MILD
More correct Information. Less Discrimination

Migrants, refugees and racialised people in media

From object to subject of information

AFRICAN MEDIA ASSOCIATION MALTA

ANTIGONE
INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE
on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence

Associazione
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Introduction

> *I believe that only extreme forms of racism are recognized as a structural problem. Everyday stereotypes are belittled and ridiculed.*

> *Unfortunately, when the country's own political actors refer to refugees and immigrants in stereotypical and racist terms, this is widely reproduced and gives the mainstream media the freedom to follow the same terminology.*

> *Black people are always the poor and marginalised, even when they are not criminals, they are still struggling-never intelligent, educated individuals whose children go to university. That stuff is simply never there.*

> *A journalist from a mainstream TV channel approached me to ask whether I wanted to tell her 'my story'. That is pure racism. She did not stop for a second to consider that I was also a journalist, a colleague of hers. She saw me as a "testimony".*

> *As happens to many racialized people in very white spaces, I tend to be compliant and 'invisible', to adapt myself to survive, because otherwise you simply don't get in, you leave.*

> *After that, hegemony is built through power relations and repetition. For me, the problem is not so much that our words are not sexy, the problem is that we have never had the power to make at least one of them be used.[1]*

Migration continues to occupy a central place in public and media debates, debates in which negative representations prevail - shaped by prejudice, stereotypes, inaccurate, or even false information - contributing to the hostility of certain segments of public opinion towards migrant, refugee, and racialised people.

The major transformations that have affected the mass information and communication system, including the rise of social media platforms and the use of Artificial Intelligence, do not appear to have fundamentally altered the dominant narrative paradigm.

While social media and new digital information channels allow for a multiplication and diversification of information sources and narrative voices, not all voices carry the same weight. Political actors and traditional media- the former due to their role and high visibility, the latter due to their authority and broad audience-continue to play a performative role in shaping the collective imagination around migration, reinforced by the close relationship between them: the media agenda tends, in fact, to follow the political one.

The representation of foreign nationals offered by the media primarily frames migration in terms of migration policy. Narratives about migrant and racialised people

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1   The quotes are drawn from some interviews conducted during the research.

who live permanently in Europe tend to be absent or focus on problematic aspects, often framed instrumentally around security, crime, and the alleged-but empirically difficult to verify-increase in what is described as citizens' perceived insecurity.[2]

How can this 'tautology of fear',[3] which so easily rebounds from political discourse to the media and shapes public perception of people with a migratory background, be dismantled? Redirecting public discourse is extremely challenging in today's cultural, political, and social context, where social crises intertwine with democratic crises, populist and nationalist impulses are growing stronger, and the internet is increasingly exploited without scruples by political entrepreneurs of racism.

Could-or can-more intensive collaboration between racialised groups, humanitarian and anti-racist organizations, and media professionals help shift this narrative paradigm? If so, in what forms and areas? This very question inspired the work presented here.

This is not a matter of 'pointing fingers' at traditional media operators; rather, it is about inventing original methods and tools of collaboration to create new narratives that reflect the completeness, complexity, and richness of contemporary society, acknowledging the plurality of its constituent identities.

We do not have, nor could we have, fixed recipes.

In the following pages, we aim to highlight the structural elements and mechanisms underpinning a media narrative that is often monotonous, stereotypical, and where the protagonists of the stories remain largely absent. In particular, we focus on the economic, social, institutional, and cultural barriers that hinder equitable access to and participation in the journalistic profession and the broader field of social communication, producing and reproducing forms of structural discrimination and racism[4]-more or less explicit-that permeate the media landscape in Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain.

The analysis draws on the findings of four national reports produced within the framework of the MILD project (*More correct Information, Less Discrimination*) by AMAM (MT), ANTIGONE - Information and Documentation Center on Racism, Ecology, peace and environment (GR), Associazione Carta di Roma and Lunaria APS (IT), and Maldita.es (ES). These reports present the results of a **qualitative** study based on interviews with a total of **68 stakeholders** selected from the fields of media and civil society.

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2   Maneri M., *Il panico morale come dispositivo di trasformazione dell'insicurezza*, in Rassegna di Sociologia n.1, January-March 2001, p. 12-13.

3   Dal Lago A., *Non-persone*, Feltrinelli, 1999

4   The European Commission itself has acknowledged the existence of structural racism in the media in its *EU Action Plan against Racism 2020–2025:* "The way in which people belonging to racial or ethnic minorities are represented in the media—or whether they are represented at all—can reinforce negative stereotypes, while the under-representation of such people in media professions further entrenches this trend. For a fair democratic debate, it is essential to have independent and pluralistic media. Promoting balanced and positive narratives, increasing journalists' awareness and knowledge, and fostering media literacy are fundamental actions to contribute to an equitable society."

Without any claim to exhaustiveness or generalization, the interviews clearly reveal some **structural characteristics common** to the media and social communication landscape regarding migrants, refugees, and people with migratory or racialised backgrounds across the four countries studied, as well as preliminary working hypotheses that could foster virtuous processes of change.

Research Methodology

The research, conducted in Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain, sought to collect information on practices adopted and promoted within traditional and alternative media, as well as by civil society movements and organisations. Its **objective** was to identify, monitor, and counter inaccurate, misleading, or false narratives about migrant and refugee people and people with a migrant background, to deconstruct these narratives, and to develop alternative ones. The study also aimed to highlight the structural social and institutional mechanisms that shape access to the journalism profession, the media narrative of migrants and people with a migrant background, and the forms of discrimination that recur in the world of journalism.

A **qualitative research methodology** was chosen, involving in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted on the basis of a common interview grid agreed upon by the partners and divided into **six main thematic areas**, as illustrated below.

1. **Engagement and access to the media sector**: the presence of foreign nationals or people with a migrant background in newsrooms and civil society organisations was investigated, and the main barriers to access to the journalism profession were identified.

2. Knowledge and awareness of the existence of forms of discrimination and racism inside and outside the workplace and their influence on migration reporting.

3. The existence of **organisational and editorial policies** aimed at preventing discrimination, hate speech or misinformation relating to migrant people or people with a migrant background in their respective sectors (media/civil society).

4. Cultural and media context in which information on migration and racialised communities is produced: particular attention was paid to analysing the most prevalent prejudices and stereotypes, the key themes shaping dominant narratives, the privileged and less visible narrative voices, and the experiences gained in monitoring misinformation and producing alternative narratives.

5. Media coverage of racism and the level of recognition of its structural nature.

6. Best practices and proposals for a more pluralistic journalism. Information was gathered on successful initiatives or strategies tested to promote balanced narratives, equality and equal opportunities within organisations, and the guarantee of human rights. Concrete proposals were also collected to improve the quality of information on migration.

Three main categories of stakeholders were identified: mainstream media editors/journalists; representatives of alternative media and activists from racialised groups; activists and communication professionals from civil society organisations and movements. In some countries (Malta, Spain), academics specialising in communication were also interviewed.

The selection of interviewees was based on the criterion of representativeness of different professional profiles, seeking to ensure gender balance. Accordingly, individuals involved in recruitment, programming, training, policy, and content production within media organisations and non-governmental organisations were identified. Various types of media (public, private, independent) operating in different information sectors (television, radio, press, magazines, social networks) were involved.

All interviewees were informed about the objectives of the study and the guarantees of privacy protection, and each contribution was anonymised using numerical codes identifying the interviews.

The interviews were conducted online, in person or by emailing the questionnaire, depending on the preference of the interviewees, between May and August 2025. They lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Participants did not receive any financial incentive for their collaboration. All interviews and written responses were conducted and archived in accordance with ethical and data protection standards compliant with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Video interviews were recorded with prior consent, then automatically transcribed and manually reviewed by the research teams to ensure accuracy.

In order to conduct an **accurate analysis**, each transcript and written response was examined verbatim; relevant parts were coded into one or more themes or subthemes to identify the most relevant topics in line with the research objectives. This approach allowed the national research teams to maintain the initial comparative analysis structure defined by the partnership while highlighting the specificities present in the different national contexts.

To contextualise the interview results, the qualitative research was accompanied by **desk research** that mapped the most recent existing literature on information, migration and racism: reports from international agencies, available official data, reports produced by independent research institutes or civil society organisations, and academic research reports.

Sharing the information gathered during the interviews at an international partnership meeting made it possible to highlight the **elements of convergence and divergence** that emerged in the four national contexts investigated and to agree on a sufficiently flexible index of reference for the national reports. The index would ensure a common analytical structure while also highlighting the specific characteristics identified in each country. This facilitated the **comparative analysis** of the results that emerged at national level, as presented in the following pages.

It is important to note that the strictly qualitative nature of the research, combined with the limited number of interviewees **(68 in total), does not allow for statistically representative conclusions** that can be generalised to the media contexts of the four countries involved in the study. The graphs and data accompanying the qualitative analysis of the information gathered through the interviews are intended

solely to highlight the most significant elements of divergence and convergence between the different national contexts that emerged during the research, without any claim to representativeness.

However, in-depth analysis of the interviews conducted revealed patterns, dynamics and tensions that **offer valuable insights into the social, professional and institutional mechanisms** that influence the careers of journalists and communicators with a migrant background, **the structural barriers** that hinder the creation of a pluralistic media environment capable of providing comprehensive coverage of contemporary society, as well as gathering **valuable insights** into possible strategies that could help trigger virtuous processes of change.

1. The context of media narratives on migration

Today, 449.3 million citizens live permanently in European Union countries, of whom 17.9 million were born in another European country and 29 million in a non-EU country.[5] Approximately 8.9 million residents born with non-EU citizenship acquired the citizenship of a Member State between 2013 and 2023.

European society has long been **pluralistic**, yet collective imagination often struggles to acknowledge this. Public debate on migration and media narratives about people with a personal or family history of migration continue to favour topics, language, mechanisms and discursive strategies that fail to recognise them as an integral part of European society.

There is a substantial body of literature available on the coverage on migration and racialised communities, and fortunately systematic mapping, monitoring and analysis initiatives exist-though mostly at the national level-that track developments in this field. The focus, however, seems to be mainly on the study of media narratives and representations rather than on the identification and analysis of those **structural elements** that contribute to the persistence of information that is still heavily biased by prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination, distorted and misleading narratives, and, increasingly today, falsehoods. Identifying and analysing these elements seems crucial in light of the important changes that are simultaneously affecting European and national migration, immigration and asylum policies, the mass media and communication system, and the social and demographic composition of European societies.

Demographically, the ageing population trend that characterises European countries - insufficiently addressed through timely structural reforms in economic, fiscal, and social spheres - is creating new imbalances that threaten the sustainability of public finances. The crisis in economic models and welfare systems is fuelling new social and generational conflicts that often pit workers, unemployed people and pensioners, permanent and precarious workers, and even "national" and foreign citizens against each other. These contradictions are exploited by the European right-wing movements and parties most hostile to foreigner nationals, which use propaganda that explicitly or implicitly employs xenophobia and racism to garner public support (Caldiron, 2024).

At the **political level**, European countries (and others) appear to have consolidated an approach that increasingly restricts the right to migrate and the right to asylum, curtails the right to reception, and strengthens programmes and initiatives aimed at externalising borders in third countries in an attempt to reduce as much as possible the number of foreigner citizens coming from third countries. In Greece

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5   The data refer to 1 January 2024 and are available on the Eurostat website **here**

and Italy in particular, migration policy management is based on a security-oriented model that exposes migrant, asylum seeker and refugee people to serious violations and forms of institutional racism, with particular severity affecting those travelling along the Mediterranean and Balkan routes and undocumented individuals detained in immigration centres.

Shortcomings in reception systems and in social and economic settlement policies for migrant, asylum seeker, and refugee people are common to all four countries involved in this study. In 2021 Greece presented a National "Integration" Strategy (2021) that is limited to beneficiaries of international protection. However, it falls short from being a strategy since it only lists objectives and actions without any reference to a timeline, budget or policy implementing the actions. Yet even in countries like Italy and Spain, where migrant populations are generally well established, social anchoring does not translate into full economic participation or involvement in the labour market. On the contrary, high levels of "social and occupational segregation" persist, particularly among refugees and asylum seekers (Iglesias, Rua and Ares, 2020; Pugliese 2011; IDOS Report, 2025).

Regarding the fight against racism, the implementation of the European Action Plan against Racism, adopted in 2021, appears to vary considerably from country to country, reflecting very different systems of prevention and protection against discrimination and racism. In Greece and Italy, for example, despite solid legislation against discrimination, propaganda, and racist violence, it is difficult to enforce and translate into concrete protection for people who suffer discrimination and racist violence. Overall, in all the countries covered by the research, there remains a difficulty in recognising that racism is a structural and systemic phenomenon that needs to be addressed with equally structural interventions and policies.

This does not facilitate the prevention and combating of xenophobic and racist hate speech, which is widespread in all four countries considered, and which primarily targets migrant people, particularly those from the African continent, Roma people and people of Muslim faith, often overlapping with xenophobia, racism and sexism. The normalisation of xenophobic and racist hate speech underpins the misleading and false narratives that permeate the public debate on migration, associating it with crime and security risks, excessive public expenditure detrimental to European citizens' rights, and a threat to cultural and religious identity (Lunaria, 2019; Maldita.es 2024 a).

