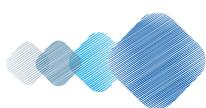


LIFE to the BORDER

Reporting by Macedonian Media Outlets about Roma and the Visa Liberalization



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Abstract

This analysis examines the negative effects of the public discourse strategy following the pressures by the EU on Macedonia regarding the abuse of the visa-free regime. The analysis covers media outlets with the highest ratings and with the largest circulation in Macedonia, elaborating upon the manner they report about the issue Roma being returned from border crossing points of the Republic of Macedonia, which is unlawful. The media played a key role in the negative framing of the Roma ethnic community that was caught in the web of repercussions occurring following the visa liberalization. The negative framing of an entire ethnic group resulted in a double violation of rights of persons belonging to the Roma community.

Preface

This analysis was prepared under the Project entitled Combating Barriers for Exit: Macedonian Roma at the Borders, implemented by the European Policy Institute in Skopje and the KHAM NGO from Delchevo. The Project's main objective is to contribute to changing the public discourse, founded on policies and practices that portray Roma as a threat to the visa-free regime for Macedonia. The Project examines how the visa liberalization process, as an instrument for Europeanization, has contributed to shaping and applying policies, which limit the freedom of movement of the Roma in the case of Macedonia.

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Introduction

Upon the proposal of the European Commission and with the endorsement of the European Parliament, the Decision of the EU Council of Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs amending Regulation 539/2001 entered into force on 19 December 2009. Thus, the Republic of Macedonia was granted visa-free regime of travel to countries of the Schengen area.¹

The number of asylum seekers coming from the Republic of Macedonia to Germany was 60,888 in the period from 2010 to 2015. On annual basis, the highest number of asylum seekers was recorded in 2015, i.e. 15.855 asylum seekers.²

In May 2011, Belgium demanded that the European Commission introduce a suspension of the visa-free regime for Macedonia and Serbia.³ In 2012, in the Republic of Macedonia, four persons were sentenced to 4 years imprisonment for abuse of the visa-free regime.⁴ The threats of the visa regime being reintroduced resurfaced after the European Parliament adopted a Resolution in 2013 introducing a mechanism for prevention of abuse of the visa-free regime. This mechanism envisages suspension of the right to freedom of movement if the practice of crossing the borders without any grounds by nationals of Western Balkan countries continues.⁵ Simultaneously, Macedonia enhanced the precautionary measures at border crossing points and introduced stricter controls. Informative and repressive measures were introduced at border crossing points.⁶ In general, the measures were applied to the Roma population, i.e. Roma at border crossing points were required to present additional documents, such as letters of support, EURO 500 in cash and to prove that they would not apply for an asylum in European countries. Even in cases in which Roma fulfilled these unlawful “conditions”, they were returned from the border crossing points.⁷ Border police officers wrote two letters on their passports- “AZ”, which stand for asylum seeker.⁸ Reports of non-governmental organizations and the Report of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights confirm that Roma were discriminated against at border crossing points and that they were subjected to racial profiling at the border.⁹ This was confirmed by the Ombudsman’s Office, which 2015, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, organized a Conference on the topic of *Limiting the Right to Freedom of Movement of the Roma at Border Crossing Points*. The Conference produced the conclusion that Roma had been deprived of their right to freedom of movement and that they had been discriminated against and racially profiled at border crossing points.¹⁰

After several waves of migration of nationals of Macedonia to EU Member-States, the Roma “were called on the carpet”. Therefore, the system institutions, primarily in Macedonia, pressured by representatives of EU bodies, started applying discriminatory practices, which run contrary to the legal, constitutional, and political norms and human rights.¹¹

1 2001. Council Regulation (EC) No. 539/2001 of 15 March 2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement. (EC) No. 539/2001. Official Journal of the European Communities.

2 Romalítico, “Migration of Roma in EU: The Case of Romani Asylum Seekers from Western Balkans”. Roma Policy Analysis, 2016, 1-7. 5.

3 Simonida Kacarska, Europeanisation through mobility: visa liberalization and citizenship regimes in the Western Balkans (University of Edinburgh: School of Law, 2012). 17.

4 Simonida Kacarska, *ibid.* 18.

5 Христов, Боби, „ЕП одобри можно враќање на визите, ако има злоупотреби“, 24 вести, 12 септември 2013 година. (Hristov, Bobi., “The EP endorsed possible reintroduction of visas if there are abuses”) Accessed in April/May 2016, <http://24vesti.mk/ep-odobri-mozhno-vrakjanje-na-vizite-ako-ima-zloupotrebi>

6 Блажевска, Катерина, „Суспензијата на безвизниот режим е казна за граѓаните“, DW, <http://www.dw.com/mk/суспензијата-на-безвизниот-режим-е-казна-за-граѓаните/a-17276344> декември, 6 (Blazevska, Katerina., “Suspension of the visa-free regime is a punishment for the citizens). Accessed in April/May 2013.

7 „Кој може да лета за Германија“, Нова Македонија, (“Who can fly to Germany, Nova Makedonija daily newspaper) Accessed in April 2016, <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=62114725183&id=9&setlzdanie=23205>.

8 Monthly Report for the Situation of the Roma Rights in Macedonia (May-June 2011). Report, ROMA RIGHTS FORUM “ARKA”, (2011).

9 Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe, (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publications, 2012) 81-85.

10 Годишен извештај за степенот на обезбедувањето, почитувањето, унапредувањето и заштита на човековите слободи и права 2015, извештај, Народен правобранител на Република Македонија (2016), 87 (2015 Annual Report of the Ombudsman) 87.

11 Simonida Kacarska, *ibid.* 20.

The consequence of the restrictions implemented upon the proposal of the EU was the return of Roma from border crossing points, with the pretext that the motives for their crossing the border were essentially of migration character, i.e. their ultimate goal was to seek economic asylum in EU Member States (in Western Europe).

This analysis examines the negative effects of the public discourse strategy following the pressures by the EU on Macedonia regarding the abuse of the visa-free regime. The analysis covers media outlets with the highest ratings and with the largest circulation in Macedonia, elaborating upon the manner they report about the issue of Roma being returned from border crossing points of the Republic of Macedonia, which is unlawful.

