

RACISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MASS MEDIA

An overview of research and
examples of good practice
in the EU Member States, 1995-2000

on behalf of the

European Monitoring Centre
on Racism and Xenophobia, Vienna
(EUMC)

by

European Research Centre
on Migration and Ethnic Relations
(ERCOMER)

Edited by Jessika ter Wal

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PREFACE

The research interest in analysing the way mass media report on ethnic issues has increased in the Member States over the last decades. And for this reason the EUMC decided to bring together the major research reports and their findings over the last five years in this report "RACISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MASS MEDIA - an overview of research and examples of good practice in the EU Member States, 1995-2000".

The project has been carried out by Dr Jessika ter Wal, at Ercomer, Utrecht University, the Netherlands. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to her for her excellent work. The report underlines the importance of media research in the area of racism and diversity.

The mass media, and especially the news media, have an unequivocal position in society when it comes to establishing and disseminating common cultural references. The mass media have an influence on people's attitudes as well as our common knowledge, but not always in the expected and desired ways.

The active democratic role of the mass media in society can be influenced by a number of factors. The way the mass media represent, focus and give voice to different actors and incidents in society could have the unintentional result of strengthening a racist discourse instead of fighting against it. Mass media reporting is especially sensitive when it comes to ethnic, cultural and religious relations in our society.

The mass media organisations in the Member States take different initiatives to promote cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, such as developing codes of conduct, recruiting broadcasters from the migrant and minority communities and training the personnel from multiethnic societies.

The report has already attracted a lot of interest from researchers, from journalists as well as from media organisations. I hope that the report will be of practical use to all those interested in the fight against racism and especially those working in the media.

Beate Winkler

Director of the EUMC

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4.3 GERMANY (DE)

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The examination of the recent research literature about right-wing extremism¹⁰, racism and cultural diversity in the German media for the period 1995-2000 revealed that negative stereotypes were frequently associated with migrants, and that media talked mainly about migrants in the context of negative scenarios and conflicts. News reporting was subject to discursive changes, for instance from an emphasis on foreigners' issues in the 1980s to a greater attention to asylum issues in the early 1990s. The coverage on right-wing extremism was highly dependent on events; the media fluctuated between mitigation and dramatisation. The effects of news reporting about acts of racist violence (in the autumn of 1992 and the spring of 1993) do not show in individual cases, but only with consonant media tenor. The media sensitise audiences to specific themes. For example, until 1991 the number of attacks against asylum seekers increased sharply at the peak of the political and parliamentary debate on asylum. Later, the coverage on the xenophobic rampage led to a heightened perception about the asylum issue as a significant social problem. As a result of this amplified perception, in the 1990s Germany witnessed a great number of media campaigns to combat racism and initiatives to promote cultural diversity.

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

The first study that dealt extensively with the image of migrants in the media dates back to 1986. By order of the Government's Commissioner for Foreigners' Affairs¹¹, Merten and associates (1986) analysed the image of the foreigner in the German press

10 In Germany the debate about xenophobia and racism is linked very strongly to the issue of right-wing extremism.

11 Ausländerbeauftragte der Bundesregierung, <http://www.bundesauslaenderbeauftragte.de>

using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The aim was to compare the representation of official guest worker groups with that of other foreigners in print media: daily newspapers, tabloids, weeklies and magazines (Ruhrmann, Kollbeck, and Möltgen, 1995: 47). Following this study, a continuous stream of research began; its latest results - from 1995 until today - are the object of the present report. At the time of this writing the latest publication derives from a conference that gathered working groups of the *Deutsche Vereinigung für Politische Wissenschaft* (German Association for Political Science) and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft* (DGPK, German Society for Media and Communication Sciences). The conference volume *Migranten und Medien* (Migrants and the Media), edited by Schatz, Holtz-Bacha and Nieland (2000), contains theoretical remarks and results of empirical studies on the media coverage about migrant issues, but also about racism and xenophobia. It is the most recent source for many of the research results presented in this chapter.

Section two of this report considers findings concerning general media practices regarding the coverage about racism and cultural diversity. How do print and broadcast journalists cover stories about migrants, asylum seekers, and foreigners living in Germany? How do media deal with right-wing radicalism, with extreme right-wing violence, parties of the extreme Right and their officials, with racism and xenophobia? Are there any findings about the ways and extent to which this type of reporting affects attitudes towards migrants? Do media reports about acts of racist violence trigger mimicking effects?

