

Romanians' image in the international media (media monitoring)

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Abstract

Media monitoring has been made during November 1, 2013 – January 10, 2014, on a total of 104 articles related to Romanians. There were studied eight publications from three different countries. From France: Le Monde, Le Figaro, Le Parisien; from Great Britain: The Guardian, Daily Mail, Reuters and from Spain: El Mundo, El País. In the approximately three months of monitoring, there have been many articles about Romanians and Roma abroad, their situation, the image created in the West and especially the issues raised by the liberalization of the labour market. There have been many articles which outline the image of Romania through the actions of the criminal conduct of Roma, often making the confusion between “Romanian” and “Roma”. It is worrisome the increasingly common association of all Romanians with the Roma population and the beggars in the international Media, the watchword to describe Romania’s image abroad, being “criminality”.

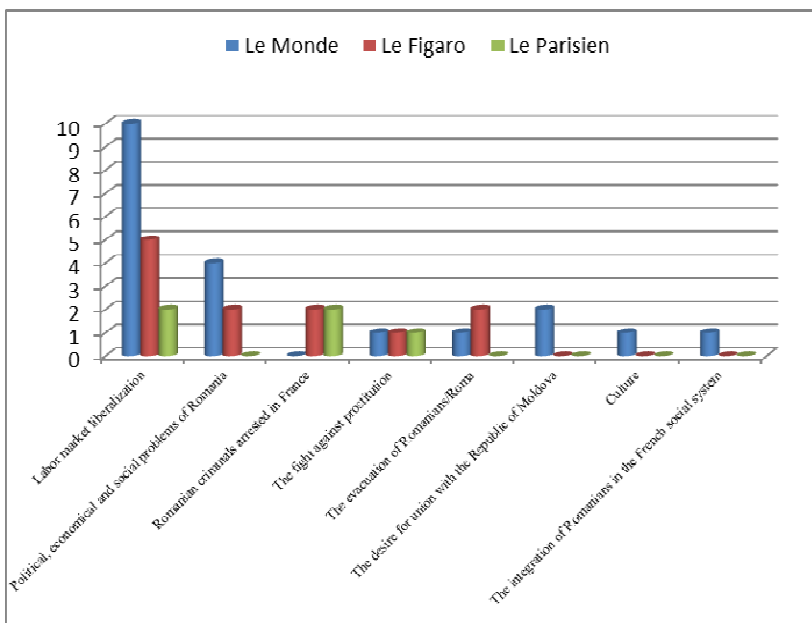
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France:

Between November 1st 2013 and January 10th 2014 we have been monitoring three newspapers from France and found the next articles about Romanians and our country as a central subject, on different topics.



In the French daily “Le Monde”, between the articles in which the Romanians are the main subject, there are prevailed the subjects on labour market liberalization, framed on “Society” section.

The journalists of “Le Monde”, although they are trying to show an objective opinion on labour market liberalization for Romanians and Bulgarians, beginning from January 1st 2014, they

are losing their objectivity, hardly criticizing this measure and anticipating the wave of immigrants coming from East which will unbalance the developed West economy.

There is also a journalist (Dominique Gallois) who is optimistic about the wave of immigrants that will arrive beginning with January 1st 2014, suggesting since the title that the workers from the East are like “a breath of fresh air for the construction companies”.

Concerning the topic of political, economic and social problems of Romania, there are treated briefly and very objective issues like: the fight against corruption, still present in the Romanian institutions, the issue of shale gas and everything related to the problem of Roșia Montană. Another issue is the “Romanian failure” in the attempt to integrate the Roma minority into society.

Also, in “Le Monde”, we found some articles related to Romanian criminals arrested in France and our country’s name is often associated to the fight against prostitution, which outlines a negative image of Romania, perhaps due to the lack of reaction from Romanian authorities.

The articles that bring a negative image of our country are those related to the eviction of Roma from the streets of Paris. In the title is used the word “Roma”, but in the content of the article they are called “Romanians”. So, here is made the confusion between a minority and a nation, associating the Romanian people with Roma ethnics.

