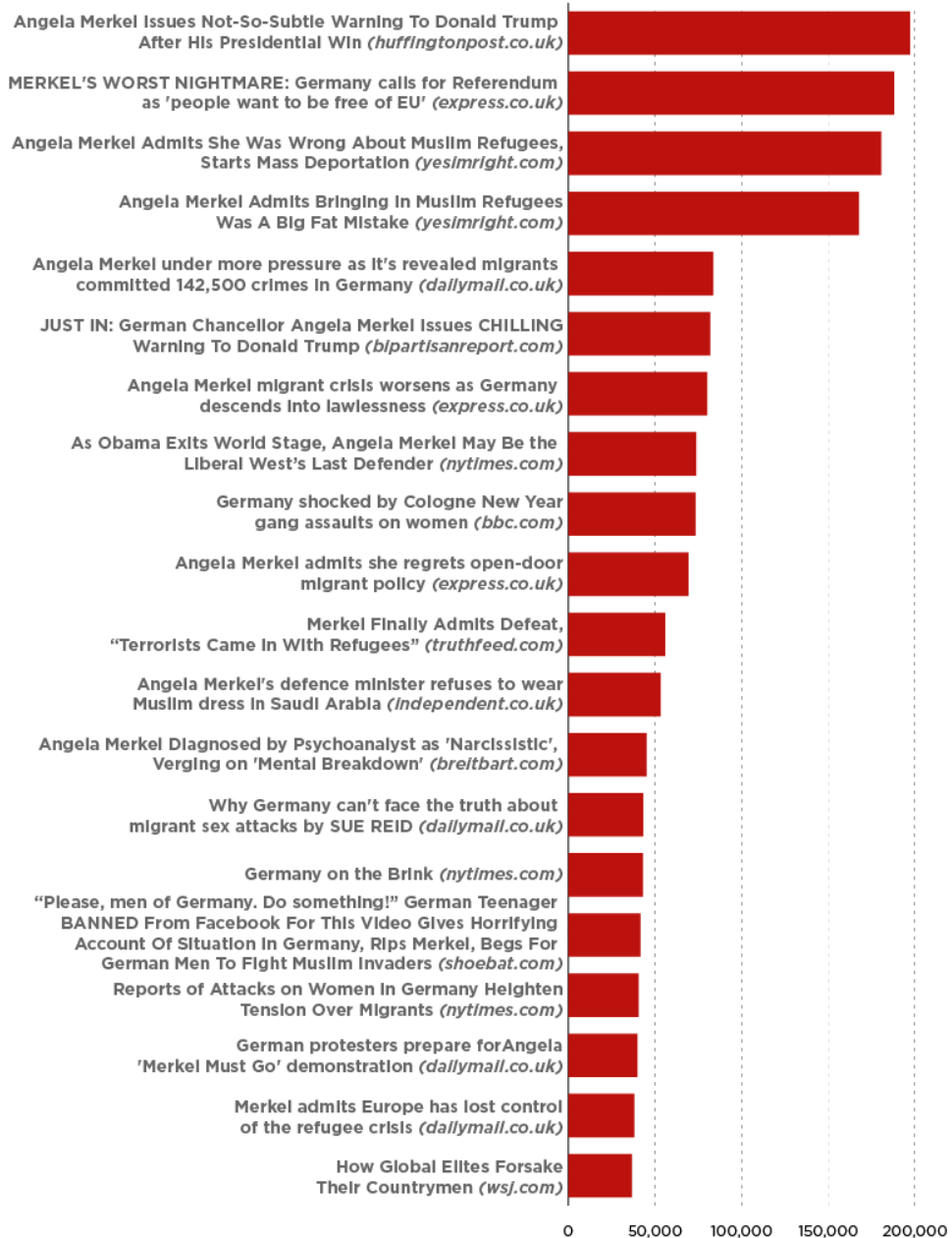


## Beacon Project >versus< Insights:

### Coverage of Angela Merkel in Some CEE Media

As part of the development of the Beacon Project’s >versus< ICT data collection tool, IRI conducted its first case study on the way Angela Merkel is portrayed in some of the most popular articles and social media in Central and Eastern Europe (specifically Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Hungary). The study was conducted with the Beacon Project’s core partners in the respective countries [Globsec Policy Institute](#) (Slovakia), [European Values Think Tank](#) (Czech Republic), and [Political Capital Institute](#) (Hungary).

