

The significance of small differences: Cultural diversity and broadcasting in Ireland

European Journal of Communication

2014, Vol. 29(4) 399–415

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DOI: 10.1177/0267323114530367

ejc.sagepub.com



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Abstract

This article is concerned with a comparative assessment of public service and commercial broadcast media in Ireland, specifically in relation to their respective capacities to reflect and promote migration-related diversity and migrant integration. The core material drawn upon in the article derives from the findings of a recent exploratory, pilot-level European research project ('Media for Diversity and Migrant Integration', MEDIVA) involving Ireland and five other partner-European Union member states which sought to identify and assess the form and extent of diversity management practices in the media at the different levels of journalistic production with special reference to Third Country Nationals or persons without European Union citizenship. In this article, we first consider how processes of cultural diversification in European countries are reflected in broadcasting policies, before fixing our focus on public service broadcasting in the 'local' context and the changing broadcasting landscape in Ireland. We then move to our empirical-level study which examines the MEDIVA findings regarding the roles and representations of Third Country Nationals in the context of RTE and TV3, comparatively. The performance of these broadcasters in this respect is assessed and examined in terms of programme production processes, recruitment practices, media training and content output. The transformations that Irish society have experienced in terms of the demographics of its population over the past two decades make Ireland a very interesting if not unique case study here. We then consider the extent to which the Irish setting resonates with the broader European context, and seek to identify specific points of correspondence and difference between the Irish broadcasting experience and that of the other countries participating in the MEDIVA project. While the nature of the differences in the approach of public service and commercial broadcasters to migrant diversity may prove to be relatively minor, they nevertheless demonstrate an interesting and significant divergence when considered from a range of perspectives.

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Keywords

Europe-related issues, journalism, news/information, public service broadcasting, public sphere

Introduction

This article undertakes a comparative assessment of public service (RTE) and commercial (TV3) television in Ireland, with specific attention to their respective capacities to reflect and promote migration-related diversity and migrant integration. The core material employed in conducting this exercise draws from the findings of a recent exploratory, pilot-level European research project involving six European Union (EU) member states in which the authors participated. Funded by the EU, the 'Media for Diversity and Migrant Integration' project (MEDIVA, 2012) comprised partners from Ireland, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom. This project sought to identify and assess the form and extent of diversity management practices in selected media with special reference to Third Country Nationals (TCNs), or persons without EU citizenship.

This article mainly draws upon a selection of the MEDIVA project's findings in the Irish context but we also make comparisons with relevant key findings from the research on other countries. The overall methodology for assessing TV3 and RTE draws upon four specific performance 'indicators' (described below) which were employed to assess the role and performance of a range of broadcast (but also print) news-media productions operating within the six participating countries. In total, 31 media outlets were analysed across the course of this study with the aim of encompassing a range of public and private media, varying political orientations and different media profiles, although without any claim of representativeness. The core interest of this article, however, lies with broadcasting media.

In recent decades, the realm of broadcasting has undergone significant transformation, both at the international level as well as in Ireland (see, for example, Brogi and Gori, 2013). Public service broadcasting (PSB) has had a long-standing and significant role in most Western European countries dating back to the radio era. However, the spread of neo-liberal policy regimes over the past 20 to 30 years has seen many of the core ideas and justifications that have customarily underpinned and sustained PSB challenged and eroded and has witnessed the opening up of the sphere of broadcasting to increased competition and market forces (Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Preston, 2001).

The transformation that Irish society has experienced in terms of the demographics of its population over roughly the same time period also makes Ireland an interesting and distinctive case study here. Ireland's transformation from 'emigrant nursery' (McLaughlin, 1994) to a country of net immigration has been swift and tension filled, with rising numbers of immigrants arriving from the early 1990s as a direct consequence of the labour market demands of a booming economy. Moreover, notwithstanding the 'preliminary' nature of the empirical-level study underpinning the key arguments of this article, the findings of the MEDIVA project in the Irish setting have prompted a useful and necessary reflection on the form and nature of the roles and representations of TCNs in Irish media. Such reflection is particularly timely and appropriate in the context of a relatively

rare but major crisis. The ramifications of this crisis extend well beyond the domains of concern usually associated with the terms 'financial' or 'economic' and have operated to raise the risks and cast new doubts over the shape and meaning of many institutions, not least in the domains of news media and journalism. A recent report finds that Irish attitudes towards immigrants have become more negative since the onset of the recession, with the number of people opposed to immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds entering the country jumping from 6% to almost 20% between 2002 and 2010 (Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), 2013).

Hence, despite the exploratory nature of this pilot-level project, it nevertheless offers itself as a useful opportunity to gain an insight into the comparative approaches of public and private broadcasters to issues of migrant diversity.

