

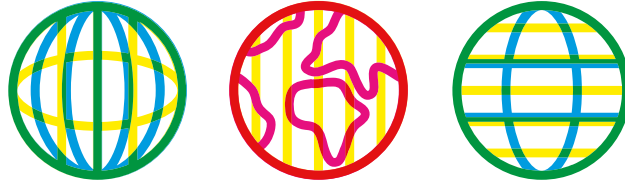
Cross-country comparison of media selection and attitudes towards narratives on migration

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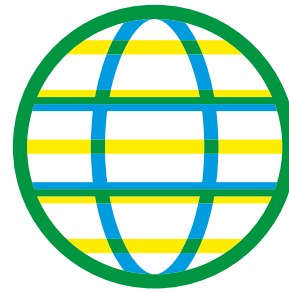
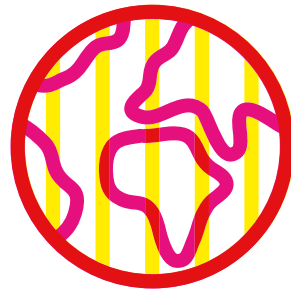
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Cross-country comparison of media selection and attitudes towards narratives of migration

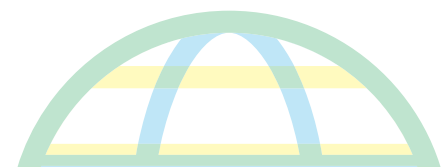
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Abstract

In this report, we provide a cross-country comparison of news media consumption patterns and anti-immigrant, refugee, and Muslim sentiments in four European countries: Austria, Germany, Hungary, and Italy (N = 6,065). Data were collected among adults aged 25 to 65 through an online survey fielded during three weeks in May and June 2021. Our findings show that there are notable differences, but also various similarities, in news media consumption patterns: newspaper and digital news consumption is clearly lower than television or radio consumption, in all countries. Furthermore, German, Austrian, and Italian respondents hold relatively similar television and radio news consumption patterns (high public service media exposure, lower commercial), but this is quite different among Hungarians. They consume more news on commercial outlets. As for newspaper and digital news, Germans and Italians mostly consume quality (or broadsheet) newspapers or digital news, while Austrians and Hungarians report higher consumption of popular (or tabloid) newspapers or digital news. Linking the effects of this media consumption to attitudes, results show that exposure to news on public service networks, local television networks, quality newspapers, and quality digital news outlets is linked positive attitudes towards outgroups. Based on earlier findings regarding the rather neutral narratives on migration on several of these media outlets, this was in line with our expectations. However, we also find that exposure to popular newspapers and digital news is related to more positive attitudes among German, Hungarian, and Italian respondents. Among Austrians, there is a clear difference in the relationship depending on the outlet: exposure to quality or (to a lesser extent) moderate outlets is related to positive attitudes, while exposure to popular outlets is associated with negative sentiments. Our findings provide new insights into the complicated association between news media consumption (and their respective narratives on migration) and attitudes in the four countries under study. This signals the need for a continued fine-grained analysis of news media effects on outgroup attitudes.





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1. Introduction

For many years, migration has been a highly salient topic in societal and political debates in the European Union (EU). However, since 2015-2016, when a large number of refugees and asylum seekers entered the EU as (amongst others) a result of the Syrian civil war, the situation has increasingly been characterized as a 'crisis' by media and political actors, and as a result, by the public as well. Over time, this crisis narrative has deepened existing cleavages, or opened up new ones within the EU. There was a lack of cross-country coordination in the reception and integration of these many asylum seekers and refugees. Thus, the migration crisis evolved into a crisis of the EU as well. The ambition of the OPPORTUNITIES project is to develop a 'new' narrative on migration that acknowledges that every crisis is also an opportunity: a chance to revisit foundational principles, create new knowledge and initiate forward-looking narrative strategies which allow us to come to terms with a world in flux. Grounded in an ethics of dialogue and a human rights approach, the narrative of OPPORTUNITIES redirects attention to the benefits from migration, as suggested in the European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (2011) and moves towards a more successful integration of migrants. The objectives of the project are eight-fold, but this report focuses on the Task 1 in Work Package (WP) 4, which attempts to provide an answer to the fourth objective of OPPORTUNITIES:

To analyse the changing attitudes of citizens towards migrants in European member states using quantitative methods, and develop a clearer understanding of the cumulative effects and consequences of media selection behaviour on individual attitudinal outcomes when adopting narratives on migration.

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In WP4, titled 'Analysis of changing attitudes and understanding', the main goal is to quantitatively analyze dynamics and outcomes of narratives. This WP is grounded in Slater's (2007) theoretical framework of Reinforcing Spirals. The fundamental premise of this theory is that media selection (i.e., choices made by individuals as to which media they choose to consume) is a dynamic outcome driven by one's beliefs, values, and personal- and collective identity, while at the same time one's beliefs, values, and identity are mutually influenced by one's media use. These reciprocal associations move forward in time and produce reinforcing or cumulative effects. These dynamic spirals of media selectivity and influences are considered to be particularly strong in social groups and networks that seek closure to outside perspectives and influences (cf. 'echo chambers', see also Sunstein, 2007). In such closed and often ideologically homogeneous communication systems, selective exposure to media and information as well as selective avoidance generate polarized and extremist beliefs and behaviors, while such beliefs and behaviors would in turn result in a greater likelihood of seeking out more polarized and extremist mediated (as well as interpersonal) communication experiences. Ultimately, the closure to outside ideas, values, and information has the potential to generate a spiral toward polarization that may lead in some cases to out-group hostility (Slater, 2007; Sunstein, 2007). Particularly, in the context of online social networking sites and with the advances of Internet technology the theory of reinforcing spirals has proven to be meaningful. In the current state of the empirical literature, however, a comprehensive, integrated study that investigates both "the reciprocal nature of [media] selectivity and media effects" as well as the role of network structure in this process is largely absent (Song & Boomgaarden, 2017). Therefore, this study proposes a systematic and integrated approach to investigate a mutually reinforcing spiral model within the context of changing attitudes towards migration.

