

Media Reception and Ideas on Media Integration among Turkish, Italian and Russo-German Migrants in Germany

This article is a small part, a fragment, of the work from an extensive research project on the role of the media in the integration of migrants. This project is being conducted by a team of sociologists and communications scholars at the Universities of Siegen and Dortmund. The project's title is: Media Integration of Ethnic Minorities. With regard to both analytical and normative considerations, the fundamental concept behind our inquiry is "media integration". After the description of this concept we will present some empirical findings on the media use of Turkish, Italian and Russo-German migrants and on the issue of which views these migrants hold with respect to certain aspects of media integration.

1. Key Concepts: Integration and Media Integration

1.1 What is Integration? Intercultural Integration: a Middle Course between Assimilation and Segregation

Any attempt to systematically clarify the role of the mass media in integration will first have to concern itself with the fundamental conception of 'integration'. What does the 'integration' of 'migrants' actually mean? Anyone doing work on this theme will quickly discover that 'integration' is a distinctly complex, multilayered concept subject to contradictory interpretations. At the outset, the concept of integration is of a double-sided nature: it is an analytical and systematic concept on the one hand, yet at the same time also a normative political concept. Not only is integration an instrument of scientific analysis, but the concept also always entails desirable goals, desirable developments, and a desirable final state. Thus, anyone doing academic research on integration is always – intentionally or not – in the midst of a political debate. (In this sense, for instance, concepts such as 'integration policy' or 'integration spokesperson' have become more and more widespread on the German political scene in recent years, even though for more than two decades concepts such as 'policy on foreigners' and 'commissioner for foreigners' had been used exclusively.) In light of its political implications, it is no surprise that the concept is very controversial – both in politics and in the academic disciplines (Geißler 2004).

Up to this point, an *assimilative* version of integration has been predominant in German research on migration. Here, integration is equated with assimilation. In his expert's report for the independent committee on immigration established by the national government (*Süßmuth-Kommission*), Hartmut Esser (2001) asserts, "Social integration into the accommodating society is [...] actually *only* possible in the form of *assimilation*" (emphasis in the original). For Esser, the opposite pole to integration (in the sense of assimilation) is the *segregation* of migrants – a simple juxtaposition of majority and minorities, a state of mutual isolation that leads to an 'ethnic class' (or, more precisely, an ethnic 'lower class'). In this view, segregated and thus excluded groups are not able to participate appropriately in the social life of the core society. For this theory of integration, an integration into the social structure – i.e., equal opportunities in the educational system, on the labor market, and in access to significant institutions (e.g., access to mass media) – can only succeed if minorities become culturally assimilated. In Canada, assimilative versions of integration have belonged to the past for some time now; they are no longer applicable today. 'Assimilation' is a concept of the "assimilationist era" (Fleras/Elliot 1992, p. 67), which has been overcome for more than three decades.

Nor do we still work with the dichotomous contradiction between assimilative integration and segregation; instead, we extend the conceptual dichotomy to a trichotomy. Alongside the concept of assimilative integration we place the concept of *intercultural* integration. Intercultural integration marks a middle course between assimilation and segregation. The concept of intercultural integration shares certain common features with, but also exhibits significant differences to, the concept of assimilative integration. Common to both is the normative idea of appropriate integration of migrants into the accommodating society: equal opportunities for the majority and for minorities in access to education, the labor market, and important institutions. The aim of both conceptions is to prevent the formation of "ethnlasses" (Gordon 1964), to impede the ethnicization of structures promoting inequality. Nevertheless, both concepts have to do with totally different ideas of socio-cultural integration. Whereas the assimilative concept has as its goal the cognitive, social, and identity-related assimilation (= adaptation) of minorities to the majority culture, the concept of intercultural integration seeks a proper balance between the equal rights of minorities to maintain a certain cultural difference and the demands of the majority for (partial) acculturation and adaptation.