In political and cultural terms, the Roma community is recognized only as a community inferior to the other non-Roma communities. In the public area, the Roma community is consistently adapted and put in a position to serve interests of other communities, which in political and cultural terms are superior compared to the Roma community. In this regard, the media have played a key role in the negative framing of the Roma ethnic community that was caught in the web of repercussions following the visa liberalization. The negative framing of an entire ethnic group has resulted in double victimization of the Roma.

Discourse analysis offers the opportunity to examine the textual parameters of a language and of a narrative, which dominate the everyday communication. This method helps peel off the ideological layers in the world, in which language is a mechanism to bypass entities, while ultimately producing ideological, political, cultural and psychological implications.

Discourse analysis accepts the world as a textual building material or simply as a text or a system of texts that are to be read by the person that analyses and follows psychological processes embedded in the texts.¹²

The permanent construction of the language shapes and provides meaning for the different linguistic parameters and notions. Thus, language serves politics and political entities. In the process of collective subjectivization using language and the imposed narrative, discourse analysis represents deconstruction and “dismantling” of the ideological supplements featuring the language deriving from the dominant ideology.

*It provides the ideal opportunity to analyze ideology in psychology, provided that we read it consistently.*¹³ Ideology is often “invisible” and full meanings, which attract the attention, having the effect of defocusing or turning the attention from the structure and the spirit of the message. Media discourse analysis examines all categories using which language contextualizes or de-contextualizes. The linguistic world is a counterpart to the world we live in. However, it has an added and increased dosage of meanings and symbols that narrow down or expand notions for certain aspects of everyday life.

The information that Roma are a threat to the visa liberalization for Macedonia implies that the process of integration of Macedonia into the EU is obstructed. Thus, Roma become the enemy. This makes the Roma victims of a discourse strategy, which if examined more closely with intertextual analysis of daily newspapers shows an interiorized logical and practical component in the society. More detailed final considerations in this respect are to be found at the end of this analysis.

The next part describes the research methodology, and based on the analysis, the following chapter presents the research findings of the conducted media analysis.

¹² Banister, Peter, *Qualitative Methods in Psychology: A Research Guide*. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994), 92.

¹³ Ian Parker, *Qualitative Psychology: Introducing Radical Research* (Maidenhead, England: Open University Press, 2005), 88.

Methodology

The starting point of the analysis is the topical problem of negative stereotype stories about the Roma in the Macedonian society. The analysis attempts to expose the approach of the media towards the Roma, the relations and contexts in which intentionally or not Roma are placed causing negative attitude by the rest of the population and the perpetuation of stereotypes that the media thus reinforce. These are the issues of interest in the qualitative analysis of media texts about the return of Roma from Macedonian border crossing points. The method applied in the media analysis is the method of critical discourse analysis.

The research sample covers traditional and new media outlets published at the national level on the entire territory of the Republic of Macedonia in the Macedonian and in the Albanian language. The main criteria in selecting the research sample is the media's coverage of the audience at the national level, i.e. the circulation of newspapers, ratings of TV stations and the number of individual visitors and visited sites of web portals. Based on such criteria, the sample consists of seven media outlets. Five of them are printed and on-line media (Dnevnik, Koha, Republika- Albanian Language Desk, Utrinski vesnik, and Vest) and two TV stations (Sitel and Kanal 5).

Printed media outlets have been selected based on their circulation. The daily newspaper in the Republic of Macedonia with the highest circulation is the Vest daily newspapers with 32,000 copies, followed by the Dnevnik daily newspaper with 25,000 copies and then Utrinski vesnik with 10,200 copies. It should be taken into consideration that in the course of the research new newspapers appeared, and some of them were closed. Such newspapers were not taken as part of the research sample because it was not possible to continually follow their reporting throughout the past years. The Koha newspaper is the newspaper with the largest circulation among newspapers in the Albanian language and is published and circulated on the entire territory of the country. The Republika web portal- Albanian Language Desk is a news web portal. According to the analysis of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the Sitel TV station has had the highest ratings for several years in a row. Hence, in 2011 it had 28.98% share of the total ratings, while the Kanal 5 TV station is the second ranked having 16.71% coverage.¹⁴ In 2012, Sitel had 22% share of the ratings, while Kanal 5 was ranked second with 9% share of ratings. In 2013, the Sitel TV station had 28.60% share of the ratings, while the Kanal 5 TV station had a 12, 80% share of the ratings.¹⁵

The search for texts and contributions in media outlets has resulted in impossibility to exhaust the sources (media outlets) and their history of reporting on this issue. Owing to unknown reasons, the Kanal 5 and Sitel TV stations do not provide Macedonian readers and researchers their entire archive of reports on their websites. This narrows down the possibility for an in-depth analytical elaboration of their manner of reporting and to better identify the media knots in the narrative cobweb. The search of TV reports kept in the archives of the TV stations themselves would take a longer period of mechanical search, review, and selection, which is time consuming and demands more resources.

This research analyses articles published on the topic of *Roma returned from Macedonian borders*. The selection of texts is based on the established reporting timeframe, which covers a comprehensive period from 2011 to 2016. The reason for setting this timeframe is the EU report and the occurrence of so called

¹⁴ Анализа на пазарот на радиодифузната дејност за 2013 година, анализа, Совет за радиодифузија на Република Македонија, (2013) 11 (2013 Analysis of the broadcasting market, Broadcasting Council of the Republic of Macedonia) 2013, 11.

¹⁵ Анализа на пазарот на радиодифузната дејност за 2013 година, Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги, (2014) 9, (2013 Analysis of the broadcasting market, Broadcasting Council of the Republic of Macedonia 2014), 9.

“false asylum seekers” in 2011, which worsened the EU rhetoric for Macedonia¹⁶ and Serbia, threatening with the possibility of these countries losing the visa-free regime of travel.

Under a timeframe determined as described above, the critical discourse analysis covers 25 journalist texts on the topic.

¹⁶ Simonida Kacarska, *Europeanisation through mobility: visa liberalization and citizenship regimes in the Western Balkans* (University of Edinburgh: School of Law, 2012).

