

# Immigrants in Polish and German Online Media: A Comparative Analysis

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**Abstract.** *In this article, the authors present the results of their research conducted in Polish and German online media in 2016. The major topic of the abovementioned research was the European refugee crisis in Poland and Germany and its representation in websites of four quality newspapers: Wyborcza.pl, Rp.pl, Faz.net and Sz.de. The aim of this article is to analyze*

*the role of media in public opinion-shaping in both countries. Through a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the data, the authors answered the following questions: 1) Are the media narratives of both countries different from each other? b) If so, how is the migration problem presented in Poland and in Germany? c) What are their most noticeable features?*

*Among the most important conclusions are the following: 1) The media coverage of both countries is highly politicized; 2) Neither German nor Polish journalists of the opinion-forming quality newspapers did measurably support an isolationist policy.*

*The research has been conducted within the scope of an international project called LEMEL (L'Europe dans les médias en ligne). This program was initiated by Cergy-Pontoise University and is now held annually. Several European countries participate in it (scientists from France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Romania are permanent members of the project's research group). The aim of the project is a synchronous and diachronic comparative analysis of the content presented in their respective national online media. The analysis focuses on the way Europe and its problems are presented in the abovementioned media content.*

**Keywords:** *European refugee crisis, "German-Polish media coverage," Online Newspapers, Representation, Media Narratives.*

## **1. Introduction**

In a complex and growingly interdependent global world, in which simple answers become wishful thinking, Europe and the European Union witness difficult times. We stand at a historical crossroads. There is no other problem that reveals the current tensions as manifestly as the refugee crisis. In this respect, Étienne Balibar has shown that the problem of European citizenship and the related debate over migration and asylum lie at the core of a consequential "displacement of the borders of the political" (Balibar 2004, p. 32). Balibar has expressed his concerns about a European "Apartheid" already in 2001, thus long before the refugee problem became such a prominent media event.

Again, in 2016, Slavoj Žižek has warned us of new emerging forms of the Apartheid. In his book *Against the Double Blackmail*, he links his warnings to the main characteristics of global capitalism. “The topic of porous walls,” he writes, “of the threat of being inundated by foreigners, is strictly immanent to global capitalism” (Žižek 2016, p. 54). However, Žižek does not support the appeals of the left-liberals that, in regard to the drowning of thousands of refugees in the Mediterranean, Europe should open its doors widely. Neither does he encourage anti-immigrant populists, whose answer consists of pulling up “the drawbridge” and letting the “Africans or Arabs solve their own problems” (Žižek 2016, p. 7). Both solutions are, according to Žižek, “worse” and lead us into a deadlock.

We could find a possible path through by turning back to Balibar’s considerations. Balibar has been a decisive advocate of a citizenship constructed from below. According to him, the overall historical progress of citizenship owes its major force to the struggles of the migrants and refugees, which have urged a necessary redefinition of citizenship “in a dialectic of conflicts and solidarities” (Balibar 2004, p. 50). Thus, we could conclude that the conflicts and solidarities, which have been forcefully expressed by the citizens of the EU in regard to the “flood of refugees” since 2015, would belong to an intense but fruitful process. Ideally at its end, there would stand a new definition of the European community, its roots, its borders and its respective “Other.” We could then be satisfied and concur with Slavoj Žižek that “[t]he refugee crisis also presents an opportunity, a unique chance for Europe to redefine itself” (Žižek 2016, p. 10). However, the reality appears less optimistic: the last two years have shown that the question of solidarity among the member states of the EU has disclosed fundamental cleavages. In this respect, we can speak, besides the alarming national tensions, of a new East-West and South-North divide. What we most urgently need, according to Žižek, is “what Heidegger called *Auseinandersetzung* (‘interpretive confrontation’) with non-European others [...]. What we need is [...] a critical engagement with the entire European tradition” (Žižek

2016, pp. 12–13). We believe that this specific and historical *Auseinandersetzung* will substantially be determined by the European demos and the public debate about the refugee crisis.

Let us consider the example of Poland. Under the EU Council Regulation of September 2015, the state agreed to accept several thousand people who were staying in temporary camps in Greece and Italy. It seemed that the Polish migration policy was consistent with the policy of the EU. The situation was changed due to the parliamentary elections in Poland, when the conservative right-wing party, the Law and Justice Party, took over the entire legislative power. The government abandoned the pro-immigration attitude of its predecessors and opposed the existing refugee relocation arrangements. It was justified on the grounds of security reasons and the protection of citizens against crime and terrorism.

In response to the position of the Polish government, the European Commission threatened that if Poland did not accept refugees, the case might be directed to the EU Court of Justice (Oworuszko 2017, September 7). Neither any potential conflict with the EU nor any negative response among the European community made the Polish authorities withdraw from this decision. In one of the interviews, the Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Gowin said:

We are ready to defend our arguments [...] We will not do anything under the pressure of the EC dictatorship [...]. We have the right, every nation, every civilization, in this case European civilization, to defend ourselves from destruction. What the Western European elites are doing is entering the path to the self-destruction of Europe (Kuśmierski 2017, June 14).

The Prime Minister accompanied him, claiming in an interview for the weekly *Sieci*: “We cannot be blackmailed with the threat of cutting off the part of EU funds as a punishment or the reason that we do not agree to the compulsory relocation of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East” (wPolityce.pl 2017, September 2). On that occasion, she accused Germany (among other states) of causing a migration crisis (wPolityce.pl 2017, September 2).

The government's official policy, supported by pro-government media, was also reflected in an opinion poll among the Poles. According to a CBOS research of April 2017, "three-quarters (74%) of respondents oppose" relocation, with a strong opposition being the dominant response (43%). A little more than 1/5 of Poles (22%) (Głowacki 2017, p. 3) agree with accepting refugees. In July 2017, such a viewpoint was confirmed by KANTAR Millward Brown respondents: 65% of them claimed that Poland should not accept a predetermined number of refugees (zma, 2017). What is more, a survey conducted by the IBRiS for the magazine *Polityka* shows that more than half of the respondents are determined to abandon the European Union, if it were to protect Poland country from receiving refugees (only less than 40% of respondents opposed this idea) (Wprost.pl 2017, June 5).

For comparison, we notice that the attitude of the German authorities to the problem of refugees is completely different. On September 5, 2015, Angela Merkel (CDU) made a decision that shaped Europe's history and the European Union's political landscape in an unprecedented way: in the face of the several hundred deaths in the Mediterranean Sea and the unbearable, barely controllable situation at the Keleti railway station in Budapest, the German chancellor decided to "open the borders" for Syrian refugees who had tried to reach Europe by land and who had finally become stranded in Hungary. This newly increased influx of refugees coming over the Balkan route was a result of a tweet made public by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) on August 25 at 1:30 pm: "# Dublin procedures of Syrian nationals are virtually not prosecuted by us at the moment." While on the Balkan route, this tweet was considered as an annulment of the Dublin III agreement for Syrian refugees and an open invitation to Germany; at the same time, it opened doors for a significant shift in terms of European responsibility and enabled several Eastern European countries to make Germany solely accountable by suspending their legally binding duty to implement asylum procedures in accordance with European standards.

