigrant is "a person of foreign nationality who enters the permanently resident population either from outside the country or by changing from a temporary to a permanent status in the country" (OECD 2007, 37). From the intra-EU immigrants' perspective, it is particularly this mobility that needs to be emphasised.

The main theoretical keystone of the present paper is based on the Social Representation Theory (SRT) regarding the analysis of the way in which the relationship national-immigrant is structured, based on the political-public discourse on the migration process reflected by means of mass-media.

This study seeks to combine social psychological theories that concentrate on the social-symbolic nature of knowledge theory like the Social Representation Theory (SRT) with a sociological viewpoint that examines group relations and collective identity formation within a specific historical context. According to the SRT (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), it is assumed that all individuals in Western modern societies strive for a positive self-identity and, consequently for positive group

identifications. The SRT points to social representations as a form of social knowledge that people use to make sense of social reality and to ascertain their position in relation to situations, events and objects of communication that concern them (Jodelet, 1991; Moscovici, 1976).

The SRT thus links cognitive elements with symbolic relations in society. This is the place where mass-media interferes as the main vehicle of information and of social construction positivation. Jean-Claude Abric (1994) explains the social representation as knowledge form, adding to it that, at the same time, it is a product and process of the mental activity by which an individual or a group reconstitutes reality and rendering it meaningful. Abric develops (1984), in the theory of the central node, a theoretical model that distinguishes between the central and the peripheral elements of a social representation, from the point of view of the stability, the changing of representations and their relationship to reality. The dominant features of the central node are: - it is determined by a series of historical, sociological and ideological conditions, with a charge of collective memory; it establishes the homogeneity of the group as a common basis and collectively conveyed by social representations; it is the most stable element, coherent and resilient to change, thus ensuring the continuity and permanence of the representation. Hence, the central node constitutes the keystone which organises both the representation and its meaning. The peripheral system is complementary to the central system and it allows anchoring the representation in the actual reality. The peripheral elements enjoy a great flexibility, as they are the interface between the central node and reality, acting as an objectifying function. Information is retained, selected and evaluated in the peripheral zone. In that context it also detains a function of protecting the central signification of the representation, but, at the same time, it also allows the integration of the subject's own history, personal experiences in elaborating social representations.

This perspective is useful when analysing the discourse on immigration in the context of cultural identity and European cultural identity because it highlights the fact that social representations are not merely cognitive schemes but involve the symbolic structuring of society and, hence, the representation of different groups (and individuals as members of these groups) and their relational positioning within society. This theory is pertinent to the analysis of immigration media discourse because it points to the socially shared nature of knowledge and its symbolic functions in society. Nonetheless, this theory too, needs to be embedded with the specific social- historical elements that organise social and political reality in a given society.

In this theoretical framework of social psychology, we will use Elizabeth Noell-Neumann's spiral of silence theory (1984) of mass communication in order to analyse the role of the media in structuring the public opinion towards immigrants.

The communication theory of media effects may be synthesized as it follows:

- a. people's reactions to the opinion climate model behaviour and lead to a stronger or weaker public manifestation, due to the fact that individuals are endowed with a special sense, namely that of detecting the opinion climate. In this context, the public opinion becomes both a pressure source and a factor of creating or maintaining social cohesion;
- b. mass media supports and promotes the dominating opinion trend and people tend to join it, to publicly and actively manifest about it. By contrast, the others who share different or contrary opinions tend to be silent due to the fear of not becoming unpopular, marginalized or reprobated.

In the second register, I will reach the cultural identity problems. The arguments for this choice are to be explained by using the concept of cultural identity, as process in a permanent change (Kim Y.Y, 1988, 2007) and the new concept of inter-cultural identity theorized by Y.Y. Kim (2007, 1), as a counterpart and extension of cultural identity "which highlights the phenomenon of changing the identity beyond the parameters of conventional monolithic concept of cultural identity" (Corbu, 2010,126). One person can spring into a wider culture or into several cultures and import, adjust and change his/hers cultural experiences by processes of acculturation and de-culturation.

