

Published: 29 March 2016

Region: Europe



Differences in the way media reported on migrants and refugee crisis in the EU are significant.

[According to the report](#)

commissioned by UNHCR and conducted by Cardiff University, differences occur in source access, terminology ('migrant', 'refugee' and 'illegal'), news angles, as well as the explanations and proposed solutions to the crisis. The Swedish press was the most positive towards refugees and migrants, while coverage in the United Kingdom was the most negative, and the most polarised. Amongst those countries surveyed, Britain's right-wing media was uniquely aggressively in its campaigns against refugees and migrants.

Germany and Sweden, for example, overwhelmingly used the terms 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker', while Italy and the UK press preferred the word 'migrant'. In Spain, the dominant term was 'immigrant'. These terms had an important impact on the tenor of each country's debate.

Media also differed widely in terms of the predominant themes to their coverage, says the team of the [School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies](#) at Cardiff University. For example, in more than half analysed news stories in Italian press, the most common were humanitarian themes on migrants and refugees, while those topics were rarest in British tabloids (Daily Mail 19% and Sun 8%). In contrast, the British right-wing press was found to

feature accounts which stressed the threat refugees and migrants posed to domestic welfare and health systems at a much higher level than the other countries in the sample (Daily Telegraph 16%, Daily Mail 42%, Sun 26%, EU average 9%).

“It is impossible to ignore the role of the mass media in influencing public and elite political attitudes towards asylum and migration. The mass media can set agendas and frame debates. They provide the information which citizens use to make sense of the world and their place within it. As we will see in the next chapter, research in many countries has found that refugees and migrants have tended to be framed negatively as a problem, rather than a benefit to host societies,” states UNHCR which funded the research by Cardiff University. The University’s team examined 2000 news stories in 2014 and early 2015 across five different European countries: Spain, Italy, Germany, Sweden and Britain.

Report co-author Dr Mike Berry said: “This raw data only tells half the story. In the EU press the negative commentary on refugees and migrants usually only consists of a reported sentence or two from a citizen or far-right politician – which is often challenged within an article by a journalist or another source. In the British right-wing press, anti-refugee and migrant themes are continuously reinforced through the angles taken in stories, editorials and comment pieces. It is this consistent, hard campaigning edge which differentiated the British right-wing press from anything else in our European sample.”

You can read the full report in [MDI Resources Section](#) .