In section three the reproduction of ethnic prejudice and stereotypes through the media is discussed. Which forms of prejudice and stereotypes appear most frequently in media treatment of minorities? What are the most common concepts that ethnic minorities are associated with in the media? Are there any changes in terminology? Do press, radio and television accounts differentiate between welcomed and undesirable groups of foreigners? A focal point of research in this area is the observation about coverage on crime among 'foreigners'¹². Do media report differently about 'foreign' than about German perpetrators?

As a result of the alarming number of acts of racist violence in the 1990s, efforts were made to use the media in the struggle against racism aimed at promoting cultural diversity. Advertising campaigns were launched by several media enterprises; the *Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger* (BDVZ, Federal Union of German Newspaper Publishers) distributed anti-racist stickers. The initiative '*Mehr Farbe in den Medien*' (More Colour in the Media) made an effort to improve the access of ethnic minorities to employment in media enterprises. Several studies examine the acceptance, reach and effects of such initiatives. The results are reported in section four. Section five shortly presents concluding remarks.

4.3.2 GENERAL MEDIA PRACTICES

4.3.2.1 REPORTING ABOUT MIGRANTS

Ruhrmann and Demren (2000) summarise the results of a current study and several others, and present the following general features of reporting about racism and cultural diversity between 1986 and 2000:

- *Crime syndrome*: when 'foreign' employees were mentioned, it often occurred frequently in relation to crime (see section 3).
- *Over-representation of specific groups*, when comparing social demographic data with content analytical data about media reporting: in particular Turkish and people from several Asian and African countries are over-represented.
- The definitions of the issues concerning 'foreigners' underwent discursive changes over the course of time, and were influenced mainly by political agendas and problem definitions. At the start of the 1980s the discourse was about the 'Turkish (guest worker) issue', later about the 'asylum issue'

12 The German public discourse uses the term 'Ausländer' to refer to immigrants, whether they are first, second or third generation of foreign origin. This is here translated with 'foreigners'.

and as of the mid-1990s about the 'refugees issue'.¹³

- *Syndrome of topicality*: media reporting about migrants is oriented towards topical, current events. Background information is neglected.
- *Syndrome of negativity*: media attention is directed towards conflict-laden, crisis-laden negative events. Migrants are thus often represented in a context of problems and crisis.
- *Risk discourse*: the effects of global migration processes and the introduction of multiculturalism is presented with a discourse of danger. The social changes are not represented as decidable and manageable, but as alarming, and even disastrous.
- *Multiple stigmatisation*: reports about migrants often label them as non-Europeans, as victims or perpetrators and as object (e.g. of state measures, such as expulsions or state benefits).

Thus by means of negative reporting that utilised a discourse of danger, the media constructed a threat scenario: migrants figure prominently in reports about expulsions, labour market pressures, the social system, and federal, regional and/or municipal finances. Only rarely did the media report positively about ethnic minorities' contributions as employees or employers, as tax and contribution payers, as neighbours and colleagues at work. Nevertheless, content analyses show that public television and radio broadcasting companies, and periodicals such as the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (FR), the *Tageszeitung* (taz), *Der Spiegel*, or *Die Zeit*, consciously tried to avoid reproducing such threat scenarios and instead, sought to publish reports which demonstrate understanding and sensitivity towards specific issues involving migrants. By contrast, private radio, local and regional newspapers with a conservative bent, and tabloids (in particular *Bild Zeitung*), were much more inclined to construct threat scenarios and sensationalise stories, using bold or 'catchy' presentation formats (Geißler, 2000)¹⁴. In this context,

13 In the German context, the term asylum designates the permanent acceptance of politically persecuted refugees, whereas the term refugees refers to the temporary acceptance of civil war refugees, especially from the former Yugoslavia.

14 Based on an analysis of reports and editorials on 'foreigners' from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Siegener Zeitung* in the period 27 October until 29 November 1997.

qualitative content analyses repeatedly find that the front pages of printed media often use metaphors and collective symbols that express threat. Examples abound: 'Kurdish terror'; 'Kurdish War in Germany'; 'Bogus asylum seekers'; 'Welfare scroungers'; 'Asylum betrayers'; 'Floods of asylum seekers'; or 'Refugee waves'; that are poured out over the 'Welfare Island' Germany (Böke, 1997; Butterwegge, Hentges, and Sarigöz, 1999; Jäger, Cleve, Ruth, and Jäger, 1998; Ruhrmann, 1999). Not only the popular press, but also the quality press drew upon this type of imagery: *Der Spiegel* covered the headline 'Refugees, emigrants, asylum seekers: crowd of the poor' and portrayed the metaphors of immigration-is-a-flood and 'the boat is full' in images, or asked - also on the front page - 'Foreign danger?' and 'Too many foreigners?'. 'Dangerous foreigners?' was the headline on the cover of the newsmagazine *Focus* (Jäger, 1997; Sage and Schreibe, 1999).