In this context, the concept of cultural identity is seen as process of a self-adjusting as a sensitive skin that can react and change according to the new cultural environment. Corbu (2010, 127) explains that when people move for a while in another culture, the cultural identity does not "recognize" familiar patterns, stereotypes and rules, norms and it causes an adaptive effort. The adaptive effort represents the process of adopting some new cultural patterns in order to facilitate the individual's integration in the new society. In some cases, the adaptive effort has two ways back processes when the individual needs to readapt into his original cultural environment after spending some time in a foreign culture or to permanent adopt the new culture as his/hers own as becoming an active member of the new adoptive culture. The process is flexible and continuous until the person finds his/hers equilibrium from emotional, cognitive and social perspective. These situations matched the cases of Romanian immigrants in such countries as Italy (Otovescu, 2012; Popescu, 2008), and Spain (Marcu, 2012). From the point of view of the analysed migration process, within the European Union, in the German migration space characterised by a powerful ethno-national motivation (as we have analysed earlier - Aussiedler), the problem of cultural identity raises some questions regarding the integration/assimilation or active participation to the creation of a new identity: the European cultural identity. The powerful positive valorisation of the German cultural space leads to keeping the German cultural identity even in the case of a possible coming back to the original cultural environment.

4. Research Methodology

The present research consists in the image analysis carried out by monitoring the German publication *Der Spiegel* (online English version) between 1 March 2007 - 6 May 2014. Twenty five articles were analysed. The articles were randomly selected, using the search engine of the publication for the content unit: "Romanian immigrants".

The image analysis was exclusively carried out on the basis of the data furnished by the analysed articles. We passed through the following stages: selection of articles, analysis and interpretation of data based on the identification of three dimensions of analysis with the set of image indices subsequent to each dimension, establishing the Romanian immigrant's image profile in the German public space starting from the selection of the central and peripheral elements of the social representation. I. Chiciudean și B. Halic (2001, 122-123) make the distinction between induced image, i.e. the image intentionally created by the actor under analysis as the transmitter, and the transmitted image created by other sources than the actor under analysis. We mention that with this research we are dealing with a transmitted image that may be more or less favourable to the actor or more or less in conformity with the interests and the social reality of the actor under analysis. The full image analysis comprises all available sources in all media of reference for a period in time where the social actor under analysis is active. For obvious reasons pertaining to the difficulty of such an approach from the point of view of the available resources, we retained as given restrictive elements: type of publication, period in time and the environment of reference (German space). For that reason, we ascertain that the full interpretation of the image profile is exhaustive, taking into consideration only the stable variables offered by the image indices. To reduce possible major errors of interpretation, we opted for using an image profile based on a synchronous system of image indices that would diminish the errors of quantification and evaluation. The system of image indices was underpinned by the content of the articles under scrutiny. To establish the system of indices, we marked the significance of the references made, based on the meaning in the context, on the content of the message, and further on we checked their frequency. Only in some situations, we only mapped the frequency of a certain unit of content (i. e. immigrant), but that was explained with each of the indices. Frequency was calculated based on the content of the message (unit of content) while not based on the mechanical recording of occurrences of a certain word, that could be redundant, in the articles. We created a system of image indices, keeping the pattern furnished by the theory of the central node. Hence, each type of given information was quantified for each of the image indices, respectively sub-indices. Meanwhile, we used a simple three-point scale to grasp the positivity degree of the content of the transmitted information. The role of this scaling is to offer a

transmitted image profile (preponderantly positive, neutral or negative) that resulted when indexing the information for each of the image indices and when calculating the percentage weight in the total sum of references. The image profile of the Romanian immigrant in the German space is realised on the analysis of the frequency of the image indices. In the articles mentioned, we monitored:

- attention paid to Romanian immigrants;
- register in which the information/events related to Romanian immigrants is rendered.

The two objectives were operationalised such as:

- Frequency of references to events/information involving Romanians, including the word Romanian;
- register of the media communication from the point of view of the impact of the transmitted message: Positive register – the journalist has favourable attitude to the actor; neutral register – the article contains the information per se; negative register – the journalist makes use of stereotypes when presenting irrelevant affirmations from the point of view of the information presented (i. e. mentioning the Roma, when bringing such information does not contribute in terms of novelty or added value).

5. Data analysis and interpretation

Following the process of monitorisation, we developed a system of image indices with three main dimensions. These dimensions constitute the three elements of the central node of the image profile underpinning the adjacent elements. The consequential adjacent elements of the image indices are to be found in the next three explanatory dimensions.

