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**Without Voice:**  
**PEOPLE ON THE MOVE**

An Analysis  
of the media coverage of migration  
in Bosnia-Herzegovina  
and Croatia  
during the period  
from 2015-2021



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **NEGATIVE FRAMING.** The research has underlined dominant negative narratives articulated throughout the studied publications with regard to migration issues or those issues related to it, all of which serve to highlight the negative impact of migration on society. People on the move are mostly associated with stories of crime, violence or illegal border crossing.
- **VARIATION OVER TIME.** The research has shown the adaptation of a negative framing relative to the media coverage on migration. The negative framing has increased over time, and the research underlined the large variety of negative discourse and hate speech over the period studied. In times of pandemic, people on the move will be designated as ‘super spreaders of the virus’ while in times of war they will be designated as terrorists, as well as constantly dehumanized.
- **DECONTEXTUALISATION.** Media coverage lacked information about the people on the move, such as the reasons for migration or their experiences of displacement. This is problematic because the complexity and reasons for migration were not illuminated. The articles relied on stories that appeal to emotions relative to fears rather than informing and explaining a situation in depth to make the audience understand the complexity of it.
- **LACK OF GENDER SENSITIVITY.** In the different articles, gender was mostly not specified. Most of the time, people on the move were described as a whole group or in numeric terms. When gender was specified, it was only with reference to women and men, with LGBTQI+ completely excluded from reporting. In the articles where gender was specified, women were less represented than men and children. Whereas women and children were often used to provide a human rights perspective on the issue, men were often mentioned in relation to stories of crime and violence. Consequently, existing prejudiced stereotypes based on gender are reproduced, namely men as criminals or sex offenders and a general victimisation of women.
- **PEOPLE ON THE MOVE AS A THREAT.** Migration is dominantly presented as a threat to the nation in terms of security (dangerous terrorists) and culture (uncivilised invaders), and also in terms of health in the relative national context. In general, people on the move are primarily portrayed as a problem, expressed in a large variety of negative and hateful narratives (terrorism, COVID-19 propagators, etc.).

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- **MEDIA CAPTURE.** The study has highlighted a lack of critical opinion in the editorial rooms. Indeed, the orientation of the main news coverage on migration issues is generally in line with the political discourse. The dominant political discourse, when associated with contemporary media coverage, along with personal threats toward journalists, can lead them to experience self-censorship. Moreover, the media are often owned by politicians or power centres with interests. This can result in conflicts of interest between the role to inform and personal interests, both political and economic.
- **VOICELESS PEOPLE ON THE MOVE.** People on the move are the central object of interest in this study, but they are also invisible. Indeed, the analysis has shown that people on the move themselves rarely get a voice in the articles to tell their stories. Besides, the articles rarely provide insights about the reality of their daily lives or contextualisation for the reason of their departure, and are even less informative about who they are. The lack of contextualization and information about people on the move prevents the audience from forming an empathetic and emotional attachment. And it seems to increase the likelihood that audiences will be more receptive to the propaganda against people on the move.
- **MIGRANT OR REFUGEE.** The study underlined that the media agree on the use of the term migrant, but on several occasions they also use the term illegal migrant in situations where the term *refugee* would be more appropriate. In this context the terminology directly modulates the reaction of the public opinion toward the population under coverage. The negative connotations that are currently associated with the terms *migrants*, and in particular *illegal migrants*, can have a strong influence on the perception of people on the move by the audience.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BiH</b>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>BIRN</b>	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FBiH</b>	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>HRV</b>	Croatia
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation of Migration
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>RS</b>	Republika Srpska
<b>SBB BiH</b>	Union for a better future of Bosnia-Herzegovina

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## People on the move

Aware of the political significance of terms such as ‘migrant’, ‘asylum seeker’ or ‘refugee’, and the sometimes abusive use of these terms, this study uses the term ‘people on the move’ as a reference term for all humans on the move.

## Refugee/migration crisis

In this study, we refer to the term ‘refugee crisis’ or ‘migration crisis’ with an awareness that these two terms in themselves carry a possible negative connotation of the phenomenon. By referring to this term, however, this study does not ignore the challenges that migration brings to Europe, and to Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2011, the Syrian conflict forced more than 5.8 million people to leave their homes. Various other conflicts, such as in Afghanistan and Sudan, have contributed to the increase in displacement during the same period. At that time, more than one million people moved towards Europe in search of security and peace.

Already in 2011, several international organisations were trying to raise awareness with decision-makers, as well as the public, about the consequences of the conflict in those countries. However, a change in the general perception seems to have occurred only when the media reported the following two tragic events: on 19 April 2015, a boat ran aground in the Mediterranean Sea and over 800 of its 900 passengers drowned; and Aylan Kurdi, a 3-year-old boy who fled the war in Syria by boat, was found dead on the Turkish coast on 3 September.

The world was outraged by the images of these events, which were disseminated worldwide through the media. The world's attention focused on what the media called a 'humanitarian crisis' and a 'migrant/refugee crisis'. For a certain period, not a day went by without a story mentioning those events, with the reports becoming more and more tragic, calling for more humanity dealing with the issue and help for people on the move.

This initial period of reporting on the need to save refugees was paired with a strong political and media message in the form of Angela Merkel's "*Wir schaffen das*", which opened the possibility of refugees being admitted to Germany and calling all the European countries to do their part in terms of responsibility and humanity. However, other political messages followed, almost immediately lumping the refugee crisis and security issues together. Not to mention nationalist figures such as Donald Trump, Matteo Salvini or Victor Orbán, who proclaimed anti-migration slogans. They focused on numbers, talked about invasion and promoted the possible consequence of a replacement of the European population. In September 2015, Hungary decided to erect a barbed wire border fence; the gradual closure of the EU's external borders marked a turning point in the crisis. In this context, anti-immigration rhetoric and hate speech increased in the media all over Europe.

Mass media plays a central role as a means of informing the public about global, national and local events, and represents a powerful means of shaping opinions and policies. Changes in national policies are often the result of a sustained media campaign that raises public awareness and provokes local, as well as national, debates. Media information platforms, therefore, involve the dissemination of verified, ethical and professional information to enable citizens to access information on key aspects of public life that significantly affect their well-being and participation. Thus, their impact on public debate is significant. The way in which information is ordered in the media, namely which facts are included, excluded or highlighted, influences the content of



the information transmitted. And thus, also the way certain phenomena are perceived and discussed within the society. Consequently, the way the media frames information can shape people's interpretations and make some aspects of the subject more salient than others.

However, even if the media are part of the problem, they can also be a powerful tool to reverse the trends. Indeed, by promoting more positive narratives based on human rights (such as humanity, dignity, justice and equality), or by adopting stories articulated around several values (such as the participation and inclusion of people on the move, empowerment, equality, non-discrimination and accountability), the media can also promote ideas about migration having the potential to be beneficial for receiving countries and societies, as well as for countries of origin and the people on the move themselves.

The way the media present information on migration contributes to the construction of the collective perception on this issue. Precisely for this reason, narratives related to the topic of migration developed by the media need to be critically analysed. Regarding the media landscape within the European Union, this has already been done in different ways. In contrast, there is no in-depth analysis of the countries bordering the European Union, which have been confronted with migration issues due to the closure of Europe's borders. Therefore, this study examines the narrative relative to media coverage of migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, to observe the emergent patterns used to frame migration.

## | 10 | METHODOLOGY

This research aims to explore the dominant discourse in which the topic of migration is framed in the most important media in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The research aims to present the range of narratives that predominate the news coverage of migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia using a content analysis approach.

**Table 1: Media analysed**

Online - Newspaper	Audience ranking	Type
Avaaz	1st	Tabloid
Nezavisne Novine	5th	Quality
24Sata	1st	Tabloid
Jutarnji	2nd	News portal

This analysis focuses on two newspapers in each of the two countries. The four publications have been chosen as representatives in terms of audience, quality and the political leaning of a significant part of readers in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, as well as in Croatia.

