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### **DIGITAL TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL SPACES OF ROMANIANS AND MOLDOVANS IN BERLIN**

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# **Digital transnational social spaces of Romanians and Moldovans in Berlin**

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## **Abstract**

This study focuses on the online community of Romanian speaking mobility migrants who live or regularly return to Berlin. Engaging with theories on transnationalism and social media, this article addressed the question of how digital transnational social spaces contribute to international migration, focusing on the integration into the host society. It is argued that social media groups of Romanian speaking migrants are community spaces which strengthen ties between members, thus facilitating international migration. Quantitative data was collected using open-sourced tools and analyzed employing descriptive statistics. Moreover, qualitative data was included stemming from the interactions with users of the observed Facebook groups. Data was gathered between 2020-2021, during Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing. It is concluded that digital transnational social spaces carry meaning to the migrant community, state institutions, social networks, and the state of research. For migrants, the existence of Facebook groups lowers the threshold of integration and allows the strengthening of social ties. Engaged institutions could rethink their communication strategy by considering a more active presence on social media, while the platforms could use digital communities as targeted audiences. Finally, the research has been enriched with a deeper perspective of not only if, but how social media impacts international migration.

**Keywords:** transnational social space, digital transnational space, social media, Facebook groups, Romanian speaking migrants, Germany, Berlin.

## **Introduction**

In our currently interconnected society, where people, ideas and goods travel, migration and migrant communication behavior have become an inherent part of academic research. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the entire globe through a high death toll, and by reducing mobility, forcing people to an increased use of digital communication in their personal and professional life. Among all groups,

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migrants were one of the most impacted categories, having been forced to reduce or stop traveling between origin and residence countries and being at risk of disintegrating from their host societies.

Based on statistics (Statistisches Bundesamt, February 2022), Germany was the most frequently chosen country for emigration by Romanians in 2019, with a percentage of about 23.3% of the total number of emigrants. Furthermore, out of the 844,535 Romanians living in this country, representing 7.1% of all foreigners, 26,330 (Statistisches Bundesamt, June 2021) have settled in the capital, forming the sixth biggest migrant community. The migration relevance of the capital (top third region within Germany after Baden-Württemberg and Bayern in 2021) matched with the specific needs related to integration in a big city are some of the reasons why this group has been chosen for research.

The target group comprises the online community of Romanian and Moldavian nationals, whereas a clear distinction between the groups within the diasporic community remains a challenge. For example, many migrants originating from the Republic of Moldova acquired Romanian citizenship to access the EU-wide labor market, thus statistically belonging to the generic “Romanian diaspora”. In the context of transnationalism, integrating multiple temporalities into the migration experience of Moldovans became part of their daily lives, especially for care takers in Italy (Cojocaru, 2021).

Taking into consideration the theories on (digital) transnational social spaces and social media in the context of migration, this article explores the structure and content of Romanian language Facebook groups. In this approach, we start from assumptions which go in line with more recent theories on migration studies; these support the existence of translational social spaces (Faist, 2000, 2006, 2017) and stress the importance of social media in facilitating international migration (Dekker, & Engbersen, 2014, 13). Thus, we ask how interactions on Facebook groups can contribute to international migration. Through this material, the wish is to bring a linguistical and mediatic focus into play. Furthermore, the interest is directed toward the meaning of social media groups’ size and content for the community, state institutions, and digital platforms. In this attempt, I am going to use new data but also already compiled statistics, focusing on the quantitative aspects of digital transnational spaces (Facebook groups). At the same time, qualitative nuances will be included, as the researcher has been involved as a participant and observer inside the analyzed Facebook groups. This implies a close relation with the involved actors (administrators of social media groups and very active members) because of regular online and offline interactions.

It is argued in this article that Facebook groups are digital transnational social spaces where social ties are being strengthened through attempts of mutual support: asking and answering questions on integration related topics. Discussing about finding a job, an apartment, or a German course, facilitates integration and eases

the path for newcomers, especially since the information is delivered in the mother tongue and misunderstandings can easily be clarified.

The structure of the article includes the theoretical framework in the first part, followed by methodology, data analysis and conclusions, together with a final discussion.

## **Transnationalism and social media: a theoretical framework**

### *On transnationalism and migration*

Theories of migration are evolving together with the realities of a topic which has become imbedded in day-to-day practices and media headlines. While initial research sheds light on the numerical character of migration to the US, research has shifted towards processes and individual or group experiences around the globe. At the turn of the millennium, Portes (1997) identified the five key themes in international migration research: 1) transnational communities; 2) the new second generation; 3) households and gender; 4) states and state systems; and 5) cross-national comparisons. As mass transportation and communication means spread around the globe easing inter-state migration, the ties and relations migrants developed grew in size and sometimes in intensity, with some even feeling more connected to their former homes than their host societies. Migrants have been reconceptualized as “transmigrants” in a groundbreaking study on transnational paradigm (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994) which proved how migrants keep extensive links with their home (and other places), while becoming integrated (or not) in their host societies.

