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BETWEEN THE REPRESENTATION
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OF REPRESENTATION



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PRESS RELEASE

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Social Representations of Migrants and Refugees in the Greek-Cypriot Media



The Genetic Social Psychology Lab of the Department of Psychology at the University of Cyprus hosted an event entitled “Social Representations of Migrants and Refugees in the Greek-Cypriot Media” on Wednesday, 27 April, 2016.

The event informed the public about the goals and preliminary findings of the RE.CRI.RE project (a Horizon 2020 funded project) the Department of Psychology of the University of Cyprus (UCY) is involved in. The study aims at identifying the representations of migrants and refugees in the Greek-Cypriot context through analysing the Greek-Cypriot press from 2011 to 2015.

Dr. Irimi Kadianaki (Project Scientific Coordinator) introduced the RE.CRI.RE project and Drs. Maria Avraamidou and Maria Ioannou, and Elisavet Panagiotou presented the preliminary findings. Three external speakers contributed substantially to the event; Dr. Fabienne Baidier (UCY) presented the rationale and

preliminary findings of the Research Program [C.O.N.T.A.C.T.](#) which focuses on hate crime (Creating On line Network, monitoring Team and phone App to Counter hate crime Tactics”) in 10 different countries. Nathalie Alkiviadou, human rights expert and Head of Aequitas NGO presented legal aspects of hate speech as a crime across different contexts. Giorgos Kakotas from the Office of the Ombudsman discussed its Office’s mandate and efforts towards eliminating racism in the local media. Dr Charis Psaltis of the Department of Psychology (UCY) coordinated the event.

More than forty people including researchers, academics, NGO representatives, and students, joined the event and actively participated in the Questions and Answers session (Q&A) and the discussion that followed the presentations.

RE.CRI.RE Methodology and Preliminary Findings

The study focused on articles published from July 2011 to December 2015 on the issue of migration (migrants and refugees) in four national newspapers covering almost the entire political spectrum, *Haravgi*, *Fileleftheros*, *Politis*, and *Simerini*. A total of 2507 articles was collected using a number of pre-determined keywords and 240 articles were selected for in-depth analysis.

The main preliminary findings of the analysis follow:

Shift of numbers and narratives

There was a noticeable increase in the number of articles published in the Greek-Cypriot newspapers that studied the topic of migration in years 2014 to 2015 compared to 2011 to 2013. The numbers, in fact, skyrocketed for year 2015 (see Table 1), in which the number of articles published on the topic of immigration was more than five times greater than the number of articles published on the same topic in year 2014.

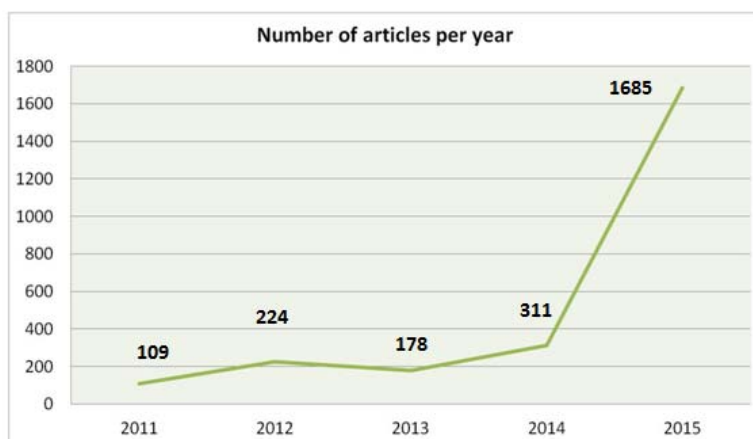


Table 1. Number of articles published per year¹

The RE.CRI.RE team explained that the change appears to be not only quantitative but also qualitative noting evidence of a discursive shift in the articles studied. More specifically, migration was represented as a predominantly local issue of concern in years 2011 to 2013. Articles published in these years focused on

¹ For 2011 the sample consisted of articles published from July to December

migration and/ or migrants as a “threat” and more specifically they emphasised competition between Cypriots and migrants for jobs and for access to social benefits. Migrants were represented as a burden to the welfare system and to the economy of the state more broadly. In 2014 and 2015 data referenced migration and the refugee crisis as an international/ global as opposed to a local issue. They focused on the refugee crisis, burden sharing amongst European states, and on the role of the EU and other international actors (e.g., the UN).