Roma Returned from Border Crossing Points from the Viewpoint of Macedonian Media Outlets

Reporting by the Dnevnik Daily Newspaper

In its edition of 20 February 2011, the Dnevnik newspaper published an article entitled “Belgium puts an end to the asylum story”, <http://dnevnik.mk/?ItemID=36CF7F2E3EF7AE48BE96AC52AFD04D99>.

The sentence, which reads: “**The vast majority of persons seeking asylum in Belgium, coming from Macedonia, Serbia and from Kosovo, are Roma...**” corresponds to the title, i.e. it derives from the title. Asylum seekers and Roma as the key words in the synthesized expression “false asylum seekers” are a precise expression of the notional attitude contained in previously established stereotypes. The author of the article presents numbers according to which 75% of the asylum seekers are Roma from Kosovo, while 25% are Albanians. The text is not clear whether the quoted person presented the data himself or the journalist arbitrarily supplemented the sentence with his own data. The dilemma is further complicated with the direct quote in which Mr. Van den Bulck does not state the ethnic background of the persons, mentioning instead only the countries wherefrom they come. This opens the possibility for the Dnevnik newspaper journalist to frame an ethnic group in a negative context by himself, going beyond what the source of information said in the quoted statement. Further in the text the journalist elaborates the thesis that Macedonian Roma seeking asylum in Western countries, declare themselves as Roma from Kosovo. Allegedly, this would increase their chances of being granted an asylum. This again makes Roma the target of constructions, in which one particular piece of information is essentialized as a general qualification of an entire ethnic group.

In its edition of 26 May 2011, the Dnevnik newspaper published an article entitled “**Macedonia should not close the borders for Roma asylum seekers**”. <http://www.dnevnik.mk/default.asp?ItemID=33FD-F309747DFE4FB2E26378B656547F>

The title of the article itself identifies asylum seekers as persons belonging to the Roma ethnic community. Such an expression “Roma asylum seekers” is a type of journalistic neologism, serving to link, i.e. equalize two terms used in the text “Roma” and “asylum seekers”. Despite the fact that the article presents a quote from a non-governmental organization as the source of the information, the journalist’s intervention in the title implies that the source of the problem with asylum seekers is the Roma ethnic community. This sentence fully integrates the stereotypes that Roma are returned from border crossing points and that passengers belonging to the Roma ethnic community are asylum seekers.

The same article continues with the sentence: **the numbers show that the largest number of false asylum seekers in Germany are Roma**. This is coherent with the title and with the stereotype, which is replicated by the contents of the text. This is discrimination *par excellence*, for the freedom to leave one’s country is not conditioned by the ethnic background of the person wishing to leave the country.

The text ends with a concluding sentence in favour of the Macedonian Government, which is a text segment that has nothing to do with the topic of the article, the title of which includes negatively selected semantic profile of Roma leaving the country.

In its edition of 10 June 2011, the **Dnevnik** newspaper published an article entitled “**Belgium threatened to introduce visas for Macedonians as of September**” <http://www.dnevnik.mk/?ItemID=B67B-5CB642ADD041A0AAD7A7961FEC65>.

This text is part of a series of texts, which establish direct link between asylum seekers and the Roma ethnic community. Using EC information, the author of the text considers that 80% of the Macedonian asylum seekers are Roma, and 20% are Albanians. Further, in the article, Roma are identified as an ethnic group, which is a threat to Macedonia, motivated to leave the country by economic reasons. This fortifies the reasoning behind the sequence *Roma-asylum seekers- threat*. The article ends with a sentence which reads “**The EU must put Macedonia in a *fait accompli* situation**”, which supports the narrative, according to which there is a threat of losing privileges the EU has granted to Macedonia, and that the danger in this respect comes from the Roma. This text refers to official sources of information, as well as to a “**confidential report**” that “**Dnevnik has come in the possession of**” as stated in the article. It is not clear whether the journalist has made an in-depth analysis of the reports he refers to or has just conveyed parts of the reports arbitrarily and uncritically. In addition, there is no mention of international human rights protection organizations, nor of national non-governmental human rights protection organizations, which could call into question the discourse followed by the EU, as transposed in the article. The text fails to present positions of the “other side”, i.e. views that would challenge the given statements.

In its edition of 14 December 2014, the Dnevnik newspaper published an article entitled “**Is there European justice for the Roma?**” <http://dnevnik.mk/?ItemID=C69B6F16F4A6514092B6F96D4594648B>

The text tries to explain problems affecting the visa-free regime and the threat of losing such a regime of travel because of the so-called category of “false asylum seekers”, which is made up of Roma. The author of the text appeals to the EU requesting interventions by the EU that would have the purpose of increasing the welfare packages and opportunities that would improve the social status of Roma and would thus deter them from emigrating. In this text, the term “false asylum seekers” is qualified in the introduction, i.e. in the first paragraph. The author paraphrases statements by representatives of Roma organizations, in such a way that the said term used in those statements covers an entire ethnic group. Sentences such as “**Non-governmental organizations appeal, as they say, that an end is put to the unequal treatment of Roma at border crossing points and to the limitation of their freedom of movement. They do not deny the *de facto* situation that the majority of false asylum seekers are persons belonging to this ethnic community, and further consider that because of false asylum seekers potential passengers cannot leave the country**” show that with in the linguistic articulation, the term “false asylum seekers” is internalized among the community that is subjected to discrimination, is structurally marginalized and inferior compared to the dominant narratives. The text underscores that the problem is not Macedonia, but the EU, assigning thus the responsibility. Even more, the journalistic coinage “as they say” serves to distance the editorial board from the statement the journalist is conveying. The coinage, inserted in the text, shows to readers that the journalist distances himself from the statement of non-governmental organizations, instructing thus readers how to read, i.e. interpret the text.

In its edition of 15 December 2014, the Dnevnik daily newspaper published an article entitled “**The EU has problems with asylum seekers, but pressures Macedonia**” <http://dnevnik.mk/?ItemID=F-3CB8FD3A6E4F34195BEEF5D777EFE47>.