With regards to Task 4.1, we know that several public survey platforms exist that are measuring public opinion on migration and immigrants. However, fundamental shortcomings in these national and international surveys oblige us to collect new data. Comprehensive, integrated empirical studies that investigate the reciprocal nature of media selectivity and media effects in relation to attitudes towards narratives of migration are largely absent. Previous large-scale public opinion studies (e.g., European Social Survey) have not, or only scarcely investigated which role digital and social media play in shaping attitudes towards migration.

Hence, this task consists of developing a new questionnaire for an online survey in Austria, Germany, Hungary, and Italy. This online survey will be representative for the adult population aged between 25 and 65 and will consist of several sections: demographic information alongside several pre-tested questions regarding attitudes towards migration/migrants from large-scale surveys such as the European Social Survey and other national surveys. (Social) media consumption will be assessed in a detailed manner, highlighting comparisons of attitudes towards migration/migrants on both legacy media (with their respective narratives on migration) and social media.

With this task, we seek to contribute to a better understanding of the role of (news) media consumption in the development of public attitudes in four European countries towards a “Black Swan” event: the arrival of millions of refugees in Europe – many of which travelled through or towards the countries under study – in 2014/2015. Furthermore, the results of this task will show if and how public attitudes differ between residents of a non-compliance country (Hungary) and those who live in countries who are compliant with EU law. A brief overview of the countries (Table 1) shows that Germany in particular received the most asylum applications in 2015, while Austria and Italy received about the same number of applications during this year. Nonetheless, all four countries under study received a high number of applications when compared to certain other neighbouring countries (for example, Belgium received 38,990 applications in 2015). Table 1 briefly compares integration policies in 2019 of the four countries under study, using data from the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX; www.mipex.eu). The overall policy score is calculated based on the subscores of eight policy themes, listed in Table 1. Here, we note that Germany and Italy have the most favorable integration policies overall, while Hungary has the least favorable policies. Each country appears to favor specific elements of integration: Germany has favorable labour market policies, Austria and Italy stimulate access to health services for immigrants, and Hungary (and Italy, to a lesser extent) focuses on anti-discrimination policies.

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Table 1. Comparison of 2019 integration policy scores of Austria, Germany, Hungary, and Italy

	Austria	Germany	Hungary	Italy
Asylum application in 2015	88,160	476,510	177,135	83,540
Overall policy score	46	58	43	58
Labour market mobility	59	81	37	67
Family reunion	36	42	58	64
Education	52	55	0	43
Health	81	63	29	79
Political participation	20	60	15	25
Permanent residence	50	54	81	67
Access to nationality	13	42	25	40





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	Austria	Germany	Hungary	Italy
Anti-discrimination	53	70	96	78

Note: Scores range from 0 (very unfavorable policies) to 100 (best possible policies).

In this report, we will provide a brief overview of the relevant literature and theories that guided the data collection and methodological choices. Subsequently, we describe the media and the various attitude measures used.

1.1 Literature review

The study of immigration-related attitudes has received much attention in the social sciences, resulting in many studies dealing with this topic. While research in the 1990s and early 2000s mostly focused on the role or influence of individual characteristics like educational attainment (Hagendoorn & Nekuee, 1999; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007) and religiosity (Billiet, 1995), the latter 2000s and early 2010s saw a growing number of studies that investigated the role of contextual characteristics at the regional or country level like the economic situation (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Meuleman et al., 2009; Schlueter et al., 2013) or migration-integration policies (Callens & Meuleman, 2017; Van Hoetegem et al., 2020). Many of these studies have contributed to our understanding of the ways in which attitudes towards immigrants and migration are shaped.

During and following the European migration crisis, the number of studies on migration increased sharply (Eberl et al., 2018; Pisarevskaya et al., 2020). More specifically, between 2015 and 2018 numerous studies focused on the European migration crisis, but studies also focused more on investigating specific groups of immigrants than prior to the crisis. The number of studies that investigated support for immigration in general declined sharply (Eberl et al., 2018). With this increased scholarly interest in migration, there has been a popularization of several strands of migration-related research. Given the large-scale news media coverage of the migration crisis (Lucassen, 2018), the popularization of digital media in society at large, and the recent political gains of right-wing political parties, the years following the crisis saw a growing interest in the role of (news) media in the formation of attitudes towards immigrants.

Given the lack of widespread face-to-face contact with immigrants across societies, the media thus shoulder a responsibility to accurately frame them in their news coverage (De Coninck et al., 2021; Ogan et al., 2018). For several decades, *framing theory* has been an often-used theoretical frame in this regard. Frames can generally be described as schemes of interpretation that enable the efficient contextualization, classification and understanding of information (Entman, 1993; Gebauer & Sommer, 2021; Goffman, 1974). Framing stresses specific aspects of reality while pushing others into the background (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011). By emphasizing and selecting certain aspects of reality (and thus, making them more salient), chances increase that recipients will adopt the narratives, interpretations, judgments, and decisions that have been put forward (Entman, 1993; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Two main mechanisms can be discerned in the framing process: frame building and frame setting (Scheufele, 1999). Frame building refers to the process in which news frames are shaped by certain actors, for example journalists. Typically, journalists tend to find new events or subjects that readers or other recipients are familiar with (Boesman et al., 2015). Beyond this, journalists themselves also look for possible explanations and those responsible for the issue under consideration. This indicates that

each news message is the result of a process of selection, emphasis or exclusion of certain elements. It follows then that based on the use of certain definitions, explanations and solutions, and the emphasis on each of these, media frames can be discerned in news messages (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Frame setting refers to the effects that media frames and narratives have on individual attitudes (Scheufele, 1999). When recipients are exposed to a particular narrative through framing, the latter may affect their individual frames of reference. However, they are more likely to do so when they already have existing schemes for the proposed elements in the frames. In short, the more recipients know about the events or subject in news media, the more effective the frames are (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011).

