Racist harassment, violence, and discriminatory ethnic profiling are commonplace in Europe, which increases the importance of the role of the media in exposing discrimination based on ethnic origin.

Over the years, the European Union has put in place legislation to tackle discrimination, such as the Racial Equality Directive, but legislative and interpretative gaps remain.

The way in which people with a minority racial or ethnic background are portrayed in the media, and whether they are represented at all, can reinforce negative stereotypes, with their under-representation in media professions further reinforcing this trend.

This Special Report looks into the role of the media in raising awareness of racial or ethnic discrimination and diversity in the media sector.
Jourova: More homework remains to be done on diversity in media

By Alexandra Brzozowski | EURACTIV.com

The under-representation of people with a minority racial or ethnic background in the media, including in media newsrooms themselves, remains a problem that needs to be addressed, and the European Commission is ready to help with funding, the EU executive’s vice-president Věra Jourová told EURACTIV in a written interview.

Věra Jourová is the vice president of the European Commission for Values and Transparency.

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he under-representation of people with a minority racial or ethnic background in the media, including in media newsrooms themselves, remains a problem that needs to be addressed, and the European Commission is ready to help with funding, the EU executive’s vice-president Věra Jourová told EURACTIV in a written interview.

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In the context of increasingly tough rhetoric coming from national and European leaders on the fight against extremism, how can we make sure that media outlets remain inclusive and non-discriminatory?

I understand that people around Europe feel unsafe. They rightly expect their governments to provide safety and the EU should support them. When faced with violent extremism and radicalisation, we stand in full support of our member states. Our approach has always been to work with those in the front line, practitioners from across Europe, to equip them with the skills and confidence they need to address violent extremism.

But with the political divide between EU leaders, how can it be ensured that the media discourse doesn’t fall into a discriminatory narrative?

The role of the media is crucial in this context – and for democracy in general. To help understand

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complex issues, to encourage a wide public debate with diverse views, to hold us, policymakers, to account. The Commission is committed to improving the working environment for journalists, their protection, and safety. We also support projects that facilitate exchanges of best practices between journalists, discussions related to ethics, and the challenges they face every day, the decisions they have to make.

Some people argue there is a contradiction between freedom and security. As someone who grew up in authoritarian Czechoslovakia – I strongly disagree. Free and pluralistic media are a cornerstone of democracy and we need them to increase awareness and knowledge.

France has recently advocated for a tough law against online hate speech (French Avia Law). How does the Commission plan to fortify the EU legal framework in order to fight increasing online hate speech?

I am aware of the French law and discussed it several times with my French counterparts. I also fully share the objective of combating illegal hate speech through proportionate means, which safeguard fundamental rights, including freedom of speech. What is illegal offline, must be illegal online. This is also why I pushed for the creation of a voluntary Code of Conduct against hate speech in 2016, which achieved great results. All big tech joined and as for today, over 90% of the content notified is reviewed and steps are taken in 24 hours.

I appreciate the determination in France to have a legal framework, but I strongly believe that actions at the European level are more effective in fighting illegal content on social media.

The nature of such services is cross-border and we need to offer a harmonized level of protection to users across the EU. The Commission will come forward with a legislative proposal on the Digital Services Act in December to upgrade the ground-rules for all internet services in the EU where we will also address illegal content. In addition, we just recently announced that we will propose to extend the list of so-called Eurocrimes to include all forms of violence, also hate speech online. I strongly believe that working together on the European level will ensure that we don’t go too far, that we don’t limit the freedom of speech. The cure cannot be worse than the disease.

French President Emmanuel Macron has announced for December a law against religious “separatism” aimed at freeing Islam in France from “foreign influences”. What is the Commissioner’s opinion on this?

In the Commission, we are closely following the developments, as you know the attacks, which took place in France, but also in Austria in recent weeks, were barbaric.

The EU ministers were clear in their statement last week that only together we can put a stop to the terrorists and their backers. At the same time, the fight against extremism must not lead to the exclusion and stigmatization of religious groups. The fight against terrorism is not a fight against any religious or political beliefs. While religious matters are for national authorities, everyone in the EU has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

What does the Commission plan in terms of incentives to make the media sector more diverse and incentivise reporting about diversity?