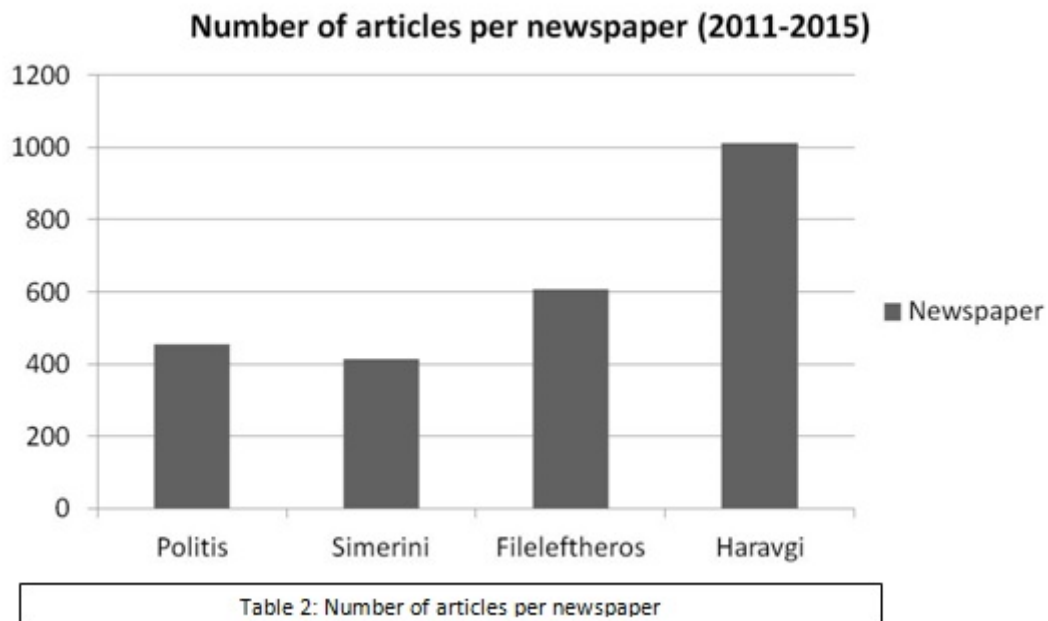
Migrants as threat



Another theme that appeared through the data analysis was the representation of immigrants as “threat”. An initial analysis of this topic indicated that immigrants were represented to constitute both a “realistic” and a “symbolic” threat to the Greek Cypriot society. Realistic threats were mostly related to migrants being responsible for unemployment and for deepening the economic crisis by being a burden to the state’s finances. Symbolically, immigrants were often represented as incapable of integrating to the Greek-Cypriot society because of keeping too close to their own traditions, religion and way of life and that this disrupted the social cohesion of the society. Interestingly, the representations of immigrants as a source of threat are more prevalent in years 2011-2013, compared to 2014 and 2015 when migrants and refugees are represented with more humanitarian-oriented ways.

Anti-racist discourse and/or pro-immigrant arguments

In parallel to representations of migrants as a threat, the study pointed to anti-racist discourses and/ or pro-migrant arguments. Such discourse and argumentation lines aimed to counter ideas of migrants and refugees as threat acknowledging that racism is perhaps an important phenomenon within the Greek-Cypriot society which had to be tackled. For example, they countered arguments that migrants contribute to unemployment among Cypriots by emphasizing how migrants take badly paid, un-skilled and/ or semi-skilled jobs which Cypriots refuse to undertake. Particularly when referencing the “refugee crisis”, articles emphasized refugees’ suffering during their journeys to safety in the EU.



Cyprus and the EU

RE.CRI.RE. researchers emphasized an increasing legitimization issue for the EU as an institution and as a system of cultural and political values due to its perceived inability to adequately manage migration in general and specifically from 2014 to 2015. The EU was recurrently constructed as a negative or positive archetype for Cyprus' own response to migration and the refugee crisis. For example, the analysis noted that pro-migrant discourses emphasized that Cyprus should apply E.U. guidelines and respect migrants. However anti-immigrant discourses claimed that other E.U. countries apply stricter migration policies and thus succeed maintaining migrants and refugee numbers lower than Cyprus.

The qualitative analysis of representations of migrants and refugees in the Greek-Cypriot press is ongoing and the final results are expected to be announced at the 13th International Conference on Social Representations "*Epistemologies of everyday life*" hosted in September 2016 in Marseille, France. Furthermore, another local event is expected to be organised by the end of the program in order to present final findings to the general public. Finally, the RE.CRI.RE team expressed readiness to contribute in the discussion of such issues beyond the context of the academia and share final results with interested stakeholders.

Information about RE.CRI.RE programme

For more information about the research programme visit RE.CRI.RE. website at www.recrire.eu. If you are interested in finding out more about the study and its findings contact Dr.Irini Kadianaki at kadianaki.irini@ucy.ac.cy

End of announcement