The **information system** is also undergoing major changes in terms of both information consumption and supply, as well as technological development.

According to the *Flash Eurobarometer News and Media 2023* survey,[6] 71% of respondents reported that television is one of the most widely used media for accessing news, followed by online press and/or news platforms (42%). Radio and social media

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6   See *Flash Eurobarometer, News and Media 2023*, here

(both at 37%) share third place. Print media is the least used source (21%). Compared with the 2022 survey, the overall share of respondents citing social media platforms as a source of news has increased across all age groups (+11%). Public television and radio broadcasters are considered the most reliable source of information for 48% of European citizens surveyed, followed by the press, regarded as reliable by 38%. Private television and radio broadcasters are perceived as less authoritative.

The spread of artificial intelligence and its use in the media system are also profoundly changing the way information is produced, distributed and searched for. Among the many effects of technological innovation is the potential amplification of the risks associated with the dissemination of prejudice, stereotypes, and false information online.[7]

The 2024 Special Eurobarometer 551, entitled *The Digital Decade*[8] and dedicated to digital technologies and their impact on citizens, revealed, for example, that almost 45% of respondents identified fake news and disinformation as problematic issues, while one in four (22%) mentioned "hate speech".

Artificial intelligence, in addition to being used to refine policies for surveillance and control of people's mobility, is also used to rapidly generate and disseminate misleading or false written content, images, audio and video online, with the aim of manipulating public opinion and even political decision-making processes, often steering them towards hostile, xenophobic, and discriminatory policies targeting migrant and refugee people.

Any **analysis of media coverage of migrants**, asylum seekers, and people with a migrant background must take these significant changes into account while also considering an additional factor that clearly emerged across all four countries examined in the study. **The close link between the media and the political system** significantly influences the agenda of the public debate on these issues. The media tends to follow the political agenda, in which immigration is framed as a battleground, and consequently amplifies it through alarmist and delegitimising narratives.

While media coverage of migration tends to fluctuate over time, depending on political phases, national and international current affairs and the evolution of the migration phenomenon, the methods, narrative frameworks, themes and voices of the news tend to remain the same.

In Italy, the latest Carta di Roma report, *"Notizie senza volto"*,[9] shows that migration continues to be portrayed in the media as a "permanent crisis." Alarmist terms such as "emergency," "crisis," "alarm," and "invasion" appeared 5,925 times in major national and local newspapers between 2013 and 2025. Coverage tends to frame mi-

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7   See, 2024, ONU, *Governing AI for Humanity*, p.29, available **here**

8   The report is available **here**

9   See XIII Report of Carta di Roma, "Notizie senza volto", 2025, **here**

gration primarily as a political issue, with polarizing language that emphasizes conflict and a central role for political actors: 24% of migration-related stories in prime-time news on the seven main networks (Rai, Mediaset, La7) include at least one statement from a politician.

At the same time, migrant and refugee people remain consistently marginalised in prime-time television reporting. Only 7% of news segments include their direct voices, a figure that has remained largely unchanged since 2015. There are two notable exceptions: in 2018 (16%), due to coverage of racist attacks and labour exploitation cases-where migrant people appear primarily as "victims"-and in 2022 (21%), with the inclusion of the voices of people fleeing Ukraine.

In Spain, the media system, while acknowledging the social importance of migration, continues to produce a predominantly stereotypical, negative, and partial representation of migrant and racialised communities, contributing to the reproduction of structural racism (Arévalo Salinas et al., 2020; Solves-Almela & Arcos-Urrutia, 2020). Dominant media coverage frames migration through the lens of conflict, criminalization, and politics, rather than adopting a human-centred or rights-based approach. Among the most recurring frames, the literature highlights narratives about the "irregular arrival of migrants on small boats" and the association of migration with crime, organized crime, and security issues. The repeated use of metaphors such as "avalanche," "wave," or "invasion" amplifies the perception of threat and fuels discourse portraying migrant arrivals as extraordinary, overwhelming, or uncontrollable (Igartua, Muñiz & Cheng, 2005).

Lexical choices further contribute to the dehumanization of migrants. Nominalised adjectives such as "clandestino", "undocumented", reinforce an administrative identity, reducing people to their legal status and erasing their individuality and social complexity (Alonso et al., 2021; RedAcoge, 2024; Van Dijk et al., 2006).

Similarly, a defining feature of the system is the silence of the protagonists within media coverage itself (Van Dijk et al., 2006). The voices of migrant and refugee people, and individuals affected by racism remain largely "marginal" (Alonso et al., 2021; Arévalo Salinas, Najjar Trujillo & Silva Echeto, 2021). This discursive exclusion is mirrored in the low representation of journalists with migrant backgrounds in the newsrooms of major Spanish media outlets (Fernández-Ferrer, 2012). These persistent limitations are often linked to structural challenges in news production: lack of time, job insecurity, and insufficient specialised training make it difficult for journalists, according to this interpretation, to produce more in-depth or context-rich reporting (Solves-Almela & Arcos-Urrutia, 2020).

Available information on the **structural and organizational arrangements of media systems and on newsroom composition** remains limited. At the international level, the Reuters Institute report *"Race and Leadership in the News Media 2025: Evidence from Five Markets"*, now in its sixth year of monitoring, provides a reference

framework by comparing five international media markets-Brazil, Germany, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States-regarding the presence of people with migrant backgrounds in newsrooms. The latest edition, published in March 2025, found that **17%** of top editors in the analysed outlets have a migrant background, despite representing an average of 44% of the population across the five countries.

Since the start of Reuters Institute's monitoring and data collection in 2020, this represents a 6% decrease-the largest year-on-year drop recorded since the beginning of the data series. In 2024, the figure had stagnated after modest increases between 2021–2022 and 2022–2023; this year, there has been a reversal: the overall share is six points lower than the 23% recorded in 2024 and is similar to the 2020 figure, when 18% of top editors were people with migrant backgrounds.[10] The report also notes that "in Brazil, Germany, and the United Kingdom, none of the sampled outlets has a top editor with a migrant background; in South Africa, the share of racialized editors fell from 71% in 2024 to 63% in 2025. Even in the United States, the proportion of top editors with a migrant background dropped to 15%, compared with 29% last year" (Reuters Institute, 2025, p. 1).

Considering that the Reuters report covers some of the countries traditionally seen as most advanced in promoting anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies, these findings underscore the need to closely monitor the level of cultural pluralism in newsrooms.

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10   *Race and leadership in the news media 2025: Evidence from five markets* (Reuters Institute 2025), here

2. Organisational context

2.1 Profile of the interviewees

The qualitative research involved a total of 68 stakeholders: 18 in Greece, 19 in Italy, 15 in Malta, and 16 in Spain. Interviewees were selected among professionals working in mainstream and alternative media, individuals active in movements and racialised communities, and members of civil society organisations engaged in communication and advocacy activities. In Spain and Malta, a number of academics and communication experts were also interviewed.

For analytical purposes, respondents were grouped into two broad categories: mainstream media professionals (43 in total) and civil society actors (activists, representatives of alternative media, and academics) (25). This categorisation also aimed to highlight, where relevant, convergences and divergences in perspectives between media professionals and activists and communication practitioners operating within the civil society sector.

Interviewees distribution for tipology of organisation (Media/CSO)

	Media	CSO	Total
Malta	6	9	15
Spain	13	3	16
Greece	13	5	18
Italy	11	8	19
Total	43	25	68
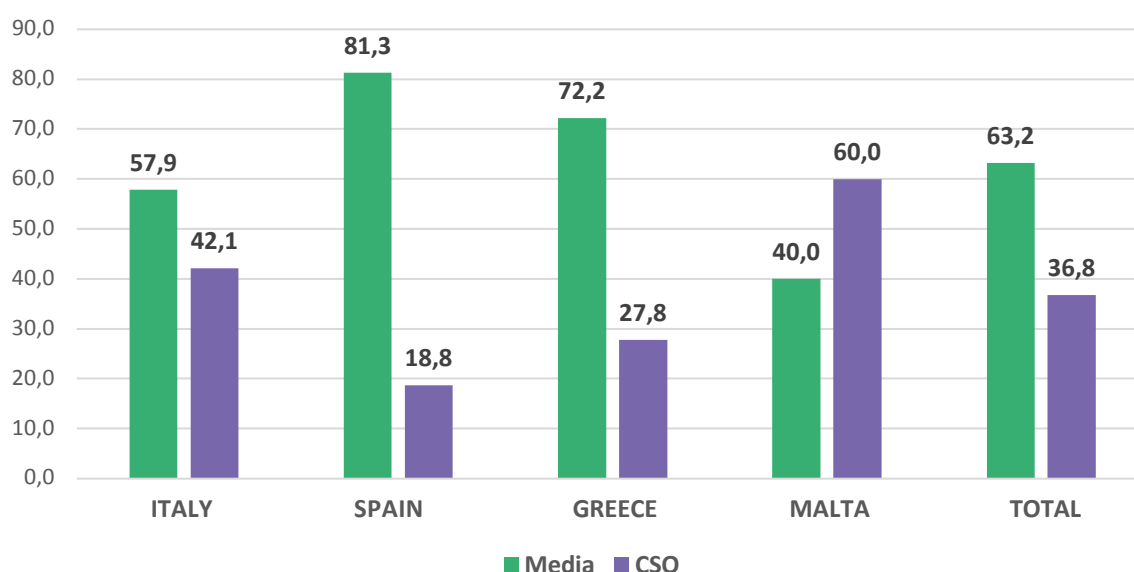
Efforts were made, as far as possible, to ensure gender balance among partici-pants. Overall, women represented a slight majority of respondents (54%), compared to men (46%).

Intervieews distribution by gender (%)
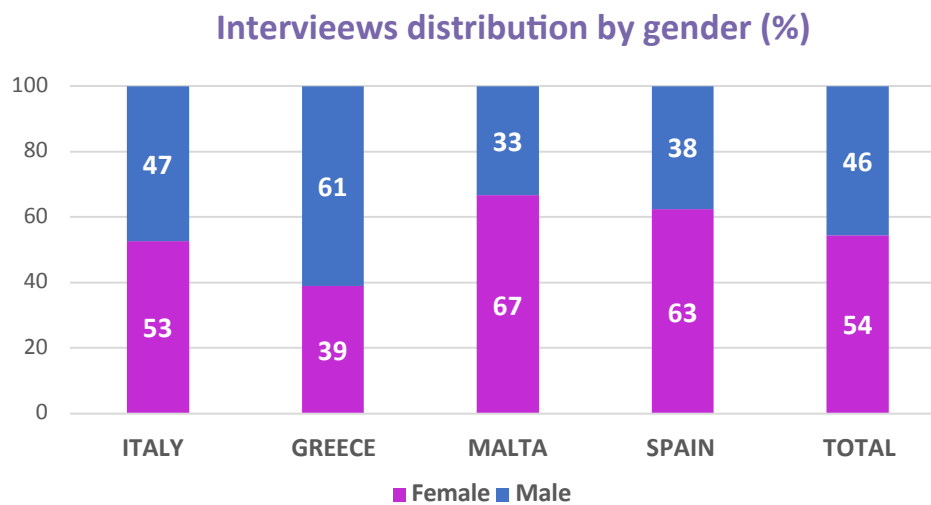
2.2 Staff composition within organisations

A first aspect explored concerned the presence of individuals with a migrato-ry background within the professional environments of the interviewees. While the qualitative nature of the research does not allow for the generalisation of findings, it is nonetheless noteworthy that a significant difference emerged between the two groups of stakeholders interviewed.

Overall, a large majority of respondents (69,9%) reported the presence of staff members with a migratory background in their workplace. However, a substantial gap was observed between the proportion of positive responses from mainstream media organisations (55.8%) and those from civil society organisations (92%).

Figures 1a, 1b, 1c – Are there individuals with a migratory background within your work environment?