- **Avaz** is based in Sarajevo and represents the most influential media and best-selling newspaper in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The online version is the most visited news platform in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Avaaz was created in September 1993 by Fahrudin Radončić, a Bosnian media businessman and politician. Radončić served as Minister of Security (2012-2014 and 2019-2020) at the national level and is the founder and current president of the Union for a Better Future of BiH (SBB BiH).
- **Nezavisne Novine** was founded in 1995 by Zeljko Kopanja, is a liberal publication and the most widely read newspaper in the Republika Srpska. The Nezavisne novine is close to the local government.
- **24Sata** was founded in 2005, quickly established itself as one of the most widely read Croatian newspapers after Jutarnji list and Večernji list. With two million visitors per month, the website is the most visited in the country. Two out of three Croatians consult it daily.

- **Jutarnji** was founded after Croatia's independence. The liberal "Morning Newspaper" is the second largest daily newspaper in the country. It features quality reports and columns and has opened its columns to many Croatian writers. Jutarnji List is part of the main Croatian press group Hanza Media.

<b>In English</b>	Migrant / refugees / illegal refugees / illegal migrant / invasion / terrorism / asylum
<b>In Bosnian</b>	Migranti / ilegalni imigranti / imigrant / tražilac azila / terorizam
<b>In Croatian</b>	Migranti / ilegalni imigranti / ilegalnih / migranata invazija / terorizam / tražioci azila

**Table 2: Keywords used for the search of articles**

Articles from three different time periods were included in the analysis. Three time periods were analysed to measure the evolution of the media discourse on the migration issue. Each period represents a key moment regarding the topic of migration that had an influence on the framing of the media coverage relative to the migration issue.

### **Period 1 (08/2015)**

August 2015 marked the starting point for what is widely referred to as 'the migration/refugee crisis'. In August 2015, Europe recorded a high number of entries of people on the move. This period has been chosen for a deep analysis in order to capture the pattern of media coverage at the very beginning of the so-called migration crisis.

### **Period 2 (05/2018)**

With the closure of the Balkan route, one of the main migratory paths into Europe, the year 2018 represented a second period of interest. As a result of the border closure by Croatia at this time, many people on the move on their way to the European Union were stranded in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The region was strongly affected by these people being blocked in the country, which caused internal political debates and conflicts between the Republika Srpska (RS) and **The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)**.

### **Period 3 (05/2021)**

The third period represents the year 2021. As yet, no concrete political solutions from the European Union, Croatia or Bosnia and Herzegovina have been adopted. In BiH, the political conflict involving the RS and FBiH continues.

## SAMPLE

The sample is composed of 220 online articles from August 2015 to April 2021, which can be accessed directly on the online website of the respective medium.

## ANALYSIS

All articles are available in digital format and were translated before being analysed. The analysis of the articles was conducted with reference to the following seven main questions:

- Who is the dominant speaker in the articles?
- What are the main themes in the articles?
- Which legal definition is used in the articles to describe people on the move?
- What is the country of origin of the people on the move mentioned in the articles?
- What is the gender of the people on the move mentioned in the articles?
- What is the reason for migration mentioned in the articles?
- What are the solutions discussed in the articles?

Based on these questions, keywords for the analysis of the articles were determined a priori. These keywords were based on contemporary research and other analysis of media coverage regarding migration in other contexts.

Table 4: Key words

Categories	Definition
<b>1) Speakers</b>	Mention of person or entity to whom the voice is given <sup>2</sup>
National politicians	Include local or national politicians and members of government or state institutions
International politicians	Include members of foreign governments and members of the European Parliament.
Local NGOs	Include local and national groups.
International organisations	Include all the international organisations relative to the protection of migration.
Representative of police	All mentions of a representative of the police or defence institutions.
Justice and law	All mentions of a representative of Justice and law institutions.
Citizen	All mentions of a national citizen voice.
People on the move	All mentions of people on the move – refugees, asylum seekers and migrant voices.
Media	All mentions of other media sources.
Others	When the source is not one of those mentioned above.
<b>2) Terminology</b>	Any mention of labels such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugee</li> <li>• Migrant</li> <li>• Asylum seeker</li> <li>• Illegal migrant</li> <li>• Immigrant</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>

2. The category is checked when the topic appears in the publication [only once]; for example, if a member of the government speaks twice in the publication, it will be noted once for national politician. A publication can include different sources and different themes.

Categories	Definition
<b>3) Source Country</b>	Any mention of nationalities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syrian</li> <li>• Afghan</li> <li>• Any mention of another country</li> </ul>
<b>4) Gender</b>	Any mention of gender identity relative to the people on the move: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Group of men</li> <li>• Mixed group</li> <li>• Children</li> <li>• Family</li> </ul>
<b>5) Political solution</b>	Human rights or security answer, noting down any mention of a solution and writing down details in the category solution.
<b>6) Themes</b>	Main themes in the coverage
Death figures	Any mention of death relative to migration caused by accident, crime, journey and other causes.
Number of migrants	Any mention of numbers relative to migration with regard to entries, deportation or demonstration of increase
Human rights focus	Any mention of a story relative to human rights or with human rights mentioned.
Positive narrative	Any mention of a story relative to people in the move presented with a positive aspect (success story, integration, friendship or good behaviour).
Political solution	Any mention of political solutions or actions: including any application of a solution (camps, quota, etc.) or a potential solution.
Smuggling	Any mention of illegal trafficking relative to migration, including potential criminalization of solidarity.
Political debate/conflict	Any mention of a national political debate or political conflict caused by migration or relative to migration.
Crime/criminality	Any mention of crime committed or criminal behaviour by people on the move.

Categories	Definition
Threat for prosperity	Any threat with regard to the wealth of the population: destruction of wealth, cost of the people on the move, etc.
Security threat	Any threat relative to security: terrorism, invasion, attack, etc.
Threat for health	Any mention of epidemic and disease due to people on the move.

## **FIRST CASE: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

### **CONTEXT**

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a democratic republic and consists of two entities – the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – as well as the Brčko District, an autonomous administrative unit under the sovereignty of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because of this complex structure, responsibilities often overlap and are similar, which cause challenges for a common coordination between national and local authorities.

#### ***Migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina***

**B**osnia and Herzegovina is considered as part of the Western Balkans route, one of the main migratory roads for people trying to reach EU countries in order to find a secure place to live. Since the beginning of 2018, 70,000 entries have been recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because of the mass movement that led to millions of displaced people entering into Europe in 2015. The closure of the European border in 2016 altered the trajectory of the Balkans Route, leading to a significant increase in entries to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Indeed, while 755 entries were recorded in 2017, the number of entries in 2018 exceeded 24,000.

This high number of transiting people has seriously challenged a country with limited institutional and financial capacity. From 2018 until today, thousands of people (including children and families) live in the street, abandoned houses, forests or makeshift shelters, struggling to get food, water and basic health care. These groups are composed mostly of people (families, women and men) from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Algeria, or Pakistan. Most of them have been travelling for weeks, even years, passing by Turkey, Greece or Bulgaria on their way towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, and further on, hoping to reach countries in the European Union.

The European Union has been closely collaborating with the state, local entities and cantons, as well as local authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Financial support of 89 million euros has been delivered to Bosnia and Herzegovina and EU partner organisations. Indeed, since 2018, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) oversees the temporary reception centre, which provides accommodation solutions for displaced people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A series of camps have been set up in abandoned buildings, where people have been located. According to numerous organisations, the reception conditions in these centres do not meet acceptable standards.



The treatment provided in these camps has not been suitable for a vulnerable population as their safety has not been guaranteed.

The data provided by the UNHCR<sup>2</sup> and the security ministry stated that between 2018 and 2020, the number of asylum applications reached 2,627, and while four persons have been recognized as people on the move, 145 have been rejected and 2,391 are in suspension, caused by internal processes or the decision to leave the country. However, compared to the high number of entries, this low application rate emphasises the characteristic of a transitory country that Bosnia and Herzegovina represent for the people fleeing, and also reveals the saturation of the administration in the face of the increase in applications.

