

Media Use of Russian Speakers in Germany

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INTRODUCTION

Patterns of media consumption among the Russian-speaking community in Germany and its impact on their political outlook came into sharp focus in the wake of the ‘Lisa case’. In January 2016, a young Russian girl in Berlin was reportedly kidnapped and allegedly raped by Arab immigrants. Both facts were later disproved. As it turned out, Lisa had run away from home with her boyfriend. Nonetheless, Russian-language media in Germany heavily publicised the story, and the aggressive coverage of the story triggered street protests in a Berlin district with a significant share of Russian- and Soviet-born residents. These residents accused the German authorities of overly lax immigration control and security. The several weeks of commotion that followed completely surprised the German authorities, who found themselves unprepared to communicate with residents who evidently believed in a completely different narrative from the one that they based their actions on. It quickly became obvious that the German authorities considered most Russian speakers in the country to be so-called Russian-Germans (repatriates from the USSR), while in fact these repatriates constitute only one part of the Russian-speaking community. In fact, the German government was able to liaise with these Russian-Germans, yet (completely) failed to connect with other groups of Russian speakers in the country.

This ‘Russian’ resentment in the Marzahn neighbourhood in Berlin was quickly exploited by a new political force, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). The party had received surprisingly good results in several recent regional elections, running an anti-immigration campaign. It was the first to come to this district and interact directly with the Russian-speaking community there. It was also the first to print and dis-

tribute election leaflets in the Russian language. For the federal election in September 2017, the AfD even put six Russian speakers on its party slate. As a populist party, the AfD promised what the inhabitants of this district were evidently waiting for: public and social security, higher pensions, protected borders, and support for and preservation of occidental Christian traditions. In the same vein, it advocated higher birth rates against foreign infiltration and demanded an independent foreign policy, attempting to capitalise on contemporary anti-American feelings. The subject of this chapter is whether or not the AfD's expectations were justified, and how they were linked to the media consumption of the Russian speakers as a target group.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The developments described above generated many academic studies and much public discussion in Germany (Schmalz 2017). This surge of interest in the Russian-speaking community and the visible lack of understanding of its structure and views motivated the Boris Nemtsov Foundation to study the issue in greater detail. The Foundation commissioned IPSOS Public Affairs to carry out a survey on the media use of Russian speakers in Germany, which was conducted in August and September 2016 and the results of which were first presented publicly at the Nemtsov Forum in Berlin in October 2016 (Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom 2016). In the course of the survey, 606 people with a 'Russian background' were questioned. The target group hence consisted of immigrants from Russia and the countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) who were at the time of the interview at least 18 years old and who were permanent residents of Germany. The sample was based on an onomastic analysis of names and surnames, which categorised names according to an assumed ethnic background.¹ The interviews were conducted by phone (using both stationary and mobile phone data banks). Each interview, based on a questionnaire, lasted on average a little under half an hour. Besides the usual questions about education, occupation and time of emigration, the questionnaire contained questions referring to three main topics: (1) the level of integration, according to respondents' self-perception; (2) the respondents' patterns of media consumption and their trust in the media they consumed; and (3) their attitudes and views regarding current political debates in Germany (i.e. their perception of the migration 'crisis', of terrorism and of the security situation in general). This chapter is based on the findings of the survey.

In the first place, the objective of the survey was to gain a better understanding of media influences on the Russian-speaking diaspora and to map the patterns of media consumption of the Russian-speaking community, defined by language, habits and other characteristics.

In a broader sense, the Boris Nemtsov Foundation conducted this research also to advance one of its main goals: the promotion of European values among Russians, not only among those who live in Russia but also among so-called global Russians. To some extent, the study of the Russian-speaking community in Europe was conducted to determine whether there is a set of common universal values shared by the Russian-speaking community and to test the hypothesis that Russia is part of European civilisation.

DIVERSITY IN GERMANY'S RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

Russian speakers in Germany are a significant group within German society. The total number of Russian speakers of different origins in Germany is estimated to amount to 4 million people (Lokshin 2020). According to statistics presented by the German political scientist Dr Andreas Wüst, 3% of all voters who could participate in the parliamentary elections in September 2017 were Russian speakers (Wüst and Faas 2018: 7). This diaspora is very diverse, with differences depending on the time of emigration, age, education level, ethnic origin, income and other characteristics. Overall, there are two large groups of immigrants from Russia, including those who fled from the USSR and former Soviet republics after the fall of the Soviet Union.