Presence of foreign citizens in the job environment
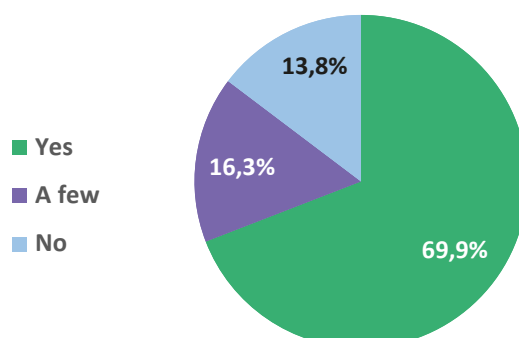
Presence of foreign citizens in the job environment by kind of organisation (Media/CSO)
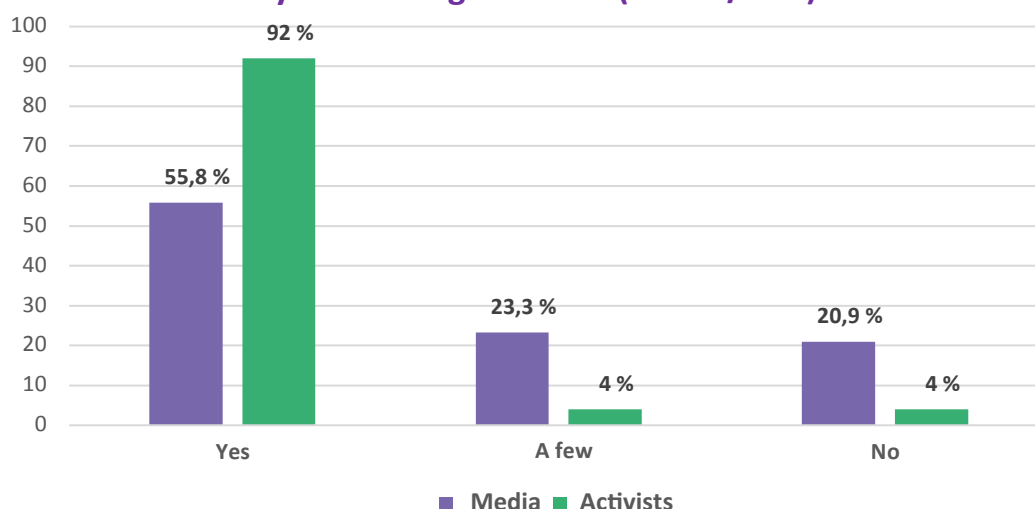
At the national level, the group of interviewees in Malta stands out, with 100% positive responses. This contrasts with the other three countries, which display a greater diversity of responses and a marked variance between the media sector and the civil society context.

Presence of foreign citizens in the job environment
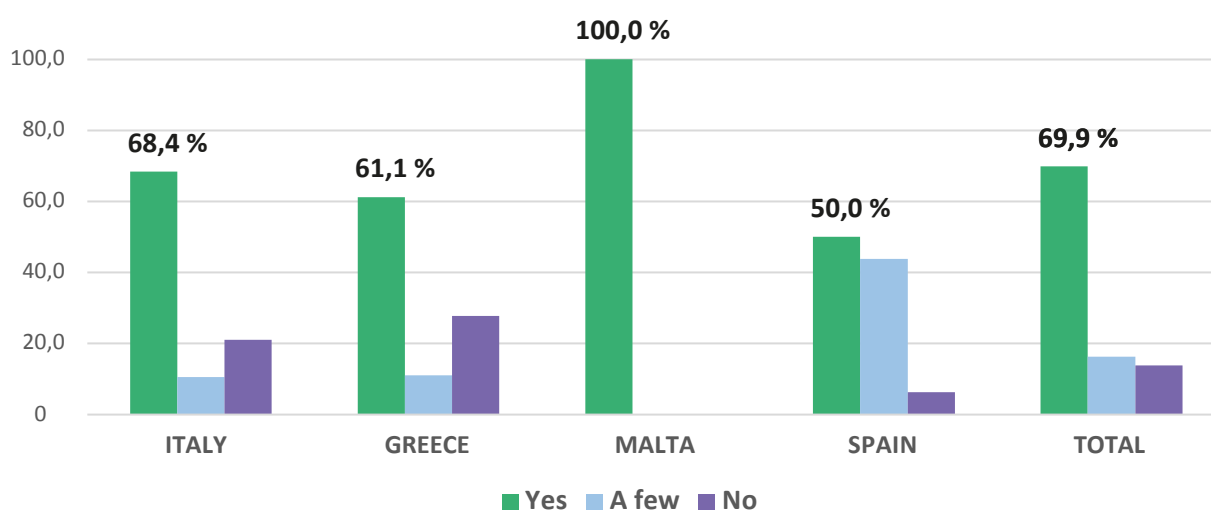
In Malta, where all respondents reported the presence of racialised colleagues, several journalists acknowledged that, although migrant people are frequently the subject of news coverage, they are rarely part of news production teams. This contributes to reinforcing the gap between media narratives on migration and the lived realities of different communities.

In Greece, while the presence of foreign journalists was reported, 46.2% of the journalists interviewed stated that there is limited or no presence of foreign colleagues in their work environment. It was also noted that, when present, these colleagues predominantly occupy support roles.

In Spain, 43.8% of respondents-all of whom were from the media sector-specified that such presence is minimal or infrequent within newsrooms.

In Italy, more than half of respondents (63.2%) reported the presence of individuals with a migratory background in their workplace; however, a significant difference emerges between sectors. Forty-three per cent of media professionals reported having no or very few colleagues with a migratory background, and 28%-just under one third-stated that they have no racialised colleagues at all. By contrast, within civil society organisations, interviewees confirmed a fairly significant (20%) or highly significant (80%) presence of individuals with a migratory background in their work environments.

The persistence of strong cultural biases and a Eurocentric worldview-identified by some interviewees with a migratory background as having colonial roots-overlaps with cultural, social, and economic barriers that hinder access 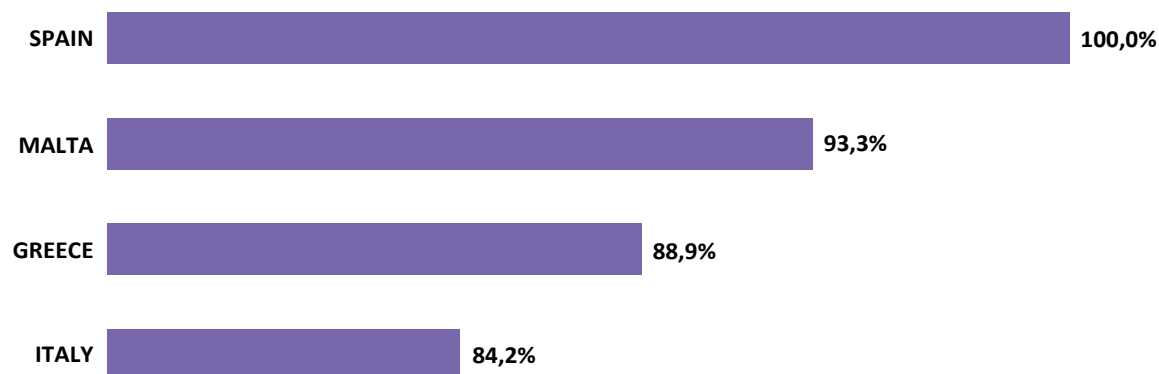to the journalistic profession. Across all four countries, there was a clear and widespread recognition of the existence of a structural problem in accessing the profession. Notably, this recognition reached 100% of responses in Spain.

__Figure 2__ – Do you believe there is a problem in terms of access to the journalistic profession for foreign nationals, people of foreign origin, or individuals with a migratory background?

The barriers to accessing the journalistic profession identified as most relevant vary across countries. **Limited proficiency in the national language** was identified as one of the main obstacles in Malta, Spain, and Greece.

> *The main reason is the perception that "journalism is a profession that requires perfect knowledge of the Greek language"... whereas, in reality, what is needed is the ability to write news articles (GR).*

In Spain, several interviewees highlighted the presence of an "obsession with how we write, how we speak, and with accents", identifying both language and pronunciation as barriers to entry. Even when Spanish is the shared language, the use of non-standard vocabulary or a different accent can lead to criticism or forms of exclusion.

> *If in Spain we do not even see Andalusians or people from the Canary Islands reading the news, it is very unlikely that there will be Moroccans or Colombians (ES).*

In Italy and Spain, where access to the labour market is still strongly based on personal social networks of reference, migratory background, stereotypes, and cultural prejudices overlap with another significant barrier: **class**. According to interviewees, journalism continues to be perceived as an **elitist field**, accessible primarily to those who can afford expensive journalism schools, rely on extensive and well-established family networks of "contacts", and, above all, sustain a prolonged period of uncertainty and precarious employment. This is a "luxury" that many people with a migratory background-and their families, who often aspire to more stable and secure forms of employment-cannot afford.

> *It is true that migration tends to produce material and/or symbolic exclusion that is inherited over time and is linked to economic conditions and internalised existential precarious employment, which may steer people with a migratory background towards educational paths or jobs perceived as more stable (IT).*

> *not everyone can afford to do internships and work for free during the first years (ES).*

> *Even if someone with a migratory background wanted to work in the media, I am not sure they would be given a chance, unless they were already very well established (MT).*

A third problematic dimension concerns **legal and bureaucratic barriers**, which make it difficult to obtain recognition of qualifications and secure residence permits. This issue emerged particularly strongly in Malta, Spain, and Greece. One interviewee in Spain described a **vicious circle**:

> *If you do not have documents, you cannot be hired, and without a contract you cannot obtain documents (ES).*

Others noted that, when migrant professionals do manage to work in Spanish media organisations, they are often confined to positions that do not involve voice-over work or on-camera roles.

> *The prevailing prejudice is not so much racial as intellectual or educational; the idea that public education in our countries is inferior and therefore we are considered less capable, which is why we don't get jobs (ES).*

The issue of **professional ghettoisation** also emerged and, as will be discussed later, is reflected in Italy in relation to the voices that dominate media narratives on migration.

Finally, the lack of a **polycentric cultural perspective** and the widespread **absence of active policies promoting equal opportunities** and combating all forms of discrimination were explicitly mentioned by some interviewees in Greece.

At the level of structural policies, a common feature across all four national contexts and both macro-groups of interviewees is the **scarcity of recruitment policies** specifically designed to promote equal access opportunities for all candidates. Only one Italian civil society organisation reported having formally adopted a targeted policy, while another Italian civil society organisation stated its intention to introduce one.

In Greece, some civil society organisations have adopted specific policies indicating a preference for candidates with a migratory background for interpreter roles. It was also observed that access is significantly easier for so-called second-generation immigrant people who hold Greek citizenship and have completed higher education. In other cases, formal policies aimed at ensuring gender equality were mentioned. It should be noted that 9.5% of all respondents chose not to answer this question.

Figures 3a, 3b – Are there policies in place that facilitate access to the profession for foreign nationals or people of foreign origin?

Presence of policies to facilitate access to the profession for foreigners or person of foreign origin
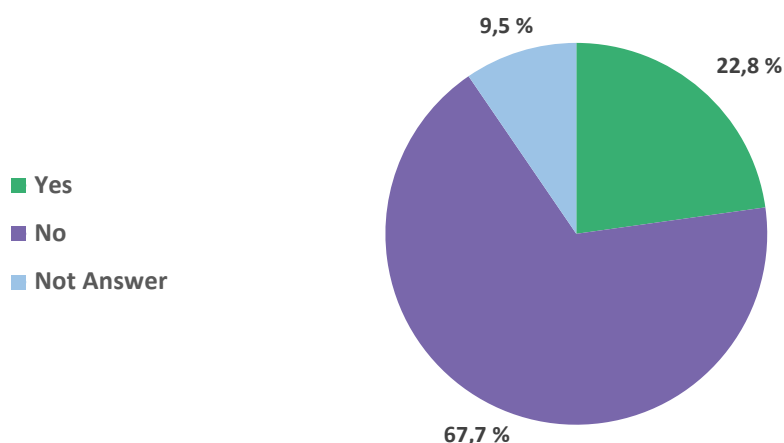
Presence of policies to facilitate access to the profession for foreigners or person of foreign origin
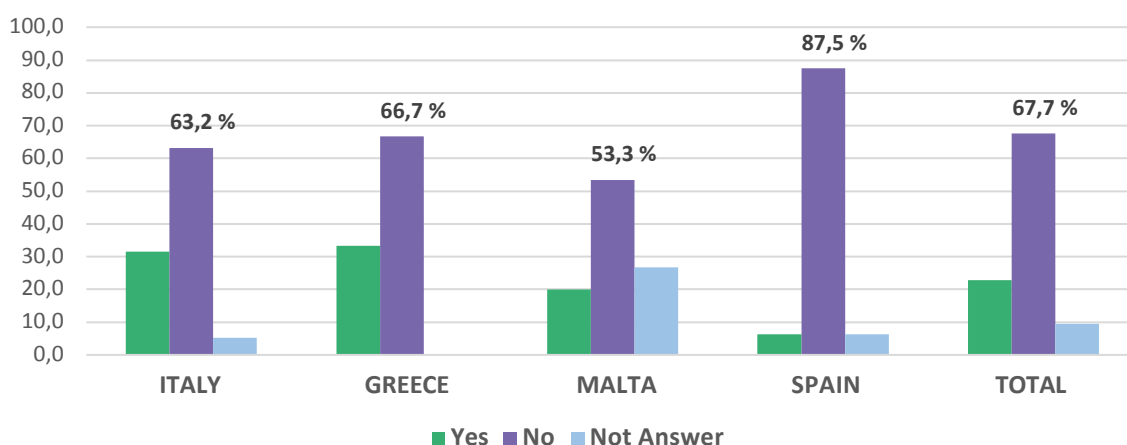
The majority of respondents stated that there are no formal guidelines or frameworks for staff recruitment within their work environments.