Intercultural integration follows from an important fundamental principle of Canadian multiculturalism. In his classic work on multiculturalism in Canada entitled "Engaging Diversity", Augie Fleras expresses this idea with the bipolar formula of "unity-within-diversity", or "diversity-within-unity"

(Fleras/Elliot 2002). The pole of “diversity” is associated with migrants’ rights to socio-cultural difference, rights to maintain and thus to engage in their particular cultural traditions, their language, their ethnic communities. The pole of “unity” places limits on these rights and demands a certain adaptation of the migrants – that they learn the language of the country they have emigrated to and other abilities important for being able to get along in the accommodating society: knowledge of laws and basic values of this society, orientation to these and identification with them, openness for interethnic and intercultural contacts beyond the borders of the ethnic community.

The concept of “intercultural integration” challenges the people involved – the majority and the minorities – to seek and find a suitable balance between the desires of the minorities to have their cultural and social distinctions respected and the desires of the majority to have a common legal, cultural, and social framework that is indispensable for living together. Within this context, it is certainly a problem to establish or, more precisely, to negotiate (Kastoryano 2002) what Fleras/Elliot (2002, 9) call the “multicultural line” between unity and diversity, that is, an answer to the questions: Where does the right to difference end? Where does the obligation to adapt begin? The concrete design of this “multicultural line” is a dynamic, never-ending process; it is the subject of societal and political debates and the result of political, often enough also of court decisions.

If both models of integration – the assimilative one and the intercultural one – are applied to reality, evidence of both can certainly be found. Both assimilative and intercultural integrative processes take place. Apparently, *assimilation* is a *long-term operation* that takes place over the course of several generations, and intercultural integration appears to be a preliminary stage to assimilation. Nevertheless, we prefer to consider intercultural integration as an important goal of integration policy and as a significant heuristic concept for migration research. Intercultural integration is more humane than assimilation. It lessens the pressure to assimilate, which, in Germany, has been shown to be experienced by migrants as an unreasonable demand (Rauer/Schmidtke 2001). Intercultural integration also takes into account the feelings of many migrants who do not wish to relinquish the cultural and social roots of their ethnic heritage and their corresponding sense of identity.

Perhaps one should actually call the humane middle course between assimilation and segregation “multicultural” integration, as the concept is strongly oriented to the philosophy and policy of Canadian multiculturalism. But for two reasons we prefer the term “intercultural” integration. On the one hand, a heated debate on multicultural society in Germany has filled the concept of “multicultural” with other, negative content (‘simple juxtaposition’ of ethnic groups, ‘parallel societies’, ‘ethnic ghettos’) and for many people the

term has become a politically highly emotive word (cf. Mintzel 1997). Thus, this term would lead to misunderstandings, especially since only a small number of Germans are familiar with the principles of Canadian multiculturalism. On the other hand, the prefix ‘inter-’ expresses better what the concept actually intends: living together, having common ground, and engaging in exchange. The prefix ‘multi-’ can, indeed, be associated with ‘simple juxtaposition’ or ‘parallel’.

1.2 What is Media Integration? Intercultural Media Integration: a Middle Course between Media Assimilation and Media Segregation

The results of these general reflections on the topic of integration are now to be more directly related to problems involved in issues of media and migration. To this end, we have developed a concept of media integration, which we define as follows: the integration of ethnic minorities into the media system and into a public sphere produced and sustained by the mass media.

The observations made below take into account the fact that in Germany – as in other societies attractive for immigrants – there is an ethnically pluralistic media system and an ethnically pluralistic public sphere. In other words, in addition to the predominant German mainstream mass media (majority media), which are primarily produced by Germans in the German language, there are ethno-media that are produced by the ethnic minorities themselves and are usually in their own language, only rarely in German or bilingual.

With recourse to the typology developed above, it would now seem appropriate to differentiate three types of media integration or non-integration: media segregation and assimilative media integration (media assimilation) as the two external poles, and intercultural media integration as a middle course between the two extremes. These three ‘ideal types’ are to be characterized briefly in what follows.

1.2.1 Media Segregation

Media segregation is the opposite of media integration. It occurs whenever ethnic minorities primarily consume ethno-media and in this way allow ethnic segments of a public sphere to exist that are isolated from the accommodating society and its dominant public sphere. Often, the ethno-media are produced in the countries of origin and for the indigenous population. If they are produced in the accommodating society, they are to a great extent or even

exclusively oriented to the original culture. In extreme cases, they contain no information at all about Germany, nor do they provide assistance in dealing with integration problems in the society at large. Typical media-segregated audiences are, for example, Turks who live in Germany and exclusively watch Turkish television programs or read Turkish newspapers that were made in Turkey for the Turkish population there.