4.3.2.2 REPORTING ABOUT RACISM AND THE EXTREME RIGHT

First, a distinction needs to be made between reports about racism and xenophobia as a conviction within society, including racist violence, on the one hand, and reports about extreme right-wing parties, on the other. Electoral campaigns, in particular, provide opportunities for the extreme or radical Right to air their views on radio and television. The constitutional rule of equal treatment for all parties prohibits the exclusion of legally recognised parties from public services and institutions, including public broadcasting corporations. In addition, the federal law mandates that public service broadcasting corporations - except for the states of Berlin and Bremen - are obliged to transmit electoral campaign commercials. Likewise, private broadcasters (with the exception of are the federal states of *Baden Württemberg, Bayern, Berlin, and Brandenburg*) are also required to air electoral spots for various political parties (Bergsdorf, 1998). Time and again right-wing parties exploit this opportunity to produce extremely controversial xenophobic and radical right-wing propaganda and this always results in discussions about the need to ban such spots.

In general, these discussions have ultimately led to the conclusion that the efforts to ban the offending spots have not only failed but,

contrary to intentions, have simply served to give these groups greater visibility (Friedrichsen, Schulz and Wolling, 1995). The authors describe the relation between the extreme Right and the media as being poised between taboo and mitigation, on the one hand, and dramatisation and over-reaction, on the other. In their study on the media presence of the new radical right-wing party *Republikaner* in the 1989 electoral campaign, Friedrichsen et al. (1995) observe that the degree of attention given to this party varied depending on the newspaper. From the very beginning, a debate about this party was only found in the left-wing alternative newspaper *taz*, whereas other newspapers only noticed the *Republikaner* after the discussion about its provocative electoral spot. The result of this provocation was that even those media that usually report only little about politics, published about the name and the aims of the *Republikaner*. The researchers conclude that a public outcry can actually be counterproductive, even helping to fuel right-wing movements. This can happen in cases when interpretations of xenophobic and right wing radical trends are incidental and are not based on a continuous thematisation and problematisation of the complexity of the phenomenon (Friedrichsen et al., 1995).

When examining the media presence of extreme right-wing parties and their leaders, it was found that they are hardly interviewed or given more than the obliged electoral space on radio and television. The extreme Right is shunned. There are exceptions, however: the private TV channel SAT1 invited the leader of the radical right-wing Deutsche Volksunion (DVU, German Populist Association), Gerhard Frey, to a studio discussion, and the private station RTL hosted the chairman of the *Republikaner*, Franz Schönhuber (Müller, 1996). Overall, the reporting about the *Republikaner* focused on open norm violations by party members or -officials, for example on Schönhuber's verbal attacks against Ignatz Bubis (then president of the Central Jewish Council in Germany). More detailed information about party programmes, candidates, congresses, rallies, staff matters, and so on, which is common in reports on other parties, was almost absent for reports on the extreme Right (Bergsdorf, 1998). An extensive study by Weiß, Feike, Freese, Funk and Trebbe (1995) deals with television reporting about the extreme Right in the early

nineties. At times when no spectacular racist disorders and acts of violence occurred, right-wing extremism and racist violence were not major themes. In private TV programmes, the reporting about issues other than news shows was almost exclusively limited to the genre of magazines and talk shows. A large proportion of the magazines depicted situations from a sentimental, personalising perspective, showing images with commentary that were mostly just superficial and crude, and tuning in voices from interviews with eye witnesses or passers-by and people from the street, to provide some background to the events reported. Rare were analytical contributions that tried to identify the societal and political developments that have favoured right-wing extremism and racist violence. Weiß and colleagues emphasise that these results, which are also found in news programmes about foreigners and asylum, are related mostly to system- and newsagent-specific programming policies, and do not represent specific lacunae in reporting about right-wing extremism. Indeed, programmes that place lesser importance on supplying information in the overall set-up of their service (as is the case with private TV), also pay less time to reporting about right-wing extremism and racist violence. They do so primarily in TV news and in the typical forms of broadcast news journalism. The public programming of the ARD, however, afforded more opportunities to elaborate upon controversial themes in a meaningful way (Weiß et al., 1995).

Looking for 'populist-nationalistic ideological terms' in public discourse, Siegfried Jäger and associates (1998) analysed several newspapers and weeklies of different orientations. Their conclusion: right-wing extremism was not represented so much as a societal and social-structural phenomenon, but rather as an individual-pathological problem. Moreover, the media adopted strategies of exclusion towards militant and terrorist right-wing extremism, as well as extreme Right movements and parties. The authors speak about a 'distancing technique' that simultaneously enhanced a 'normalisation' of right-wing extremism. According to the authors, a characteristic of this technique - found particularly in conservative printed media - is a rejection of form (violence, populism) combined with an acceptance of substance (asylum policies, strong State).