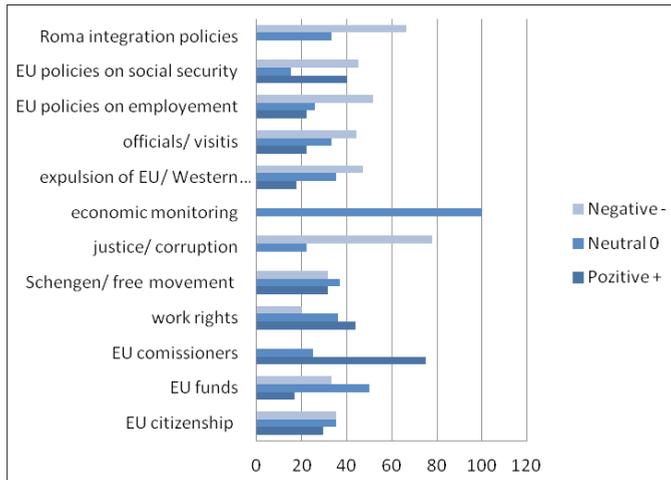
The political economic dimension comprises the following set of indices:

- European citizenship – the coefficient of image implies aspects linked to: The category of second-class citizenship of the Eastern Europe countries (mainly Romania and Bulgaria, but also other countries in the East), the accession of the states from the former communist block to the European Union;
- European funds – we measured the references to the way in which European funds were used in the Eastern European Member States, the aid for the states in this area, the efficiency of these funds;
- European commissioners – we took into consideration the reaction of the European commissioners regarding the issue of migration, and also the references to the activity of the Romanian commissioners at the European Commission;
- the right to work – on the one hand, it refers to a human right, to a value of the European construction, and, on the other hand, it refers to the breach

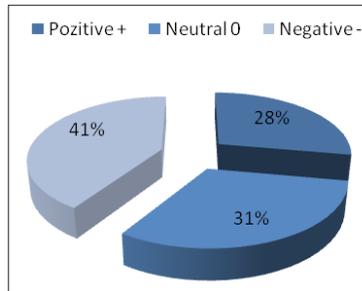
of this right for a part of the citizens of the Member States, more precisely to the discussions triggered by the liberalisation of the labour market.

- the Schengen area/the freedom of movement – implying the same dichotomic types of references similar to the right to work: Breach of the freedom of movement of the citizens of Romanian or Bulgarian provenance (even their fingerprinting), and, on the other hand, the references reflect on the issue of the EU's fundamental rights;
- Justice/corruption – we recorded aspects pertaining to the system of justice in Romania, as a characteristic of its political and social development;
- Economic monitoring – we recorded a reference in the context of the accession to the area of free movement;
- Expulsion from the European Union – referring to: Expulsion procedures of the Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity in some of the Member States (France and Italy), introduction of such procedures in other Member States as well; a form of threatening/punishing citizens of Romanian and Bulgarian provenance under the conditions of infringing the laws of the host state;
- Officials – we recorded the references to the way in which the performance of the Romanian officials was related, on the occasion of bilateral diplomatic visits;
- EU employment/unemployment policies – this sub-index includes aspects relating to the term of “benefits tourism” (British version) or “poverty migration” (German version), references to the Hertz IV German system and the way in which these policies are applied in the host countries and beneficial to the immigrants;
- EU policies regarding the system of social insurance – focussing on the references to the policies of the type of welfare state, the quality of the insurance services and social assistance, to the role of the immigrants in consolidating/weakening of the said system;
- Roma integration policies – at this position we recorded references at the macro-social level on the Roma minority, an EU-wide debating topic.
- From the point of view of the statistical analysis of the relative weight of the frequency of each image coefficient, the data are synthetically presented in Graph 1.

Of the total of 169 references recorded for this dimension, we notice that the relative weight is negative of 41%. The indices where we recorded neutral references are: The Schengen area/free movement and economic monitoring. The highest percentage of positive references is noticed for the indices: European commissioners and right to work.



Graph 1. System of indices for the political-economic dimension



Graph 2. Relative weight of positive, neutral and negative references for the political-economic dimension

From the point of view of the second element of analysis, respectively the style of the journalistic tone from the perspective of the transmitted message, the results show a balanced tone of the related events, even if negative references were predominant.