Broadcasting and migration

Migrant integration is an issue of pressing concern in Europe and is all the more pressing in the context of a deep economic crisis in which migrants are increasingly scapegoated. The media play a crucial role in creating and sustaining pluralist democratic societies in Europe – a role that is acknowledged by politicians, policy makers, scholars and migrants alike. Initiatives developed by European institutions such as the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), *Directorate-General for Employment* (DG EMPL), the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) have aimed at strengthening the capacity of the media to reflect diversity. Yet, as Signer et al. (2011) indicated in their analysis of Swiss media, the integration of migrant groups has remained 'a marginal subject in broadcasting regulation' (p. 419). It is in this context that the MEDIVA project was designed to organise and make available a database of such initiatives, including scholarly research and policy, but also attempted to go beyond existing work by creating a policy tool (based on 'indicators') by which the capacity of media to reflect diversity and promote integration could be assessed.

In choosing RTE and TV3 as outlets for scrutiny in the Irish context, MEDIVA researchers recognise that radical change has taken place across the sphere of European broadcasting over the past three decades, particularly with the growth of cable and satellite networks and more recently the evolution of electronic media, which has resulted in a super-abundance of content and an increasingly fragmented consumer market. However, despite this, terrestrial broadcasters remain key stations of choice among Irish television viewers, with RTE 1 enjoying 98% penetration compared to 95% for TV3 (McNulty, 2010).

Moreover, despite the context of technological change, where issues pertaining to migration and diversity are concerned, the debate has continued to prioritise PSB. There is a considerable research literature covering the historical influences and settings within which PSB evolved, and key features defining the concept (e.g. Garnham, 1990; Tracey, 1998; Van Cuilenberg and McQuail, 2003; Williams, 1974). While it has developed differently in different national contexts, given that political cultures vary in different countries, there are, nonetheless, several common features that characterise PSB per se. In particular, PSB is solely or partly funded by public money, it is semi-autonomous and

(theoretically at least) free from both private/commercial and state pressures and PSB is a publicly owned and regulated resource with the express function of providing broadcasting services in the public interest. Furthermore, a key assumption is that public service sits at the 'core of democracy and the fulfilment of democratic values' (Donders et al., 2012: 4–5). As such, it is deemed superior to commercial, profit-driven media in terms of delivering to 'all citizens' equal access to a wide range of entertainment, education and information (Garnham, 1990 cited in Donders et al., 2012: 5).

For others (e.g. Syvertsen, 2003), PSB characteristics may be defined in terms of 'privileges' and 'obligations'. PSBs are privileged, primarily through their receipt of public funding, but also in some countries by being granted a monopoly on advertising funding or exclusive rights to transmit 'commercial over-the-air' television nationwide (as in Norway). In return for such privileges, PSBs find themselves uniquely obliged to fulfil certain responsibilities.

The prevailing accounts in the research literature often imply that public service broadcasters are entrusted 'with maintaining the cultural wealth and diversity of a nation' (Hesmondhalgh, 2012: 138). Moreover, PSB may even assume 'some responsibility for the health of the political process and for the quality of public discourse generated within it' (Blumler, cited in Hesmondhalgh, 2012: 138). A fundamental concept underpinning the public service approach is diversity, hence its remit extends beyond the realm of 'highly serious, educational programming' (p. 138) to offer citizens the most comprehensive and diverse spectrum of programming possible.

In conducting a legal analysis of EU policy approaches to the fostering of media pluralism, Brogi and Gori (2013) point to the re-affirmation of the role of PSBs as a perennial issue for address at EU level, as is 'the need to avoid the unequal representation of minorities in the media' (p. 93). Moreover, PSBs 'in a dual system, represent a chance to maintain or create spaces to guarantee "internal pluralism" and access to all those positions that are excluded from the main media outlets' (Brogi and Gori, 2013: 79).

While acknowledging that ongoing processes of cultural diversification in European countries are slowly starting to be reflected in the broadcasting policies of nation-states, Podkalicka (2008) points to broadcasters in Europe being 'rather slow' to respond to the 'mainstream diversity' that results from globalisation (p. 325). Although many PSBs do provide some element of multicultural programming in schedules, there are no legal quotas in place to ensure a minimum level of coverage of or address to minority issues or audiences. Rather, there has been

... an observable shift away from minority media provision in Europe, justified by the widespread availability of cable and satellite channels in migrants' languages and PSBs need to attract higher audience figures in a competitive television market. (Podkalicka, 2008: 325)

For Kaitatzi-Whitlock, a key obstacle to a more comprehensive incorporation of migrant voices and concerns into public service programming relates to how European public broadcasting institutions primarily regard themselves as sustaining concepts of 'national citizenship, language, culture and identity' (cited in Podkalicka, 2008). In this account, public broadcasters are seen as anchored in a concept of the 'national' that fails to reflect the complexity and diversity of cultures that have evolved in