Other analyses of print media coverage contend that the treatment of right-wing extremism and extreme right-wing violence changed over time. The extreme right-wing violence in Rostock and Hoyerswerda (August 1992)¹⁵ marked a phase of event coverage in which the comments poised ambivalently between an understanding of the motives and a condemnation of the acts (most noticeable in the tabloid *Bild Zeitung*). The fire attacks of Mölln (November 1992) and Solingen (May 1993) belong to a second phase. The comments on these acts changed, moving away from ambivalence towards a decisive rejection. This time the news reports tried to delve more deeply into the backgrounds of these attacks (Ohlemacher, 1998).

4.3.2.3 *EFFECTS OF MEDIA REPORTING ABOUT MIGRANTS AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM*

Most texts and studies examined on this subject contain speculations or claims about the effects media have on the acceptance of cultural diversity or - more frequently - on the racist and xenophobic attitudes of the population. It is not the aim of this report to give an account of these claims. Instead, the findings of a few studies that tried to measure these effects with the methods of empirical social research are presented here.

The main question in a 1995 study was: how is it possible that after key racist events such as those that occurred in Rostock and Hoyerswerda, a host of copycat incidents came about (Brosius and Esser, 1995)? In their analysis the authors considered the news reports of press and television, as well as public opinion polls, immigration, and crime statistics of the Republic and the Federal States. On the basis of these data, they developed a model of escalation of anti-foreigner violence. According to this model, reporting on a criminal racist act actually increased the readiness of violent criminals to act against foreigners in every conceivable way. For example, the authors did not find indications that reporting about fire attacks led specifically to further fire attacks. Also the spatial prox-

15 In Rostock and Hoyerswerda fire attacks against asylum seeker centres were committed - partly with the support of bystanders and people living nearby.

imity to a key event did not play a crucial role. The gist of their analysis was that there was no direct causal link between a single report and subsequent criminal acts. Only the relatively consonant reaction of the entire media system led to increasing criminal racist acts. However, the role of the media changed over time. Contagion effects could be observed particularly during a phase of mere event coverage. However, the authors found diminished effects as soon as background reporting was intensified; counter-reactions emerged (such as demonstrations using a chain of lights) and political actions and discussions arose (Brosius and Esser, 1995).

Following an agenda-setting approach, Funk and Weiß (1995) analysed the extent to which foreigners, asylum, and right-wing extremism in Germany were perceived by the population as an important media issue, and whether this thematic complex was thus seen as a crucial national problem. For their study, the authors used data from a 1992 telephone survey, in which respondents were asked about their reception of media themes and their evaluation of the political issues in Germany. Data about media reporting as such were not used, since it was assumed that the media themes that were evaluated as most interesting, had actually received prominent coverage. In their results, Funk and Weiß attribute a successful thematisation capacity to media reporting, which interacts with previously held attitudes towards the thematic complexes that are specific to the public (mostly the explicit, theme-specific sensitivity of the respondents). Media reporting thus influenced the way in which xenophobia and right-wing extremism, as well as foreigners' and the population and the way in which their importance was evaluated perceived asylum issues. An interesting finding was that at the outset of the racist attacks in Rostock, the asylum issue acquired importance as a prominent media theme much more sharply than did the mention of xenophobia and right-wing extremism. The violent attacks against asylum seekers thus did not only lead to intensified coverage about violence but also about its presumed causes: the unresolved asylum issue in Germany.

Koopmans (1996) researched the effects of the political debate about the revision of the constitutional right to asylum on the nature and number of violent racist acts (1990-1994)¹⁶. He con-

cluded that the character of the public debate had a significant impact on the objectives of radical right-wing violence. Whereas in 1990 this violence was directed mostly at members of the left wing and other arbitrary targets, with the peaks of the debate on asylum in the early nineties, the number of violent attacks against asylum seekers increased sharply. When the asylum issue faded from the public debate, the number of violent attacks against asylum seekers again dropped (Koopmans, 1996: 178). This effect can be observed for the period until September 1991, whereas later the political debate and the 'career' of the asylum issue followed the incidents of racist violence. However, Koopmans underlines that the political debate alone was not a sufficient cause for the violence against asylum seekers. Instead, he claims that the balance was tipped by a combination of two important factors. One was a right-wing youth sub-culture that was prepared to mobilise itself and was looking for a rallying theme that could count on at least some measure of political and popular support. The other was a polarised political debate between actors who were unwilling to compromise, which could then serve as such a theme for the radical Right.