McNeil and Karstens (2018, p. 35) highlight that each journalist operates within a “distinct and complex situation of competing pressures and influences. Factors that shape their journalistic outputs include: their preconceptions about their roles as journalists; the nature of the media they work for and its place in the particular political context of their society; and the nature of migration and EU mobility [in the case of migration coverage] as a factor within this understanding of the world around them”. For example, Hungarian journalists are forced to navigate the increasingly autocratic efforts by their government to control media content and nationalist narratives that focus on security and a ‘clash of civilisations’. As a result, they often adopt either a pro- or anti-governmental stance that largely shapes their narratives in migration coverage (McNeil & Karstens, 2018). In Germany, journalists tend to exhibit more nuanced narratives on migration. Although the recent migration crisis heightened the awareness for migration issues in Germany, journalists show a clear understanding of various dynamics related to migration which indicates intense discussions and self-reflection in the newsrooms. In Italy, many journalists tend to hold a more specialist view on migration. Given Italy’s status as a high-profile receiving country of refugees and asylum seekers, many journalists worked as specialists on the subject at this time – which may in turn affect the narratives they adopt. These mostly focus on poverty or refugee-related migration is found, rather than a focus on other types of migration (e.g., intra-EU mobility) (McNeil & Karstens, 2018)

Not only at the level of the journalist, but also at the level of the media organizations can differences in narratives or framing about migration be found. Jacobs et al. (2016) found that Flemish news media differ in their representational preferences: frames on public media are more likely to emphasize the positive consequences of migration, while commercial media use more sensational elements that refer to negative emotions and conflict. This is also true for newspaper coverage: quality newspapers adopt more left-leaning, liberal viewpoints towards migration, while popular newspapers apply more sensationalized frames (Blinder, 2015; Eberl et al., 2018; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Strömbäck, 2008). To summarize: public media and quality newspapers tend to adopt somewhat neutral narratives to talk about migration, while commercial media and popular newspapers lean more towards negative or sensationalist narratives. In the British coverage of immigration, the economic frame, the social benefits frame, and the employment frame are frequently used by popular newspapers. However, the educational frame (which is less negative) and the EU-policy frame (a ‘constructive’ frame) are more salient in quality newspapers or broadsheets (Eberl et al., 2018; Gottlob & Boomgaarden, 2020). However, other studies indicate that there are no clear differences in the framing of migration between quality and popular newspapers (Carvalho et al., 2015; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017).

Aside from framing theory, the *cultivation theory* posits another theoretical perspective of media effects (Gebauer & Sommer, 2021). This theory, developed by Gerbner and Gross (1976), suggests that people who spend more time watching television are more likely to perceive society or their social reality in ways that reflect the lessons or narratives of the ‘television world’, rather than those who spend less





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time watching television. The term ‘cultivation’ “thus refers to the independent contribution television viewing makes to audience members’ conceptions of social reality.

Television viewing cultivates ways of seeing the world—those who spend more time ‘living’ in the world of television are more likely to see the ‘real world’ in terms of the images, values, portrayals, and ideologies that emerge through the lens of television” (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2008, p. 35). The cultivation differential is the observed difference in conceptions of reality (e.g., outgroup attitudes) between lighter and heavier viewers in the same demographic subgroups or populations. Previous meta-analytic research has confirmed the stability of the cultivation differential across different variables and populations, showing a large consistency in the direction predicted by the theory (Gerbner, 1998; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Following this theory, it should follow that exposure to stereotypes or negative framing about migration or migrants on television has a greater impact on attitudes of heavy viewers than of light viewers (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999).

A few years after its initial conception, Gerbner and colleagues (1980; 1998) expanded this theory after receiving some criticism regarding the proper application of statistical controls in initial cultivation studies. Two new concepts were introduced: mainstreaming and resonance (Shrum, 2017). Mainstreaming refers to a sharing or convergence of world views among heavy viewers in otherwise disparate groups (gender, education, income...). People in these different groups tend to have different views of the world. Gerbner and colleagues found that heavy television viewing should cause the outlooks of disparate groups (high vs. low income, higher educated vs. lower educated) to move closer to one another (hence the term mainstreaming) (Gerbner, 1980). Resonance suggests that those audience members with life experiences that are congruent with television portrayals will be most affected by its consumption, essentially providing a ‘double dose’ of the television message and thus boosting cultivation (Gerbner, 1980). For example, viewing portrayals of refugees should resonate particularly strongly with audience members who have had direct experiences with refugees (Shrum, 2017; Shrum & Bischak, 2001).

2. Methodology

Public opinion research may be conducted in various ways, but one of the most common methods is survey research. In this methodology, researchers pose a set of questions – either online or face-to-face – to participants. Although the (often closed question) format has some drawbacks, the main advantage is that it provides a relatively easy and, in the case of online surveys, cost-effective methodology to gather data among a large sample of the population. It is a widely used methodology to assess public attitudes, as evidenced by large-scale, high-quality European studies like the European Social Survey or the Eurobarometer that both utilize survey research.