Given the recent controversies surrounding ‘disinformation’ in the American presidential elections, there is a lot of media attention being paid to the upcoming parliamentary elections in Germany. An analysis carried out by BuzzFeed’s Alberto Nardelli and Craig Silverman and published under the title [Hyperpartisan Sites And Facebook Pages Are Publishing False Stories And Conspiracy Theories About Angela Merkel](#)<sup>1</sup>, highlights the issue of how various media outlets cover Angela Merkel. What they found was that the anti-Merkel media was “echoing what was seen during the US election, many of these sites mix legitimate partisan political content with false and conspiratorial information, especially about refugees and Islam, in order to inspire passion and increase social engagement.”



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.buzzfeed.com/albertonardelli/hyperpartisan-sites-and-facebook-pages-are-publishing-false>

To complement the BuzzFeed article, the Beacon Project and its partners carried out a similar review of Merkel's coverage in some of the Slovak, Czech, and Hungarian media. While we are still fine tuning our data tool and establishing the corresponding methodological framework<sup>2</sup>, we found that our results largely reflect those that were seen in the German online media space by BuzzFeed. Over all the most shared articles are hyperbolic, disingenuous, or disinformative and seemingly designed to stoke fear.

The first analysis we did was to take a look at the top 50 most *shared* headlines on Facebook relating to Angela Merkel. After translating the headlines in to English and removing common English *stopwords* we created a basic histogram to reflect some of the most common words across the combined corpus of headlines from all three countries. Despite the relatively small sample size, we can see a few key words reflected in the histogram. While Merkel and Germany are obvious keywords, the rest reflect some of the divergent messages we saw as we investigated each of the countries individually. In particular, references to migrants, attack, election, and media reflect what the people in the three countries were the most interested in.