The relation between media attention and radical right-wing electoral success was the subject of a study by Friedrichsen et al. (1995). Through surveys and an analysis of press coverage, the authors tried to explain the success of the *Republikaner* in the 1989 elections in Berlin. An analysis of media consumption showed that the proportion of actual or potential *Republikaner* voters was significantly higher among readers of the dailies *Bild*, *Morgenpost* and *Berliner Zeitung* (BZ) (all three from the *Springer* publishing house) than among those of the other three Berlin newspapers (*Tagesspiegel*, *Volksblatt* and *Tageszeitung* (taz)) that were examined. Readers of the Springer-owned newspapers with significant frequency held the opinion that the limitation of the number of foreigners was an important political task. From the perspective of agenda-setting research, it could be expected that readers of newspapers that reported most extensively about the foreigners' issue would consider this theme to be most important and would vote

16 A content analysis of the coverage in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* between January 1990 and August 1994 examined the (speech) acts of non-media actors (for example, statements by politicians, demonstrations, political decisions).

more frequently for the *Republikaner*. However, this was not the case. In the *Springer* newspapers the foreigners' theme was reported with rather average frequency. A more negative reporting or a stronger attention to foreigners' crime in these newspapers was not determined either. This means that the electoral success of the *Republikaner* may not be credited to the amount of coverage given, or to a particularly negative or problematising approach attached to foreigners by the *Springer* press; indeed its coverage was characterised by the conspicuous absence of politics and a minor presence of parties. Foreigners were nevertheless an important political theme for numerous readers of these newspapers. They could thus get the impression that the political establishment was not dealing effectively with the issue. Indeed, the apparent failure of established politics to appropriate the 'foreigners issue' was an important condition for the mobilisation of voters by the *Republikaner*, who ran their campaign almost exclusively on this issue. The party's provocative anti-immigrant TV election spot played an important role in the campaign investigated.

The media presence of this party was characterised by three phases: the initial phase with minor attention, followed by a period of general outcry and increased media presence, and a third phase (after violent protests against an election meeting of the *Republikaner*) with again heavy media attention. Before the transmission of the electoral spot, the *Republikaner* were by far the least observed party; after the disorders, it was mentioned in more articles than the liberal Freie *Demokratische Partei* (FDP) or the *left-wing/green Alternative Liste* (AL). In this way, its name and objectives became known. Even media that rarely reported on politics picked up the events surrounding the *Republikaner*. The party became the embodiment of anti-immigrant politics. Friedrichsen et al. (1995) show that the widespread impact of the agitation around the electoral spot could be read from the fact that even one year after the elections, 73 per cent of the Berlin respondents could remember that the spot was connected to the *Republikaner*, although only a mere 6 per cent had actually seen the spot at its first broadcasting.

4.3.3 THE REPRODUCTION OF ETHNIC AND RACIST PREJUDICE THROUGH THE MEDIA

A number of stereotypes were already mentioned in connection with the news-making practise about migrants in section 2.1. The most dominant stereotype is the treatment of the crime theme in connection with news about foreigners. An extensive analysis of press reporting in the late nineties showed that almost one fourth of all articles about 'foreigners' reported on the crime theme. Moreover, journalists do not take account of the fact that some crimes could be committed exclusively by 'foreigners', such as offences against the asylum or foreigners' law (Ruhrmann and Demren, 2000). Qualitative content analyses found that 'foreign' suspects and criminals, in comparison to German ones, were clearly represented in a more negative way. Crimes committed by 'foreigners' were represented in a more brutal and violent way, and the accusation was often made that 'foreign' criminals abused the German social system. Moreover, motivations behind the criminal acts of foreigners were reported less often. Not only were more crimes attributed to foreigners, but also the reference to a full confession, that is often included for German culprits, was frequently missing when a foreigner was involved. Perhaps more importantly, newspaper reports often associated foreigners with so-called organised crime, i.e. drugs smuggling and gang criminality that was predicted to grow in Germany (Jäger, Cleve, Ruth and Jäger, 1998).

Particularly pronounced was the negative stigmatisation in the coverage about the asylum issue. The denomination 'asylum seeker' (*Asylant*) or 'bogus refugee' (*Scheinasylant*) in connection with terms such as 'over-foreignisation' (*Überfremdung*) or metaphors such as 'flood' (*Flut*), 'glut' (*Schwemme*), and similar expressions, created negative associations and danger signals for German society. Background information about the conditions of asylum seekers living in Germany or about the causes of their flight, problems in the countries of origin, and so on, were almost completely absent. Newspapers almost never gave voice to asylum seekers or their representatives, for example, in interviews. Overall, the representa-

tives of the government and the political parties were dominant in the reports on asylum (Hömborg and Schlemmer, 1995).