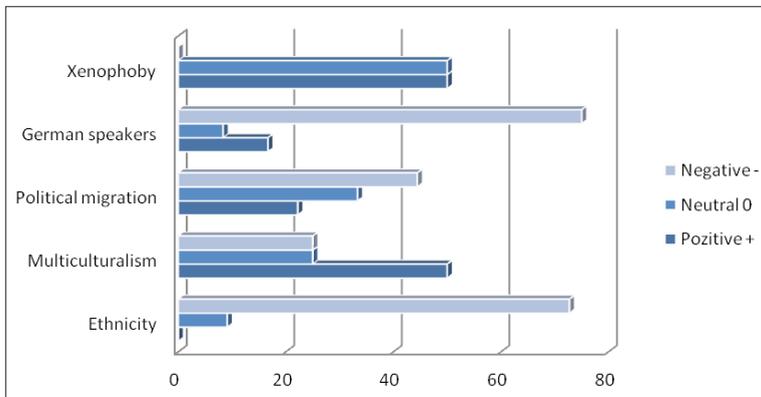
The second dimension focussed on the image indices that showed the social-historic side of the process of immigration, as we considered this dimension to be essential for highlighting an image profile, as real as possible, the argument also relying on the aforementioned studies on the eastern emigration of the German ethnics to the German area.

For this dimension, we identified the following image indices:

- Ethnicity – we focussed on elements pertaining to the cultural, historical nature and traditions; we also introduced references to discrimination and stereotypes. As it can be noticed in Graph 3, the preponderantly negative positioning demonstrates the minimal relevance of the belonging of the

Romanian immigrants to the German minority in the present socio-economic context, being one of the elements which confirms the theory of the migratory wave based on economic reasons and less on historic considerations also linked to tradition. In the media under analysis, that is perceived as a negative aspect;

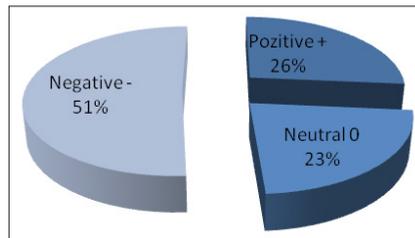
- Multiculturalism – this image index quantifies references such as: Accepting diversity, inter-ethnic or emigrant/host relationships, festivals, ceremonies, holidays;
- Political migration – we took into consideration messages linked to the process of emigration solely based on political or ethnical considerations (discrimination in the country of origin, political refugees);
- German speakers – this index also tries to identify the assimilated cultural identity of the Romanian immigrants in the German cultural space. Speaking German is an index both for belonging to the German ethnicity and also as a sine qua non job or German citizenship opportunity criterion. And this index confirms the theory of the migratory wave based on economic considerations because it registers negative values, comparatively higher than the positive ones. These results show that today’s Romanian immigrant in the German space is not German speaking and they also demonstrate a certain difficulty in learning it.
- Xenophobia – this index quantifies the clear references to this term, we did not carried out a content analysis having this term as an analysis unit. Consequently, the references are preponderantly positive or neutral as the message is not centred on the content on the xenophobic character of the message.



Graph 3. The system of indices for the socio-historical dimension

For this dimension, we registered 53 references of the total number of articles. Most of the references are quantified under the political migration index (18) and German speakers (12). Both indices have preponderantly negative values.

The socio-historical dimension is characterised by a high percentage of negative references (51%), even if it was composed of small number of image indices, as compared to the other two dimensions. As we have previously noted, when explaining the process of operationalising the contents of the image indices, we may stress the strong economic motivation of the new wave of Romanian emigrants to the German space, a motivation caused by the context of the economic crisis and by the powerful positioning of the German economy in the Romanians' social representations of Germany. The low value of the references for the multicultural and also the ethnical indices support that idea.



Graph 4. Relative weight of positive, neutral and negative references for the socio-historical dimension

We may consider the style of the journalistic tone to be characterised by a pondered balance, despite the preponderance of the references with a negative content. For this dimension, we did not notice stylistic excesses, an excessive and pointless use of adjectives, of the dichotomy us/them or self/others, as well as of the reflexive verbs (Fairclough, 2003).