> *There are no specific policies regarding the hiring of racialised individuals; some organisations, for example, have policies related to gender balance in recruitment. However, these policies are clearly informal (IT).*

Others referred to general equality or non-discrimination clauses within their organisational statutes, but in some cases noted that these provisions are rarely enforced.

2.2 Awareness and understanding of discrimination and racism within and outside the organisation

Awareness of the entrenched nature of racism and its influence on access to the journalistic profession, organisational structures, editorial policies, content, and narrative formats appears to be strong within the interviewed organisations and media outlets. Overall, **84**% of respondents answered positively to this question.

***Figure 4** – Do you believe that your organisation has sufficient awareness of the existence of racism and its impact on information production?*

Awareness of racism and of its influence on media inside the organization
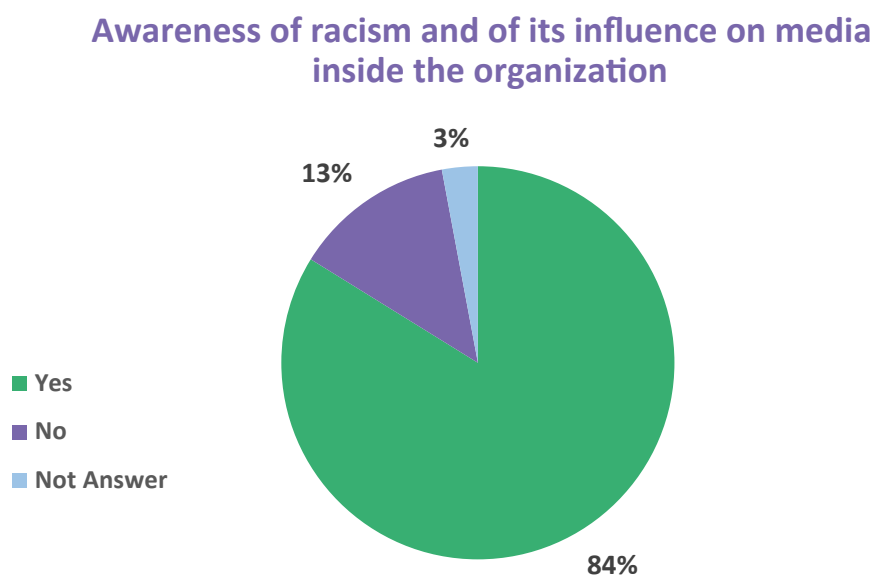
Racism, however, tends to be perceived as an **issue external to one's own workplace**. Most respondents in Greece, Italy, and Malta who were asked about the occurrence of discriminatory incidents within their organisations reported being unaware of any such cases; only three journalists in Greece and two civil society representatives in Italy referred to specific incidents within their organisations.

Spain stands out once again: 14 out of 16 respondents answered positively, noting that mainstream Spanish media tend not to recognise racism as a structural phenomenon. This difficulty is common across all countries studied: the framing of racism as a systemic problem is generally absent, both in media narratives and in the internal policies of mainstream media. Instead, reporting tends to focus on racism only when it appears in its most violent forms or involves individuals with high public visibility.

Overall, the interviews reveal a **persistent difficulty in recognising the subtle or non-explicit forms of structural racism** present within recruitment, management, interpersonal relations, and content production systems in the media sector-and, to some extent, within civil society organisations. These barriers range from substantial obstacles to entering the profession, to institutional obstacles linked to the legal status of foreign nationals, to historical and cultural barriers that implicitly assume disparities in knowledge and skills between "national" and foreign professionals, or between those of local versus migrant origin. Such assumptions often essentialise linguistic, religious, or cultural differences, reinforcing prejudices, stereotypes, and asymmetric power relations.

The interviews provide numerous examples: linguistic discrimination; the use of inappropriate, stigmatizing, or even offensive terminology; paternalistic, pitying, or instrumentalised engagement of migrant and racialised individuals (tokenism), whether as experts or journalists; thematic or functional ghettoisation within newsrooms; and difficulties in professional mobility.

🟩 *Being a migrant means having to work three times harder (MT).*

Despite a specific and conscious attention to acts of racism in society, there remains an underestimation of a range of everyday exclusionary practices that are not perceived or recognised as such. For example, while all respondents acknowledge the existence of barriers to entering the journalistic profession, these practices are not labelled as discriminatory within their own professional contexts.

It is noteworthy that critical reflection on the processes that produce and reproduce stereotypes and prejudices also extends to civil society organisations. In Italy, for instance, it was observed that the composition of staff and members in more established civil society organisations-still predominantly "white"-can be linked to **the persistence of exclusionary, or at least outdated, models of participation and activism** that struggle to engage with emerging racialised groups.

The internal dynamics of media outlets and civil society organisations are compounded by **the limitations inherent in national anti-discrimination policies and legal frameworks.** In Greece, in particular, the insufficient enforcement of laws addressing discrimination, racist propaganda, and racially motivated violence emerged as a key factor.

Most Greek organisations did not report internal incidents of racism but demonstrated general awareness of the issue. Existing literature and available data indicate that the level of structural and institutional racism is so entrenched that it discourages victims from reporting it, which may help explain the lack of reported internal incidents within the same media organisations.

The use of appropriate **language** within organisations and actions to counter hate speech are considered by interviewees to be important and, in most cases, already implemented within their organisations.

Figure 5 – *In your view, does your organisation use non-discriminatory language in internal and external communication?*

Adoption of a non discriminatory language in communication
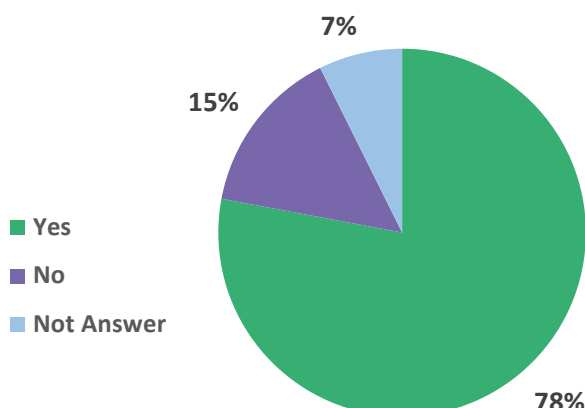
Overall, 78% of respondents reported the internal use of non-discriminatory language. However, the formalisation of an internal policy specifically dedicated to adopting "inclusive" language was explicitly mentioned by only two civil society organisations, one in Italy and one in Spain.

In Greece, there was strong consensus among participants on the conscious use of "inclusive" and non-discriminatory language in both internal and external communications.

In Malta, some respondents noted that external communication is not always consistent with the language used internally, and that in the media context, language appropriateness depends more on the individual editor or journalist than on the implementation of conscious editorial policies.

> *It really depends on who writes the article. There are no standardised guidelines on how to refer to migrants or sensitive issues (MT).*

However, some Maltese interviewees from civil society organisations and academia mentioned intentional language policies, particularly in communications aimed at young people and migrant communities.

It is worth noting that the topic of language, which recurred in many interviews, was approached with varying emphases. For example, in Italy-where a professional code of conduct exists for accurate reporting on migration issues,[11] and past campaigns have specifically promoted the use of non-discriminatory language-several civil society representatives made interesting observations regarding the challenges posed by the complexity of the subject and the lack of a common, shared language within both anti-racist organisations and racialised communities themselves.

11   This refers to the Carta di Roma, promoted in 2008 by the Italian National Journalists' Association (Ordine Nazionale dei Giornalisti), the National Press Federation (Federazione Nazionale della Stampa), and UNHCR. From 2025, the principles of the Rome Charter will be part of the new Code of Ethics for Journalists (Art. 14 – Migrants and Refugees). Further information can be found **here**

> *We are inventing language at a pace that exceeds our ability to make it effective, so it is almost consumed in the very act of its creation.*

> *There is an inherent difficulty-an almost impossibility of countering populism, because that particular grammar does not belong to us.*

> *Moreover, hegemony is established through power relations and repetition. For me, the problem is not so much that our words are 'unattractive'; the real issue is that we have never had leverage to ensure that even one of them is actually used (IT).*

In Spain, most interviewees indicated that building a truly "inclusive" narrative would require a transformation of newsroom culture rather than merely adjusting vocabulary. Even in this context, however, a communication gap was noted within civil society movements and organisations. Several respondents referred to "academic or overly rigorous language" or "jargon" that is "completely inaccessible to the very minorities" and to the general public, leading to communication failures. According to this perspective, the use of overly technical terminology contributes to the self-referential nature of narratives, limiting understanding to an already informed and sensitised audience.

Across all four countries studied, the urgency of addressing the spread of xenophobic and racist **hate speech online** emerged clearly. Online violence disproportionately targets migrant, asylum seeker and racialised people, and Roma communities. However, there appears to be a lack of consolidated strategies for prevention and counteraction. Practices implemented to date in both media and civil society remain largely fragmented, adopted on an ad hoc basis, and tend to be more reactive than preventive or proactive.

Figure 6 – *Have specific measures been implemented to prevent or counter hate speech on the social media platforms of your organisation or media outlet?*

14,7 %
19,1 %
66,2 %

- Yes
- No
- Not Answer
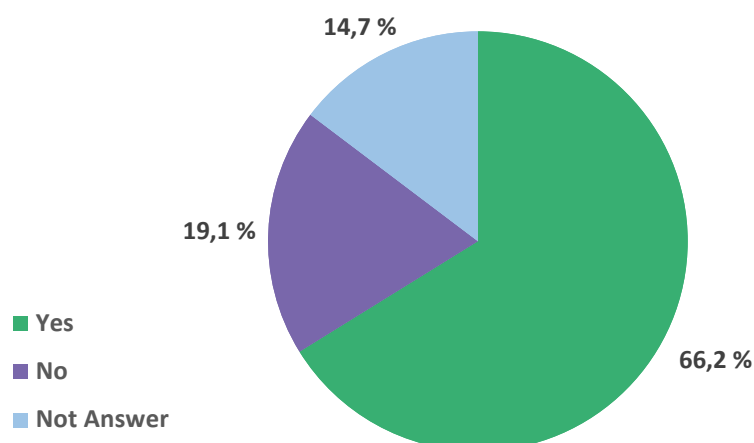
The most common practice is to ignore or remove the most aggressive comments without attempting to engage with users, or to moderate or disable comment sections altogether to prevent hostile interactions. Fact-checking, however, has emerged-particularly in Spain-as the main mechanism for countering disinformation.

24

In **Italy**, an interesting approach was observed by a humanitarian organisation that, following particularly violent online attacks, developed a strategy that prioritises, in addition to deleting overtly racist messages, the production of alternative narratives centred on the organisation's core humanitarian principles, rather than direct engagement with the aggressors.

> *At a strategic and systematic level, the focus was more on counter-narratives rather than responding directly to attacks individually. The approach involves using the general messages or overarching narratives of the attacks to propose an alternative narrative.*

> *For example, on social media, a strategy was still in place: decisions were made about which comments to respond to and which, particularly overtly racist or violent comments, should be deleted. A formal policy for managing comments was established, so that well-reasoned comments received a response grounded in the organisation's core humanitarian principles (IT).*

An online alternative media outlet founded in Italy by racialised individuals reported that, in specific cases, it chose to select certain topics from offensive posts or messages and address them within articles published on its website.

However, these remain isolated experiences.

In Malta, systematic strategies were also rare. Only a few respondents mentioned social media moderation policies or internal reminders on managing user-generated hate speech, usually when a public controversy forced the organisations to act. Even in these cases, responses were primarily reactive and focused on removing offensive comments rather than preventive interventions.

A somewhat different situation was observed in Greece. In the media sector, interventions by trained personnel were reported, aimed at preventing hate speech on social media platforms, supported by internal guidelines and participation in multi-stakeholder programmes. Civil society organisations were generally less proactive, as they did not appear to consider hate speech a priority issue, due either to limited public engagement or because their core objectives focus on combating discrimination more broadly.

Overall, the absence of structured strategies to combat hate speech occurs within a broader context, common to all countries studied, in which **formal anti-discrimination policies**, clear internal protocols, and visible, secure, and accessible reporting channels for harassment and discrimination in the workplace **are largely lacking** in the media sector.

3. The cultural and media context: themes, methods, and voices in the migration narrative

In the course of the interviews, a number of insightful observations were collected regarding the evolution of dominant media narratives concerning migrant and racialised people, with particular reference to the voices represented in these narratives, the thematic frames, target groups, the most recurrent forms of stereotyping, as well as narrative patterns and registers. Many elements common to the four countries involved in the research emerged, alongside some country-specific features. A detailed and comprehensive analysis is provided in the respective national reports[12]; in this section, we limit ourselves to highlighting those elements that appear most significant.

3.1 The protagonists of the narrative

The vast majority of respondents (91%) confirmed the persistence of an **issue of invisibility** of the voices of people with a migrant background within mainstream media narratives. Racialised individuals tend to be portrayed as objects of media narratives rather than as autonomous subjects within the discourse.

Figure 7. In your opinion, does the problem of the invisibility of the voices of foreigners or people of foreign origin in media coverage persist?