Earlier studies already showed that news discourse distinguishes between 'desired' and 'less desired' groups of people (Merten et al., 1986). More precisely, a distinction is made between foreigners, who are in Germany for a short term (guests, artists, sport stars), and migrants, who live and work in the Federal Republic for a longer period. The former appear without exception in a positive light, while foreign workers and asylum seekers are judged negatively. However, in the latter group there are also gradations. For example, in news reports Greek, Italian and Spanish workers are represented more positively - or rather, less negatively - than migrants from other, more distant areas or cultures (Ruhrmann and Demren, 2000).

Until today there has been little research on different media treatment of various minority groups. Some findings are available about specific media images of ethnic-religious differences. A remarkably high consensus is found regarding the media's rejection of anti-Semitic attitudes. From the beginning, the quality press of the Federal Republic did not report any anti-Semitic statements, and over time it learned to adopt a sensitive language and a more decisive treatment of the theme. Counter-opinions have been marginalised so much, that explicit anti-Semitic positions can only be found in radical right-wing press (Bergmann, 1997).

On the media image of Islam, more negative findings have been reported. For example, in large parts of the public discourse, Islam is juxtaposed with repressive, anti-modern, and anti-feminine positions. Generalisations are used so that it is hardly acknowledged that not only extremist, but also moderate forms of fundamentalism exist. Longitudinal studies of German press coverage show that the subject of Islam belongs to those themes in the coverage on foreigners' issues that are most strongly associated with negatively classified events, such as terrorism. Importantly, these stereotypical images have been reproduced in the media coverage about migrants in general in Germany. The most frequently covered themes are: violence in connection with Islamist extremism; issues

of religious faith and social conflicts; clothing and cultural habits (in which the headscarf serves as a symbol of cultural difference); and themes connected to religious education, in which the fear about the potential influence of extremist forces often plays an important role (Hafez, 1999).

4.3.4 MEDIA INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND COMBAT RACISM

4.3.4.1 ANTI-RACIST CAMPAIGN EFFORTS AND EFFECTS

After the racist excesses in Rostock and Hoyerswerda in the early 1990s, a host of campaigns against racism and xenophobia were launched. Ruhrmann and associates (1996) even go as far as to say that these campaigns became the everyday practise in media communication. The campaigns were initiated by enterprises, federal and state governments, the media themselves as well as their lobbies or trade unions, NGOs and many more. Communication scientists have evaluated the possibilities and limits of campaigns for tolerance in very distinct ways. Empirical research that examines the attention, evaluation, and attitude changes triggered by such PR-campaigns is rare. One of the exceptions is the study by Ruhrmann et al. (1996), in which questionnaires were used to discover how respondents reacted to three different tolerance campaigns in 1994, namely 1) an advertisement campaign of the *Esprit* firm with the message 'live and work together'; 2) a sticker action launched by the *Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger* (Federal Union of German Newspaper Publishers, BDZV), 'Hatred against foreigners - we say no!'; and 3) an advertisement campaign of the federal and state ministers of Interior 'Fairness, understanding (*Fairständnis*) and respect for human dignity - against racism'. All three campaigns were evaluated as good by more than one half of the respondents (*Esprit*, 73 per cent; BDZV, 55.8 per cent; and 'Fairness', 68.6 per cent, n=263). For the sticker campaign, an additional question was asked about whether those interviewed were willing to attach the sticker, for example, on their cars. This was refused by 49.8 per cent of those interviewed; somewhat less, 47.1 per cent, were willing to do so. Another question concerned

whether, generally speaking, there were either too many or not enough campaigns against racism (see Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents' evaluation of a number of anti-racist campaigns (interviews held in 1994).

Far too many campaigns	2.8
Rather too many campaigns	15.7
Not too many nor too few campaigns	41.8
Rather too few campaigns	34.5
Far too few campaigns	5.2
Total	100.0

Source: Ruhrmann et al. (1996)

In addition, the authors asked respondents about their evaluation of news coverage about foreigners, their contact with foreigners, and political attitudes, as well as their approval/refusal of discriminatory statements. The analyses show that racism was essentially related to their political attitudes and to a lesser extent to their personal contact with foreigners. The more respondents had contact with migrants in their social context, the less racist their opinions were. Based on these observations, the researchers concluded that campaigns against racism only have a limited chance of changing attitudes in the population about foreigners, because political attitudes cannot be changed by campaigns while evaluations of the campaigns were made against the background of these attitudes (Ruhrmann et al., 1996). The authors recommend to thematise where possible single fact-oriented attitudes of the audience and to try to refute prejudices with concrete examples, instead of appealing to general and very broadly interpreted attitudes, as happened in the three campaigns analysed.