Consequently, to the mechanism of border closure, the increased violence of the so-called illegal push-back at the Croatian border as well as the Dublin mechanism - where thousands of people on the move are drain in a chain-pushbacks from a country to another one the until the first country where an asylum application has been requested or forced - lead thousands of people on the move to be currently stuck in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mostly concentrated in the north due to the proximity with the Croatian border, the region of Una Sana Canton has accommodated over 80 per cent of people on the move in the country. As no solution has yet been found, the capacity of the reception centre has been rapidly exceeded, leaving many people on the move living outside in makeshift conditions to reach the Europeans Country. Exasperated by the situation, the mayor of Bihac often instructs the police authorities to dismantle the informal camps as they form, expelling families, women, and men from the canton's borders. While the Trans Balkanska Solidarnost Network urged local authorities and international organisations to "stop the policy of silence", to prosecute those responsible and to ensure a dignified and safe reception for people on the move, the local climate has turned increasingly hostile towards the massive presence of people on the move. This hostility is reflected both in the discourse of political representatives and in the creation of explicitly anti-migration platforms that contribute to the spread of a xenophobic and racist discourse. In addition, this climate, strengthened by the lack of political action, has given rise to an escalation of anti-immigrant demonstrations among the population. This stronger and more hostile movement has led to the formation of citizen militias to expel people on the move from their territory. The transitory situation has changed as permanent precariousness for many people on the move until today.

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2. Retrieved 13.12.2021 from <https://www.unhcr.org/see/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2021/03/BiH-Country-Fact-Sheet-FEB2021.pdf>.

## | 18 | **Media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**T**he violent dissolution of Yugoslavia was concluded for Bosnia and Herzegovina with the signing of the Dayton agreement in 1995, which opened up a process of democratisation for the region, leading to an inevitable transformation of the media system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the context of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe<sup>3</sup>, in an effort to support this transition, the international community provided significant support to the media in the Western Balkans, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite several advances, the transformation of the media system has failed and has repeatedly bowed to corruption, censorship and persecution of journalists.

The media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina is composed of many media outlets: 103 Television Stations, 152 radio stations, three public service broadcasters, 8 dailies and 181 periodicals. Regulatory responsibilities are held by the Communications Regulatory Agency and the Press Council self-regulatory body; the Public Service Broadcasters board is nominated by a parliamentary commission. Media models are characterised by three types of income based on: advertising revenue, allocation of public funds and international donations grants.

However, significant problems affect the functioning of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many media outlets suffer due to a lack of financial capacity that limits their *modi operandi*. This impacts the quality of information, which is often poorly diversified and often unverified or uncritical. In addition, the advertising market remains weak, while a high number of media outlets exist. There is, therefore, little profit and a high level of competition. This difficulty pushes many outlets to change their editorial tactic to a more sensationalistic editorial line. In fact, this editorial strategy, characterised by the dramatization of certain events through the choice of title, vocabulary and photo, is designed to attract the attention of the audience by making a strong impression on them. By this means, the media outlets are able to reach a wider population. Indeed, this works as a booster for sales and audience numbers, but comes at the cost of a lack of diversity of topics, and of erroneous, biased or unverified information.

Finally, other media outlets have been inexorably pushed into a dependence on state funding. Currently, there is a growing and dangerous influence of political parties and their entourage on the media. Through non-defined criteria, as well as by non-transparency with regard to public funding, political parties can decide to punish or favour particular media outlets. Governments are more likely to favour media outlets that are favourable to them and, above all, uncritical of the authorities. Such political domination in the media leads to self-censorship and a poor level of criticism, as well as promotion for the ruling parties. The media construction of ethno-national identities remains a high concern, especially the banalization of related hate speech and the spread of biased historical events, which can contribute to an exacerbation of the already polarised climate.

Nevertheless, many institutions and journalists contribute quality journalistic work

3. Retrieved 13.12.2021 from: [http://analitika.ba/sites/default/files/publikacije/jusic\\_and\\_ahmetasevic\\_-\\_rpp\\_bih\\_medassistance\\_31dec2013\\_final.pdf](http://analitika.ba/sites/default/files/publikacije/jusic_and_ahmetasevic_-_rpp_bih_medassistance_31dec2013_final.pdf)

within the territory in the interest of the citizens. The Sarajevo Media Centre releases several critical publications and media education courses, as well as ethics and conduct training, with the aim of fostering greater professionalism in the field of journalism. Independent and alternative media have played a major role in exposing significant key cases of corruption (BIRN), as well as presenting alternative and critical points of view (kosovotwopointzero.com, media.ba), mostly present online; they are often based on international donations. Fact Checking platforms are also providing important work, such as “Raskrinkavanje”. Their essential function is to monitor the global information stream in such a way as to distinguish between verified and erroneous information, or between propaganda and informing. Despite a significant improvement in the movement against disinformation and propaganda, such initiatives are faced with a variety of pressures. Indeed, in 2021, the team of Raskrinkavanje has received death threats for their publication, and journalists and editors are often subjected to intimidation and attack. An example is the independent journalist Nidžara Ahmetašević, who was insulted by police and threatened with prosecution when she filmed them arresting people on the move in Sarajevo, as well as Vanja Stokić, the editor-in-chief of the web platform eTrafika, who received a death threat for posting a photo of herself with two people on the move.

## RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The following section will present the results, which were elaborated based on the analysis of the data. As mentioned previously, the analysis of the data was organised according to the three periods with reference to five guiding questions. Furthermore, the interpretation is relatively open and iterative, also outlining some linguistic aspects. The quotes presented were selected based on their relevance to the discussion.

### ***First period: Europe and the migrant/refugees crisis***

In the first period, the data shows that migration is presented as an international concern, balanced between a humanitarian perspective for the displaced people and a security approach to the potential increase of arrivals to the country. The way migration is covered in this first period is more similar to the coverage of migration in the countries of the European Union at that time, which tended to consider the situation as a humanitarian crisis. On the other hand, it can be observed in this first period that some articles point to the possibility of a rapidly increasing number of people on the move arriving in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

## | 20 | Who speaks?

Considering the question of who is the dominant speaker in the articles, we can say that the main speakers are the politicians for both platforms, with 68.7% for Avaz and 53.95% for Nezavisne Novine. Taking a closer look reveals that it is, in particular, international politicians who are given a voice in the articles. The strong voice by international players is also represented in Nezavisne Novine through international press agencies (23.07%). The humanitarian voices are represented at the second and third position in Avaz, with UNHCR (31.25%) and local NGOs (25%). The representatives of NGOs (7.69%) and UNHCR (7.69%) appear as the second source of speakers for Nezavisne Novine.

	Avaz	Nezavisne Novine
<i>National politicians</i>	12.50%	7.7%
<i>International politicians</i>	56.25%	46.15%
<i>Experts</i>	6.25%	7.69%
<i>FRONTEX</i>	12.50%	0%
<i>Citizen</i>	6.25%	0%
<i>Local NGOs</i>	25%	7.09%
<i>International organisations</i>	31.35%	0%
<i>Presse agency</i>	12.25%	22.07%

### Legal Definition

	Avaz	Nezavisne Novine
<i>Migrant</i>	12.50%	7.7%
<i>Refugees</i>	56.25%	46.15%
<i>Asylum seeker</i>	6.25%	7.69%
<i>Immigrant</i>	12.50%	0%
<i>Illegal immigrant</i>	6.25%	0%

The dominant legal definition used to refer to people on the move in both publications was “migrant” (68.75% for Avaz and 46.15% for Nezavisne Novine). The term “illegal migrant” occurs second most often in Nezavisne Novine (30.76%), while it is never mentioned in Avaz. The term “refugees” is used in Avaz (25%) while never present in the Nezavisne Novine’s publication.