European societies in the 21st century. Such an approach is supported by Metykova (2009), who, based on her empirical-level study of journalistic practices in Europe, concludes that emphasis is placed on addressing 'the national audience as the primary one' rather than considering minorities or migrants (p. 142). Thus 'the coverage of minority and migrant-related issues needs to be interesting and accessible for a majority audience' in order to obtain publication or broadcast (Metykova, 2009: 143). Moreover, Metykova (2009) argues that

In general, coverage related to migrants and minorities tends to be heavily biased, and members of minority groups are under-represented in the journalistic profession. (p. 143)

Metykova's conclusion is largely supported by reviews of content and discourse analyses of media coverage of migration and integration in Europe since 2000 (see Bennett et al., 2012), as well as by more recent studies of the reporting of 'migration crises' (Moore et al., 2012). Likewise in Ireland, various studies have identified instances of biased and sensationalist news coverage of migrants, and of refugees and asylum seekers in particular (e.g. Devereux et al., 2006; Ging and Malcolm, 2004; Pollak, 1999).

Methodological underpinnings of empirical-level MEDIVA study

In order to assess the capacity of media outlets to reflect migration-related diversity and promote migrant integration, MEDIVA developed a set of 'media assessment indicators'. These indicators, which employ both qualitative and quantitative methods, were organised around the below four themes:

1. Content analysis of selected news outputs from the organisation

This essentially comprised an assessment of the extent and form of the coverage given to TCNs and TCN issues in selected broadcasts and publications. This was assessed in terms of the balance between positive and negative representations (e.g. labelling or stereotyping versus frames of harmony or positive differences) of TCNs in the news, and the extent to which TCNs were framed as 'active' or 'passive' in these representations.¹

2. News making and production practices within the organisation

With regard to this indicator, a range of interviews were conducted with management and journalistic personnel within the respective media organisations which sought to establish the existence of specialised sections/programmes on news from TCN's countries of origin, the existence of programmes in the languages of the main TCN groups of the country, the existence of specialised journalists working on migrant and diversity issues and procedures regarding the 'filtering' of TCN-related news (i.e. standard practices concerning fact-checking and verifying news items, editorial procedures regarding the broadcasting of TCN-related news and the existence of ethical reporting guidelines with regard to minorities).

3. Media recruitment and employment practices within the organisation

With regard to this indicator, interviews sought to establish the existence of measures aimed at ensuring that the media company personnel reflect the ethnic composition of the migrant population, discrimination in the recruitment of TCNs as media professionals by the respective media companies, outreach schemes that involve mentoring or supporting those from an immigrant background (and monitoring of same) and special diversity officers (or departments) within the media organisations.

4. The extent and form of diversity training available to professionals within the organisation

With regard to this indicator, interviews sought to establish the extent and form of any training opportunities tailored to the needs of migrant media professionals, the existence of courses for media professionals within the organisation aimed at raising awareness of diversity issues and how these should be reported, the involvement of TCN or minority representatives or experts in the design and/or implementation of any such diversity training programmes and the existence of diversity goals in human resource (HR) training policies for all levels of staff.

While these indicators are largely qualitative in nature, an attempt was made to translate findings into quantitative scores, mindful of the exploratory nature of such an exercise. Upon evaluating the empirical data garnered through the study, researchers subsequently allotted scores for 'low', 'medium' or 'high' (on a scale of 1 to 5) to each publication or news organisation in relation to each specific field and sub-field of inquiry.

The MEDIVA indicators were designed so that media outlets in different countries with different editorial cultures and with different media ownership structures (as well as journalism traditions) could be assessed and compared. Equally, MEDIVA suggests that they are appropriate for different types of media. Furthermore, with regard to news making and production practices within the organisation, MEDIVA considers the size of each media outlet in evaluating its performance. Here we also observe some specific but important local institutional factors which, in turn, suggest significant barriers to the full potential of diversity goals in the case of Irish media. The quantitative size of a country or region and the absolute or relative scale of its total population, wealth and income are important factors in influencing the potential or actual roles and performance of its media system.

MEDIVA also emphasises that the choice of different media outlets for analysis in each participating country is made primarily on the basis of generating an initial impression of distinctive characteristics and features relating to how different 'types' of media (including ideological orientation) reflect and/or promote migrant-related issues and diversity. As such, it was not a core aim of the project to provide a comprehensive overview of any national media scene regarding migrant diversity.

Presentation and discussion of research findings

Here we move to the empirical-level findings of the Irish MEDIVA team, as they relate to the two media outlets under scrutiny in this article, RTE and TV3. Below, we compare

their respective performances in relation to the four ‘indicators’ as well as to selected outlets in the various other participating European countries.