First are the so-called *Aussiedler* (resettlers), that is, people with German origins whose ancestors migrated to Russia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Article 116 of the German Basic Law entitled these people to receive German citizenship in 1949, although this started to matter in practice only in the 1980s. In total, 2,377,791 resettlers moved to Germany from the USSR and its successor countries between 1950 and 2016, mostly coming from Russia and Kazakhstan (Bund der Vertriebenen 2018). Not all of them maintained Russian as their primary language of communication, and their children and grandchildren may not even speak Russian.

The second most important group consists of Soviet Jews. A resolution of the federal Conference of the Ministers of the Interior signed on 9 January 1991 extended the application of the HumHAG (Gesetz über Maßnahmen für im Rahmen humanitärer Hilfsaktionen auf-

genommene Flüchtlinge), the law regarding measures for accepting refugees in the context of humanitarian relief, to include Jewish immigrants, who received the opportunity to leave the former USSR countries. This is described in section 23(2) of the AufenthaltG (Gesetz über den Aufenthalt, die Erwerbstätigkeit und die Integration von Ausländern im Bundesgebiet – German Immigration Act); however, since the beginning of 2004 this has excluded immigrants from the Baltic States, which had by that time become members of the European Union. The applicants must match a number of criteria, in addition to being of Jewish ethnicity or having at least one Jewish parent. Among others, they may not belong to any other confession and need proof both of elementary German-language skills and that they will be accepted by a Jewish community in Germany. Experts estimate the number of Jewish immigrants coming from the post-Soviet space to Germany between 1991 and the present day to amount to between 200,000 and 250,000 people (Tolts 2015: 24).

Other Russian-speaking Germans are immigrants who came for different reasons over the last twenty-five years, among which political asylum, family reunion, marriage, work or business are the most important. Their number is estimated at up to 350,000, but they cannot be as easily counted as a result of their varying legal and residence conditions (Bund der Vertriebenen 2018). In all likelihood, this group is quite evenly spread throughout Germany.

The demographic data of the survey conducted by the Boris Nemtsov Foundation shows that 95% of respondents were born outside Germany. The majority came to Germany between 1990 and 2009, with two-thirds coming during the 1990s. These respondents mostly came from Russia (40%) and Kazakhstan (39%); another 9% came from Ukraine and 4% came from Kyrgyzstan. Family reunification was the main motivation to migrate, and most respondents were ethnic German resettlers (78%); 11% came through the Jewish refugee programme. It is worth mentioning in this context that more than 20% of the 80 million people living in Germany have a migrant background. The main home countries for these people are Russia along with the former Soviet countries (27%), Poland (25%) and Turkey (11%) (German Federal Statistical Office 2016).

Our respondents were quite equally spread across age groups: 38% of the Russian speakers questioned were between 36 and 54 years old, 30% were older than 55, and 32% were between 18 and 35.

Language behaviour is one of the key parameters and key criteria of integration. It also helps to explain patterns in media consumption, as language preference determines the choice of the most influential channels of information access. Therefore, our respondents had the choice

between answering the questions in Russian or in German. It is noteworthy that 87% of respondents opted for German. At the same time, more than 60% considered Russian to be their native language, 27% said that they spoke Russian fluently, 9% rated their Russian skills as intermediate and 2% as basic. For German-language skills, the picture is different: 21% called German their native language, 43% claimed to be 'fluent' in it, 28% estimated their command as 'intermediate' and only 7% as 'basic', despite the fact that 78% considered themselves German resettlers. Russian was chosen as the language of communication within their immediate family by 43% of the respondents, while 24% preferred German. The remaining third used both languages.

Despite these different language preferences, the majority of the respondents said they felt comfortable in Germany. Four out of five respondents said that they had integrated into German society. While 83% of the respondents described themselves as integrated in German society, only 3% felt completely unintegrated. German-language skills and the respondents' ages correlated with their levels of perceived integration. It is obvious that people of Russian origin who speak German feel much more integrated. Among those who affirmed fluent language proficiency, 55% affirmed themselves to be very integrated. The same is true for the younger generation: 58% of respondents aged 18–35 years old described themselves as well integrated, whereas only 43% of respondents aged 36–54 and 26% of those over 55 shared this perception.

Roughly 44% of respondents identified themselves as German, and nearly one-fifth identified as European. Those respondents who were fluent in German in most cases also identified themselves as German.

RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE NEWS OUTLETS IN GERMANY

Understanding the patterns of media use among Russian speakers in Germany is central to the work of the Boris Nemtsov Foundation. Several Russian-language media outlets in Germany have shared with us their experiences in communicating with their audience. There is a large variety of Russian-language sources of information (or disinformation) controlled, openly or covertly, by the Russian authorities.

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue and the Institute of Global Affairs at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) researched the influence of media and social networks on the Russian diaspora during the 2017 election campaign for its report titled *Make Germany Great Again* (Applebaum et al. 2017). According to this report, the Russian-speaking community enjoys access to a full range of media

outlets from the Russian Federation. Local cable providers, for example, offer such a service. However, there are also a number of Russian-language media outlets produced in Germany.

Print media in particular is quite diverse. Entertainment magazines and newspapers are interspersed with information and advertisements (Kurennoy 2006). At the same time, Russian speakers can buy Russian newspapers in Germany, such as *Izvestia*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* or the *Moskovskii Komsomolets* with a special edition for the readership in Germany.

It is worth mentioning that there are a number of online communication options for Russian speakers in Germany. There are up to 100 different groups in social networks like VKontakte and Odnoklassniki (both of Russian origin), and Facebook has hundreds of thousands of users.² There are also online forums.³ These networks, as well as various messaging services, became places for the dissemination of the call to rally on the streets of Berlin in the 'Lisa case'.

Boris Feldman is the publisher of the media holding Rusmedia Group, which prints three Russian-language newspapers: *Russkaia Germaniia* (*Russian Germany*), *Russkii Berlin* (*Russian Berlin*) and the *Rejnskaia gazeta* (*Rhein Gazette*). Feldman himself edits *Russian Germany*. All of these are also available in online editions. The Rusmedia Group has been working in Germany for more than twenty years (Rusmedia 2018). The weekly audience of the print version of *Russian Germany* attains 200,000 readers. Nearly half of these readers are between 30 and 49 years old. The daily audience of the Russkij Berlin radio station, which is part of the same media organisation, is 350,000 people of the same age group as the audience of the newspapers.

The most popular topics among the readership are the migration crisis, pensions and Donald Trump. While Donald Trump has preoccupied the minds of the global audience for the past years, he was also the top news issue in Russian media in late 2016 and early 2017. He was even more frequently mentioned than president Vladimir Putin, who is usually the top newsmaker in Russia. Russian retirement pensions were a highly relevant issue for a substantial part of Russian-speaking citizens, who are recipients at present or in the future. Both preferences may thus be understood as further evidence of Russian media influence.

Refugees, by contrast, are a hot political topic all over Europe, and the subject is frequently presented in a very partisan way. This includes in Russian-language media in Germany. *Russian Germany* conducted an online poll among its subscribers which showed that their Russian-speaking audience is very suspicious about refugees (Russkaia Germaniia 2018). Almost 4,000 users took part in this poll. One-fifth responded

that Germany is not a country for refugees and they should return to their countries of origin. Almost one-third expressed the opinion that any other country should accept refugees, but not Germany. Only 2% said that Germany must give asylum to refugees due to humanitarian reasons, and even fewer respondents volunteered that they themselves came to the country as refugees some time ago. In another poll regarding attitudes towards the European Union, users named immigration policy as the most important issue, and more than 40% thought that it should be changed (Russkaia Germaniia 2018).

A Russian-speaking television station in Germany, OstWest (formerly RTVD), also has experience in communicating with local television audiences. This channel is viewed mostly in Germany but also in Austria and Switzerland, with approximately 100,000 households watching the channel. It has a 24-hour broadcast service and produces its own programmes that target Russian-speakers living in Europe. According to OstWest Director General, Peter Tietzki, the channel's audience is aged 45 years old or older and made up of about 45% male and 55% female viewers. The largest share, one-third, are pensioners, and 70% have higher education. Tietzki states that OstWest's viewers are mostly looking for entertainment content in the Russian language; they want to see movies and TV series that they are familiar with from when they still lived in Russia or the USSR.⁴