### Source country

Several countries of origin of the displaced persons were mentioned. Syria and Afghanistan were mentioned as countries of origin of people on the move in Nezavisne Novine (15.38% and 7.69%), as well as in Avaz (43.75% and 25%) are important. Africa comes as the third occurrence for Avaz (25%), while it is Pakistan (7.69%) for Nezavisne Novine. Nezavisne Novine presented 69.24% of undefined source countries.

### Gender

Both publications had a lack of information concerning gender, with 68.75% in Avaz and 69.23% for Nezavisne Novine. We observed that in Avaz ‘man’ or ‘group of men’ (18.25%) and ‘children’ (18,50%) were mentioned, while in Nezavisne Novine ‘man’ or ‘group of men’ (15,38%) were also mentioned, followed by ‘woman’ (7.69%).

### Political solution

The solutions presented by politicians in response to this issue vary but can be grouped under humanitarian or security solutions. Avaz presented a high range of humanitarian solutions that tend to be dominant, with 61.53%, while it was 38.46% for security answers. Among political solutions, strengthening and control of internal borders (between Republika Srpska and the Federation) was an often cited solution proposed by politicians. ‘Welcome initiatives’ were mostly representative of the humanitarian solutions proposed by politicians, such as opening citizen houses for people on the move or secure roads for people on the move. Nezavisne Novine tended to present security solutions, with 63.63%, mainly addressing the strengthening of the control, as well as possible closure, of the borders.

### Themes covered

From a broader perspective, the dominant theme mentioned in this first period in the articles was the level/number of immigrations for Avaz (75%) and Nezavisne Novine (53.84%), as well as the political solution (68.75% in Avaz and 46.15% in Nezavisne Novine). In third place of themes mentioned, Avaz tended to focus on human rights (43.75%), while most of the time, Nezavisne Novine presented people on the move illegally crossing the border (30.75%). Mortality figure appeared to be quite high in Avaz, with 31.25%, followed by refugees crossing the border illegally. Besides, Nezavisne Novine presented people on the move as a threat for security (23.10%).

## | 22 | Interpretation

According to the results, international politicians get the floor in most of the articles. This can be interpreted to mean that the two newspapers are thus highlighting the political importance of this issue and taking a stand on an international political concern.

	Avaz	Nezavisne Novine
<i>Immigration number</i>	75%	53.84%
<i>Political solutions</i>	68.75%	46.15%
<i>Human rights focus</i>	43.75%	30.75%
<i>Mortality figure</i>	31.25%	23.10%
<i>Threat to national security</i>	25%	15.40%
<i>Illegal border crossing</i>	25%	15.40%
<i>Smuggling</i>	12.5%	15.38%
<i>Threat to prosperity</i>	6.25%	7.69%
<i>Threat to culture</i>	0%	0%

It should be taken in consideration that at that time, the EU's borders weren't closed, which means that no increase of entries of people on the move had been recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While Italy, due to its geographical location, had already had a peak of entries of people on the move at the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina had only a few.

That the issue is mainly seen as an international political concern is also reflected in the fact that the articles mainly feature the UNHCR, and international organisations linked to the European focus at that time: the deadly sea crossings in the Mediterranean. Giving a voice to international organisations, such as UNHCR, seems to be a way for the journalists of *Nezavisne Novine* and *Avaz* to cover this issue from a humanitarian perspective.

As outlined above, this mainly international perspective on the issue is also reflected in the main topics covered in the articles. The key theme of the media coverage related to migration issues in this first period is the 'number of immigrants'. The prevailing narrative of immigrant numbers is often used to characterise the increasing number of people on the move crossing the Mediterranean and entering the neighbouring countries. In fact, many references focus on neighbouring countries, such as Serbia, Slovenia or Hungary, which already have a high number of entries of people on the move.

The increasing entries of people on the move in neighbouring countries is also seen as worrying by national politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The increasing entries in neighbouring countries was used to articulate a panel of solutions that our research identified as the second main theme covered in the articles. The analysis shows a balanced division between security and humanitarian solutions proposed by politicians.

Furthermore, we can see a difference between *Avaz* and *Nezavisne Novine* in the general treatment of the issue: while *Avaz* put an emphasis on human rights, *Nezavisne Novine's* articles mainly deal with the problem of illegal border crossing by people on the move. This is also related to the fact that *Avaz* used the term "refugees" for most of this period, while *Nezavisne Novine* used "illegal immigrants".

### ***Second period: the migrant/refugee crisis in The Balkans***

In the second period (2018), Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced a high number of arrivals due to the closure of borders by European Union countries. When the structures and the reception centre for people on the move were overwhelmed with the situation, thousands of displaced people were forced to live on the streets. The data generally reveals a sensationalist tone in the articles on the migration issue, for example, "*Mektic: 50,000 migrants are invading BiH*"<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, the portrayal of the issue took on negative overtones, both in terms of the consequences of migration for the country and the portrayal of the people on the move. Thus, in numerous articles, people on the move were attributed animal-like behaviour (e.g. they hide, they are visible only in the night). Besides, in the articles, xenophobia and fear of the people on the move were spread.

4. Retrieved 13.12.2021 from <https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/Mektic-50000-migranata-na-dire-ka-BiH/477403>.

## | 24 | Who speaks?

Considering the question of who is the dominant speaker in the articles, it seemed that national politicians tended to have a dominant voice in the articles of *Avaz* (36.76%), as well as *Nezavisne Novine* (45.83%). Police representatives in *Avaz* (13.23%) and *Nezavisne Novine* (25%) came second, playing an important role in the articles published in this second period.

	<b>Avaz</b>	<b>Nezavisne Novine</b>
<i>National politicians</i>	26.47%	45.83%
<i>International politicians</i>	4.41%	4.10%
<i>Citizen</i>	10.29%	4.10%
<i>International organisations</i>	5.88%	8%
<i>Press agency</i>	10.29%	4.10%
<i>Local NGOs</i>	7,35%	0%
<i>Representatives of police</i>	13,23%	25%
<i>Justice and law</i>	0%	0%
<i>Religious institutions</i>	2.4%	0%
<i>Displaced people</i>	4.1%	4.10%
<i>FRONTEX</i>	1.47%	0%



### Source country

Afghanistan (13.23%), the Maghreb (11.76%) and Syria (11,79%) were the most frequently mentioned countries of origin of people on the move arriving in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We observed that a constellation of people of different countries of origin, reaching 29.40%, were named under 'Other'.

	Avaz	Nezavisne Novine
<i>Afghanistan</i>	13.23%	8.33%
<i>Syria</i>	11.76%	12.50%
<i>Algeria</i>	11.76%	0%
<i>Libya</i>	10.9%	0%
<i>Africa</i>	14.41%	4.16%

### Legal Definition

The dominant term used in this second period is 'migrant', for both Avaz (66.17%) and Nezavisne Novine (66.66%). "Illegal migrants" were mentioned second most often in Avaz (16.17%) and Nezavisne Novine (29.16%), followed by the term 'refugees' (11.76%) in Avaz, while the legal definition 'asylum seeker' is used only once in Nezavisne Novine and Avaz.

### Gender

The non-representation of gender in the article is most pronounced in Nezavisne Novine, with 79.16%, while in Avaz it reaches 66.17%. "Men" are represented in 17.64% of the articles in Avaz.

### Themes covered

In terms of topics, Avaz reported more often on the 'number of migrants' (33.82%), stories about people on the move crossing the borders illegally (25%) and stories about crimes conducted by people on the move (17.64%). In Nezavisne Novine, the topic of 'illegal border crossing' is mentioned most often (50%), followed by 'number of migrants' (45.83%) and the portrayal of the political debate on migration (33.33%), while in Avaz it is 17,64%. The theme of 'threat' is also presented in articles from both newspapers. In Avaz, several stories are about the portrayal of refugees as a threat to national security (13.23%), prosperity (13.23%) and culture (4.41%). In Nezavisne Novine, the threat to national security (25%) is mentioned, as well as to prosperity (12.50%) and culture

| 26 | (12.50%). In *Nezavisne Novine* (11.76%) and *Avaz* (12.50%), it was mentioned that people on the move have a potential for spreading diseases and infections. Only a small number of articles reported positive stories about the people on the move, and in *Nezavisne Novine* there were no articles at all. Human rights were mentioned in 2.4% of *Nezavisne Novine* articles and 13.23% in articles of *Avaz*.