When considering the vast spectrum of migration studies, transnationalism refers to migration processes. In terms of topic clusters, migration-related diversity (26%) and migration processes (19%) comprise the two largest clusters in terms of the volume of published research (Pisarevskaya *et al.*, 2020). As stated above, migration studies had a clear statistical and state-oriented approach at its beginnings, a trend which lessened and allowed a reorientation. For instance, judging by the “age” of topics, calculated as average years weighted by proportions of publications within a topic per year, #22 “Migrant demographics”, followed by #45 “Governance of migration” and #46 “Migration statistics and survey research” are the oldest. The newest topics include #14 “Mobilities” and #48 “Intra-EU mobility” (*ibidem*). Overall, multiple developments indicate a paradigmatic shift in migration studies, possibly caused by criticism of methodological nationalism.

If the migrants cross borders more easily and stay in contact with family, friends or newly acquired acquaintances, what happens to the web of links they are involved? Transnationalism shifts attention away from geographies of migration and nation-states, giving way to “mobilities”, “diasporas and transnationalism” and “identity narratives” since the 2000s (Faist, 2006). A special place has thus been given to

the connectivity of migrants within “transnational social spaces”, which represent “continuous and dense sets of transboundary social and symbolic ties (Faist, 2000). More explicitly, “transnational social spaces, transnational social fields or transnational social formations usually refer to sustained ties of geographically mobile persons, networks and organizations across the borders across multiple nation states” (Faist, 2006, 3). Among the four types of transnational spaces—small groups, particularly kinship systems; issue networks; transnational communities and transnational organizations – I consider the focus group of the research to be a transnational community of different intensity ties. Transnational communities, like social media groups, can evolve at different levels of aggregation.

The present article tackles the junction between transnationalism and social media, taking a closer look at what we consider to be digital transnational social spaces (Christiansen, 2017), namely Facebook groups of Romanian speaking migrants which settled in the German capital. A special role is naturally played by technology, which provides scope for strengthening transnational ties, working on social and cultural capital, and engaging in political action (Almenara-Niebla, 2022; Labayen, & Gutierrez, 2021; Marlowe, 2019). The smartphone, an essential item for migrants, also facilitates the creation of connections, allowing people to use its affordances to plan and organize their trip, keep in touch with family members and bridge challenges of integration. Storing images and sharing them is, for instance, part of the affective practices of refugees who need to bridge emotional gaps and traumatizing experiences in an “affective networked space” (Aziz, 2022). Although our target group is not subject to forced migration, at times of movement restrictions, the social and emotional burden increases and puts pressure on the community members to find and participate in innovative means of communication.

The pandemic has also occasioned an intensive process of rebordering and intensified migration control (Moze, & Spiegel, 2022), bringing transnational movement almost entirely to a halt. Entire cities were contained, filtering at the border crossing strictly implemented, while the passage was conditioned by vaccination. Only mobile migrant workers deemed essential or desirable were allowed to cross the border, seasonal Romanian workers in German agriculture being one of them.

As a consequence of the purported “migration crisis” in 2015-16 and the following pandemic, “digital migration studies” (Leurs and Smets, 2018; Sandberg *et al.*, 2022) have secured a place in the realm of migration.

### **Social media as spaces that host transnational ties**

The network of migrants flexibly crossing borders expands, often intensifies, and searches for de-territorialized social spaces to remain active. Social media became the needed space for identity formation, information exchange, community-

building and political activism, appearing as a possibility for democratizing global communication. Social media are “online applications containing user-generated content, which are part of an open (or semi-open) network infrastructure enabling social networking” (Dekker, & Engbersen, 2014, 403) and which create “a new type of space between mass and interpersonal communication” (Schmidt, 2013). Among their multiple forms, the article focuses on Facebook as the space of analysis, a social network which merged into becoming a multimedia platform (Schmidt, 2013) integrating videos, photos and music. Platform members are not only connected with each other, but in their exchange and online communities, they employ multimedia.