In the Dnevnik article of 15 December 2014, entitled “The EU has problems with asylum seekers, but pressures Macedonia” the term asylum seekers is equalized with persons belonging to the Roma community, as early as in the first paragraph of the text. The explanation that “**a group of eight Roma**” was

returned from the border is a journalistic construct, using which the author of the text explains who are the asylum seekers because of whom Macedonia is under pressure from the EU. It is obvious that the author of the text himself is negatively framing the Roma population, if one takes into consideration the following paragraph: **“According to her, to a large extent, it is a matter of unequal treatment and discrimination against persons belonging to the Roma community, who make the majority of false asylum seekers from Macedonia, as well as of violation of the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of movement and to leave one’s country.”** When paraphrasing the source of information, the journalist arbitrarily inserts a notion, which is of no relevance to the situation that the author of the quoted statement tries to describe. This utterly unprofessional work by the journalist in fact represents pointing of the finger to the Roma, as a community that creates the problem of false asylum seekers from Macedonia. Thus, Roma are implicitly accused to be the source of the problem, and in a segment of the text, which in fact is to present their viewpoint of the problem.

Reporting by the Vest Daily Newspaper

In its edition of 19 May 2011, the Vest daily newspaper published an article entitled **“(The EU is preparing sanctions) Visas will be issued only in one embassy”** <http://www.vest.mk/?ItemID=2AFE903159EA-3F46BE91ECB22206D435>.

The text has an unsubstantiated and speculative character, since it does not precisely state the source of information presented in the text. The heading before the title of the article has the aim of frightening the citizens, while the sub-heading, which reads, “Will Macedonian citizens be treated as hooligans?” adds the tabloid feature to the entire text. This is all “spiced up” by not stating the source of information presented in the text. In such a context, without a precisely stated source, the journalist arbitrarily equalizes the term “asylum seekers” with the term “Roma”, putting himself in the position of an expert. Thus, the journalist offers the forecast that asylum seekers could prompt anti-Roma sentiments.

Before the title there is a conclusion and an intimidation, in the form of **“The EU prepares sanctions”**, while asylum seekers are portrayed as a factor threatening the visa-free regime, while the concluding paragraph reads **“The EU admits that they know that reintroduction of visas could cause anti-European sentiments in Macedonia, but also anti-Roma sentiments, since the largest part of asylum seekers are Roma, but also add that if the wave of asylum seekers coming to Member-States continues that could seriously reinforce the anti-enlargement sentiments in the Union.”** This comment in the last paragraph of the text precisely shows the problems that this text abounds in and the fact that it perpetuates stereotypes about the Roma and their ensuing discrimination. Ethnic background is not the main identity feature using which asylum seekers are to be profiled, especially not in terms of racial profiling. The statement is linked with the possibility of losing the visa-free regime and opens the possibility to shift the blame. The comment in the last paragraph is in fact a conclusion of the journalist and implies that the journalist fully agrees with it.

In its edition of 8 June 2011, the Vest daily newspaper published an article entitled **“The number of Macedonian asylum seekers in Switzerland increased in May”** <http://www.vest.mk/default.asp?ItemID=332E09B42195E14F9A75B2624EB8B384>.

The article fuels the dynamic discriminatory narrative against the Roma. At first glance, the article presents information relating to persons applying for asylum in Switzerland and their total number. The text draws

an analogy between asylum seekers and the Roma. The concluding paragraph of the article says **“In the press release of the Swiss Migration Office it is again clearly underlined that the largest number of asylum seekers from Macedonia are of Roma ethnic origin, who have left because they have no socio-economic prospects in the country.”** The comment in the last paragraph of the text implies agreement with the referred to statement and it primarily represents a conclusion following the analysis that the journalist has made. However, the ethnic and racial qualification of the term “false asylum seekers” is an act of discrimination. The Annual Report of the Swiss Federal Office for Migration,¹⁷ confirms the information conveyed by the journalist in this text. The Report furthermore states: “As in the previous year, several thousand Serbian, and Macedonian nationals, many of whom belong to the Roma minority group, took advantage of the eased travel restrictions to apply for asylum within a Schengen country in 2011.” Following the same discriminatory approach that the Swiss Federal Office for Migration has applied is the main problem with this article and with the entire anti-Roma agenda when presenting and profiling Roma in the public.

In its edition of 8 June 2011, the Vest daily newspaper published an article entitled **“(The man from Kumanovo transporting Roma to Germany and to the Netherlands was convicted to) Eight years imprisonment for transporting asylum seekers”** <http://www.vest.mk/default.asp?ItemID=FF-8413C176C8DE4CA60EFC049B5A5108>

The text contains a gross equalization between the terms Roma and asylum seekers, which creates a negative contextualization in the text. This is a blatantly discriminatory text, which emanates discriminatory practices even as early as the title itself. It is needless to ethnically identify so-called false asylum seekers and in this given case, there are no possibilities to criminally prosecute people for crossing the border. The entire text is founded on the thesis that Roma who attempt to cross the border are lawbreakers. The text implies that *a priori* Roma have the goal of applying for asylum and that they are damaging the interests of the state (of the Republic of Macedonia) and its nationals. The text elaborates upon abuse of the visa-free regime, without previously examining the motives of the “felons”. The sentence, which reads **“According to the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the person left the group of Roma at the age from 20 to 50 years in a van with German registry plates.”** is a classic example of discriminatory association and profiling. Citizens, i.e. readers do not have any need to know what is the ethnic background of the seventeen people who wanted to cross the border, and were stopped and prevented from doing so, by which their constitutionally and legally guaranteed rights were violated.

In the last paragraph, the author persists with the same rhetoric. Thus, the article states **“According to the police, Ridvan from Kumanovo, who added his wife’s surname to his surname, driving a van with German registry plates has transported Roma on a number of occasions. He claimed that he was taking them for a visit to his home in Germany. However, the Public Prosecutor’s Office claims that he abused his German nationality and his guests in fact ended up in centres for asylum seekers.”** This paragraph has all elements of discrimination and stereotype narrative articulation, being also of speculative character. The author of the text agrees with the statement that links Roma and the centres for asylum seekers, producing thus the notion that Roma are the ones that end up in asylum centres as false asylum seekers.