The current survey was fielded to investigate the dynamic interplay between media representations/narratives of different migrant groups and the governmental and societal (re)actions on the other. With these data, we provide more insight into these societal reactions by investigating attitude formation. Through an online survey, we collected quantitative data on attitudes towards outgroups (e.g., immigrants, refugees), exposure to and trust in news media, intergroup contact, and political attitudes (e.g., right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation) among the adult population aged 25 to 65 in four European countries: Austria, Germany, Hungary, and Italy. We collected the data in cooperation with Bilendi, a Belgian polling agency, and selected the methodology for its cost-effectiveness in cross-country research. Respondents received an e-mail asking them to participate in a survey without specifying the subject matter, which was essential to avoid priming. Three weeks of fieldwork in May and June of 2021 resulted in a dataset of 6,065 respondents (a little over 1,500 per country). Sample weights were included in the dataset and can be applied to ensure that the sample is representative for gender and age in each country. The cooperation rate ranged between 19% and 31%, in line with similar online data collections (see De Coninck et al., 2019).

To assess traditional and digital news media consumption of respondents in each country, it is important to (1) provide a detailed overview of all main types of news media consumption and (2) to acknowledge and distinguish clearly between media brands between the different countries. In all countries, television and radio news consumption was split into three categories: public service, commercial, and local/regional networks. Examples of each network were provided per region to ensure that respondents knew which networks belonged to each category. For newspaper and digital news consumption, the most commonly read newspapers and commonly visited news webpages in each country were included separately (about 10 per country). Because these categories differ for each country, cross-country comparison of this type of media consumption is not possible. Because of this, we aggregated the individual types of newspaper/digital news consumption per country into two categories: quality or left-leaning (digital) news(paper) consumption and popular or right-leaning (digital) news(paper) consumption. We used information from Media Landscapes (<https://medialandscapes.org/>) to determine which outlets belonged to which of these two categories. For each television, radio, newspaper, and digital news medium, respondents were asked how often they had consumed it over the past month. Answer categories ranged from 1 = never to 7 = every day.





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To assess sentiments towards outgroups in each country, we presented feeling thermometer questions. Here, respondents were asked to indicate how they felt towards immigrants, refugees, and Muslims with a score of 0 representing very cold or negative feelings while a score of 10 indicates very warm or positive feelings. To ensure that all respondents had a uniform understanding of the individuals that we considered to be an immigrant or a refugee, we presented the UN definition of these groups:

“An immigrant should be understood as covering all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned, for reasons of 'personal convenience' and without intervention of an external compelling reason (e.g., war, natural disaster, ...)” (UNESCO, 2017).

“A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group” (United Nations, 1951).

We clearly highlighted these two definitions so that respondents would be able to distinguish between immigrants and refugees and provide a reliable measurement of attitudes for each group.

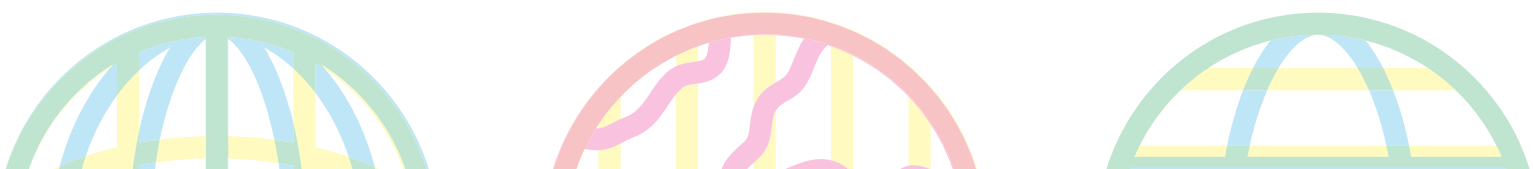
We also measured the perceived threat that respondents held towards refugees through six items: (1) 'Would you say that refugees who come to live here generally take jobs away from workers in [country], or generally help to create new jobs?'; (2) 'Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that refugees from other countries come to live here?'; (3) 'Most refugees who come to live here work and pay taxes. They also use health and welfare services. On balance, do you think refugees who come here take out more than they put in or put in more than they take out?'; (4) 'Have the country's crime problems increased or decreased by refugees coming to live here from other countries?'; (5) 'Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by refugees coming to live here from other countries?'; and (6) 'Generally speaking, values and beliefs of refugees are not compatible with those of the country'. All items were answered on an 11-point scale, with the high end of the scale indicating high threat perceptions.



3. Results

In Table 2, we provide a descriptive overview of news media consumption variables and attitudes towards outgroups per country. Results indicate that respondents in Austria, Germany, and Italy generally consume more news on public service media than on commercial media, both on radio and television. The exception here is Hungary, where commercial media news is clearly more frequently consumed than public service (or, in Hungary's case, state) media news. Local television news is consumed considerably less than the 'main' outlets, but local radio news is the highest consumed radio outlet among Germans and Italians report high consumption as well. As for newspaper consumption, results indicate that quality newspapers are consumed more frequently than popular newspapers among Italians and Germans, while the opposite is true among Austrians and Hungarians. As for digital news consumption, Italians are found to consume more popular digital news than quality digital news, while respondents in other countries favor quality digital news. An overview of results per individual newspaper or digital news outlet per country can be found in Table A1 in the appendix.

The results on outgroup attitudes indicate that, when considering the comparison of sentiments towards immigrants, refugees and Muslims, respondents in all countries clearly hold more negative sentiments towards Muslims than towards the other two migrant groups. The cross-country comparison of attitudes indicates that Italians hold the most positive attitudes towards these groups, while Hungarians are clearly the most negative. Germans and Austrians take up moderate positions. When looking at the perceived (refugee) threat, variables, a growing crime rate in one's country appears as one of the main concerns among respondents in all countries.