For mobile migrants, social media has become part of their daily lives, playing an important if not at times decisive role in their decision-making. Four functions of social media have been identified, including: “1) enhancing the possibilities of maintaining strong ties with family and friends; 2) addressing weak ties that are relevant to organizing the process of migration and integration; 3) establishing a new infrastructure consisting of latent ties; 4) offering a rich source of insider knowledge on migration that is discrete and unofficial” (Dekker, & Engbersen, 2014, 406). Thus, empirical findings concluded that social media are transforming migration networks and, in that way, lower the threshold for migration. Social media has changed the nature of migrant networks by allowing an infrastructure consisting of latent, weak, and strong ties to support migrant experiences abroad. The ties can be created and maintained within groups, where a closer and more specific interaction takes place, which often includes topics of general interest and where pioneer migrants become a source of information for the newcomers and ease their access to information.

Starting from the assumption that social media facilitate international migration, this paper aims at questioning which is the size and structure of the digital transnational spaces of Romanian speaking migrants based in Berlin. More specifically, we inquire about the number of pages and groups, their categorization based on integration relevance and the topics brought to discussion.

Although research on social media groups has been released, the focus was placed on rather different dimensions of migrants lives and migrant networks, such as emotional, identity-related or political. For displaced people, online spaces are vital in helping produce identities and communities, as they create identities which are more a reflection of their imagined reality than their current life (Witteborn, 2015). Furthermore, Sreenivasan *et al.* (2017, 106) suggest mobile phones allow Sri Lankan refugees to keep an open dialogue and “create a virtual community for the refugees, to some extent replacing the physical community they left behind.” And for the Czech Roma, “the online place becomes a site for collaboration, activism, and ultimately, a place of resistance”, and “spaces for organizing and identity”, in the context of marginalization (Hatef, 2022).

Taking a step aside from forced migration (refugees), we return to the Romanian speaking diaspora which mostly represents work migrants inside the European Union and are endowed with free movement rights and unrestrained access to the labor market. We are focused on finding out how their (digital) transnational social spaces are structured on social media (Facebook), by investigating their groups and which are the topics (content) populating it. At the same time, it is important to outline their significance for the community, state institutions, and the digital platforms.

## Methodology

Starting from the assumption that migrants create transnational social spaces and social media facilitate international migration by sharing of information on the destination country, we strive to find out how this phenomenon is shaped in our case. We consider that Facebook groups are digital transnational social spaces of Romanian speaking migrants living in Berlin and seek to find out how they are structured and which are the topics being discussed.

Having access to statistical data on migration, the number of Facebook users and the type of questions posed by group members, descriptive statistics will be used, while allowing social observations to complete the picture. Descriptive statistics refer to “methods used to obtain, from raw data, information that characterizes or summarizes the whole set of data” (Berger, 2016). The method includes gathering data on the number of Facebook users and their distribution within different groups based on their dimension and relevance in the process of integration (or inclusion). Additionally, data on the type of questions posed within the observed Facebook groups will be included. The standardized list of twelve topics relevant for integration was pre-defined by a collective of social workers with previous experience in social counselling, which was open to additions based on ongoing data gathering.

The data gathering (2020-2021) was possible due to a professional Facebook profile with which I became a member of the analyzed social media groups related to the Romanian speaking migrant groups from Berlin (N: 86). In contrast to Facebook pages or profiles, groups allow members an open or private interaction, the exchange of information based on their own experience, but also give experts within the community the possibility to intervene and combat disinformation.

In addition to data on the groups, the information on their topic of interest was collected using the open-source digital tool Vtiger Community Edition. Asked questions and those answered by social counselors within the project “New in Berlin Plus” financed by the Berlin Senate were introduced into the software allowing detailed analysis on topics of interest within the community. This approach made the inclusion of more general type of questions unmanageable, as their number was high, thus make it impossible to weight integration relevant questions against

general topics of discussion. Nevertheless, details on this have been included in the data analysis section based on the personal observations during data gathering, which brought qualitative contributions to the initial quantitative approach. As a general mention, some of the statistics included in this article were published as part of the yearly reports without the theoretical framework of the present article which places a bigger emphasis on the relation between theory and practice and without the focus being placed exclusively on a single language community.

Considering the sociocultural context of this study, I was aware of my positionality – being both insider and outsider of the analyzed Facebook groups and in time, through reputation building, possibly co-contributing to the increase in discussed topics. Nevertheless, this distortion should only be minimal and not affect the overall results.

### **Data analysis: the structure and content of digital transnational social spaces of Romanian language**

The first dimension of the transnational social space of Romanians from Berlin on social media which presents interest to our study is its size. Because of the growing number of Romanians migrating to Germany and Berlin, the need for communication in the mother tongue increased. Social media offered an interaction space where people of different backgrounds could exchange knowledge on general or specific integration topics (work, language, access to social, educational, and medical services). The table below illustrates the number of Facebook users from this community in relation to the general migrant population and other language communities from the same geographical place, in 2016, 2020 and 2021. Between 2016 and 2020, the language community almost doubled in size and later on experienced a decrease caused by the pandemic.