Almost a year later, twelve journalists of the German online newspaper *Zeit Online* tried to assess Merkel's decision:

It is a controversial decision that will divide the country and still splits; the schism goes through families, clubs, businesses, editorial offices [...]. It is a historical decision because it divides history into a before and an after. Those three days at the beginning of September 2015, which one will call "Merkel's opening of the border" a short time later, even as a "second fall of the Berlin Wall," mark a turning point in her chancellorship (Blume et al. 2016, August 22).

Already at the end of September 2015, Angela Merkel had anticipated herself that the refugee crisis could be regarded as a crucial turning point in German politics: "This will seriously change our policy and set new priorities" (*Zeit Online* 2015, September 30), she told the press. And indeed, in the course of the following two years, her decision, which initially was celebrated by the larger majority as a humanitarian breakthrough and an "act of European solidarity" (Dernbach 2015, August 26), became increasingly controversial among the moderate political German parties like the SPD, FDP, the Left and the Green; in addition, it turned into the favorite target of the right wing parties and populist slogans, and it developed into a general plaything of the political power struggles within the CDU/CSU. Strong political debates about the introduction of border controls, border-near transit zones, refugee registration centers, an annual ceiling for refugee numbers and the refugee deal with Turkey have spread the general impression of a state of exception accompanied by a severe planning deficit, uncontrollability and lack of political unity. A further consequence became most evident during the German elections in 2017, which reflected alarmingly the various tensions within German society: The eurosceptical, right-wing, populist AfD (Alternative for Germany) became the third strongest party and is now, with 92 seats, well-represented in the German Bundestag.

Although the German society does not seem to share the general position of its Eastern neighbors and their isolationist policy toward

refugees, we cannot speak of a homogenously determined society willing to integrate the refugees without difficulty. “[I]n the fall of 2015, mass pictures of refugees were published at Bavarian railway stations,” writes Silke Betscher in her analysis of border regimes and continues: “[h]ere the central element of the picture was often the support and assistance of the resident population, whereby the normatively proclaimed culture of welcome at that time did not only receive a visual expression, but also contributed to the dynamics of the events and had a mobilizing effect” (Betscher 2017, p. 131).

This picture of the German “culture of welcome,” the German humanitarian attitude and the altruism of volunteer helpers became more nuanced due to a growing fear in the aftermath of the sexual assaults during the 2015/2016 New Year’s Eve celebrations in Cologne, the terrorist attacks in Hamburg, Würzburg and Berlin and the rise in racist and xenophobic offences like the massive attacks on refugee accommodations.<sup>1</sup> It shows to what extent is the German society deeply divided in terms of its political convictions and social attitudes. This divide is as well reflected in the so-called “media crisis” or the “crisis of credibility” (Alexander 2017, p. 189), which has developed in the course of a meta-discourse about media coverage on the refugee problematic. According to a 2015 study conducted by the opinion research institute *Infratest Dimap*, 42% of the respondents in Germany did not consider the information in the German media credible (Infratest Dimap 2015, October 30).

Considering such different attitudes of the neighboring countries, the question about the role of media in these countries in public opinion-shaping is worth asking – after all, it can be considered that media coverage on this topic can be regarded as a preliminary and intermediary agent in the process of public negotiation and redefinition.

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<sup>1</sup> In December 2015, *The Independent* reported that “the country, which has led the humanitarian response to the refugee crisis, has recorded 222 attacks on homes” (Staufenberg 2015, December 7).

From the above introduction emerge the research goals adopted by the authors of this article:

1. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of media reports on the migration crisis in Europe, conducted on the basis of the selected internet media in Poland and Germany.
2. A comparison of research results in order to indicate the Polish and German media narration on the refugee crisis.
3. Research results concerning the reference to the position of the governments of both countries and the public opinion. The main research questions posed by the authors are the following: are the media narratives of both countries different from each other? If so, how is the migration problem presented in Poland, and how in Germany? What are the most noticeable features of these representations?

By achieving the research goals and obtaining answers to the research questions, we are to verify the following theses, in which it is stated that:

1. Media images of the refugee crisis in Poland and Germany are different, and these differences may come from both the migration policy of these countries and the attitude of the society regarding the analyzed problem.
2. The migration problem, both in Poland and in Germany, arouses controversy and discussions, whereas the media reports concerning the problem are emotional, subjective and based on numerous rhetorical arguments.

The authors believe that a binational study may reveal a discrepancy in the way the topic is presented to its respective national public. This binational comparison may provide first insights into the potential obstacles a common transnational and European-wide public debate on the question of the refugees and Europe's "Other" may face.

## 2. Polish and German Media System in Light of the Research by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini

The conducted analysis is part of a study on the functioning of media systems of various countries. Many ever-changing factors influence the shape of the media system; therefore, there is a need to monitor markets, especially in comparative research studies. An increasing internationalization of media does not always result in their homogenization, because the specificity of each country can differentiate the systems. Hence, comparative analyses demonstrating the reasons for differences in media systems are vital. The monograph *Media Systems. Three Media and Policy Models in a Comparative Perspective* by Paolo Mancini and Daniel Hallin (2007), published in the twenty-first century, was the first multifaceted, broad publication describing the conclusions of a comparative empirical study (Soczyński 2013; Kaczmarczyk, Rott, Boczkowska, Koszembar-Wiklik 2015; Dobek-Ostrowska 2012; Dobek-Ostrowska, Glowacki, Jakubowicz, Sükösd 2010; Matykiewicz-Włodarska, Ślufińska 2016; Papathanassopoulos 2007). This typology is one of the leading ones in this field. The models shown by the authors cannot be representative, because the research analyzed only the media systems in 18 countries (Hallin, Mancini 2007, p. 71).

The countries belonging to this group are:

1. The model of polarized pluralism (the Mediterranean model): Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal;
2. The model of democratic corporatism (the North and Central European model): Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland;
3. The liberal model (the North Atlantic model): Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Ireland.

Then, many other researchers, especially from Poland,<sup>2</sup> basing their studies on the same criteria, analyzed the Polish media system and

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<sup>2</sup> In the Polish context, the article that stands out as a leading one is authored by B. Dobek-Ostrowska (2012).

presented its characteristics. The German media system is an example of a dual pluralistic system (the coexistence of private and public media), which fits in with the model of democratic corporatism, which is characteristic of the countries of Northern and Central Europe – i.e., Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. As Konarska (2014) points out, Germany differs from the other countries in this group. First, it is a much larger country than the other ones; second, it was only after the Second World War that the political model characteristic of the rest of the region was adopted in Germany, i.e., with the solutions being based on a compromise and power being divided between dominant, organized groups of social interests based on the welfare state. Both the Polish and the German systems are becoming more and more similar to the liberal model due to internationalization and global factors (Konarska 2014).