News making and programme production

In terms of the role and representation of migrants, there are significant points of correspondence but also some differences between the PSB and commercial broadcasters in terms of their overall approach to news production and programme making. Perhaps unsurprisingly, neither network broadcasts sections of news in the languages of migrant groups in Ireland. Unlike its commercial counterpart, RTE has at various times over the past decade produced a range of programmes that seek to address intercultural, and sometimes migrant-specific, issues (e.g. *Spectrum* and *Mono*). In some cases, these shows received their initial airing as part of main evening schedules (or just outside main evening schedules), thus securing a reasonable level of visibility and profile.

Neither RTE nor TV3 employ a reporter or journalist with a specialised focus on intercultural or ethnic minority issues. Again, however, the state broadcaster scores better than its commercial rival by virtue of the fact that the station has a designated ‘religious and social affairs’ correspondent whose remit includes diversity issues. According to RTE’s Learning and Development Manager, the broadcaster draws upon a number of other correspondents who cover relevant issues, and much of the programming in this domain is outsourced to independent production companies that have their own specialised staff. In the case of TV3, the MEDIVA researchers were unable to obtain an answer to this question from the station.

In terms of the ‘filtering’ of migrant-related news, TV3 received not only a lower score than RTE but lower than any of the three print publications that were also sampled and analysed in the MEDIVA research study. Here, an interview with a TV3 news reporter suggested that it was usual for reporters at the station to consult with ‘several’ sources regarding a particular story or issue, but not necessarily migrant sources. The same news reporter further stated that the newsroom’s agenda was ‘news-driven’, therefore reactive rather than proactive. Beyond this, the personnel interviewed at TV3 were reluctant to give detailed information about editorial processes. RTE staff confirmed routinely checking a range of sources during their production of migrant-related news. The broadcaster also edits comments for its website in terms of racial language.

As with the issue of establishing the existence of specialised journalists on migrant and diversity issues at TV3, the MEDIVA project was not able to establish an answer to the question of ethical reporting guidelines with regard to vulnerable groups and specifically with regard to immigrants and minorities. Conversely, RTE contains a specific ‘Respect for Diversity’ category in its *Programme Standards and Guidelines* document (RTE, 2008b), which includes race and ethnicity among the broad range of diversity categories such as religion, political views, disability, age, class, sexual orientation and others.

Media recruitment and employment practices

The findings of the MEDIVA project in relation to this performance indicator point to some very notable similarities but also fundamental differences in the respective approaches of RTE and TV3 to issues of recruitment and employment practices.

Both the public service and the commercial broadcaster have a minimal amount of professional staff with a migrant background (especially people with a non-European background). Regarding RTE, the broadcaster's Learning and Development Manager stated that the organisation did not have any measures in place aimed at ensuring representativeness of different TCN or migrant groups in Irish society.

The HR Director of TV3 demonstrated some awareness of this situation, but she nevertheless did not indicate any perceived need to implement new policies or measures in this regard. She proceeded to acknowledge that she was aware of the fact that there are not many people with an ethnic minority background working in TV3 or even applying for the posts they advertise. She did, however, contend that the broadcaster was employing 'appropriate tools' to advertise vacancies and fill posts.

Notably, both broadcasters showed a very different approach to anti-discrimination measures in the recruitment process. In the case of RTE, the broadcaster has evolved a *Dignity and Respect in the Workplace* policy. While this is not specifically related to migrants or TCNs, the policy is designed to support equality in recruitment practice as well as in the broader area of staffing. This is in turn supported by the provision of relevant training and development programmes for management and staff. So, it appears that Ireland's public service broadcaster is seeking to address issues of discrimination in its recruitment processes.

Conversely, there is no evidence to suggest that TV3 has evolved any specific policy regarding the targeting of any ethnic minority groups in Ireland or has engaged in affirmative actions to address issues of discrimination when it comes to recruitment. Rather, the commercial broadcaster suggests itself to be effectively 'colour blind' in its approach to recruiting staff and states that it does not seek out any specific information regarding the ethnic or religious background of any applicant. Its professed policy is to seek to select the best candidate for the position on offer by focusing exclusively on the competencies of the individual, irrespective of his or her background. According to TV3's HR Manager,

Our preoccupation is to get the best person for the job ... It's not 'let's make sure we have ethnic minorities represented in our workforce' ... Our policy is that we are an equal opportunity employer and therefore we welcome applications from any and all applicants. Whatever sexual community they might come from, whatever diversity groups they might represent ... I mean certainly we're happy to have applications and we consider everybody equally on merit. (Personal interview)

Regarding the availability of outreach schemes, neither RTE nor TV3 have any initiatives in place designed for mentoring or supporting individuals from an immigrant background or ethnic minority. Neither organisation has developed a diversity department or possesses a diversity officer.

