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**Master's Degree in Human Rights and Migration Studies**

**Dissertation**

**The media presentation of the refugees' and locals'  
voices in Eidomeni and Moria through the lens of  
human rights and media ethics**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the media representation of refugees and locals in the areas of Eidomeni and Moria during the period of February to May 2016 and 2015, respectively. The analysis reveals that the coverage was diverse, with some media outlets portraying refugees as victims of war and persecution, while others may have hidden stereotypical opinions. Additionally, it suggests that there was no equal representation of refugees and locals in the media coverage of the crisis. While locals were often given extensive coverage, most of media outlets lacked the refugees' own testimonials. This research highlights important questions about journalistic ethics, media bias, and the responsibility of the media to present accurate and unbiased reporting. While some media outlets provided comprehensive and accurate coverage, few gave refugees a chance to express their views and experiences. The findings suggest the need for more inclusive and ethical media practices, especially in reporting on vulnerable communities such as refugees. The limitations of this study include the relatively short time period and the limited scope of the analysis, which could be addressed in future research. The implications of this research are significant, as it calls for greater media accountability and sensitivity in reporting on refugees and other marginalized groups.

**Key-Words: Media Ethics, Human Rights, Media coverage, Refugees, Locals**

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## Introduction

Scholars, academics, and many professionals have engaged in debates, either defending or attacking the thesis that media contributes to society's development and peace. It should be noted that the idea of information as a peace-inducing force is not only pervasive and institutionalized but also integral to the broader meta-narrative of freedom of expression that guides the regulation of information in modern forms. At least theoretically, it is believed that information contributes to an overall reduction in misunderstandings while decreasing the need for non-aggressive measures. Additionally, by exposing the scale of brutality during periods of conflict, it can generate global pressure or rally support for victims in many cases (Powers & O'Loughlin, 2015).

One of the most significant functions and parameters of information is its ability to construct realities that shape collective and individual perceptions and attitudes. Additionally, the media's ability to define the world for its audience is a crucial effect that must be considered. In many cases, political responses are presented as reactions to the images that nations have of the real world, and these images are selected and shaped primarily by the media. By defining public discourse, the media prioritize certain themes or events, thus affecting the shaped image of them. Furthermore, it is believed that the media consolidates dominant views and perceptions, magnifies issues and facts, and in many cases, alters perceptions and ultimately determines choices (Tsitsanoudi, 2008).

Studying, specifically, the topic of refugee and local representation by the media is important for several reasons. First, media representations can shape public attitudes and perceptions towards refugees and local communities. Biased or inaccurate media coverage can reinforce negative stereotypes and contribute to prejudice and discrimination against refugees or/and local communities. Understanding how the media represent refugees and local communities can help identify and challenge harmful stereotypes and biases, promote more accurate and balanced reporting, and foster greater empathy and understanding between different groups.

Media representations can also influence policy and decision-making around refugee issues. Media coverage can shape public opinion and political discourse, influencing policymakers' decisions on issues such as immigration policies, refugee resettlement, and

international cooperation. By understanding how the media represent refugees and local communities, policymakers and advocates can better anticipate and respond to public and political reactions to refugee issues.

Finally, studying the topic of refugee and local representation by the media can also help us understand broader issues around media ethics, accountability, and the role of the media in shaping public discourse. By examining media representations of refugees and local communities, we can gain insights into the ways in which media organizations operate and the factors that influence their reporting. This can inform efforts to promote more responsible, ethical, and socially accountable journalism, and to build greater trust and transparency between media organizations, audiences, and the communities they serve.

That is why it is very important to study and evaluate the topic of refugee flows in our country. Since 2015, a significant number of migrants and refugees have crossed Greece's borders to other European countries. A small part of this population has remained in our country, mainly accumulating on the islands of entry, from where they are gradually moving inland. The refugee flows and the reactions of Greek citizens have been widely broadcasted over the past few years. Since 2015, the refugee flows in Greece have attracted the attention of policymakers, EU officials, NGOs, and the general public. Even though the media played a catalytic role in bringing forward the plight of the refugees, what has raised questions is how they presented the voices of both the refugees and the local communities in the areas where large refugee flows found temporary shelter, such as Eidomeni and Moria.

We can mention that many journalists, through their writing and the expressions they use, not only obscure the facts and distort reality, but also present it subjectively to the public. Sometimes, media coverage of events significantly distorts the facts and skews public judgment. Moreover, mainstream news stories often glorify conflicts and controversies that, for various reasons, may not be as significant as other important news that are not covered extensively. Many researchers argue that the use of stereotypical expressions creates biases towards refugees, and the receiver's attention focuses on specific events to a greater extent than necessary, thus influencing public opinion. Typical examples include commonplace expressions often used in journalists' written speech, which have been observed from time to time in published articles (Fragonikolopoulos, 2010).

This thesis aims to critically examine the way that the Greek media covered the issue of the refugees' crisis in the areas of Eidomeni and Moria during the periods February to May

2016 and in the year 2015, respectively. It will focus on the media representation of both refugees and locals through the lens of human rights. Furthermore, the study will examine the media representation of these diverse groups with reference to media and journalism ethics and human rights law. The overall aim of this study is to explore how the media presented the voices of refugees and locals and whether they were given equal representation in the cases under consideration, or if any violation of the relevant rights is identified.

The research findings of this study aim to contribute to a better understanding of the media's role in shaping public opinion towards refugees and locals, and how media representation can impact the protection and promotion of human rights. To accomplish this, the thesis will employ empirical and desk-based evidence, drawing evidence from public statements of local actors, Local Governmental representatives, religion representatives, residents, and businessmen in the affected areas through articles, interviews and reports published during the specific periods and concern the above areas.

Furthermore, the study will approach the topics of Media Ethics, Ethical Journalism and Human rights, through relevant bibliographic references. In this context, the measure of responsibility of the representatives of the journalistic profession, the credibility of the media at European level, as well as the rules of ethics, their application in practice and the existence / or non-existence of a relevant legal framework will be investigated. At the same time, questions will be asked regarding the rights of citizens in public communication/ representation, the rights of refugees and their representation in the media, but also the European Policies related to the above issues. Emphasis will also be placed on the issue of self-censorship, which will be analyze in order to investigate the existence of the phenomenon in the particular case studies.

## **Structure**

This study is organized in the following chapters as presented below.

Chapter 1: The main focus of this chapter is to explore the concept of Media Ethics and its significance in the field of Journalism and Mass Communication. It will begin by defining Media Ethics, analyzing the current challenges, and highlighting the need for journalists to uphold ethics and morals in their reporting. The ethical reporting during migration crisis will

also be analyzed, alongside with common ethical violations. The topics of ethical principles, media self-regulations and standards that guide journalism practices, such as the International Media Code of Ethics, Journalistic Codes of Ethics in Europe, and the Code of Ethics of Greek journalists will be also discussed.

The chapter will also explore right of freedom of press and media freedom in the European Union, providing insights into the parameters of European Media Credibility. The importance of credibility and the factors that impact Mass Media Credibility will be also discussed. Finally, this chapter will examine the limitations on journalists, their role and responsibilities, specifically in their contribution to the public perception of the refugee crisis.

Chapter 2: This chapter will analyze the theme of self-censorship in the media industry, including an explanation of the context in which self-censorship occurs and the factors that can influence it. Additionally, the consequences of self-censorship will be explored, as well as its prevalence in the current media environment. Finally, several case studies will be presented to illustrate the existence of this phenomenon.

Chapter 3: this chapter will include the analysis of human rights, with a particular emphasis on the right of freedom of opinion and expression, the right of access to information, and communication rights.

Additionally, chapter 3 places emphasis on the parameters of non discrimination in public communication, pluralism and diversity, EU citizens' rights in public communication, refugees' communication rights, and the presentation of media representation of refugees in Europe.

Chapter 4: This chapter sets out the importance of the study's issue, the reasons that led to the study of this issue, as well as the aims of the study and the research questions to be addressed.

Chapter 5: This chapter explains the methodology employed for the research of the study; a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both empirical and desk-based evidence to examine the media coverage of the refugee crisis in Greece.

Chapter 6: Media Representation of Refugees and Locals in Eidomeni during February to May 2016 and in Moria 2015; this chapters examines the representation of refugees and locals, through critical, thematic analysis of news articles, interviews or reports, interpretation of findings, discussion of media responsibilities in promoting human rights and ethical reporting.



In addition, the chapter includes a comparison of media representation of refugees and locals through a comparative analysis of news articles and interviews, findings, and reference to media responsibility in balancing perspectives of refugees and locals

Chapter 7: Conclusion; an overview of media representation of refugees and locals in Eidomeni and Moria, the balance of both representation and identification of media ethics violations and self-censorship in coverage.

Implications and recommendations of media representation on public opinion and policy will be also discussed in this chapter. Finally, limitations of the study and implications for future research will be highlighted.

## **1. Media Ethics**

### **1.1 Defining the Concept of Ethics**

The word "ethics" comes from the philosophic sources of ancient Greece, where "ethos" translates to the concept of good habits. As a philosophy, however, it is not a property of the ancient Greek civilization, since it is also found in other civilizations (such as the Indians or the Chinese). In modern times, the characterization of a person as moral describes the integrity of the person's character, the importance attached to moral values rather than any expression of interest in their violation. From ancient times, the moral character is compared to having a divine substance and as bearing virtue: ethos is understood as the set of psychic qualities of the individual that provides them with a virtuous character, while ethics ends up describing dogmatically the difference between good and evil (Mouskouris, 2015).

The concept of “ethos”, as described from antiquity, seems to have deep inner motivations: an ethical person maintains an attitude based on an inner impulse to be just, honest, consistent, compassionate, to behave according to the interest of humanity in society, all because they feel an inner need to do so, regardless of their external image. According to Tsiamouras (2020), morality has been created as a concept by people in their attempt to form some rules of social coexistence, in order to obey "right and just", to distinguish "good" from "evil", to understand "wrong" and to define the "unjust". Thus people use ethics and through the systematic study of these concepts they recognize basic universal human values, as well as they accomplish to comprehend the basis of the human social nature.

According to Michel Foucault, there are different levels of understanding the concept of ethics: on the one hand there are the rules, on the other hand there are the applications of the rules, while the focus on the inner man should not be omitted, for it is about the formation of the self. Thus, Foucault focused on ethics and the formation of the human being, but also on the different perspectives on the subject of ethics depending on the way a person actively understands the "self": this opens the field for many alternative perspectives on ethics (Tzanakis, 2012).

Although there may be alternative approaches to the question of ethics, justice and virtuous living, the concept of ethics is widely accepted and perceived as a set of principles based on good behavior. And this perspective has a global basis. Ethics are universal. When people are asked to process data and make decisions, they are committed to adopting rational thinking and emphasizing on ethical principles. This shift in the ethical field of thought characterizes ethical behavior (Eid, 2014).

Deontology can be clarified as a term containing important concepts, such as the sense of duty, the conscious adoption of the moral value system and moral direction in one's choices and actions. Ethics may govern the actions of individuals in their everyday interactions and may be relevant to their personal lives, but also may be relevant to their professional activities. Professional ethics include ethical practices that are accepted within the boundaries of activity in a professional field. Professional ethics dictates the actions that are permissible and distinguishes them from those that have no ethical dimension when a person undertakes to carry out his given or chosen duty (Misselbrook, 2013).

According to Immanuel Kant, good will describes a deep sense of duty towards an action, only because it is right and proper and not because there is an external motive, such as

a reward. The actions of the person of good will are not governed by the pursuit of profit, but by a deep, powerful, intrinsic motive of duty (Misselbrook, 2013).

In a broader sense, professional ethics can be understood as the set of values and ethical principles that guide the decisions and actions of individuals in a particular professional discipline. However, it is quickly apparent that this definition allows for multiple interpretations and a variety of alternative approaches. This is not surprising, considering that the concepts of code of ethics, professional behavior, and duty are all open to alternative perspectives and approaches (Airaksinen, 2009).

Professional ethics define the conscious and important decisions and actions of professionals, while also determining how individuals in a particular profession can be characterized by the ethical dimension. This approach has an idealistic character, as it seeks to answer the question of how a profession can follow standard ethical practices and maintain its optimal ethical dimension. Therefore, each profession has developed its own code of values and ethics that guide the decisions of professionals, describe the root cause of their behaviors, and give value and moral standing to the professional discipline (Airaksinen, 2009).

### **1.1.2 Defining Media Ethics**

Media inform the whole world about various events that happen locally, nationally or globally. They involve the totality of television stations (TV), radio stations, websites, which are accessible to a large part of the world. They are generally characterized as a mass tool for entertainment, education and information, while at the same time they create a place for public debate on important current affairs. This tool is important in the context of power, as it offers the opportunity for observation and commentary on government decisions and political tactics, while actively participating in the functioning of various institutions (Briggs & Burke, 2005).

The concept of media ethics dates back to ancient times, with the Greek philosopher Plato writing about the importance of truth and accuracy in the dissemination of information. Over time, various codes of ethics and standards of practice emerged, including the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, the British Broadcasting Corporation's Editorial Guidelines, and the International Federation of Journalists' Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists (Bivins, 2016). These codes and their guidelines aim to ensure that journalists and media professionals uphold ethical standards in their work, including accuracy, fairness, objectivity, and transparency.

The media industry is expected to operate with a high level of integrity, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility towards society. In today's media landscape, the role of these principles and media ethics has become more important than ever, given the significant impact of media on society, politics, and culture. Media ethics is a fundamental concept that guides the behavior of individuals and organizations engaged in journalism, mass communication, and related fields (*Ward*).

According to the Center for Journalism Ethics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, media ethics are based on the norms, values, principles, and moral traditions that ensure media practitioners act responsibly and accountably towards the public they serve. These principles encompass a wide range of ethical issues such as accuracy, impartiality, fairness, transparency, respect for privacy and human dignity, and social responsibility.

Media ethics can be applied to various forms of media, including journalism, advertising, public relations, and entertainment. The term “Media ethics” involves the decisions made by media professionals in their pursuit of news, information, and entertainment, and how they balance competing values such as freedom of expression and privacy, and maintain the public trust. According to the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ, 2014), journalists, producers, and other media professionals should follow in their work, four key principles: seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable and transparent.

Each of media principle has its own specific ethical challenges and standards, but they all share the same overarching goal of producing ethical and responsible content. These principles are crucial in maintaining the integrity and credibility of the media industry, and they play a significant role in upholding the values of a democratic society. The media has a vital role to play in informing the public, promoting public debate, and holding those in power accountable. Without ethical guidelines, the media can have a negative impact on society and erode public trust.

### **1.1.3 The importance of Media Ethics**

Journalists have a vital role in society as they are responsible for disseminating information to the public. The importance of ethics and morals in journalism lies in the need to maintain the integrity of the profession, promote transparency and accountability, and uphold the public's

trust in the media. The role of journalism is to provide accurate, balanced, and unbiased information to the public. The failure to adhere to these standards can lead to consequences such as loss of public trust, legal action, and damage to the reputation of the media outlet. Therefore, it is essential for journalists to follow ethical and moral guidelines in their reporting. (Cohen, 2014).

Stephen J. Ward, a professor at the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, argues that "journalists should be guided by ethics in their reporting, in order to promote the public good" (Ward, 2015). This is especially important in the era of "fake news," where misinformation can easily spread on social media and other platforms.

One of the primary reasons why journalists need ethics and morals is to promote accountability. As watchdogs of society, journalists have a responsibility to uncover wrongdoing and expose those in positions of power who abuse their authority. However, without ethical guidelines, journalists may be tempted to sensationalize stories or engage in yellow journalism, which can lead to inaccuracies and damage the public's trust in the media.

The importance of media ethics cannot be overstated. The media has a critical role to play in society, and its ability to do so effectively depends on its adherence to ethical standards. By promoting accuracy, fairness, objectivity, and impartiality, journalists can maintain the public's trust in the media and ensure that the news is delivered responsibly. Additionally, by respecting the privacy of individuals and protecting the confidentiality of their sources, journalists can continue to hold those in power accountable for their actions. (Tilak, 2020).

The practice of media ethics is an important consideration for journalists and media organizations around the world. While media ethics can be broadly defined as a set of principles and standards for responsible journalism, the application of these principles can vary depending on the specific context in which media is being produced.

### **1.1.4 The challenges of Media Ethics**

Media ethics can be challenging to uphold in practice, particularly in today's fast-paced media landscape. Pressure to break stories quickly, attract viewers or readers, and compete with other media outlets can lead to ethical lapses. Additionally, the rise of "fake news" and disinformation has made it increasingly difficult for the public to trust the media. Other

challenges include conflicts of interest, the use of anonymous sources, and the use of sensationalism to generate interest (Allan & Thorsen, 2017).

The advent of technology has brought new challenges to media ethics. The rise of social media, for example, has blurred the lines between personal and professional communication and has made it more difficult to maintain journalistic independence. Additionally, the use of deepfake technology and artificial intelligence has raised questions about the accuracy and authenticity of media content. The use of algorithms to determine what news is presented to users can also raise ethical concerns about bias and manipulation (Allan & Thorsen, 2017).

The use of social media by journalists and media professionals raises a number of ethical considerations. For example, journalists must consider how their personal social media accounts might be perceived by the public and whether their behavior on social media could compromise their professional credibility. Additionally, the use of social media to solicit news tips or to engage with sources can raise questions about the appropriate use of these platforms (Bivins, 2016). Media ethics is essential to ensuring that the media to ensuring that the media upholds its responsibility to inform the public in an accurate, fair and ethical manner. While practice of ethics can be challenging, it remains crucial to maintaining the public's trust. In the same time, by upholding ethical principles and standards, journalists and media professionals can fulfill their role as responsible.