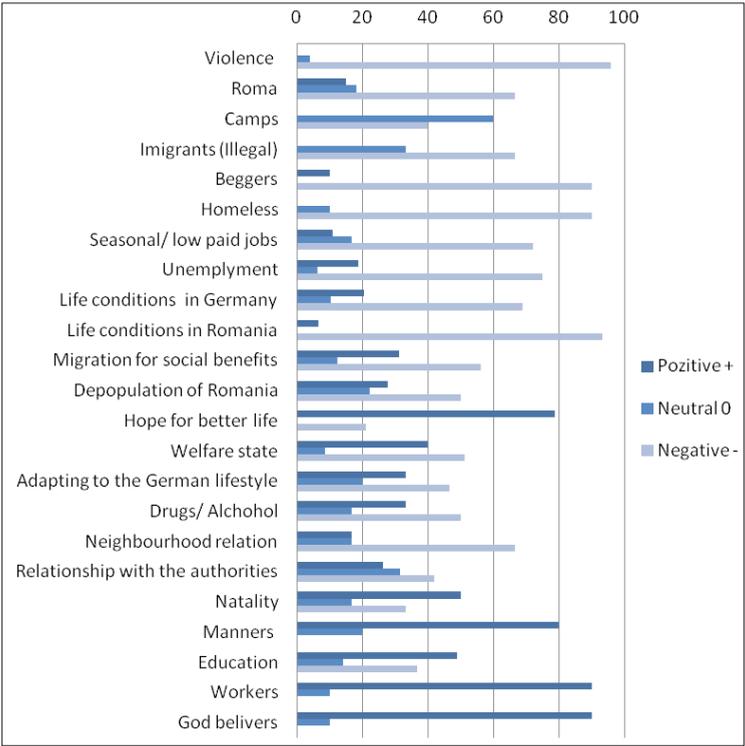
The third dimension under the image analysis was centred upon the human nature of the process of migration of the Romanians to Germany. This dimension enjoyed the largest number of references and, consequently, had the greatest weight in the image profile of the Romanian emigrant. This dimension was at the basis of the following set of image indices (Graph 5):

- Violence – this index registered situations where there were presented acts of trafficking in persons, criminality, prostitution, theft. We analysed the acts when the Romanians were presented as aggressors as negative references, when they were victims, as positive references, and neutral when they were not involved. That is the index which quantified a high score of negative reports (24 out of 25);
- Roma persons – for this index we calculated the references to the Roma in the context of the articles on Romanian immigrants. We obtained 33 references of the total of articles, and, of these, the weight of the negative references showed a high score of 66.66%. In the 25 articles we analysed, we recorded a number of 5 references to the Roma minority in the titles of the articles.

- Camps – we registered references to the way of dwelling in some urban areas. The references focussed on the illegal camps or the type of community specific to the Roma ethnics.
- Immigrant – our intention was to quantify the occurrences of the term *immigrant*, the analysis of the frequency of the references evinced a major negative connotation associated to this term (66.66%) without any positive reference, here *immigrant* follows the classic definition of the term, i. e. the person that reached the country of destination, in our case Germany;
- Beggars – with this index again there is a high score of references with a negative connotation (9 out of 10 items).
- Homeless – focussed on the references related to persons without a dwelling and drifting. We recorded a reference in the title of an article. Furthermore, the references are preponderantly negative;
- Seasonal jobs – we observed the signification for temporary, poorly paid and low-skilled jobs (donkey work). With this index, we found a number of 18 references and 72% of them were negative.
- Unemployment – with this index we focussed on failing to find a permanent or a long term job, a legal work (contract of employment). The values recorded with this index are also preponderantly negative (75%) under the conditions when the number of references is almost double compared with the previous index that was related to the same issue (32 references).
- Living conditions in Germany – we quantified references presenting the living conditions of the Romanian immigrants in Germany: misery due to abusive (sometimes) occupation of abandoned buildings, precarious conditions, without basic facilities (running water, electricity, heating), noise pollution. We analysed a number of 17 references in total, with a percentage of 82% negative references;
- Living conditions in Romania – we quantified a large number of references to the way of life of the Romanians in the country of origin in order to explain the reasons behind the process of emigration. The living conditions were presented as characterised by misery, poverty, primitivism hitting a high level of negative associations 93%. We did not find any positive references with this index.
- Migration – references to this index were made to show the benefit and the quality of the German social insurance system, on the one hand, and, on the other, the references highlighted the economic reason of the process of migration (*poverty migration, tourism migration*) and the destabilisation of the insurance system because of the number of immigrants. Therefore, the references related to this index even if slightly negative in tendency (56%), they denote the duality of the opinions regarding this issue, as we found a relatively large number of positive references (31%). Moreover, we seem to find a state of balance with this index, yet presenting the risk of deterioration;