Diversity training

In this section of the MEDIVA research project, the overall findings in relation to both public service and commercial broadcasters in the Irish case are extremely sparse. Overall, there is a dearth of training in respect of diversity in both RTE and TV3.

Yet while neither broadcaster fares well here, RTE does have some general policies in place that refer to diversity awareness in a broader sense. The organisation's Learning and Development Manager indicated that the company's policy on 'Dignity and Respect' is rolled out to all staff, in particular to people-managers, and that RTE provides specific courses for HR staff on interculturalism. However, RTE does not offer specific training opportunities tailored to the needs of migrant media professionals and there is no policy on diversity training within the organisation.

According to one of the network's editors who participated in an interview for the MEDIVA project, RTE also facilitates staff to attend external events which 'may' relate to diversity issues (e.g. EBU conferences or workshops). Neither the editor nor commissioning editor from RTE who were interviewed indicated an awareness of any obligation upon management or personnel to attend diversity training courses. So, while training is facilitated within the organisation, it is not obligatory. There is no involvement from migrants in designing training programmes and, according to the relevant interviewees, there are no monitoring or reporting systems for such training.

The HR Director of the commercial TV station TV3 advised that she was not in a position to share TV3's training policies. She stated that the perception of her company was that there is no need for diversity training. Hence, the MEDIVA research project concludes that TV3 does not offer specific training opportunities designed to facilitate migrant media professionals, nor does it provide courses aimed at raising the awareness of media professionals on diversity and how it should be reported.

Comparing content: RTE's *Six-One News* and TV3's *News at 5.30*

It is worth noting the scale of the coverage allotted to migrants and migrant issues in RTE and TV3's early evening 'national' news bulletins. In total, less than 5% of the 766 overall news items analysed by MEDIVA researchers over the five sample weeks of their study made specific reference to migrants or migrant-related issues. Nevertheless, this represents a significantly higher level of coverage than any of the print publications examined in the recent Irish study. In the case of the three newspapers scrutinised, less than 2% of a combined total of 6356 items published over the same sample period have any reference to migrants.

As illustrated in Table 1, there is a significant difference relating to the quantity of news items and depth of coverage given to news stories per se by the two broadcasters under scrutiny here. With RTE, 4.79% of the total items analysed refer to TCN/TCN issues, as opposed to 3.67% in the case of TV3. Of the five combined broadcast and print outlets analysed in the Irish context, RTE news broadcasts the highest percentage of items with reference to migrants. (In relative terms, the study also noted that RTE *Six-One News* outputs a higher percentage of items with immigrant voices than any of the other outlets.)

However, the RTE statistics need to be considered in the context of coverage given to first-world migrants which enhance the findings. While 13 of the 25 RTE *Six-One News* items that refer to immigrants were coded as 'positive', it must be noted that five of these items relate to 'first-world' corporate or high-ranking state officials currently based in Ireland. By removing these five items from the analysis, the number of positive items reduces by 38.5%; equally, by removing these five items from the analysis, the overall

Table 1. Representation of migrant voices on Irish television news across combined sample periods.

| Outlet | Total items | TCN Items | Items coded +ve | Items coded neutral | Items coded -ve | Coded active 'good' | Coded active 'bad' | Items coded passive |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| RTE <i>Six-One News</i> | 521 | 25 | 13 | 10 | 2 | 10 | 1 | 14 |
| TV3 <i>News At 5.30</i> | 245 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | 766 | 34 | 53 | 60 | 45 | 14 | 1 | 19 |

TCN: Third Country National.

number of items coded as 'active' dropped by 44%, while the number of items coded as active/good dropped by 50%.

While not a recurring theme in RTE news coverage of immigrant issues, a two-item feature addressing racism towards ethnic minorities and, a related 'good news' item (all contained in their *Six-One News* broadcast on 25 November 2011) are of note. This happened directly in the aftermath of (1) the violent assault (and subsequent death) of Nigerian taxi driver Moses Ayanwale and (2) the racist comments made on local radio by Mayor of Naas Darren Scully, who resigned over racist comments made on radio (where he stated that he is refusing to represent black Africans in his constituency). One featured calls from the Black community for government action to tackle racism in Ireland. Another dealt with the reported rise in assaults and abusive verbal attacks against Black people in the context of the economic crisis.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, crime features as a recurring theme in the news broadcasts under analysis here. With RTE *Six-One News*, it is central to a total of six stories (representing 24%) of the 25 items containing reference to immigrants. These, however, relate to just three separate serious crime stories (relating to murder, violent assault and dismemberment) in which immigrants were in all cases victims. Two of the nine migrant-related items carried by TV3 *News at 5.30* over the sample periods in question are murder stories. Other crime stories, such as fraud, card-skimming and so on, which gain minor coverage in daily broadsheets, do not feature in national broadcast news.