In the German media system, ethnic minorities are less apparent as producers than as consumers. As far as media content is concerned, they are thematized relatively rarely and, if so, as ‘foreigners’, as people who don’t belong. Their representation is distorted in a negative way. They are dealt with, e.g., as ‘problem groups’, as groups that live in Germany but tend to pose problems for society more than anything else.

1.2.2 Assimilative Media Integration

The opposite pole of media segregation is assimilative media integration. Here, at the level of social structures ethnic minorities are ‘institutionally’ integrated, i.e., they are appropriately represented in the functionally significant institution of the mass media – as journalists, managers, controlling authorities (e.g. on television boards) or as proprietors. Since the assimilative model presumes that ethnic minorities are also ‘adapted’ in socio-cultural respects, such minorities no longer represent any ethnically specific problems or interests in the German media system. There is no ethnically specific coverage in the mass media since the ethnic minorities no longer exist as socio-culturally specific groups. They have been fully absorbed and assimilated into the diversity of the German majority culture – with respect to cognitive, social, and identity models (see above). There are no distinct ethnic segments of the public sphere because there are no ethno-media and because the ethnic minorities use German media in patterns similar to those of the Germans themselves (e.g., dependent on their level of education).

It is obvious that both of the models outlined so far only relate to very limited sections of the real mass media situation in Germany as a country attracting immigrants. They are not useful as normative models that would contain desirable goals. Media segregation prevents the desirable integration of ethnic minorities, and assimilative media integration is at odds with the mental disposition of a large number of migrants who do not wish to break all bonds with their homelands. Apparently, the integrative requirements of the accommodating society and the specific socio-cultural needs of the migrants can best be brought into an appropriate balance with the third model.

1.2.3 Intercultural Media Integration

In the assimilative model, the ethnic media and public spheres are missing; in the segregationist model, the majority and the minorities and their respective media and public spheres are isolated from one another. In contrast, in the intercultural, integrative model, the majority and the minorities are intermeshed; intercultural communication takes place. The specific characteristics of this model relate to media production, their content, and their use.

- Production. At first glance, the situation in mass media production seems very similar to that of the assimilative model: an appropriate, if possible, proportional participation (with respect to the percentage of ethnic groups in the entire population) of ethnic minorities in German majority media. Yet, the proportional representation in the intercultural model implies a totally different fundamental conception of the socio-cultural integration of migrants and of their role in the mass media. Here, representatives of ethnic minorities are not socio-culturally assimilated; instead, they represent the ethnic groups with certain specific problems and interests. Structurally, their situation can be compared to that of representatives of the two sexes in their societal roles. They help to bring about a pluralistic, democratic public sphere, and, in doing so, they contribute specific information and specific knowledge about their ethnic groups and their problems. They personify an important part of the multi-dimensional, democratic pluralism in the German media system: its ethnic dimension, which ranks at the same level as other dimensions, such as those of pressure groups, the sexes, age groups, or religious organizations. In this model, ethno-media also exist in addition to the ethnically pluralistic German media. Migrants with knowledge of the accommodating society produce such media themselves or at least participate in their production in order to ensure that the content is designed in a way that promotes intercultural integration.
- Content. First of all, the representation of ethnic minorities in the majority mass media is oriented to the role the German media play in promoting active acceptance. To increase an awareness of the interdependence between the majority and the minorities, they provide explanations for the *necessity of immigration*, for the demographic and economic significance and benefits of migrants, but also for Germany's international obligations to admit refugees for humanitarian reasons. At the same time, they draw attention to the necessary intercultural integration and to integration at the level of social structures. Equal

opportunity, the necessity of a minimum form of acculturation, but also tolerance toward legitimate ethnic particularities in accordance with the principle of ‘unity within diversity’ (see above) are the guidelines for reporting and commentaries.