Invisibility of the voices of racialized people in media narratives

- Yes
- No
- Not Answer
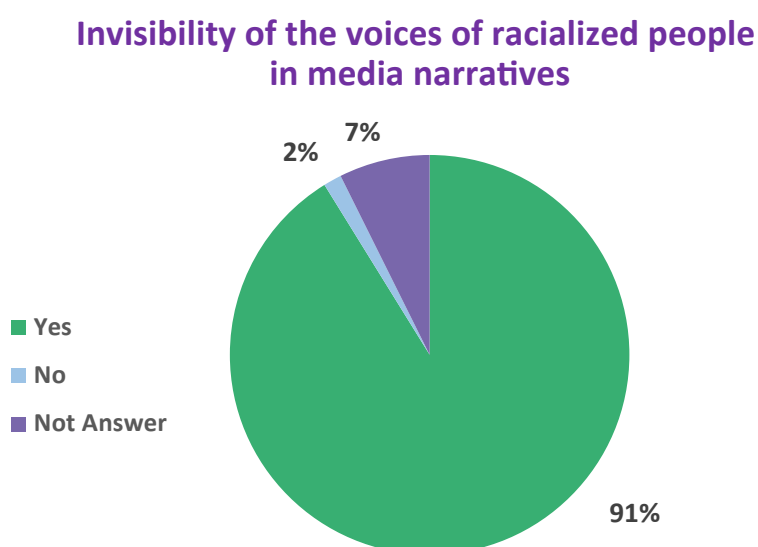
This appears to be a direct consequence of the ways in which the media agenda is defined and of its close dependence on the political agenda. Political and institutional actors are, in fact, those who most frequently prevail within media narratives.

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12   The reports are available **here**

The dominant narrative remains "white", paternalistic, and grounded in categories of otherness. This form of systemic exclusion produces a distorted representation that reinforces common-sense notions of otherness and threat. It constitutes a structural problem that prevents the media from reflecting the plurality of society and strengthens the perception that migrant populations do not form part of it.

Migrant people and people with a migrant background are rarely invited to speak for themselves and, when they are, their voices are often presented in the form of brief, isolated statements rather than as in-depth narratives.

> *A migrant speaks for two seconds, and then the rest of the story is taken over by politicians or the police (MT).*

This form of structural invisibility may be understood simultaneously as a **narrative issue and a relational one**. Migrants are not always easily accessible to journalists, due in part to language barriers or the absence of well-established social networks; however, insufficient effort on the part of journalists to build contacts or long-term relationships with migrant communities has also been observed.

Some interviewees, particularly those working within organisations and activist contexts, also referred to a form of **distorted visibility**. In certain cases, racialised persons are present in media coverage but are represented through stereotypical roles.

> *These are not isolated insults or stereotypes, but an entire system of selection and representation that reproduces relationships of domination: the homogeneous composition of editorial offices; the lack of diversity in positions of power; the tendency to consider the white point of view as "neutral"; the marginalisation of those who try to introduce a critical perspective. The consequence is that racialised people are represented, but they do not represent: they are narrative raw material, not authors of the narrative (IT).*

When migrant people are involved, they are often used as "witnesses" to reinforce narratives of "vulnerability" or victimhood, repeating familiar patterns of suffering.

> *It is very difficult for migrants to appear as primary sources in the media. This is also linked to the very structure of journalism, which favours official sources over personal experience. And when migrants are consulted, they are often used to repeat the same stories: 'How was your journey? How many days were you at sea? How much did you suffer?' There is this notion of the 'good migrant", the one who has suffered deeply and endured extreme hardship. And yes, migration is dramatic in many cases, but this leads to an over-representation of suffering and very little normalisation of the migrant experience. We need more stories that are not just tragedies (ES).*

In addition to the limited presence of the voices of directly affected individuals, particularly on television, the **topics** on which they are invited to speak, and the **manner** of their representation are also significant. A clear pattern of **thematic ghettoisation** emerges: people with a migrant background are predominantly involved in coverage relating to migration, and are seldom consulted as experts on other topics of broader societal interest.

> *Sometimes it is difficult to step outside the role you have been assigned: if you are a migrant, you cover stories about migration. And yes, it is important to be able to tell these stories, but it is equally important to be able to report on other things too... The ability to practise journalism should not be limited by our origins (ES).*

Narratives that depart from the stereotype of the poor, needy migrant person-or, if already established and participating into the labour market, the low-skilled migrant-are considered rare. Migrant and refugee people are represented solely in relation to these aspects, and seldom as citizens, students, workers, parents, or creatives. This dynamic produces a polarization between two opposing images: the "problematic migrant" and the "heroic migrant," both of which are dehumanising. The intermediate figure-the ordinary person-tends to remain invisible.

Some of the journalists interviewed also highlight **the chronic nature of processes of racialisation and criminalisation** of migrants, who are frequently portrayed only as victims or perpetrators.

The issue of narrative voices is directly and explicitly linked to the absence of a stable and structural presence of professional journalists with a migrant background within editorial staff (see Chapter 1).

The theme of self-narration is central. Many interviewees-particularly representatives of organisations-emphasised the need for a paradigm shift: it is not a question of "giving voice" to racialised persons, a paternalistic formulation that implies power on the part of those who grant the voice, but rather of "stepping back," making space available and allowing others to occupy it autonomously, both within newsrooms and in advocacy activities promoted by civil society. This idea of "**narrative protagonism**" aims to subvert hierarchical logics in the media and to build a genuinely equal discourse. Until these obstacles are removed, self-narration risks remaining confined to those already sympathetic or aware.

Some of the media representatives interviewed note that, in recent years, a **new generation of diasporic and Afro-descendant authors** has begun to emerge, introducing hybrid and intersectional narratives that connect racism, gender, and class. Thanks in part to social media, these voices are gaining visibility and compelling traditional newsrooms to confront the diversity of European society. Yet their presence remains marginal: as long as they are not consistently represented within the decision-making levels of the media, meaningful change is likely to remain limited and partial.

It is noteworthy that some Italian interlocutors also highlighted the existence of a **generational divide**, which appears significant both among those producing news on migration and among those receiving it. Young journalists seem to be more sensitive and open to the concerns of civil society, partly because they are better able to use alternative channels and media (private chats, social networks) as well as informational formats (podcasts, videos) that are widely used by younger generations of foreign origin.

In summary, the **plural composition of editorial staff** emerges as **one of the main indicators** of commitment to preventing discrimination, as reported by representatives of alternative media founded by racialised individuals, particularly when accompanied by participatory and shared decision-making processes and working methods.

3.2 *Narrative frames*

The majority of interviewees confirmed that public and media discourse on migration is still shaped by a number of dominant narratives, which tend to portray it as a problematic phenomenon (the key word being **crisis**) and as a threatening one (the key word being **invasion**).

Media coverage of migration tends to increase when political actors, institutions, and law enforcement agencies address the issue; these actors also constitute the dominant voices in the narrative. Media attention primarily focuses on borders-particularly maritime ones-and on arrivals of migrant people from the southern Mediterranean, possibly also due to the geographical location of the countries under examination.

> *When migration is discussed, it is almost always linked to arrival, detention or conflict. We rarely see migrants portrayed as neighbours, workers or contributors (MT).*

The identification of migrant individuals with the moment of their journey and arrival by sea is so strong that it prevails even in the visual representation of news unrelated to this context. As a Maltese activist points out, images of boats filled with migrant persons are repeatedly used even in connection with entirely different news stories and content.

> *Even when the article is about integration or education, you still see a photo of a dinghy full of people. It doesn't match the story, but it's what the public expects (MT).*

In the media, the recurring image of migrant people arriving by sea has become a simplified symbol of migration. Some interviewees in Malta described this as a form of **visual stereotyping** that, even if unintentional, tends to evoke fear, pity, or distance rather than familiarity and empathy.

Similarly, another frequent depiction casts migrants as a "burden," a dead weight "threatening" the host country, capable of destabilising the welfare system and labour market, increasing the risk of social deviance, or causing the loss of "cultural and national identity."

> *The main narratives are those of the "migration threat" and "security" (GR).*

> *The issues on which the narratives focus are crime, the "burden" on the economy and public health, and the "burden" on social cohesion (GR).*

There are also stereotypes of a different kind that contribute to reproducing social inequalities and discrimination, portraying migrant people in a **paternalistic** and

pitying manner, as individuals in need of saving. An excerpt from an interview with an Italian journalist summarises particularly well the narratives identified by a large number of interviewees across the four countries, highlighting those that are most recurrent.

> *I have identified five recurring narratives that also emerged from the courses we attended. The first is the emergency, i.e. migrants are seen as a wave, a crisis, a problem. We were told that this is a dehumanising narrative that lacks context. Then there is a second recurring point, the passive victim. It was pointed out to us that we too portray migrants as objects to be saved, never as subjects, as people with skills, as professionals. The third recurring problematic narrative is that of the deviant, with crime news overexposing foreign perpetrators and fuelling racial generalisations. An example is theft. A Romanian steals, etc. We would never say an Italian. Another narrative I noted was that of the good migrant, i.e. the grateful, integrated model, who is accepted in journalistic narratives only if he or she excels, never if he or she is an ordinary person. The assimilated, i.e. only those who conform, are narrated and considered part of society. So the problem is not only what is said, but how and by whom it is said. Above all, as I said before, who is left out of the narrative. And so, to really change the narrative, we need many new voices, but also different registers (IT).*

The perspective of interviewed activists and racialised individuals on the trends shaping media narratives about migration is highly critical, both with regard to editorial choices and the ways news is covered, and concerning the themes, recurring forms of representation, and the voices present in these narratives.

In particular, a **consistent lack of media coverage addressing structural racism** has been highlighted. Media narratives on racism tend to focus on individual acts of aggression, and primarily on those targeting public figures (such as elite athletes). This gap is directly and explicitly linked to the absence of a stable and structural presence of professional journalists with a migrant background within editorial staff.

> *It is rarely reported and occasionally treated as "isolated incidents" rather than a structural problem (GR).*

Many interviewees noted that media narratives do little to convey that racism is a phenomenon more complex than individual acts of physical or verbal violence. Racism, for instance, also affects access to resources, healthcare, and even the spatial organisation of society. This type of reporting is highly problematic, as exclusionary processes are sustained through mechanisms of selection and representation that reproduce existing power hierarchies.

3.3 Target groups

Afro-descendants, Roma, and young North African generations have been identified as the groups most exposed today to forms of xenophobic and racist stigmatization, with some variations linked to national contexts.

In Spain, unaccompanied foreign minors are often associated with deviance and considered a threat to public safety. A similar trend is observed in Italy, where in recent years stigmatization has increasingly targeted young children of immigrant people-particularly those from North African countries and of Muslim faith-living in large cities. Here, the derogatory term "*maranza*" overlaps with the more established label of *baby gang*.

In Greece, hostile discourse tends to target, in addition to migrant people, Albanian citizens and Roma individuals.

In Malta, men and women arriving by sea from the southern Mediterranean are the primary targets of racist discourse.

In both Malta and Spain, interviews highlighted the clear existence of a differentiation and gradation of stereotypes based on skin colour, nationality, and religion. The Maltese team effectively described this as "**selective empathy**," referring to the tendency to humanise some groups of migrant people more than others-for example, the relatively empathetic coverage of people fleeing Ukraine compared with that of Asian or African migrants.

> *There is a double standard. Some groups are described as "refugees fleeing war", while others are described as "illegal migrants", even when their stories are similar (MT).*

This differentiation appears to reflect a broader hierarchy of empathy, shaped by cultural proximity, religious prejudices, and political discourse. In Spain, where Afro-descendant and Maghrebian communities are among the most stigmatized, Latin American migrant persons are represented more favourably due to cultural and linguistic closeness. Even in this case, however, stereotypes persist: they are generally perceived as "submissive, cheerful, talkative, lazy, or superficial." Overall, according to interviewees in Spain, the intensity of stereotypes increases with greater geographical and cultural distance from "white European models."

3.4 Four recurring flaws in the narrative

Polarisation. In all four countries included in the research, many interviewees highlighted a **polarization of public discourse** around issues of racism, discrimination, and migration. This tendency, also reinforced by the operators of major social media platforms, contributes to intensifying public debate and making it more aggressive and hostile.

Dehumanisation. One of the core elements of this process is the **imprecise, dehumanising, and violent use of words and images**. While media professionals often attribute lexical inaccuracy and the stigmatisation of certain groups to the simplification required by media logic and breaking news formats, representatives from the non-profit and activist sectors emphasise the performative power of language. Language is not merely a descriptive tool but a **social and political** instrument capable of including or excluding, recognising or denying otherness.

Sensationalism. A form of what has been effectively described in Italy as "**predatory journalism**" continues to persist. It is characterised by sensationalist, dramatic, and often alarmist and dehumanising narrative styles, particularly when news coverage relies on data without engaging with individual stories. According to some Spanish and Italian participants, this dynamic has enabled European right-wing forces to exert hegemonic influence over the definition of the public and journalistic agenda on migration.