We have raised this issue in our EU anti-racism action plan. An independent and pluralistic media in all its diversity is necessary for a balanced democratic debate. The under-representation of people with a minority racial or ethnic background in the media, including in the media professions, needs to be addressed. Some media executives themselves see this as a problem and try to diversify newsrooms. They realise that would enrich their reporting.

The Commission will also support these efforts with funding, for example with the Creative Europe program where we have for the first time a dedicated envelope for media pluralism and media literacy. Diversity is key for the whole program.

But progress in diversifying newsrooms has been rather average so far…

I believe we can only improve the situation if we have a good picture of how things stand. This is why we are collecting data and intelligence on how the situation evolves. The Media Pluralism Monitor has a dedicated chapter about social inclusiveness, along with the protection of rights, market plurality and political independence. This chapter also assesses access to media for minorities and for women.
The Monitor clearly shows there is homework for all of us, at European and national levels, and for the sector itself.

At the same time, I see these issues are high on the political agenda, more than ever, with more awareness and a wider public debate on how diversity is important for our democracies, societies and economies. This is very welcomed.

We are also working with civil society to raise awareness on racial and ethnic stereotypes, and organising exchanges with journalists on these issues. We are looking at the disinformation and conspiracy theories targeting minority communities. The work of the European Digital Media Observatory will focus specifically on this issue.

We will further address all those challenges in the upcoming European Democracy Action Plan.

The Racial Equality Directive included proposals on how to combat stereotypes in media and creative industries which includes seminars, but not much else. Is this enough in your opinion to make a difference?

The Racial Equality Directive has been a cornerstone of EU’s anti-discrimination rules for the past two decades. The rules are clear – discrimination is illegal, but in reality, Europe has still work to do. This is true also in the media sector.

Before we decide about the next steps, we need to know how the existing law is working on the ground. This is what we are doing now. Based on the findings, I think we will be able to follow with possible legislation to address the existing gaps.

But the Directive is not the only tool we have at our disposal. For instance, the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive plays a crucial role in the battle against hate speech in all audiovisual content.

What further initiatives on this issue will be included in the forthcoming European democracy action plan?

The European Democracy Action Plan will cover three themes: election integrity, media freedom, and media pluralism, and the fight against disinformation. I also want to cover the democratic participation and role of civil society as something that underpins all aspects of our democratic life.

We need to take into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. When it comes to media, the pandemic has clearly demonstrated the essential role of journalists, working in the frontline to inform us. Readership and audiences have been record-high.

But revenues have been record-low. The crisis has amplified pre-existing trends. The economic situation of the media sector was already fragile before the crisis, with the digitalization and the increasing power of online platforms getting the bulk of advertising revenues. We want to support the recovery of the sector as part of a dedicated Media and Audiovisual Action Plan.

And there’s impunity against journalists that has become a big problem recently…

Our recent reports on the rule of law showed challenges across Europe when it comes to the safety of journalists. We see how individual reporters are subject of organised hate storms and threats when they write about certain matters. This is a true threat to democracy.

Media are not only losing money, they are also losing people. Even here, in Europe, journalists are murdered. Journalists Daphne Caruana Galizia, Ján Kuciak – and also members of the team of French magazine Charlie Hebdo in 2015.

So it is clear we have to do more when it comes to safety. We are also looking into the issue of abusive litigation against journalists – also known as Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPP). This will be at the heart of the upcoming European Democracy Action Plan.
Investors or professionals: How most Hungarian media helped discrimination

By Vlagyiszlav Makszimov | EURACTIV.com

Media watchdogs have been sounding the alarm over the shrinking space for media pluralism in Viktor Orbán’s Hungary. EURACTIV looks into how discrimination of ethnic and social minorities has evolved in the country and how the development of its media landscape also played a role.

“Since 2010, the Hungarian government has systematically dismantled media independence, freedom and pluralism, distorted the media market and divided the journalistic community in the country, achieving a degree of media control unprecedented in an EU member state,” said a report published last year by seven media monitoring organisations.

The shrinking space for independent voices has been reflected in the coverage of minority issues, while evidence piles of discrimination in state and pro-government media.

During the 2015 migration crisis, leaked documents suggested of editorial guidance not to show children in footage of refugees and migrants in state media.

“It’s a lot harder to be afraid of a family where dad, mom, kids are trying to survive together, and it’s a lot easier to be afraid when we see 10-12 youthful men in the picture,” explained Ágnes Urbán, an expert

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at the Hungarian media think tank Mérték.

