

From Solidarity to 'Economic Rationalisation': How the Romanian Media's Discourse on the War in Ukraine Has Changed

CLUJ-NAPOCA, CLUJ, ROMANIA, June 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A recent study published by researcher Radu Drăgulescu from [Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu](#) offers a novel perspective on how the Romanian media has shaped public perceptions of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Based on a large-scale linguistic corpus, the analysis reveals a clear evolution in media narratives: from widespread empathy during the first months of the invasion to a discourse increasingly focused on costs, risks, and energy security.

The study, entitled "A Corpus-Assisted Analysis of the Discursive Construction of Socio-Economic Issues Concerning Romania and Ukraine in Romanian News", is part of the [CORECON](#) project, funded through the NextGenerationEU instrument. The author analysed articles published between 2022 and 2024 in Romania's leading news outlets, including Adevărul, Digi24, HotNews, and Libertatea, using advanced corpus-linguistic methods to identify framing strategies and patterns of discursive manipulation.

One of the study's most significant findings is the shift in the representation of the refugee crisis. While media discourse in 2022 was dominated by humanitarian solidarity and emotional appeals to compassion, from mid-2023 onwards it gradually transitioned towards what the author describes as "economic rationalisation", relying more heavily on arguments grounded in logic and practical considerations.

Ukrainian refugees increasingly came to be portrayed as a source of pressure on social services



Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu



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and public finances, marking a shift from their initial depiction as victims in need of assistance to a more systemic framing as a burden. Nevertheless, the study highlights that Romanian media overwhelmingly favoured the term “refugee” (481 mentions) over “immigrant” (only 15 mentions), thereby granting Ukrainians greater social legitimacy as recipients of protection. Regarding economic issues, the study identifies a dual discourse. Ukraine is simultaneously portrayed as a strategic partner for infrastructure and transit, particularly in relation to grain exports and energy flows, while also being framed as a source of risk due to its geopolitical volatility.

The media frequently employed conflict-related metaphors, such as “the battle for resources” and “the fight against the energy crisis”, framing economic challenges in martial terms and reinforcing the perceived necessity of reducing dependence on Russian gas.

The analysis also draws attention to a power asymmetry within the media sphere. Coverage is dominated by the voices of Romanian politicians and international officials from organisations such as NATO and the European Union, while the voices of Ukrainian refugees themselves are largely absent. The media frequently speaks about them, but only rarely with them.

Furthermore, the use of pronouns creates dichotomies such as “we” – Romanians providing assistance – versus “they” – the beneficiaries of that assistance. This linguistic pattern reflects latent tensions between a perceived moral obligation to help and emerging economic resentments as public fatigue gradually increased.

The study demonstrates that the media does not merely report events but actively constructs social realities. The transition from strong solidarity to a discourse centred on securitisation and caution illustrates how language can be used to legitimise political decisions and redefine national interests during times of crisis.

For readers interested in the methodological framework and the full findings, the study was published in the journal *Transilvania*, issue 12/2025.

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Bianca Pădurean
Transylvania Today Association
+40 766609344
[email us here](#)

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