Simplification. As highlighted in the interviews, the logic of **permanent breaking news** contributes to a distortion of relevance, particularly with regard to certain topics. Migration-related events are reported only in their immediacy-a shipwreck, a decree, a controversy-without any analysis of context or underlying causes. The moment replaces history. The urgency to publish prevails over the need to understand.

One of the main challenges facing the media sector lies precisely in finding a balance between the drive towards the hyper-simplification typical of traditional media and the pursuit of terminological precision, which is crucial to safeguarding people's dignity.

3.5 Limitations and challenges of anti-racist communication

The assessment of communication strategies promoted by anti-racist activism and civil society organisations highlights a number of limitations and challenges that constrain their effectiveness.

Among the most significant limitations identified across all countries examined is the **difficulty in adopting a strategic approach to communication**. The lack of resources-characteristic of much of civil society, particularly smaller organisations-is only one of the factors at play. Alongside this, great organisational **fragmentation** and the difficulty in developing a **shared vocabulary and a common communication strategy** also represent major challenges.

> *we should try out ways of communicating, or even strategies or narratives, using common language (IT).*

Another aspect concerns message framing: solidarity-based narratives have been observed to at times display **paternalistic** tendencies, for instance when migrant persons are primarily portrayed as "vulnerable individuals," thereby overlooking the complexity of their lives-as students, workers, professionals, and citizens.

> *For example, the idea that 'all children in Africa must be saved by us, the white saviours', or that 'all Latin American countries are extremely violent, so we must go and help them'. This is something we are trying to change from within organisations. At first, in trying to mobilise people through solidarity, we ended up perpetuating stereotypes - just from a different angle (ES).*

As has been observed, although these narratives are often well intentioned, they tend to be perceived as "tiring and reductive" and may even prove counterproductive, as they frequently reproduce the very categories they seek to challenge.

> *NGOs are limited in terms of narrative. Even when they try to give voice and autonomy to migrants and racialised people, they often maintain paternalistic and victimisation-centred approaches (ES).*

Another perspective emphasises the **importance of diversifying narrative frames** by moving beyond a purely humanitarian approach and seeking to link discussions on migration to broader structural social and economic policies (for example, by highlighting migrants' contributions to GDP or to pension systems).

> *Without abandoning the language of rights, which must always come first, we must also include economic and labour issues, and discussions on the sustainability of pensions and healthcare. Not everyone is receptive to the discourse on human rights. And if the goal is to eradicate racism, we need more narrative tools (ES).*

A decisive issue concerns **the asymmetry of power** between political actors and major media outlets, as well as the difficulty of disseminating messages to a broad audience. While some consider the internet and social media platforms to offer ample opportunities for producing alternative narratives, others point to the risk of communication remaining confined within informational bubbles and stress the importance of reaching mainstream media channels as well. From this perspective, the challenge lies less in crafting messages and more in gaining access to media and achieving the visibility necessary to effectively challenge entrenched narratives.

> *In my opinion, what we should do to counter these narratives is take a step back: understand that social media is not the place to focus on for these campaigns, because social media seems very attractive, very democratic, that it has come a long way, but instead... (IT).*

> *If the public service does not give space, for example, to the referendum, then pressure campaigns and initiatives that highlight this limitation are aimed at trying to expand what we call "public service". I don't see any other possibilities at the moment. Then, it is certainly crucial not to remain anchored exclusively to the political aspect (IT).*

Nevertheless, the research has also brought to light experiences of systematic collaboration between activists and journalists that offer useful insights for future work. Community radio, community journalism initiatives, collaboration with universities in the development of training modules, and the emergence of collective media spaces founded by racialised professionals point to possible trajectories for a reorientation of media debate on migration.

4. Towards prevention policies and alternative narratives

The power asymmetry that continues to characterise an information landscape largely dominated by political actors is, in many respects, further reinforced by the development of new technologies and the widespread use of social media. While these platforms are often presented as tools capable of opening up new communication channels and formats, they also function as spaces in which artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems tend to reward polarisation and the spectacularisation of content. As a result, they risk generating and reproducing processes of racialisation and contributing to the invisibilisation of racialised individuals and of social actors engaged in the protection of human rights and the fight against all forms of discrimination.

The difficulty of reorienting public and media debate in a context marked by the widespread **criminalisation** of migrants and of humanitarian and anti-racist organisations themselves clearly emerged during the interviews conducted. The development of pluralistic, equitable and non-discriminatory information would require structural reforms at the regulatory level, as well as in the economic, social and cultural spheres; however, the current political context and cultural climate do not appear particularly favourable. Indeed, the close relationship between migration, asylum and anti-discrimination policies on the one hand, and the circulation of messages, rhetoric and news laden with prejudice and stereotypes (when not explicitly xenophobic and racist) on the other, emerged with particular clarity.

However, there are several areas of intervention in which change can be promoted even in the absence of structural political and institutional reforms, as demonstrated by some of the experiences and practices mentioned during the interviews. These interventions fall into five main areas: recruitment policies and measures to facilitate access to the journalistic profession; training; strategies and actions aimed at preventing and countering hate speech; the production of alternative narratives; and civil society advocacy initiatives. In addition, a number of specific measures are promoted at an individual and/or informal level. An overview of these areas is provided below, while further details can be found in the individual national reports.

4.1 Recruitment of staff

The main measure for ensuring a non-discriminatory environment is access to newsrooms, so that information is diversified from its source, from the moment it is created (ES).

Eliminating cultural, social, and economic barriers to entering the journalistic profession is, as we have seen, crucial. The examples cited are not numerous, but they show that even individual organisations can, if they choose, intervene through tar-

geted policies. In Italy, one initiative mentioned involved a large multinational in the high-tech sector, which supported paid internships "reserved" for racialised individuals. While the project's good intentions were acknowledged, the interviewee pointed out that the candidate selection process tended to favour those already privileged, with prior experience and completed educational pathways.

> *The problem, therefore, cannot be solved by offering scholarships at the end of an already selective process, but by acting upstream, intervening in early education processes and guidance mechanisms. The idea suggested is to "give scholarships to secondary schools", i.e. to start supporting potential talent before economic barriers exclude them (IT).*

A similar initiative was recalled in Spain, where one interviewee reported having gained access to the journalistic field through a master's program that offered ten scholarships for Latin American students.

The *New York Times*, the German network *Deutsche Welle*, and the *BBC* were mentioned as reference examples for having implemented internal policies aimed at ensuring equality in terms of origin, gender, and/or socioeconomic background. In particular, the *BBC* has adopted "diversity & inclusion" policies with measurable objectives, such as the "50:50" program[13], designed to ensure equal gender representation among presenters and guests on its programs. Meanwhile, the German public broadcaster has introduced multilingual services and dedicated news spaces for communities of foreign origin residing in the country.

Attending master's programs, participating in paid internships, and targeted recruitment policies are indeed privileged entry channels into the journalistic profession. However, several interviewees criticised the use of "quotas," considering them ineffective in the absence of a deeper change in organisational culture and a greater willingness to listen, engage in dialogue, and collaborate.

More convincing appears to be the promotion of recruitment policies that, through the use of anonymised CVs, prioritise knowledge, skills, and previous experience as the main criteria for staff selection. A formal policy of this kind has been adopted or cited as a best practice by several organisations in Italy and Spain.

4.2 Training

Staff training is another area considered a priority. In this case, the examples of good practice cited by interviewees mainly relate to civil society organisations.

In Spain, the CEPAIM Foundation requires all new staff to complete a mandatory online training covering equality, anti-racism, and intercultural issues, while the NGO Educo offers compulsory introductory courses on "inclusion" and gender.

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13   The project implemented in BBC newsrooms to promote gender equality was later extended to monitor representation based on other personal characteristics as well. **here**

In Greece, two of the organisations interviewed confirmed that training courses, seminars, and workshops on equal opportunities and discrimination are planned, organised, and/or include an ongoing learning process. Anti-discrimination training is considered an integral and continuous part of professional development.

In Italy, training promoted by the Carta di Roma association for journalists and journalism schools focuses specifically on fostering accurate reporting on migrant, asylum seeker and refugee people and Roma communities. Amnesty International has developed training programs for staff on the use of "inclusive" language, while Médecins Sans Frontières strongly encourages-but does not require-staff participation in courses on diversity and inclusion (D&I) and "inclusive" leadership.

The SOS Malta association has promoted training initiatives on media literacy: supporting educators and young people in critically understanding narratives about migration is considered strategic.

In all the experiences cited, the participation of racialised individuals in both the design and delivery of training is a distinguishing feature.

4.3 Prevention and countering of *hate speech*

Although the spread of xenophobic and racist hate speech is a major concern in all countries involved in the research, the presence of comprehensive strategies for its prevention and counteraction remains very limited. Many organisations still lack clear, safe, and easily accessible internal protocols for reporting cases of discrimination and hate speech.

The most common approach identified during the interviews is reactive, primarily implemented through content moderation and the blocking of hostile comments on social media.

In Italy, Médecins Sans Frontières has developed a more comprehensive strategy, establishing guidelines for managing comments on its social media pages and creating key messages to anchor its various external communication initiatives. The deletion of the most violent comments is complemented by strategies for responding to more reasoned hostile comments, drawing on humanitarian principles of equality, fairness, neutrality, and anti-discrimination.

The communication platform *Colory**, on the other hand, reported a practice of identifying recurring topics within hostile comments in order to develop a consolidated response, which is then published as a new message.

In Spain, *Servimedia* has published a style guide to prevent hate speech, while PorCausa has produced a manual on alternative narratives based on three guiding principles: not responding directly to hate speech, prioritising faces and personal stories over data in narratives, and challenging the "us" and "them" dichotomy.

In Greece, the Hellenic League for Human Rights (HLHR) relies on highly qualified staff to ensure that none of its posts promote hate speech, xenophobic, sexist, or other forms of racist discourse.

Production of alternative narratives

The experimentation with strategies and practices for producing alternative narratives reveals a wide range of experiences aimed at promoting greater awareness of the various forms of xenophobia, racism, and hate speech; the use of more respectful and non-discriminatory language; the self-production of information both online and offline; and/or collaboration between people with migrant backgrounds, social movements, and civil society organisations on the one hand, and the media on the other. Some of the experiences mentioned in the interviews are illustrated below.

Documentation and reporting of racist violence and hate speech

In Greece, where official data on racist violence are limited, the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) considers monitoring, documenting, and reporting racist violence to the competent authorities as strategic priorities. Reports are collected exclusively through interviews with people affected by racism. Through this work, RVRN documents qualitative and quantitative trends in racist violence in the country, identifies gaps in victim support systems, provides recommendations to institutions, and promotes awareness and training initiatives, also through the publication of annual reports.

In Italy, Amnesty International's *Barometro dell'Odio (Hate Barometer)* periodically monitors online hate speech by tracking the social media pages of publicly visible figures, with the support of a network of activists. The findings are compiled into a report.

Promotion of respectful and non-discriminatory language

The adoption of policies aimed at promoting non-discriminatory language within civil society organisations is another practice highlighted in the research. From this perspective, while only one of the humanitarian organisations interviewed has adopted a formal policy, other interviewees stressed the importance of better coordinating efforts in this area.

Among the practices mentioned, in addition to the training initiatives already discussed, are the development of formal policies intended to modify the language used both internally and externally to make it more accurate and non-discriminatory; the avoidance of certain words or expressions considered part of a Eurocentric and colonial legacy (e.g., the terms "inclusion" and "civilisation"), or that tend to acquire negative and derogatory connotations in public discourse (for example, the terms "illegal" or "irregular migrant," the Italian term *clandestino*, or the use of the noun "migrant" without referencing the person as an individual or citizen).

The production of multilingual content is practiced in Malta to expand the audience by breaking down language barriers, which, as noted, hinder both the production and consumption of information by migrant and refugee people. The creation of

dedicated glossaries aimed at combating discrimination has also been documented in Spain and Italy.

Self-production of information

The difficult access to mainstream media systems has encouraged the emergence of multiple experiences of self-managed and independent information and communication, as well as forms of citizen journalism and community journalism. Despite certain limitations, digital platforms have enabled the development of more horizontal and participatory forms of communication. On social media and through podcasts, the voices of independent journalists, activists, and creators with migrant backgrounds are increasingly visible, using these tools to deconstruct mainstream narratives. In Italy, projects such as *Pandemic* on Instagram, independent media outlets (such as *Lo Spiegone*, *Will Media*, *Colory**), and podcasts produced by diasporic collectives foster in-depth conversations with racialised experts and activists, demonstrating that an alternative form of journalism is possible: less sensationalist, more informed, and oriented towards dialogue.

At the European level, initiatives such as *4 New Neighbours*-a co-production project involving migrants and local communities-demonstrate that it is possible to build shared narratives, in which storytelling becomes a bridge for mutual understanding rather than a wall of separation. The future, it is suggested, lies precisely in this approach: in collaboration between journalists, activists, and racialised actors, grounded in listening, respect, and shared responsibility.