Poland is shown, especially in the developed representation of the approach of Hallin and Mancini done by Dobek-Ostrowska (2011, p. 171), as a media system placed between the model of polar pluralism (characteristic of a supervision over public media and a lack of objectivity) and the liberal model (denoted by private media capital). As A. Jaskiernia (2011, pp. 152–153) specifies, in the Polish media system, the place of political parallelism is taken by political and/or economic instrumentalization.

In terms of the mass press development, both the German and Polish media systems are strongly developed and characterized by the co-existence of commercial media, which is focused on entertainment. What is more, it is worth emphasizing that the Polish market is dominated by German capital in the sector of printed entertainment magazines, which makes the trends unified. A strong state interventionism is characteristic of both systems, but in correlation with the degree of political parallelism, abuses in this field are more frequent in Poland. What makes the two systems different in this respect is the fact that in comparison to Poland, the German market is characterized by the low presence of foreign capital. Regarding journalistic professionalization,

both countries have different experiences as well: Polish journalists are political, while their German colleagues sympathize with political parties to a much lesser degree.

### 3. Research Methodology

The research has been conducted within the scope of an international project called LEMEL (*L'Europe dans les médias en ligne*).<sup>3</sup> This program was initiated by Cergy-Pontoise University, and it is now held annually. Several European countries participate in it (scientists from France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Romania are permanent members of the project's research group). The aim of the project is a synchronous and diachronic comparative analysis of the content presented in the respective national online media. The analysis focuses on the way Europe and its problems are presented in the abovementioned media content. It is always completed within the same scope of time (the period from October 23 to November 19, 2016 was designated for the last edition of the project), so that all the participating countries may compare their respective results.

The Polish research group selected two internet websites that are regarded as opinion-forming, namely Wyborcza.pl and Rp.pl. The applied criteria, which followed LEMEL's rules, were their impact on public opinion and the citation rate.<sup>4</sup> The analysis of the two websites' content shows many discrepancies resulting from the different preferences of their respective recipients.

Wyborcza.pl is the electronic edition of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a printed opinion-forming newspaper with the largest circulation in its segment (Związek Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy 2017). Its target is a well-educated audience, which can be best illustrated by the addressed themes, the length of the articles, the variety of genres and by the authors

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<sup>3</sup> <https://lemel.hypotheses.org/>

<sup>4</sup> This is mostly associated with the impact on public opinion with regards to politics. The authors mean the two-step information flow posited by P. Lazarsfeld and E. Katza (1955).

of published texts (outstanding publicists, experts, award-winning journalists). Rp.pl is the online edition of one of the most prestigious nationwide newspapers in Poland – the *Rzeczpospolita*. The newspaper is regarded as highly trustworthy by its well-educated readers due to its balanced portrayal of political views as well as because of its expert approach to many different areas (such as economy or law). However, a more in-depth reading reveals more content that is critical of the government. And unlike in *Wyborcza.pl*, these texts are printed under the titles of commentaries and opinions (Jęczmionka 2011).

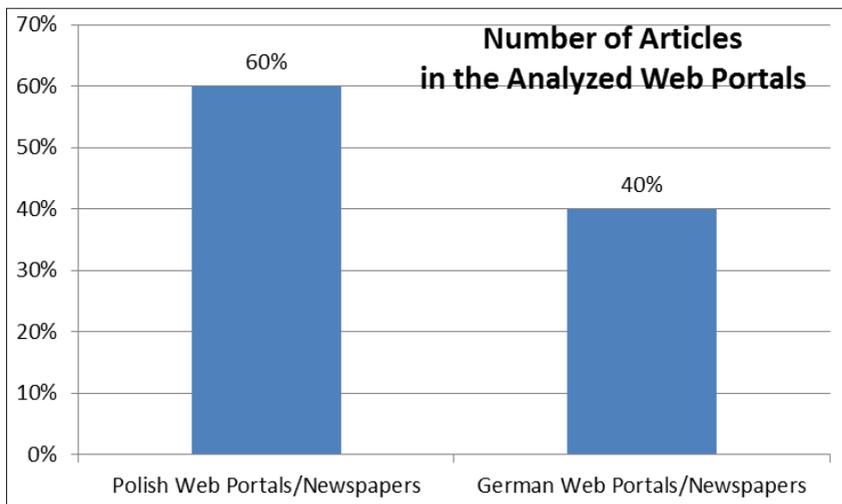
The German team selected two internet websites that are regarded as opinion-forming, namely *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Faz.net) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Sz.de). Both are German quality newspapers. The FAZ opened its online news portal in 2001, and in 2006, the website of Sz.de was launched. It is interesting to mention that Faz.net has, according to a AGOF survey, reached 6.55 million internet users per month in 2015, while Sz.de, during the same period, reached 9.28 million readers (Schröder 2015).

We should to point out that for the purpose of this article, the applied research methodology is content analysis, understood as a technique aiming at an objective, systematic and quantitative description of the overt communication content (Berelson 1952, p. 18). The conducted analysis was both qualitative and quantitative. Having defined the research issues, both the research aims and the hypothesis have been formed. The latter concerns the extent to which the media discourse is politicized regarding the relations of Poland with its neighbors. Next, the authors developed a categorical key according to the criteria proposed by Walery Pisarek and based on Bernard Berelson's research methodology (Pisarek 1983, p. 103).

#### 4. Quantitative Analysis

Out of 80 analyzed articles, 60% came from the Polish internet editorial offices, and 40% from the German ones (Graph 1). The difference does not indicate any clear involvement in the subject of

immigrants of the news outlets from one country. It rather results from a relatively short time of analysis, during which the topic was unevenly distributed. The fact that as many as 85% of press materials came from the Rp.pl website among the articles published on the Polish websites seems more interesting. Both chosen editorial bodies, as it was mentioned before, are the most opinion-forming outlets and the most frequently quoted; however, one of them raised the subject of immigrants clearly more often than the other, which might indicate an uneven editorial engagement in this important subject. However, it is important to note that due to the European research scope of LEMEL, several articles were not included in the German corpus. These articles dealt with the refugee issue exclusively regarding domestic affairs and were not at all embedded in a European context but focused entirely on the domestic political decision-making process and domestic political power struggles.