One aspect of interest is the comparison between the offline transnational social space and its digital version on social media. According to the Federal Statistics Office, 26,330 Romanians were living in Berlin in June 2021, whereas a total of 26,300 Facebook and Instagram users spoke Romanian and were in the capital. The data indicated an almost perfect overlapping of social media users compared to migration statistics. The comparison suggests that the number of social media users could be considered an alternative indicator for immigration. While migration statistics are made public at specific times and require institutional processing, social media reflects the mobility of migrants and their belongingness to multiple socio-cultural spaces. Nevertheless, as social media is changing, with more platforms being used (WhatsApp, TikTok), relying on data provided by one social media platform remains useful, but more is needed on the long term.

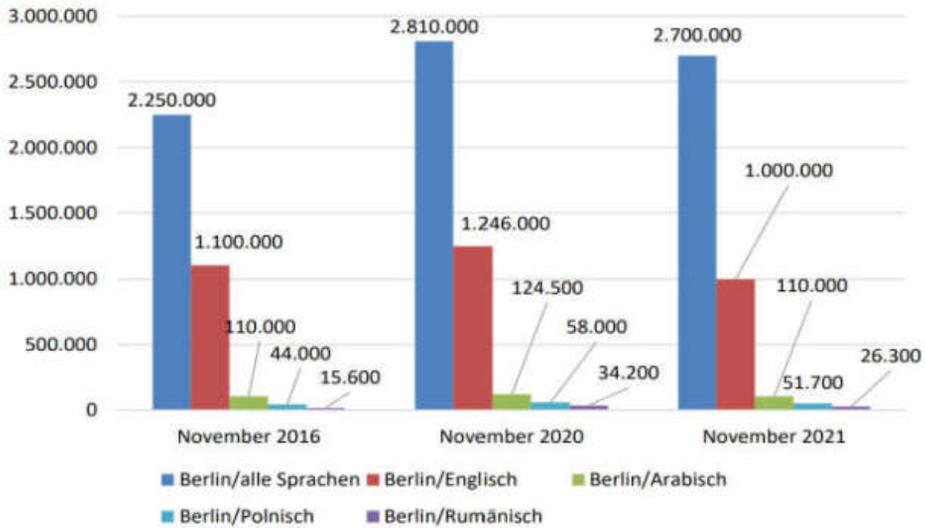


Figure 1. Total number of Facebook and Instagram users located in Berlin based on the used language: English, Arabic, Polish, Romanian. Comparison between November 2016, 2020, and 2021.

Source: Facebook, Minor – project for education and research

On Facebook, the digital transnational social space of Romanians is structured in pages and groups, their total number reaching 199 units. Latent, weak or strong ties can be created within the 86 groups which could be identified based on criteria such as size, type (private, open) and relevance for the process of integration. For example, out of 86 total units, 11 (12.7%) are considered relevant and highly relevant for the integration process with the rest being dedicated to topics such as transportation, beauty services and advertisement for many products. Within the 11 most relevant groups for integration purposes, social ties can develop and the support for mutual help during integration becomes visible. The topic-oriented analysis below will mostly include data from the 10-11 most relevant groups, but not be limited to them.

With the largest group reaching 13,996 and the lowest having only three members between 2020-2021, the average number of members per group (N: 86) is 1,633.6. Given the remarkable differences between extremes, the number should be understood as a referential, in the pursuit of measuring the central tendency (location of the distribution) of the whole set of collected data. This descriptive approach, as opposed to inferential statistics, limits itself at creating a picture about the given information, without any pursuit in generalizing to the whole population they were taken from.

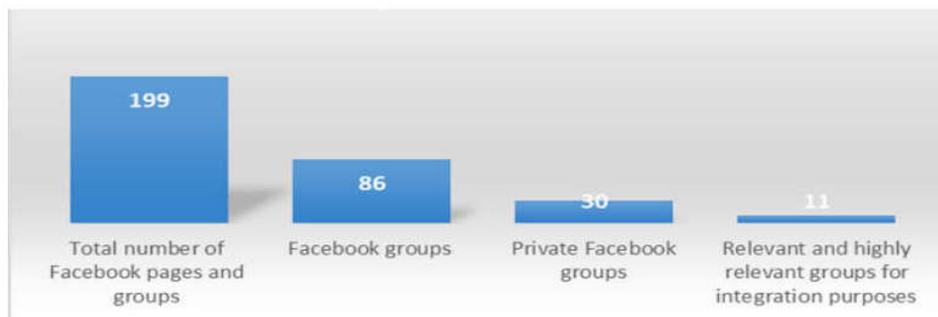


Figure 2. Structure of Facebook groups associated with the Romanian Community in Berlin, 2020-2021.