Furthermore, the representation of ethnic minorities also embodies the ethnic dimension of *media pluralism*. The mass media impart relevant knowledge of the varying groups that live and cooperate with one another to the respective other groups. Since the Germans – for language-related reasons – only rarely make use of ethno-media, the majority media are practically their sole media resource for information on the nature and problems of the ethnic minorities. Conversely, the ethnic minorities are only then able to participate in social and political affairs in Germany in an informed and knowledgeable way if they relatively regularly use German media in order to learn about and understand German current affairs and their contexts. One stimulus to regular media consumption is already provided by the circumstance that the ethnic minorities recognize their own interests and problems in the coverage of the majority media.

The characteristics of media content that is integrative in an intercultural way can also be expressed negatively: Germanocentric media that only allow ethnic minorities inadequate coverage, that ignore their mental dispositions and their problems, or in whose reporting discrimination and ethnic negativism predominate (e.g., ‘foreigners’ as groups that are primarily a source of problems for the German population) contradict the model of intercultural integration. Still, this does not mean that problems with migration and integration in the accommodating society should be taboo. On the contrary, such problems are – much like problems concerning relationships between the sexes or between the generations – a part of the pluralistic public discourse. But they should not dominate this discourse.

For non-assimilated minorities, ethno-media are a necessary complement to the German majority media. Their main target groups are the bicultural, often bilingual segments of the ethnic minorities whose desires for contact with their original culture and language and for information on the specific situation and specific problems of their ethnic group in the larger society cannot be adequately satisfied by the German mass media. In light of the ethnic diversity and the increasing internal socio-cultural differentiation of the individual ethnic groups, meeting such requirements is beyond the capabilities of the German

mass media. In the pluralistic German media system, ethno-media have functions similar to those of specific media for women, youth, or certain religious communities. Of major importance is the *integrative nature of the content presented*. Segregationist content – as in an exclusive focus on the original culture or a confrontation between a ‘superior’ original culture and the culture of the accommodating society that is presented in a distorted, negative way – is not in accordance with this model.

- Media Use. It is unrealistic to expect Germans to make use of the ethno-media. For this reason, an appropriate representation of ethnic minorities in the German mass media is extremely important. On the other hand, it is absolutely indispensable for the intercultural integration of ethnic minorities that such minorities make use of the German mass media. With no knowledge of current affairs and their contexts in the society at large, integration into the social structures – appropriately taking advantage of opportunities in politics, on the labor market, in the educational system, and in other significant institutions (see above) – is not possible. Thus, the attractiveness of the German mass media for ethnic minorities is an important prerequisite for their intercultural integration. In addition, non-assimilated minorities with a bicultural orientation will also make use of the ethno-media of their original culture. Through such groups, the dominant German public sphere becomes and remains interconnected with the ethnic sub-spheres.

2. Media Reception and Ideas on Media Integration among Turkish, Italian and Russo-German Migrants in Germany

2.1 Methodology

We will now present some select tentative findings of a comprehensive study on media use and integration of migrants (including their children) from Turkey, Italy, and Russia. Over 1,000 persons from Italy, approximately 700 persons from Turkey (excluding Kurds), and approximately 1,000 persons from Russia were interviewed. Here, we will simply present the findings for over 500 Russo-Germans (not those for Russian Jews or for other Russians). Only members of pure migrant families were interviewed, that is, no children



Figure 1: Media Reception¹. T = Turks; I = Italians; R = Russo-Germans.

1 Source: Sonja Weber-Menges - Survey on Media Reception and Integration of Migrants (preliminary results). N = 673 migrants from Turkey, 1023 from Italy and 512 Russo-German migrants.

from mixed families consisting of natives and migrants were surveyed. We have excluded these because their patterns of behavior and attitudes are almost identical to those of the natives. The sample is representative for North Rhine-Westphalia. It can probably be assumed that to a certain extent the findings would also apply to all of western Germany.

2.2 Media use

Media use depends on two important factors: on the media-related wants and needs of the migrants, but also on the programs that are offered. Furthermore, for all three groups media use is dependent on age, knowledge of the German language, and the length of the person's stay in Germany. The older the migrants are, the less fluent they are in German, and the shorter the time they have lived in Germany, the more frequently they make use of their own ethnic media (figure 1).