Again, while not occurring in sufficient quantity or frequency to merit being labelled a *trend*, RTE *News Six-One News* contained two items relating to charges of medical misconduct brought against doctors of African origin (representing 8% of items referring to migrants). What is perhaps most interesting here is the 'comparative' framing of the case of Dr Etop Samson Akpan relative to TV3's *News at 5.30* coverage of the same story. RTE carried the story as 'Hospital consultant found guilty of poor professional performance'; TV3 carried the same story as 'Consultant gynaecologist cleared of all allegations of misconduct'.

Discussion of main findings

Comparison of findings with other countries

It is also useful to consider the performance of the public and private broadcasters in Ireland examined here relative to their counterparts elsewhere. What follows below is a

headline-level overview of MEDIVA research findings from the other participating countries.

At a general level, the findings of the Irish-based arm of the MEDIVA project resonate with those of the other participating European countries in terms of overall performance of public service and private broadcasters. It must be noted, however, that we are not comparing like with like. Different countries participating in this project have experienced different histories and trajectories regarding TCN populations. The United Kingdom and the Netherlands (both countries with ‘colonial’ pasts), for example, possess a longer and more evolved experience of migrant issues than Ireland. Ireland itself has been adapting to a significantly changing demographic over the past two decades. According to the most recent Irish Census of Population (2011), 12% of state residents are non-Irish nationals (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2012: 7). However, by contrast, the population of Poland comprises less than 1% non-Polish nationals. Hence, the roles and representations of TCNs within and by media organisations in different countries must also be considered in such varying contexts. Nevertheless, the tendency for public broadcasters to outperform their private counterparts across the four MEDIVA indicators is shared across the findings of the overall project.

Unsurprisingly, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands demonstrate the most evolved public broadcasting services in terms of diversity issues. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio’s Asian network and its global news agencies routinely broadcast news stories and features from migrant countries of origin. MEDIVA research also indicates a very robust fact-checking process when it comes to the filtering of migrant-related news items. BBC journalists and reporters draw upon a broad range of sources from contacts within diverse communities and also employ strict guidelines about verifying sources in this domain. Whereas other media outlets do not possess diversity officers or departments, the BBC has both.

Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (‘Netherlands Broadcasting Foundation’, NOS), the public service broadcaster in the Netherlands, demonstrates a much more evolved and considered approach to migrant and diversity issues relative to its commercial counterpart RTL. For example, NOS employs an active equal opportunities policy in relation to its media recruitment and employment practices. No such policy exists with commercial broadcaster RTL. A diversity department also exists to serve the Dutch public broadcasting system as a whole. There is also a special multicultural broadcaster that operates with a remit to provide ‘greater visibility to the diversity existing in Dutch urban, economic and cultural life and history’ (Ter Wal, 2012). While such findings exceed those relating to RTL, they also demonstrate the Dutch public service system to much more competently and comprehensively reflect and promote migration-related diversity and integration than PSBs in the other participating European countries, not least in the case of Ireland. The overall findings in relation to the Dutch case imply a ‘buy-in’ on the level of management at NOS in terms of diversity and migrant issues and the widespread availability of relevant training. Equally, while media training practices and recruitment and employment processes at RTL show the broadcaster to be performing less effectively than NOS, it is still scoring much higher than its Irish counterpart, TV3, across the range of indicators.

In terms of the other countries examined in the pilot MEDIVA project, while results in Poland reflect the fact that that country’s population is almost exclusively ethnically

homogenous, the Greek and Italian results do highlight some interesting points of comparison to the Irish study. For example, in the case of Greece, MEDIVA researchers point to the public service broadcaster NET as unique in that it offers programmes in the languages of migrant communities living in the country through its radio network. Likewise, Italy's state-owned TV channel Rai produces programmes that specifically address migrant-related issues courtesy of TeleGiornale 3. The network also operates a code of ethics that promotes the non-discriminatory treatment of minority or vulnerable groups. This contrasts with the overall picture across Italian media outlets where, according to the MEDIVA research findings, migration and diversity are rarely treated as topics in themselves.

In the cases above, the various media outlets under scrutiny operate in countries with varying histories and experiences of migration. While the research pertaining to all six territories participating in the MEDIVA project indicate the overall level of coverage given to migrants in content output to be at a low level, PSBs demonstrate themselves to be consistent in delivering more than their commercial counterparts. In many instances, this is also the case in respect of media production processes and recruitment and training practices within media organisations, particularly in the case of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, two countries that possess longer immigration histories than any of the other participating countries. These two countries exhibit a more evolved commitment to migration and diversity issues on the part of management and, as a result, a more enhanced reflection of diversity in terms of programming and staffing.