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Table 2. Descriptive overview of news media consumption and outgroup attitudes per country

	Austria (N = 1,520)	Germany (N = 1,521)	Hungary (N = 1,510)	Italy (N = 1,514)
Television consumption				
Public service news	3.96 (2.20)	4.47 (2.09)	3.01 (2.06)	4.51 (2.03)
Commercial news	3.89 (1.94)	3.88 (2.05)	3.93 (2.15)	4.38 (2.03)
Local news	2.31 (1.74)	2.39 (1.79)	1.96 (1.48)	2.65 (1.88)
Radio consumption				
Public service news	3.42 (2.27)	3.42 (2.21)	2.41 (1.83)	3.10 (1.99)
Commercial news	3.38 (2.02)	3.24 (2.09)	3.51 (2.07)	3.19 (2.03)
Local news	3.06 (2.06)	3.74 (2.22)	2.56 (1.82)	3.18 (1.99)
Newspaper consumption				
Quality newspapers	2.16 (1.37)	1.82 (1.26)	1.64 (1.11)	2.37 (1.46)
Popular newspapers	2.43 (1.32)	1.70 (1.17)	1.79 (1.18)	2.04 (1.60)
Digital news consumption				
Quality news websites	2.35 (1.38)	2.23 (1.38)	2.75 (1.52)	2.59 (1.52)
Popular news websites	2.00 (1.23)	2.18 (1.51)	2.74 (1.39)	2.80 (1.59)
Outgroup attitudes				
Feeling thermometer: Immigrants	5.20 (2.44)	5.42 (2.41)	4.07 (2.48)	5.59 (2.59)
Feeling thermometer: Refugees	5.04 (2.44)	5.29 (2.37)	4.42 (2.42)	6.07 (2.55)
Feeling thermometer: Muslims	4.13 (2.58)	4.55 (2.55)	3.61 (2.34)	4.71 (2.63)
Perceived threat: more crime	6.97 (2.07)	6.72 (2.04)	5.97 (1.82)	6.53 (1.99)
Perceived threat: jobs	5.09 (2.18)	4.89 (2.22)	5.57 (2.17)	5.03 (2.36)
Perceived threat: social benefits	5.96 (2.52)	5.58 (2.48)	5.83 (2.09)	4.99 (2.39)
Perceived threat: economy	5.19 (2.49)	4.66 (2.46)	5.78 (2.35)	4.88 (2.48)

	Austria (N = 1,520)	Germany (N = 1,521)	Hungary (N = 1,510)	Italy (N = 1,514)
Perceived threat: cultural life	5.53 (2.77)	4.89 (2.70)	5.54 (2.50)	4.54 (2.60)
Perceived threat: values	4.90 (2.79)	4.84 (2.60)	5.97 (2.38)	5.11 (2.58)

Note: Means are reported, standard deviations in brackets. News media consumption: 1 = never; 7 = every day. Feeling thermometer: 0 = very negative; 10 = very positive. Perceived threat: 0 = low perceived threat; 10 = high perceived threat.

Subsequently, we conducted a partial correlation analysis (controlling for country) to investigate how the different news media consumption variables are associated with outgroup attitudes. To enable cross-country comparison, we use the aggregated quality and popular newspaper/website consumption. An analysis per country can be found in the appendices, in which the individual newspaper/digital news indicators were used. Table 3 shows that news media consumption is associated with feelings towards immigrants, refugees, and Muslims in several ways. Regarding television news consumption, correlation coefficients show that consumption of public service and local news is associated with positive sentiments towards these outgroups, while commercial news consumption is associated with negative sentiments. The link between radio news and sentiments is weaker: only the consumption of public service radio news is (positively) associated with outgroup sentiments. Although different newspapers and digital news outlets adopt different narratives to talk about migrants and migration, the effects of newspaper and digital news consumption are relatively uniform. This was confirmed by additional correlation analyses that related 1) the correlation between newspapers and outgroup attitudes with 2) the correlation of digital news outlets and attitudes. The result was – in all countries and for all outlets with both an online and offline version – clear: correlation coefficients exceeded .85 in all cases and .90 in most, which indicates that the effect of (the same) offline and online outlets on attitudes are highly similar. Consuming news on quality outlets is strongly associated with more positive sentiments towards immigrants, refugees, and Muslims. However, and perhaps contrary to some expectations, consuming news on popular outlets is also associated with positive attitudes in some instances, although the link is weaker than for quality outlets.

When individuals hold greater perceived threat towards refugees, they also hold more negative attitudes. Although the link between all threat variables and sentiments is negative, it is most pronounced for the item regarding refugees' threat towards the country's cultural life: when respondents believe refugees will threaten their culture, their attitudes towards refugees and other outgroups will be negative.





Table 3. Partial correlation analysis of outgroup attitudes with news media consumption, and perceived threat (N = 6,065), controlled for country

	Feelings: Im- migrants	Feelings: Ref- ugees	Feelings: Muslims
Television consumption			
Public service news	.07***	.11***	.04**
Commercial news	-.07***	-.05***	-.07***
Local news	.07***	.06***	.06***
Radio consumption			
Public service news	.09***	.10***	.08***
Commercial news	.01	-.01	-.00
Local news	.03*	.01	.02
Newspaper consumption			
Quality newspapers	.17***	.18***	.18***
Popular newspapers	.03**	.02	.06***
Digital news consumption			
Quality news websites	.16***	.17***	.17***
Popular news websites	.07***	.07***	.07***
Outgroup attitudes			
Perceived threat: more crime	-.38***	-.43***	-.42***
Perceived threat: jobs	-.47***	-.51***	-.48***
Perceived threat: social benefits	-.56***	-.64***	-.60***
Perceived threat: economy	-.59***	-.66***	-.60***
Perceived threat: cultural life	-.62***	-.69***	-.66***
Perceived threat: values	-.21***	-.22***	-.21***

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.