She added that the images edited in such a way “presented a staggering and unsolvable problem to the viewers” and contributed to the portrayal of “the problem as a threat.”

“Obviously, the correct procedure would have been to show the human destinies, how these people got here, why they came, why they felt that even this was better than staying home.”

Since the refugee crisis, state and pro-government media have been looking for new social minority groups to take into the crosshair, analysts suggest.

“My estimation is that the anti-migration campaign was no longer working,” said Tamás Dombos, a board member at Háttér, an LGBTQI civil society organisation.

In Dombos’s view, the government was “testing” the communication potential in various minority groups, including the Roma, the country’s largest ethnic minority, but “LGBTQI was the one that stuck out the most.”

Since the start of 2020, Hungary has barred citizens from legally changing their gender, and introduced legislation that would limit adoption to married couples, cutting paths to adoption for gay couples, as well as constitutional amendments that define that the “mother – is a woman, the father – a man.”

Hungary’s controversial media law, one of the first bills enacted after Fidesz came to power in 2010, lists amongst the goals of public service broadcasting the promotion of “respecting the institution of marriage and the value of the family.”

However, this law has so far not been used to curtail LGBTQI-friendly material, at least until now, according to Dombos.

“When it was adopted at the time, many people were really afraid that there will be a crackdown on any reportage about LGBTQ issues, now I think those fears were unfounded, legally speaking,” he said.

Nevertheless, the absence of LGBTQI friendly content from national broadcasters has been glaring and the government had to fend off allegations last year that Hungary would not take part in Eurovision 2020 because “it’s too gay.”

At the same time, the protection of the social majorities is stringently enforced.

The oversight body fined a channel this spring for broadcasting a segment that showed the liberal mayor of the capital’s 7th district, Péter Niedermüller, saying that if “we were to peel off” groups to be hated in the country – citing migrants, Roma, and others – what “would remain is this horrifying formation in the middle, these white, Christian, heterosexual males”, as well as females.

Similarly, Coca Cola was fined last year for running a banner ad campaign showing kissing gay couples, because the posters had the potential to “impair the physical, mental, emotional, and moral development of children and adolescents.”

Moreover, signs of self-censorship are also present. In 2014, RTL Klub, Hungary’s largest independent channel, owned by the German RTL Group, was reported as having cut out scenes of two young men kissing from a teenage drama series.

Last year, a study conducted by Urbán for Mérték, estimated that pro-Fidesz outlets covered 77.8% of the entire news and public affairs segment of Hungary’s media market.

RTL Klub, the last large independent commercial broadcaster with a news segment that reaches a wide audience, has previously played an important role in portraying the diversity of the Hungarian society.

In early 2000s, RTL was deliberately trying to show a more diverse picture of the Hungarian society. Its soap opera, Barátok Közt (Among Friends), on air since 1998, has portrayed Roma and gay characters, drug addicts and persons with disabilities.

Even so, Romani people are still underrepresented in Hungarian media.

For instance, Roma do not appear as anchors on commercial or public television, and if they are mentioned by mainstream media, it is more often as “a societal problem to be solved,” according to Urbán.

One exception is talent shows, where skilled Roma musicians are
Continued from Page 8

portrayed positively, but even that can reinforce stereotypes, if they always only show up in such talent shows, Urbán said.

**HOW DID WE GET HERE?**

After the fall of communism, it seemed that Hungary was on course to develop a Western-style diverse media market. Big German media giants like Axel Springer, ProSiebenSat.1, Funke Mediengruppe entered the country, accompanied by the Swiss Ringier and Finnish Sanoma.

“What was a worrying sign is that pretty quickly it turned out ... that these companies do not operate in Hungary according to the same professional standards as in their home countries,” Urbán told EURACTIV.

“In fact, they treated these Eastern European markets, or at least Hungary, as a market activity from which dividends can be taken, but they did not really deal much with what was happening in the profession,” she said.

“In retrospect, it is clear how much of a mistake this was, and how much it actually ruined the Hungarian media market.”

She said the 2008 financial crisis and the regulatory environment, coupled with global trends like loss of advertising revenue to tech platforms, created fertile ground where it was “surprisingly easy to bulldoze various editorial offices. There wasn’t really resistance from companies, I wouldn’t even say there was resistance from consumers.”

Journalists themselves have put up significant resistance, with mass resignations from Origo in 2014, Vs.hu in 2016 and most recently, from Index.

