

# Critical Junctures of Ethnic Media in Austria

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## Abstract

In light of globalization, migration, and the imperative to safeguard human rights, the examination of ethnic media has become a pertinent and noteworthy area of research within the realm of media studies. Nevertheless, the historical exploration of ethnic media in Austria remains insufficient. Thus, the objective of this research paper is to identify the key critical junctures that have exerted a substantial impact on the evolution and course of ethnic media in Austria. By employing the theory concerning changes in Austrian history at the national level, this research aims to unveil the pivotal moments experienced by Austrian ethnic media in the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

Keywords: *ethnic media, critical junctures, Austria*

Ethnic media refers to news outlets that cater to specific ethnic or cultural communities serving as a vital source of information and connection for immigrant and minority communities, providing a platform for cultural expression and community engagement. The term “minority media” is an often used to alternative and appropriate name since the group of people for whom these information sites are established belong to the minority among the general population. However, the term is limiting, because not all minorities are ethnic, and some social groups are referred to as “minorities”. Ethnic media are information outlets created for, and often by, immigrants, ethnic and linguistic minority groups, and indigenous communities, delivering news from their either or both their home country and the country of relocation, typically in the language of the ethnic minority group or bilingually. Over the years, ethnic media has undergone several critical junctures that have transformed its role in society. This research paper aims to identify critical junctures and their impact on ethnic media, commencing from the conclusion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the early 19th century and concluding with the digital transformation of the 21st century. Throughout this period, ethnic media in Austria were established and began their developmental trajectory. The research suggests that the development of ethnic media in Austria has been occurring gradually; however, certain historical situations reinforced or, indeed slowed down the process. Ethnic media have never been as widely disseminated as mainstream media due to their restricted audience. However, they still require research attention: Austria, being ethnically and culturally diverse, necessitates the study of media from various communities. An essential feature of a democratic society is the provision of access to information and the capacity of all citizens to participate in the political process. Ethnic media plays a crucial role in enabling this opportunity by acting as a bridge between minority communities and the broader society, disseminating news and information that is important to their needs and interests. In this manner, the apprehensions and challenges of ethnic minorities are recognized and tackled by policymakers.

It also can function as a corrective tool to consequences of mainstream media disinformation or information paucity if such circumstances are applicable. It is crucial for enhancing general understanding and preserving cultural heritage, fostering community engagement, and exploring other social implications. Five critical junctures significantly influenced the development of the Austrian ethnic media landscape were defined: the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the national-socialist regime, migration from Southern and Eastern Europe, EU membership, and the Digital Transformation.

## Literature Review

The book titled *Österreichische Mediengeschichte. Band 2: Von Massenmedien zu sozialen Medien (1918 bis heute)* (Austrian Media History. Volume 2: From Mass Media to Social Media (1918 to the Present) (Karmasin & Oggolder, 2019) offers a comprehensive account of the historical evolution of the Austrian media system, from 1918 to the contemporary era. This book serves as a valuable resource in comprehending the interconnectedness of political, economic, and ideological occurrences commencing from the inception of the First Republic. It enables a nuanced examination of media developments, which is also helpful in understanding Austrian ethnic media within this broader historical context. Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes (2011) suggest ethnic minority media has undergone three distinct eras. The first was the gifting era, connected to decolonisation and modernisation, which involved managing minority language resources to achieve presence and visibility within the nation-state media system. The second was the service era, which established a shift from the provision of media space to a service for minority language consumers, with media serving as a means of developing the ethnic minority community and making it fit for the pluralistic society. The third was the performance era, which resulted in a less top-down and more bottom-up and fragmented media landscape and covering transnational channels of communication

(Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2011). Recent studies have noted that public funding for ethnic media should not be framed as aid but as a social, cultural, and economic investment (Zabaleta & Xamardo, 2022). Despite facing economic, structural, and competitiveness challenges, minority language media production has the potential to be a strong player within their minority community, as observed in research that focuses on active community management and involvement (Zabaleta et al., 2014). Ethnic media can aid in the integration of minorities if they are composed correctly, with geo-ethnic stories being particularly important. However, research conducted by Lin and Song (2006) shows that these stories are not as widely disseminated as news from the homeland in minority media. This was discovered through an analysis of ethnic media in Los Angeles using the communication infrastructure theory, which emphasises the importance of local media and communication in providing vital information resources that help individuals achieve their goals. Ethnic media allows community actors to obtain and disseminate information, develop a sense of belonging, and participate in problem-solving activities (Lin & Song, 2006). This tendency to emphasise news from the homeland may not just be the case in Los Angeles but also in other parts of the world, where it may hinder integration and even separate migrants from society. The theory of communication infrastructure, which incorporates a multi-level storytelling system, has been utilised to demonstrate that a well-integrated communication infrastructure within ethnic enclaves can enhance residents' health outcomes by facilitating the dissemination of information and promoting participation in health-related activities. So long as the system includes community-based organisations, local ethnic media, and resident networks. This finding underscores the importance of effective communication strategies in promoting health equity within diverse ethnic communities (Lim et. al., 2022).