- Romania’s depopulation – it is a present index in our image analysis and we recorded references to Romania’s demographic situation, a dire consequence of the process of migration; to the visibly improved economic situation of the families left behind in the country of origin (financially supported by the money sent by the members of the families working in Germany). It is an index with a negative tendency too, but it is somehow balanced by the sum of the positive references equal to the negative ones (9);
- Hope for a better life – it is one of the few image indices that reached a positive score of the references, which shows a high degree of trust and a standing motivation to continue the efforts of establishment of the Romanian immigrants in Germany. We could assume that it is an index for a continue positivisation of the social representation of the German state and people, in general, in Romanians’ collective social representations, irrespective of their ethnicity;
- The welfare state – we focussed on the references to the welfare state represented by the German state, under the conditions of presenting the mechanisms of deceit to obtain social aid from the German state (unemployment allowance, allowance for the children, family allowance, etc.). The index registered scores close to the two main tendencies (51% negative, 40% positive) which shows a division of the formulated opinions and the difficulty of pointing out the favoured tendency. That is the index that registered the second highest score in terms of frequency of all the references (35 references of the 428 registered in total for this dimension);
- Adapting to the German way of life – this index quantified references to the access of Romanian immigrants to the educational and health systems, to public transport services, housing, cultural life, etc. We notice a slight negative tendency, which denotes the reality of a consistent effort to adapt, but both the positive and the neutral references show a balanced degree of successful adaptive effort;
- Drugs/alcohol – we verified if this index represents a characteristic of Romanian immigrants. We registered only two references in all the articles we analysed for the item alcohol, one was positive and one was negative. Consequently, this index is not relevant for contributing to the image profile, hence it does not characterise the social representation.
- The relation of neighbourhood – this index is to show the reaction of the German citizens to their immigrating Romanian neighbours. The references measured did not register manifest neighbourly relations, most of them indicate a major problem (66% of the references are negative). When correlating the data of this index with those reflecting the immigrants’ living conditions in Germany, we notice that the latter is a cause of the manifestation of the negative tendency we find in the relations of neighbourhood;

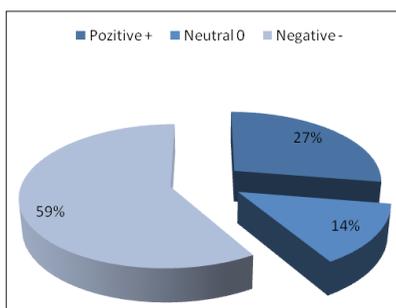
- Relations with the authorities – here the index shows the relation the Romanian immigrants have with the German authorities in terms of schools, hospitals, public authorities, including the NGOs with the scope covering the situation of the immigrants. The relation is characterised by a balanced weight of negative, positive and neutral references.
- Birth rate – this is one of the few indices showing a positive tendency of the references to Romanian immigrants, which demonstrates a positive perception of the references both to the rate itself and to the benefits of this rate for the demographic growth of the population in Germany.
- Manners – we quantified the references to the basic elements of good conduct. This is one of the few indices that did not register any negative reference;
- Education – this index quantifies elements referring to: The level of education of Romanian immigrants, schooling (any level), interest in education. This index registered most of the references (49), and almost 49% of them are positive. It is the only index showing a positive tendency of the image profile of the Romanian immigrant in the German space. Most of the negative references we analysed appeared in the context of the materials on Roma people.



Graph 5. The system of indices for the human dimension

- Working people – we recorded the quality referring to Romanian immigrants, this also registered a positive tendency;
- Belief in God – we recorded six references for this index showing a consistent positive tendency (90%). We can assert that the Romanian immigrant in the German space is characterised by a strong positive connotation in relation to their belief in God.

The style of the journalistic tone is characterised by moderation and balance. This dimension was formed with the largest number of image indices (23), and their negative weight was evidently negative.



Graph 6. Relative weight of positive, neutral and negative references for the human dimension

In order to draw up the image profile according to the central node, we took into consideration the references of the total number of references that clustered around the image indices more obviously (see Table 1).