Nevertheless, any fear of large-scale ethnic media ghettos in Germany is unfounded. Media ghettos, that is, the exclusive use of ethnic media, with no German media made use of, are marked red on the diagram. Only small minorities of migrants exclusively make use of ethnic media. The largest one is the Turkish TV ghetto, with 31%. One of the reasons for this is that some of the women from Turkey are illiterate and do not have a very good command of the German language, either. Apart from this Turkish TV ghetto, media ghettos only involve between 6 and 10 percent of the migrants and, in one finding, 15 percent (an Italian TV ghetto).

Large portions of the Russo-German population are assimilated in their use of media, that is, they make use only of German media (marked green on the diagram). This is true only of relatively small minorities of the Italians and Turks. However, the group of those who are assimilated is somewhat larger than those whose behavior corresponds to a media ghetto.

The majority of the migrants makes use of both German and ethnic media and is, thus, interculturally integrated.

2.3 Views on ethnic media

Only very few migrants have the impression that their ethnic media – for the Turks, Turkish media, for the Italians, Italian media, and for the Russo-Germans, Russian media – have segregating effects and report on Germany and the Germans in a negative way (figure 2).

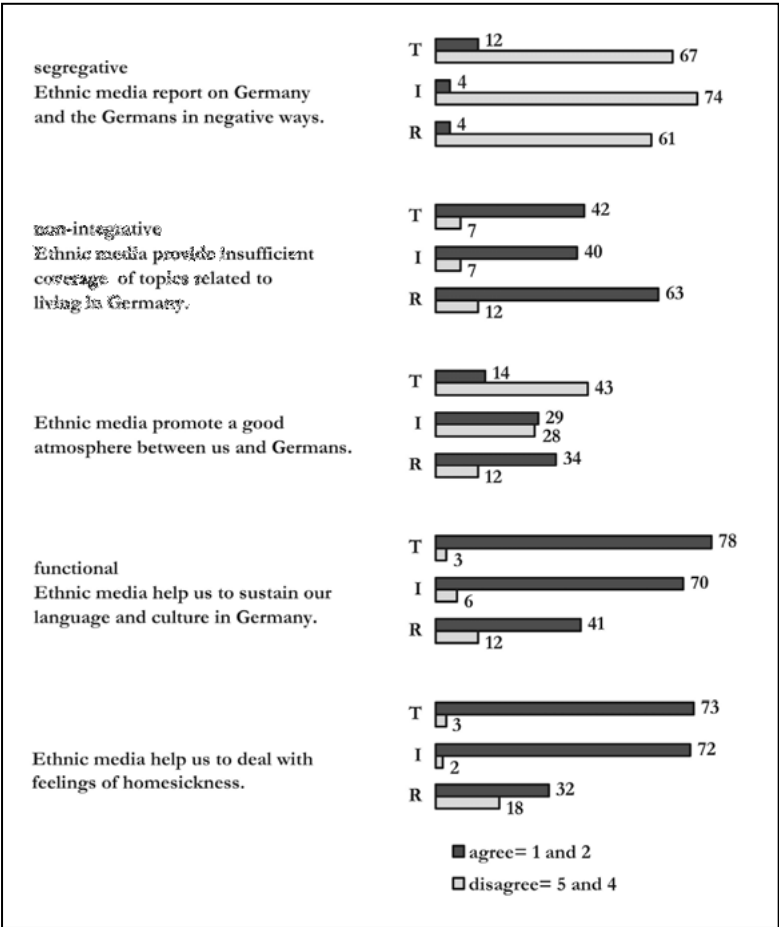


Figure 2: Views on ethnic media.²
T = Turks; I = Italians; R = Russo-Germans. Response measured on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 5); here: agree = 5 and 4; disagree = 1 and 2.

But neither do they observe integrating effects in the media content. Only a few think that ethno-media promote a good atmosphere between migrants and Germans. Almost half of the Turks responded negatively to this question.

Yet, ethnic media do fulfill other important functions which presumably support the intercultural integration of migrants. For Turkish and Italian migrants, they represent an important linguistic, cultural, and emotional tie to their homeland, a function that is significant only for a minority of the Russo-

2 Source: Sonja Weber-Menges - Survey on Media Reception and Integration of Migrants (preliminary results). N = 673 migrants from Turkey, 1023 from Italy and 512 Russo-German migrants.

