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Migrants on the Balkan Route in the Serbian and Hungarian Media

Migration from the Middle East, North Africa and Asia and the migration crisis has remained a major issue in the media all around Europe until to date. It has been more or less intense, politicised, biased, over-simplified or overtly full of disinformation. In most cases, this is explained by pure ignorance, but there was also deliberate use of lies. Sometimes journalists/reporters were unfamiliar with the correct terms and phrases, while sometimes there were no appropriate definitions. In an analysis of the media discourse (content analysis) in Serbia and Hungary, the paper analyzes media reports and parts of political and public discourse about migrants on the West-Balkan Route between 2016 and 2019. Both Hungary and Serbia are transit and not destination countries for migrants, however, in a different political position: Hungary being an EU member state, and Serbia wishing to become one. Among the most outstanding narratives with repeated messages identified in referring literature and content analysis were narratives on security issues and cultural differences. In years after the fence along the Hungarian-Serbian border was raised and the Western Balkan Route was physically shut down, migrants keep arriving in Serbia with the intention to cross the EU-border between Serbia and Hungary. While focusing on security and cultural issues in media reporting in Hungary and Serbia, the research will also look back to the election campaigns during the analyzed period, and continue with the 2022 elections in both countries: in what way were these narratives used or misused by political counterparts.