Table 1. Total distribution of the references on the three levels of analysis

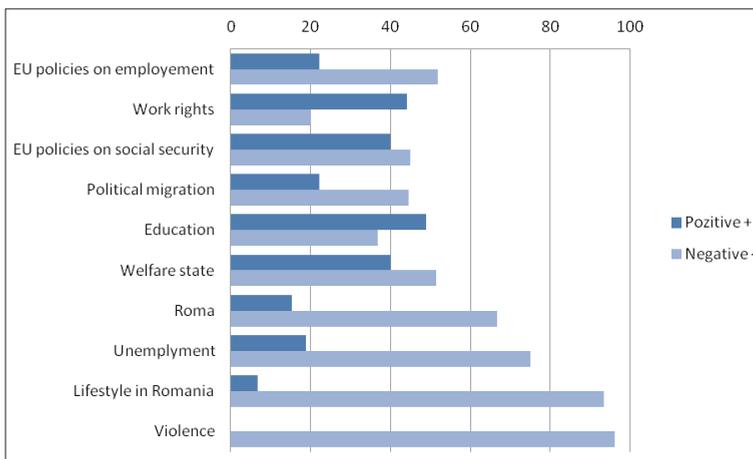
Size	References Positive (+)	References Neutral (=)	References Negative (-)	Total
Political-economic	47	53	69	169
Social-historical	14	12	27	53
Human	118	59	251	428
Total	179	124	347	650

Therefore, the image profile of the Romanian immigrant in the German cultural space was drawn up starting from the image indices that best marked in the context of the analysed articles. We managed to highlight such indices that represent constitutive elements of the central node of the social representation, also having adjacent interface elements. For any analysed dimension, we took into consideration the image indices with a high degree of relevance, significant for defining an image profile as real as possible. Thus, for the political-economic dimension, we selected three indices: EU policies on unemployment/employment, right to work, EU policies on social insurance. For the social-historical dimension, the most significant index was the one referring to political migration. For the third di-

mension, we selected the following indices that were present in over 25 references, in a decreasing order: education, welfare state, Roma people, unemployment, living conditions in Romania, violence (Graph 7). Therefore, the social representation in the analysed social media appear as such: Romanian immigrants are educated, dispose of a high level of professional training, have the right to work in Germany (and any other Member State), they are strongly lured into migration (in terms of EU policies, wages, social insurance) and are attracted by the better living conditions ensured by the welfare policies of the German state.

We have to point out that we noticed a strong association of the Roma people with the immigrant of Romanian nationality (and/or Bulgarian) which indicates a negative tendency of the image of the Romanian immigrant in the German space.

Moreover, there was a high frequency of the overlapping of the negative characteristics found in the structure of the articles on Roma people. In other words, the image of the Romanian immigrant is mixed up with the image of the Roma people, the differences being minor or nonexistent. At the secondary level of analysis, this overlapping focuses on peripheral elements of the image of the Romanian immigrant so that we could assert that Romanians, in a socially defined representation, are seen as: violent Roma (begging, stealing, trafficking persons); poor, living in poverty and miserable conditions; migrating for social aid, escaping discrimination and poverty in their countries of origin; cheating the German state to get social aid; lacking education or a high level of professional training; difficult to adapt to the German way of life; having a high birth rate. This profile was defined starting from references recorded when searching articles having the *Romanian immigrant* as the major actor. Therefore, we could notice a high degree of manifestation of the Roma negative stereotype – Romanian immigrant as it is assumed in the image presented in the content of the articles.



Graph 7. Structure of the image of the Romanian immigrant in the German media

6. Conclusions and further discussions

The image profile of the Romanian immigrant in the German media (the media we analysed) is predominantly negative, with a high degree of overlapping the one of the Roma. In this context we appreciate that the social representation of the Romanian immigrant is predominantly negative. This conclusion has a major relevance in two directions at least: the journalistic style was considered balanced generally, for each of the three dimensions we analysed; the social representation of the Roma minority continues to register negative connotations, and those reflect upon other nationalities as well (Romanians, Bulgarians); that kind of social representation continues to be present in other media (social media, TV, various types of printed press/publications) triggering distortions and elements of xenophobia (not only against East-European immigrants, in general, but also other types of immigrants, from other parts of the world). Possible further research based on profound methods of research on the Roma minority in Germany, may bring supplementary information on this topic. At the moment, media transmits and, even more, they amplify that opinion, dominant in the German (and international) public space, especially the virtual one. The image of the Romanian immigrant is negative and mixed up with the one of the Roma minority, as seen above. The opinions contradicting the negative assertions are silent, and they are to be found only in the commentaries of the readers, yet not in the feature articles. The public pressure becomes strong, and the fear to be excluded and unpopular is growing (for example, for the attitude of the Romanian immigrants of the first waves, of those of German descent or of those with high level of education) and they cannot avoid being a subject to beat down on. Therefore, the cultural identity of the Romanians is in jeopardy as well under the existing conditions, the European cultural identity is challenged considerably.