An interesting aspect remains the difference between the size (based on the average) and relevance for integration purposes of the different groups. The differences include the description (Romanians versus Moldavians) or areas of most acute need of information (work, rent, parenting).

The graphic on the evolution of the top ten most numerous Facebook groups (Figure 3) places ROMANI IN BERLIN, Romanii din BERLIN and Moldovenii In Berlin as the biggest virtual community places of interaction with more than 10,000 members each. A surprising drop in numbers occurred in the summer of 2021, a moment which coincides with the approaching of summer vacation and a lower need for information exchange within the diaspora. Another interesting dimension is linguistics. While there are several groups structured around the identity mark of “Romanian” or “Moldavian”, three out of the ten most relevant groups are social spaces of reference for job search and rental: “locuri de muncă Berlin”, “Chirie în Berlin”, “Locuri de muncă în Berlin” all of them including the clear toponymic reference.

On the other hand, the most relevant groups for migration and integration (Figure 4) are not the biggest in size, but the most active in this area. Only three out of ten accounted for more than 5,000 members, with “Moldoveni in Berlin” proving a constant increase. Although very small in size, the groups “Mamici romance in Berlin” and “Parinti in Berlin” have built solid communities of mothers and parents which ask questions about health, the school system (especially access to kindergarten), offer donations, invite one another to walks in the neighborhood or anonymously ask for advice even in the case of domestic violence. These groups demonstrate the intense communitarian side of social media and its potential to truly bring people together and create networks of support. Furthermore, the contrast between the size of digital transnational spaces and the strength of ties between members can differ – the smaller a group and the more specific it is, the

stronger migrant connectivity becomes. While numerical data does not indicate it, direct sociological observation of the groups suggests this conclusion.

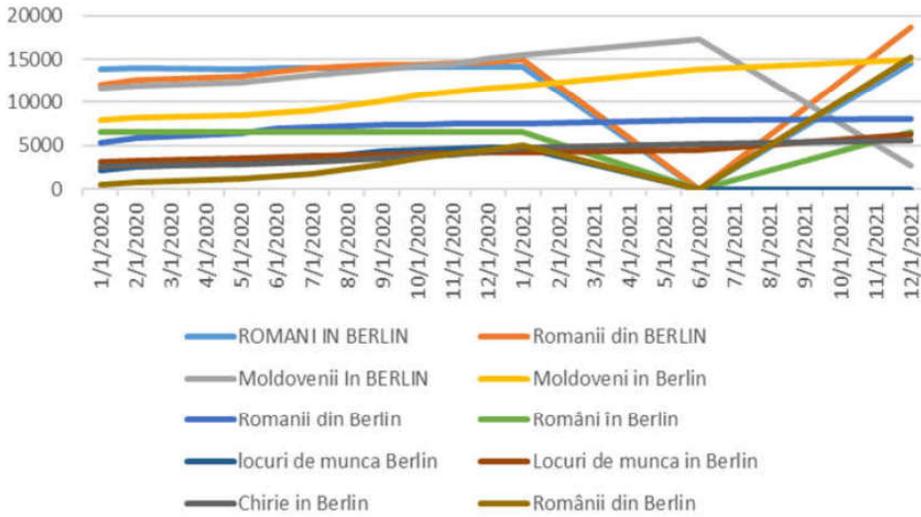


Figure 3. Evolution of the ten most numerous Facebook Groups, 2020-2021

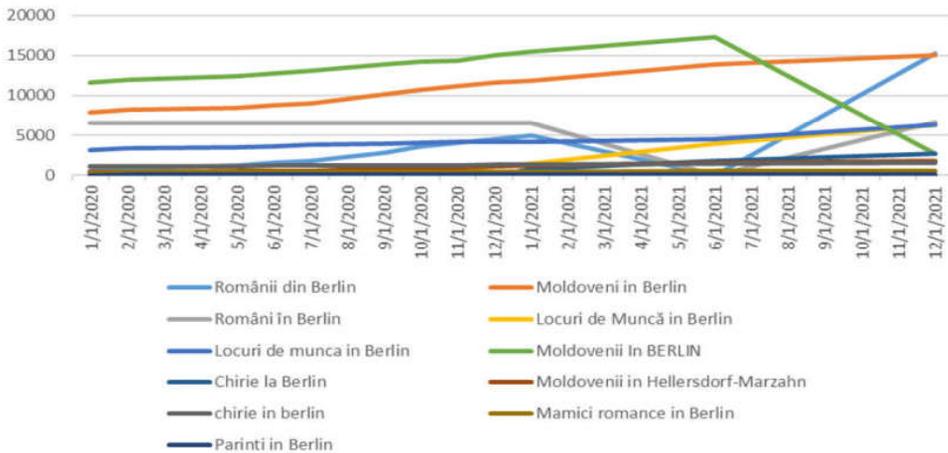


Figure 4. Size evolution of the most relevant Facebook Groups, 2020-2021.