	<b>Avaz</b>	<b>Nezavisne Novine</b>
<i>Immigration number</i>	33.82%	45.83%
<i>Human rights focus</i>	13.23%	2.40%
<i>Mortality figure</i>	10.29%	0%
<i>Threat to national security</i>	13.23%	25%
<i>Illegal border crossing</i>	25%	50%
<i>Smuggling</i>	7.35%	16.66%
<i>Threat to prosperity</i>	4.41%	12.50%
<i>Problematic</i>	29.41%	45.83%
<i>Threat to culture</i>	13.23%	12.50%
<i>Crime/criminal stories</i>	17.64%	25%
<i>Disease/infections</i>	11.76%	12.50%
<i>Political debate</i>	17.64%	33.33%
<i>Positive stories</i>	2.94%	0%

### **Interpretation**

The results of the analysis for the second period have presented a shift in the way migration has been addressed by the media. As we can see from the results, in this second period, national politicians mainly get the floor. This shift in focus from international politicians to national politicians can be interpreted as a result of migration increasingly being a national concern. This is understandable, as the sample covers the

period in which Bosnia and Herzegovina recorded a high number of entries of people on the move into the country due to the closure of the Balkan Route.

A look at the data shows that the national political debate revolves around the question of who is responsible for the care of migrants, an issue that reinforces already existing political conflict between the two political entities, the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this second period, migration is presented by the media not only as a political problem, but also as a security problem for the area, where police representatives often feature in the articles.

The result also underlines the journalistic construction of the people on the move as a relevant 'other' in reference to negative characteristics. By also associating the people on the move with criminality, and thus not only being circumscribed purely as 'other', they also can be presented as a threat to the national population.

They were often portrayed as dangerous offenders; in numerous articles, people on the move were portrayed as men committing sexual assaults on women or physical violence against citizens, and the articles also reported on people on the move who were stealing money. An example: Gordana Bosiljčić, the prosecutor of the Prosecutor's Office of BiH, claimed to *Nezavisne Novine* that she was robbed in the centre of Sarajevo on a Saturday night by a migrant<sup>5</sup>.

*A group of young men surrounded a stranger and stole his wallet. The shocked stranger tried to get rid of them, but they followed him, asking for more money. They shouted at him and followed him for almost half a kilometre<sup>6</sup>.*

They are described as uncivilised people who sell humanitarian donations for money and lie drunk in the streets. The portrayal of people on the move as barbarians or sexual predators is part of the stereotypical portrayal of the people on the move that evokes fear and anxiety and creates the image of a 'dangerous other', in perspective with an 'us' that needs to be protected, namely the victim - the citizens.

This idea of protecting citizens is underlined by the portrayal of people on the move as a threat. Especially in political discourse, people on the move are associated with terrorism, fraud and threats to the well-being of the social order. Through the construction of a 'dangerous other', this pattern also tends to form a common enemy.

*Dodik said: "We will take all measures to protect property and people. He recalled that the borders were previously closed by Hungary and Croatia and called on the Bosnia and Herzegovina level to do the same".<sup>7</sup>*

Through the construction of a 'dangerous Other', this pattern also tends to form a common enemy.

5. Retrieved 13.12.2021 from <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/378164/migrant-opljackao-tuziteljicu-gordanu-bosiljic-u-centru-sarajeva>.

6. Retrieved 13.12.2021 <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/375453/dramaticno-u-centru-sarajeva-migranti-tuku-i-pljackaju>.

7. Retrieved 13.12.2021 from <https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/Srpska-od-BiH-trazi-da-zastiti-granicu-od-migranata/478201>.

## | 28 | **Third period: the criminalisation of migration**

The analysis of the third period reveals a general media coverage of sensational news and crime stories, and tends to portray the displaced people as scapegoats. The high degree of plasticity of the negative portrayal is striking, by adapting negative discourse according to the context. As observed with the pandemic situation, people on the move have been presented as a “Covid bomb”. In the articles, different nuances of the threat people on the move pose for Bosnia and Herzegovina are highlighted. Depicted as devoid of civic mindedness, dangerous and violent, they are also presented as Covid-19 super spreaders.

### **Who speaks?**

Considering the question of who is the dominant speaker in the articles, in the articles published by Avaz, police representatives are the dominant speakers (29.26%), followed by justice and law (12.19%) and local politicians (12.19%). In the articles published by Nezavisne Novine during this third period, local politicians dominate, with 55.55%, followed by the representatives of the police (22.22%).

	<b>Avaz</b>	<b>Nezavisne Novine</b>
<i>National politicians</i>	17.06%	55.55%
<i>Citizen</i>	2.4%	0%
<i>International organisations</i>	31.35%	0%
<i>Press agency</i>	12.19%	22.22%
<i>Representatives of police</i>	29.26%	22.22%
<i>Justice and law</i>	12.19%	0%
<i>Religious institutions</i>	2.4%	0%

### Source country

	Avaz	Nezavisne Novine
<i>Afghanistan</i>	14.63%	11.11%
<i>Maghreb</i>	14.63%	0%
<i>Pakistan</i>	9.75%	0%
<i>Somalia</i>	4.87%	0%

In this third period, Afghanistan is mentioned in the majority of the articles as the country of origin of the people on the move. Syria is never mentioned. Avaz also mentioned Maghreb (14.63%) and Pakistan (9.75%) as a country of origin in the articles. Interestingly, most articles published by Nezavisne Novine do not mention the country of origin of the people on the move.

### Legal definition

In both newspapers, the term ‘migrant’ is generally found, with 68.29% in the articles of Avaz, whereas in the articles of Nezavisne Novine the term is constantly used. Other mentions of the legal definition were found in articles of Avaz, such as ‘illegal migrant’, with 7.31%, and ‘refugees’, with 2.43%.

	Avaz	Nezavisne Novine
<i>Migrant</i>	90.26%	100%
<i>Asylum seeker</i>	2.43%	0%
<i>Illegal immigrant</i>	7.31%	0%

### Themes covered

The analysis reveals a dominance of the theme “crime” constantly in link with people on the move throughout the articles from Avaz (36.58%) and Nezavisne Novine (44.44%). The number of “immigrants figures” (24.39%) took up a large part of the publication in Avaz, followed by news about ‘smugglers’ (17.07%). In Avaz and Nezavisne Novine the issue of “illegal border crossing” took up 22.22%. News about the number of illegal immigrants and the number of deaths was also found in articles published by Nezavisne Novine. The topic of human rights was only presented to a small extent, with 9.75% for Nezavisne Novine and 11.11% for Avaz.

| 30 | **Solutions**

	<b>Avaz</b>	<b>Nezavisne Novine</b>
<i>Immigration number</i>	24.39%	11.10%
<i>Human rights focus</i>	9.75%	11.11%
<i>Mortality figure</i>	12.19%	11.10%
<i>Threat to national security</i>	2.4%	0%
<i>Illegal border crossing</i>	12,20%	22,22%
<i>Smuggling</i>	17,07%	11,11%
<i>Threat to prosperity</i>	4,80%	0%
<i>Problematic</i>	7,31%	11,11%
<i>Threat to culture</i>	0%	0%

Compared to the published humanitarian solutions for the migration issue in articles by Avaz, no solutions were mentioned in the articles published by Nezavisne Novine. However, it is important to note that security solutions are also discussed in articles published by Avaz, especially with regard to the camps for people on the move and a possible internal restriction of migrations, through a restrictive border control.

### **Gender**

Articles in the two newspapers generally do not mention the gender of the people on the move during this third period. The few cases where gender is mentioned, the people on the move are referred to as men or groups of men (12.9%), followed by children (14.63%) and women or groups of women (7.31%).