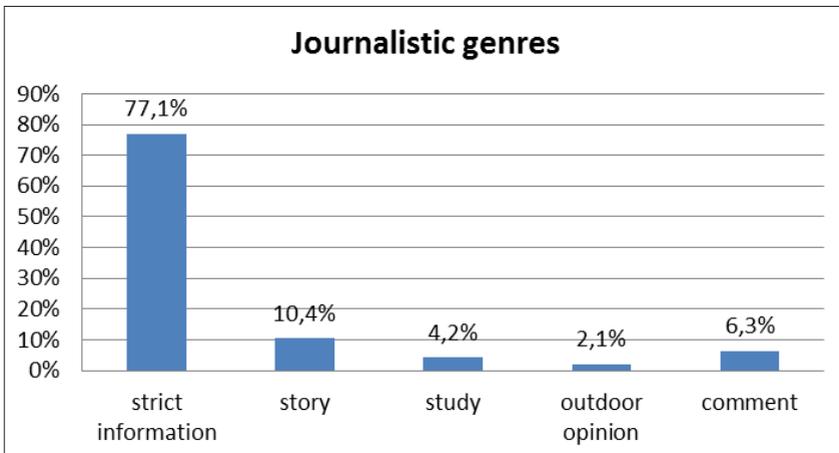


**Graph 1.** The number of articles in the analyzed web portals.

Source: calculated by the authors.

## 5. Qualitative Analysis in General Terms: The Journalistic Genre

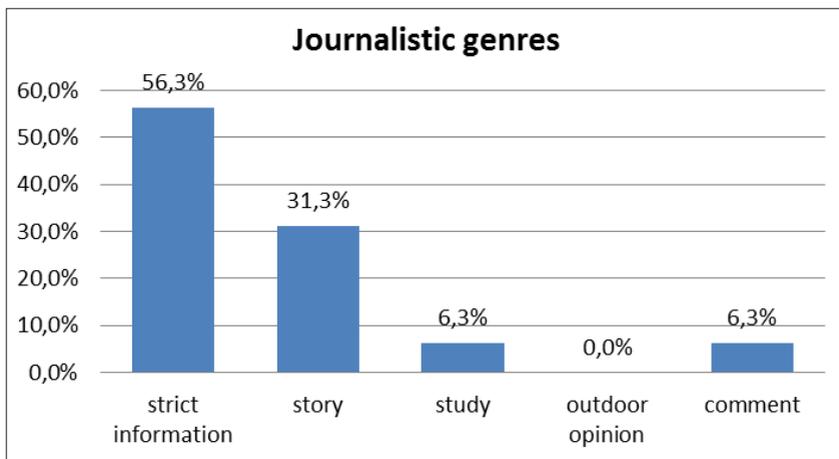
The Polish articles were clearly dominated by information materials, both short news and extended reports (Graph 2). The authors repeatedly referred to previously published data and attached new facts. Among other topics, they described the movement of migrants in Europe, the economic context connected to the reception and maintenance of refugees not only in Poland but in other European countries as well, and they repeatedly reported on the closedown of the Calais camp. The next genre, in terms of frequency, was the story-telling. These were mostly reports on the immigrant families living in Europe and analyses related to the social situation of the refugees. The next three articles were commentaries in which the authors evaluated the Polish immigration policy negatively (two articles) and justified the actions of the Polish government (one article). Isolated materials were a study and an outdoor opinion.



**Graph 2.** Journalistic genres: results for both Polish web portals.

Source: calculated by the authors.

When comparing these figures to the German corpus, it becomes apparent that the distribution in terms of the journalistic genres is very similar to the Polish outcome (Graph 3). Most of the articles – 56.3% – delivered very strict news information and dealt with a variety of topics, like the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris, Danish border-crossing proceedings, the mistreatments of refugees at the Italian border, the Pope’s journey to Sweden, Victor Orban’s isolationist policy or the dissolution of the Calais Camp in France. Similar to the Polish corpus, it can be observed that story-telling was placed second. However, unlike the Polish news coverage, it represented 31.3% of all articles. Thus, German journalists used the story as a journalistic genre much more frequently than their Polish colleagues.



**Graph 3.** Journalistic genres: results for both German web portals.

Source: calculated by the authors.

## 6. Qualitative Analysis in General Terms: Argumentation

After an initial examination, the authors decided to investigate the following arguments: *a simili*, *a contrario*,<sup>5</sup> *ad populum*,<sup>6</sup> *ad hominem*,<sup>7</sup> *ad misericordiam*,<sup>8</sup> *argumentum baculinum*,<sup>9</sup> *ad crumenam*.<sup>10</sup> In the preliminary study, the authors took into account the most common

<sup>5</sup> *A simili* and *a contrario* – both arguments take advantage of the possibilities offered either by an analogy or a lack of it. They are similar in the way material is treated, but they are opposite when it comes to conclusions. The essence of this argument is to compare phenomena or facts. In the case of the *a simili* argument, the aim is to emphasize a similarity; in the case of *a contrario*, the aim is to emphasize a lack of similarity.

<sup>6</sup> The *ad populum* arguments are directed toward the people in the sense that the people arguing for any given idea refer to the group characteristics or an affiliation with those to whom they speak. Populism, well-practiced in political life, relies heavily on the use (and often abuse) of the *ad populum* argument.

<sup>7</sup> The *ad hominem* argument functions by adjusting the elements of argumentation (facts, evaluations etc.) to both the recipients' preferences and aversions as well as to their ability to understand the argument (experience, education, intelligence, etc.). The consequence of this attitude of the communicator is a varied, flexible selection of elements of argumentation to various recipients. The arguments *ad populum* and *ad hominem* are very similar; their difference lies in a stronger accentuation of either group or individual personality traits.

<sup>8</sup> The intention of the *ad misericordiam* argument is to arouse compassion or pity in the people to whom the argument is addressed. The reasons for this compassion can be various: poverty or misery, illness, oppression of all kinds (political, social), economic exploitation as well as intolerance or persecution (of ethnic or religious nature, for example). The reason for pity or compassion can also be found in personal experiences (a loss of one's close relatives, family problems etc.)

<sup>9</sup> The *baculinum* argument is used to threaten or menace. It may be threatening with physical violence, administrative penalties or causing various types of other ailments (cutting off energy supplies etc.). The scheme is as follows: "if you do not behave in a certain way (or if you do not give up any action), we will punish you in one way or another." Of course, this argument is generally used in the case of big conflicts.

<sup>10</sup> The *ad crumenam* argument means referring to financial profits or losses – or simply material ones. Overall, it takes the form of giving something or the form of a promise to give (in the public domain, for example, these are the main promises during the election campaigns). However, this argument may also consist of pointing to possible losses inflicted if the recipients of the argument do not behave in a certain way that the arguing party postulates. This is done based on the following principle: "With us, you will win (you will profit), and with others you will lose."

types of arguments, used in all kinds of media messages of an informative nature, based on Michał Gajlewicz's comparative analysis (Gajlewicz 2009; 2011).