Among grassroots journalism experiences, *Seen* stands out as an English-language digital platform that trains ordinary people to become narrators of their own stories. Its model combines citizen journalism with community organising practices: professional journalists are no longer mere intermediaries, but facilitators who support participants in telling their stories with competence and awareness. This approach overturns the traditional hierarchy between those who speak and those who are spoken about, proposing a participatory methodology in which communities are no longer objects of observation, but active subjects of narration. The same principle underpins many Italian community journalism initiatives[14], which seek to combine journalistic rigour with social sensitivity.

Another noteworthy experience is *Colory**, a communication platform created to portray the realities of people with migrant backgrounds living in Italy. The project began with a founding group primarily of Afro-descendant individuals, but it has progressively expanded its network to include people with Sino-Italian, Romani, Peruvian, and many other backgrounds. *Colory** stands out for its active and dialogical

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14   Examples of citizen journalism in Italy include *YouReporter*, *Blasting News*, *Fada Collective*, and *Cittadini Reattivi*. Community journalism experiences have been carried out, among others, by *Domani*, which involves its subscribers in selecting investigations and in-depth reports.

approach: it does not merely receive stories, but seeks them out, contacts people directly, and builds trust and relationships.

> *The editorial team works every day, publishing content regularly and openly addressing criticism, even when it concerns errors or imperfect representations. The aim is not to offer a glossy image of diversity, but to show reality in all its complexity, accepting the hard work involved in intercultural dialogue (IT).*

In Malta, a group of journalists with migrant backgrounds has founded an online platform to provide space for alternative narratives, community stories, and intercultural dialogue. Although most of its content is published in Turkish, selected posts and articles are shared in English through social media, enhancing accessibility and engagement beyond linguistic boundaries. The platform's mission reflects a growing commitment among migrant journalists in Malta to promote ethical, non-discriminatory and human-centred journalism. As one interviewee explained, such initiatives aim to "offer the stories that are missing"-stories highlighting everyday experiences, contributions, and resilience rather than crisis-driven representations. In this case, the emphasis is on countering exclusionary narratives by presenting migrants' voices **as credible sources** rather than subjects of the story, portraying ordinary life through accounts of work, culture, and social participation, avoiding images that reinforce pity, victimisation, or fear, and adopting collaborative approaches in which journalists and community members co-produce content that reflects shared realities.

Similarly, in Spain, self-organised media initiatives such as *Quiu, El Colombiano en España*, *Árabes en España*, and *Enlace Latino* were founded by people with migrant backgrounds due to the challenges of working with mainstream Spanish media. Here too, independent podcast production, such as *Migrantes Anónimas*, represents a new opportunity to deconstruct prejudices and stereotypes and to offer new narratives on migration. In Greece, alternative and independent Media models such as *Solomon* and *Reporters United* were mentioned as good practice in showcasing personal stories and counternarratives that increase visibility and challenge stereotypes.[15]

Activism–media collaboration

> *If we could combine the professionalism of journalists with the empathy and access NGOs have, the impact would be huge (MT).*

Collaboration between people with migrant backgrounds, mainstream media journalists, and civil society organizations could significantly improve the collective imaginary regarding migrant, refugee, and, more broadly, racialised people. Many of the interviewees share this view. The professional expertise and wide reach of mainstream media, on the one hand, and the stories, knowledge, and social networks of civ-

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15   *Solomon* is a news organisation established by migrants (here) and *Reporters United* is a network of independent investigative media journalists in Greece promoting cross-border investigative journalism (here)

il society actors, on the other, could be complementary and facilitate the production of narratives free from stereotypes and respectful of human rights. Documented practices include the opening by some mainstream newspapers of spaces for contributions and articles authored by racialised individuals; the creation of expert shortlists; informal collaboration between journalists and activists with migrant backgrounds in content production; and the relationships between activists, newspapers, and local radio stations. However, these remain extraordinary and intermittent experiences that, at least until now, have not succeeded in consolidating into a systemic practice.

5. Proposals and Recommendations

The transformation of media narratives and representations of migrant, refugee and racialised people and people with migrant backgrounds requires a plurality of interventions and the involvement of multiple actors: national institutions, media publishers and journalists, and the anti-racist activism sector.

Below, we summarise the main proposals and recommendations suggested by the interviewed stakeholders, distinguishing between general guidance aimed at policymakers and institutional actors (who were not directly consulted during this research) and more specific proposals directed at the media sector and civil society.

5.1 Proposals and recommendations for policymakers and institutional actors

End campaigns criminalising migrant, asylum seeker and refugee people and humanitarian and anti-racist organisations ("criminalisation of solidarity"). In particular, it is necessary to halt legal and judicial repression of non-governmental organisations engaged in humanitarian activities, in the reception and social inclusion of migrants and refugees, and in combating discrimination, racism, and hate speech.

No to political and institutional hate speech. It is a priority to effectively counter the production and dissemination of hostile, offensive, and discriminatory discourse with xenophobic and racist undertones by political and institutional representatives, including through the promotion or support of legal actions when necessary. The dominant institutional narrative at the national and European levels, which frames migration as a "national security" issue, does not promote more efficient management of migration and immigration policies; instead, it fuels public polarization and the spread of discriminatory and violent discourse and behaviours, thereby undermining social cohesion.

Establish permanent collaborative platforms to define and implement national strategies against discrimination and racism, and for social inclusion, ensuring the participation of migrant and refugees and people with migrant backgrounds, and racialised individuals in decision-making processes.

Strengthen the legal framework against discrimination in the workplace, and specifically in the media sector, and ensure its effective implementation, paying particular attention to safeguarding pluralism in the public broadcasting system.

Support the creation of national networks of safe spaces and services for reporting and denouncing discrimination, violence, and xenophobic or racist hate speech.

Develop national guidelines on cultural pluralism in the media, where such guidelines are absent or not effectively implemented, in order to guide the choice and

use of language and imagery, as well as editorial policies, in line with the principles of equality and equal opportunities.

Ensure and protect freedom of information: it is necessary to adopt concrete and timely measures to address the hostile climate faced by journalists, safeguarding their autonomy and independence, as a free and safe press is essential for critical journalism capable of identifying and combating structural racism.

Strengthen long-term institutional support, including financial support, to foster collaboration between collectives of racialised people, civil society organisations, and media outlets committed to producing accurate, ethical, and responsible information, as well as to preventing and countering hate speech.

5.2 Proposals and recommendations addressed to publishers, journalists, and anti-racist activists

Below we summarise the proposals and recommendations addressed to media professionals and the anti-racist activism sector. The proposals are organised into four main thematic areas:

1. Internal policies for pluralistic journalism;
2. Training on equality and against all forms of discrimination;
3. Innovating editorial policies and communication strategies;
4. Transforming narratives.

1. Internal Policies for Pluralistic and Non-Discriminatory Information

Media

- Make a **formal and explicit editorial commitment** to staff diversification and to pluralism within newsrooms.
- Introduce **professional incentives** (e.g. awards, scholarships, funding calls) to promote pluralistic and balanced journalism on migration-related issues.
- Introduce **thematic shortlists** for the recruitment of experts/interlocutors and key sources.
- Adopt **editorial guidelines on the appropriate use of language**, to avoid inaccurate or discriminatory terminology.
- Introduce **internal monitoring tools** within newsrooms to assess the pluralism of topics and content.
- Systematically and structurally monitor the **representation of people with migrant backgrounds and racialised people** in mainstream media, with particular attention to news and current affairs programmes.
- Create **professional counselling and support spaces** for asylum-seeker and refugee journalists.

- Adopt **internal anti-discrimination policies and protocols** within organisational contexts, including safe and protected reporting mechanisms for incidents of discrimination.
- Allocate greater attention and space to **reports and observations issued by international organisations and bodies on racism**.

CSOs

- Create **spaces for dialogue and exchange** with the media sector.
- Monitor the **representation of people with migrant backgrounds and racialised people** within non-profit organisations.

Media and CSOs

- Build **strategic alliances** among journalists, academics, collectives of migrant people and CSOs, and create shared spaces for training, mutual learning, and content production.
- Adopt **formal policies to ensure equal recruitment opportunities**, for example through anonymised CV selection processes.
- Promote the **participation of people with migrant backgrounds and racialised people in decision-making structures**.
- Adopt **formal internal language policies**, governing both internal and external communication, to ensure accuracy and equality.

2. Training for equality and against all forms of discrimination

Media

- Integrate **anti-racist education** into journalism curricula at both secondary and higher education levels, in order to provide timely training on equality, intercultural communication and ethical journalism.
- Develop **internal training modules** for journalists, media professionals and senior management on combating discrimination.
- Launch **continuous professional development programmes** for journalists, editors and communication professionals on topics such as anti-racism, unconscious bias, intercultural journalism, human rights, anti-discrimination principles and the political context of migration.
- Schedule **mandatory seminars** for all members of professional orders and associations, with a focus on non-discrimination and human rights.
- Plan **training initiatives aimed at transforming internal organisational cultures**, in order to address exclusion, discrimination and "macho" practices within media organisations.

Media and CSOs

- Promote **media literacy initiatives** to foster more informed access to information and to enhance the ability to recognise misleading narratives.

- Integrate **modules on media ethics and the fight against discrimination** into journalism and communication study programmes.

- Support the development of **experiential learning projects** bringing together journalism students and migrant communities.

- Encourage the development of **training modules co-designed and co-delivered** by journalists, racialised and anti-racist collectives, both in the design and implementation phases.

3. Innovating editorial policies and communication strategies

Media

- Support **pluralistic editorial projects** that enhance and make visible the knowledge and professional expertise of all newsroom staff.

- Avoid **thematic ghettoisation**: journalists and experts with migrant backgrounds or who are racialised should be given opportunities to cover general-interest topics-such as housing, the economy, sport or culture-and not be confined to migration-related issues.

- Promote **partnerships with migrant collectives and CSOs** for the co-creation of content, offering migrant communities' greater opportunities to participate in shaping narratives.

- Encourage **newsroom-level policies** on the moderation of hate speech, plurality of sources and accurate visual representation.

- Provide **public service information** tailored to migrant communities (e.g. guides, legal information).

CSOs

- Make **structural investments in communication capacity**.

- Plan communication and narratives **strategically**, shifting from reactive to proactive approaches.

- Develop an **autonomous and independent communication agenda**, not subordinate to political or media debates.

- Define **internal policies** to prevent and counter hate speech.

- Innovate **narrative formats**: new platforms and audio-visual formats, such as podcasts and short-form videos, should be used to produce alternative narratives and to reach younger audiences.

Media and CSOs

- Launch and support **citizen and community journalism initiatives**.

4. Transforming the narratives

Media

- **Shift the paradigm**: move from reporting *about* migrant and racialised people to reporting *with* them.

- Ensure the **active participation of migrant and refugee people** in the presentation of their own stories.

- **Deepen and humanise news coverage**: narratives should prioritise personal stories (storytelling) over data, framing migration as a structural social phenomenon rather than an exceptional or emergency-driven event, and avoiding sensationalism.

- **Verify content with the individuals concerned**, where possible, prior to publishing articles on sensitive issues-particularly when covering unaccompanied foreign minors, asylum seeker and refugee people, or racist violence, especially when perpetrated by law enforcement.

CSOs

- **Increase coordination and reduce fragmentation**: building critical mass and converging towards shared communication and advocacy strategies is essential, including the alignment of key messages and language wherever possible.

- Highlight the **positive aspects and contributions** of migrant, refugee and racialised people to cultural, social and economic development.

- **Diversify argumentative frameworks**: in addition to human rights-based narratives, incorporate arguments related to labour markets, the economy and sustainability, for example by highlighting migrant people's contributions to welfare systems, economic growth, and pension schemes, to reach more conservative or sceptical audiences.

- **Improve accessibility and clarity of messaging**: anti-racist communication should avoid overly academic or self-referential language and instead adopt clearer, more accessible language capable of reaching wider audiences.

Media and CSOs

- Abandon **paternalistic and victimising approaches** in narratives about migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and racialised people.

- Ensure the **responsible use of images**: maintain coherence between images and content; avoid sensationalist, pitiful, dehumanising, or victimising imagery; and safeguard the privacy of vulnerable individuals.

- Recognise migrant, refugee and racialised people as **agents and sources of information**, not merely as subjects of reporting.

6. Summary of key findings and conclusions

These pages present an independent analysis of the structural economic, social, institutional, and cultural mechanisms that shape access to the journalism profession, the structure and content of media narratives concerning migrant, refugee and racialised people and people with migrant backgrounds, as well as the forms of discrimination and racism recurring within the information sector in Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain.

The analysis draws on the four national reports produced within the framework of the MILD project (More correct Information, Less Discrimination) by AMAM (MT), ANTIGONE – Information and Documentation Center on Racism, Ecology, peace and environment (GR), Associazione Carta di Roma and Lunaria APS (IT), and Maldita.es (ES).

Without claiming to be exhaustive, the report identifies with sufficient clarity a number of **common structural features** characterising the information ecosystem and social communication related to migrant and refugee people, people with migrant backgrounds and racialised individuals in the four countries examined.

The report is structured into **five chapters**, preceded by a description of the methodology adopted to conduct a **qualitative** study based on interviews with a total of **68 stakeholders** selected among professionals working in the media sector and civil society.