4.3.4.2 ANTI-RACIST CAMPAIGNS: FRAMING STRATEGIES AND EFFECTIVENESS

In the framework of a comparison between German and British anti-racist campaigns, Sigrid Baringhorst (2000) examined advertisement campaigns, which in the 1990s appeared in selected

German periodicals. She identified five different framing strategies that were used to promote cultural diversity through advertising:

- *Appeals to socio-economic self-interest.* Particularly advertisements that are commissioned by enterprises or business associations emphasise the economic advantages for the German economy that will result from the employment of migrant labour.
- *Appeals to humanitarianism and compassion.* In advertisements of private, non-commercial initiatives, Germans often direct openly expressed empathy towards strangers as victims of violent attacks.
- *Appeals for identification and declarations of affection.* Examples of this type of appeal are confessions such as 'My best friend is a foreigner' or the 'I am a foreigner' declaration signed by representatives of the German entertainment industry.
- *Communication of guilt and fear.* Some campaigns try to draw attention to the discrimination and racism suffered by ethnic minority groups, by means of drastic and shocking images. To this type of communication also belong the advertisements and spots that evoke memories of Nazi terror and in this way link up contemporary issues to the German Nazi-Socialist past and the related national guilt problematic.
- *Ironic twists and humorous strategies of degradation.* Irony and humour are used in quite a lot of campaigns, in order to illustrate the absurdity of racist hatred and prejudice.

The effectiveness of such campaigns should be measured and judged less in relation to individual attitude changes, but more in terms of social self-perception and -representations. They rather serve the self-confirmation of a German collective that perceives its society as tolerant and having a high moral standing, the confirmation of a shared moral consensus rather than the re-education of the individual (Baringhorst, 2000). The potential benefits are contrasted by possible dangers that are located in particular in specific content and formal structures of anti-racist messages.

Each of the types mentioned above has its weaknesses. Affectionate harmony or the primary view of migrants as victims of racist violence hardly contributes to raising awareness about the position of ethnic minorities. Campaigns that generate feelings of fear and guilt lead to reactions of rejection or denial, and contrariness. Many campaigns feed on a moral 'minimum consensus', which aims at the largest popular acceptance. Therefore, distinctions between immigrants and nationals are often denied or minimised, and structural conditions that determine unequal opportunities and living standards are not considered. The conclusion of the author: the comparison with Great Britain indicates, that in Germany the potential for anti-racist campaigns is not fully used. As yet, the thematisation of direct and structurally determined discrimination of immigrants in politics, education, and in the labour and housing markets is missing in the German campaigns. The campaigns should also address the practises of direct and indirect discrimination enacted by societal and official actors (Baringhorst, 2000).

4.3.4.3 *MORE COLOUR IN THE MEDIA' PROJECT*

'More colour in the media' is the name of a project which was carried out between 1996 and 1998 by the *Adolf Grimme Institute (AGI)*¹⁷. This was a professional qualification programme, which offered practical training in radio and television journalism to 20 women from ethnic-cultural minority groups. Starting from the observation that migrant women and men are underrepresented in the media (reliable statistics on the participation in the media profession were not available), the attempt was made to encourage media enterprises to scrutinise and change their staff policy and programme structuring and, at the same time, to train a group of women interested in the radio and television profession over several months and to offer them experience as volunteers with public and private broadcasters and production companies (Jungk, 1999). Six participants found a permanent or temporary contract as editor immediately after the conclusion of the programme. Another six began working as so-called permanent free-lance collaborators.

17 <http://www.grimme-institut.de>

Two of them have become mothers and have put aside their ambitions at least for the time being. The prospects regarding the remaining six women are either not clear at present, or the registration information about their current professional situation is missing. In view of the employment situation in the media trade, the initiators value the overall result very positively.

The volunteers had variable experiences with inter-cultural awareness in the media institutions. In some cases, they encountered high acceptance among their colleagues and their professionalism was acknowledged; there were however also cases of discriminatory and insensitive behaviour. Overall, they judged the willingness of the media institutions to open up to inter-cultural dialogue with scepticism. According to their experience, decision makers in the media industry were not fully committed to multicultural recruitment initiatives nor were they articulating existent policies to all employees. A specific criticism from the organisers of the project 'More colour in the media' was directed at the public service broadcasting companies. These organisations were unwilling to integrate the participants in their regular volunteer programme, because they perceived this as an unacceptable interference with their selection criteria. The original concept of the project could thus not be effectively carried out as planned. In the end, another cooperation in the form of volunteer training was made possible - mostly because individual, committed people in the media institutions (in particular at the public service stations *Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg* (ORB) and *Sender Freies Berlin* (SFB)) did support the idea.