By now, all of the international media groups have exited Hungary, with the exception of RTL and Ringier Axel Springer, which was created as a 50-50 venture between its namesakes for their activities in Central and Eastern Europe.

However, Ringier Axel Springer provides little coverage of current public affairs, and focuses more on tabloids, lifestyle and entertainment.

"From the point of view of the Hungarian public, it is as if they have withdrawn" from the market, Urbán pointed out.

“I really think it’s the shame of the foreign investors that, in fact, a commercial channel [RTL Klub] is the only one that counterbalances the propaganda media of the Orbán government,” she added.

Critics say the strongest tool in the EU hands to intervene in the Hungarian media market is competition law, because the market is dominated by the Central European Press and Media Foundation (KESMA), an Orbán-ally conglomerate comprising nearly 500 media groups.

In 2016, the Mérték think tank and former MEP Benedek Jávor have raised a complaint with the European Commission alleging excessive funding of public broadcast media in Hungary, but the executive is yet to respond.

In October, EU competition boss Margrethe Vestager said that “it’s not the state aid rules of the EU that will guarantee media plurality – it should be the member states safeguarding this.”

Urbán believes the bloc also needs to secure more direct financing for independent reporting, investigative projects and exchange programmes for young journalists to gain experience in outlets abroad.

In addition, the economist said, “it is absolutely key” how advertisers, car factories, retail chains, and other foreign commercial companies present in Hungary spend their advertising budgets.

“Essentially, the survival of independent media depends on whether they will enrich government media or consciously pay attention to ensuring that independent actors also receive advertising money,” Urbán said.
Europe’s newsrooms are still predominantly white and middle-class, though societies are changing at a rapid speed. Experts are calling on the sector to change and enable journalists to reflect the society they are reporting about.

For many decades, people with a history of migration were considered an exception in editorial offices. Fortunately, that has changed. Nowadays, migrant journalists are increasingly visible as columnists, news anchors or moderators.

However, a recent study by the Reuters Institute for Journalism Research, examining the composition of editorial boards of the most important online and print media in various countries, produced sobering results. Editors-in-chief of 100 online and print media in various countries were examined for their composition last year, including in Germany, Sweden, and the UK.

According to the study, none of the major media companies in Germany and Great Britain have a non-white editor-in-chief.

In addition, all three countries lack journalists who do not come from urban contexts and journalists whose families are workers or economically disadvantaged.

In Germany and Sweden in particular, media workers with a migration background are underrepresented – the editors-in-chief cited a lack of language skills or an insufficient educational background as reasons.

The picture across most European newsrooms is similar.

European Commission vice-president Věra Jourová has told EURACTIV that under-representation of people with a minority racial or ethnic background in the media, including in newsrooms themselves, remains a problem that needs to be addressed, and the European Commission is ready to help with funding.
“The Commission will also support these efforts with funding, for example with the Creative Europe program where we have for the first time a dedicated envelope for media pluralism and media literacy,” she said.

At the same time, asked about progress in diversifying European newsrooms, Jourova said the Media Pluralism Monitor is “collecting data and intelligence on how the situation evolves” so that the Commission can have a comprehensive picture.

“The Monitor clearly shows there is homework for all of us, at European and national levels, and for the sector itself,” she said.

However, there have been few valid surveys so far to provide information about the composition and level of diversity of European newsrooms.

Experts believe that as long as editorial offices have no statistics on the background of their colleagues, it is difficult to talk about concrete measures to promote diversity or inclusion.

At the same time, very few media companies actually show interest in collecting data on in-house diversity or dedicating themselves to a quota.

“Media organisations that don’t keep metrics, not even internal ones – on the composition of newsrooms and staff or content and experts – you can bet that they don’t do a great job on diversity,” said Alexandra Borchardt, a senior research associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University.

Borchardt, who recently authored recommendations for the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), doesn’t believe most of Europe’s newsrooms would pass the diversity test.

Her report includes ten recommendations for newsrooms to be more diverse, to enable them to identify talent and reflect the society they are reporting about.

“There are more and more algorithms, and I strongly recommend newsrooms to develop their own algorithms. That makes sure that certain topics are brought to people’s attention,” Borchardt said, citing the approach by the Swedish Public Radio, which is developing an ethical algorithm aimed at making sure content is more diverse.

“Editors, just like people, can be biased, and algorithms can make at least suggestions for variety and diversity – that’s also a way to battle stereotypes,” she added.