The third important media outlet for Russian speakers is Deutsche Welle, a German public media holding that offers a Russian-language service. Its budget has increased significantly in recent years, from 320 million euro in 2015 to 360 million euro in 2018. The Russian-language service is one of the outlet's current priorities (Deutsche Welle 2016, 2018). While for most of its history Deutsche Welle has targeted audiences abroad, it now acknowledges the need to broadcast in Russian within Germany too. The obvious reason is to challenge possible disinformation spread by Russian state channels, including the propaganda channel RT. Since 2017, Deutsche Welle has provided its content to the Russian-speaking community inside the country as well, making use of, among others, an agreement with OstWest. The launch in late spring 2017 of a special political television show, *Quadriga*, to discuss the 2017 German elections in Russian clearly shows Deutsche Welle's new awareness of its need to have a Russian-language service to communicate with the domestic Russian-speaking electorate. The Russian case is by no means unique, however, as various minorities living in Germany have become the target of foreign authoritarian regimes, with Turkish citizens being the most important group besides the Russian-speaking population. More generally, the advance of communication technolo-

gies, especially the Internet, has erased borders, in some cases rendering geographical borders and limitations obsolete in terms of communicating with foreign audiences. The adaptation process is slow, however. As mentioned above, Deutsche Welle does not have its own broadcasting channel within Germany and depends on partner broadcasting companies or on the Internet to distribute its Russian content within Germany.

In 2018, another German regional public broadcasting institution, Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) in Cologne, an important member of the German public broadcasting consortium providing content for the First and Third German television channels, decided to launch a Russian service. WDR also offers a half-hour news programme in Russian on its radio channel COSMO.

MEDIA CONSUMPTION OF RUSSIAN SPEAKERS IN GERMANY

Regarding their media use, respondents to the Boris Nemtsov Foundation's survey were asked about the media outlets they preferred, the frequency of their access to media, the language of these media, and whether they trusted Russian or Western media more. Moreover, the survey included questions about their attitude towards European values and their level of tolerance towards people who are not like them.

The respondents used both Russian-language and German-language media outlets. Two-thirds of the respondents said they use the Internet and watch television every day. Of the Internet users, 37% mostly browsed Russian-language sites, with 'mostly' referring to more than two-thirds of the total consumption time. Of the television viewers surveyed, 40% said they mostly watched Russian television (Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

There are several explanations for these preferences. On the one hand, many respondents obviously felt more comfortable with the Russian language than with German or English. On the other hand, the themes, approach and style of presentation of Russian media content resonate better with the expectations of people with Russian backgrounds. Beyond that, long-standing habits also play an important role in the selection of sources of information. The people who prefer Russian media do so because they find the communication style familiar and because they are accustomed to the topics, attitudes and values. Furthermore, Russian media, especially television channels, provide their audiences with free-of-charge access to high-quality content, including popular blockbusters and up-to-date shows.

This may explain the fact that the respondents trusted Russian media more than Western media. For 32% of respondents, Russian television was the most trustworthy source of information on politics and current affairs. Only 19% trusted Western media, compared with 30% who considered Russian media as a more trustworthy source of information on politics and current affairs.

The preference for certain sources of information influences people's attitudes towards sensitive issues, including security and human rights. In general, audiences who watched Russian television channels were more critical towards the German authorities and their decisions as well as more aggressive and more suspicious towards the USA. These people are ready to believe and to disseminate conspiracy theories. In their worldview, 'real democracy' does not exist and politicians are always lying about it. By contrast, the audiences who preferred German-language channels showed more positive attitudes towards democracy. Those who watched German television believed that Germany respects human rights, and they were less anxious about becoming a victim of a terrorist attack. These differences are also noticeable in the way people perceived major threats to Russia and the efficiency of different economic models. The survey examined these differences among two respondent groups: those who watched Russian-language and German-language television channels respectively more than 60% of their media-use time (Table 5.3).

Refugees are a very sensitive issue, especially for immigrants to Germany, including Russian immigrants. In general, 72% thought that there were terrorists among them, while 49% supported the idea of closing the borders. Only 20% said that refugees were able to successfully integrate into German society. Russian television viewers are significantly more sensitive to this topic, as seen in Table 5.4.

In order to find out about their level of tolerance, responses to a question about attitudes towards different social groups were also taken into consideration. Answering the question 'How would you perceive living in the same neighbourhood as . . . : positively or negatively?', our interviewees could choose between five groups: drug addicts, heavy drinkers, LGBT people, immigrants, and Muslims. The questionnaire also contained separate questions asking about the respondents' attitudes towards immigrants and refugees.