4. Conclusions

In the context of WP4 of the OPPORTUNITIES project, whose aim it is to analyze changing attitudes of citizens towards migrants in European member states using quantitative methods and develop a clearer understanding of the cumulative effects and consequences of media selection behaviour on individual attitudinal outcomes when adopting narratives on migration, we fielded an online survey in four European countries (Austria, Germany, Hungary, Italy; N = 6,065) in May and June of 2021. In this survey, we collected detailed data on individual news media consumption, which included exposure to media narratives on migration. We asked about their consumption of news on public service, commercial, and local television and radio networks. Beyond that, we also asked about the consumption of about ten newspapers and digital news outlets in their country. To link this to outgroup attitudes, we also collected data on sentiments towards immigrants, refugees, and Muslims.

The data and these findings indicate that there are notable similarities and differences in news media consumption patterns between countries. A first finding is that newspaper and digital news consumption is clearly lower than television or radio consumption, in all countries. Second, while German, Austrian, and Italian respondents hold relatively similar television and radio news consumption patterns (high public service media exposure, lower commercial), the pattern is quite different among Hungarians. They clearly consume more news on commercial outlets. As for newspaper and digital news, Germans and Italians mainly appear to consume quality (or broadsheet) newspapers or digital news, while Austrians and Hungarians report higher consumption of popular (or tabloid) newspapers or digital news.

The correlation analysis indicates that news media consumption – and exposure to different narratives on each media type – is strongly associated with attitudes towards outgroups. Exposure to news on public service networks (both radio and television), local television networks, quality newspapers, and quality digital news outlets is associated with positive attitudes towards immigrants, refugees, and Muslims. Based on previous findings regarding the narratives of migration on several of these media outlets, this was largely in line with our expectations. An exception here is Hungary, where exposure to the public service broadcaster (or here: state media) is linked with more negative attitudes. However, this is not surprising given the government's strong influence on this broadcaster, which thereby serves as a medium to disseminate the government's anti-immigrant rhetoric. Somewhat surprisingly, results also indicate that exposure to popular newspapers and digital news is also related to more positive attitudes among German, Hungarian, and Italian respondents. This indicates that – in some countries – the amount of media exposure in general may play a significant role in the development of outgroup attitudes, rather than the type of media that individuals are exposed to (in line with the cultivation theory). Among Austrians, there is a clear difference in the relationship depending on the outlet: exposure to quality or (to a lesser extent) moderate outlets is related to positive attitudes, while exposure to popular outlets is associated with negative sentiments. When individuals consume more news on commercial networks, they will hold negative attitudes.

With these findings, we provide new insights into the link between news media consumption and attitudes in the four countries under study: not only does the amount of exposure to a certain medium (television, radio, newspaper, digital news) play a vital role in the development of outgroup attitudes, but the specific network or outlet – along with its specific narratives on migration - consumed on each





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medium also have a clear effect. This signals the need for a continued fine-grained analysis of news media effects on outgroup attitudes.



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6. Appendix

Table A1. Descriptive overview of newspaper and digital news outlets per country (Q = quality newspapers, M = moderate newspapers, P = popular newspapers)

	Austria (N = 1,520)	Germany (N = 1,521)	Hungary (N = 1,510)	Italy (N = 1,514)
Newspaper consumption				
Austria				
Q: Der Standard	2.39 (1.87)			
Q: Die Presse	1.99 (1.53)			
M: Falter	1.54 (1.12)			
M: Kurier	2.09 (1.61)			
M: Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung	1.35 (1.05)			
M: Neues Volksblatt	1.29 (0.89)			
P: Heute	2.22 (1.74)			
P: Kleine Zeitung	2.04 (1.72)			
P: Kronen Zeitung	3.04 (2.11)			
Germany				
Q: Süddeutsche Zeitung		1.87 (1.48)		
Q: Die Tageszeitung		2.55 (2.08)		
Q: Neues Deutschland		1.49 (1.22)		
Q: Die Zeit		1.81 (1.41)		
Q: Der Spiegel		2.09 (1.61)		
Q: Handelsblatt		1.71 (1.38)		



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	Austria (N = 1,520)	Germany (N = 1,521)	Hungary (N = 1,510)	Italy (N = 1,514)
M: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung		1.75 (1.39)		
M: Die Welt		1.86 (1.49)		
P: Frankfurter Rundschau		1.57 (1.28)		
P: Bild		2.06 (1.76)		
P: Express		1.46 (1.19)		
Hungary				
Q: Népszava			1.63 (1.21)	
Q: Megyei napilaphálózat			1.91 (1.57)	
Q: Világgazdaság			1.79 (1.31)	
M: Pesti Hírlap FM			1.45 (1.07)	
P: Blikk			1.94 (1.42)	
P: Bors			1.77 (1.33)	
P: Metropol			1.65 (1.25)	
P: Nemzeti Sport			1.80 (1.53)	
P: Ripost			1.63 (1.21)	
P: Magyar Nemzet			1.67 (1.28)	
P: Magyar Hírlap			1.63 (1.23)	
Italy				
Q: La Repubblica				2.50 (1.80)
Q: La Stampa				2.19 (1.70)



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Q: Il Sole 24 Ore	2.29 (1.71)
Q: Il Fatto Quotidiano	2.24 (1.75)
M: Avvenire	1.80 (1.46)
M: Corriere della Sera	2.52 (1.82)
M: Il messaggero	2.02 (1.59)
P: Il Giornale	2.04 (1.60)
P: Il resto del Carlino	1.88 (1.56)
P: Il Gazzettino	1.82 (1.49)