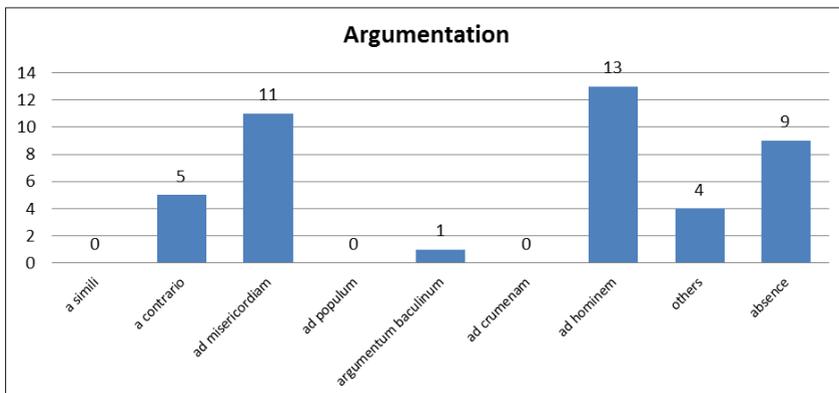
The frequent use of storytelling methods as a journalistic genre is linked to another outcome of this study: by using the categories established by Michał Gajlewicz and in analyzing the argumentation of the German online news articles, it could be observed that especially in Germany, the majority of the articles collected were either written with the simple intent of arousing compassion or pity in the people to whom the argument was addressed to (*ad misericordiam*) or the authors of the articles were referring to their readers' humanitarian values and belief systems (*ad hominem*). The articles often took the perspective of the refugee as liminal figure or refugees as a distinct but rootless and homeless group, telling the story from their perspectives. Already in 2015, German news coverage was heavily criticized for its "emotionalization" of the refugee issue<sup>11</sup> and its remarkable lack of neutrality.<sup>12</sup> In 2016, Petra Hemmelmann and Susanne Wegner identified five major waves of refugee reporting in print, TV and online news in 2015. A "growing empathy" and the "journalists as advocates of the refugee" figured in the second and third positions (Hemmelmann, Wegner 2016). As shown in the Graph 4, values associated with empathy and moral virtue continued to dominate the news coverage in Germany in our corpus of 2016.

In the context of immigrants, the range of arguments used in the published Polish texts is very wide. This is due to two factors: first, a lot has been written about this subject and from different perspectives (from social to economic); second, this subject favors the use of persuasive means as it is controversially perceived by the Polish society. It should be noted that in the research, an occurrence of up to two different arguments used in an article was expected. As a result, it was

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the readers' questions and Slavoj Žižek's response, which appeared on October 26, 2015, in the German online newspaper Süddeutsche.de ("Sollten wir mitbestimmen dürfen" 2015).

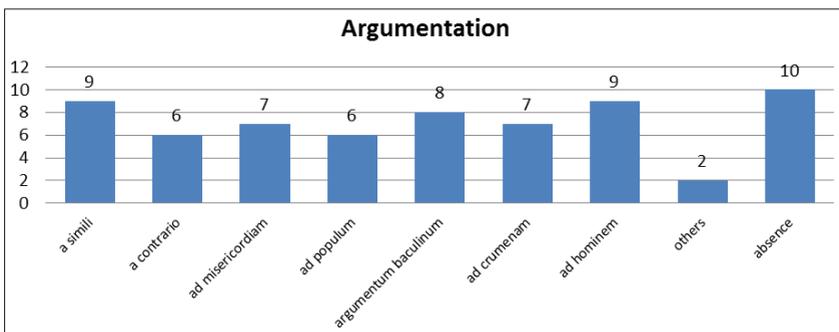
<sup>12</sup> The most prominently discussed in this context was Michael Haller's (2017) study.



**Graph 4.** An analysis of the types of argumentation in German articles according to Michał Gajlewicz.

Source: calculated by the authors.

found that no arguments were used in 10 Polish articles. Only in two of the cases other types of arguments were used than those distinguished in the coding key.



**Graph 5.** An analysis of the types of argumentation in Polish articles according to Michał Gajlewicz.

Source: calculated by the authors.

As the analysis of the Polish media shows, in 9 cases, the use of a typical arguments was noticed in press materials: *a simili* and *ad hominem*. The first one, just like a *contrario* (6 cases), is among the most commonly

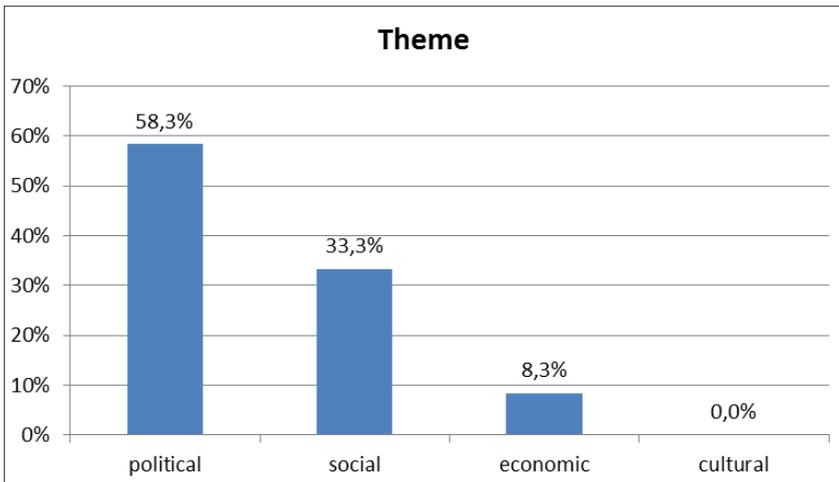
used types of arguments because of its usefulness in persuasion. In the context of the studied issues, they showed differences and similarities in the approach toward immigrants in several countries and the EU's decisions, as in the text of Jerzy Haszczyński (2016, October 10). The use of *ad hominem* (9 cases) is not surprising, because it is an argument often used in describing or commenting on events on a social basis. A very good example of use of *ad hominem* is the text by Piotr Jendroszczyk (2016, October 26). In this text, the personal experiences of the victims were referred to, adjusting them to the recipients' aversion to these types of acts.

The *baculum* argument was identifiable in eight cases – which is interesting, as it shows that its frequent use in Polish media directs the discussion about immigrants toward the fear and violence associated with this phenomenon, a typical example being the headline *Greece: Refugees Set Fire to Containers on Lesbos* (arb 2016, October 24). The use of *ad crumenam* is associated with the economic aspect of admitting immigrants in Europe. Also significant is the relative frequent appearance of *ad misericordiam*. It points to a rather ambiguous attitude of the Polish media to immigrants, because the use of the previously described argument referring to fear does not interfere with describing the difficult situation of immigrants in Europe (children, poverty, uncertainty of the future, the financial situation). It is the use of *ad misericordiam* that allows the readers to presume that, contrary to common opinion, Rp.pl and Wyborcza.pl are able to take note of the difficult situation of the refugees and try to sensitize readers to it. This argument was used in 8 cases out of the 47 analyzed texts from Polish web portals.