4.3.4.4 INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL ON MEDIA CONTENTS

Besides the spontaneous and rather sporadic initiatives and campaigns discussed so far, a series of institutional forms of control of media contents exists in Germany, in particular the *Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehen* (Voluntary Television Self-Control, FSF)¹⁸ and the *Trägerverein Deutscher Presserat* (which embodies the voluntary self-regulation of the printed media). The principles of pub-

18 <http://www.fsf.de>

lishing contained in the *Pressekodex* (press code) of the *Presserat* (Press Council), which have been decided in cooperation with the press associations, contain for example the guideline that no-one should be discriminated against because of their membership to a racial, ethnic, religious, social, or national group. In the coverage about crime, the membership of the suspects or culprits to religious, ethnic or other minorities should only be mentioned in cases where a justifiable reason exists for the understanding of the event reported. Thereby it should be taken into account that including such information might incite prejudice (*Pressekodex* in the edition of 17 September 1997)¹⁹.

4.3.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite the difficulty to sum up in a few lines the essence of the wealth of reported research results, in principle it can be sustained that the insights of communication sciences about the general mechanisms of journalistic selection and reporting are also valid for reporting about racism and right-wing extremism. Media are able to influence social and political issue agendas (for example in the asylum debate), they promote stereotypes through the type or amount of coverage (for example about ethnic minorities), and are oriented towards event reporting (as opposed to background reporting, for example in the case of extreme right-wing violence). Following the rise of extreme right-wing movements and violence in the 1990s, the German media have reinforced their role as independent social actors that - in addition to their function of transmitting information - try to positively influence the social climate in Germany through the promotion of tolerance and the initiation of anti-racism campaigns. Research on the positive and negative effects of media show interesting results about the limited impact on individual attitude changes. The negative or positive role of concerted action within the media or in combination with the debate in the public sphere is revealed. Precisely in instances where political attention to foreigners' issues seemed absent, or where media tended to eschew these, a part of the news-reading public would more easily support the mobilisation on these issues by radical

19 <http://www.presserat.de/pressekodex.pdf>

right-wing parties. Other research mentioned the possible positive outcome of information that is focused on backgrounds (as opposed to event reporting), and of (so far not existing) campaigns that highlight concrete examples capable of challenging prejudice, and show particular instances of (institutional) discrimination, rather than general appeals to moral principles and abstract positive portrayals of 'foreigners'.

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4.3.7 INTERNET ADDRESSES

Ausländerbeauftragte der Bundesregierung (Government official for foreigners' issues) <http://www.bundesauslaenderbeauftragte.de>

Links to many NGOs:

<http://www.bundesauslaenderbeauftragte.de/links/index.stm>

Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger (BDZV)

<http://www.bdzv.de>

Laws: http://www.fsf.de/texte/Gesetze/hauptteil_gesetze.htm

- Grundgesetz (Constitutional law) (GG)
- Gesetz über die Verbreitung jugendgefährdender Schriften und Medieninhalte (Law concerning the dissemination of papers and media that are dangerous for youth) (GjS)
- Gesetz zum Schutz der Jugend in der Öffentlichkeit (Law to protect youth in the public sphere) (JÖSchG)
- Strafgesetzbuch (Criminal law) (StGB)
- Rundfunkstaatsvertrag (Agreement between State and Broadcasting Companies) of 1 April 2000
- EU-Fernsehrichtlinie (EU directive on television)

Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehen (FSF)

<http://www.fsf.de>

Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Multimedia Dienstanbieter e.V. (FSM)

<http://www.fsm.de>

Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft (FSK)

<http://www.fsk.de>

Landesmedienanstalten

<http://www.alm.de>

Landesanstalt für Rundfunk Nordrhein-Westfalen

<http://www.lfr.de>

Trägerverein Deutscher Presserat e.V. (freiwillige Selbstkontrolle gedruckter Medien)

<http://www.presserat.de>

Pressekodex

<http://www.presserat.de/pressekodex.pdf>

Verband Privater Rundfunk und Telekommunikation (VPRT)

<http://www.vprt.de>

Verband Deutscher Zeitschriftenverleger e.V. (VDZ)

<http://www.vdz.de>