In its edition of 19 March 2014, the Vest daily newspaper published an article entitled **“(Germany eliminates the problem with asylum seekers) Asylum seekers will be returning home within a week”** <http://www.vest.mk/default.asp?ItemID=18B796D5466D9E43B81222F527AA5B25>

17 Migration Report 2011, report, Federal Department of Justice and Police DFJP (2012), 19.

Throughout the text, the author speaks about the frustration of Germany with the large number of people applying for asylum. The author links Macedonia and the Western Balkans to that frustration. The sentence **“Municipalities, which every autumn face thousands of Roma families from the Western Balkans, who come the Germany to spend the winter, are the most affected ones with the burden of this problem.”** is especially offensive owing to the insertion of the ethnic component and due to the promotion of the thesis that Roma are people who shrug off duties and responsibilities, portraying them as nomads and vagrants who want to take advantage and exploit someone’s prosperity. The comparison with a Deutsche Welle text,¹⁸ which elaborates upon the migrations of the Roma population, and this text too negatively frames the Roma, shows that the referred to sentence **“Municipalities ...are most affected with the burden of this problem.”** is a free interpretation of the source by the journalist. This sentence perpetuates the negative portraying of the Roma in the public and is not present in the source text to which the journalist refers.

In its edition of 9 November 2014, the **Vest** daily newspaper published an article entitled **“(Problems with the return from the border go out of control) Roma will set their passports on fire”** <http://www.vest.mk/default.asp?ItemID=44FED39459DC85429205BA945A5C6EA6>.

This is a particular journalistic text, which conveys summarized statements. The text focuses on statements of the non-governmental sector, of a political party, and of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of the Interior. The title and introductory part of the text contain very problematic elements. While elaborating upon the positions of the representative of the European Roma Rights Centre, there is a reference to the Roma community as a victim of the process. However, it is evident that the author consistently avoids going into more in-depth elaboration of the problem, implying that the journalist adopts the existing discourse approach towards the Roma. When the text only conveys positions and even positions of all consulted stakeholders, but does not apply a critical approach, then the article, i.e. the journalist merely conveys values and ideology that are deeply rooted and which are traditionally perpetuated.

Reporting by the Utrinski Vesnik Daily Newspaper

In its edition of 9 August 2011, the **Utrinski vesnik** daily newspaper published an article entitled **“Exit from Macedonia banned for the Roma?”** <http://www.utrinski.mk/?ItemID=B26D1B0EF6C-FF646A5B85E69D654F839> and on 17 October 2012 it published the article **“Unwanted guests from Macedonia – a European problem”** <http://www.utrinski.mk/?ItemID=37647D5F5F6B7D-439C61C7BD661DA818>. Both articles elaborate the problem through interviews with representatives of foreign institutions that are responsible for certain aspects of the visa-free regime. The first text (“Exit from Macedonia banned for the Roma”), paraphrases words of an EU civil servant, who according to the journalist uses the expression “false asylum seekers”. The last paragraph of the text quotes a statement of Pierre Mirer, Director for the Western Balkans. The quoted statement reads as follows: “Roma migrations could have an impact on the enlargement process”. A quoted statement of this character placed at the end of the article has the tendency of leading the reader to a certain predetermined conclusion and imposing that conclusion as the final and definite one. This metonymy hints to the travel by the Roma, which has become a game of chance, followed by the stylistically shaped opinion of the author about the entire process, accompanied with an attempt by the journalist to argue that the steps undertaken by the

¹⁸ Höppner, Stephanie, “Visa exemptions for Roma, Sinti put the test”, DW, October 13, 2013, accessed in April/May 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/visa-exemptions-for-roma-sinti-put-to-the-test/a-16304000>.

state authorities are a logical consequence of the continual attempts of the Roma to leave i.e. to exit the borders of Macedonia. This is a typical example of negative framing of an entire ethnic community, using the disguise of arbitrary comments not supported with facts by the journalist. To a certain extent this leads to the conclusion that Roma are the ones who pose an obstacle to the EU enlargement process and thus motivated to migrate they continually force the EU to use all available mechanisms to pressure the administration and authorities in Macedonia to prevent nationals belonging to the Roma ethnic community to exit the borders, i.e. leave Macedonia. This is confirmed with the last quotation at the end of the text, which is a statement of the head of the political department the EU Delegation in Skopje and the quotations reads, **“If in the present climate, future accessions are linked with migration issues, then the risk of refusing accession is increased.”** If the text ends with a quotation, which is not explained, not commented upon or which is not supplemented with a sentence distancing the journalist from the quotation, this implies confirmation and agreement of the journalist with the views expressed in the quotation. This is another way to frighten the readers using the Roma and the possibility that they cause closing of the borders for all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, justifying thus the necessity to sanction anyone that would become a “false asylum seeker” on any ground. Another problem burdening the text consists of the fact that it does not consult the “other side”, i.e. the stakeholders, especially Roma organizations and those advocating for the interests and rights of Roma citizens. Instead, the article contains interviews, quotations, paraphrasing and conclusions based solely on statements of EU representatives.

The second text, which is similar to the first one, also consists of paraphrased communication with EU representatives and is entitled “Unwanted guests from Macedonia - a European problem”. The text abounds in comments and stereotypes relating to the Roma and *a priori* equalizes Roma with asylum seekers. The sentence which reads **“Most of the asylum seekers, according to the government report, are Roma, about whom Friedrich said are ‘unwanted guests who do not respect the German asylum policy.’”** supports the thesis that “false asylum seekers” are of Roma ethnic background. The quotation deploys a passive approach and evidently qualifies asylum seekers as Roma. If we analyse the categories “asylum seekers” and “unwanted guests” and if we take into consideration and carefully read the continuation of the text which says **“This issue has become a European level problem with the EU recognizing that Roma are exposed to bad living conditions in their countries of origin”** then we can draw the parallel between asylum seekers and unwanted guests, and asylum seekers are the Roma, while coming at the same time to the conclusion that Roma have bad living conditions in their country of origin, i.e. we come to the passive conclusion that Roma are not wanted anywhere by anyone.

Parts of the text contain words that show compassion and “understanding” for the situation of the asylum seekers. However, the problem with this article too is that texts relating to the Roma are seemingly impartial and neutral when in fact they are not. Quite the contrary, the texts taken in their structural entirety perpetuate many stereotypes and abound in discriminatory segments.