Mediascapes have been transnationalized, creating special cultural spaces (Geissler & Pöttker, 2009). Ethnic media, which are connected to cultural identity and influence the process of people's integration, do not promote separation, nor is this the intention of ethnic journalists. While mainstream media provide information on current affairs, ethnic media provide orientation in everyday life, a bond between the homeland and current state, the preservation of ethnic traditions, and fostering a family's sense of togetherness (Albizu, 2007; Fleras, 2009). Ethnic online communities meet the same needs as ethnic television, radio, or print media, but they seem to do so with a bigger impact. The internet is a medium for those seeking attachment to their cultural homeland to strengthen their cultural identity. It allows users to find members of their own ethnic background and culture and to gather information and knowledge about where they come from, thereby enhancing their cultural identity (Arnold & Schneider, 2007). Empirical studies by Yin (2013) and Ponzanesi (2020) indicate that cyberspace does not dissolve location-related identity but reinforces it (Yin, 2013; Ponzanesi, 2020). Considering

that newcomers often constitute a younger generation, which is more prone to both online communication and consumption of information, the results of previous studies become even more apparent. Often, people with a migrant background use social media to establish an interest group, which implies less expense than creating a full-fledged media outlet (Asimovic et al., 2021).

La Ferle and Lee (2005) suggest that ethnic rather than mainstream media may be the most effective way to reach and persuade minority audiences, which is why media planners should be more familiar with cultural values and lifestyles of ethnic minorities in order build trust and present understandable information. Based on social comparison theory, media use offers information salient to race and ethnicity that individuals may incorporate into their self-concept (La Ferle & Lee, 2005). Ethnic media likely have positive effects on ethnic minorities by enhancing their ethnic pride and ethnic performance whereas reliance on mainstream media to learn about one's ethnic group can lead to decreased self-esteem. It is possible that ethnic media exposure might alleviate the negative effects of mainstream media stereotypes for ethnic minorities. It was suggested for future research to use experimental methods to explore the possibility that ethnic media exposure can serve as a method for internalised prejudice reduction among ethnic minorities and as a way to increase group vitality in the context of democratic multicultural societies. It is nevertheless salient to create and support alternative spaces where ethnic communities can create, consume, and share ethnic media. These alternative media spaces can help improve group vitality, boost collective ethnic pride (Brantner & Herczeg, 2013), and raise willingness to engage in ethnic performance for minority groups (Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). Eventually, having strong diasporic communities is crucial to ensuring that ethnic minorities become active and engaged citizens in a multicultural, transnational, and a global media context (Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). While minority media can mobilise and provide support for the ethnic community, they are indicators of larger social change, and can revise the media landscape and create new organisational structures. People are susceptible to ethnic media connections to elaborate and understand more what makes them Turkish-Austrian, for example, and not just Austrian, to discuss cultural and social values, but to also find mechanisms to fit in and to co-exist with others who have a different ethnic origin. Minority media contribute to larger social processes as well, such as the contemplation of what it means to be a citizen of a state. They are also involved in policy negotiations concerning minority groups. The phenomena of ethnic media enterprises that may transmit across national borders (e.g., Jafri's *TV Asia*, *TV Globo*) connecting diasporas and their countries of origins, creating ethnic transnational media, and the emergence of many ethnically targeted satellite television channels around the world force governments to consider the implications of ethnic media for society as a whole (Ramasubramanian et al., 2017).