### **Interpretation**

In the context of the third period, migration is generally presented by the newspapers as a national political and security concern, which becomes evident through the dominant speakers, principally 'national politicians', as well as 'representatives of the police' or 'justice and law'. In fact, the study shows the judicialization and securitisation of the migration issue in this third period.

The theme of 'crime and criminality' is prevalent in this sample. The analysis shows, in a majority of the articles, people on the move were portrayed as dangerous individuals who constantly stage aggression against citizens, often without a motive. People on the move were mainly described as male, and were portrayed as criminal, violent and dangerous.

Like the origin of the people on the move and the reasons for migration, no representative picture of the people on the move is drawn in terms of gender; for example "[a] larger group of migrants arrived from Sarajevo"; "[t]he streets of Bihać are full of migrants" and "dozens of migrants passed through Banja Luka last night". These general descriptions make it difficult to see people on the move as individuals with their own stories.

As further highlighted by the analysis, illegal border crossing was an important topic discussed by the media in this third period. In the articles, people on the move were described as crossing borders illegally and being stopped or arrested by the police. The journalists described how the police discover "migrants" under cars and in old houses, or depict people on the move as hiding all the time and only coming out at night; in some publications, people on the move were only depicted as animals, with documentary descriptions of them crossing a field or sleeping in a garden.

## DISCUSSION

This part discusses some of the main findings of the analysis of the articles. Five central aspects will be addressed: 1) the use of legal definitions referring to people on the move, 2) the number of people on the move, 3) threat, crime and violence, 4) the security aspect, and 5) the missing voice of migrants in the media coverage.

### Legal definition

'Migrant', 'illegal migrant', 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' are legal categorisations based on official definitions. The legal definition of people on the move provides valuable clues as to the reason for their arrival. Furthermore, the type of definition used also has an influence on the way people on the move are received and perceived in a country. In the sample, both journalists and politicians quoted in the articles tended to refer to displaced people as 'migrant', with the main problem being that some equate the term with 'illegal migrant' and do not seem to take into account the different meanings of the terms.

There is no formal definition of the term 'migrant', but in this context journalists use the term to refer to someone who changes their country of habitual residence by their own choice in order to improve their economic situation. This is reinforced by the fact that journalists referred to countries such as Algeria, Morocco or Pakistan as the country of origin of people on the move, countries that are not affected by war.

The use of the term ‘illegal migrant’ is not correct in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, nor is the use of this term recommended by UNHCR. The term ‘illegal immigrant’ reinforces prejudices with regard to people on the move. The term falsely suggests that these people would lose all their rights by leaving their country. This is incorrect, as people on the move are specifically protected by national and international law, including access to fair trials, the possibility to apply for asylum and the right not to be arbitrarily detained.

This widespread misuse of legal terms in the articles is one of the main points that contributes to casting people on the move in a negative light, and thus, as a consequence, leads to a negative perception and reception of these people. A conscious use of legal terms is therefore a central aspect of making reporting on people on the move as objective as possible.

### **Numbers relating to immigration**

*Milorad Dodik said that in BiH migrants can cause long-term consequences, i.e. affect the population structure in this area<sup>8</sup>.*

Throughout the publications, the number of people of the move was often presented as increasing, without any comparison or contextualisation. The research has shown that immigration numbers are used as a tool to refer to a potential ‘invasion’. This supposed ‘invasion’ is an idea prevalent in nationalist ideology. This idea assumes that the white and European population will be replaced by Muslim immigrants, Africans and Arabs. It is also part of the theory of ‘great replacement’ developed by the French writer Renaud Camus, who is close to the far-right movement.

### **Threat, crime and violence**

*Some people who came to Western Europe via the Balkan route committed terrorist acts in France, and there is information that there are people in migrant groups who were members of terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq<sup>9</sup>.*

An important trend that can be observed, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is the construction of refugees as a ‘threat’. This narrative is mainly disseminated through political discourse and underlined by an editorial sensationalist strategy.

This narrative of threat emerged especially in the second period, when Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced the first peak of entry of people on the move to its territory. From then on, numerous politicians quoted in the articles have associated the issue of people on the move and migration with terms such as invasion, terrorism and violence.

The third period of interest for this study showed how this narrative of threat is not

8. Retrieved 13.12.2021 from <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/379562/dodik-bosnjacima-odgovaraju-migranti-jer-su-iste-vjere>.

9. Retrieved 13.12.2021 from <https://avaz.ba/kantoni/republika-srpska/378166/policija-republike-srpske-do-sa-da-privela-650-migranata>.



only maintained but adapted to the current circumstances. During the period when the pandemic became a dominant theme, people on the move were suddenly considered dangerous because they represented a potential spread of Covid-19.

The narrative of threat helps to spread fear and xenophobia among the population. Consequently there is a defensive action to protect the population of the country from this threat. This is part of the construction of the scapegoat figure. Scapegoating a population has been a common strategy throughout history, used by various authorities to find a culprit for certain social, economic or political problems.

### **Security Perspective**

While in the first period people on the move and migration were considered from both a human and a security perspective, a security narrative dominates in the second and third periods. The report shows that the articles analysed tended to emphasise the prevalence of political solutions proposed in relation to security and border restrictions. The security aspect was also present in most articles through the portrayal of people on the move arrested in different parts of the country and the portrayal of people on the move as a threat. By portraying the migration issue as problematic and people on the move as criminals, the media contribute actively to the idea of an 'us' that needs to be protected from a 'dangerous other'.

### **Voiceless**

Even though people on the move are the object of interest in the articles, they rarely get to speak about themselves. They only exist through stories that others tell, which are mainly negative stories about crimes they seem to be involved in. As the findings show, in the articles people on the move do not have the opportunity to talk about their own experiences, stories and concerns. And apart from not having their own voice in the majority of the articles, it seems that they are denied the existence of a personality of their own, as often neither their gender, origin nor the exact reason for migration is mentioned.

## **SECOND CASE: CROATIA**

### **CONTEXT**

#### *Migration in Croatia*

**T**he decision by the Hungarian government to close the borders and erect fences with Serbia to block the passage of refugees and migrants, as well as the threat of three years' imprisonment for crossing the border illegally, was a clear message toward the EU, as well as people on the move. On 16 September 2015, the closure of the Hungarian border announced the starting point of the refugee crisis in Croatia. Indeed, the mechanism of the Balkans Route closure started. Tens of thousands of people were redirected to Croatia and Slovenia towards Austria. Between January and December 31, 2015, the Republic of Croatia recorded 658,068 people on the move at the state border, with a peak of 11,000 entries in one day. Croatia remained a transit country according to a low level of asylum request for the number of entries transforming these countries as new transit routes for people fleeing war, persecution and poverty.

As a European Union Member State, Croatia is leading the way by providing humane reception conditions for asylum seekers and opening reception centres such as the Opatovac reception centre, which opened early after the peak to accommodate 4000–5000 people. On November 3, the Winter Reception and a Transit Centre opened in Slavonski Brod, which could host 5000 people, as well as providing organised care for people in transit. Services included restoring family links, health protection and emergency treatment, and protection and care for the unaccompanied and separated children. In Croatia, the Ministry of the Interior runs the reception centres for asylum seekers in Zagreb and Kutina and is responsible for providing services through non-governmental organisations. Currently the MOI has contracts with the Croatian Red Cross and Médecins du Monde.

Following the events of 2016, Croatia was urged by the EU to implement the Eurodac Regulation<sup>10</sup>, which is the EU's asylum fingerprint database and the transmission of requisite data to the Eurodac Central System within 72 hours. By the geo-localisation as the last country before the exterior border of the EU, Croatia has experienced numerous countries sending back asylum seekers to their territory as a consequence of this regulation. This led the Croatian government, on 18 November 2016, to only let migrants from war-torn Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan pass. Croatia showed a humani-

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10. <https://www.thalesgroup.com/en/markets/digital-identity-and-security/government/customer-cases/eurodac>

tarian response at the beginning of the crisis, providing food, temporary shelter and medical assistance, as well as the constant presence of the first minister in the field. But since the beginning of 2016, many organizations, such as Border Violence, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have documented collective expulsions from Croatia to Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with serious allegation of violence, illegal push back and torture. Indeed, those reports reveal how individuals or groups of people on the move have been repeatedly bound, brutally beaten and tortured by Croatian officers, who most of the time confiscate or break their phones and personal items, including money. Not only are these actions illegal, push-backs can also be fatal, as was recognized by the ECHR<sup>11</sup>, which confirmed that Croatia is guilty of the death of a little girl: Medina Hussein.