## **1.2 Ethical journalism**

### **1.2.1 The context of ethical journalism**

New technologies foster in last decades an environment of mass information exchange and aggregation, which changes the way knowledge and materials are exchanged. The communications and media industries are influenced in this way by the technological advances and also they are provided with new opportunities while facing various challenges. It can be mentioned that as the communications and media industries continue to dominate public and private spaces, modern societies are facing new themes relating to the behavior of these highly pervasive channels. That's why the theme of ethics and good decision-making is becoming an increasingly important theme in the sector of media (Katsogiannou, 2015).

The promotion of ethics in journalism is a highly debated topic in today's era. Many researchers argue that news reporting often crosses ethical boundaries and promotes sensationalism and mudslinging in the media industry. Journalism faces various limitations in this regard, and these limitations can only be overcome if journalists decide to reduce this phenomenon. With the development of social media, rapid technological advancements, and unprecedented events, the journalism profession has undergone significant changes. Social media often produces news unintentionally, disrupting the balance between freedom and accountability, and between journalism and interpretation (Tsitsanoudi, 2008).

Ethical journalism treats not only subjects and sources, but also colleagues and members of the public, as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should balance the public's need for information against the potential for discomfort or harm. Furthermore, the pursuit of news can be seen as a mechanism for undue intrusiveness or arrogance. Journalistic ethics represent the common values that guide journalists in their profession. They lay out both the obligations and aspirations that editors, journalists, and other individuals working in the media sector should follow to carry out their work in a responsible and effective manner. Journalism ethics have evolved over time, and most modern organizations have their own written codes of ethics as various professional membership bodies. If a professional journalist or news organization violates these ethical standards, they will lose credibility (Powers & O'Loughlin, 2015).

In this way there are various ethical standards that appear across international modernized organizations. At the highest level, it is presented that they call on journalists to minimize harm, act in the public interest and also seek the truth. The code of ethics in media encompasses principles such as accuracy, fairness, objectivity, confidentiality, and privacy, which helps to preserve the reliability and quality of journalism (UNESCO, 2008). By adhering to these ethical standards, the media can maintain its credibility, and the public can have trust in the news that is reported (Pritchard, 1997).

Especially the most important ethical standards principles are the below (Naveh, 2002):

- Proper attribution. Journalists must avoid the phenomenon of plagiarism and in this way, when they use information from another journalist or media outlet is needed to attribute it to them

- Harm minimization : based on this standard not every fact that can be published is needed to be published
- Fairness : we can mention that in the effort to be independent, journalists should present and develop impartiality and balance in their reporting. Most news stories have more than one side, and that's why reporters should capture this
- Avoiding libel. This is a legal which can be considered as well as a moral imperative for journalists. Journalists cannot print in this way various false statements that damage an individual's reputation. In most jurisdictions, it is presented that true statements cannot be libelous and that's journalists can protect themselves by rigorously checking and also evaluating various facts
- Independence. Journalists should not act on behalf of special interest groups and also should avoid expressing political perceptions. Any financial investments or in many cases any political affiliations that might constitute a conflict of interest with the subject they are writing about should be declared in this way to public and editors.

This principle can be characterized very often as objectivity, while others, mainly non-profit civic journalism projects choose to reject very often this term, as they try to present themselves explicitly on the side of public interest.

- Honesty : journalists are limited to seek out the truth and report it as accurately as possible and that's why are very important the presence diligence and the effort to corroborate any information with multiple sources.
- Public accountability : based on this principle modernized organizations should listen to their public. In the effort to enable the public to hold them accountable, journalists should write under their own bylines and accept in this way their responsibility for the presentation of every theme.

### **1.2.2 Common ethical violations in Media**

Media professionals are expected to adhere to the set of ethical principles and values in their daily work. As previously mentioned, these principles include accuracy, fairness, objectivity,



transparency, and independence. However, journalists and media professionals sometimes fall short of these standards, leading to ethical violations in journalism, including plagiarism, fabrication, misrepresentation, and conflicts of interest. The most common journalist violations are the following:

- Misrepresentation involves the deliberate distortion of facts or the use of misleading information. Misrepresentation can take many forms, including selectively quoting sources, manipulating images or videos, and using sensationalized headlines to grab attention. Misrepresentation can lead to the spread of false information and can damage the public's trust in the media (Kwak, 2018).
- Plagiarism involves the use of another person's words or ideas without giving proper credit. Plagiarism is a serious ethical violation in journalism because it undermines the public's trust in the media's ability to provide accurate information. Journalists must ensure that they properly attribute all sources and that they do not present someone else's work as their own (Kwak, 2018). Plagiarism can result in loss of credibility and even legal action.
- Conflicts of interest occur when journalists or media professionals have a personal or financial interest in a story that they are reporting. Conflicts of interest can lead to biased reporting and can damage the public's trust in the media's objectivity. Journalists and media professionals must disclose any potential conflicts of interest and must not allow them to influence their reporting (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).
- Fabrication involves the creation of false information, quotes, or sources. Fabrication is a severe ethical violation because it undermines the fundamental principle of accuracy in journalism. Journalists who fabricate stories or sources violate the public's trust in the media and damage the credibility of the entire profession (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

When journalists and media professionals violate ethical principles, it can have a significant impact on the media industry and the public's trust in journalism. Ethical violations can damage the credibility of media outlets and can lead to the loss of public trust in the media. Additionally, ethical violations can lead to legal action and financial repercussions for media organizations. It is crucial that journalists and media professionals adhere to ethical principles

and standards of practice to ensure that they fulfill their responsibility to provide accurate, fair, and ethical information to the public.

### **1.2.3 Media self-regulation in Europe and Greece**

Media self-regulation in Europe refers to the practice of media organizations regulating their own activities and adhering to a set of ethical standards without the need for external regulation. This approach is based on the principle of editorial independence and the belief that media organizations are best placed to regulate their own activities in the public interest.

In many European countries, media self-regulation has a long history and is deeply rooted in the traditions of the press. The idea of self-regulation is based on the premise that the media have a responsibility to inform the public in a fair, accurate, and impartial manner, and that they should be held accountable for their actions (European Federation of Journalists, 2020).

In Europe, media self-regulation takes various forms, ranging from industry codes of practice to formal self-regulatory bodies. For example, in the United Kingdom, the Independent Press Standards Organization (IPSO, 2021) is a self-regulatory body established in response to the Leveson Inquiry into press ethics. IPSO oversees adherence to a code of practice that covers issues such as accuracy, privacy, and harassment, and has the power to investigate complaints and impose sanctions on offending media outlets.

Similarly, in Ireland, the Press Council of Ireland was established in 2007 as an independent self-regulatory body that oversees the print and online media, with the power to investigate complaints and issue rulings (Press Council of Ireland, 2021).

In addition to self-regulatory bodies, media organizations in Europe also adhere to a range of codes of practice and ethical guidelines established by industry associations and professional bodies. For example, the International Federation of Journalists has developed a code of ethics for journalists that covers issues such as accuracy, fairness, and respect for privacy (European Federation of Journalists, 2020).

One of the key benefits of self-regulation is that it allows media organizations to take responsibility for their own conduct and to develop ethical standards that are tailored to their specific needs and circumstances. This can help to build trust with the public, as media

organizations that adhere to a code of conduct are seen as more reliable and trustworthy (Press Council of Ireland, 2021).

However, while media self-regulation is widely seen as a positive development, critics argue that it can be ineffective in ensuring that media organizations adhere to ethical standards, and that external regulation is necessary to ensure accountability and protect the public interest. In recent years, the rise of online disinformation and the spread of hate speech and harmful content has led to calls for greater regulation of the media and social media companies in Europe.

In Greece, media self-regulation is largely voluntary and decentralized, with a range of industry bodies and associations responsible for promoting ethical standards and professional conduct (O'Connell, 2013). The main self-regulatory bodies are the Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers (ESIEA) and the Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers (ESHEA). Both organizations have established codes of ethics and are responsible for mediating complaints and disputes between media outlets and the public (Kiossev, 2016).

However, the effectiveness of media self-regulation in Greece has been questioned, with critics arguing that the system lacks teeth and enforcement power (Papathanassopoulos, 2013). Critics also raise concerns about conflicts of interest and the influence of media owners on self-regulatory bodies, which they argue has led to a lack of transparency and accountability in the self-regulatory process (Kalyvas, 2017).

In addition to these challenges, the changing media landscape poses new challenges for media self-regulation in Greece. The emergence of new media platforms, including social media, has made it more difficult to monitor and regulate media content (Sarikakis, K.). This has led to concerns about the spread of fake news and disinformation, particularly in the context of political campaigns and elections.

Despite these challenges, media self-regulation remains an important part of the media landscape in Europe. By holding media organizations to account and promoting high ethical standards, self-regulatory bodies can help to build public trust and confidence in the media, and ensure that the media continue to play a vital role in democratic societies (Independent Press Standards Organisation, 2021).

### **1.2.4 Code of Ethics : Journalistic Codes of Ethics at international level and in Europe - Code of Ethics of Greek journalists**

Various journalism associations and media outlets operate based on their own ethics codes that apply to their members or workers. These codes often offer more specific guidance on the fundamental principles and standards of ethical journalism. The most important global codes of ethics are presented below (Roselle, 2011) :

- The New York Times Ethical Journalism Guidebook : it is well – known based on the presentation of the news without favor or fear. In this way it prioritizes more contextualized news coverage and also thorough fact-checking and in the effort to support this theme it publishes a comprehensive ethics code
- The Radio Television Digital News Association’s Code of Ethics : it is believed that this membership body is specific to the operation of digital media. Its ethics code references common themes in the sector of internet publishing, such as how to treat sponsored content and also to how to respond to various news
- The Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics: it is considered the oldest journalism association in the United States, giving emphasis on the promotion of the First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech and also on the promotion of freedom of the press, mainly by the effort to encourage journalists to practice the high standards in this ethics code.

In Europe, emphasis must be placed on the official declaration of the 4th European Conference on Mass Media, which was held in Prague in December 1994. Article 11 of this declaration recognizes the right of journalists to adopt their own self-regulating norms, giving emphasis to codes of ethics. During the conference, it was stated that such codes of behavior should be voluntarily accepted and applied, promoting the perception that the practice of the journalistic profession and the sector of media are primarily based on the fundamental right to freedom of speech (Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights). Government representatives from the various countries participating in the conference signed the declaration. The journalistic codes of conduct that have been created and adopted in many European democratic countries strive, in various ways, to harmonize the rights of journalists with the freedoms of citizens. Their aim is also to prevent conflicts between these rights and freedoms and to outline the professional responsibilities of journalists in Europe (Lynch, 2013b).

It can be presented that there are over 30 national codes of ethics for journalism adopted and in force in Europe, in our era. The number of codes can be considered significantly greater than the number of press councils. We can mention that most of these codes have been established by journalists' associations and have been revised during the 1990s. In addition, several completely new codes have been created in the new Eastern and Central Europe in recent years (Päivi & Laitila, 1995).

By studying the 31 codes, which concern 29 countries, it can be understood that the most common characteristics and parameters of the European codes are related to the effort to show accountability to the public and the sources. In addition, it is very important to consider the effort to protect the professional integrity of journalists from external interference. On a general level, all these codes are similar and as such, 13 main themes can be related to almost all of them. However, there are various differences based on the political, financial, social, and cultural background of each country. The most common principles in these codes are below (Laitila, 1995):

- freedom of expression and comment
- integrity of the source and the journalist
- fair means in the process of gathering the information
- the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, etc
- stress the truthfulness of information

It is believed that the differences and similarities presented between the national codes do not seem to follow any traditional, linguistic, or geographical dividing lines. For many researchers, since freedom of information for journalists, publishers, and proprietors in the mass media sector is not unlimited, it is necessary to safeguard their rights and demand their duties, thus giving freedom and responsibility a compatible character. Additionally, the Council of Europe emphasizes that journalists, publishers, and proprietors are responsible for presenting information as a significant citizen's right and not as a merchandise right, so that citizens in Europe can demand ethical opinions and truthful information. It should be mentioned that there is a need for special protection of journalists, who are often exposed to pressure by influential

companies and public authorities. Emphasis must also be given to the decisive role of mass media in the development of public opinion and democracy (Laitila, 1996).

Moreover, it is important to note that it is crucial to avoid usurping the proper functions of public authorities and to refrain from pretending to represent public opinion. Such tactics may appear as an attempt to act like public authorities, yet without the representation and democratic controls necessary to do so (Lynch, 2011).

The effort to help the media fulfill their aim of providing ethical opinions and reliable information is also very significant. Therefore, the Council of Europe believes that it is important for the mass media to exercise self-control through journalists, publishers, and proprietors, and to voluntarily submit to deontological codes. The influence and prestige of deontic codes in European countries can only be maintained if they include mechanisms of self-control, sanctions, and declared ethical principles (Lynch, 2011).

Very important is also the code of ethics in our country, particularly the Greek code of ethics for journalists. It was approved on October 31, 1988, by the following five Greek journalists' unions<sup>1</sup>:

- the Union of Journalists of Periodical Press
- the Union of Journalists of Daily Newspapers of Thessaly, Sterea, Evia
- the Union of Journalists of Daily Newspapers of Peloponissos, Epirus and Islands
- the Union of Journalists of Daily Newspapers of Macedonia-Thrace
- the Union of Journalists of Daily Newspapers of Athens

The main principles of this code are the below :

- journalists don't accept any promise, benefit or advantage of benefit offered in exchange in the effort to succeed the restriction of the independence of their opinion during the practice of their function
- journalism can be considered as function

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<sup>1</sup> <https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes/greek-journalist-unions-code-of-ethics>

- the function of journalism may not be practiced in various cases for self-seeking aims
- truth and its presentation concern mainly journalists
- the most important task of the journalist can be considered the defense of the democratic regime and of the people's liberties, as well as the advancement of various social and state organizations and institutions
- the access to sources of various news and information is free and undisturbed for journalists, who haven't the duty reveal their information sources
- the journalists during the practice of their function reject any intervention having the aim of distorting or concealing the truth
- main aim of journalists is the effort to defend the freedom of press, the undisturbed and also free propagation of news and various ideas, as well as the right to opposition.
- main principle is considered the defense of people's interests and the respect for national and popular values, as they can inspire the journalists in the practice of their function
- the religious convictions, races and peoples, customs and manners of nations and institutions and organizations, as well as public's private and family life are respected and also inviolable.

The principles of the Code of Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility of the Panhellenic Federation of Journalists' Unions and the Journalists' Union of Macedonia and Thrace Daily Newspapers served as the basis for the creation of the Anti-racism Ethics Code of Greek journalists, also known as the Charter of Eidomeni. The charter is named after the thousands of refugees who passed through the region of Eidomeni in 2015 and highlights the role of journalism in the refugee crisis, which is the main theme of this study. The Charter of Eidomeni aims to<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2016/05/12/greek-journalists-draft-ethical-code-to-fight-racism-on-refugees-coverage/>

- provide every journalist with the needed conditions of voluntary commitment in the process of performing their duties
- guarantee the right to press freedom, freedom of expression and in addition the rights of asylum-seekers, migrants, refugees and generally in this way defenseless social groups, related to the principles of the Treviso Charter on protecting the rights of minors and children in the media, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and global law
- discourage and also denounce climates of racism, xenophobia and intolerance, which can be considered very important factors for the discrimination and persecution on grounds of political affiliation , gender, language, religion and origin
- preserve the social role and influence of journalists in the conditions created by the presence of socially vulnerable groups, minorities, migrants and refugees in our country

### **1.3 Media Freedom: Establishing Fundamental Human Rights**

Media plays a crucial role in democratic societies, particularly in supporting and underpinning their functioning. The freedom of the press is essential to democracy, as it provides citizens with unfiltered information to make informed personal, professional, social, and political decisions, helping them gain a comprehensive understanding of contemporary life. In democratic societies, media acts as a tool that can unite the voices of the people and authorities, fostering a collaborative environment that supports the smooth functioning of all institutions while promoting democratic dialogue.

However, it is important to note that media's influence on public opinion is strong and direct. The media has the power to shape public opinion on current affairs, whether they relate to political dilemmas, financial scandals, or social movements. Therefore, it is critical to explore the issue of press freedom and establish limits that can prevent violations of basic and fundamental human rights. It is also essential to clarify the concept of media freedom and establish a basic code of ethics for media professionals. (Kontaxis, 2011).



First and foremost, it is crucial to recognize the significance of freedom of the press. It enables media professionals to inform the public and openly discuss important issues that divide and affect public opinion. This freedom of media professionals is a crucial characteristic of a democratic system. In fact, it can be argued that freedom of the press is the foremost criterion for determining whether a society is truly democratic.

According to the principles of the free press, professionals in the field can inform the citizens of a state about the successes and failures of government representatives, they can offer a loud voice to the opposition, but it could be the other way around: they can inform the leadership and the executive bodies about the basic needs of the people. Therefore, in the current regime of free press, media also listen to the voice of citizens, acting as a tool for dialogue and feedback on key political, social and economic issues. Conversely, the absence of media freedom implies fundamental imbalances in these interactions. The result of these imbalances is poor decision making in relation to political issues, implying negative consequences for all members of society, both those in power and those not in power.

By definition, the absence of free press calls into question the establishment of basic democratic values<sup>3</sup>.

In the European Union, particular emphasis is placed on media freedom, as this is a prerequisite for ensuring justice and democracy in the Member States. In fact, in the Community framework, various freedom of the press projects are funded by the European Commission, which shows the paramount importance of media freedom in the European area. Important initiatives are planned to ensure that media professionals can freely exercise their profession without censorship and under conditions of security. The aim is to build a secure, democratic and sustainable media ecosystem. A fundamental right that Europe defends through its actions and a fundamental right for the media professionals is that of freedom of expression. The right to freedom of expression includes the right to receive and impart information without interference by public authority and is constitutionally enshrined in Article 11 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Article 11 was in fact previously stated in Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Commission, 2022).