The **first chapter** contextualises media narratives on migration, highlighting several structural trends that contribute to the persistence of information still heavily affected by prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination, distorted and misleading narratives, and, in many cases, false information. Particular attention is paid to changes in demographics, politics, information and mass communication systems, and the relationship between media and power.

From a **demographic perspective**, the ageing population characterising European countries-insufficiently addressed through timely structural reforms in the economic, fiscal and social fields-has generated new imbalances affecting the sustainability of public finances and has contributed to the emergence of new social conflicts.

From a **political perspective**, European countries (and beyond) appear to have consolidated approaches that increasingly restrict the right to migrate and the right to asylum, compress the right to reception, and strengthen programmes and initiatives aimed at externalising borders to third countries in an attempt to reduce as much as possible the number of third-country nationals. This context does not facilitate the prevention of, or response to, xenophobic and racist hate speech.

The **information system** itself is undergoing significant transformations, both in terms of information consumption and production and from a technological stand-

point, notably due to the spread of Artificial Intelligence. Among the multiple effects of technological innovation is the potential amplification of risks related to the online dissemination of prejudice, stereotypes and false information.

The relationship between the media system and political power also significantly influences the public debate agenda on these issues: migration emerges as a field of political confrontation and is therefore amplified by media coverage in alarmist and delegitimising terms.

The **second chapter** provides an overview of the internal context of the organisations interviewed, with reference to staff composition and the level of awareness of the structural nature of racism both within and outside organisations.

A large majority of respondents **(69,9%) reported the presence of people with migrant backgrounds in their workplace**; however, a significant gap emerged between responses from media organisations (55.8%) and civil society organisations (92%).

In all four countries, there was a clear recognition of the existence of a **structural problem related to access to the profession**. The persistence of strong cultural prejudices and a Eurocentric worldview-identified by some respondents with migrant backgrounds as having colonial roots-overlaps with social and economic barriers hindering access to journalism.

The **barriers to entering the profession** identified, with variations across countries, include **limited proficiency in the national language** (Malta, Spain and Greece), **class background** and **economic conditions** (Italy and Spain), **legal and bureaucratic obstacles** to the recognition of qualifications and the acquisition of residence permits (Malta, Spain and Greece), the absence of a **polycentric cultural perspective**, and the widespread lack of active policies for equal opportunities and against discrimination. Most respondents stated that no formal guidelines or reference frameworks exist for recruitment within their organisations.

Internal organisational dynamics are further compounded by the **limitations of national anti-discrimination policies and legal systems**, as well as by explicit forms of **institutional racism**.

While **awareness of the deep-rooted nature of racism** and its influence on access to the journalism profession, organisational models, editorial policies, content, and narrative formats appears solid among the organisations and media outlets interviewed, racism tends to be perceived as an **external problem to one's own workplace**. Overall, there remains **a persistent difficulty in recognising subtle or implicit forms of structural racism** embedded in recruitment, management, relational practices and content production within the media system (and, to some extent, within civil society organisations). These include material barriers to access, institutional constraints linked to foreign legal status, and historical and cultural assumptions that (explicitly or implicitly) posit disparities in knowledge and skills between "national"

professionals and those of foreign origin, crystallising linguistic, religious, or cultural differences and reinforcing stereotypes and asymmetric power relations.

78% of respondents reported **using non-discriminatory language internally**; however, only two civil society organisations in Italy and Spain reported having formalised internal policies specifically addressing this issue. The appropriateness of language appears to depend more on individual sensitivity than on the adoption of structured editorial policies. Language remains a challenge also within civil society, where anti-racist organisations and racialised communities struggle to develop a shared lexicon that is accessible and understandable to broader audiences.

Across all four countries, the urgency of addressing the spread of xenophobic and racist **online hate speech** clearly emerged. Migrant, asylum seeker, and racialised people and Roma communities are among the primary targets of online violence. However, consolidated prevention and response strategies appear to be lacking. Existing practices in both the media and civil society sectors remain largely fragmented and reactive rather than preventive or proactive. The absence of structured strategies to address hate speech is part of a broader context common to all countries studied, where media is characterised by a **lack of formal anti-discrimination policies**, clear internal protocols, and visible, safe, confidential and accessible reporting channels for harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

The **third chapter** examines how information is produced, focusing on voices, themes, narrative frames and the main stigmatised groups.

Narrating voices. Ninety-one per cent of respondents confirmed the persistence of a **problem of invisibility** of voices from people with migrant backgrounds in mainstream media narratives. Racialised people tend to be objects of media narratives rather than autonomous subjects and sources. Political and institutional voices continue to dominate.

The issue of a **distorted visibility** emerges when racialised people are present but portrayed through stereotypical roles or used as "witnesses" to reinforce narratives of vulnerability or victimhood. A form of **thematic ghettoisation** prevails, with rare instances in which they are consulted as experts on general-interest topics.

Innovations largely come from a **new generation of authors with migrant backgrounds** who introduce hybrid and intersectional narratives into the public debate, connecting racism, gender and class, particularly through social media.

Narrative frames. Dominant narratives tend to portray migration as a **problematic phenomenon** (key word: crisis) and as a threat (key word: invasion). The media image of people arriving by sea has become a simplified symbol of migration, reinforced by **visual stereotyping** that, albeit unintentionally, evokes fear, pity or distance rather than familiarity and empathy.

Another recurring frame depicts migrant people as a '**burden**,' a dead weight, which '**threatens**' the country of arrival, destabilises the welfare system and the func-

tioning of the labour market, and carries the risk of increased social deviance or the loss of 'cultural and national identity'.

Stereotypes of various kinds contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities and discrimination, particularly when they portray migrants in a **pietistic or paternalistic** manner. Across all countries, there is a consistent **absence of media coverage addressing structural racism**: media narratives tend instead to focus on individual acts of aggression, particularly those targeting public figures.

Target groups. People of African descent, Roma communities and young North African generations are among the groups most exposed to xenophobic and racist stigmatisation, with variations linked to national contexts. The Maltese team effectively described this phenomenon as "**selective empathy**", referring to the tendency to humanise certain migrant groups more than others, reflecting broader hierarchies shaped by cultural proximity, religious prejudice and political discourse.

Narrative patterns. **Polarisation, dehumanisation, sensationalism and oversimplification** emerge as the four most recurrent shortcomings in media narratives.

Within anti-racist activism and civil society communication, key limitations include **difficulties in adopting a strategic communication approach**. Alongside the **lack of resources**, which characterises much of civil society, there is the **significant** organisational **fragmentation**, the difficulty in developing a **shared lexicon and communication strategy**, and **insufficient differentiation of narrative frames**. According to some stakeholders, it is necessary to move beyond a purely humanitarian argument and more strongly link the discourse on migration to broader structural social and economic policies

The **fourth chapter** presents **experiences already implemented** in the four countries to promote preventive policies and the production of alternative narratives. The research highlights examples of systematic collaboration between activists and journalists, offering valuable insights into recruitment policies, training, hate speech prevention and response, alternative narrative production and self-produced information. Community radio, citizen and community journalism, cooperation with universities in developing training modules, and collective media spaces founded by racialised professionals point to promising trajectories of change.

The **fifth chapter** outlines proposals and recommendations aimed at triggering structural change, identifying political and institutional actors, publishers and journalists, as well as movements and civil society organisations, as key stakeholders.

Strong and effective **institutional commitment** is required to redesign migration and asylum policies, reception and social inclusion systems, anti-discrimination measures and the prevention of hate speech, including political and institutional hate speech.

Media and civil society are called upon to collaborate in four priority areas: 46 proposals and recommendations address internal organizational policies, train-

ing, editorial policies and communication strategies, and the production of alternative narratives. Non-discriminatory recruitment policies, greater autonomy from political agendas and discourse, systematic learning and training activities, the introduction of monitoring systems for the pluralism of staff, language, narrative structure, and thematic coverage, strategic communication planning and investment by civil society, the adoption of internal protocols for reporting discrimination and hate speech, and innovation in media formats and channels are systemic interventions that could foster the production and circulation of more accurate information on migration, free from stereotypes and discriminatory prejudice.

Overcoming the mutual distrust that often characterises relations between media professionals and civil society is therefore essential. **Building collaborative networks** among media outlets, racialised groups, academics, humanitarian and anti-racist organisations-both in staff training and content production-appears strategic.

In the uncertain and complex reality in which we are compelled to operate, forging alliances that value knowledge, experience, professional skills, relational networks and creativity seems to be one of the few remaining **glimmers of opportunity to detoxify** the public and media debate on migration public and media debates on migration, which are increasingly marked by polarisation, instrumentalisation and cynical political exploitation.

Collaborative experiences and self-produced information, together with new communication formats developed by younger generations of journalists and activists, particularly online, **offer grounds for optimism** regarding the introduction of innovative languages, styles and narrative strategies into mainstream media, capable of representing the complexity and plural composition of contemporary societies.

This is not only about diversifying voices, but about ensuring that racialised people **play a central role** in driving structural change-a process that cannot be left to individual sensitivity alone, but requires public coordination and support, investment, and collective commitment by publishers, journalists and activists in support of free, critical, independent, human rights-based and non-discriminatory journalism.

It is not merely a matter of diversifying the voices in the narrative, but of ensuring that racialised individuals are at **the forefront of a structural change** that cannot be delegated to the sensitivity of individuals alone. It requires public oversight and support, investment, and a collective commitment from editors, journalists, and activists to uphold journalism that is free, critical, independent, respectful of human rights, and non-discriminatory.

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Appendix

Annex 1   Grid for interviews

PERSONAL DATA

What gender do you identify with?

1. Female
2. Male
3. Non-binary
4. I prefer not to define myself

What is your or your family's country of origin?

_____

How old are you?

1. 18-30
2. 31-45
3. 46-60
4. 61-75

QUESTIONS

1.Commitment and accessibility

• Within your professional context, are there any foreigners or people of foreign origin?

• How does the organisation where you work promote equal opportunities and the presence of foreigners and people of foreign origin?

• Do you think there is a problem with the access of foreigners, people of foreign origin or people with a migrant background to the journalistic profession? If so, what do you think are the main causes?

• Within your professional context, are there policies which facilitate access to the profession for foreigners or persons of foreign origin?

• Have specific interventions been promoted to prevent/counteract hate speech on the social platforms of the organisation/media where you work?

• Could you describe 3 actions that contribute to a non-discriminatory working environment?

2.Knowledge and awareness

- Do you think there is sufficient awareness in your work environment about the existence of racism in our country and how this can affect information?

- Have you been informed about any instances of racist discrimination within your work context?

- In your opinion, do all workers of your organisation feel respected and valued, regardless of their background of reference?

3.Prevention policies

- How does your newspaper/organisation actively foster dialogue and mutual understanding between employees of different national origins? What is your newspaper/organisation's commitment to recognizing and valuing different individual and cultural backgrounds?

- In your opinion, does your organisation use 'inclusive' and non-discriminatory language in its internal communication? And in external communication?

- Are training sessions and workshops on equal opportunities and the prevention of all forms of discrimination planned within your workplace?

4.The cultural and media context

- Looking at the media landscape, what are, in your opinion, the narratives that feed stereotypes towards migrants, refugees and people with a migration background?

- What are the issues on which media narratives about migrants, refugees and racialised groups in general tend to focus? What are the most recurrent stereotypical narratives? Is there anything new compared to the past?

- Does the problem of invisibility of the voices of foreigners or people of foreign origin in media narratives persist in your opinion?

- Do you have information regarding possible good practices that may be promoted by traditional media, anti-racist movements and civil society organizations about monitoring and addressing misinformation and producing alternative narratives of migrants, refugees and racialized groups?

Free to decide if making the following questions only to antiracist activists and alternative media

- How much and how is racism reported in the mainstream media? Is it recognised as a structural problem?

- In your organisation and more generally in the world of antiracist activism, is there or is there not a deficit in the ability to define effective communication strategies and relevant alternative narratives? If yes, how could one concretely intervene to fill this deficit?

MILD
More correct Information. Less Discrimination

Migrants, refugees and racialised people in the media

From object to subject of information

Migration continues to be at the centre of public and media debate, a debate in which negative representations prevail, steeped in prejudice, stereotypes, incorrect or even false information, which contributes to fuelling hostility among part of the public towards migrants, refugees and racialised people.

Could closer collaboration between racialised groups, humanitarian and anti-racist associations and media professionals help to change this narrative paradigm? If so, in what ways and in what areas?

This report highlights some common structural characteristics that distinguish the world of information and social communication relating to migrants, refugees, people with a migrant background and racialised people in Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain, as well as some working hypotheses that could generate virtuous processes of change. The analysis was carried out as part of the **MILD** (**More correct Information, Less Discrimination**) project promoted by **Lunaria APS** in collaboration with **AMAM-African Media Association Malta** (M), **ANTIGONE - Centre for Information and Documentation on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence** (GR), **Associazione Carta di Roma** (IT) and **Maldita.es** (ES).

MILD promotes the production of more accurate media coverage of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and racialised people through research, training and communication activities.

Info: link