At the same time, Borchardt believes that in many European media organisations recruitment practices have to change.

“If you’re recruiting talent, you have to make sure you recruit a mix of talent and particularly in journalism, people were used to get applications of highly qualified candidates they could pick from and they didn’t think much about representation in the newsroom – this has changed quite a bit,” she said.

“But if you hire diverse candidates, and you don’t change anything to the culture, then diversity won’t have any impact on, for example, the programme or content,” Borchardt added.

According to her, media organisations often also fall into the minority-journalist-trap.

“If you let minorities write only about their own communities all the time, then this perpetuates stereotypes, and also doesn’t take them and their interests and needs seriously,” she added.

For many experts, the BBC, which draws up dedicated diversity plans and transparently monitors and develops them, is seen as a role model.

“Looking at the BBC is really interesting because I think they are really ahead of the curve in many respects, and in terms of integrating diversity and also discussing it,” Borchardt said.

Renate Schroeder, director of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), said there is “no consensus on whether a quota would be the right thing”.

Asked whether financial incentives could change behaviour in the sector, especially in private media, she said it is unlikely as one could not force organisations to commit to diversity.

“They have to understand that diversity is also about audience engagement. It’s so important to build trust, because what we see at the moment, media is not taken seriously,” Schroeder said.

One example would be the fake news debate in the US, where liberal media are seen as the enemy because they are principally white, middle-class and of Anglo-Saxon background, and not reflecting other parts of society.

“Of course, it’s the ethnic background, it’s the gender, that makes a difference. But it’s also the social background of journalists. Most journalists are coming from a middle-class background,” Schroeder said.
With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, discussions on racism, especially anti-Asian racism, have been brought back into the media spotlight and agenda. However, anti-Asian hate continues to spread online.

As the epidemic began spreading outside of China, politicians, most notably the outgoing US President Donald Trump, and some media sources began using the term ‘Chinese virus’ to describe COVID-19.

During the first lockdown earlier this year, the European Union’s Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) noted in a report that there has been a spike in recorded cases of racist abuse against people perceived to be of Chinese or Asian descent in the EU amid the ongoing health crisis.

“The COVID-19 pandemic triggered an increase in racist and xenophobic incidents against people (perceived to be) of Chinese or Asian origin, including verbal insults, harassment, physical aggression and online hate speech,” the report stated, adding that such demographics in Europe have also faced discrimination in accessing health services.

Already at the end of January, an Asian woman in France complained in an anonymous post on Facebook that the health crisis had fuelled hate speech and racist acts against ‘Asian-labelled’ people, believed to be majority-identified as Chinese.

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It came at the same time as a local newspaper, Le Courier Picard, caused an outcry when it used inflammatory headlines like “Alerte jaune” (Yellow alert), together with the image of a Chinese woman wearing a protective mask.

It started the social media campaign #JeNeSuisPasUnVirus.

Similar attributions of anti-Asian racism were made implicitly or explicitly in other media across the bloc and worldwide, triggering a global Twitter campaign under the equivalent hashtag #IAmNotAVirus, which has been trending all over Europe, often in the member states' respective language.

But although numerous people had already reported hostility and examples of discrimination that they experienced in connection with COVID-19, many media continued to (re)produce anti-Asian images and stereotypes, experts found.

The German organisation ‘Koration’ has been collecting examples of discriminatory media reports on since April, while Belltower.News has done so since February.

“Media reporting is not innocent,” Koration explains on its website, appealing “to the responsibility of all media professionals to work in a non-discriminatory, differentiated and self-reflective manner and not to stigmatise groups of people.”

“Images arouse associations, language creates reality and words lead to actions,” it warns.

At the same time, however, rising racism against Asians during the COVID-19 pandemic has in some ways become a catalyst in raising awareness of discrimination.

“The only thing mass media and journalists 'actually' should be and are doing here is their job: report what is happening and how,” media researcher Joachim Trebbe of Berlin's Freie Universität told EURACTIV when asked what consequences the media sector should draw from the incidents.

“The US president’s discrimination against Asian countries and their citizens, especially China, as the conspiratorial originator of the pandemic, for example, only had to be (and eventually was) confronted with the facts that helped disavow the conspiracy theory and exposed Trump's claims itself as racist and discriminatory,” Trebbe said.