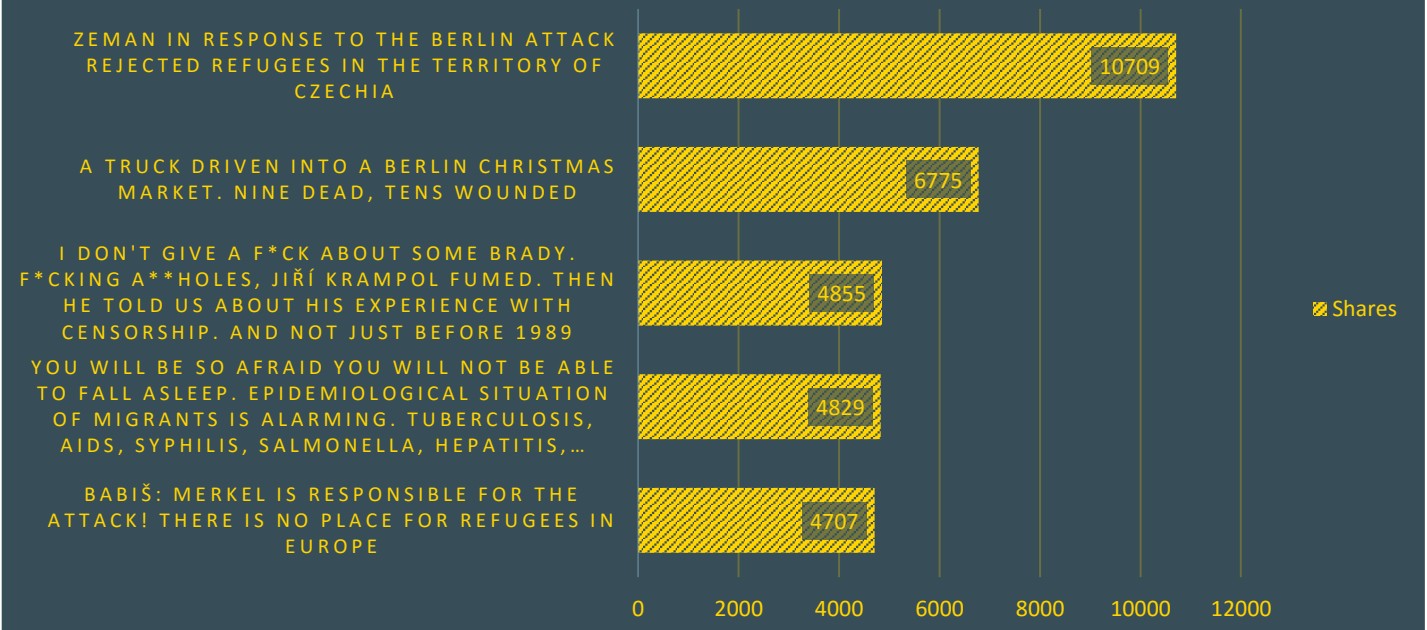


<sup>2</sup> The findings in this sample are still part of a testing process and while they do show some useful insights they are not meant to be taken as rigorous scientific based research. It is one of the goals of the Beacon Project to continue to refine the data collection process and methodology to ensure that the research outputs are not only interesting and insightful, but also robust and fair.



While the histogram provides an overview of common words found in the top 50 most shared headlines of all three countries we can get a bit more of a nuanced look when we focus the view to one specific country and expand the examined text to include the headlines and body of the text. The above *wordcloud* begins to show us more about what the Czech media space in general is concerned with when they speak about Angela Merkel. Overall the wordcloud highlights that while the Berlin attack was a much written about topic other key themes were Europe, the German election. These, however, were not necessarily the topics that received the most attention by readers. In order to explore which topics received the most reach we looked more closely at the specific headlines that received the most shares on Facebook.

**TOP 5 SHARED "MERKEL" HEADLINES (FACEBOOK, CZ)  
OCTOBER 2016 - JANUARY 2017**



The above example of translated headlines from the Czech Republic, shows the main themes being spread are those focusing on the migration/refugee crisis. While the topic is certainly of great concern to many across Europe, by looking at the headlines it is quite easy to see how some of the news worthy topics are exploited for specific agendas. Another sample article from the Czech Republic shows how some of the sources will use other methods to frame largely fact-based text to fit a specific narrative.

The below shows two articles which are largely factual, but framed much differently. In fact, in this example, the article posted on *Parlamentni Listy* actually references the article published on *Týden*. The main difference between the two is quite clear, the one on the right has a much more unflattering picture of Merkel and accompanies a headline that is much sharper and critical in tone. While some portions of the text are the same as in the referenced article the author has also rearranged the order of the paragraph topics to put the seemingly critical remarks of Merkel at the top to add emphasis and suggest that it was the main message of her statements.

## TÝDEN.cz

HLAVNÍ STRANA | DOMÁČÍ ▾ | ZAHRANIČÍ | SPORT ▾ | BYZNYS | ZDRAVÍ | KULTURA | LIDÉ | MÉDIA

EVROPA | RUSKO A OKOLÍ | AMERIKA | ASIE A OCEÁNIE | AFRIKA | ZPRÁVY Z ABSURDISTÁNU |

[Hlavní strana](#) > [Zahraničí](#) > [Evropa](#)

Kancelérka

### Merkelová se navezla i do Zemana. Evropa podle ní nefunguje



09.01.2017 22:26

**Title: Merkel picked on Zeman as well. According to her, Europe does not work**

PARLAMENTNÍ LISTY.cz

ParlamentniListy.cz | Politici, instituce a obce

CVVM, MÉDEA RESEARCH, PHOENIX RESEARCH, PPM FACTU

Úvod | Zprávy | Aréna | Politika ▾ | Kraje ▾ | Profily ▾ | Zahraničí | Galerie

ParlamentniListy.cz » Aréna » Monitor » Merkelová opět nadávala Zemanovi

Jan Mádř (člen strany) má dnes narozeniny. Gratulujeme!

### Merkelová opět nadávala Zemanovi

10. 1. 2017 7:01

Prezidenta Miloše Zemana nepřímo kritizovala německá kancléřka Angela Merkelová. V projevu na zasedání zaměstnanců státní správy v Kolině nad Rýnem uvedla, že politici, kteří zcela odmítají přijímání uprchlíků, nepomáhají fungování Evropy. Informoval o tom server Týden.cz.

Tweet | +1 | 4 | Like | Share | 3.2K people like this. Be the first of your friends.