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<sup>3</sup> Freedom House, Media Freedom: <https://freedomhouse.org/issues/media-freedom>

Article 11 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights therefore explicitly states (European Union, 2010):

***Article 11***

***Freedom of expression and information***

*1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.*

*2. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected.*

According to Karakostas (2000), freedom of the press was constitutionally guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome on 4 November 1950. This convention not only defines rights to freedom of expression but also duties and obligations, which explains that within the framework of freedom of expression there are limitations, as there is the possibility of sanctions for the violation of other fundamental human rights.

These measures are considered necessary to ensure democracy. One of the most basic limitations that become clear in the fiction of the reference to duties and the subordinations of the freedom of expression is that of the right of personality: every human being has the right to protect their honor and dignity. Thus, in the context of freedom of expression in the press, there is an inherent duty not to cause moral harm to third parties.

Therefore, the freedom of the press has limits to prevent such offenses as defamation, which is a key limitation due to the right to protect one's honor and dignity. Media professionals have a responsibility to carry out their social mission of informing public opinion while respecting the limits of the right to personality. Harsh criticism is allowed, but any unfair treatment makes it illegal. Any action by the media that constitutes defamation, unfair ill-treatment, or misinformation about a person or group of people is a direct attack on their personality, causing moral damage. The limits are thin, and any violation of the right to personality results in sanctions. (Katsogiannou, 2015).

### **1.3.1 Media freedom in Europe**

Press freedom is facing increasing challenges both within and beyond the borders of the EU, highlighting the crucial role that the European Parliament plays in supporting the work of journalists. In the global arena, journalism is under growing pressure, with misinformation and propaganda fueling international tensions and exacerbating societal divides. While Europe is often regarded as the continent that best safeguards press freedom, there have been instances of intimidation and attacks on journalists in some countries, such as Russia's war against Ukraine, which is believed to have the potential to further worsen this already difficult situation

As an illustrative example, on May 3, 2022, which commemorates World Press Freedom Day, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) expressed concerns about the increasing number of attacks on journalists and underscored the significance of promoting press freedom for the effective functioning of democracy. It can also be argued that journalists should not be forced to choose between their lives and reporting the truth, nor should they have to spend years and their savings defending themselves against intimidating lawsuits. In a robust democracy, a free and strong press is indispensable.<sup>4</sup>

The European Parliament has repeatedly emphasized the importance of press freedom and pluralism in the EU and beyond its borders. In November 2021, the Parliament adopted a resolution on strengthening media freedom and pluralism in the EU, promoting the need for new rules to protect the profession of journalists. Additionally, in a separate report adopted in March 2022, Parliament's special committee on external interference in the EU presented the need for a common strategy to counter foreign interference and disinformation campaigns and emphasized the important role of stronger support for independent media, journalists, and researchers.

Several months later, on April 27, 2022, the Commission proposed measures to improve the protection of journalists and human rights defenders from abusive legal proceedings and committed to presenting the European Media Freedom Act in the autumn. This act seeks to establish a framework for media freedom across European Union member states, addressing issues such as censorship, media ownership, and access to information. The proposed legislation seeks to ensure that journalists are able to work without fear of reprisal, harassment, or violence. It would also establish measures to protect sources, ensuring that

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/el/headlines/society/20220513STO29508/eleutheria-tou-tupou-to-europaiko-koinovouljo-sto-pleuro-ton-dimosiografon>

journalists are able to maintain confidentiality and protect their sources from retaliation<sup>5</sup>. In this way, MEPs have also condemned the increasing silencing of critical voices and attacks on journalists in countries such as Russia, Poland, and Mexico.

On May 3, 2022, the European Parliament announced the nominations for the second Daphne Caruana Galizia Journalism Prize, which is awarded annually for outstanding achievements in the field of journalism that promote or defend the fundamental principles and values of the EU. In April 2022, the Parliament also announced a new system of scholarships and training programs for young journalists, which is expected to begin in 2022. Therefore, it can be understood that freedom of expression, media freedom, and pluralism are enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as emphasized in the European Convention on Human Rights.

## **1.4 The credibility of Media**

The introduction and widespread use of the internet in modern society has brought about a new age of information dissemination. With news and information being instantly available at a person's fingertips, the news media has faced new challenges. In addition to potentially losing revenue from declining newspaper sales, the credibility of information itself has also been called into question.(Lunch, 2013b).

Media credibility refers to the level of trustworthiness and reliability that the public attributes to a particular media source, such as a news outlet, website, or social media platform. Credibility is based on factors such as accuracy, impartiality, transparency, accountability, and ethics. Essentially an intense dialogue has been developed in last years concerning the level or the presence of media's credibility, although many researchers believe that the media, both traditional and digital, are suffering in last decades from a heavy crisis. There are many causes for this loss of credibility, giving emphasis on the below causes (McCurdy, 2011) :

- presence of little diversity in the mainstream: in many cases the major press essentially releases publish almost identical interpretations of what is at financial, cultural and political level desirable. As a result, it is believed that societal minority groups perceive

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/el/headlines/society/20220513STO29508/eleutheria-tou-tupou-to-europaiko-koinovouljo-sto-pleuro-ton-dimosiografon>

the main perceptions of mainstream media as arrogant, particularly those who consider themselves as victims of the process of social change. In our era it can be mentioned that the rift between mainstream hypocrisy and marginalized groups of society has become profound and broad and that's why it is believed that the mainstream media have only become spokesmen for the modern system.

- development of various unopposed opinions and few facts: in this way it is presented that information is often filtered and adulterated by the various comments and perception of opinion leaders and of influencers. The result of this situation is that the facts, what in an actual way happened, in its essentiality are disappeared
- lack of professionalism: we can mention that many newsrooms publish anything coming from marketing agencies or political or in many cases corporate spin-doctors. It is believed that they don't even realize that in so doing they are working instead of journalism in this way in public relations
- journalists' decline in research capacity: many media operators choose to stick to official versions, without deciding to go any further. In the effort to find sources on Google, clicking on the first five results cannot be considered a research.

That's why the investigation itself, the active search for informants and the actual verification of the sources have become a rare.

The issue of media credibility in Europe is complex and multifaceted. While there are certainly concerns regarding the trustworthiness of some media outlets, there are also a number of factors that contribute to the overall credibility of European media. For example, according to the 2021 Reuters Digital News Report (Newman, 2021), the majority of European consumers still rely on traditional media sources, such as television and print, for their news. This suggests that these outlets have been successful in maintaining a certain level of credibility in the eyes of the public. There are also many positive examples of media outlets and journalists who work diligently to maintain their credibility and the public's trust. For example, a study by Matthew Powers (2017) found that media organizations in some European countries, such as Denmark and Finland, have developed strong internal systems for fact-checking and quality control that contribute to their overall credibility.

According to a study by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), countries with stronger public service media tend to have higher levels of trust in media overall (EBU, 2020). This suggests that ownership structures and funding sources can play a significant role in shaping public perception of media trustworthiness. In addition, the EBU study found that countries with higher levels of media freedom tend to have higher levels of trust in media, indicating that political factors are also important. Efforts to improve media literacy and promote fact-checking have been made in Europe in recent years, but there is still much work to be done to combat the proliferation of false information. One potential solution is to strengthen regulations around media ownership and funding, which could promote greater transparency and accountability. In addition, greater investment in public service media and independent fact-checking organizations could help to counteract the spread of misinformation and promote greater trust in media overall.

Based on modern research, it is presented that Greece ranks at the bottom among 24 European countries (38th out of 46 countries globally) in terms of media credibility, according to this year's 46-country survey by the Reuters Institute in collaboration with Oxford University. It is also noted that only 32% of people trust the news in the media in general in Greece and, even worse, only 12% pay for digital information (Morozov, 2011). Additionally, this poses a significant threat to democracy in Greece as the entrenched culture of free content consumption degrades journalistic activism, putting the credibility of information at greater risk and increasing the degree of dependence of media groups on advertising companies and owners-entrepreneurs<sup>6</sup>.

Emphasis must be given to the discrepancy in what takes precedence: getting the information out in a correct way at the first publishing, or taking the time to ensure that all facts are accurate and the political and economic contexts have been thoroughly checked. The significant role of having a system of checks on all information submitted has been considered paramount in the last decades. People tend to trust and believe all they read without questioning it, so ensuring accuracy and reliability is crucial. (Morozov, 2011). If all the information is not thoroughly checked, people often end up reading an article with inaccurate information and believe it without questioning. This can be a dangerous phenomenon as misinformed people may make misinformed decisions. Due to the increase in errors made by major publications or

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.moneyreview.gr/world/83516/ereyna-poso-empisteyontai-ta-mesa-enimerosis-oi-eyropaioi/>

citizen bloggers, many are concerned about the lack of journalistic ethics and credibility in the news media. This is done to maintain the speed in the news circuit and personal profits (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2008).

Although disseminating information to the public is a crucial aspect of the media's function, it should not come at the cost of sacrificing the credibility of the information being disseminated. It is essential that the majority of media outlets are staffed with trained and reliable journalists who can present the information as accurately as possible by planning and verifying their sources, rather than relying on those who may pose potential challenges to the truth and credibility of the media. Without this level of control, it is challenging to fully trust anything presented in a digital format (Stovall, 2008).

The change in the pace of media is believed to have been occurring for a long time and will continue to gain speed as advancements in technology are made. While this may be seen as a positive aspect for the world of journalism, it is important for the news community to remain constantly aware and cautious. Checks and balances need to be implemented to ensure that all information is accurate. It is crucial that information is not published before it is fully confirmed (Wanta et al, 2004).

It can be understood that the media needs to prioritize the truth and credibility of its words and images. As a provider of information, they are responsible for ensuring that all facts are thoroughly checked and verified before articles or pictures are released. While the immersion of media in the digital age is significant, it is crucial that everything remains as credible as possible (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2008).

## **1.5 The role of journalists during crises**

### **1.5.1 Journalism and crises**

Journalism in our era faces various challenges, as the technological environment is drastically changing the object of journalism in all its parameters from the production of news to its distribution. At the same time it is believed that the conceptual dimension of the public sphere has changed. Especially citizens in last years have developed an active role in shaping the agenda and also content and the role of news, while digital technologies are increasing in many cases international connectivity and thus shrinking society spatially and in many cases linking

heterogeneous social actors with the presence of transnational information flows (Lunch, 2013b).

Although there is a significant conflict between cosmopolitanism and localism, it is increasingly apparent that the phenomenon of globalization has resulted in all events having a global dimension, which in turn affects local communities. In Europe, the success of integration requires more than the harmonization of policy-making at the European and national levels, and the implementation of effective institutions is also crucial. (Shinar, 2007).

In this way, the creation and strengthening of communication processes is necessary, and the emergence of a public sphere that allows for participation in public conflict and dialogue at a European level is becoming increasingly important. At the same time, the phenomenon of Europeanization of media coverage is developing. To achieve these goals, it is significant to strengthen cross-border journalistic networks, so that journalism can function as a guardian of the public interest, transparency, and increased accountability. Cross-border journalism networks have not only attempted to uncover various important issues but have also demonstrated the ability to succeed in this cooperation. The success of European integration requires more than just the harmonization of policy-making at the European and national levels and the implementation of effective institutions; it requires the development of a shared European public sphere (Wanta et al, 2004).

One of the most crucial needs in addressing various crises is access to reliable, credible, unbiased, and understandable information on all aspects of the crisis. During crises, the media often adopt a mentality that prioritizes presenting stories that are interesting and captivating to the general public. Such stories often involve human narratives or conflicts, and their success is measured by how quickly and easily the information can be obtained from a reliable source. In many cases, the information is also provided by the public itself through interviews, with the goal of conveying the facts based on their experiences (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007).

It is widely recognized that the media have the opportunity to reinforce the decisions and legitimacy of political leaders, while also improving public understanding of their content and the most important factors involved. The media are often viewed as links between decision-makers and the public. Additionally, the media can take on an educational role, particularly when they have the ability to analyze and explain the modernized obligations being imposed to address a developing crisis situation and the expected behavior of the public (Jackson, 2006).



However, it is believed that the risks of online populism, polarization, and misinformation increase during periods of crises. Many researchers emphasize that the threat posed by information disorder is amplified and made more visible due to the stress of the need to prevent and counter it. In periods of crises, the requirement for professionalism and thoroughness in the process of checking disseminated information is all the greater. Therefore, the media must be aware of their heightened duty, as in these difficult periods, they have the responsibility to assume in full, including effectively and successfully countering inflammatory discourses and conspiracy theories (Fahmy & Neumann, 2011).

Emphasis must be given to the independence of public service media and their responsibility to serve the public by fulfilling a specific remit for social cohesion and integration of all individuals, as well as their role as a broad platform for pluralist public debate (Jackson, 2006). In the context of crises, it is believed that public service media should encourage the public to develop critical thinking skills and the ability to effectively compare various sources of information, including those retrieved from social media platforms that pose a risk of false news or unchecked information being disseminated on their networks (Anderson et al, 2003).

For these reasons, it is significant for operators to redouble their efforts to counter this trend by developing and modernizing fact-checking mechanisms and promoting accurate and reliable news sources. It is essential to understand how dangerous it is to assume that governments at a global level are best placed to control and distribute information in various periods of crises, in the effort to avoid the dissemination of direct collective behavior and inaccurate information. An approach of that kind cannot be considered compatible with the protection of the right to freedom of expression and democratic principles, as enshrined and emphasized in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>7</sup>.

### **1.5.2 Journalism and refugees' theme**

As previously mentioned, journalists may "obfuscate" facts and distort reality by the expressions they use in their writing, resulting in a lack of objectivity in their presentation of information to the public. The media's coverage of events often distorts not only the reality but also various factors that influence public judgment. Mainstream news tends to glorify conflicts

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<sup>7</sup> European Court of Human Rights, 1950. European Convention on Human Rights. Council of Europe

and controversies in their dominant news coverage, even if they are insignificant compared to other more important news that may not receive extensive coverage by the media (Patrona, 2018).

In our country, the issue of refugees is considered one of the most important national, European, and global topics that have raised significant concerns among a large part of society. Evidence of this can be found in a variety of studies and reports. For instance, the report "Media Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries" by Georgiou and Zaborowski (2017) provides analysis on how media coverage reflects societal concerns and debates about refugee issues. At a global scale, the UNHCR's "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018" report underlines the worldwide significance of the refugee issue, further reflecting its importance and the widespread concern it garners across societies. These sources collectively illustrate how the refugee crisis has become a critical topic of national, European, and global discussions.

Particularly in Greece, with the increase in refugee flows after 2015, and the establishment of refugee camps in various areas, questions have arisen regarding the management of this challenging situation, as well as the integration and future of these populations. Papadopoulou, & Papageorgiou, 2016). The significant influx of asylum seekers, predominantly from Syria, which surpassed half a million sea arrivals within the first six months of 2015, reinvigorated the movement of solidarity within Greece. However, the 2016 agreement between the EU and Turkey led to the closure of Greece's borders with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This closure dismantled a well-traveled refugee route through Europe, leading to around 60,000 individuals becoming stranded within Greece. These individuals found themselves living in camps under deprived conditions, which inevitably impacted their health and resulted in psychosocial distress (Soulatou, n.d).

The media has also considered this issue to be significant, and its coverage and promotion of news related to it have influenced a large part of public opinion (Wodak et al, 2009). One of the most notable examples is the media coverage of the refugee crisis in 2015 when a large number of refugees started arriving in Europe, particularly in countries like Greece, Italy, and Germany. A pivotal moment came when the image of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy

who drowned while his family was trying to reach Europe, was widely circulated in global media.<sup>891011</sup>

The issue of the refugee crisis was often presented as a top story in the media, with various different types of approaches or ways of capturing news related to this theme. The media's presentation of refugees can influence public attitudes and perceptions. Negative media coverage of refugees can contribute to the creation of negative attitudes and stereotypes, which can hinder the integration of refugees into the host society. Conversely, positive media coverage can promote empathy and understanding of the refugee experience (Waters, 2011).

The issue of biased or inaccurate media coverage of refugee issues is a serious concern. Some media outlets attempt to approach the refugee issue objectively or promote a positive image of refugees, while others publish false news that reinforces prejudices and stereotypes towards them. Unfortunately, there are many cases where racist messages are reproduced and promoted through the media, including the speech of journalists (Fragonikoloulos, 2010). For example, media outlets may focus primarily on negative stories, such as incidents of crime or violence involving refugees, without providing context or balance by also reporting on positive stories, such as examples of successful refugee integration or contributions to society. However, in some cases, media outlets may intentionally publish false or inflammatory stories about refugees, with the goal of reinforcing existing prejudices and stereotypes. This type of reporting can be particularly damaging, as it can create a hostile environment for refugees and hinder their ability to integrate into the host society (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2018).

In recent years, with the intensification of the refugee crisis, various racist ideologies and stereotypes have appeared in Greek media of all kinds. One particular sector that has been especially implicated in the reproduction of these ideologies and stereotypes is the internet, whose influence has increased rapidly over the past few decades due to rapid technological development (Fragioudakis, 2019). The internet provides an ideal platform for the dissemination of racist messages and propaganda, which can be amplified through social media and other online platforms. The internet could be used as a platform for the rapid dissemination of extremist ideologies and propaganda. Online spaces, such as social media platforms,

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<sup>8</sup> <https://time.com/4162306/alan-kurdi-syria-drowned-boy-refugee-crisis/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34150419>

<sup>10</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/02/europe/migration-crisis-boy-washed-ashore-in-turkey/index.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://gr.euronews.com/2016/09/01/how-children-are-still-dying-at-sea-one-year-on-from-alan-kurdi-and-that-photo>

websites, and forums, enable individuals to connect, share, and amplify their racist views with relative ease and anonymity. The accessibility and global reach of the internet allow such messages to transcend geographical boundaries and reach a wide audience (Berger, 2019). This can also contribute to the normalization of negative attitudes towards refugees, as well as to the perpetuation of false and misleading information about them.