Seventy-four per cent of respondents found it acceptable to live near Muslims, 67% near immigrants, 49% near homosexuals, 16% near heavy drinkers and 8% near drug addicts. When asked about their perception of immigrants in general, 52% of the respondents agreed with the statement that immigrants would increase crime rates, 38% consid-

ered that migrants were the ones taking on hard and unpleasant work, 34% acknowledged the immigrants' contribution to the culture of their host country and only 18% believed that immigrants were taking jobs away from native Germans. As far as refugees were concerned, 72% of Russian-speaking respondents agreed with the statement that there were terrorists among refugees and merely one-fifth believed in the refugees' ability to successfully integrate into German society.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE OUTCOME OF THE SURVEY?

Elena Koneva, a sociologist who participated in preparing the survey on behalf of the Boris Nemtsov Foundation, suggested two methods of classifying the Russian-speaking community based on the analysis of the collected data. The generational model is based on factors like the year of immigration, language habits, intensity of contacts within Germany and the existence of ties to the home country, self-perception of the level of integration, and media consumption habits.

Based on these characteristics, four groups were identified among the respondents of the survey, which we called the 'New Generation' (34%), the 'Middle-Aged People' (36%), 'Citizens' (14%), and 'Latecomers' (16%):

- *New Generation*: This is the youngest and one of the two best integrated groups. They migrated to Germany in the 1990s, most likely as children. They have many connections in Germany and few in Russia or other countries of origin. They readily share European values and generally show loyalty to the German government, though they can be quite critical. This group is the most tolerant; however, they too do not want more refugees coming to Germany.
- *Middle-Aged People*: This forms the biggest group of Russian-speaking Germans. They are mostly middle-aged people who immigrated primarily from Russia and Kazakhstan in the 1990s. Their families are well integrated and fluent in German. They are very close to the New Generation group in terms of values but are more mature and self-confident. This group is less tolerant than the New Generation and they are even less friendly to other immigrants and refugees.
- *Citizens*:⁵ This group consists of respondents aged 55 years and older. They immigrated in the 1990s and are well integrated. They have good language skills as well as the strongest connections in Germany. They care less about freedom and human rights; however, they are

more relaxed on the issue of immigrants and refugees compared with the other groups.

- *Latecomers*: This group is the least integrated. In many cases, the Latecomers belong to the second wave of immigration, having followed their children and relatives. They are of the same age as the Citizens, but they have very poor language skills and, in their self-perception, the lowest integration level (57%). The members of this group are the most devoted viewers of Russian-language television. They often refused to answer questions, and they represent the least tolerant group.

The second method of classification, which is based on the attitudes of the respondents towards minorities, refugees and other nationalities, offers the opportunity to identify two large groups among the Russian-speaking community in Germany: the conservative, Russian-oriented 'patriots' and a more cosmopolitan, German- or Europe-oriented faction.

The key features of these two groups are:

- *Russian-oriented*: This group comprises 17% of the respondents, including the biggest share of the latecomer group (56% are aged 55 years and older). They are the least integrated segment. They retain many connections in Russia and have few in Germany. Often they migrated relatively recently, following their children; 43% of them came to Germany during the period 2000–9. They believe that Russia should pursue its national interest even if this leads to conflicts with other countries. They see Russia as a source of international political stability; nonetheless, they believe Russia should invest more in its armed forces to face current security risks. As to the recent crisis, they are convinced that Russia has the right to influence external and internal political decision-making in Ukraine.
- *German-oriented*: This comprises 18% of the respondents, including the biggest share of the Middle-Aged People and the New Generation. They came mainly from Russia and Kazakhstan and immigrated before 1999 (82%). They perceive themselves as fully integrated and they have many connections in Germany but few in Russia. Besides considering themselves integrated, they see themselves as Germans in the first place. They are relatively tolerant of minorities, accepting at least three out of the five social groups referred to in the survey. About 70% think that it is important to live in a democratic state and they believe that Germany adheres to human rights principles.

Attitudes towards the media are entirely different in both groups. At the same time, the Russian-oriented group is much more interested

in politics and current affairs (78% vs 58% of the German-oriented group).

It is interesting to note that in the Russian-oriented group, 67% of respondents trusted Russian television and only 28% trusted Russian-language websites. At the same time, among the German-oriented group, only 17% trusted Russian television or believed that Russian-language websites were a reliable source of information (Table 5.5).