Digital news consumption

Austria

Q: Orf.at	2.84 (2.10)
Q: Derstandard.at	2.50 (1.97)
Q: Diepresse.com	1.96 (1.51)
Q: Profil.at	1.61 (1.20)
M: Kurier.at	2.10 (1.66)
M: Falter.at	1.58 (1.21)
M: tt.at	1.53 (1.29)
P: Krone.at	2.61 (1.99)
P: Oe24-netzwerk	2.03 (1.66)
P: Kleinezeitung.at	1.91 (1.57)
P: Heute.at	2.05 (1.63)
P: News.at	1.81 (1.41)





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Germany

Q: Spiegel online	2.31 (1.82)
Q: ARD online	2.61 (1.99)
Q: Zeit online	1.98 (1.55)
Q: Suddeutsche.de	1.93 (1.55)
Q: ZDF news online	2.08 (1.62)
Q: Stern.de	2.00 (1.54)
M: FAZ.net	1.80 (1.44)
M: Welt online	2.02 (1.61)
M: Focus online	2.14 (1.69)
M: Web.de	2.19 (1.88)
M: N24.de	2.13 (1.69)
M: Gmx.de	1.95 (1.69)
P: t-online	2.19 (1.85)
P: Bild.de	2.17 (1.86)
P: n-tv.de	2.45 (1.94)

Hungary

Q: Index.hu	3.13 (1.89)
Q: 24.hu	3.14 (1.86)
Q: Telex	2.71 (2.05)
Q: 444	2.82 (1.87)



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Q: Szabad Európa	1.76 (1.36)
M: Indapass.hu	1.60 (1.21)
M: Nlcafe.hu	2.32 (1.53)
P: Origo.hu	2.79 (1.77)
P: Startlap.hu	2.37 (1.76)
P: Blikk.ru	2.26 (1.62)
P: Ncore.cc	1.88 (1.52)

Italy

Q: La Repubblica	2.76 (1.92)
Q: La Stampa.it	2.39 (1.75)
Q: Il Fatto Quotidiano	2.53 (1.82)
Q: Il Sole 24 Ore	2.48 (1.74)
M: Corriere della Sera	2.72 (1.90)
M: Il Messaggero	2.16 (1.62)
M: Huffington Post Italia	2.19 (1.64)
M: Fanpage.it	2.59 (1.80)
P: TGC0M24	3.02 (1.94)
P: ANSA	3.16 (1.96)

Note: Q = quality newspapers; M = moderate; P = popular newspapers.





Table A2. Pearson correlation analysis of outgroup attitudes, news media consumption, and perceived threat in Austria (N = 1,520)

	Feelings: Immigrants	Feelings: Refugees	Feelings: Muslims
Television consumption			
Public service news	.06*	.10**	.04
Commercial news	-.12**	-.11**	-.11**
Local news	.00	.00	.00
Radio consumption			
Public service news	.08**	.11**	.08**
Commercial news	-.10**	-.13**	-.11**
Local news	-.04	-.05	-.04
Newspaper consumption			
Q: Der Standard	.18**	.22**	.20**
Q: Die Presse	.10**	.12**	.12**
M: Falter	.19**	.20**	.22**
M: Kurier	.04	.06*	.04
M: Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung	.01	.01	.06*
M: Neues Volksblatt	.03	.04	.10**
P: Heute	-.04	-.06*	-.03
P: Kleine Zeitung	.04	.05	.05
P: Kronen Zeitung	-.14**	-.11**	-.10**
Digital news consumption			
Q: Orf.at	.11**	.15**	.12**
Q: Derstandard.at	.21**	.24**	.23**
Q: Diepresse.com	.12**	.13**	.13**
Q: Profil.at	.09**	.08**	.12**
M: Kurier.at	.07**	.07**	.09**
M: Falter.at	.20**	.20**	.22**
M: tt.at	.05	.05	.10**
P: Krone.at	-.09**	-.10**	-.09**
P: Oe24-netzwerk	-.04	-.06*	-.02





P: Kleinezeitung.at	.04	.05	.07*
P: Heute.at	-.05	-.07*	-.02
P: News.at	.05*	.04	.08**
Outgroup attitudes			
Perceived threat: more crime	-.44**	-.54**	-.54**
Perceived threat: jobs	-.43**	-.52**	-.48**
Perceived threat: social benefits	.51**	-.62**	-.59**
Perceived threat: economy	-.55**	-.67**	-.59**
Perceived threat: cultural life	-.58**	-.70**	-.67**
Perceived threat: values	.14**	.18**	.17**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; Q = quality news outlet; M = between quality and popular news outlet; P = popular news outlet.





Table A3. Pearson correlation analysis of outgroup attitudes, news media consumption, and perceived threat in Germany (N = 1,521)

	Feelings: Immigrants	Feelings: Refugees	Feelings: Muslims
Television consumption			
Public service news	.08**	.12**	.04
Commercial news	-.07**	-.08**	-.07**
Local news	.06*	.04	.04
Radio consumption			
Public service news	.13**	.12**	.13**
Commercial news	.11**	.11**	.08**
Local news	-.03	-.06*	-.04
Newspaper consumption			
Q: Süddeutsche Zeitung	.18**	.15**	.17**
Q: Die Tageszeitung	.10**	.10**	.10**
Q: Neues Deutschland	.13**	.11**	.16**
Q: Die Zeit	.18**	.16**	.15**
Q: Der Spiegel	.17**	.14**	.15**
Q: Handelsblatt	.16**	.11**	.10**
M: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	.14**	.12**	.14**
M: Die Welt	.13**	.10**	.13**
P: Frankfurter Rundschau	.13**	.10**	.14**
P: Bild	.03	.00	.01
P: Express	.12**	.09**	.14**
Digital news consumption			
Q: Spiegel online	.21**	.17**	.15**
Q: ARD online	.16**	.15**	.14**
Q: Zeit online	.20**	.15**	.16**
Q: Suddeutsche.de	.16**	.14**	.15**
Q: ZDF news online	.18**	.15**	.16**
Q: Stern.de	.15**	.12**	.13**
M: FAZ.net	.16**	.11**	.13**