ONLINE HATE SPEECH

The findings of the FRA report emphasised that what appears on social media is often a reflection of what happens in the real world.

In the US, research by the Atlantic Council think-tank’s Digital Forensics Lab (DFRLab) noted there was a significant spike in social media posts employing “dog whistle” terms such as “Chinese virus” after they had been used in news conferences or on news shows by US politicians.

Social media platforms Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have faced intense scrutiny around misinformation and fake news since the COVID-19 outbreak began.

In many cases, they started to display trigger-warnings and ensure that reliable sources of information on COVID-19 are promoted high on user feeds or searches.

Asked whether classical media serve as catalysts for racism on social media or vice versa, Trebbe said that "social network media are indeed increasingly becoming the authority for the agenda of the conventional mass media”.

“I wouldn’t speak of ‘catalysts’ there. It’s more like a “burning glass effect”, he said.
Instead of countering disinformation about migrants head on, communication professionals and decision-makers should promote alternative messages to undermine narratives sowing fear, a new study finds.

In a paper that looked at nearly 1,500 news articles that received the greatest engagement from Germany, Italy, Spain and the Czech Republic published between spring 2019 and July 2020, researchers found that instead of debunking false, manipulated, out-of-context or unverifiable information, “the goal should instead be to develop a ‘vaccine’ to disinformation, promoting the development of ‘antibodies’.”

According to the authors, “this can only be achieved by eliminating the root causes of disinformation’s appeal, while also promoting a healthier political discourse.”

The paper suggests that alternative messaging should be targeted at the “movable middle” people who do not hold beliefs on either extreme and, as previous research suggests, form the majority of the population in high-incoming countries.

At the same time, prior studies suggest that attitudes on migration tend to remain stable and it is hard for the narrative that narrative occupies the majority of public discourse to change.

However, the attitudes of youth, which are formed at an early age, are still malleable and up for grabs seeking to influence them.

“It is likely that the kind of media environment which younger generation are exposed today, will actually manifest itself in 10 years, 15 years time. That is why it is urgent to find solutions now, both from a communications perspective and,
most importantly, also from a policy policymaking perspective,” said Alberto-Horst Neidhardt.

Mainstream media also has an important role to play, not only because it can be the platform to presenting an alternative narrative, but also because it is one of the carriers of disinformation.

15-25% of the most popular disinformation articles analysed by the researchers appeared in mainstream publications.

Disinformation narratives often present possible attitudes on migration as a binary choice – one is either a complete opponent or wants to open the floodgates.

“The reality is that we have a range of options available, and the fact that there is this polarisation makes it harder to reach a compromise and achieve more manageable and sustainable policies in this area, as well as in other other areas,” Neidhardt told EURACTIV.

“The lesson there for the media is that there is absolutely a demand for reasoned objective, accurate reporting, which doesn’t need to try and convince people that migration is a great thing, it’s wonderful, and there are no problems with it, that would be counterproductive, if anything,” said co-author Paul Butcher.

“But what I can do is try and reframe the debate away from disinformation narratives which are deliberately divisive, and that are based on misleading figures or distorted information,” he added.

Besides conservative publishers who are more prone to present migration issues in a negative light, news outlets using a more sensationalist tone are often the sources of mainstream media publishing disinformation content.

“It seems that there are cases where a certain kind of claim first appears on the fringe side of things and is later picked up by mainstream media,” according to Butcher, who described the relationship between media and public opinion as a vicious circle.

“If the media thinks that they get more response from anti-migrant positions or stories, then they’re more likely to write more of them. And that will make people even more hostile towards migration.”

“Actors should be really careful in not contributing to giving further visibility to the disinformation narratives out there,” Neidhardt said.

Meanwhile, disinformation actors are pushing migration into public discourse by linking it to existing concerns, for instance by framing migrants and asylum seekers as COVID-19 carriers.

According to Neidhardt, “oftentimes disinformation actors are trying to simply divert the attention away from concrete issues and put the blame on migrants for everything that doesn’t work in society.”

“There is an appetite for a more balanced account and narration that, of course, doesn’t try to minimize the concerns [about migration and] doesn’t try to necessarily play down what are effectively problems, but also at the same time [attempts] to sort of break the link between existing concerns and migration.”

“One example of a successful campaign using such entry points was conducted in Upper Austria, in which people with a migrant background were posing with white compatriots, both wearing uniforms of service workers such as firefighters.
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