In its edition of 11 April 2012, the **Utrinski vesnik** daily newspaper published an article entitled **“Jankulovska- The number of false asylum seekers is decreasing”** <http://www.utrinski.mk/default.asp?ItemID=376D69C95B14E04EA5F5C4920D50B69E>.

The author of the text uses the syntagma “false asylum seekers”. The Minister running the Ministry of the Interior, who is to protect the peace and order, the Constitution and laws and rights of all citizens, gives a statement according to which there is a negative phenomenon in the society, this phenomenon being “false asylum seekers”.

In continuation, the author quotes the Minister of the Interior: **“On the contrary, we will continue work-**

ing with the same intensity as we were working in the last year- 2011, when in response to the problem that occurred, the Republic of Macedonia undertook a series of measures, preventive ones, but also repressive ones.” This is a statement given following the conclusion of the Conference on the Decade of Roma Inclusion. This indirectly introduces the core meaning of the term “false asylum seekers”, i.e. the Roma and their problems. Thus, “false asylum seekers” are identified as Roma. This is confirmed in the next part of the text which reads: “She (the Minister) underlined that in terms of preventive activities, deploying in-line institutions, the Government has pursued an intensive campaign in the field visiting a number of populated areas, **“areas mainly populated by Roma”**, but also a large number of municipalities throughout Macedonia with a view to informing citizens about the essence and contents of visa liberalization.” The part of the sentence saying, **“mainly populated by Roma”** is in fact saying that a certain ethnic group is not sufficiently emancipated/informed. The fact that Roma are singled out as a community, which represents a threat, and primarily as a community that is not sufficiently emancipated and thus requires further emancipation, without at the same time mentioning other groups of citizens, is *per se* discrimination. This fortifies and perpetuates stereotypes about the Roma.

The author quotes the statement “In addition to several criminal charges filed against carriers and tour operators and fines for these legal persons, a larger number of citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, **who have not been not able to prove the purpose of their travel could not leave the country, because acting in accordance with the Schengen Code and the Law on Surveillance of the State Border, police officers** have assessed that the purpose of the travel claimed by such citizens is not justified sufficiently, i.e. the citizens could not provide evidence proving the purpose of their travel, stated the Minister of the Interior, Gordana Jankuloska”. The author of the text does not attempt to challenge the theses of the Minister and dispute them by referring to the Constitution and laws, which do not prescribe the obligation of passengers to submit evidence proving that the purpose of their travel is genuine. The fact is that the Schengen Code is not legally binding for Macedonian law enforcement officers. The Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia has not ratified it and thus it is not an integral part of the legal order of the country. Another proof that the text is biased, although there is an attempt to “sell” it as unbiased, is the fact that the author of the article has not consulted any Roma organization working on this issue. The relevant legal provisions in this context are contained in Article 27 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia- right to freedom of movement, Article 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and Article 3 of **“the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination, which prohibits discrimination and helping in discriminatory treatment on the grounds of gender, race, skin colour, sex, belonging to a marginalized group, ethnic origin or any other grounds established by law or a ratified international agreement”**.¹⁹

In its edition of 25 October 2012, the **Utrinski vesnik** daily newspaper published an article entitled **“What you need at the border is a passport and not white skin”** <http://www.utrinski.mk/?ItemID=-F2FEDEBFC92E3A4C935E4AB1C10134E5>.

The paraphrased statement, which has not been quoted in its original form, but is only retold, reads as follows “Ruzhdi Arifovski considers that the state should deal with Macedonians who possess Bulgarian passports, who according to him, make problems for the country everywhere they go by declaring themselves as Bulgarians, **instead of the state raising obstacles for the Roma who want to stay temporarily in European countries owing to purely economic reasons.**” This is not a statement, but a conclusion based on already standardized prejudices. *Inter alia*, the conclusion says that Roma are indeed emigrants and that regardless of their motive, they leave the country with the sole idea of abusing the

¹⁹ Анализа на случаи од стратешко застапување, Македонско здружение на млади правници (2016). 14. (Analysis of strategic litigation cases, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association) 14.

visa-free regime, i.e. to abuse travel for tourism purposes for other purposes in the Member-States of the Schengen area. The phrase “according to him” is a way for the author to distance himself from the statement of Ruzhdi Arifovski. What the author is saying is that the readers should have some reservations about the views of the source that are not quoted, but paraphrased by the author of the article.

Further, in the same article, the author presents the direct quote: **“Why are we returned from the border when we have biometric passports? Why only people from our community are asked for a bribe of EURO 200 or 300 to be allowed to cross the border? Why such an attitude only towards the Roma and not towards other minority groups in the country? Either we will all freely travel to the Schengen area, or if that is the solution, then such travels are to be banned for all, so that we are all equal before the law.”** There are essential inconsistencies and discrepancies between this direct quote and the paraphrased statement. The directly quoted statement says that a certain institution in charge of controlling the exit of passengers from the country violates the law and on top of that demands bribes (corruption) in order to let people exit the country. On the other hand, the paraphrased statement contains elements, which do not relate to the constitutional and legal possibilities for free movement. The paraphrased statement is in fact a speculation. The return of Roma from border crossing points cannot be based on elements, which do not relate to violations of laws, such as motives for leaving the country or the possession of a Bulgarian passport.

The entire text resonates with the connotation of emigrating and running away from poverty. This enables to quite easily establish the identity link with “false asylum seekers”, who are damaging the interests of the country in its efforts for integration into the EU and in the endeavours to maintain the visa-free regime of travel.

Reporting by the Koha Daily Newspaper

In its edition of 11 April 2012, the **Koha** daily newspaper published an article entitled **„Bie numri i azilkerkuesve të premë (The number of false asylum seekers is dropping)”**, <http://koha.mk/aktuale/13374-bie-numri-i-azilkerkuesve-te-rreme.html>.

This is a text of latent discriminatory character. It perpetuates the position that the Roma are those who in fact threaten the freedom of movement of other citizens of Macedonia who would like to travel outside the country. The text says that the number of “false asylum seekers” is dropping, with the Government and the in-line ministry undertaking activities in dealing with this problem. The text conveys a statement of the Minister of the Interior, who expresses satisfaction that the number of the so-called “false asylum seekers” has dropped, underlining activities undertaken, which *inter alia* cover visits to places (quote) **“mainly populated with Roma”**. This quote and the message given by the Ministry when placed in the context of the title of the article fully confirm the thesis that Roma are indeed the population that produces the so-called false asylum seekers and that following measures undertaken by the state authorities and the in-line Ministry, the number of such asylum seekers has dropped.