It is believed that the increased freedom of expression provided to users by internet applications, in comparison to traditional media, has had a significant impact on the proliferation of messages. The advent of internet applications represents a democratization of communication tools, granting individuals the ability to voice their opinions, share their stories, and propagate their messages with unprecedented ease and reach. This evolution from traditional media, where the production and distribution of content was mainly in the hands of a few, to a more decentralized and participatory media environment aligns with the principles of freedom of expression as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19, UN General Assembly, 1948). Furthermore, the United Nations Human Rights Council's 2016 resolution represents an international recognition of the essential role that internet technologies play in advancing freedom of expression. This resolution asserts the need to maintain the same protection and respect for freedom of expression online as we do offline, emphasizing the continuity of human rights irrespective of the medium (UNHRC, 2016).

The emergence of the Internet has made the boundaries between professional journalism and the general public less distinct, according to Sitail. However, merely engaging in activities that seem journalistic, such as capturing a mobile phone photo at the scene of an incident or creating a blog for news commentary, does not in itself result in the creation of journalistic content. The core of journalism is the prioritization of the public good above all else and the adherence to ethical principles in the process of gathering and evaluating facts.

Additionally, the internet's influence on the spread of hate speech and prejudice against refugees is also very important. For instance, a study by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (Silverman, J. Stewart, Amanullah, Birdwell, 2016), shows that there has been a surge in negative social media posts against refugees across several European countries, often linking refugees with terrorism, crime, and economic burden. All of these phenomena are essentially caused by a conscious or unconscious distortion of reality, which can be attributed to the way media outlets and journalists report the news (Tatsis, 2016).

Additionally, a case that highlights the gravity of the issue is that of *E.S. v. Austria* (European Court of Human Rights, 2018)<sup>12</sup>. The case involved an Austrian woman who made derogatory comments about the Prophet Muhammad on social media. She was subsequently convicted by the Austrian courts for disparaging religious doctrines. On appeal, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) upheld her conviction, emphasizing that freedom of expression, as critical as it is, must be balanced with the rights of others to have their religious feelings protected, and the legitimate aim of preserving religious peace

At the same time, however, the internet can also be a powerful tool for countering racism and promoting tolerance and understanding. By providing access to a diverse range of voices and perspectives, the internet has the potential to challenge dominant narratives and provide a platform for marginalized voices to be heard. It is therefore important for media outlets, both online and offline, to take responsibility for the messages they disseminate and to ensure that they do not contribute to the spread of racist ideologies and stereotypes. The Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) has guidelines that emphasize the importance of sensitive reporting, particularly concerning matters of race, religion, and culture (EJN, 2021). In the same vein, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has established guidelines on reporting about migrants, refugees, and ethnicity. The guidelines caution against stigmatizing communities and insist on respectful, sensitive, and fact-based reporting (IFJ, 2021).

At national level, the National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) in Greece has the power to impose sanctions on broadcasters that violate ethical or professional norms, including those related to the fair and respectful depiction of different racial, ethnic, and social groups (NCRTV, 2021).

However, in recent years, there has been a visible increase in the reproduction of these stereotypes on the internet. The use of stereotypical expressions creates and reinforces labels towards refugees, leading recipients to focus on specific events or points to a greater extent than necessary, thus influencing public opinion. Commonplace expressions often used in written journalistic discourse can be typical examples of this phenomenon. Although such expressions and terms are not always the norm in journalistic terminology, they can still shape and influence public perceptions. Stereotypes have occasionally appeared in Greek media, including radio, television, and print (Kouvelaki, 2016).

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<sup>12</sup> [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%22itemid%22:\[%22001-187188%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%22itemid%22:[%22001-187188%22]})

It's important to recognize that the term "newsprint," when applied to digital media, especially in the context of police news or war stories, might be linked to the spread of stereotypical narratives about refugees. Journalists, whether influenced by personal biases or motivated by other factors to reproduce negatively slanted news about refugees, are thought to play a significant role in shaping public understanding. This, in turn, can reinforce negative stereotypes (Karidis, 1996).

The media is a powerful tool that can either promote or hinder racial diversity and inclusion. Racial diversity in mass media can increase the visibility and representation of underrepresented groups, challenging stereotypes and promoting positive representations of diverse individuals and communities (Hunt et al., 2015). Media is not just a passive conduit of information but an active player in constructing public understanding of various social issues (Happer & Philo, 2013). The media's portrayal of marginalized groups, environmental issues, health crises, and political issues can significantly shape public attitudes and beliefs about these issues (Happer & Philo, 2013). When people from diverse backgrounds are portrayed in the media, it can help to increase their visibility and representation in society, which is particularly important for marginalized communities. In fact, the way media's framing of stories, selection of sources, emphasis on particular aspects of an issue, and even omission of certain facts can greatly influence public perception (Happer & Philo, 2013). In turn, these media-influenced perceptions can drive public behaviors, policy support or opposition, and social movements, leading to societal change. It can also promote a more inclusive and empathetic society that values diversity. When the media lacks diversity, it can perpetuate stereotypes and negative attitudes towards certain groups. Conversely, diverse media representation can help to promote a more positive and empathetic attitude towards diversity and reduce prejudice (Bodenhausen et al., 2001).

Journalists have a responsibility to report on refugee issues in an ethical manner. This includes the responsibility to report accurately, avoid sensationalism, and respect the privacy and dignity of refugees (Bell, 2008). Journalists must ensure that they present a balanced and accurate picture of the situation and that they do not exaggerate or distort the facts. They should also respect the privacy and dignity of refugees by seeking their consent before reporting on their stories and avoiding any invasive reporting techniques.

## **2. Aims and research questions**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Taking into consideration the theory previously highlighted, media ethics have specific standards and challenges, but all aim to produce ethical content for a democratic society. Upholding these standards is essential for journalists to follow ethical and moral guidelines in their reporting (Cohen, 2014), but difficult in today's fast-paced media landscape. Challenges include conflicts of interest, technology and social media, anonymous sources, and sensationalism (Allan & Thorsen, 2017). To adhere to ethical standards, media implements self-regulations, with the responsibility to inform the public fairly and accurately. In Greece, ESIEA and ESHEA are the primary self-regulatory bodies with established codes of ethics to handle complaints and disputes between media outlets and the public (Kiossev, 2016). However, these bodies have been criticized for lacking enforcement power and transparency. Critics argue that conflicts of interest and media ownership influence self-regulatory bodies, resulting in a questionable self-regulatory process (Papathanassopoulos, 2013; Kalyvas, 2017).

Simultaneously, the increasing challenges to press freedom both within and beyond the borders of the EU emphasize the crucial role of the European Parliament in supporting the work of journalists, as the freedom of the press is currently under significant danger. Additionally, the credibility of European media is a complex issue that involves concerns about the trustworthiness of some media outlets, as well as various contributing factors that impact the overall credibility of media in Europe.

Among the challenges mentioned earlier that journalists and media outlets face in their daily work is the phenomenon of self-censorship, which refers to the act of censoring one's own expression or speech. Self-censorship often occurs when journalists or media outlets refrain from reporting important information, and often may be presented as a voluntary act, it is done under pressure or out of fear (Mason, 2015). It is mostly presented during crises, while factors such as economic interests contribute. The presence of self-censorship is a growing concern, and Greece is no exception. A notable instance of self-censorship in Greece, where the media failed to provide accurate and impartial coverage, was the refugee crisis from 2015 to 2016. Human Rights Watch pointed out that some Greek media outlets even sensationalized the crisis and portrayed refugees in a negative light. This lack of critical reporting was due to pressure from the government and the fear of losing advertising revenue from businesses with ties to the ruling party (HRW, 2017).

Access to information and freedom of expression are fundamental human rights, and refugees, like all individuals, have the right to exercise these rights without any discrimination or restriction. These rights are crucial for refugees for their well-being and integration into their new communities. However, often they face discrimination in public communication, as they are perceived as outsiders or as a burden on the host community. This discrimination can take the form of media portrayals that stigmatize refugees, hate speech directed towards them, or restrictions on their right to freedom of expression.

The way the media portrays refugees can either promote a positive and constructive dialogue on refugee issues or contribute to negative stereotypes and prejudice. As it was highlighted previously, some Greek media outlets portrayed refugees in a negative light during the crisis of 2015 to 2016. According to these, questions have been raised about the coverage provided by Greek media outlets during the refugee crisis, particularly with regards to the representation of refugees and locals, as well as the extent to which their human communication rights were respected.

## **2.2 Aims**

The refugee crisis has become a major issue for Europe, and Greece, as a front-line state, has been at the center of this crisis. The crisis has brought up questions regarding human rights and media ethics, particularly in the way the media portrays the refugees and the local population.

The aim of this thesis is to critically examine the coverage provided by Greek media outlets during the refugee crisis of 2015-2016, with a focus on the areas of Eidomeni and Moria. Specifically, the study will analyze how the media represented refugees and locals during the periods of February to May 2016 and in the year 2015, respectively.

The thesis will take a human rights perspective, examining the extent to which the media coverage respected the communication rights of both refugees and locals. The study will explore the ways in which media outlets portrayed refugees and locals, assessing the accuracy, fairness, and balance of the coverage provided.

The overall aim of this thesis is also to determine whether there was equal representation of refugees and locals in the cases under consideration or whether any violation of the relevant rights is identified. By examining the media's role in shaping public perceptions of the refugee crisis in Greece, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with refugee integration.



## **2.3 Research questions**

To achieve the aims outlined in the previous section, the following research questions will guide the investigation:

1. How did Greek media outlets portray refugees during February to May 2016 in the area of Eidomeni and 2015 in the area of Moria?
2. How did Greek media outlets portray locals during February to May 2016 in the area of Eidomeni and 2015 in the area of Moria?
3. To what extent did Greek media outlets respect the human communication rights of both refugees and locals during February to May 2016 in the area of Eidomeni and 2015 in the area of Moria or were violations of relevant rights identified?
4. Was there equal representation of refugees and locals in the media coverage of the 2015-2016 refugee crisis in the areas of Eidomeni and Moria?

Through a critical examination of these research questions, this thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of how the media can either promote or hinder positive and constructive dialogue on refugee issues and the importance of respecting the human rights of all individuals, regardless of their status as refugees or locals.

## **3. Self – Censorship in media**

### **3.1 The context of self- censorship in the sector of media**

Self-censorship occurs when someone, often a journalist or media outlet, censors their own expression or speech. They refrain from saying something that may be important to the public due to its factual nature or the possibility that it could contribute to a robust public debate on the topic. While self-censorship may be presented as a voluntary act, it is often done under pressure or out of fear (Mason, 2015). Recent events in European states have highlighted the pressure that can be exerted on independent media and journalists who do not align with the government's stance. For instance, under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's leadership, Hungary has seen increasing government influence over the media. Orbán's government has been accused of curbing press freedom, with many independent media outlets being bought out by government allies or forced into closure due to financial pressure (Bognár & Kaposi, 2018).

Similarly, the Polish government, led by the Law and Justice party, has also exerted pressure on media freedom. Notably, it took over the public broadcaster, Telewizja Polska, turning it into a government mouthpiece (Mijatović, 2020). Self-censorship, in this context, can be regarded as a restriction on free speech or an inhibition of opinion expression, which is not imposed by official actors. Essentially, it is believed to be practiced by individuals or entities responsible for promoting creative expression, to avoid any perceived negative reaction to that expression (Hayes, 2007).

It can be said that all forms of journalism involve some degree of self-censorship, which arises during the reporting and editing process, as well as in the selection of information and details to be included or omitted in the final published product. Self-censorship within modern organizations is influenced by various factors, and some justifications for its use have included considerations of taste, decency, and the avoidance of unnecessary harm. For example, self-censorship may prevent the whipping up of a violent situation, or it may be employed at the request of the government, with an emphasis on protecting sensitive operations (Fuller, 1997 57).

When we exercise our freedom to express our opinions and ideas, we not only uphold our fundamental rights but also provide others with the opportunity to enjoy theirs. This can be achieved by sparking public debate and promoting the free and open exchange of ideas. Furthermore, it is essential to inform the public about significant issues so that they can make informed decisions when voting. In contrast, self-censorship can be considered a significant threat to democracy. Whether practiced by members of the public or journalists, it restricts knowledge and understanding and stifles the free flow of information. This creates a void that the government and its allies may fill with spin and propaganda, distorting the truth and manipulating voters. This phenomenon is not limited to traditionally authoritarian states but is also observed in Europe (Mancini, 2011)

Hungary and Poland have faced the risk of being shut down or subjected to state manipulation, while journalists in Malta, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and other parts of Europe and the world have experienced threats to their safety (Mason, 2005).

The pressure and intimidation on journalists to self-censor not only restricts the freedom of the media but also hampers people's ability to access information. This, in turn, can stifle democratic debate. A free and diverse press is a cornerstone of democracy, as it ensures the public has access to varied viewpoints and unbiased information (Benson & Powers, 2009).

This range of perspectives allows for informed debates and helps facilitate a functioning democratic process. The ability of everyone to obtain information, comprehend various issues, and share and discuss their opinions is a crucial aspect of a free and democratic society. Self-censorship can undermine this fundamental value (Fuller, 1997). When journalists or media companies face pressure to self-censor, it can have serious consequences for modern democracy. To ensure that governments work in the interests of their citizens, it is essential to freely ask politicians difficult questions. This keeps citizens informed and compels the government to speak candidly about their decisions and plans. Both journalists and citizens should have the ability to express their concerns to their representatives, whether through writing or other forms of expression (Hayes, 2007) .

The phenomenon of self-censorship can be explained by modern leaders' efforts to control the narrative. When an authoritarian government pressures journalists to self-censor, it enables the government to manipulate which version of the story and what information the public receives. Furthermore, by encouraging self-censorship, the government can avoid the appearance of controlling all media. Media outlets that self-censor may remain technically independent, allowing the government to claim to other countries that they still uphold the freedom of the press (Besley & Pratt, 2006). In this way, the news to which people have access can be distorted. Through the use of government-friendly media or the cudgel of self-censorship, governments can keep corruption scandals out of the news or shift blame for public grievances towards marginalized groups such as LGBTQI persons, ethnic minorities, migrants, and refugees (Masosn, 2005). In addition, it is important that everyone knows the true state of affairs in their country so that they can make informed decisions. Truth is a vital mechanism of democracy as it enables a balanced debate where the public can hear different perspectives, debate them, and form their own opinions (Hayes, 2007).

Self-censorship can also be considered a serious blow to these values. By suppressing free media through the implementation of self-censorship, citizens are deprived of vital information necessary for an open and informed democratic process, ultimately limiting their ability to make an informed decision when casting their vote during elections (Besley & Pratt, 2006).

In 2017, the Council of Europe has released a report called "Journalists Under Pressure", which includes the perspectives of nearly 1,000 journalists on self-censorship and their work environments (Clark & Grech, 2017). The report highlights a significant increase in

threats against journalists over the last decade, resulting in widespread self-censorship by independent media outlets and journalists. The Council of Europe has emphasized that this environment of self-censorship poses various risks and called on EU member states to enact better protections for journalists and media groups to combat self-censorship and protect democracy in Europe. Human rights and pro-democracy groups also recognize the role of self-censorship in modern societies (Morris, 2017).

### **3.2 The presence of self- censorship in current media**

Upon studying the operation of modern media, we can observe many examples of self-censorship at a global level in our era. The development of the internet and social media has given a platform to almost anyone to share their opinions or, in many cases, share other information. As previously stated, examples of self-censorship are significant threats to modern democracy (Besly & Pratt, 2006).

Media freedom is facing serious problems and risks in Europe, with countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, and Hungary serving as prime examples of where the government has increased its influence over the media, leading to a backslide in democracy. For instance, journalists in Hungary are afraid to ask critical questions of the government or its institutions for fear of losing access to press conferences or interviews. This phenomenon was also observed in Hungary during the COVID-19 pandemic in the last three years, with significant pressure and restrictions placed on media groups. The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, a Liberties member, conducted its own survey on the obstruction of journalists during this recent global crisis (Morris, 2017).

The survey revealed that information regarding the pandemic was heavily centralized, and significant pressure was put on independent media to silence them. Journalists must be even more cautious in authoritarian states, such as Turkey, where press outlets and social media pages are often shut down during terrorist attacks, preventing them from reporting the truth. Even personal social media channels of journalists are frequently blocked or taken offline.

Economic interests are also a factor contributing to self-censorship. Media outlets, particularly those owned by large corporations, may prioritize profits over journalistic integrity, leading to self-censorship or biased reporting. For example, in the United States, Fox

News has been criticized for self-censoring when reporting on Republican politicians or wars to deliver a manipulated narrative to its audience (Morris, 2017).

The presence of self-censorship in current media is a growing concern worldwide, and Greece is no exception. According to a report by the International Press Institute (IPI), journalists in Greece face increasing pressure from government officials and media owners, leading to self-censorship and a lack of critical reporting (IPI, 2020). This trend has been noted in both traditional and digital media, with journalists reporting fear of losing their jobs or being blacklisted if they report on certain topics or criticize those in power (Mavridis, 2020).