The articles about culture have a smaller percentage (with topics related to Nadia Comăneci or the Romanian cinematography, with reference to Cristian Mungiu’s film “Beyond the Hills”) and articles on the integration of Romanians in the French social system, particularly in the health and health insurance system, paid by the French State, or the desire of

restoring the Romanian territory by the union with the Republic of Moldova.

In "Le Figaro" we found fewer articles on the subject of Romanians, and as in "Le Monde", there are dominating the ones on labour market liberalization.

On this issue, it highlights the reactions and worries of Germany and Great Britain across the wave of immigrants from Eastern Europe and also the fact that France predicted the situation created on 1 January 2014, with the liberalization of the labour market for Romanians and Bulgarians.

The journalists are dealing with this subject with objectivity, and the same goes for the issues related to social and political problems of Romania. There are treated subjects as the replacement of ministers, the quarrel of the Minister of Culture with Crin Antonescu and the precarious situation of the Romanian health system, hospitals and their lack of basic drugs.

When it comes to eviction of Roma population, the problem of prostitution or Romanian criminals arrested, things are getting a more personal interpretation and the articles lose their objectivity. A good example in this case is an article published on 02.12.2013, entitled: "Romanians on the knees: incidents during deportations". This author, like other journalists of the newspaper "Le Figaro", describing the events that occurred during the evacuation of Roma, fails to stipulate that the people involved in that action are Roma ethnical, calling them Romanians and making again confusion between Roma and Romanians.

And the third newspaper monitored, "Le Parisien", although it published fewer articles about Romanians (perhaps because it is a local newspaper), has like dominant theme the labour market liberalization.

Unlike the others, the journalists of "Le Parisien", deal with this topic briefly and objectively, somehow concluding that the labour market liberalization is a benefit for the countries that receive immigrants by greater contributions to the state system and note that the first negative reaction to this measure is increasing the crime rate.

Among the topics found in "Le Parisien", there are also those of Romanian criminals arrested in France, specifying only that they have Romanian nationality and the subject of prostitution associated with the name of Romania.

An article that caught our attention was published on 10.01.2014 in "Le Monde", entitled: "A l'ouest, jeune home!" (Go west young man!), Which, starting from a quote of Horace Greeley, a famous American journalist ("Go West, young man, go west and grow up with the country"), seeks to justify the westward migration of Romanians. The article presents in detail the situation in Romania, as well as the young people's impossibility to find a decent job in their own country. This explains the fact that young people are encouraged by their own system to emigrate and search a better paid job and a better life.

Another article, framed in the "Culture" section of "Le Monde", published on 01.09.2014, entitled: "Nadia en équilibre. « La Petite Communiste qui ne souriait jamais », de Lola Lafon", brings to the fore the launch of Lola Lafon's book, about the life of Nadia Comăneci.

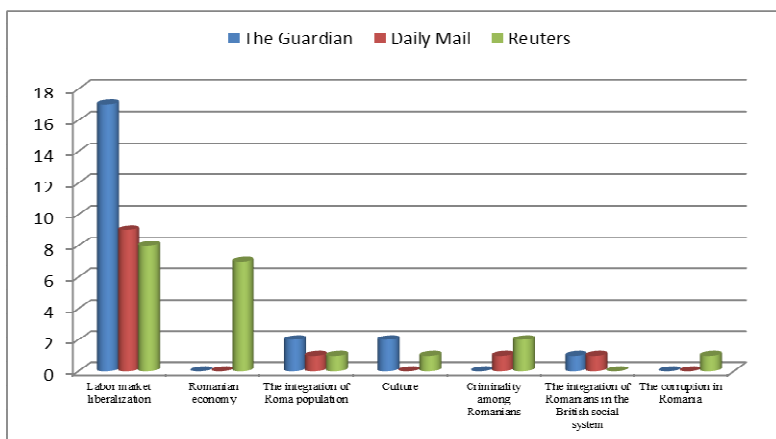
The article is a presentation of the book and also remembers the difficult times that the little gymnast lived under communism, who debuted in 1976 at the Olympic Games in Montreal, at just 14-year-old.