Germans. As a rule, Russo-Germans had conceived of themselves as a minority in Russia and, for this reason, they are not as attached to their homeland as Italian migrants are to Italy or Turkish migrants to Turkey. Many Russo-Germans feel as if they have “returned home” to the land of their ancestors and feel no need to maintain ties to the country they have emigrated from.

2.4 Views on the German media

Views on the German media prove to be quite negative (figure 3). These media meet with the greatest skepticism on the part of Turkish migrants; Russo-Germans evaluate them somewhat more positively; the Italians’ position is somewhere in between. Turks and Italians criticize the absence of topics that would be interesting to migrants and the cliché-like representation of migrants – especially the Italians find that their image in the media involves stereotypes. All three groups complain of predominantly negative reports on migration and migrants, for example, the representation of migrants as criminals. The Turks voiced this criticism most frequently. With respect to the issue of whether the German mass media promote a good atmosphere between migrants and Germans, these media were judged to be just as deficient as the ethno-media. Turkish migrants were the most critical here – with reference to both German and Turkish media. With reference to one issue, Russo-Germans in particular, to a lesser extent the Italians, and even less the Turks, perceive media content with an integrating effect – German media help migrants to cope with everyday life in Germany.

2.5 Migrants’ ideas on how to improve media integration

Which suggestions do migrants make on how to improve media integration? Do their ideas correspond to our concept of media integration (figure 4)?

A clear majority of the Turks (76%) and of the Italians (70%) interviewed would like to see more coverage and more positive reports on migrants and their culture and activities, their celebrations and festivities, their clubs and organizations. Only a small minority of both groups rejects such intensified coverage because they suspect a lack of interest in such topics on the part of the Germans or because they think that these things are none of the Germans’ business. Russo-Germans are more reserved towards such improvements. In any case, 40 percent say that they have no opinion on this. Apparently, the

interests of the Russo-Germans are more strongly represented in the German media than are those of the other two groups.

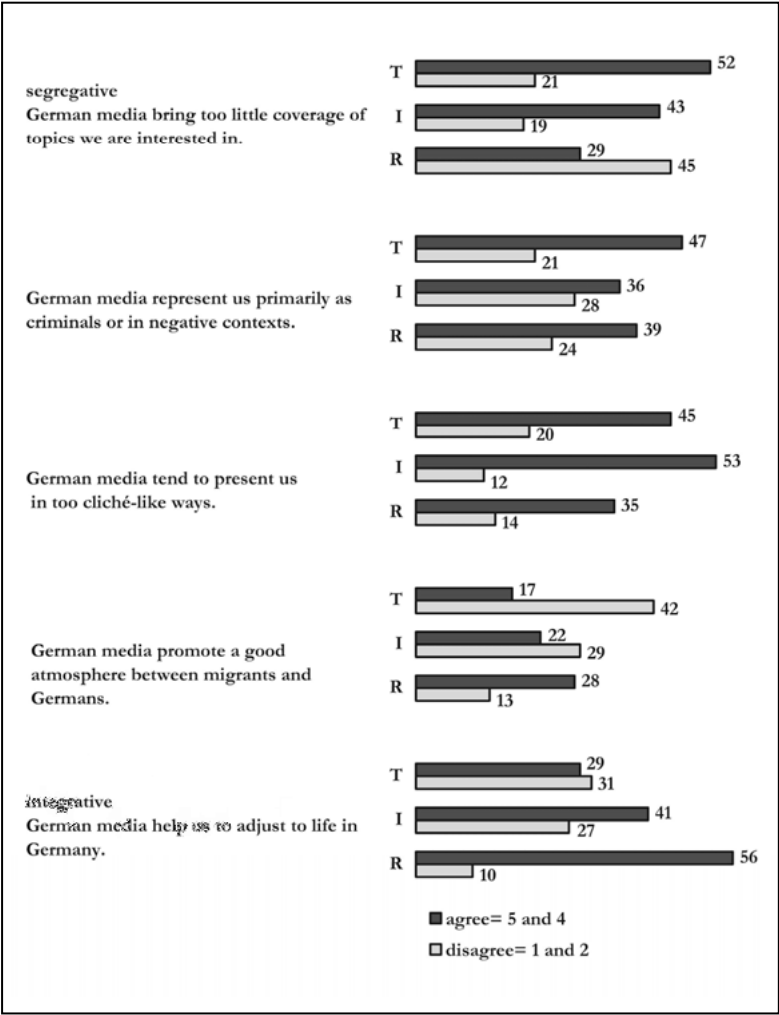


Figure 3: Views on the German media.³
T = Turks; I = Italians; R = Russo-Germans. Response measured on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 5); here: agree = 5 and 4; disagree = 1 and 2.