One notable case of self-censorship in Greece was the lack of coverage of the ongoing refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016. As noted by Human Rights Watch (HRW), many Greek media outlets failed to report on the situation accurately or in a balanced manner, with some even engaging in sensationalism and demonization of refugees (HRW, 2017). This lack of critical reporting was attributed to pressure from the government and a fear of losing advertising revenue from businesses with ties to the ruling party (HRW, 2017).

Despite these challenges, there are efforts underway to combat self-censorship in Greek media. The Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) has been monitoring media freedom in Greece since 1995 and has been vocal in calling out instances of self-censorship and government interference (GHM, 2020). In addition, the Athens-based Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) has worked with Greek media outlets to promote ethical reporting practices and combat self-censorship (EJN, 2019). Furthermore, the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) has undertaken research projects aimed at understanding the factors contributing to self-censorship and developing strategies to address them (ELIAMEP, 2022). Reporters Without Borders (RSF), an international non-profit organization that conducts political advocacy on issues related to freedom of information and freedom of the press, regularly monitors the state of media freedom in Greece, providing reports and calling attention to violations (RSF, 2023). At the same time, grassroots initiatives such as the Thessaloniki's School of Journalism's "Media Literacy" project have been educating the public about media literacy, aiming to promote a more critical consumption of news and discourage the spread of disinformation (Thessaloniki's School of Journalism, 2022). Internally, the Union of Journalists in Athens Daily Newspapers (ESIEA) has been actively campaigning against self-censorship, advocating for greater transparency in the ownership of media outlets and for stronger protections for journalists against political and economic pressures (ESIEA, 2023).

At the same time, Council of Europe reports contain the necessary recommendations for planning and implementing an inclusive media policy that respects migrants and refugees (Bellardi, Busch, Hassemer, Peissl and Scifo, 2018). It should be noted that refugees and migrants should be recognized as respected and relevant members of the public, with specific interests and needs (Castles, Miller, & Ammendola, 2020). The media can be considered a facilitator of public discourse and cannot fulfill its important role when whole segments of the population are excluded due to barriers in their access to media (Maneri, 2021). It is also believed that community media, based on their long experience of interactive and multilingual formats, have involved newly arrived refugees and migrants in the process of media production for decades, thereby strengthening their access to local networks of communication (Smets, Vandevordt & d'Haenens, 2018). For newcomers, this involvement could provide benefits also concerning their representation, community connection and skills development (Mollgaard, 2016). Finally, we can mention that the role of media makers and activists with a refugee or migrant background is considered very important in the effort to investigate and explain perspectives, as well as to provide important counter-narratives where the failure of mainstream media can be understood. These individuals can provide first-hand insights and narratives based on their experiences and they can serve as a vital bridge between host communities and newcomer communities while with their understanding of both cultures and languages, they can facilitate cross-cultural dialogues, promote mutual understanding, and contribute to social cohesion. (Council of Europe, n.d.).

Self-censorship in current media poses a significant threat to democratic values and freedom of information. Governments and media outlets must take steps to combat this phenomenon by enacting better protections for journalists and media groups, promoting media diversity and independence, and encouraging the involvement of marginalized communities in the media production process. In current media, phenomenon presents a threat to democratic values and freedom of information.

## **4. The main human rights concerning the sector of media**

### **4.1 Communication rights**

Communication, encompassing the right to information, is not only an essential aspect of human interaction but also a fundamental human right. It enables individuals to express themselves

freely, access information, and participate in family and community. Communication is an integral part of human life, regardless of age or ability. It takes various forms such as language, poetry, mathematics, history, conversation, music, art, and social media, connecting people across generations and continents and can be expressed through speaking, listening, reading, and writing, but other forms such as sign languages, online audio/video communication, and touch can also be used. While speaking, listening, reading, and writing are privileged in many societies, there are other modes of communication that are equally important (McLeod, 2018).

Communication rights are enshrined in various international and regional human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations, 1966), and the European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe, 1950). Various measures have been taken to safeguard communication rights, including the establishment of regulatory frameworks and the development of technology that enhances communication. Communication rights related to the freedom of opinion and expression have been included in various international conventions and covenants, such (McLeod, 2018):

- Articles 19 and 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations, 1966a)
- Articles 5 and 15 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (United Nations, 1965)
- Article 2 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (United Nations, 1948)
- Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 1966b)
- Article 6 of the Declaration on the Right to Development (United Nations, 1986)
- Article 5 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001)
- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005)
- Declaration on the Right to Peace (United Nations, 2015)

Regulatory frameworks are essential for safeguarding communication rights. They provide the legal framework within which communication takes place and ensure that communication is not unduly restricted. Regulatory frameworks are established at the international, regional, and national levels.

## **4.2 The right of freedom of opinion and expression**

In recent years, the themes of media ownership and control, as well as how to regulate them, have become fraught with political and legal complexity. Firstly, it is believed that an undue concentration of media ownership can be considered harmful to freedom of expression in many cases. When one or two individuals control the media, they effectively control the modern equivalent of the public square, where social discussion and debate take place. This clearly undermines both freedom of expression and democracy since it limits the free flow of information and ideas in society to the detriment of every person. Moreover, an undue concentration of media ownership undermines the most important principles of competition, which are essential for the success of any market<sup>13</sup>.

Based on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, particularly Article 11, freedom of expression and information are crucial. As stated, all individuals have the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom of opinion and the freedom to receive or impart information or ideas without interference from public authorities and without regard to borders. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on the importance of media freedom, and thus, media pluralism should be upheld. Many researchers also consider Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights significant since it addresses the themes of freedom of expression and political rights<sup>14</sup>.

The right to freedom of expression can be associated with Political and Civil Rights, as well as the Right to Freedom of Expression. Specifically, it relates to the right to vote, as the public who are called upon to elect a person to a public office should have access to all the relevant information to enable them to choose between the candidates. Additionally, the public

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<sup>13</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246670>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/freedom-expression-and-opinion>



should have complete access to information regarding the actions of individuals whom they have already placed their vote of confidence in<sup>15</sup>.

The free flow of information and data on public and political issues between citizens, candidates, and elected representatives is necessary and should be ensured through measures taken by each country. Additionally, Article 19 and the General Comment presented highlight the most significant limitations on the right to freedom of expression. In particular, paragraph 3 of this article explains that the protection of individual rights, which comprise the safeguarded concept of Freedom of Expression, imposes an additional and significant obligation of specific duties and responsibilities on every state that is responsible for guaranteeing them. Thus, it is evident that within the context of Article 19, state entities are obligated to impose exceptional and specific restrictions on freedom of expression<sup>16</sup>.

It is crucial to emphasize that this article places significant importance on protecting and respecting freedom of expression. Therefore, any exceptions established must be interpreted narrowly and conservatively, without any attempt to misuse them for selfish purposes or to undermine the right itself. The drafters of the Covenant delimit the sectors in which such restrictions may be imposed in two distinct ways, emphasizing the need to respect the rights of other citizens and to protect national security, public order, public health, or morals. Thus, the drafters of the Covenant aimed to ensure that these restrictions would be both formally and substantively legal, as long as they were tied to other provisions relating to Civil and Political Rights, and in this way, they would be infused with the intentions and objectives of these provisions, serving the proper functioning of the legal system<sup>17</sup>.

It is widely believed that restrictions on freedom of expression can be used as a tool by various actors seeking to undermine democracy. This underscores the need for protecting press freedom, which is often referred to as the "fifth estate." Furthermore, according to paragraph 2 of this article, the first basis for a conditional restriction of the right to freedom of expression is when the exercise of this right conflicts with the protection of other fundamental rights and freedoms. It is important to note that any restrictions must be within permissible limits and must ensure the protection of rights in a more collective manner<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/freedom-expression-and-opinion>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/freedom-expression-and-opinion>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/freedom-expression-and-opinion>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/freedom-expression-and-opinion>

Essentially, there are individuals and governments in positions of power at the global level that threaten this very important right. Many freedoms fall under the category of freedom of expression. In recent years, freedom of the media has been attacked in many countries due to its basic role in ensuring accountability and transparency for government and public authorities. Other forms of freedom of opinion and expression are also under pressure, with an emphasis on conscientious objection to military service. Finally, it is important to note that the right to freedom of expression includes the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, whether orally, in writing, in print, in art, or through any other media of one's choice<sup>19</sup>.

### **4.3 The right of access to information**

The right to access information guarantees everyone the right to access all information and documents related to the management of public affairs, regardless of the concerned person's status and the purpose for obtaining the required information<sup>20</sup>.

The importance of the right of access to information lies in its role in enhancing transparency, accountability, and participation. It enables citizens to participate in public affairs, scrutinize government actions, combat corruption, and make informed decisions. For instance, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) protects the right to freedom of expression, which encompasses the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds (United Nations, 1948; United Nations, 1966).

In the regional context, in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, a general right of access to information is presented. This article does not impose on Member States any positive obligations to collect and disseminate various information of its own motion. However, the recent case-law of the European Court of Human Rights has emphasized that the Convention is a living instrument that should be interpreted in the light of present-day conditions, empowering it to adopt a broader interpretation of the notion of freedom to receive the needed information, which essentially encompasses the recognition of a right of access to information. Departing from its previous case-law, the Court has taken a clear stance that the

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/freedom-expression-and-opinion>

<sup>20</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/the-right-to-access-of-information-22mar21/native/1680a1dca2>

right of access to information held by the most important public authorities in Europe and at the global level now falls within the ambit of Article 10 of the Convention (Council of Europe, 2018).

It can be understood that such a right and obligation could arise where the disclosure of needed information had been imposed by a judicial order which had gained legal force. Additionally, access to information can be considered essential for the implementation of one's freedom to receive and impart information, and where it is believed that its denial would interfere with that right. Therefore, in the effort to benefit from the protection of Article 10, the information in the form of documents or data to which access is sought must lead to the development of a public-interest test, prompting a need for disclosure. Such a need may exist where the disclosure provides transparency on matters of interest to society and the conduct of public affairs. The public interest may also relate to matters that can significantly influence the public and hence legitimately deserve emphasis (Council of Europe, 2018).

These matters have the ability to give rise to considerable controversy, concerning important social themes or involving themes that the public would place emphasis on being informed about. In many cases, the use of email privacy and the publication of truthful news and commentary related to the conduct of a public figure can be considered permissible, provided it is within the limits of the journalist's legal right and duty to inform the magazine's readership of the acts and conduct of persons who, based on the virtue of their status and position, present a great interest to society as a whole. Essentially, journalists are motivated by a legitimate interest and with a view to safeguarding a justified and essential public interest, which is directly linked to the conceptual ideal of the constitutional framework and the effective execution of a democratic constitution (Katsogiannou, 2015).

In addition, the freedom to disseminate ideas and the corresponding freedom of information may be restricted by law in some cases, provided that such restrictions have a general character, are not merely repressive measures, and do not affect the core of the right to freedom of the press (Kontaxis, 2011).

However, the fact that the requested information is readily available is an important criterion in assessing whether a refusal to provide it interferes with the right to receive and impart information guaranteed by Article 10 of the Convention. It is important to note that freedom of the press is not an absolute right and should not be used to sacrifice other legal

rights. It is subject to the general restrictions provided by the laws of the State, within the legal framework that allows the press to operate and develop freely (Kontaxis, 2011).

#### **4.4 Non-Discrimination in Public Communication**

The right to non-discrimination is a fundamental principle enshrined in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights (European Union, 2012). This right extends to public communication, including media representation, advertising, and public discourse. Discrimination in public communication can take many forms, such as hate speech, stereotyping, or exclusion of certain groups from participating in public discussions or media representation.

The EU has adopted a number of legal instruments to combat discrimination in public communication. The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) sets out rules on the content of audiovisual media services, including prohibiting hate speech and ensuring that programming does not incite violence or hatred (European Union, 2010). The Directive also requires that broadcasters promote diversity in their programming and ensure that the portrayal of minorities is not prejudicial.

Furthermore, the EU has adopted several other legal instruments that promote non-discrimination in public communication. The Race Equality Directive prohibits discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin (European Union, 2000). The Employment Equality Directive prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation (European Union, 2000). The Charter of Fundamental Rights, which has legal force in the EU, prohibits discrimination on a number of grounds, including sex, race, religion, and sexual orientation (European Union, 2012).

In addition to legal measures, the EU also promotes non-discrimination through education and awareness-raising campaigns. The European Commission has launched several initiatives to combat hate speech and promote tolerance, including the #NoHateSpeech movement, which encourages individuals to speak out against online hate speech (European Commission, 2016). The EU High-Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance has also been established to develop policy recommendations and best practices (European Union, 2018).

The EU's efforts to combat discrimination in public communication are also reflected in its policies on media pluralism and cultural diversity. The EU's Creative Europe programme,

for example, supports the audiovisual sector and encourages the production and distribution of European films and TV programmes (European Union, 2013). The programme also aims to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

Despite the EU's efforts to combat discrimination in public communication, there are still challenges and criticisms. For example, the AVMSD has been criticized for not going far enough to combat hate speech, as it only applies to audiovisual media services and not other forms of public communication (European Commission, 2018).

The EU's commitment to non-discrimination in public communication is crucial to ensuring that every citizen can engage in public discussions and decision-making processes. However, there are concerns that some member states of the EU are not fully implementing the EU's laws and policies on non-discrimination. The EU's Fundamental Rights Agency has reported that discrimination based on ethnicity and religion remains a persistent issue in some member states. This highlights the need for continued efforts to ensure that all EU member states uphold and enforce the principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment in their public communication and policies (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020).

#### **4.5 Refugees' Communication Rights**

Communication is an essential tool for refugees, as it enables them to exercise their fundamental rights, including the right to seek and receive information, freedom of expression, and the right to privacy. Refugees, like all individuals, have the right to freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive, and impart information. These rights are enshrined in international human rights law, including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These rights enable refugees to communicate with their families and friends, access information about their legal rights, and participate in public discourse.

However, refugees often face significant challenges in exercising their communication rights (UNHCR, 2019, p. 23). For example, many refugees do not have access to communication technology, such as mobile phones or the internet, which are essential tools for communicating. When refugees do not have access to communication technology, such as mobile phones, computers, or the internet, which makes it challenging to communicate with

family members or access information. In most cases, refugees may have to rely on public Wi-Fi networks, which can be unreliable and insecure (UNHCR, 2019, p. 27).

Additionally, language barriers can make it difficult for refugees to communicate with service providers, government officials, or other members of the community. This can limit their ability to access healthcare, education, employment, and other critical resources. (UNHCR, 2019, p. 26). The EU has recognized the importance of addressing language barriers and has developed policies to support language learning and interpretation services for refugees and migrants. However, there are still challenges in ensuring that these services are accessible and available to all who need them.

Finally, many refugees face censorship, surveillance, and harassment from government authorities, making it challenging to exercise their freedom of expression. Indeed, these factors can influence refugees' ability to fully integrate into society and actively engage in public discussions and interactions ((IOM, 2019). For instance, in some countries, refugees' communications are monitored, and social media platforms are blocked, preventing refugees from accessing information or communicating freely. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides guidance on communication with communities affected by forced displacement. As it acknowledges, refugees often face restrictions on their communication rights, including monitoring of their communications and the blocking of social media platforms (UNHCR, 2017). Such practices of surveillance and harassment create an environment of fear and intimidation where refugees refrain from expressing their opinions (Amnesty International, 2018). In summary, these examples underline the challenges refugees encounter in exercising their freedom of expression. Government surveillance, censorship, and harassment limit their access to information, hinder open communication, and could lead to self-censorship.

International organizations have taken steps to protect and promote refugees' communication rights. For example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has developed a policy on ICT (Information and Communication Technology) for refugees, which aims to enhance refugees' access to communication technology, provide training on digital literacy, and protect refugees' data privacy (UNHCR, 2020). International Telecommunication Union (ITU)<sup>21</sup>, a specialized agency of the United Nations, promotes the

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.itu.int/>

use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development, including for refugees. ITU collaborates with governments and other stakeholders to improve connectivity and digital inclusion in refugee camps and host communities, enabling refugees to access information, communicate, and participate in social and economic activities. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) works to ensure that refugees have access to quality education, including media and information literacy programs. These initiatives aim to empower refugees with the skills and knowledge to critically analyze media content, engage in constructive dialogue, and exercise their freedom of expression (UNESCO n.d.)<sup>22</sup>. Additionally, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has developed programs to provide language and digital literacy training to refugees, which can help refugees to communicate more effectively with their host communities and access essential services (IOM, 2020).

National governments of some countries also have a role to play in protecting and promoting refugees' communication rights. For example, in Germany, the government has developed programs to provide language and digital literacy training to refugees, as well as access to mobile phones and the internet (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016). On the other hand, some governments have implemented policies that restrict refugees' access to communication technology or censor their communications. For instance, in some countries, social media platforms are blocked, preventing refugees from accessing information or communicating freely. This type of censorship can have significant consequences for refugees, who may not have access to essential information or be able to communicate with their families.

International organizations, national governments, and community organizations have a role to play in protecting and promoting refugees' communication rights. Efforts to enhance refugees' access to communication technology, provide language and digital literacy training, and protect refugees' data privacy can help refugees to communicate more effectively, access essential services, and exercise their fundamental human rights.