In its edition of 11 April 2013, the **Koha** daily newspaper published an article entitled **„Be planifikon rikthimin e vizave për Maqedoninë dhe Sërbine (The EU plans to reintroduce visas for Macedonia and for Serbia)”**, <http://koha.mk/aktuale/21231-be-ja-planifikon-rikthimin-e-vizave-per-maqedonine-dhe-serbine.html>.

The text follows the dominant narrative about the visa liberalization and the possibility of visas being re-introduced. The title itself aggressively turns the attention to the possibility of losing the visa-free regime. The fact that such a possibility is directly linked with the Roma is demonstrated with the following quote: **“Many asylum seekers from Serbia and Macedonia are Roma”**. The text continues by promoting the stereotype thesis that **“They are considered to be economic emigrants, who are not politically persecuted”**. This is making a difference between political and economic migrants, latently defending the former, while not justifying the latter and profiling them as Roma. The author mentions the situation in the country in which Roma are not politically discriminated, and that they simply and by inertia accept the economic situation, abusing it as a reason for their applying for asylum.

In its edition of 23 October 2012, the **Koha** daily newspaper published an article entitled **„Kur policët e bëjnë vet ligjin (When police officers create their own law)”**, <http://koha.mk/aktuale/18473-kur-policet-e-bejne-vet-ligjin.html>.

The text starts with a conclusion that representatives of institutions of the Republic of Macedonia abuse the visa-free regime too. Thus, the authors of the text do not reject the thesis that the “usual suspects” abuse the visa regime. The text elaborates the issue of relevant institutions abusing their power and competences, also presenting all characteristics of discrimination, starting with racial profiling over to marking the passports. The authors convey statements of victims who have been returned from the border. Despite the fact that the text cites that one of the elements of discrimination is racial profiling, only statements of persons belonging to the Albanian community who have been returned from the border have been taken, and not statements of persons belonging to the Roma community that is directly and mostly affected by this problem.

The text conveys the statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of the Interior, as well as statements of university professors working in the area of law and human rights. Thus, the text adopts a more critical approach to the problem of discrimination against the Roma at the border. However, there is the impression that the critical approach in this text is a consequence of the discriminatory practices against the Albanian community. The text was written in a period when both Roma and Albanians were prevented from crossing the border with the explanation that they are potential “false asylum seekers”. After a certain period, this practice was applied only to the Roma, a discriminatory practice that has persisted to this very day.

Reporting by the Republika Web Portal- Albanian Language Desk

In its edition of 12 November 2013, the **Republika** web portal published an article entitled **„Azilkërkuesit Rom, kthejnë vizat për Maqedoninë? (Are Roma asylum seekers going to bring back visas for Macedonia?)**, <http://shqip.republika.mk/?p=113649>.

This is a text of pompous promotion of the created stereotype, which is thus to be reinforced and made normal. It is not strange that a title such as this is published in an Albanian language news outlet, since the management policy of this media outlet is the same for the Macedonian Language Desk. “Republika” is one of the most profitable media outlets and is linked with the pro-government media outlets such as “Kurir” and “Radio Slobodna Makedonija”²⁰ This reveals orchestrated anti-Roma propaganda in the public discourse. The title establishes an explicit link between the terms Roma and “false asylum seekers”, de-

²⁰ Јордановска, Мери, „Провладините медиуми формираа свој синдикат на новинари”, Призма, 26 јули 2016 година (Jordanovska, Meri., “Pro-government media establish their trade union of journalists”). Accessed on 27 July 2016, <http://prizma.birn.eu.com/мк/стории/провладините-медиуми-формираа-свој-синдикат-на-новинари>

spite the fact that the term “false” is not contained in the title. However, these qualifications are attributed in the continuation of the sentence. The fact that Roma are seeking asylum in EU Member-States, means that visas will be reintroduced for Macedonia. This puts the Roma under the term “false asylum seekers”, who abuse the possibility for visa-free travel and thus damage the other citizens, including Albanians. This is the reasoning that comes up after the first reading of the title of this text.

Furthermore, the text follows the already established discourse strategy of perpetuating many stereotypes and discriminatory meanings. The first paragraph contains comments about increased number of asylum applications by citizens from Macedonia and from Serbia, which according to the author will cause reintroduction of visas. The title has already determined which groups of citizens, i.e. which ethnic group is at matter in this context, and those are the Roma, who represent the group that seeks asylum in the EU Member-States.

In the second paragraph, it is openly stated that these asylum seekers belong to the Roma ethnic community. The author does not even attempt to challenge the percentage and number of such asylum seekers, instead exclusively promotes the thesis that those are persons belonging to the Roma ethnic community.

The third paragraph also reaffirms the idea that Roma are the asylum seekers and that they are a threat to the visa liberalization for Macedonia. This paragraph even expands the terms geographically since it uses the toponym ‘the Balkans’. Thus, the text reads: **“Roma from Macedonia and from the Balkans go to Germany ...”** Thus, the text communicates not only with Macedonian citizens, but also with citizen living outside the borders of the Republic of Macedonia, who speak the Albanian language.

The text ends with a cadence and focus on terms that have been repeated throughout the text. Hence, the text ends with the sentence: **“According to statistics, the number of asylum seekers from Macedonia is increasing every month. From 247 asylum seekers in April, this number will reach 1,051 until September”**. This conclusion employs the terms Roma, false asylum seekers, and visa liberalization, despite the fact that they do not appear in the wording of the sentence. By not questioning the thesis that Roma are asylum seekers and that only Roma are asylum seekers, regardless of their relevance, these numbers represent a quantified deduction and a fortification of the final conclusion that has already appeared even at the very start of the text, namely in its title. It is even more significant that the author of the text does not refer to any source or institution that have provided these numbers, despite the fact that the sentence containing the numbers is the last sentence of the text, which also presents the final conclusion.