The second level of analysis refers to the most frequently asked questions members pose in social media groups. This area was highly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and its restrictions on travel conditions, as well as the differences between countries with high or low numbers of infections. These questions together with their answers were collected from all groups, due to random sampling, but often were naturally concentrated inside the most relevant groups for integration. Also, questions of high interest were followed by an engaged interaction, creating a small cluster of question-answer interaction.

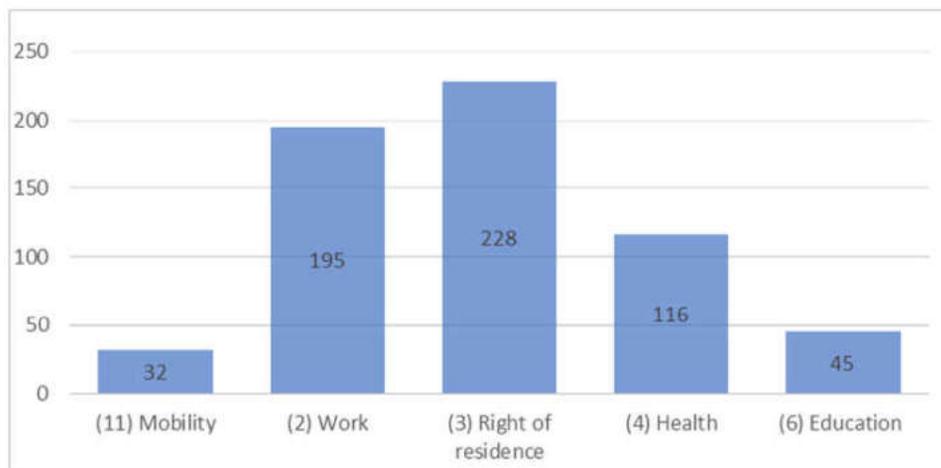


Figure 5. Most frequently asked and answered questions on the Facebook Groups of Romanian language

As follows, the top five topics of interest included: the right of residence (37.2%), work (31.8%), health (18.9%), education (7.3%) and mobility (4.5%), where the total number of answered (not only posed) questions reaches N=612. The number of asked questions within the Facebook groups is much larger, but their number could not be fully processed within the research.

The selection of questions used a standardized list of twelve topics which include: 1) social issues, 2) work, 3) residence regulations, 4) health, 5) accommodation, 6) education, 7) family, 8) consumers' protection, 9) finances, 10) language, 11) mobility and 12) other. As observed, the issue of residence remains relevant despite the EU membership of Romanian citizens because of the much more limited access of Moldavian migrants to the European work market and the travel restrictions during the pandemic. Work-related questions included the search for jobs and workers' rights. In this case, there should be made a clear distinction between highly skilled migrants who very seldomly used Facebook for job search and medium to low skilled Romanian speakers who often asked simple questions and wrote shorter sentences such as "I am searching for a job" or "I am looking

for a job, except cleaning and construction”. This category of migrant workers was focused on earning money by taking jobs which do not require rare skills, nor advanced German. Recommendations would come from peer migrants who were active in the labor market. This visible part of migrant interest sheds light on vulnerable groups which migrate temporarily and primarily for financial reasons.

Other questions referred to health. Here, women frequently acted as caretakers of their families and were in search for doctors who offer medical services in Romanian or asked questions on access to the health insurance. Also, during the pandemic many migrants were searching for answers related to vaccines and access to state institutions or even doctors, which depended on it.

On another level, education included the search for kindergarten or school spots for children, the recognition of study certificates or the search for (additional) training in Germany. The category mobility included questions such as “how and where can I submit my driver’s license for recognition in Berlin?” or “how can I get from place A to place B, if I am new here and need to arrive early in the morning at the airport?”

Furthermore, one of the most important integration aspects remains the possibility to rent a room or apartment. Housing has been a very debated topic in Berlin in the last years with rental prices soaring and gentrification pushing workers towards specific neighborhoods of the capital. The attempt to cap rental prices “Mietendeckel” (implemented between February 2020-April 2021) was declared non-constitutional by the Federal Constitutional Court. Consequently, the problem of finding affordable rent still affects the city population and especially migrants, the hardest.