## **4.6 Media representation of refugees**

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/media-crisis/refugees-media>

The arrival and settlement of refugees in host countries can lead to a more successful and multicultural society, one that is not solely assimilated to the homogenizing norms of the host people (MPI Europe, 2020). The diversity of population groups in society, based on their religion, culture, and race, raises objections to the homogenizing and unifying characteristics of states, and thus, immigrants can be perceived as threatening to social order, genetic heritage, and national identity. The media provides a critique of the arbitrary actions of governments and power, and acts as a legitimate mechanism for public discourse of regimes and promoting the expression of social demands to governments. Media have the critical role of holding governments accountable for their actions and policies. Through investigative journalism and in-depth reporting, the media uncovers information that may otherwise remain hidden from the public. By exposing government actions and policies to public scrutiny, the media plays a vital role in fostering transparency, accountability, and good governance. Citizens rely on the media to provide them with accurate and unbiased information about their governments' activities (McChesney, 1999). The media serves as a watchdog, exposing governmental misconduct and bringing it to public attention. Additionally, the media has a significant impact on shaping public attitudes, which can assist in the integration of migrants into the society of each host country (Jukes, 2007).

The developed attitude towards migrants using stereotypes based on the term of difference can be considered very important. In this way, it negatively influences the creation of a climate of trust between migrants and the citizens of the societies, contributing instead to their smooth social adaptation, due to their presentation as "others". However, it can be mentioned that smooth integration into society should mean integration on the one hand, while maintaining specificities and identity on the other, without necessarily requiring a total transformation into the culture of the modernized society. This process of assimilation presents the need for a balanced representation of immigrants and their origins in the media. It must also be understood that the phenomenon of immigration cannot be presented as a matter of moral order but essentially as a socio-political problem.

The media has a great influence on the creation of public opinion and thus establishes the use of references by producing various social expressions about migrants. Their active or supposedly democratic role is shaped by various factors. They transform ideology, perception, behavior and also opinion of majorities towards minority groups such as migrants. It can also be stated that the use of definitions and categorization, in most cases negative, in descriptions



of themes about migrants tend to be attributed as identical identity markers of the whole society.

Furthermore, the media appears to endorse the views and attitudes of the government, often revealing anti-immigrant sentiments. Frequently, immigrants are portrayed as the root of socio-economic issues and are held accountable for the exacerbation of criminal activities. Additionally, the media's coverage of news events may perpetuate ethnic prejudices.

Since the media do not have a specific code of conduct regarding the coverage of migration news and often limit themselves to the general rule of not allowing the publication of racist and xenophobic comments. Most media outlets do not have specialized programs for covering migration news or updating on developments in the home countries of migrants. Although some media have specialized journalists in migration themes, their engagement with them is often empirical and related to their socio-ideological sensitivities and personal perceptions. In the same time, the media do not have policies for employing migrant journalists because migrants may not have a good command of the most important tool of the journalistic profession, which is a strong command of the language.

It is also believed that the emphasis on the humanitarian needs of refugees in the media is based on a causal relationship between the European Union's policy on the reception of refugees and its positive visibility. Particularly, the data from research conducted in Hungary, which has the highest number of refugees and the harshest immigration policy in Europe, is very important. According to the data from this study, the media in Hungary emphasized the humanitarian needs of refugees, despite it being contrary to government policies. Therefore, the media's coverage of the refugee crisis cannot necessarily be causally related to existing government policies (Egres, 2018).

Generally, the coverage of the humanitarian crisis is based on the values and cultural codes of the developed Western countries. As a result, various aspects of the humanitarian crisis, especially those related to the situation in Syria, may not align with the value codes of citizens in Western states and may be overlooked (Özdemir, 2015).

An important study analyzed The Guardian, The Independent, The Daily Telegraph, The Times, and The Sun newspapers. The content analysis of these newspapers emphasized that although they gave emphasis to aspects of the humanitarian refugee crisis, they didn't adequately address the issue of physical and sexual abuse of women in the refugee caravans (Özdemir, 2015). Therefore, it can be argued that the European press coverage of the

humanitarian crisis is based on the perceived supportive needs of refugees, which are related to the experiences of the citizens of the host country.

## **5. Research methods**

This thesis will employ a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both empirical and desk-based evidence to examine the media coverage of the refugee crisis in Greece. In particular, with regard to the representation of locals, evidence will be drawn from public statements made by local actors, local government representatives, religious representatives, residents, and businessmen in the affected areas.

To gather this evidence, a desk-based review of relevant materials will be conducted. This will involve searching the archives of online media for articles, interviews, and reports that were published during the specific periods and concern the areas of Eidomeni and Moria.

The data collected from the desk-based review will be analyzed using critical analysis to identify patterns and themes in the representation of locals and refugees in the media coverage of the refugee crisis. Additionally, empirical evidence will be presented through interviews of locals and refugees from the specific period.

Overall, this mixed-methods approach aims to enable a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the media coverage of the refugee crisis in Greece and provide insights into the representation of locals and refugees through the lens of human rights.

## **6. Media representation of refugees and locals in Eidomeni and Moria**

### **6.1 Greek media coverage in Eidomeni**

Eidomeni is a small village on the Greece- Republic of North Macedonia border that became a major focal point during the European refugee crisis in 2015-2016 (Andrikopoulos, 2020). At its peak, it was “home” to thousands of refugees, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, who were seeking to cross the border and continue their journey to other European countries. The situation in Eidomeni was characterized by overcrowding, lack of basic facilities and services, and tensions between refugees and authorities. International organizations and NGOs,

made efforts to provide humanitarian aid and improve conditions in the camp, but the situation remained challenging (Athanasίου, 2020).

In March 2016, the Republic of North Macedonian government closed its border with Greece, effectively trapping thousand of refugees in Eidomeni and other border areas<sup>23</sup>. This led to a humanitarian crisis, with refugees facing food and water shortages, poor sanitation, and deteriorating health conditions. The Greek government eventually evacuated the camp and relocated refugees to other parts of the country, but the Eidomeni crisis highlighted the need for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to addressing the refugee crisis in Europe (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

The Greek media covered the refugee crisis in Eidomeni extensively, with many news outlets providing daily updates on the situation in the camp and the broader refugee crisis in Europe (Chondrogiannos, 2016 & ALPHA, 2016, Capital.gr, 2016, To Vima, 2016, NewsIt, 2016, Ta Nea, 2016, In.gr, 2016 & To Vima, 2016). In the early stages of the crisis, the media focused on the arrival of refugees (CNN<sup>24 25 26</sup>, ERTnews<sup>27</sup>, iefimerida<sup>28</sup>, Ant1news<sup>29</sup>) in Greece and the challenges they faced in their journey to other European countries. Coverage included interviews, reports on the conditions in the camp, and analysis of the political and social implications of the crisis (Chondrogiannos, 2016 & ALPHA, 2016, Capital.gr, 2016, To Vima, 2016, NewsIt, 2016, Ta Nea, 2016, In.gr, 2016 & To Vima, 2016).

As the crisis deepened and tensions between refugees and authorities escalated, the media also reported on the protests and clashes (Capital.gr, 2016, To Vima, 2016 & NewsIt), that took place in Eidomeni and other border areas. There were also reports of police violence and human rights violations, which drew criticism from the media and civil society groups. Overall, the Greek media played an important role in raising awareness about the refugee crisis

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/27/thousands-of-refugees-stranded-at-greece-macedonia-border>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.cnn.gr/ellada/story/28790/meionontai-oi-prosfygikes-roes-53-925-prosfyges-kai-metanastes-stin-ellada>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.cnn.gr/kosmos/story/28759/tha-ayxithe-i-o-arithmos-ton-syron-poy-epanaprothoyntai-apo-tin-ellada-leei-i-toyrkia>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.cnn.gr/ellada/story/26749/egklovismenoi-prosfyges-kai-ellada-sta-adiexoda-ton-apofaseon>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ertnews.gr/eidiseis/ellada/dramatiki-i-katastasi-stin-idomeni-eno-sinechizonte-i-afixis-prosfigon-ston-pireia-vid/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.iefimerida.gr/news/249636/eidomeni-shedon-5000-atoma-perimenoy-na-perasoyn-stin-pgdm-anamenontai-mazikes-afixeis>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.ant1news.gr/amp/General/article/440259/antartiko-kai-ekatontades-nees-afixeis-prosfigon>

and the challenges faced by refugees in Eidomeni and other parts of Greece (Zafeiropoulou & Tzogopoulos, 2020). By disseminating stories and images of the crisis, the Greek media not only informed the local and international public about the escalating situation but also sparked critical conversations about the adequacy and fairness of existing asylum policies and practices. Thus, the study by Zafeiropoulou and Tzogopoulos (2020) underscores the essential role played by Greek media in raising awareness and shaping public and policy discourses around the refugee crisis.

### **6.1.2 Media representation of refugees in Eidomeni**

The media representation of refugees in Eidomeni was varied and often influenced by political and social factors (Chatziantoniou, Rori, & Vasilopoulou, 2020). Some media outlets portrayed refugees as victims of war and persecution, highlighting their struggles and the difficult conditions they faced in the camp (Chondrogiannos, 2016 & *Amir*, ALPHA, 2016). Others focused on the challenges that refugees posed to the Greek and European societies, portraying them as a threat to national security (Soupli, ALPHA, 2016) and public order.

Some media outlets published interviews with refugees and described the conditions in the tents where they were staying. These accounts often highlighted the difficult living conditions and lack of basic facilities and services, such as running water, electricity, and sanitation. A characteristic example is the interview published on Popaganda.gr, which includes the story of a family of refugees living in a tent (Chondrogiannos, 2016). The article describes the difficulties faced by the family, with testimonials mainly from the son and the father. Both of them highlight how beautiful their life was previously and how all their dreams are now over. In the same time, they underline the difficulties in Eidomeni and also express their hope to go to Europe. The journalist provided refugees with the opportunity to speak and express their own testimonials and feelings; he aims to evoke emotion and to raise awareness. In this way, the journalist upheld the basic principles of the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, etc. and protected freedom of expression and comment. However, there is a certain point when his comments may hide a stereotypical opinion about Muslim married women. Specifically, it is implied that Muslim women are particularly shy, with the phrase, “*She thanks me with the shyness typical of a Muslim wife*”. In general, the article expresses support and empathy towards the refugees of Eidomeni. It gives a voice to refugee voices and respects their rights to communication and freedom of expression. It is

important to note that there were no language barriers, in this case since the son of the family spoke fluent English.

Stereotypes and negative attitudes can be perpetuated by the media, which acts as a powerful tool in shaping public perception. The media often presents biased representations of individuals or groups, thereby reinforcing stereotypes (Dixon & Linz, 2000). This is particularly evident in the coverage of sensitive issues like immigration or refugee crises. According to Bleich, Stonebraker, Nisar and Abdelhamid (2015), such coverage can lead to the consolidation of negative stereotypes and escalation of negative attitudes towards these groups. Therefore, this emphasizes the importance of fostering media literacy to mitigate the potential harm caused by the perpetuation of such stereotypes and attitudes.

Another characteristic example of refugee interviews has been retrieved from personal archive and will be used as empirical evidence to describe media's representation of refugees. The interview conducted in 2016 on radio ALPHA<sup>30</sup>. During the interview, Amir, a refugee who has been living in Greece for many years, described his experience working with organizations that assist refugees in Eidomeni. Amir mentioned that as a refugee, "he has experienced the same situation and despite the government's declarations of assistance, nothing has changed." As he clarified, regarding the conditions in Eidomeni during 2016, the situation was tragic, with refugees lacking proper accommodation, being exposed to cold weather, and children falling ill (ALPHA, 2016)<sup>31</sup>. "Despite this, they always smile when you offer help them although they are desperate or tired", he noticed. In this case, journalists were given the independence to provide freedom of expression of other opinions that offer criticism against the government. Amir's testimonials could provide a positive image for refugees and inspire audience's empathy. Self-censorship did not occur during this interview, as the journalists allowed Amir to express his views and asked for further details.

Articles reporting on refugees' complaints were published by Greek media. Refugees' protest on the railway tracks in Eidomeni was published by *Capital.gr* (2016)<sup>32</sup>. This article presents the numbers of the refugees and explains the reasons of the protest without including any testimonials. Another article published in *To Vima* (2016) represents refugees' complaints about having paid 50 euros for a bus ticket through a specific agency to go to Eidomeni, but

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/09uinwrm23spf71m8g7l6/h?dl=0&rlkey=v7b4oe7zn17el5n3w3p6xste7>

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.capital.gr/epikairotita/3113124/eidomeni-diamarturia-prosfugon-stis-sidirodromikes-grammes-gia-na-anoixoun-ta-sunora>

they never actually traveled there<sup>33</sup>. At the same time, the article presents the response of the agency with testimonials from the responsible parties explaining the reasons why the refugees did not travel. As a result, the right to freedom of expression has only been partially implemented, as only the opinion of the agency has been provided, with no testimonials from the refugees themselves. This may attract the audience's interest to the agency's words rather than focusing on the real fact and refugees' complaint itself.

Other articles may not have given voice to refugees, but used images to depict the situations in which refugees find themselves. The article published by *NewsIt* (2016)<sup>34</sup>, presented picture of refugees attempting to set themselves on fire in protest of the closing of borders in Eidomeni. The article's title warned readers that "hard" images were included and aims of conveying the desperation of refugees. Images of refugees attempting self-immolation were used to emphasize the extreme despair and hopelessness felt by refugees stranded in Eidomeni when borders were closed. The visual representation is often more powerful and immediate than written descriptions, sparking emotional reactions and making the refugee crisis more tangible and urgent to the audience. This approach can be an effective means of storytelling because it places the audience directly into the situation, offering them a raw and unfiltered look at the realities of the crisis. However, it can also be seen as exploitative or manipulative, as it uses the suffering of individuals to evoke emotional responses. While the use of graphic images can certainly raise awareness about the crisis, it's also crucial that media outlets consider the ethical implications of their coverage.

Reports on the number of refugees and the conditions in Eidomeni were also covered by the media. These report usually included specific data such as the number of refugees arrived or left the area, the condition in camp of Eidomeni and the humanitarian aid provided by international organizations. Characteristic reports of this kind were published by *In.gr*<sup>35</sup>, *Ta Nea* (2016)<sup>36</sup>, *To Vima* (2016)<sup>37</sup>, and other online Media. These reports usually cover the data

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.tovima.gr/2016/03/08/society/kataggelies-prosfygwn-xwris-antikrisma-eisitiria-50-gia-eidomeni/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.newsit.gr/ellada/eidomeni-prosfyges-prospathoyn-na-aytopyrpolithoyn-sklires-eikones/1314242/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.in.gr/2016/05/26/greece/adeiase-o-kataylismos-prosfygwn-stin-eidomeni/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.tanea.gr/2016/03/07/greece/perissoteroi-apo-36-000-oi-egklwbismenoi-prosfyges-stin-ellada/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.tovima.gr/2016/03/07/society/panw-apo-33-000-oi-egklwbismenoi-prosfyges-kai-metanastes-sti-xwra/>

provided by the police without including any opinions or views from either the refugees or the local communities.

Overall, media representation of refugees in Eidomeni raises important questions about journalistic ethics, media bias, and the responsibility of the media to present accurate and unbiased reporting. After researching relevant articles and interviews published online, it appears that only a few media outlets have given refugees a chance to express their views and speak out. The use of stereotypical phrases, limits to freedom of opinion of refugees and misrepresentation, was often observed and in the examples of articles provided above. It is really rare for the media to allow refugee voices to speak out against the government and criticize political decisions. However, during the beginning of the year and up until May 2016, the Greek media provided a variety of coverage regarding the situation and conditions of refugees in Eidomeni.

### **6.1.3 Media representation of locals in Eidomeni**

The media coverage of Eidomeni during this period- February to May 2016- tended to report the refugees flows and the conditions in the area, as well as the humanitarian crisis that was unfolding (ALPHA 2016, Efsyn 2016<sup>3839</sup>, CNN, 2016<sup>404142</sup>). However, the Greek media also covered the local community by including in their reports, quotes of local actors (Soupli, ALPHA, 2016), local governmental representatives (Gountenoudis, ALPHA, 2016), and businessmen of Eidomeni (Oulis, 2016). While media reported their reactions to the refugee crisis, some of them portrayed the locals in Eidomeni as being hostile or unsympathetic towards the refugees and migrants. Other media outlets presented a more nuanced view of the local community in Eidomeni by presenting quotes from residents who expressed empathy for the refugees. In any case, the refugee crisis in Eidomeni was a significant event and drew the attention of all of the country's media.

Representatives of the Greek government frequently made statements to the media regarding the situation in Eidomeni. The Minister responsible for Migration Policy issues,

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<sup>38</sup> [https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/koinonia/61468\\_stin-eidomeni-dramata-sto-herso-anoihtes-agkalies](https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/koinonia/61468_stin-eidomeni-dramata-sto-herso-anoihtes-agkalies)

<sup>39</sup> [https://www.efsyn.gr/nisides/74043\\_monopati-ton-prosfygon](https://www.efsyn.gr/nisides/74043_monopati-ton-prosfygon)

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.cnn.gr/ellada/story/31701/petropolemos-kai-ximika-stin-eidomeni>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.cnn.gr/ellada/story/30898/eidomeni-antimetopoi-me-laspes-fidia>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.cnn.gr/ellada/story/28790/meionontai-oi-prosfygikes-roes-53-925-prosfyges-kai-metanastes-stin-ellada>

Yiannis Mouzalas, often provided updates about the government's plans to manage the refugee crisis. The following interview with the Minister was retrieved from personal archive and is being used here as empirical evidence (ALPHA, 2016)<sup>43</sup>. During the interview, there were reports about the Belgian government proposing to push refugees out to sea. However, the Minister clarified that this was not an official statement from the Belgian government but rather an individual's opinion. He emphasized that allowing people to drown in the sea is not acceptable. The interview became tense when the Minister claimed that his words were being twisted. When asked about the refugee accommodation areas that were planned to be created, he avoided giving clear answers about their locations. When it was pointed out that some municipalities were reacting negatively and did not want these areas in their region, he stated “that they needed to understand the difficult situation the country was facing and that refugees should not be treated like garbage cans and dumped at someone else's doorstep (Moyzalas, ALPHA, 2016)<sup>44</sup>. The use of the term 'garbage cans' in reference to refugees, even if it was intended as a defense, is problematic and concerning. However, it was observed that none of the journalists present during this assertion sought clarification or questioned the appropriateness of the terminology employed.