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M: Welt online	.12**	.09**	.11**
M: Focus online	.11**	.06*	.08**
M: Web.de	.05	.05	.06*
M: N24.de	.07**	.02	.05*
M: Gmx.de	.04	.01	.05
P: t-online	.11**	.10**	.07**
P: Bild.de	.03	-.01	-.01
P: n-tv.de	.09**	.08**	.07*

Outgroup attitudes

Perceived threat: more crime	-.43**	-.52**	-.47**
Perceived threat: jobs	-.48**	-.53**	-.44**
Perceived threat: social benefits	-.57**	-.66**	-.60**
Perceived threat: economy	-.55**	-.65**	-.54**
Perceived threat: cultural life	-.62**	-.70**	-.66**
Perceived threat: values	.24**	.24**	.22**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.





Table A4. Pearson correlation analysis of outgroup attitudes, news media consumption, and perceived threat in Hungary (N = 1,514)

	Feelings: Immigrants	Feelings: Refugees	Feelings: Muslims
Television consumption			
Public service news	-.13**	-.10**	-.12**
Commercial news	-.03	-.01	-.05
Local news	.08**	.05*	.07**
Radio consumption			
Public service news	-.01	-.02	-.02
Commercial news	.02	.02	-.02
Local news	.05	.01	.01
Newspaper consumption			
Q: Megyei napilaphálózat	.05*	.03	.04
Q: Népszava	.18**	.16**	.17**
Q: Világgazdaság	.15**	.14**	.14**
M: Pesti Hírlap FM	.14**	.07**	.14**
P: Blikk	.07**	.05*	.07**
P: Bors	.08**	.06*	.10**
P: Metropol	.08**	.05*	.08**
P: Nemzeti Sport	.05	.02	.03
P: Ripost	.11**	.07**	.12**
P: Magyar Nemzet	.06*	.05*	.07**
P: Magyar Hírlap	.11**	.10**	.13**
Digital news consumption			
Q: Index.hu	.12**	.15**	.09**
Q: 24.hu	.17**	.20**	.13**
Q: Telex	.25**	.26**	.21**
Q: 444	.22**	.26**	.19**
Q: Szabad Európa	.20**	.18**	.20**
M: Indapass.hu	.12**	.10**	.14**
M: Nlcafe.hu	.09**	.10**	.12**



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P: Origo.hu	-.06*	-.05	-.05
P: Startlap.hu	.05*	.07*	.08**
P: Blikk.ru	.09**	.07**	.10**
P: Ncore.cc	.09**	.07*	.09**
Outgroup attitudes			
Perceived threat: more crime	-.37**	-.40**	-.37**
Perceived threat: jobs	-.48**	-.50**	-.49**
Perceived threat: social benefits	-.55**	-.60**	-.57**
Perceived threat: economy	-.58**	-.63**	-.60**
Perceived threat: cultural life	-.60**	.65**	.62**
Perceived threat: values	-.59**	-.63**	-.62**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; Q = quality news outlet; M = between quality and popular news outlet; P = popular news outlet.





Table A5. Pearson correlation analysis of outgroup attitudes, news media consumption, and perceived threat in Italy (N = 1,510)

	Feelings: Immigrants	Feelings: Refugees	Feelings: Muslims
Television consumption			
Public service news	.07**	.10**	.02
Commercial news	-.12**	-.08**	-.11**
Local news	.04	.01	.07**
Radio consumption			
Public service news	.14**	.12**	.13**
Commercial news	.03	-.01	.05*
Local news	.06*	.02	.06*
Newspaper consumption			
Q: La Repubblica	.19**	.18**	.19**
Q: Il Sole 24 Ore	.09**	.08**	.14**
Q: La Stampa	.09**	.05	.15**
Q: Il Fatto Quotidiano	.14**	.12**	.19**
M: Avvenire	.12**	.07**	.20**
M: Corriere della Sera	.13**	.14**	.17**
M: Il messaggero	.11**	.08**	.18**
P: Il Gazzettino	.10**	.04	.18**
P: Il Giornale	.04	.01	.12**
P: Il resto del Carlino	.06*	.03	.13**
Digital news consumption			
Q: La Repubblica	.22**	.23**	.23**
Q: La Stampa.it	.14**	.13**	.18**
Q: Il Fatto Quotidiano	.16**	.17**	.20**
Q: Il Sole 24 Ore	.09**	.11**	.13**
M: Corriere della Sera	.13**	.17**	.17**
M: Il Messaggero	.15**	.11**	.21**
M: Huffington Post Italia	.17**	.17**	.23**
M: Fanpage.it	.16**	.14**	.17**





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P: ANSA	.12**	.16**	.14**
P: TGC0M24	.02	.03	.03
Outgroup attitudes			
Perceived threat: more crime	-.35**	-.37**	-.35**
Perceived threat: jobs	-.46**	-.48**	-.49**
Perceived threat: social benefits	-.57**	-.62**	-.59**
Perceived threat: economy	-.65**	-.68**	-.64**
Perceived threat: cultural life	-.65**	-.69**	-.65**
Perceived threat: values	-.62**	-.63**	-.66**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.





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