Returning specifically to the Irish context, beyond the realm of private broadcasting, RTE also demonstrates a more developed capacity to reflect increasing diversity in Irish society than print news publications operating in the country. This becomes particularly evident when reviewing the policy documents of RTE relative to that of commercial newsprint organisations. For example, a comparative analysis of RTE relative to Independent News and Media (INM) in this context reveals that the state broadcaster far exceeds the commercial organisation in terms of its operating policies across the three broad areas of content output, staff training and recruitment (O'Boyle et al., 2012). The state broadcaster published a corporate responsibility statement entitled 'Intercultural Strategy' in 2008 (RTE, 2008a) and established an intercultural co-ordinating group in 2007 in order to devise a specific action plan around the broadcaster's stated intercultural commitments. The result of this process saw RTE make changes to its programme output as well as become actively engaged in such initiatives as 'The Festival of World Cultures' and 'Anti-Racism Week' (RTE, 2008a). Furthermore, RTE subsequently launched a diversity website (www.RTE.ie/diversity). By contrast to RTE's relatively comprehensive policy on diversity (and record of subsequent actions), INM's *Code of Conduct of Independent News and Media plc* offers only a general commitment to addressing diversity issues and fails to outline any specific related initiatives or actions.

RTE also surpasses all of its counterparts in the Irish context in terms not only of the extent of its content output regarding diversity and migrant issues but also when it comes to offering space to migrant voices. Notwithstanding that the level of coverage devoted to migrants is very low in general (relative to the size of migrant communities in the country), RTE, nevertheless, performs better than both of the country's most established indigenous daily newspapers, the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent*, when measured

across the overall MEDIVA criteria. While the margins by which the MEDIVA findings deem it to outperform, these newspapers are, relatively speaking, quite slender; it is nonetheless consistently identified as scoring higher across the board.

Reflections on the research process

As the methodology outlined above indicates, field interviews with journalistic and managerial personnel within media organisations constituted a core component of the data-gathering process for the MEDIVA project in relation to those indicators assessing news making and production routines, recruitment and employment practices, and diversity training. Initiating contact with suitable key informants was, for the researchers involved, sometimes a lengthy and frustrating process. While some personnel were simply unobtainable or failed to respond to a number of requests for their participation, in other cases it proved difficult to establish the appropriate person within the organisation with whom to discuss diversity issues. However, in overall terms, the response from those informants approached in RTE was significantly more positive and generally supportive towards the work of the researchers than not only TV3, but also the other print outlets analysed. In the case of RTE, most interviewees freely engaged in semi-structured, open-ended interviews around strategies and values, as well as general policies and diversity issues.

Dissimilarly, TV3 personnel exhibited a much more defensive approach in terms of discussing policies and procedures and were often reluctant to provide detailed answers. While all key informants were assured that interviews would appear anonymously, TV3 interviewees were particularly concerned about advancing answers/responses that they perceived as leaving them open to identification.

The accessibility of RTE personnel was also notable to the MEDIVA researchers. In total, four members of staff at RTE were interviewed. Three of those made themselves available for face-to-face interview, while the fourth RTE participant was interviewed via telephone due to time restrictions. Two members of staff at TV3 were interviewed. Conversely, none of these were available for face-to-face interview.

One of the crucial points when approaching and assessing the respective performances of RTE and TV3 in terms of the MEDIVA indicators was the availability of written policies and guidelines issued by the two organisations. It was not possible for researchers to read or analyse any of TV3's policy documents or statements. Unlike the state broadcaster RTE, such documents are not available via the TV3 website. Equally, the HR Director advised that the station was not in a position to share them with the researchers. Conversely, RTE proved itself to be relatively transparent in this regard. A range of documents, policies and annual statements can be freely accessed on the RTE website.

The 'findings' of academic research are very often understood and identified in narrow ways (i.e. limited to specific questions and themes) and therefore researchers can often discard as meaningless findings which do not conform to predefined categories of interest. In so doing, researchers may not only fail to provide rich description but may also deny themselves the opportunity of reflecting more broadly on the actual *experience* of conducting the research and how such reflections (while impressionistic) also constitute *findings* of a sort. Unlike quantitative data, such findings cannot be statistically validated, yet this does not render them meaningless. As Geertz (1973) long ago argued,

qualitative findings enrich human discourse; they are not intended to produce a formal body of knowledge.

