

EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



Transnational Television Cultures: Reshaping Political Identities in the European Union

Policy implications of Media & Citizenship, an EU-funded research project exploring television use and cultural belonging among Arabic speakers in seven European countries

May 2011

INTRODUCTION

Are mediated cultural experiences an asset or a threat for Europe?

Globalization and access to new media are reshaping cultural belonging in Europe. Driven by the Internet and satellite television, new mediated spaces are emerging where content from around the world is being delivered through multilingual, multifaith, and politically diverse channels. These mediated spaces are relevant not only for migrant communities who are attempting to understand their place in Europe. They are also relevant to the work of national and European policymakers who are developing media regulation and formulating citizenship tests.

For Europe's policymaking bodies, it is essential to recognize that globalization of media infrastructure means agendas for public debate are no longer set in an environment of nationally managed spheres. This infrastructure, however, does not appear to be enticing migrant communities in Europe to retreat into ethnic media worlds. On the contrary: as European Union's media infrastructure becomes more complex, it is also growing richer, allowing media users to negotiate information in a more critical and conscious way.

Instead of being viewed with suspicion, mediated cultural experiences should be regarded as a valuable instrument for developing a sustainable notion of transnational belonging and identity. These experiences are core to 21st century Europe and should be implicit in any citizenship testing.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

Europe's media and policy environment

Over the past twenty years, Europe's media landscape has been significantly altered by three developments:

1. New technologies (particularly satellite technology and the Internet)
2. The convergence of media forms (the internet, for instance, offering access to television and press)
3. Increasing globalization of media infrastructure.

These developments have led to concentration (mergers and acquisitions) in the media industry, a trend that has been aided by national governments who have relaxed ownership rules – including those restricting cross media ownership.

Is the media industry becoming more concentrated or more competitive?

Regarding the media market there are two competing views about media ownership: one view argues that pluralism and public interests must be protected from multi-media concentration. The other view (now dominant) suggests that a competitive European media market will emerge.

As a result of globalization and new technologies, media markets have become more difficult to define, making regulation by the European competition taskforce problematic.

Satellite TV and the internet give access to content that is not within the scope of EU regulation.

Why is content delivered by satellite and internet not subject to EU regulations?

Under EU rules, satellite delivered content is regulated at the country of upload not of download. EU member states, therefore, have no regulatory control over most satellite-delivered content. The EU's own regulatory framework (which limits advertising and assures appropriate content for children, for example) cannot be effectively enforced.

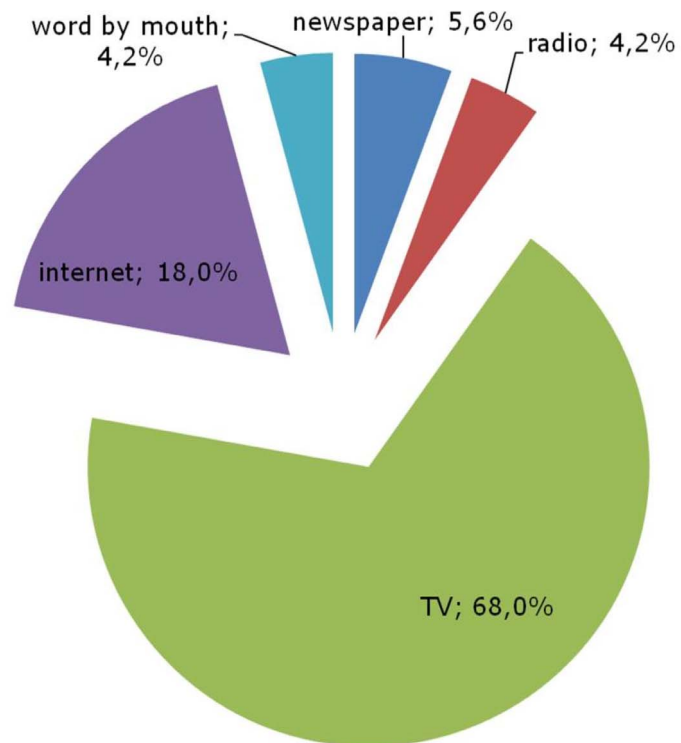
In some European countries the satellite dish itself has come to represent the fear that new communication technologies have obviated the need to integrate, to learn the language of the host country. Numerous attempts to ban satellite dishes led the EU in 2001 to respond by issuing a directive stating that "private individuals should be free to use administrative, urban planning or tax obstacles".

Today, hundreds of Arabic language channels, television and radio, are available freely through satellite or cable delivery to Arabic speaking households in Europe. This has led to a fundamental shift in the ways 'minority' and migrant groups perceive their connection to their country of origin.

Freshly collected data on media use among Arabic speakers in seven European countries shows:

- Arabic speakers in several EU countries feel they are under-represented on public or commercial local (EU) television. They also perceive a lack of perspective on Arab affairs in EU national coverage.
- Television is the preferred medium of nearly 70% of Arab speakers surveyed. Only 20% prefer the Internet and newspapers.