Foto: Archiv vydavatele Vaše věc

**Title: Merkel scolded Zeman again**



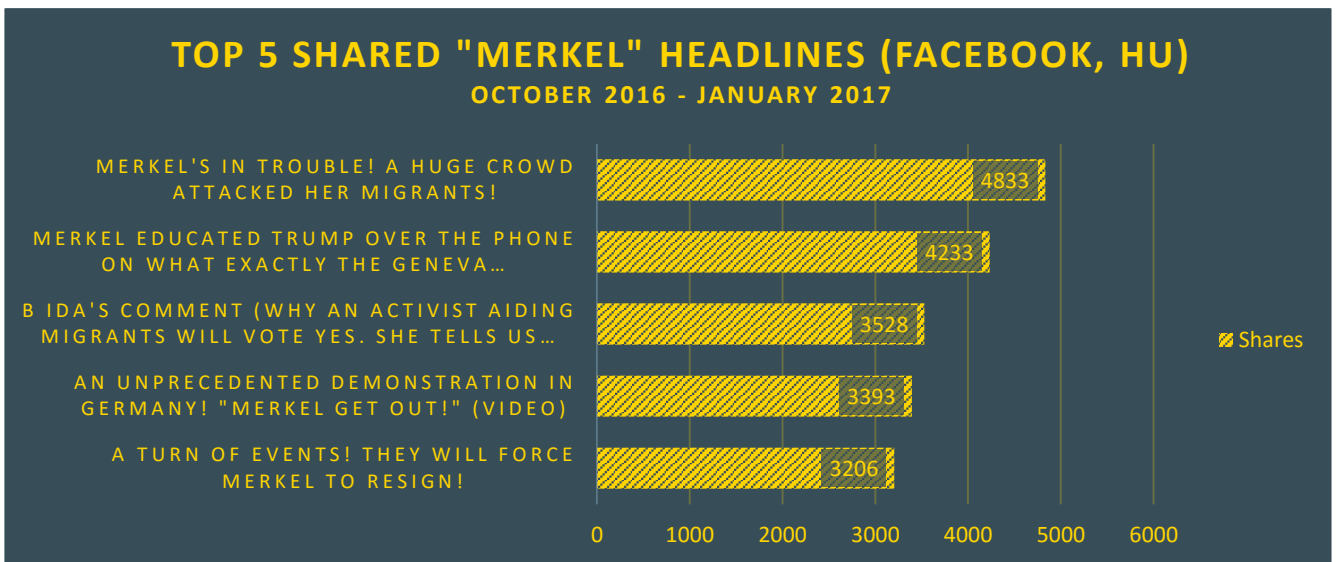




While the wordcloud highlights that the Hungarian media was also largely discussing the refugee(s) crisis the word association table shows that overall the media tended to focus on Merkel's leadership and the negative impact it might have on her re-election campaign.

The below graph shows that three of the top five shared articles in the country focused on how Merkel has lost her credibility and should resign. While other articles highlighted the far right *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). This is obviously an important matter as Germany will go to the polls this autumn to decide who should lead the country.

Top 10 words associated with 'Merkel' in HU media sample	
Associated Words	Correlation
soon	0.53
lose	0.48
difficult	0.47
German	0.46
Islamization	0.46
leave	0.45
indicated	0.43
process	0.43
AfD	0.41
allies	0.41



Furthermore, while the use of cross-posting stories was shown to happen in both our Czech and Slovak samples, it appears to be a much more prevalent tactic in Hungary. Of the top **twenty** most shared articles about Angela Merkel, **eight** were cross posted with the exact same titles. This included the most shared story *Merkel is in Trouble! Huge Masses have Attacked her Migrants!* which appeared on *legfrissebb.info* (4833 shares) as well as being cross-posted word-for-word on *maivalosag.com* (896 shares) at the same time. This resulted in a total number of shares of 5729 shares for a story of only 78 words which was about an uncorroborated fight between German nationals and *asylum seekers* and was accompanied by a picture of a neo-Nazi next to an image of Merkel.



**Bajban van Merkel! Hatalmas tömeg támadt a migránsaira!**  
© 2016-10-02 | newscast team | 0 Comments