Instead of providing security for a girl who was forced to leave Afghanistan with her family, the Croatian police illegally expelled Medina's mother, brothers and sisters in the middle of the night. Shortly after the pushback, little Medina was hit by a train.

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11. <https://www.euronews.com/2021/11/18/europe-rights-court-slams-croatia-on-afghan-family-pushback>

## | 36 | Media landscape in Croatia

Croatia's media system has been shaped by important historical political events, such as independence, war and membership of the European Union. The Croatian media system is characterised by a weak market and low engagement.

The media landscape is composed of 800 registered print publications, which includes nine dailies and nine weekly newspapers. The most important media in terms of audience are *24 sata*, *Jutarnji list*, *Večernji list* and *Slobodna Dalmacija*. *Jutarnji List* is a semi-tabloid owned by the Croatian company Hanza Media, with liberal socio-political and economic values (Car and Bukvic, 2014). Created after the independence of Croatia, *Jutarnji* is the second biggest daily newspaper of the country. *Jutarnji List* is part of the main Croatian press group, Hanza Media, which includes the influential Croatian weekly *Globus*, the largest local daily *Slobodna Dalmacija*, as well as several press titles. *24sata* is a tabloid with conservative values. Founded in 2005, it quickly established itself as one of the most widely read Croatian dailies after *Jutarnji list* and *Večernji list*. With two million individual visitors per month, the site is the most visited in the country; two out of three Croats consult it daily. Six of the radio stations are nationally licensed and 152 are local and regional, 4 of which are part of the HRT - Croatian Radio Television. The television landscape is composed of 10 national channels and 21 local and regional ones. The main television station, HRT, is part of Croatian Radio Television, and it is a state-owned broadcast.

In spite of numerous regulation structures and legislation, such as the law on media, the law on electronic media and the Croatian Radio Television Law on the Right to Access Information, as well as the EU laws as part of the process of EU accession, the damage to the freedom of the press and journalists continues unabated. Indeed, the attacks on the freedom of the press are strong and find their cause not only in a strong political parallelism but also due to the strong self-censorship caused by the gagging of all journalists with the gagging trials and the different threats that they are subjected to.

When the Covid-19 pandemic affected the whole world, the financial crisis in the Croatian media worsened. Indeed, freelance reporters have not been supported by the state during this crisis. A survey has shown that 30% of these freelancers became unemployed during the first months of the crisis as well as a considerable drop in their revenues. In addition to economic violence, Croatian journalists also face other types of violence, both physical and psychological. Indeed, journalists working on corruption, organised crime or war crimes, or denouncing the working conditions in the state broadcast domain, face lawsuits, physical attacks, threats and cyber-violence. The European Federation of Journalists has warned that such lawsuits have had a chilling effect on journalists and the media.

## RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The following part will present the results, elaborated and based on the analysis of the data. The data analysed pertains to all articles published in the period of September 2021 on two online portals: *24 sata* and *Jutarnji*. As mentioned previously the current analysis has been guided by five questions.

In contemporary research, the data shows that migration is presented as an international concern. The focus was on three different events: the Taliban takeover of Kabul and the potential movement of Afghan refugees into Europe; the problems at the Belarusian/Polish border; and finally, the Haitian population seeking asylum in the US. In each situation, the publications of both media have shown a security approach, presented negative aspects of migration and presented solutions based on restriction on the borders, namely closure and/or erection of fences. On the other hand, our research also presented a humanitarian concern for the respect of the dignity of the individual.

### Who speaks?

Considering the question of who is the dominant speaker in the articles, we can surely say that the most dominant speaker for both portal publications was international politicians for both *24 sata* ( 53.33%) and *Jutarnji* ( 23.07%). *24 sata*'s second most important speaker was national politicians (16.66%) as the mention of Press agency (16.66%). International organisations were mentioned, with 10%. *Jutarnji* presented the voice of refugees (15.38%), which did not exist in *24 sata*. The international organisation's presence was also more significant in the publication of *Jutarnji* than *24 sata*.

### Themes Covered

Considering the question of what are the main themes that were covered in the articles, the analysis reveals that *24 Sata* wrote more often on themes related to immigration numbers, threats to national security and crossing illegally. This was followed by human right concerns (26.66%), political weapons, mortality figures and crime/criminality (13.33%). *Jutarnji* presented a similar interest for thematic focusing on immigration numbers (30.79%), as well as human rights concerns (30.79%) followed by national security (23.07%). Also, there were some mention of themes relative to crossing borders illegally (15.38%) and political weapons (11.53%). Positive portrayal of refugees was found among the publications, with 7.69%, as well as crime-/criminality and smuggling.

### Legal Definition

While considering the question of what legal definitions were used in the articles to describe people on the move, the publications analysed in the present study showed that in both media platforms using the legal definition "migrant" to name the people

| 38 | on the move is dominant, with 50% for 24sata and 38.46% for *Jutarnji*'s publications. *Jutarnji* used the term illegal migrant more often (19.23%) than 24Sata (10%). The term "refugee" is also low for 24 sata (10%) as well as *Jutarnji* (11.53%).

### Gender

Considering the question of gender with regard to people on the move mentioned in the articles, the analysis underlines that most of the time the lack of gender mentioned reached 70.01% in 24Sata and 73.09% in *Jutarnji*. Considering the presence of gender in both publications, women were most present, as well as children in 24 sata (13.33%) and *Jutarnji* (7.69%). This was followed by a low mention of men (3.33% for 24sata and 7.69% for *Jutarnji*).

### Source Country

While considering the question of the source country of the people on the move mentioned in the publication, we can say that Afghanistan seems the most mentioned country, with 26.66% for 24 sata and 15.38% for *Jutarnji*. It is followed in second position by Syria in 24sata (10%), as well as in *Jutarnji* (7.69%). Haiti is surprisingly the third occurrence for both publications. We observed that a listing of various source countries is represented as one shot mention, such as Pakistan, Somalia, Algeria and Morocco. But for both publications, the source country is not mentioned 50% of the time.

	24 sata	Jutarnji
<i>National politician</i>	53.33%	23.07%
<i>National politician</i>	16.66%	0%
<i>Press agency</i>	16.66%	7.69%
<i>Journalist</i>	10%	15.38%
<i>International organisation</i>	10%	15.38%
<i>Religious institutions</i>	6.66%	7.69%
<i>Representative of the police</i>	6.66%	3.84%
<i>Frontex</i>	3.33%	0%
<i>Refugees voice</i>	0%	15.38%
<i>Justice and law</i>	0%	0%

## Reason for migration

With regard to the reason for migration being mentioned in the articles, we observed that more often the publications are not mentioning any reason for departure. Nevertheless, 6.66% of 24sata's articles mention a key reason why the people on the move are pushed to migration, while in *Jutarnji* mention of a reason reach 19.32%. Both media outlets presented similar reasons for the departure, such as "war in the source country" or "difficulties in the origin country", but most of the time there is no more complex development of the explanations.