How do Arabic speakers in Europe use media?



Over 90% of those surveyed claim to use both EU national and Arabic television.

Arabic speakers born in Europe are less likely to prefer Arabic language channels than those born in Arabic-speaking countries. The latter prefer to watch national channels from their country of origin.

The most watched Arabic language channel (except in Paris) is Al Jazeera followed by Al Arabiya.

Are Arabic speakers in Europe using satellite TV to retreat into ethnic media worlds?

Quantitative data do not support the hypothesis that Arabic speakers in Europe are retreating into ethnic media worlds. On the contrary, more than 90% watch both Arabic and local EU TV channels. Only 7.3% of respondents exclusively watch Arabic channels.

- Diasporic communities typically bring multiple perspectives to the experience of local or international events. Evidence indicates that Arabic speakers consciously move between channels with a sharp awareness of the varying ideological perspectives of the Arabic language channels and of the domestic EU channels.
 - Arabic speakers use Western European national public television as a source of reliable news.
-

Three patterns of media use among Arabic speakers in Europe

Bicultural

Migrant groups of media users who switch back and forth between local EU television and that of their own countries of origin.

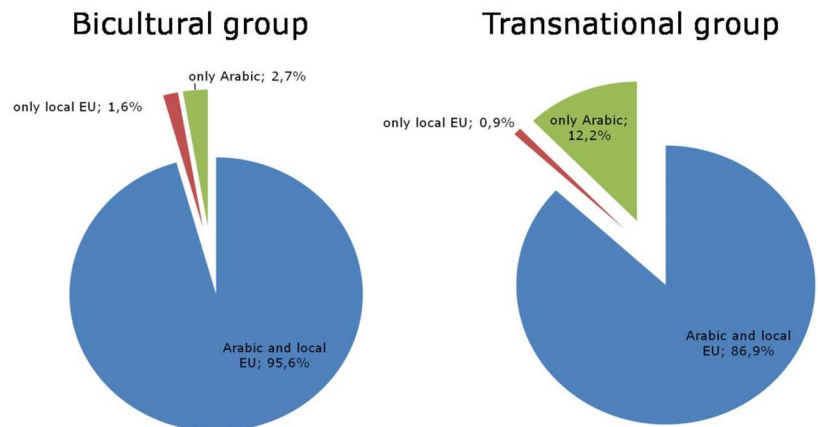
This pattern of media use is typical among Arabic speakers of North African Maghrebian origin who are found overwhelmingly in Madrid, Paris and Amsterdam. Their viewing behavior oscillates between local national channels (French, Spanish and Dutch respectively) and retransmitted local television of the country of family origin (chiefly Morocco and Algeria but also Tunisia). This pattern survives even in Paris, where a high proportion of Arabic speakers were locally born. Even they are third generation citizens in a European country, members of this group typically visit their country of family origin at least once a year.

Transnational

Arabic speakers from the Middle East living in Western Europe who tend to watch local EU and transnational Arabic channels.

This group (which includes non Maghrebi Arabic speakers in London, Berlin and Stockholm) is more ethnically mixed and more likely to watch transnational channels such as BBC Arabic, Al Jazeera, CNN and Al Arabiya. Members of this group - which includes a mix of refugees, students and long term residents - visit their country of origin less frequently than bicultural media users. They too follow issues in their country of birth via internet or local television, but there was greater emphasis on the Arabic language sphere as a space of debate and reflection independent of the particular homelands.

There is a correlation between country of origin of Arabic speakers and viewing behaviour



Mediterranean

Arabic speakers in the eastern Mediterranean who regard Arabic language channels as a further form of 'local' channel.

Cypriot Arabic speakers who consider Arabic a 'home' language.

- **While Arabic speakers in the EU do watch Arabic language television, they also follow mainstream media in Europe. This interplay between media sources would appear to be precisely what EU policy is seeking to encourage in its pursuit of media pluralism.**

What does citizenship mean in the EU?

Models of democratic participation assume a simple one-to-one relationship between a citizen and the nation state to which they belong. But all citizens of the EU already have dual citizenship: of their nation and of the Union. This puts pressure on the notion that political belonging is a one-to-one relation between a citizen and a nation state.

- Recent EU discussions regarding common European modules for migrant integration beg the question: Can citizenship tests assess anything approaching a common European identity?
- **New forms of citizenship testing are on the rise in EU member states. But the models of cultural belonging implicit in such tests fail to recognise the mediated cultural experiences at the heart of 21st century Europe.**

Do citizenship tests acknowledge the reality of mediated cultures?

New citizenship tests have been introduced in the Netherlands, Germany and the UK. Meanwhile, developing discourses in France, Sweden and Spain call for a return to 'native' cultures. These tests and discourses equally fail to reflect the reality of mediated cultures.