Similarly, when the minister questioned by journalists regarding the government's absence in northern Greece, specifically in the Eidomeni region during 2016, as stated by the mayor of the region and other local individuals, the Minister displayed visible annoyance and disregarded the question, deeming it unfair to the mayor (ALPHA, 2016).<sup>45</sup> He stated that such claims did not apply and that he personally worked well with the mayor. This incident highlights the phenomenon of self-censorship among journalists, as they refrained from sticking to the real version of the statement. Prior to the interview, the journalists had spoken with the mayor and local, who had emphasized the lack of financial support, the government's absence from Eidomeni and expressed dissatisfaction with the local government's non early response. However, due to the fear of being blacklisted and to avoid creating tensions, the journalists did not challenge the Minister's denial of the mayor's claims.

On the other hand, the mayor of Paionia, in the region of Eidomeni, Christos Gountenoudis (ALPHA, 2016), spoke about the lack of planning and financial support from

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<sup>43</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

<sup>45</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))



the government<sup>46</sup>. The mayor emphasized that the situation “had reached an impasse, and discussions with state bodies to manage it were not done in time.” He also emphasized that the prime minister was afraid that “Idomeni would become a "warehouse of souls," and now that it is too late, it has already happened.” The mayor may have clarified his assessment to the responsible minister, but he still emphasized the lack of timely action and complete financial support from the state. The specific statements made by Mr. Gountenoudis (ALPHA, 2016) were not transferred in the interview that followed with the minister (Moyzalas, ALPHA, 2016)<sup>47</sup> leading to the conclusion that the journalists have censored themselves.

Regarding the reaction of the local community towards the refugees, the mayor stated (APLHA, 2016)<sup>48</sup> that locals will now rise up with whatever measures are taken, as they were not taken in time. He noted <sup>49</sup> (ALPHA, 2016) that “people tend to sympathize when the crisis is far away, but this changes when it is near”. He also added that he believes in the humanity of the residents as long as they guaranteed that the refugees will go somewhere else and will not stay in the area of Idomeni for more than 24 hours (ALPHA, 2016). Significantly, in this particular case, as per the mayor's statements, the local community has appeared hostility and resistance towards the presence of refugees for a duration exceeding 24 hours (ALPHA, 2016). This position is being exploited by the mayor of Paionia (Gkountenoudis, ALPHA, 2016), as leverage to exert pressure on the government to relocate the refugees.

In the same vein as the mayor's statements, the coordinating director of the Center, George Perperidis<sup>50</sup> (ALPHA, 2016), emphasized that “the government had not given a single euro to the state. He even argued that the state considered the refugee problem to be concentrated only on the islands and did not support Eidomeni. As a result, the refugees go to the fields, which become full of garbage, and the municipality is unable to clean it as it has absolutely no money.” Similarly to the previous statements, these specific statements were not conveyed to the minister by the journalists as a counterargument to his claim that the municipality was completely satisfied with the government.

More negative stereotypes of refugees were reported in Greece highlighting that Greek people frequently used negative adjectives to describe refugees, often associating them with

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<sup>46</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

<sup>49</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

<sup>50</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

issues of crime, unemployment, and cultural dissonance (Amnesty International, 2016). Stereotypes about refugees often rely on derogatory or dehumanizing language, associating them with uncleanness or dirtiness. Perceptions of the refugee camps, such as Eidomeni, with their inadequate facilities and overcrowded conditions, contributed to the portrayal of refugees as 'dirty' or 'unclean' (Kandylis and Kavoulakos, 2018).

Another interview from the personal archive is that of the president of the local community of Eidomeni, Xanthippi Soupli<sup>51</sup> (ALPHA, 2016). She stated that the residents of Eidomeni are now confined to their homes, “as they are afraid of the refugees who have stayed in the area for a long time and there is a question of security. She also referred to "illegal immigrants" who prevent refugees from crossing the border.” The interviewee's use of the term "illegal immigrants" underlines that the need for careful use of terminologies related to sensitive matters such as immigration and refugee issues is paramount (Mudde, 2013). Unfortunately, a number of politicians may not have a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies associated with these terminologies, which can result in misrepresentations and potential misunderstandings (Crawley et al., 2016). Therefore, it's crucial to advocate for enhanced awareness and education among political figures on these issues.

Continuing, the interviewee emphasized that “the local community has tolerated everything, as the refugees enter the plowed fields of the residents, destroying their crops, which results in the residents being financially ruined and unable to feed their families.”

Within the framework of the Southern European context, Greece emerges as a prominent case where a significant proportion of the local population perceives refugees as an added burden. This perception could potentially be a reflection of various socio-economic factors, coupled with the complexities faced by the country in effectively managing the influx and integration of refugees (Amores, Blanco- Herrero & Arcila- Caldron, 2020).

Some of the reports documented the situation of the refugees, focusing on incidents of profiteering by local businessmen. In particular, they reported that these businessmen were selling food to the refugees at raised prices and taking advantage of their situation. In the following interview, Lazaros Oulis, owner of a canteen in Eidomeni, was quoted as empirical evidence<sup>52</sup> (ALPHA, 2016). He clarified that “the refugees were now throwing away the food

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<sup>51</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

<sup>52</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

provided to them by international organizations because, due to their religion beliefs, they were afraid that it may contain pork.” He stressed that he provided free food to those who had no money, including refugees and pregnant mothers, in opposition to accusations of profiteering. He then clarified that “his prices were low, even when he sold food.” In this case, a representative of local businessmen (Oulis, ALPHA, 2016) was given the opportunity to address the accusations leveled against them (iefimerida, 2016).

During the evacuation of the informal camp of Eidomeni, journalists from all media outlets -except for state media- were prohibited from being present, and media coverage of the event was banned. During his visit to Idomeni after the evacuation in May 2016, the Minister of Citizen Protection, Nikos Toskas, made pertinent statements to the Greek media, justifying the decision. He emphasized that the execution of the operation would pose difficulties and present challenges, particularly for journalists (In.gr, 2016)<sup>53</sup>. This situation presents a circumstance where government policies had an impact on the scope of media coverage, with state media being the main source of onsite reporting. Although the operation was completed, the way it was carried out or fears about how it would be carried out left open questions following the decision to ban coverage.

In the case of Eidomeni, the media mainly defended the side of the refugees through representatives of international organizations that provided humanitarian aid to the informal settlement. The workers of these agencies conveyed the poor psychological and physical condition of the refugees, as well as the need for an immediate solution. The statements made in the media facilitated the development of an atmosphere characterized by empathy and solidarity towards the refugees. A typical example, is the statements by Stella Nanou from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)<sup>54</sup>, who emphasized “the need for creating normal accommodation facilities as the informal camp in Eidomeni was inadequate to accommodate the refugees. It was clarified that the refugees were in a very difficult situation, tired from traveling long distances only to find the border closed.” As she mentioned, their main goal was to inform the refugees of their rights, particularly their right to asylum. In this case, the mass media provided space for the rights of the refugees to be heard and communicated, even if briefly, to the general public. Greek audiences' interest in migration-related news during periods of heightened refugee arrivals, underscores the impact of real-

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<sup>53</sup> <https://www.in.gr/2016/05/26/greece/toskas-gia-tin-kalypsi-stin-eidomeni-etsi-ginetai-se-olo-ton-kosmo/>

<sup>54</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews\\_Branioti\\_ALPHA%20\(1\)](https://www.dropbox.com/home/Interviews_Branioti_ALPHA%20(1))

world events on public attention and engagement with the media (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017). During such times, when the number of refugee arrivals spiked, Greek citizens were more likely to seek out news regarding migration, perhaps to better understand the unfolding situation and its potential implications for their country and communities

The media representation of locals in Eidomeni varied depending on the source and context. Some media outlets reported on local businessmen who were accused of profiteering from the refugee crisis, by raising prices and taking advantage of the refugees' situation. Others interviewed those who expressed sympathy towards the refugees and called for more humane treatment. However, reports also portrayed locals in a negative light, blaming them for the tensions that arose due to the refugee crisis (Soupli, ALPHA 2016). Views and statements of politicians and local governmental representatives were often presented by mainstream media. Overall, the media representation of locals in Eidomeni was complex and multifaceted, reflecting the diverse perspectives and opinions of the local community.

## **6.2 Greek media coverage in Moria**

On the island of Lesbos in Moria was a refugee camp that was home to thousands of refugees and migrants, many of whom had fled war and persecution in their home countries. The Greek media coverage of Moria was extensive, with many news outlets reporting on the conditions in the camp.

Many news reports focused on the overcrowding and poor living conditions in the camp, which had been a concern for years. Images of cramped tents, overflowing toilets, and unsanitary living conditions were often featured in news stories.

There was also significant political controversy surrounding the camp, with many people criticizing the Greek government for its handling of the situation. Some news outlets focused on the government's response (Tsangarides, 2015)<sup>55</sup>, while others examined the broader policy issues surrounding refugee and migrant resettlement in Greece (HRW, 2015)<sup>56</sup>.

Despite the challenges, there were also many stories of hope and resilience coming out of Moria. News outlets covered the efforts of humanitarian organizations and volunteers who

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<sup>55</sup> <https://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2015/09/07/refugee-crisis-greece-lesvos>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/el/news/2015/10/21/282451>

were working to provide food, shelter, and medical care to the camp's residents (Vice, 2015 & Ta Nea, 2015).

Overall, the Greek media coverage of Moria displayed a wide range of perspectives and aspects, reflecting the complex and challenging situation faced by refugees and migrants in Greece. While some news outlets focused on the problems and controversies (Efsyn, 2015, (Demetis, 2017 & *Lesvonews*, 2016), others highlighted the efforts of those working to make a difference in the lives of those affected by the crisis (Vice, 2015 & Ta Nea, 2015).

### **6.2.1 Media representation of refugees in Moria**

In the context of Moria, giving refugees a chance to speak on the media could have provided a more nuanced understanding of the challenges they faced in the camp. Refugees in Moria faced a range of challenges, including overcrowding, poor living conditions, and a lack of access to basic services like healthcare and education. By allowing refugees in Moria to share their stories and experiences, the media could have shed light on these challenges and highlighted the resilience of those living in the camp. Refugees could have spoken about their experiences of fleeing war and persecution, their journeys to Europe, and their experiences of living in Moria.

Unfortunately, given the chaotic and volatile situation in Moria, after researching empirical evidence, or relevant articles and interviews published online, no stories have been of refugees to accessing the Greek media or sharing their stories. The media coverage of Moria often focused on broader policy issues or government responses to the crisis, rather than the experiences of refugees themselves. However, there were some efforts by journalists and media organizations to highlight the human rights abuses and physical violence experienced by refugees.

The article published on *Efsyn* (2015) is a characteristic example. The article describes the violent policies against refugees and provides accurate and relevant images to support this claim.<sup>57</sup> It should be mentioned that, by providing evidence of the violations, the article defends the rights of refugees and the democratic regime. In the same time, the journalist preserves their social role and uses their influence for the good of this vulnerable group. In this case the

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<sup>57</sup> [https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/dikaiomata/39530\\_astynomiki-bia-sto-limani-tis-mytilinis](https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/dikaiomata/39530_astynomiki-bia-sto-limani-tis-mytilinis)

truth and its presentation seems the overall aim of the coverage. It is significant that the article denounces that the photojournalist had also experienced an attack by the police while trying to capture a shot of a woman bleeding from a baton. It is clear that in this case, there was a clear effort to undermine the freedom and pluralism of the media, and to violate journalists right to practice their function without any intervention with the aim of distorting or concealing the truth. However, the event was reported in defense of the fundamental right of the press.

In the same vein, there was the article published by the local media, *Lesvosnews* (2016)<sup>58</sup>. The article presented a policeman kicking a refugee. The event was reported with unshakable evidence, with pictures displaying the policeman in action. In this case as well, the aim of the coverage was to present the truth and its presentation.

The article published by *News247* also includes strong pictures aiming to present the situation in Moria. As it highlights, the refugees live in a landfill and are treated as garbage. The article presents the truth about the conditions in the camp, mentioning that among the refugees, there are children with fever, pregnant women, and elderly people who wait in the rain in the mud and garbage (Demetis, 2017)<sup>59</sup>. Moreover, representatives of international humanitarian organizations describe the situation and accuse the EU of its absence. It is clear that the article provides accurate information and describes the difficulties of refugees. This respects the rights of vulnerable groups and may create empathy for refugees and a positive image. However, no refugee voices are included in the article.

The media coverage of Moria in 2015 focused mainly on reports of the numbers of refugees who arrived on the island and those staying in Moria. Besides the numbers, these reports often provided information about the nationalities of the refugees who arrived. This kind of reports was published daily in most of the Greek media and provided the exact same information. Examples of such reports are *Kathimerini* (2015)<sup>60</sup> and *Euro2day* (2015)<sup>61</sup>.

The media representation of refugees in Moria has been a topic of great discussion and debate. One common trend in media coverage of refugees in Moria has been a focus on

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<sup>58</sup> <https://www.lesvosnews.net/articles/news-categories/koinonia/astynomikos-mpatsos-klostaei-prosfyges-sti-moria-lesvoy-fotografia>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.news247.gr/koinonia/oi-prosfyges-sti-moria-lesvoy-zoyn-se-chomateri-kai-antimetopizontai-san-skoypidia.6381493.html>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/843851/836-000-prosfyges-mesa-sto-2015/>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.euro2day.gr/news/highlights/article-news/1356225/mono-ton-avgoysto-kateftasan-sth-lesvo-33000.html>

numbers and statistics, rather than on the individual stories and experiences of the refugees themselves. This has led to a dehumanization of refugees and a lack of empathy for their plight. On the other hand, there have been efforts by some media outlets to provide more balanced and accurate coverage of refugees in Moria, highlighting their humanity and the challenges they face in a more nuanced way. This type of coverage can help to create greater understanding and empathy for refugees and their experiences.

### **6.2.2 Media representation of locals in Moria**

The media coverage of the locals in Moria was mixed, with some portraying them as sympathetic and supportive of the refugees, while others portrayed them as hostile and intolerant. Some media outlets highlighted the efforts of local residents and volunteers who provided aid and support to the refugees living in Moria. They showed how the locals welcomed the refugees and worked to create a sense of community, despite the challenges posed by the overcrowded and under-resourced camp. However, other media outlets focused on incidents of violence and hostility towards the refugees by some local residents. They reported on tensions between the refugees and the locals, and how some locals blamed the refugees for the strain on resources and infrastructure on the island. These reports often portrayed the locals as intolerant and xenophobic.

Among the articles that highlight the aid provided by locals and their willingness to welcome refugees was an article about three elderly ladies who helped and fed milk to a baby refugee<sup>62</sup>. Most of the Greek media reproduced the article, emphasizing the hospitality of the locals. The ladies, who were the protagonists of the article, directly won the sympathy of the audience and were presented as a good example to follow. The way the news was presented by the mass media inspired public interest, and as a result, it was picked up by television, radio, newspapers, and electronic media. Most publications took interviews the elderly women and included their statements.

In the same vein, an article was published by *Vice* (2015)<sup>63</sup> recounting the story of fishermen who saved the lives of refugees in the Aegean. The journalist spoke to the fishermen

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<sup>62</sup> <https://www.tanea.gr/2015/10/20/greece/lesbos-treis-ellinides-giagiades-ena-mpimpero-kai-ena-prosfygopoylo/>

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.vice.com/el/article/78pveq/ellines-psarades-iroes>

and gathered their views on the refugees and the help they offer them. One of the fishermen made a statement, mentioning that *he fears the day when bad weather prevents him from helping with his small boat, and that he fears for the refugees' lives as much as for his own*. The article characterized the fishermen of Lesbos as heroes, creating a feeling of compassion and support towards the refugees.

However, the Mayor of Lesbos, Spyros Galinos, presented both sides of the coin, stressing that there are residents who are patient and others who stir up trouble. In an interview he gave retrieved from personal archive (*ALPHA*, 2015)<sup>64</sup>, he made it clear that those who stir up trouble have been always irresponsible. As he mentioned, an average of 4,000 people arrive in Lesbos every day, resulting in the residents feeling like tourists in the midst of the immigrant crowds that have gathered. He emphasized that the situation with the refugee flows is uncontrollable and that a solution needs to be found in cooperation with Turkey, and aid should be provided by the EU. During 2015, the Mayor of Lesbos was often interviewed to describe the situation with refugees.

In addition, the media frequently presented statements from politicians visiting Lesbos, regarding refugee support and management measures. Among these statements, the Minister of Migration Policy Yiannis Mouzalas' statements were dominant, emphasizing that they were working on the refugee issue and making efforts to manage this enormous problem. The specific article published in *Naftemporiki* (2015)<sup>65</sup> includes the minister's statements during his visit to the island. Visits by politicians to the island of Lesbos were frequent, and the media covered the events and republished relevant statements, most of which were in a supportive climate towards refugees. Similarly, in the article used as an example, the minister emphasized that the work being done to defend Europe's borders is to save people, not push them back into the sea.

The media representation in Moria included mainly voices to the local community, representatives of the local government, and the political scene in the country. Depending on the philosophy and political beliefs of each media outlet, the statements may focused on the human and sensitive side of the refugee issue, or on criticism of problems created by the arrival of refugees in different regions of the country.