## Solution

According to the question of what solutions are proposed being discussed in the articles, we can easily answer that the panel of solutions discussed focus predominantly on securitisation, compared to a humanitarian or welcoming solution. The most frequent securitisation solution discussed through the publications analysed showed

	24 sata	Jutarnji
<i>Immigration number</i>	30%	30.79%
<i>Threat to national security</i>	30%	23.07%
<i>Crossing illegally</i>	30%	15.38%
<i>Human rights concern</i>	26.66%	30.76%
<i>Problematic</i>	16.66%	0%
<i>Political weapon</i>	13.33%	11.53%
<i>Mortality figure</i>	13.33%	3.84%
<i>Crime/criminal</i>	13.33%	7.69%
<i>Smuggling</i>	10%	7.69%
<i>Political debate</i>	10%	11.53%
<i>Positive portrayal</i>	3.33%	0%
<i>Threat to culture</i>	3.33%	3.84%
<i>Health care</i>	0%	0%

| 40 | a stark occurrence of “build fences”, “closing the border”, “state emergency”, “remigration”, “strengthening the border controls” and “prepare the army”. One mention of supporting refugees in the transit country was found, as well as two mentions of supporting initiatives in their country.

## DISCUSSION

First of all, the section concerning the main speaker shows that “international politicians” are dominantly represented in both platforms, according to our analysis. International politicians are dominantly represented in the media coverage to

	24 sata	Jutarnji
<i>Migrant</i>	50%	38.46%
<i>Illegal immigrant</i>	10%	19.23%
<i>Refugee</i>	10%	11.53%
<i>Alien</i>	3.33%	3.84%
<i>Immigrant</i>	3.33%	0%
<i>Person</i>	3.33%	7.69%

provide different statements, points of view and perspectives concerning migration issues. This choice of main speaker shows that migration is an international concern. Indeed, focusing on three different events – the Taliban takeover of Kabul and the potential movement of Afghan refugees into Europe, the conflict at the Belarusian/Polish border and the Haitian population seeking asylum in the US – the frame is delimited; migration coverage is presented only through great external and international crises. The second point of our analysis presented in the section “solutions” has underlined the global securitisation approach used through the media frame in Croatia. Indeed,

	24 sata	Jutarnji
<i>Unknown</i>	70.01%	73.09%
<i>Woman</i>	13.33%	7.69%
<i>Child</i>	10%	7.69%



	<b>24 sata</b>	<b>Jutarnji</b>
<i>Man</i>	3.33%	7.69%
<i>Group of women</i>	0%	0%
<i>Mixed group</i>	0%	0%
<i>Family</i>	0%	3.84%
<i>Immigrant</i>	3.33%	0%
<i>Person</i>	3.33%	7.69%

the solutions analysed through the different publications are framed around: restriction on the borders, closure of the border or erection of fences to prevent migration; on the other hand, there was some nuance in those publications, with a mention of humanitarian concerns. Journalists have presented, in each situation, concern for the treatment of people on the move at the border by focusing on the respect of human rights.

The most important aspect that the study underlines is undoubtedly the exclusion or “making invisible” of people on the move through the media representation. This “invisibilization” of people on the move in the media can result in a state of inexistence

	<b>24 sata</b>	<b>Jutarnji</b>
<i>Afghan</i>	26.66%	15.38%
<i>Syrian</i>	10%	7.69%
<i>Haiti</i>	10%	7.69%
<i>Africa</i>	3.33%	3.84%
<i>Somalia</i>	3.33%	0%
<i>Pakistan</i>	3.33%	0%

with regard to this population in the public sphere. Indeed, voices of people on the move are rarely heard, as the section "who speaks" has shown. It means that people on the move are constantly presented in those publications without any substantial sense of "existing". They cannot explain the reason for their presence and discuss their condition of subsistence, or provide information concerning their own stories. Moreover, the section "gender" has also shown the "invisibilization" of their gender: they are not women, men, children or even a family, as they are constantly represented, as underlined in the section "themes covered", through a number or figure, as well as the term 'migrant'. Following the "invisibilisation" of the subject, the study highlighted the deficit of knowledge regarding people on the move as a human subject. Indeed, there is limited mention of the source country, reason for departure, stories and gender. This invisibility can also be interpreted as a process of dehumanising the subject by denying any human aspect. Moreover, by associating the theme of migration with a constant negative connotation, as represented in the section "themes covered", such publications discourage empathy towards a population and amplify the exclusion of a minority. This dehumanisation is in line with the theme of creating an 'us' and an 'other' that is found in other European media studies. Secondly, the current study highlighted the combination of migration issues with negative themes. For example, the current study showed the number of parallels between migration – from the Middle East, Africa or Asia – and terrorism. Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic Radman said in Brdo, near Kranj, that it is necessary to prevent the wave of migrants from Afghanistan and that EU Members States must cooperate more strongly in the fight against terrorism. Or in this extract from an article from our analysis: "Poland: extremist content found on migrants' mobile phones". Another point, underlining the reference of people on the move through the metaphor of water to infer an invasion and a cataclysm as we could be observed in another extract from an article of our analysis: "We expect millions of Afghans to come to Europe. We will not avoid a new wave". There is also a strong narrative of migration linked to crime and smuggling, as well as being a threat. The results also underline the journalistic construction of the people on the move as a relevant 'other', with reference to negative characteristics, and by associating the people on the move with terrorism or threats to national security. Through the construction of a 'dangerous other', this pattern also tends to form the portrayal of the common enemy.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to shed light on the nature of media coverage on migration issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. For this purpose, a total number of 220 online articles from two newspapers in each of the two countries along three different periods (08/2015, 04/2018, 04/2021) were analysed.

The analysis was guided by seven main questions related to the identity of people on the move, such as the reasons for departure and the country of departure, as well as their gender. It also looked at which legal terms were used in the articles to refer to people on the move, which people played the main role in the articles and which main issues were addressed in the articles in relation to migration.

The research indicates that coverage was mostly characterised by a negative portrayal of migration and people on the move, especially in the second and third periods. In the articles, there are different narratives used to draw a line between “us” and “them”, to draw a line between the people on the move and the citizens. These barriers demarcate the “us”, the citizens and the territory, from “them” by emphasising the differences in values, and also in appearance. This social and political exclusion can be summarised as a process of othering (Triandafyllidou 2001: 75). The concept of othering introduced by Holliday (2010) underlines the negative aspect of a delimitation process. By excluding the “other”, the out-group becomes different from, and incompatible with, the in-group (Triandafyllidou 2001: 75). Following Holliday (2010), the process of delimitation is a construction, or imagination, of a demonised image of “them”. This demonised “other” supports an idealised image of “us” (Holliday 2010: 69). In fact, this study shows very well how people on the move are described as uncivilised and criminal, or illegal, violent and dangerous, and constructed as the figure of the scapegoat or threat. This reinforces the idea of an “us” against ‘them’ by associating the people on the move with a constant narrative relative to criminality, as well as a threat to the country’s population, health and culture. Furthermore, people on the move are represented as dangerous criminals, barbarians and uncivilised. This negative portrayal of people on the move evokes fear and anxiety and creates the image of a “dangerous other” – the people on the move – in opposition to an “us” – the citizens – that need to be protected. This technique is indeed a tried and tested tactic to mobilise a constituency, or a group, while blaming social, security or economic problems on the “others”.

Besides, the research has also shown that a significant lack of contextualisation, such as information about the background of the people on the move, the reason for their migration or any identifying keys such as social situation, work or details of stories, tends to erase any possibility of empathy between the audience and the people on the move, and instead increases public concern. This point can also show how journalists work in these media outlets. Working on such issues requires a certain level of

| 44 | knowledge and sensitivity for the topic, as well as the use of appropriate vocabulary and the development of the stories accordingly.

Further, the analysis shows how media coverage tended to confirm political discourse and support political propaganda against migrants. This can be attributed, in particular, to a lack of critical classification or objectivity in the reporting. This result is not surprising in the sense that, as mentioned in the introduction, not only the newspapers analysed but also many other media outlets are heavily influenced by politics.

This research does not claim to be exhaustive, but it represents an important starting point for an in-depth study on the nature of media coverage on migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The research raises several questions related to the treatment of information about people on the move in the so-called mainstream media. Besides, it would be interesting to also observe the media treatment of the same topic in the independent media sphere, in order to analyse whether and how, for example, the funding methods of the media have an impact on the reporting on migration. But also, to take a closer look at what impact the existing coverage can effectively have on the behaviour in society and the perception of the general population of people on the move.

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