Although the article is surprising for the French media, bringing in light and complimenting a Romanian girl, however the author, does not give the offensive style that the French

journalists have against Romanians and ends his article in an ironic note: “*Nul n’aurait pensé qu’elle pouvait habiter ce robot communiste de 40 kilos, mascotte de son pays, jusqu’à sa fuite aux Etats-Unis, en 1989*”. (Nobody would have thought what could live with that communist robot of 40 kilograms, the mascot of her country, until she fled the United States, in 1989).

Great Britain:

Between November 1st 2013 and January 10th 2014, we have monitored three newspapers from Great Britain, where we found the following articles related to Romanians and our country as central topic on different themes:



Regarding the articles about immigration, the journalists from “The Guardian” seem to have an objective position with articles presenting the testimonies of Romanians who are already

established in the UK, who have stable jobs, pay taxes and do not feel discriminated by the British.

“The Guardian” estimated a new wave of Romanian immigrants since 1 January 2014 when the Romanians had the same rights as British citizens to work freely, publishing articles with statistics on the number of Romanians who will “invade” the UK. There were also found articles on the position of the Prime Minister and other politicians, David Cameron being put under increasing pressure from his own party to take action as a result of fears that the full access to the labour market in the UK would lead to a wave of immigration mass.

An article that caught our attention was published by “The Guardian” on 30.12.2013, with a pretty impressive title “Thousands of Romanian children stay at home while parents work abroad”, related to the children left home, while their parents are working abroad. It is a shocking article which outlines the situation of the children left behind, to what extent they are affected by the absence of their parents, testimonies of the parents who left Romania which are restricted to a single common point “they have left the country for a higher salary, for the good of the children, tired of the situation in Romania” not considering how children are affected after their departure; and testimonies of the children who say “Mom and Dad are not beside me, they left for a better life”, while they have remained with their grandparents. There is presented a huge number of children left at home, which figures only on paper, but in reality it is higher.

A cue ball for Romania was the article published on 31.12.2013 in “The Guardian” when the editor, intrigued by all the talks of Romanians wave arriving from 1 January 2014 as all British media predicted, challenged Romanians in Great Britain

and elsewhere to send pictures of all the beautiful places in Romania and perspectives about their own country.

With the liberalization of the labour market for Romanians and Bulgarians there appeared more and more articles related to immigration and its consequences. “Daily Mail” is no exception and published several articles with statistics, showing the number of Romanians and Bulgarians who were expected in the UK.

Daily Mail presents, in several articles, information and statistics on homeless people on the streets of London, where they don’t distinguish between Romanian and Roma; statistics showing that one of 10 homeless is Romanian or Bulgarian.

What particularly caught our attention was that, in the title appeared the word “Romanians”, and in the article there were pictures of Roma and appeared the word “Gypsies”.

Articles on the number of Romanians arrested in London for various crimes, particularly related to fraud at ATMs are a black ball for Romania, because the journalists of Daily Mail do not distinguish (again) between Romanians and Roma.

A pretty rough article was a statistic presenting the crime rate, rising with the immigration of Romanians and Bulgarians, where the editor has outlined a very bad image of our country.

The Daily Mail newspaper had a subjective position during the monitoring through its articles, unfavourable to Romania's image, preferring to present Romanians as a nation of thieves and beggars.

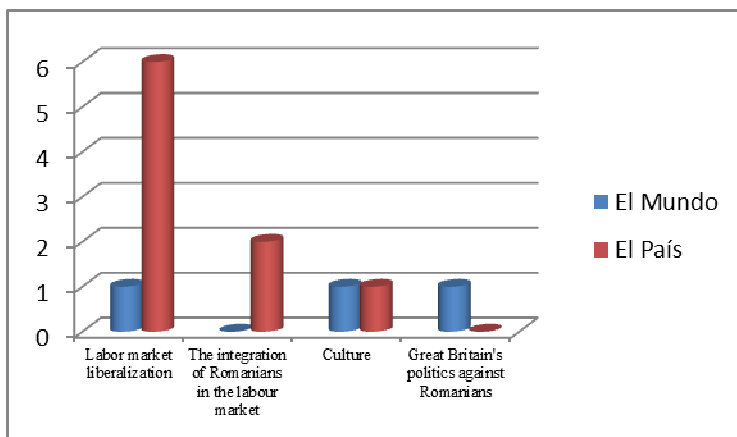
During the monitoring, the publication “The Reuters” did not put very much emphasis on the immigration problem, publishing only 8 articles, saying that now, countries like Great Britain, France and Germany are facing a massive influx of Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants, and now they can work, after 7 years from the European Union integration, without any

restriction. On this topic, "The Reuters" had an objective position, presenting concrete and concise things.

