



## Public perception of A8 migrants: the discourse of the media and its impacts.



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On 01 May 2004, eight countries from the former 'Eastern Bloc' joined the European Union (EU) in what was the single largest enlargement of the political and economic union in its history. These countries – Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - have been grouped together into a group called the 'Accession Eight' or 'A8'. Among the most debated issues relating to the enlargement was the issue of labour mobility. Over half a million A8 nationals have come to the UK since the 2004 accession which makes it one of the most important social phenomena in recent years.

The enlargement and the consequent migration have received extensive media coverage throughout the world. This paper examines how much influence certain types of mass media in Scotland have on their audiences when it comes to the portrayal of A8 migrants in the country. The research aimed to identify the connection between processes of public perception and social inclusion.

This project was submitted by the Glasgow-based the Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS). It is an ethnic minorities-led umbrella organisation which aims to empower the diverse ethnic minority third sector. BEMIS chose to participate in the Collaborative Masters Dissertation project to see how media representation of the A8 migrants affect public opinions and attitudes and how new directions

could be highlighted to influence the media portrayal of affected communities.

Research for this project was carried out in three different stages:

- Library based analysis of academic discourses regarding the media's impact on social inclusion and integration
- Library based content analysis of newspapers (Scottish tabloid - *Daily Record*, Scottish edition of a free newspaper - *Metro*, Scottish broadsheet newspaper - *The Herald*, national broadsheet newspaper - *the Guardian* and Scottish edition of a national tabloid - the *Scottish Sun*)
- A case-study involving focus groups and interviews.

Although traces of negative portrayal were found during the empirical stage of the research, it is fair to say that most of the coverage of the five researched newspapers could be described as positive towards A8 minorities in the UK. The *Scottish Sun's* search for sensationalism was not shared by the remaining four newspapers, and contrary to some of the previously published documents, it was found that the A8 minority was mainly portrayed positively as a group of hard-working people who come to Britain to seek better a future, taking jobs that the indigenous population does not want to do and using a minimum of the welfare provisions available to them.

However, none of the five newspapers offered a viewpoint of the A8 minority other than very few articles describing the lives of several A8 nationals in Scotland. Moreover, no A8-related cultural events or issues were reported on. What was confirmed by the newspaper analysis is that the 'us and them' mentality of the media is deeply entrenched in the newspapers researched. Despite the generally positive coverage, it does not recognise the need for a balanced overview of the community which could ease the social processes of integration and inclusion.

Several recommendations for further research were included in the paper:

- Expanding the scale of the empirical research itself by focusing on a variety of mass media
- Making comparisons with other minority groups in Scotland
- Interviewing a wider sample of the population and also members of the media industry.