Reporting by the Sitel TV Station

In its internet edition of 14 October 2015, the **Sitel** TV station published a text entitled **“Conference about the Right to Freedom of Movement of Roma at Border Crossings”** <http://sitel.com.mk/konferencija-za-pravoto-na-sloboda-na-dvizhenje-na-romite-na-granichnite-premini>.

The author does not go into questioning the theses of the interviewed persons. In general, the text offers three brief interviews, i.e. statements by representatives of the EU and of the Ombudsman’s Office and of the Executive Director of the Helsinki Committee. The statements are quoted *ad integrum*, without any additional comments by the journalist. Some of the quoted statements are accompanied with paraphrasing, as a way of summing up the given statements.

The text conveys universal messages, while elaborating the meaning of multiethnicism and non-discrim-

ination. It does recognize the issue of discrimination against the Roma in their right to cross the state border, and that this is primarily done on ethnic and racial grounds. The text does not contain the terms “false asylum seekers” and “asylum seekers”.

Conclusions

This analysis had the goal of examining how media outlets have reported about the problem of Roma being returned from Macedonian border crossing points, as a specific type of consequence of the visa liberalization. It presents a chronological review of daily newspapers with the largest circulation (Dnevnik, Utrinski vesnik, Vest, Koha), the web portal (Republika, Albanian Language Desk) and the visual media outlets with the highest ratings (Sitel and Kanal 5), placing this review in the context of discriminatory practices and violations of laws by border police officers and in-line ministries (such as the Ministry of the Interior).

25 texts have been analysed, with one text being excluded from the analysis since it did not explicitly identify Roma as so-called false asylum seekers, i.e. the noun Roma could not be found in a single text of this media outlet (Kanal 5 TV Station).

The method used in the analysis is the critical discourse method, which helps identify the ideological and discourse layers, which are inherent to a text or a contribution. The entire edifice of stereotypes and prejudices is imposed by an established media agenda, which very often does not even have the goal of reproducing the relations of power in the society. However, such relations very often derive from inadvertent producing of contents as directed by the reporting policy and the narrative approach of media outlets, which in a liberal democracy should be the pillar of the political and social life.

The media outlets have reported on this topic (of Roma being returned from Macedonian border crossings and their framing in the context of asylum seekers) dynamically and at certain periods, with some of the media outlets applying a less biased approach in their reporting and some more biased approach. The selected media outlets and texts considered under this analysis follow the established media agenda regarding this topic of reporting, an agenda which in fact equalizes Roma, as an ethnic community in Macedonia, with “false asylum seekers”, a term directly linked with the Roma. Thus, the media pursue a reporting agenda, which is utterly damaging to the rights of Roma, which are grossly violated at border crossing points. The issue of lack of sources, especially the problem of well-organized archived news of the Sitel and Kanal 5 TV stations, should be underlined since this narrowed down the analytical field explored under this analysis.

A case in point in this context is the Dnevnik daily newspaper, which in 2011 reported on this issue three times - in February, May and in June. The articles start to coin the term “false asylum seeker” and create an organic unity in the reporting dynamic. The texts use the term “false asylum seekers” as an expression that integrates the term Roma, thus singling out the Roma as a possible threat that could bring about abolishment of the visa free regime for Macedonia and its citizens. In 2014 (14 and 15 December) the Dnevnik daily newspaper continued reporting Roma related information. Even after the elapsed period of time, the texts are full of stereotypes, which by now are normalized and accepted without a possibility of changing them. The texts create the image of Roma as *a priori* asylum seekers and prompt segregation implications, which stigmatize an entire part of the society.

The Vest daily newspaper joins the anti-Roma media agenda. This printed media outlet too, the same as the previously analyzed one (Dnevnik), has reported on the issue of Roma at border crossings on four occasions with a time interval between each two occasions (reports of May and June 2011, and then in March and November 2014). The reporting follows the reasoning of equalizing the identity of Roma with

so-called false asylum seekers. The texts are founded on existing stereotypes, which are perpetuated and reinforced. The texts are featured with a negative approach, without having a single critical discourse element that could dispute the term “false asylum seekers.”

The Utrinski vesnik daily newspaper reported about this issue in August and October 2011, and in April, and in October 2012. This printed media outlet too sustains the agenda of negative framing of the Roma, establishing a direct identity correlation between Roma and “false asylum seekers”. Desiring to mitigate the discrimination references of foreign authorities, authors often focus on the economic motives of the Roma prompting them to emigrate. Thus, they even more expand the realm of stereotypes.

The Albanian language daily newspaper – Koha published negatively contextualized information about the problem of visa-free regime on two occasions - in April 2012 and in April 2013. The texts adopt the already established and extensively used clichés in the discourse landscape of reporting and news making. It is interesting that in 2011, the problem of visa liberalization included the Albanians too. This daily newspaper started again reporting about the problem of visa liberalization in 2012, when stereotypes about the Roma fortified themselves, qualifying Roma as “asylum seekers” and as people threatening the visa-free regime. The analyzed articles published by this newspaper accept the Roma as a category of citizens that threatens the visa liberalization and equalize the Roma with “false asylum seekers.”

The Republika web portal- Albanian Language Desk represents the most blatant and perceptible example as to how a short article full of stereotypes can abound in discriminatory and stigmatizing framing. The title of the article is stigmatizing and elicits feelings of animosity. The reasoning is binary and uses the phrases “Roma are reintroducing borders, borders are our enemy, thus Roma are our enemy”. The text manipulates with notions and phrases such as “abolishing the visa-free regime” and “Roma are those who seek asylum.”

The Sitel TV station reported only about one event in 2015. This is a report about a Conference elaborating exactly the discriminatory practices of Macedonian border officers at border crossing points and the racial profiling they are practicing. The problem with TV stations having the highest ratings, *inter alia*, is the archiving of their news reports. Thus, no TV station keeps as part of their archive news segments older than a year.

Following the desire to explain the motives of asylum seekers, the authors attempt to apply a balanced approach in the reporting. The problem occurs as of the moment of adopting the dominating discourse approach, without deconstructing it and without considering the context and different views about the issues at hand. In this case, media outlets are just silent conveyers of stereotypes, which have multiplied because of the politically incorrect approach of the Macedonian and of the Western-European institutions.

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