3 Source: Sonja Weber-Menges - Survey on Media Reception and Integration of Migrants (preliminary results). N = 673 migrants from Turkey, 1023 from Italy and 512 Russo-German migrants.

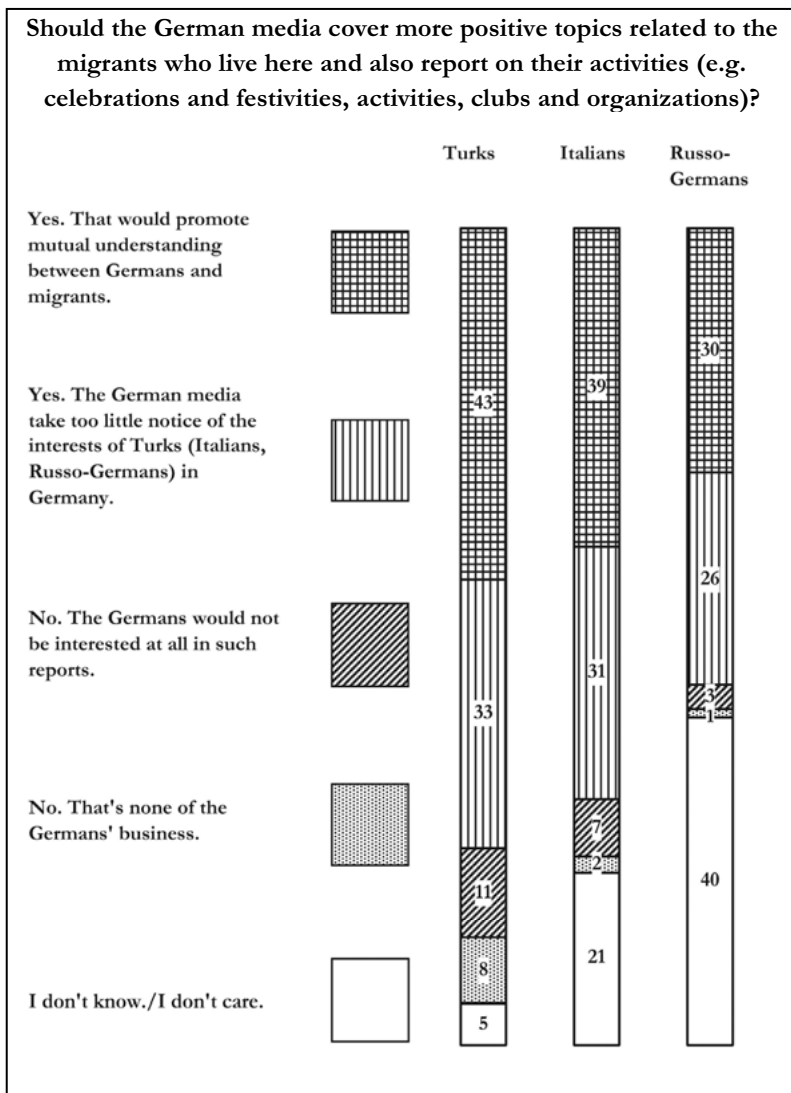


Figure 4: More positive coverage.⁴

The three groups also agree on how the representation of migrants and media integration could be improved (figure 5). The demand for more migrants among the media personnel was raised most frequently. We postulated this as early as five years ago as an important condition for media integration.

4 Source: Sonja Weber-Menges - Survey on Media Reception and Integration of Migrants (preliminary results). N = 673 migrants from Turkey, 1023 from Italy and 512 Russo-German migrants.