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<sup>64</sup> <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/09uinwrm23spf71m8g7l6/h?dl=0&rlkey=v7b4oe7zn17el5n3w3p6xste7>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/society/1135467/sti-lesvo-oi-presveis-ton-choron-tis-e-e-stin-ellada/>



## 7. Conclusion

### 7.1 The overall portrayal of refugees by the Greek media

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how Greek media outlets portrayed refugees and locals during the 2015-2016 refugee crisis in the areas of Eidomeni and Moria. The study aimed to investigate whether the media respected the human communication rights of both refugees and locals or whether violations were identified. Additionally, the research sought to explore whether there was equal representation of refugees and locals in the media coverage of the crisis.

The analysis of the media representation of refugees in the areas of Eidomeni and Moria during February to May 2016 reveals that the coverage was varied and often influenced by political and social factors. Some media outlets portrayed refugees as victims of war and persecution, highlighting their struggles and the difficult conditions they faced in the camps (*Popaganda*, 2016). These accounts aimed to evoke emotion and raise awareness while upholding the basic principles of the prohibition of discrimination and protecting freedom of expression and comment. However, there were some “journalistic” comments that may have hidden stereotypical opinions (*Muslim married women are shy*). In the same vein, interviews of refugees that provided a real-life example of the challenges faced by refugees working in Eidomeni (*ALPHA*, 2016). In this case, testimonials provide a vivid description of the tragic conditions that refugees face, while personal experience lends credibility to his account.

The fact the Media provided to refugees freedom to express their views and criticize the government without any self-censorship from journalists is a positive sign of the media's commitment to providing fair and accurate coverage of refugee issues. Overall, these interviews provide a good example of the media's role in promoting empathy and understanding towards refugees through fair and balanced reporting.

Articles reporting on refugees' complaints were also published, but they often only presented the opinion of agencies and responsible local parties, without including testimonials from the refugees themselves. This may have attracted the audience's interest to the agency's words rather than focusing on the refugees' complaints themselves.

The media also used images to depict the situations in which refugees found themselves, such as refugees attempting to set themselves on fire in protest of the closing of

borders in Eidomeni. Reports on the number of refugees and the conditions in Eidomeni were also covered by the media, usually including specific data such as the number of refugees arrived or left the area, the condition in the camp of Eidomeni, and the humanitarian aid provided by international organizations.

Overall, the media representation of refugees in Eidomeni raises important questions about journalistic ethics, media bias, and the responsibility of the media to present accurate and unbiased reporting. While some media outlets provided comprehensive and accurate coverage, few gave refugees a chance to express their views and speak out against the government and criticize political decisions.

Based on the evidence presented, it seems that the Greek media coverage of refugees in Moria was even more limited than Eidomeni, in terms of providing opportunities for refugees to speak and share their stories. The analysis of media coverage of refugees in Moria suggests that there was a lack of diversity in the voices represented in the media. Specifically, there were few if any refugee voices that were included in the coverage. This is significant because it means that the media was not able to capture the nuances and complexities of the refugee experience in Moria.

Instead, the media focused more on providing statistics and reporting on broader policy issues and government responses. Media coverage of refugees in Moria often focused on numbers and statistics (Kathimerini, 2015 & Euro2day, 2015) rather than on the individual stories and experiences of refugees themselves. Although, this kind of coverage is important, the absence of refugees' voices can lead to a dehumanization of refugees and a lack of empathy for their plight. It also ignores the root causes of why people are forced to flee their homes in the first place

However, some journalists and media organizations made efforts to highlight the human rights abuses and violence experienced by refugees in the camp, and to shed light on their challenging living conditions. It is noteworthy that some media outlets provided accurate and relevant images to support their claims (*Efsyn*, 2015) which aimed to present the truth and defend the rights of refugees. However, the absence of refugee voices in the coverage may have contributed to the dehumanization of refugees and a lack of empathy for their plight.

It is also important to note that the media coverage of refugees in Moria was influenced by the political and social context in which it was produced. The chaotic and volatile situation in Moria may have made it difficult for journalists to access refugees and gather their stories.

## 7.2 The overall portrayal of locals by the Greek media

The media coverage of the refugee crisis in Eidomeni during February to May 2016 was extensive, with Greek media reporting on the conditions in the area, the humanitarian crisis, and the reactions of the local community. However, the portrayal of the locals was not consistent, with some media outlets presenting a more nuanced view, while others depicted them as hostile or unsympathetic towards the refugees.

Representatives of the Greek government, including the Minister responsible for Migration Policy issues, were frequently interviewed about the situation in Eidomeni. In one interview (*ALPHA*, 2016), the Minister used problematic language, referring to refugee reception centers as "garbage cans," which was potentially racist. However, the journalists present did not challenge him on this. Additionally, the journalists refrained from challenging the Minister's denial of the local actors' claims about the government's absence from Eidomeni, which highlights the phenomenon of self-censorship among journalists.

The media also reported the statements made by local actors, including the mayor of Paionia, Christos Gountenoudis (*ALPHA*, 2016), who emphasized the situation had reached an impasse, and discussions with state bodies were not done in time. The mayor also noted that the residents of Eidomeni are now confined to their homes, as they are afraid of the refugees who have stayed in the area for a long time, indicating the hostility of the locals towards the presence of refugees. The mention of residents being confined to their homes due to fear of refugees suggests that the situation has gone beyond a mere refugee crisis and has escalated into a situation where the safety and well-being of the local population are at risk.

Other interviews, presented the locals of Eidomeni struggling to cope with the influx of refugees and are not receiving adequate support from the government (*Perperidis*, *ALPHA*, 2010). The media seems to be highlighting the challenges faced by the locals and the need for the government to step in and provide assistance. This portrayal may elicit sympathy from the Greek public and increase pressure on the government to take action.

The interview with the president of the local community of Idomeni, Xanthippi Soupli (*ALPHA*, 2026), portrays the local residents as fearful and resentful towards the presence of refugees in the area. Her use of racist language, referring to "illegal immigrants," reinforces negative stereotypes and suggests a lack of empathy towards the plight of refugees. Moreover,

her focus on the financial impact on local residents, while understandable, does not acknowledge the difficult circumstances that refugees face and the reasons why they are forced to flee their homes. This interview is a characteristic example of media portraying the locals in Eidomeni as being hostile or unsympathetic towards the refugees and migrants.

In contrast, the media mainly defended the side of the refugees through representatives of international organizations that provided humanitarian aid to the informal settlement. The statements made in the media allowed for the creation of a climate of sympathy and solidarity towards the refugees.

It seems that the locals of Eidomeni had ample opportunity to be represented in the media. The media coverage portrayed a complex and multifaceted representation of the local community, with various perspectives and opinions being shared. Local governmental representatives, businessmen, and residents were among those who were interviewed and given a platform to express their views on the refugee crisis.

It is important to note that the representation of locals in the media may not have been entirely equal or fair. There were reports that portrayed locals in a negative light, blaming them for tensions that arose due to the refugee crisis. Additionally, the media's access to cover the evacuation of the informal camp in Eidomeni was restricted, with only state media being allowed to cover the event. This decision by the government hindered the work of the media and left open questions following the decision to ban coverage.

The media portrayal of locals in Moria during 2015 was mixed, with some outlets highlighting the sympathy and support of local residents and volunteers towards refugees, while others focused on incidents of hostility and xenophobia towards them. Media coverage generally reflected the political philosophy and beliefs of the respective outlets, leading to differing opinions on the refugee crisis.

One approach was to showcase the positive stories of local residents and their efforts to create a sense of community despite the challenging conditions. For example, an article about three elderly ladies who helped and fed milk to a baby refugee garnered widespread attention and was picked up by various media outlets. The ladies were portrayed as a good example to follow, and their actions were presented as an act of hospitality and compassion. Similarly, a *Vice* (2015) article recounted the heroic actions of fishermen who saved refugees' lives in the Aegean, creating a feeling of compassion and support towards refugees.

However, other media outlets focused on the incidents of violence and hostility towards the refugees, portraying locals as intolerant and xenophobic. The Mayor of Lesbos, Spyros Galinos (*ALPHA*, 2015), provided a balanced perspective, acknowledging that while some locals were supportive, others were irresponsible and stirred up trouble.

Politicians visiting Lesbos frequently made statements about refugee support and management measures. The media covered these events, with the majority of statements being supportive of refugees. The coverage generally reflected the political philosophy and beliefs of the respective outlets.

### **7.3 Respect and Violations of Human Communication Rights in Greek Media Outlets**

The study found that there were numerous violations of human communication rights by Greek media outlets during the 2015-2016 refugee crisis. These violations included the publication of misleading stories, the use of stereotypes and stigmatizing language, and the failure to provide accurate and balanced reporting.

The media representation of refugees shows a mix of respect and violations of human communication rights. Some media outlets provided refugees with the opportunity to speak out and express their opinions and feelings (Eidomeni- *Popaganda & ALPHA*, 2016), thus upholding the basic principles of the prohibition of discrimination and protecting freedom of expression and communication.

Moreover, there have been efforts by some journalists and media organizations to provide accurate and balanced coverage of the challenges faced by refugees (Moria- *Efsyn*, 2015). These efforts have included highlighting human rights abuses and physical violence experienced by refugees, and shedding light on the poor living conditions and lack of access to basic services like healthcare and education (Moria- *New247*, 2015). These types of stories can help to promote understanding and empathy for refugees and their experiences, and respect their right to have their stories heard and understood.

Regarding the representation of locals, some media outlets highlighted the efforts of local residents and volunteers who provided aid and support to the refugees living in Moria (*Vice*, 2015), emphasizing their hospitality and willingness to create a sense of community. These articles portrayed the locals as sympathetic and supportive, promoting a positive view

of their actions towards refugees. On the other hand, some media outlets focused on incidents of violence and hostility towards the refugees by some local residents, portraying the locals as intolerant and xenophobic. These reports violated the human communication rights of refugees by presenting them in a negative light and reinforcing negative stereotypes. Such reports could have led to further marginalization and discrimination of refugees and hindered their integration into the local community.

Some media outlets the focus on numbers and statistics in much of the media coverage of refugees mainly in Moria (*Kathimerini & Euro2day, 2015*) has led to a dehumanization of refugees and a lack of empathy for their plight. This type of coverage violates refugees' right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to have their individual stories and experiences acknowledged and understood. Additionally, the lack of direct access to the media for refugees in Moria may have further limited their ability to exercise their right to freedom of expression and to have their voices heard.

It appears that there was a lack of media representation of the refugees mainly in Moria, which can be seen as a violation of their right to communicate freely and to have their voices heard. The chaotic and volatile situation in Moria may have made it difficult or even impossible for refugees to access the Greek media or share their stories. This lack of representation can lead to a lack of understanding of the experiences and perspectives of refugees, and can contribute to stereotypes and misinformation.

In some cases, media outlets published articles that did not include testimonials from refugees themselves (*Newsit, 2016*), or only partially implemented freedom of expression by providing the opinion of the agency or the government, rather than the refugees themselves. This limits the opportunity for refugees to express their own views and violates their right to communicate freely and express their opinions. It is important for media outlets to ensure that their coverage of refugees is accurate, fair, and unbiased, and that they provide refugees with the opportunity to express their own views and experiences.

The use of stereotypical phrases in some articles (*Popaganda, 2016*) also reveals a potential violation of the right to be portrayed accurately and without prejudice, and suggests a possible bias in the media representation of refugees. For instance, the use of the term 'garbage cans' (*Mouzalas, ALPHA, 2016*) as an analogy to describe refugee reception centers is problematic and potentially racist, even if it was used in defense of refugees, which is a violation of the right to freedom from discrimination. Additionally, the term “illegal

immigrants," (Soupli, ALPHA, 2016) is a violation of the right to freedom from discrimination. The focus on the residents' fear of refugees without further clarification portrays the refugees as a security threat, is a violation of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. It is significant to notice that the journalists present did not ask for clarification or challenge the terminology used, which is a violation of the right to seek and receive information.

#### **7.4 Self- Censorship in Greek Media Outlets**

Based on the findings of the study, self-censorship can be analyzed in the following ways:

- Fear of blacklisting: The journalists present during the interview with the Minister (ALPHA, 2016) refrained from challenging him or asking for clarification about his problematic terminology, and did not challenge the Minister's denial of the mayor's claims, for fear of being blacklisted by the Minister. This fear of negative consequences led to self-censorship.
- Neglect of specific statements: The journalists also neglected to convey specific statements made by the mayor of Paionia and the coordinating director of the Center to the Minister during the interview, which could have challenged the Minister's claims and given a more accurate picture of the situation. This neglect may have been due to fear of negative consequences or pressure to avoid creating tensions.
- Pressure to avoid creating tensions: The journalists also refrained from challenging the Minister's denial of the mayor's claims due to pressure to avoid creating tensions. They may have been afraid of causing conflict and damaging media outlet's relationship with the Minister or the government.

Overall, self-censorship appears to be a significant issue among the journalists in the given text. Fear of negative consequences, pressure to avoid conflict, and reluctance to challenge problematic statements or language all contribute to the phenomenon of self-censorship. This can result in a distorted or incomplete portrayal of the situation, which can have significant consequences for the public's understanding of the issue.

## **7.5 Equal Representation of refugees and locals**

The study found that there was not equal representation of refugees and locals in the media coverage of the crisis. While locals were often given extensive coverage, particularly in relation to the economic impact of the crisis, refugees were often depicted as a faceless, homogenous group. This suggests that the media may have given more attention to the impact of the crisis on locals, particularly in relation to the economic consequences, while refugees were not given the same level of coverage.

In terms of the portrayal of refugees, the media coverage was varied and influenced by political and social factors. While some media outlets provided comprehensive and accurate coverage, few gave refugees a chance to express their views and speak out against the government and criticize political decisions. Moreover, the media coverage of refugees in Moria was even more limited than in Eidomeni, in terms of providing opportunities for refugees to speak and share their stories. The representation of refugees in the media was often negative or stereotypical, as they were depicted as a faceless and homogenous group. This can be problematic, as it can contribute to negative attitudes towards refugees and may perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

On the other hand, the portrayal of locals was not consistent, with some media outlets presenting a more nuanced view, while others depicted them as hostile or unsympathetic towards the refugees. The portrayal of locals as unsympathetic or hostile towards refugees could potentially perpetuate negative stereotypes and prejudice towards refugees, which could have negative consequences for social cohesion and integration. However, it was important for media outlets to provide accurate and balanced coverage of the crisis, including the perspectives of both refugees and locals, to avoid stigmatizing any group.

At the same time, presenting a more nuanced view of locals could be beneficial in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the situation. However, it was important to recognize that the crisis has economic, social, and political dimensions that impact not only on locals, but also on refugees.

Overall, the media representation of refugees and locals during the 2015-2016 refugee crisis in Greece was influenced by political and social factors and lacked balance and fairness. There was a need for more diverse and nuanced voices to be represented in the media coverage to provide a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the situation.



## 8. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the importance of journalistic ethics and responsible reporting when covering crises involving vulnerable populations such as refugees. While some media outlets provided accurate and balanced coverage, others perpetuated harmful stereotypes and failed to give refugees a voice in the coverage of their own experiences.

Moreover, the findings suggest that the political and social context in which media coverage is produced can have a significant impact on the portrayal of refugees and locals. Journalists may face challenges in accessing refugees and gathering their stories in chaotic and volatile situations, and media outlets may feel pressure to avoid conflict or challenging problematic statements or language.

Moving forward, there is a need for media literacy and critical thinking to understand media coverage of refugees, particularly in the context of crises. Media organizations must strive to provide accurate and balanced coverage, while also giving voice to refugees and challenging harmful stereotypes and language.

The study also highlights the need for equal representation of refugees and locals in media coverage, with attention given to the impact of the crisis on both groups. This can help to ensure that the perspectives and experiences of refugees are not overlooked or marginalized in media coverage.

A potential limitation of this research is the focus on only two specific locations and a relatively short time frame. Future research could expand the scope of the analysis to include other locations and examine changes in coverage over a longer period.

Overall, the findings of this study present important implications for media organizations, policymakers, and the public, and underscore the need for ongoing dialogue and engagement to ensure responsible and ethical reporting of crises involving vulnerable populations such as refugees.

The nuanced and diverse portrayals of refugee experiences by the Greek media significantly influence public perceptions and attitudes toward refugees. The changing portrayal of refugees within Greek media is a key factor in understanding the evolution of public sentiment towards the refugee crisis in Greece. In the initial influx of refugees in 2015, media coverage largely humanized the plight of refugees, focusing on their adversities and the

dehumanizing conditions they encountered in refugee camps. However, by the end of the crisis, there was a notable shift in the narrative (Kalafati n.d.). Despite the absence of direct negative framing of refugees, the dissemination of certain facts and aspects within the media could have inadvertently propagated negative sentiments among the public. Further analysis revealed that the media sentiment during the second wave of refugee arrivals in 2019-2020 was significantly more negative compared to the initial period in 2015 (Kalafati n.d.).

The mainstream media's coverage of refugees, particularly in Greece, has been subject to criticism due to its perceived lack of depth and nuanced representation of refugee experiences (Chauvet, 2023). According to Joinda, a refugee from Afghan the traditional media rarely delves into the real lives and challenges faced by refugees (Chauvet, 2023). However, community-based media initiatives, such as the "Migratory Birds"<sup>66</sup> program, run by the non-profit association Network for Children's Rights, offer an alternative and much-needed platform. They provide refugees with the opportunity to participate in media production and express their experiences, thoughts, and feelings in their own language by facilitating a better representation but also foster a sense of belonging among refugees, thereby contributing to their integration into the local community (Chauvet, 2023).

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<sup>66</sup> <https://migratorybirds.gr/>

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