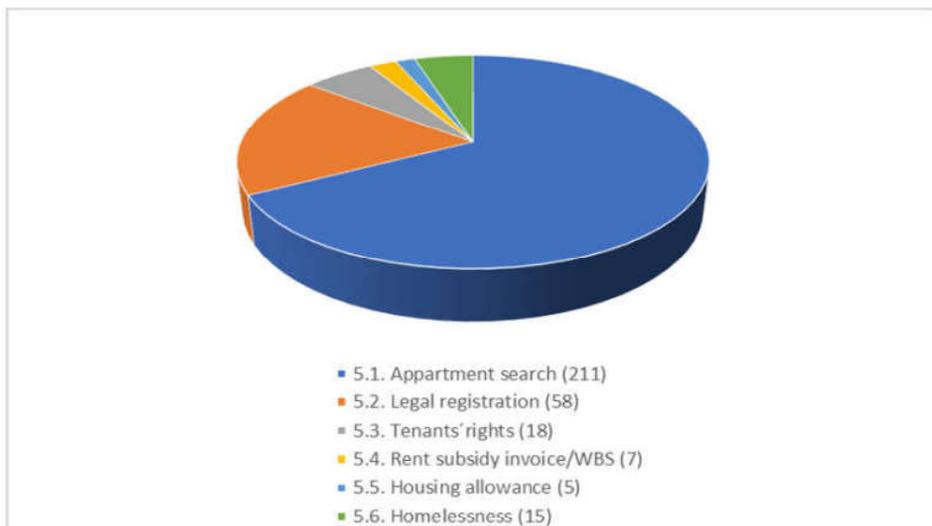


Figure 6. Questions on rent related issues

The graphic above (Figure 6) illustrates the high priority of searching for housing (211 answered questions) in Berlin, followed by the question of legal registration with the local authorities and the rights of tenants. Although information about how and where apartments for rent can be found is available including in the mother tongue, the problem lies within the small number of available apartments, the high number of candidates and the bureaucracy of the application process. The system is strictly structured, which poses high accessibility thresholds for newly relocated migrants and gives them few alternatives: choosing temporary accommodation in the initial phase, accepting low living conditions for an affordable price, moving to specific areas or even relocating back to their home countries because of the impossibility to find suitable and affordable rent. The graphic illustrates all topics of interest related to rental: registration, searching for an apartment for rent, tenant rights, accommodation entitlement certificate, rent subsidy and homelessness.

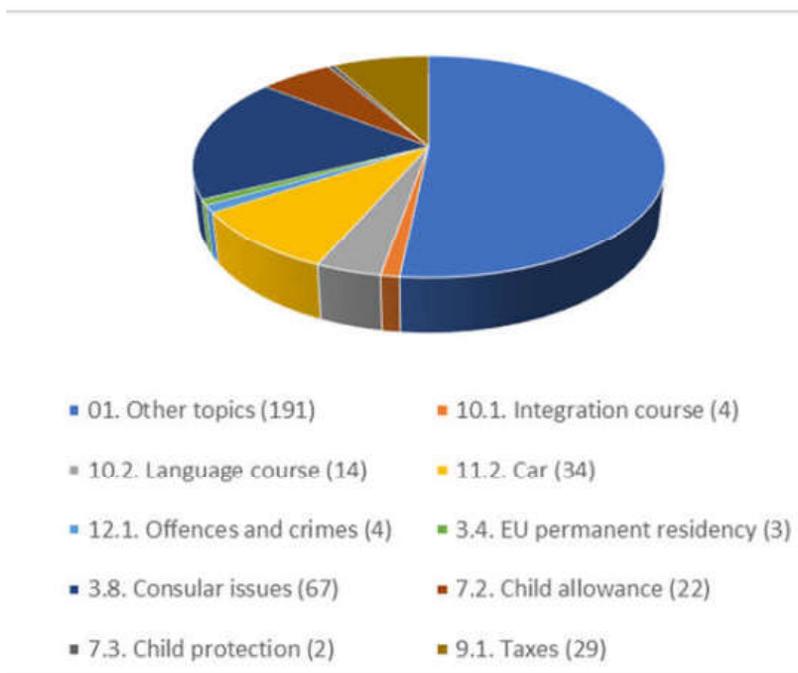


Figure 7. Sub-themes on aspects of migration in the Berliner host-society

Not less interesting and relevant are the subtopics of all twelve themes of integration. Among these, questions related to the consular services of the Romanian embassy in Germany were relevant with 67 answered questions, including issues related to access or requirements. Although not directly part of the integration process (or inclusion) obtaining identity or new travel documents for adults, or their children from the Romanian Consulate is of primary importance. The access