The use of *ad populum* is taking polemical advantage of the existing or imagined features of a specific social group, when it is assumed that belonging to this group must mean having these features and recognizing certain views. This argument was used in six texts published in Polish media selected for analysis: it favors stereotyping the immigrants and homogenizing this group.

## 7. Qualitative Analysis in General Terms: The Subject Matter of the Articles

The dominant topic of the Polish articles on immigrants (58.3%) is politics (Graph 6). It is clearly visible that the problem of refugees is considered mainly in the political context. This results from the fact that in Poland, this topic is the subject of a political fight between the government's ruling party and the opposition. Social issue topics are represented in 33.3% of the articles. These are mostly press materials concerning living conditions in the camps for refugees and the fate of immigrants in various European countries.



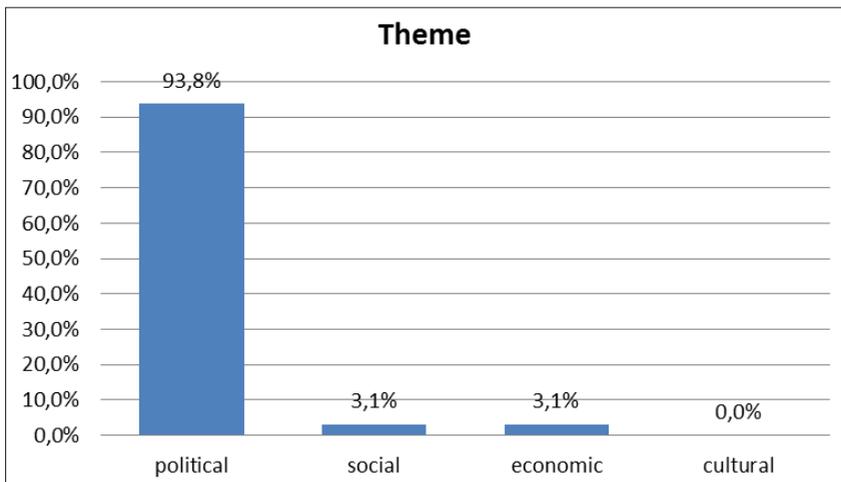
**Graph 6.** The number of articles on the main topics in Poland.

Source: calculated by the authors.

A point of interest is that as many as 79% of the Polish articles were concerned with the topic of immigrants outside Poland, both in a positive and negative context (either the acceptance or the refusal of refugees). The crises in France, Hungary and Germany were described. The topic of the fate of refugees was raised, e.g., in Finland, Sweden or Greece, but this was done with no references to the Polish state or

any distant ones, if any. Because of this fact, it could be presumed that since Poland does not accept refugees, nothing can be written about them from the Polish perspective. However, the lack of a clearly explicit negative tone of the statements (see the next chapter) suggests that the authors did not try to push through the opinion on the immigration crisis in Europe, which was supposed to support the Polish policy of not accepting refugees. But it should be emphasized that the remaining 21% of articles were concerned mainly with a negative assessment of the Polish immigration policy carried out by the representatives of the EU and the possible financial consequences that could result from this policy. Two articles also dealt with Poland accepting immigrants from Ukraine.

Turning the attention to the respective German outcome (Graph 7), a striking figure is the high frequency of articles in the category of politics: 93.8% of all articles addressed the refugee crisis in its political context. Articles written in the categories of society and economics were only marginal and amounted only up to 3.1%. This uneven result



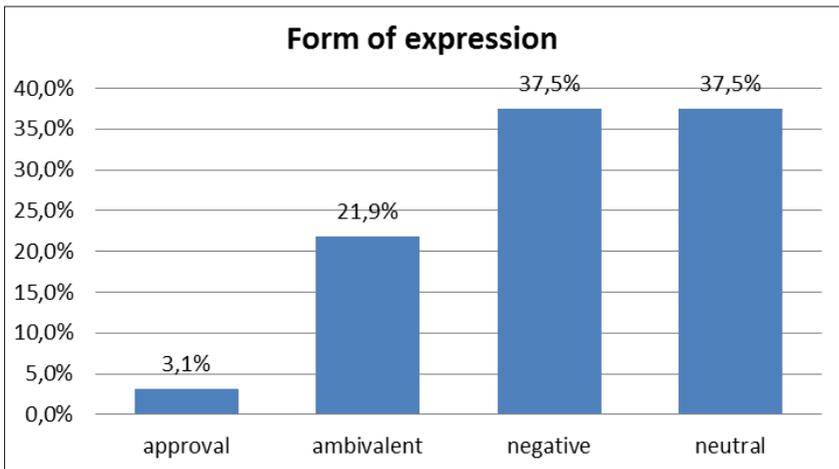
**Graph 7.** The number of articles on the main topics in German newspapers.

Source: calculated by the authors.

might be interpreted in light of the German political debates concerning the challenging task of the administration and registration of incoming refugees. Nonetheless, most of the articles dealt with other European countries like Denmark, France, Italy and Hungary, which were partly addressed as negative examples.

### 8. Qualitative Analysis in Detail: The Tone of the Statements

The next step of the content analysis was defining the tone of the statements in which the journalists took up the subject of immigrants. It is interesting that despite the general negative policy toward refugees in Poland, journalists in the selected articles presented the topic mainly in a neutral way (Graph 8). It may be presumed that it correlates with the dominant genre, i.e., information, which imposes an independent and impersonal way of the subject matter presentation. Certainly an important fact is that the selected portals are not right-wing; that is, they do not explicitly follow the ideas of the ruling party. The rest of the articles that described the subject of immigrants positively (to a

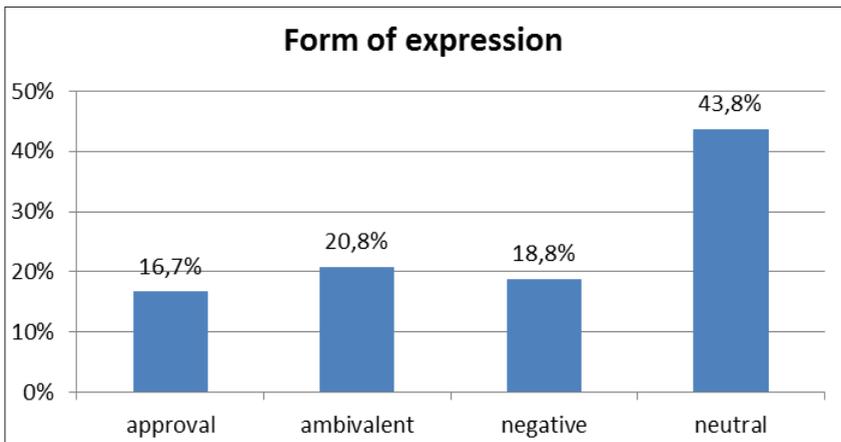


**Graph 8.** The tones of expression in Polish newspapers.

Source: calculated by the authors.

similar degree), negatively and ambivalently made up 16.7%, 18.8% and 20.8%, respectively. It is worth noticing that among these three variables, the ambivalent tone was the most frequent. This means that the journalists avoided any explicit statements. They used contradictory arguments and descriptions in the same article rather frequently, which suggests a certain amount of difficulty that they had encountered in the unambiguous definition of their views.