Furthermore, the Russian-oriented group demonstrates less tolerance and integration. They are notably more concerned with security and refugee issues (Table 5.6). In particular, when they were asked if they would consider it acceptable to live next to different minority groups, only 30% of the Russian-oriented group accepted homosexuals, in contrast to 92% of the German-oriented group. Furthermore, 74% of the Russian-oriented group also thought that the presence of immigrants made crimes more likely to take place, while only 33% of the German-oriented agreed with that statement.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY IN GERMANY

Did the wooing of the Russian-speaking electorate by right-wing populists pay off in the 2017 federal elections in Germany? Previously, the Russian-speaking community had traditionally supported the Christian Democrats, with the party receiving up to two-thirds of Russian speakers' votes. However, the AfD's aggressive election campaign focusing on the migration crisis had already proved successful in the previous regional campaigns. They succeeded in building up an image of being a new political force different from the traditional elite. After the 2017 elections, researchers at the University of Duisburg-Essen and the University of Cologne studied the voting results among the Russian and Turkish communities in Germany (Goerres et al. 2018: 4–10). They questioned about 500 German citizens with Soviet and post-Soviet backgrounds as well as 500 Germans with Turkish backgrounds. The main results are shown in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 shows that the share of votes among Russian speakers more or less corresponded to the average percentage totals of these parties across Germany, except for one party and that was not the AfD but the left populist party Die Linke.

At the same time, according to an announcement on the AfD's Russian-language webpage, in Lower Saxony and Thuringia, 'the electoral districts populated mainly by Russian Germans, the AfD party

showed phenomenal results': more than 50% and more than 35%, respectively (Russlanddeutsche für die AfD 2017)

The authors of the research cited above also observe that one-third of those Russian voters who supported AfD in 2017 did not take part in the previous federal elections in 2013. One-third of those who did vote in 2013 had at that time supported the CDU/CSU (Goerres et al. 2018: 6). According to the study, the turnout was significantly lower among Russian speakers than overall. Only 58% of Russian-speaking German citizens took part in voting, while the overall turnout was 76.2%. Obviously, the AfD failed to mobilise those parts of the Russian-speaking electorate in Germany that would have been most likely to share the party's outlook, that is, the Latecomers or the Russian-oriented group.

Remarkably, the next elections in which the Russian-speaking community in Germany participated were the Russian presidential elections in 2018. A comparison of the results of the Russian citizens' voting in Germany at the Russian embassy in Berlin and the consulates around the country in 2012 and 2018 shows that the turnout increased almost three-fold, and votes in favour of Vladimir Putin nearly doubled from 49.7% to 81.1% (Strana.ua 2018). Unfortunately, it is very difficult to establish the number of Russian speakers in Germany who hold both a Russian and a German passport and who would be entitled to cast their votes in both countries. As tempting as it would be to read participation in the Russian presidential elections as a further indicator of politicisation and cleavages among the Russian speakers in Germany, there is simply not enough factual evidence to support such an interpretation.

CONCLUSION

Over recent years, the Russian-speaking community in Germany – the biggest in Europe – has become an important factor in domestic policies. Only on 17 May 2017, however, did Angela Merkel become the first German Chancellor to receive representatives of the Russian-language community in Germany.

In response to the 'Lisa case', the Federal Ministry of the Interior and its agency for political education set up new programmes to exert influence on the country's Russian speakers, attempting to promote tolerance and to facilitate networking between different civic action groups of Russian speakers. One of the explicit goals of these programmes was to increase the involvement of the Russian-speaking residents in German public affairs. Government agencies actively sought to connect with existing Russian-language civil society organisations to stimulate discussions

and, where possible, an exchange of ideas and thoughts in the Russian language. Another aim was to cross-link existing Russian-language civic organisations and associations, for example through online portals like the Dialogplattform des Bundesverbands russischsprachiger Eltern (The Dialogue Platform of the Union of Russian-speaking Parents).⁶ This platform has been holding meetings for Russian-speaking community members in different regions of Germany since 2017. Recent topics of these discussions have included ‘perspectives for Germany after the elections’, ‘the future of nuclear energy in Germany’ and ‘migration policy’. These discussions involve prominent Russian speakers living in Germany as well as Russian members of different political parties (including the AfD), and are a sign of obvious progress in establishing an open dialogue.