In reflecting post hoc on our collective research experience, a number of themes emerged as important. These crystallised in what we collectively perceived as a marked difference in *openness to research* between RTE and TV3. As the indicator findings presented above suggest, RTE at least *appears* interested and committed to diversity issues and has something of a track record on policy, practices and output. Moreover, diversity commitments are not solely revealed in the tangibles of recruitment policies and programming; they are also signalled in the intangibles of media cultures (editorial culture, willingness to engage with research etc.). The MEDIVA indicator scores are important but they are only part (albeit a crucial part) of the overall *findings* of the research. The interest level and responsiveness of participants, their openness or closedness to questions of work culture and practices, our difficulties in contacting them and in receiving responses and so on are all findings of the research that are invisible in the project indicators but which nevertheless reveal much about institutional commitments to diversity. From the start, there was a marked difference in respect of engagement with the research by both broadcasters, including availability to be interviewed and to discuss policy and so on. While TV3 representatives were difficult to access and hesitant and guarded in interviews, RTE representatives were interested to engage from the start, which is not to suggest that they were simplistically celebratory. In fact, RTE representatives were in some respects critical of diversity measures (such as training) yet the *depth* of their engagement and their willingness to discuss difficult issues openly and candidly and even contest the terms of some of our questions contrasted markedly with their colleagues in the commercial broadcaster. Indeed, the fact that only two of the Irish MEDIVA research interviewees (both of whom work in RTE) attended an event organised to publish the project's findings – and one of these covered the event in his professional capacity – again signals the institution's willingness to engage in discussion and debate on diversity with the wider community.

Critical reflexivity on the part of media workers must be fostered and facilitated (see Downing and Husband, 2005). The true test of this lies not in the adoption of diversity charters per se but in voluntaristic commitments to interrogate self-assumptions and professional practices. In this respect, we detected a marked difference between the research participants from the two broadcasters, with the PSB participants displaying considerably more critical reflexivity.

Conclusion

This article indicates the value of the research framework and approach developed and applied at pilot-stage level in the MEDIVA project. Such an approach has enabled us to identify and explore subtle, but nonetheless important, issues and tendencies in how public and private media address issues of ethno-cultural diversity and migrant integration. While MEDIVA does not make it possible to claim that PSB far outperforms its commercial counterparts in the domain of migrant diversity, the findings still consistently illustrate public service broadcasters to be more willing to acknowledge and accommodate migrant audiences and issues in terms of programme production and

content output. Equally, the employment and recruitment practices of PSBs demonstrate greater awareness and accommodation of migrant communities. As such, it is possible to argue that when it comes to migrant diversity, PSB still retains a public service function, and a role that is not matched by private media.

It must also be acknowledged here that the overall methodological approach of the research study drawn upon in this article is subject to limitations associated with such quantitative and qualitative processes of inquiry in the context of an exploratory, pilot-level study. For example, interviews are based on the assumption that interviewees report their thoughts, experiences, actions and perceptions honestly. Thus, it is important to bear in mind that the various participant's professional roles and functions each serve specific interests and particular agendas. Equally, when it comes to considering the news output of the broadcasters in question, the analysis is based on a selected sample from a relatively narrow time period. As such, the overall findings are not definitive or purporting to provide a thoroughly comprehensive or holistic understanding of the approach of the selected media organisations to migrant/diversity issues. Nevertheless, the findings summarised above do combine to offer a series of insightful 'snapshots' which enable us to form useful impressions of the extent to which RTE and TV3 reflect diversity and promote integration, and the scope and nature of the coverage afforded to migrants in media and journalistic accounts emanating from these broadcasters.

This is particularly pertinent and timely in the context of the current deep financial crisis, and the attendant upsurge of mass unemployment and disruptions of prior flows of migration, not to mention the revival of nationalist stereotyping that has accompanied some public and media analyses of the sources and solutions of the crisis in the Eurozone in recent years.

An updated and expanded research project along these lines now seems not merely plausible in terms of the results of the pilot study, but such justifications seem amplified when more recent developments in a wider EU setting are taken into consideration.

Funding

This research was conducted under the the aegis of MEDIVA - a project co-funded by the European Commission, DG HOME, European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals.

Note

1. MEDIVA coded as 'positive' news items that focussed attention on characteristics or attributes of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) that linked them to themes such as public debate and contribution to society, that focussed on specific positive discourses regarding migrant groups and issues and that adopted perspectives of 'harmony, emancipation and solidarity' (see Triandafyllidou et al., 2012: 13). Against this, 'negative' codes were applied to items that attributed negative characteristics to immigrants, 'through labelling, use of qualifying adjectives, including negative stereotypes which define immigrants as different and/or inferior' and, through the lining of TCNs to specific negative themes and discourses such as crime, illegality, oppression of women and others (Triandafyllidou et al., 2012). Equally, MEDIVA evaluated each media outlet on a scale of 5-to-1 regarding 'active' versus 'passive' representations of TCNs, where '5' relates to 'active immigrants doing good things (very positive)', a score of '3' relates to 'passive immigrants having bad or good things done to them

(medium)' and a score of '1' relates to 'active immigrants doing bad things (very negative)' (see Triandafyllidou et al., 2012: 14).

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