In Germany, the form of expression took a much more negative (37.5%) or ambivalent (21.9%) tone. The procedures in Italy, France, Denmark or Hungary in regard to refugees were often treated in an ambivalent manner – if not even being openly criticized. The German online newspapers portrayed the dissolution of the Calais Camp in an especially ambivalent way and disapproved of Orban’s refugee policy. However, the same criticism was applied to domestic controversies over the best solution of the refugee question as already outlined above.

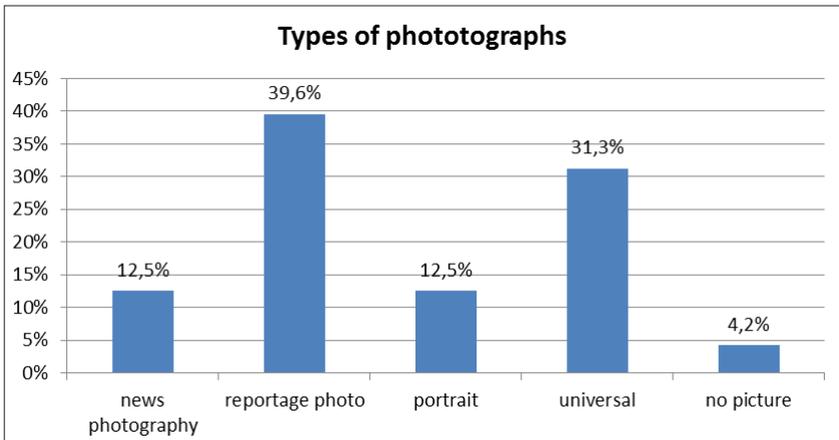


**Graph 9.** The tones of expression in German newspapers.

Source: calculated by the authors.

## 9. Detailed Analysis of the Visual Message: The Typology and Function of Photographs

The subject concerning immigrants gives great opportunities for using various forms of visual messages. Refugees escaping from war or immigrants looking for a new home is the subject matter that perfectly matches the nature of press photography. That is why it is not surprising that Polish web portals are dominated by press photography (Graph 10). It facilitates the showing of difficult subject matter, forces the readers to reflect on the subject matter visible in the image and, finally, encourages them to take a stand on the presented problem. However, in the case of the conducted analysis, there is no strict correlation between reportage photography and the function of photography. Not all photographs included in the reportage genre had a persuasive function. Such images amounted only to 22.9% (Graph 11). This surprising arrangement indicates that when portraying the subject, photojournalists also frequently avoided an explicitly taken viewpoint. Therefore, the next most frequently used type of photography is universal photo-

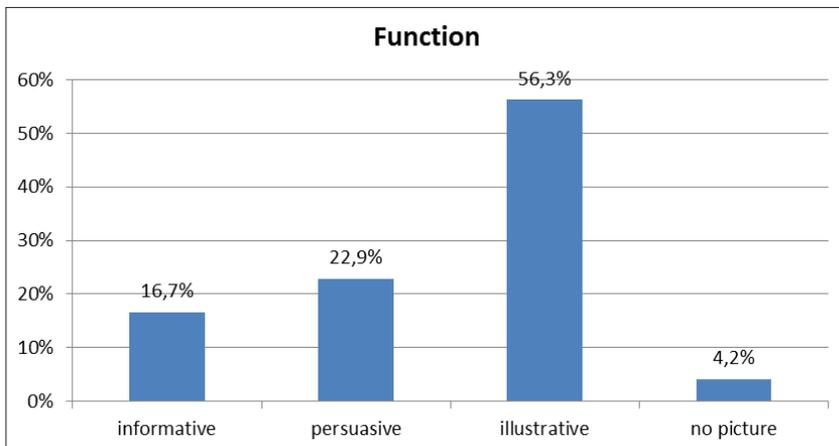


**Graph 10.** The types of photographs in Polish newspapers.

Source: calculated by the authors.

graphy. Such a picture is only of illustrative value and, at the same time, it is also the most frequently used.

News photographs had informative value, too. Their task was to broaden the recipients' knowledge on the presented subject and on some portraits that were supposed to bring closer the heroic appearance of the journalistic text. These photos added additional information to the articles. Such a distribution of the functions of photography indicates that the web spaces of these news outlets does not fully make use of the possibilities of visual communication. It treats photographs rather as an added element – essential but only with the purpose of performing illustrative purposes, not informational and persuasive ones.



**Graph 11.** The function of photography in Polish newspapers.

Source: calculated by the authors.

In her analysis of border regimes in the context of the refugee crisis from 2014 to 2016, Silke Betscher has analyzed the central role of German media discourses and media images that constituted new forms of collective image repertoires. She pointed out that until the spring of 2015, there was a manageable number of visual condensations, motif clusters and image series. Central motives were the refugee boat

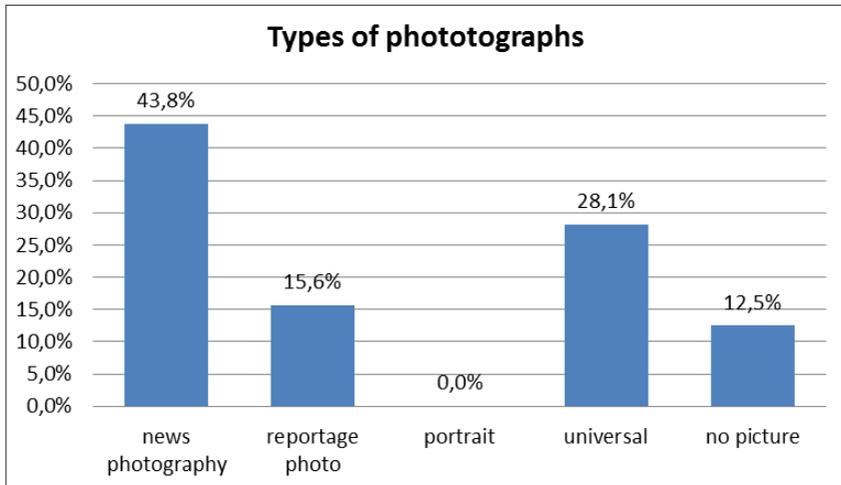
on the Mediterranean, the border fences of the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla and refugee accommodations in Germany. However, Silke Betscher has traced the changes of these repetitive image repertoires since 2014 and has remarkably shown to which extent the images are linked to a specific correlation between the position of the subject, the perspective of the viewer and power relations:

The people in the boats did not consciously look into a camera [...]. Instead, the refugees looked to maritime rescuers, border and front office officials in helicopters and ships. [...] Dislocation, decontextualisation, dehistoricization, and desubjectification work together to make the refugees, in a process of othering, to others who are outside and in a dramatically threatening situation (Betscher 2017, p. 120).