to appointments was a challenge because of the reduced digital skills of users, the limited number of appointments available and the system according to which they are offered on the platform <https://www.econsulat.ro/>, the difference between the users' needs versus the personnel within the consular apparatus available for processing the requests. Thus, the growing diaspora not only requires services of the host-society, but in the case of people who kept their Romanian citizenships, still need a functioning state beyond its borders. This type of issues is specific to countries with a considerable and growing migrant community in Germany such as Bulgaria or Poland. The digitalization of consular services covered parts of migrants' needs, but without proportional and adequately trained human resources, it risks leaving many needs unmet or out of their reach. Social workers in Berlin are thus forced to offer services not only in relation to the German, but also with the Romanian state. Inter-institutional dialogue offers the tools for communicating the problems faced by the community and searching together for common solutions (voluntary support, empowering users and teaching them basic digital skills). In the case of the Romanian embassy and consulate, the openness towards dialogue and the will to find innovative, if not structural solutions, are present.

In the case of consular related questions, the number does not reflect the (temporary acute) emergency of people's questions and their implications for all aspects of life. Our IDs or passports are gates towards travel, accessing social services or cultural rituals (travelling for a wedding or baptism).

## Conclusion and discussion

In line with theories of migration which propose the existence of transnational social spaces (Faist, 2000, 2006, 2017) and digital transnational social spaces (Christiansen, 2017) which evolve on social media, the article explored the size and content of the Romanian speaking Facebook groups, concluding that the number of users is comparable with migration statistics and the questions posed in those groups activate latent ties to facilitate integration and international migration.

The findings not only come as a confirmation of existing literature, but contribute to its particularities. In this case, the digital transnational space is fragmented into 86 different groups which vary in size. The findings on the number of Romanian speaking users from Berlin echoes the results of similar research which came to the conclusion that "the number of newly arrived migrants to Berlin who used Facebook sank, while the pandemic slowed down in 2021" (Stapf *et al.*, 2021). At the same time, the size of the observed Facebook groups expanded, pointing out the "increasing connectivity and need of information among users" echoing the observations of Şanlıer Yüksel (2022, 1838), who argues that "the digital space of flows accommodates affordances to overcome information precarity, [...] a condition of information instability and insecurity". In times of insecurity, mobility migrants turned to each other, in a natural attempt to collectively cope with a crisis.

Echoing previous findings (Dekker, & Engbersen, 2014), the present findings about the discussed topics on social media groups support the idea that migrant networks act as facilitators of international migration. Through reaching out to members of the same community, migrants acquire information on how to better navigate the challenges of host society. Sharing unofficial information nevertheless includes the risk of disinformation, as a dimension which was augmented during the time frame. Still, it is a proof that accessing the work market, housing, health services or education eases the process of integration/inclusion and thus acts as an encouragement for future migrants.

The findings have a multifold significance for the community, state institutions, and digital platforms. Firstly, the awareness on the existence of a support network alleviates social pressure and migratory stress for the members of social media groups. By reaching out to their fellow migrants, group members activate latent ties or make weak ones stronger while interacting on the platform. Persons who were part of the same digital community interact with each other at first and those who barely knew each other communicate more often. Secondly, for state institutions the presence and activity of migrants on social media is an indicator of the information behavior developed by the target group. For those institutional actors directly involved in the integration infrastructure, reflections on it could trigger a rethinking of their communication strategies. For instance, they could communicate closely with the groups' administrators who also play the role of gatekeepers and control the information posted on the groups. At the same time, they could identify key persons such as active community members and suggest collaborations on awareness or information campaigns. If implemented in a coordinated way, social workers who practice digital street work might as well become bridges between migrants and state institutions.

Thirdly, for social media platforms, users are the ones supporting their existence and groups offer an ideal context of data gathering or targeted advertising, offering the possibility of increased monetization. Still this viewpoint should be critically assessed, since it increases the already massive power of social media. Users are co-creators of the content and deliver valuable information to the media giants - this fact requires sustained debates in society on how to regulate their activity.

Finally, this article enriches the state of research by adding more insight into how digital transnational social spaces contribute to international migration. While previous studies supported the important role social media has for migratory movement, only some studies managed to deliver refined data on a specific language community located in one of the biggest European capitals.

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The author has a complex experience in voluntary and forced migration. Within the last eight years she has worked with refugees from all over the world as a social worker, volunteer coordinator and translator. She subsequently offered digital counselling and did research on the Romanian speaking community from Berlin, as part of the project “Neu in Berlin Plus” and “Neu in Berlin Live” financed by the Berlin Senate and developed by Minor – Projektkontor für Bildung und Forschung gemeinnützige GmbH.

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