Spain:

Between November 1st 2013 and January 10th 2014, we have monitored two newspapers from Spain, where we found the following articles related on Romanians and our country as central topic on different themes:

Regarding the Spanish media interest for Romanians we can affirm, after the monitoring of the two newspapers, that it is very low.



The daily "El Mundo" is very "poor" in articles about Romanians, being resumed at the number of three. So, the subject of labour market liberalization beginning from 1 January 2014 is treated in an objective and detached way. It also shows the fears of France, Great Britain and Germany to be "invaded"

by Romanians and Bulgarians starting from 1 January and also their actions, taken in the desire to postpone the liberalization of the labour market.

Another article presents the measures taken by the UK to deter Romanians who intend to go to work, namely the reduction of social benefits for Romanians and Bulgarians.

Another article in "El Mundo" informs that, in certain provinces of Spain, where Romanians percentage is very high, agreements were signed between the Romanian state and local authorities to introduce courses of Romanian culture in schools.

The newspaper "El País" had several articles about Romanians (nine), in which, the dominant theme was the liberalization of the labour market. The articles are presented in an objective way, aiming the standpoint of both Western countries and the Romanian and Bulgarian authorities, through speeches and replies of representatives of these states.

Another two articles refer to labour market integration for Romanians beginning from 1 January 2014, making a parallel of what meant their integration in Spain and Italy, one of the articles having suggestive title: "The hand that helps an aging society".

It also brings into question the good preparation of young Romanians, the difficulty to find a job and also the discrimination they are suffering abroad.

An article that caught our attention, published on 03.11.2013 in "El País" has the title: "Anca Petrescu, Ceausescu's delirium architect ". It presented extensively Ceausescu's megalomaniac ideas and how managed a young architect of just 27-year-old to design the second largest building in the world; although in the beginning it was thought to be a kitsch, the time has proved its worth and value.

Another article that caught our attention, "Romanians and Bulgarians still believe in Europe, despite the hostility of the

associates", published in the same newspaper on 05/01/2014, brings to light the problems the Romanians and Bulgarians face as European citizens, when they leave their country. It presents in detail the story of a young Romanian, 29-year-old, graduate of a university in the Netherlands and speaking 3 foreign languages. The discrimination and negative experiences suffered and lived in countries such as Belgium and Great Britain, leads him to assert that "until now Romanians and Bulgarians have been second-class citizens of Europe."

Reaction of the Romanian media

For about three months we monitored the online publication "Ziare.com", they published over 30 articles of all areas about Roma and Romanians abroad, the situation they are in, our image created by France and Great Britain and also the attitude that they have since the liberalization of the labour market.

"Ziare.com" has taken over reactions and statements of British parliamentarians accusing that some Roma are already planning to come to the UK for "steal pocketing and aggressive begging" after lifting labour market restrictions for the two Eastern European countries from January 1, 2014.

A shocking story taken from the "Daily Express" by "Ziare.com" informs that the Roma were having a new method of burglaries: they use their children to steal from homes; the article contains details on how they were operating and the reaction of policemen when they found out what actually happened.

There are dozens of articles taken over by the site "Ziare.com" from UK, France, where they are outlining our

image through the actions of Roma, sometimes it is not specified clearly the difference between Romanians and Roma.

It is worrying the more frequent association of gypsies and beggars to all Romanians by the international media, the key word to describe Romania's image abroad being, briefly, “crime”. Immigrants are labelled as parasites, freeloaders, spongers and scroungers, benefiting unfairly from state aid, particularly Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity and other Eastern European countries citizens. The massive wave of illegal immigrants from Eastern Europe has led western citizens to find a scapegoat for the growing rate of crime and drug trafficking in major European cities, with serious repercussions that come to xenophobia and racism against immigrants.

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