These activities of German NGOs, German parties and the German authorities, especially those of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and its civil education agency, are a clear sign of a changing perception of the Russian-speaking community. It is now understood and treated as an important part of the German electorate. Russian speakers have gained visibility. At the same time, they are still mistakenly perceived as a fairly homogeneous group. As Dmitri Stratievski reminds us, however, ‘Germans of Soviet origin represent over 80 nationalities’ – most of whom are members of this Russian-speaking community (Stratievski 2017). Despite the latest efforts at inclusion, Russian speakers are still poorly represented in German politics. The community is not a homogeneous group, and their outlook varies significantly, in particular concerning the latest conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Table 5.1 Frequency of media use to get information about politics and current affairs (%)

<i>Type of media</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>At least once a week</i>	<i>At least once a month</i>	<i>Less than once a month</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Don't know/ refuse to answer</i>
Internet	68	14	2	3	13	0
TV	66	18	3	4	8	1
Newspaper	24	34	5	8	28	1
Radio	53	10	3	7	27	0

Table 5.2 In which language do you use the media (%)?

<i>Type of media</i>	<i>In Russian</i>	<i>In German</i>	<i>In English</i>
Internet	37	59	4
TV	40	59	1
Newspaper	16	83	1
Radio	8	91	1

Table 5.3 Perceptions and opinions according to media consumption
(% of respondents)

	<i>Watch Russian TV > 60% of time</i>	<i>Watch German TV > 60% of time</i>
Perception of human rights and security		
Likely to become a victim of a terrorist attack	33	23
Security measures are sufficient	17	31
Germany respects human rights	24	42
Preferred economic model		
Free market economy	32	65
State-run economy	24	18
Don't know/refuse to answer	43	17
Threats to Russia		
Corruption	60	54
Religious extremism	27	18
EU enlargement	11	21
Conflict with the West	32	41
Separatism	9	16
Authoritarian government	7	20

Table 5.4 Attitude towards immigrants and refugees according to media consumption
(% of respondents)

	<i>Watch Russian TV > 60% of time</i>	<i>Watch German TV > 60% of time</i>
Terrorists are among them	79	69
Close borders	59	46
Make crime problems worse	64	47
Take jobs away from natives	21	12
Most refugees can successfully integrate	16	19
Do the hard and unpleasant work for the country	43	40
Could enrich the culture of the country	25	49

Table 5.5 Media used to learn about current affairs (comparison of two groups: Russian-oriented and German-oriented)

<i>Type of media</i>	<i>Russia-oriented</i>		<i>German-oriented</i>	
	<i>Daily</i>	<i>In Russian</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>In German</i>
TV	79	57	74	58
Internet	70	51	64	64
Newspaper	63	—	63	—
Radio	43	—	57	—

Table 5.6 Comparison of attitudes of the two major groups

<i>Views and attitudes</i>	<i>Russian-bound (%)</i>	<i>German-oriented (%)</i>
<i>— towards minorities</i>		
Consider it acceptable to live next to . . .		
drug addicts	6	16
heavy drinkers	11	29
homosexuals	30	92
immigrants	60	99
Muslims	62	98
<i>— towards immigrants</i>		
Agree that immigrants . . .		
take jobs away from natives	29	6
could enrich the culture	30	46
do hard work	50	38
make crime problems worse	74	33
<i>— towards refugees</i>		
Agree that . . .		
refugees can successfully integrate into their new society	23	28
Germany must close borders entirely	63	31
there are terrorists among refugees	88	63

Table 5.7 Distribution of votes in the 2017 federal elections in Germany

	<i>Russian respondents (%)</i>	<i>Turkish respondents (%)</i>
CDU/CSU (Christian Democrats)	27	20
SPD (Social Democrats)	12	35
Linke (Left Party)	21	16
Grünen (Green Party)	8	13
FDP (Liberals)	12	4
AfD (Alternative for Germany)	15	0
Others	5	12

NOTES

1. This procedure works well for people from Russia and its successor states; nevertheless, it is unable to capture Russian Germans who have German names and surnames (e.g. Karl Müller).
2. For example, Mix Markt, 'Наши люди в Германии' (Our people in Germany); 'Vsë o germanii' (All about Germany), <<https://ok.ru/germany.de>> (last accessed 15 January 2021).
3. See <<http://www.allrussian.info/>>, which has more than 60,000 users (last accessed 15 January 2021).
4. Telephone interview, Bonn/Berlin, 3 May 2017.
5. The term is the English equivalent of the German 'Bürger', which carries a somewhat ironic connotation in contemporary Russian, referring to those Russian speakers who have 'arrived' in German society.
6. <<https://www.bvre.de/dialog-plattform.html>> (last accessed 18 January 2021).

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