- The rise of *nativism*, and concerns about inward migration have come to dominate debate about citizenship in Europe.
- While cultural belonging has been complex throughout EU history, globalization and access to new media have increased the complexity.

- The rhetoric of a 'clash of civilizations' between Christian and Muslim communities has been reinforced in Europe by the terrorist bombings in Madrid (2004) and London (2005). Unsettled relations between migrant communities and the host culture in the Netherlands (following the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004), France (with the riots of 2005) and in Scandinavia (with the cartoon crisis of the same year) have also influenced that rhetoric.
-

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

European and national-level

- Clarify issues concerning regulation of content delivered by satellite and internet.
 - Ensure diversity of news.
 - Support the availability of satellite- and cable delivered material. These actions are essential in responding to media industry convergence that is producing a highly competitive but concentrated set of media messages within Europe.
 - Further develop and refine - at local, national and supra-national levels - mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the EU's 2001 Communication (IP/01/31) in order to ensure the protection of individuals' right to possess and use satellite dishes.
 - Encourage public service television broadcasters across the EU to provide more continuity in formulating and implementing their diversity policies.
 - Employ more Arabic-speakers as media workers and managers.
 - Encourage recognition of the importance of accessing a variety of media sources among all viewers in the EU. Encourage media literacy.
 - Incorporate understanding of mediated culture in the notions of cultural citizenship used in citizenship testing.
 - In particular take account of transnational television as a mode of cultural awareness among all EU citizens.
 - Assure that migration policies and citizenship tests take into account multiple forms of belonging and recognize their close connection to transnational television.
 - Recognize formally the varieties of sub-national and supra-national identity in Europe and acknowledge the widespread civic literacy that is found among many recent migrants.
 - Encourage the critical use of a variety of media sources and use educational resources to enhance skills in comparing and contrasting messages.
-

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Objectives

Media & Citizenship was an EU-sponsored project that explored how transnational media - in particular Arabic language television – is reshaping the landscapes of citizenship in the European Union. It provided the first European-wide empirical research on the use of Arabic language television and its influence on integration in multicultural societies.

The main objectives of the project were to:

- Gather quantitative and qualitative comparative empirical data on the use of Arabic language television in seven European countries: Cyprus, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
- Ascertain how Arabic speakers themselves construct citizenship in light of their media use and their adopted national cultures in Europe
- Deliver well founded policy advice on issues relating to the media and its regulation.

Methodology

The project's survey methodology was developed in cooperation with the research arm of BBC World, the BBC World Trust, the director of which served on Media & Citizenship's advisory board.

The methodology was rolled out in four stages:

Stage 1: A short questionnaire provided information on age, gender, education level, generation and dialect. It acted as a filter for Stage 2 by identifying those who watch Arabic television.

Stage 2: This stage measured the viewing of Arabic language TV channels by Arabic speakers in six countries (UK, Netherlands, France, Germany, Sweden, Spain): what they watch, when they watch it, why they watch it.

Stage 3: The objective of this stage of the project was to acquire data on how Arabic speakers in Europe use the media in constructing an understanding of their identity and citizenship. This stage of the project involved six extended focus group interviews in each of the seven nations investigated, derived from the larger sample of the quantitative study.

Stage 4: In this stage of the project we looked at the legal immigration requirements in each of the countries studied. We analysed citizenship tests in the countries that have these tests and held public engagement workshops that focused on how Arabic speaking citizens (or anticipated citizens) experience citizenship related legislation and the role of the media in this experience.

PROJECT IDENTITY**Coordinators****Professor Christina Slade**

Universiteit Utrecht, The Netherlands/ City University London, United Kingdom

Lianne Toussaint / Quirijn Backx

Project management, EU Liason Office
Universiteit Utrecht, the Netherlands

Consortium**Professor Ingrid Volkmer**

Associate Professor Media & Communication, Universität Bielefeld, Germany

Dr Myria Georgiou

Department of Media and Communications,
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), the United Kingdom

Dr Leonor Camauër

Associate Professor Media & Communication, Örebro Universitet, Sweden

Dr Fayçal Najab

Associate Professor, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3, Pdt of the Psycho-linguistics French Association, France

Dr Chamia Ghanjaoui

Doctor in Anthropology, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3, France

EC contact**Wolfgang Bode**, DG Research & Innovation

e-mail: Wolfgang.Bode@ec.europa.eu

Funding scheme

Funded under the 7th Framework Programme of the European Community, SP 1 Cooperation, Collaborative Project. Activity 3 - Major trends in society and their implications

Duration

April 2008 – March 2011 (36 months)

Budget

EC contribution: EUR 1.240.226

Website

<http://www.media-citizenship.eu/>

For more information

Professor Christina Slade

e-mail: Christina.Slade.1@city.ac.uk

Further reading

Country-specific policy recommendations are available on the project website under "Reports and results"