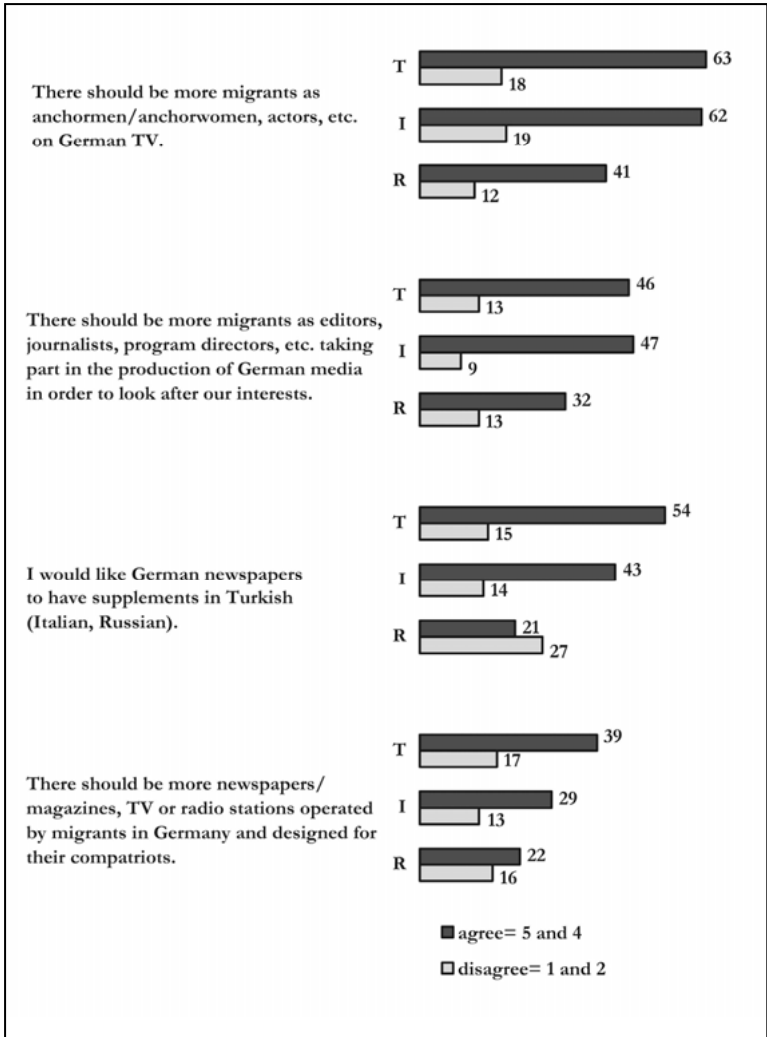


Figure 5: Improving media integration – migrant’s suggestions.⁵
T = Turks; I = Italians; R = Russo-Germans. Response measured on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 5); here: agree = 5 and 4; disagree = 1 and 2.

In the last two years, this position has also been increasingly taken up in Germany by politicians and decision makers at the public broadcasting companies – most recently at a joint conference of the German broadcasters ARD and ZDF in Mainz.

5 Source: Sonja Weber-Menges - Survey on Media Reception and Integration of Migrants (preliminary results). N = 673 migrants from Turkey, 1023 from Italy and 512 Russo-German migrants.

Foreign-language supplements to German daily newspapers are also considered desirable, especially among the Turks. On the other hand, there is little interest in “genuine ethnic media” produced by migrants themselves in Germany. In general, Russo-Germans voice a demand for increased participation in the production of the German mass media less frequently than migrants from Turkey and Italy.

3. Summary

Of the three complexes media use, media content, and media production, the use made of the media corresponds most closely to our model of media integration. The majority of migrants makes use of both German and ethnic media. Thus, the German public sphere and ethnic sub-spheres are in general interconnected with one another. Only small minorities live in media ghettos.

In contrast, media content – of both German and ethnic media – meets with a great deal of skepticism on the part of migrants. Mass media programs are judged to be substantially lacking in integrating effects. This sort of criticism is most common among Turks, most rare among Russo-Germans. Large segments of the Russo-German population have undergone assimilative media integration. Such differences can be plausibly explained by the hypothesis of cultural conflict: the more remote from one another the cultures of migrant and indigenous groups are, the more complications are involved in media integration.

Migrants also note a distinct lack of integrating effects in the production of German mainstream mass media. For these groups, increased participation of migrants in media production is an important demand to counteract the dominance of negative images in the media’s representation of migrants.

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