This perspective has changed slowly but constantly since September 2014; not only did the newspapers show the capsizing of a refugee boat with 700 deaths but also close-ups of babies and of lost children's gloves on razor-sharp barbed wires. Furthermore, the media turned to depict the refugee no longer as an absolutely passive and dependent individual but as a high-handed person who is illegally passing the European borders.

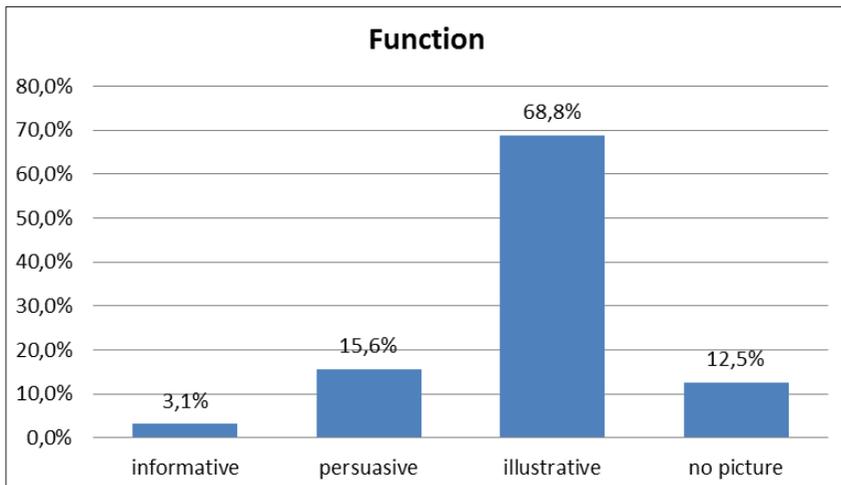
In the German corpus collected in the autumn of 2016, neither individual nor group pictures of refugees had predominated. Graphs 12 and 13 show that most of the pictures were universal (28.1%) and resembled news photography (43.8%) and suited illustrative (68.8%) rather than persuasive (15.6%) or informative (3.1%) purposes. The pictures depict unknown people, in groups or one at a time, but never take on the reoccurring image icons. However, the images can be clearly located and contextualized either through their explicit motive, like the Calais Camp, or through their textual embedding, like the following selection of image subtitles exemplifies:

1. Refused asylum seekers being brought to the Leipzig airport.
2. A short-term camp in Erding.
3. A refugee boat near the Italian island of Lampedusa.
4. Danish police supervising a border crossing-point near Flensburg.



**Graph 12.** Types of photographs in German newspapers.

Source: calculated by the authors.



**Graph 13.** The function of photography in German newspapers.

Source: calculated by the authors.

5. Refugees from North Africa disembarking at the harbor of Pozallo.
6. Supporters of the Front National demonstrating in La Tour-d'Aigues against migrants.

The subtitles of these images make apparent how locality (Pozello, Lampedusa, Erding, La Tour-d'Aigues) became central for a European-wide issue. The unknown, the individual or even the anonymous refugee and the local and regional are, besides Calais and the two capital cities of Paris and Budapest, the major motives in the texts gathered from the period of autumn of 2016.

## 10. Conclusion

The corpus gathered by the Polish and German team of the LEMEL project has revealed certain similarities and certain discrepancies as well in the way the refugee topic is dealt with in the chosen online newspapers. The first and most important outcome concerns the role of media in public opinion-shaping and their respective standpoint toward political decision-making processes of each national government. It could be shown that the media coverage of both countries is highly politicized. The majority of the articles were directly or indirectly linked to political struggles between the ruling party and its opposition, suggesting that the refugee crisis and its most urgent process of public debate were merely utilized as a political plaything within power politics. Despite all of the attempts at critical investigations, the German and Polish online newspapers finally mirrored this process and unwillingly enhanced the distortion of an open-minded and sophisticated public debate and an “interpretive confrontation” (*Auseinandersetzung*) by political interests or manipulative intervention. In both countries, this has led to a meta-discourse on media credibility. In Poland, the question of credibility was raised in the context of excessive political interference on the freedom of speech by the passing of a new media law and the government’s “intolerance toward independent or critical reporting, [...] and restrictions on speech regarding Polish history and identity

[...].”<sup>13</sup> In the case of Germany, it could be observed that, although German media is generally rated as free and independent, in the course of the year 2016, the term *lügenpresse* (“lies press”), primarily used by populist and right-wing extremists and xenophobic circles, was – to a certain extent – successful in eroding the credibility of the German press.

However, second, neither the German nor Polish journalists of the opinion-forming quality newspapers did measurably support an isolationist policy. Especially in Germany, the appeal to humanitarian values and empathy through the means of storytelling favored a clear pro-refugee attitude and highlighted Germany’s welcome culture and willingness to support. To a certain degree, this can be interpreted in the light of Germany’s past and personal experiences in terms of the refuge and displacement after WWII and the respective national memory discourses promoted by various media. The analyzed Polish online media deserves special appreciation, as it has managed, despite the alarming changes in the legal framework for the Polish media landscape, to counter-balance the Polish government’s anti-immigration policy, offering at least an alternative source of information and critical reflection. In both national cases, this pro-refugee attitude was additionally highlighted by the used image repertoires, which, in most cases, underlined the refugees’ extremely difficult and dangerous situation.

Finally, it must be taken into consideration that the aim of LEMEL was to analyze the representations of Europe and European controversies during a period which lies outside the main European events (e.g., elections). This does explain why a part of the corpus includes minor events, allowing for an analysis of a more nuanced geographical scope and stressing the importance of the regional and local. The forms of representation of the refugee could thus be extended from “the refugee in a boat at sea” or the “refugee landing at the European coast” to “the refugee among us” and the process of integration.

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<sup>13</sup> See the Freedom of the Press 2017 Assessment of Freedom House for Poland: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/poland>

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