In that context, we can recommend actions and strategies to improve the image of the Romanian immigrants correlated with different media. Supported by the theory of the spiral of silence, that goal could be attained by increasing the number of presentations of the Romanian immigrants' positive actions in the German media, so that to bring a salutary change in the climate of opinion.

The relatively low rate of the indices focussing on the cultural historical dimension demonstrates the economic motivation of the last wave of Eastern European migrants. We also notice a positive trend of the German way of life and of the living conditions in Germany, which we consider to have significantly contributed to the election of the President of Romania, of a German descent and of a religious denomination different from the Orthodox religion of the majority of the Romanians. These assertions are supported by the negative references centred on the living conditions in Romania and on the high level of expectancy for a better life of the Romanian immigrant in Germany. We consider it a form of transfer of the im-

age from the outside in, that was noticeable at the attitudinal level (attitude being defined as a behavioural expression of opinion) by the casting of votes. Obviously, further research may complete and elaborate at this level of the research.

From the methodological point of view, the image analyses presupposes a certain degree of subjectivity when interpreting data, recording references and building a system of image indices and sub-indices. However, it has the benefit of the researcher's scientific probity, as this method proves to be useful and largely used when it focuses on identifying an image profile of a social actor using one or several sources, for a certain period in time or for a panel research. In the frontier domain of the communication sciences (involving sociology and social psychology), the use of this quantitative and qualitative method, at the same time, may generate interesting or even relevant results for scientific investigation.

As stated in the Research Report of Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (2014,2013) most immigrants from Bulgaria and Romania, countries which joined the EU in 2007, choose to leave their home country for economic reasons, primarily for the less attractive professional opportunities and lower wages in the EU countries. Since 2014, the principle of the free movement of workers within the EU has also applied in full to Bulgarian and Romanian nationals, with the result that they can travel to Germany to look for work without any restrictions. The main reason of migration to Germany remains economic, while the ethnic German re-settlers remain on a lower level (the minimum level was achieved in 2012 comparative with the ascending trend since 1950). We still have not statistical data about the precise number of Roma people that also immigrated to Germany.

In the context of the Romanian migration to the Western EU countries, and of the migration as a continuous process raises the question of a common super-national cultural identity which is perceived most often as the desirable ideal of the European project. The main issue still remains and asks for answers: are the EU citizens ready to integrate and receive the Eastern-European citizens, including the Roma ethnic group, regardless of their country of origin? Is the Roma culture part of the EU cultural identity? Is European culture prepared to pass over the waves of immigrants and to transfer and to adapt to the new and different cultures of the immigrants? There are two directions which can be identified when discussing the European identity, the pessimist current which is based on the widespread euro-scepticism (and criticism) of the widening process which remains "preoccupied by the apparent absence of a European public sphere" (Trandafoiu, 2006, 91) and the optimistic current which discusses the construction of the European identity as a continuous process whose existence is proved by diverse phenomena such as migration, the media covering of different European questions, integration and humanitarian values of accepting and helping. The concept of cultural identity is provocative and more in vogue in the contemporary social context.

The essential question still is if “the European cultural identity” exists or it is only a theoretical structure, which can explain the adaptive effort in the framework of the migration process within the European Union. From the perspective of cultural identity as a system, I argue the idea that it is still premature to talk about a proper European cultural identity, but we can find the germs of such a concept. We can interpret the current EU cultural identity in the post-modern perspective and that of pragmatics of communication theory (Watzlawick, Beavin Bavelas, Jakson, 1967) and we support the idea that nowadays, the European cultural identity is still like a harlequin costume, a virtual theoretical concept, meant to happen, to become reality. As the matter of diversity is still a problem of the socio-psychology theory of the SRT on accepting the other and treating them as human beings. I argue that despite the powerful economic reasons of the contemporary migration process, the migration of the poor, the xenophobic discourses within the public sphere must be avoided as Europe encountered viral and sensitive facts during recent history.

In this context, there is an obvious need to find ways to construct and reinforce the European cultural identity in its way of becoming reality. One of the key ways by which this will be achievable is cultural-mediatic communication, as an attempt to establish powerful inter-national connections and to find adaptive patterns which can finally homogenize a unique European identity.

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