Language is inevitably connected to identity and is a symbol of identification. For example, in the Austrian region Carinthia – which is notable for the presence of a significant Slovenian minority – the role of the Slovenian language is symbolic, and this symbol is as powerful as a hymn or flag. Since the language acts like a symbol, the nexus between media and language is obvious: the presence of a particular language in the media indicates its value and prestige. There is also an opinion that language is not essential to building a feeling of belonging to a particular country as was indicated by an analysis of Austrian political and media discourses. However, in semi-official and private social circles, the German language was called as one of the most salient parts of the Austrian identity that distinguishes Austrians from migrants. Sometimes, the existence of an imbalanced linguistic double identification can be seen as a burden, but considering minority language as private, familial or weekend identity assists in escaping these burdens (Busch, 1999). Busch defines three dimensions of minority language rights in the context of differences: a) to expose them and to be accepted; b) to have equal rights despite them; and c) the necessity of social interaction across them (Busch, 1999).

Purkarthofer (2005) endeavoured to delineate the factors contributing to the establishment of ethnic media within the Austrian context. Institutional factors stand out as particularly influential, wherein minorities lacking official minority status are unable to access relevant government support. Additionally, the status of a language plays a pivotal role; languages utilized in churches, schools, or public settings are endowed with functions vital for their sustenance and media coverage. The utilization of Slovenian as a religious language by the Hermagoras group a century ago, coupled with the state's obligation (as stipulated in Article 7 of the State Treaty) to ensure media coverage, has facilitated media provision due to increased resources, both financial and personnel-based. Autochthonous minorities in Austria benefit significantly from institutional factors, particularly languages like Slovenian, Burgenland-Croatian, and Hungarian, which are used in specific educational settings. The burgeoning significance of bilingual education in Carinthia augurs well for language use and, consequently, media diversity. In the realm of audiovisual media, the commitment of public broadcasting is crucial, as legal obligations ensure, at the very least, minimal coverage. Theoretically, despite institutional factors being equally applicable to all autochthonous minorities according to State Treaty provisions, they alone do not singularly determine media coverage, as there are other influential factors, such as media-inherent ones. These factors are intrinsically tied to the nature of the medium, particularly the distinctions between print and audiovisual media. For instance, appropriate broadcast times are critical for audiovisual media's effectiveness; broadcasting minority programs during less favourable hours can impede access and weaken justification based on viewership numbers. Similarly, print media, like newspapers and

book publications, face distribution challenges, affecting accessibility and reach. Other factors encompass demographic and psychological facets, encompassing aspects like the size of the ethnic group and the perceived value or prestige of a language. These factors significantly impact the media landscape by influencing the potential audience and the reception of particular languages. For example, cohesive settlement areas often facilitate media initiatives, while the perceived value of a language, intertwined with the ethnic group's prestige, can positively or negatively shape the media landscape. Negative associations with certain languages can detrimentally affect their presence in media outlets (Purkarthofer, 2005, p. 58-59).

## Ethnic Media and Democracy

The concept of strategic essentialism coined in the 1980s by Spivak (Ritzer & Ryan, 2010, p. 193) is a path that has been and continues to be explored as a minority strategy for influencing mainstream society. Strategic essentialism in this sense entails that members of groups, while being highly differentiated internally, may engage in an essentializing and to some extent a standardizing of their public image, thus advancing their group identity in a simplified, collectivized way to achieve certain objectives (Eide, 2016, p. 76). The concern is that by taking this approach, they might inadvertently support those whose essentialist views are stronger than their own, such as researchers, editors, politicians, or influential figures. Conversely, as public awareness of the associated risks and strategies grows, it may help to reduce these risks and enhance the overall outcomes. The problem occurs when the practice of strategic essentialism is not the result of a deliberate choice and an assessment of a delicate balance, but rather is partly the result of media conventionalism that requires people and groups to essentialize themselves in order to highlight issues that have nothing to do with their daily ontology of being either or both the majority and a minority within (Eide, 2016, p. 76). The issue arises when strategic essentialism is not a conscious decision based on careful consideration, but instead is partly driven by media norms that compel individuals and groups to oversimplify their identities to bring attention to matters unrelated to their everyday experience as part of the majority or as a minority. In general, strategic essentialism means that there is a tactic where minority groups, despite their internal diversity, adopt a more simplified identity to advance their collective interests in society. However, there is a danger that by simplifying their identity, these groups might reinforce stereotypes or play into the hands of more powerful forces who might use this essentialized identity to their own advantage. Strategic essentialism can contribute to polarization by emphasizing differences between groups rather than commonalities.

Lin and Song (2006) argue ethnic media often prioritize news from the homeland over local geo-ethnic stories.

This can limit their effectiveness in promoting integration and local civic engagement and can also create echo chambers where individuals are exposed primarily to information that reinforces their own perspectives. When communities become isolated in such echo chambers, they may become more polarized. Asimovic et al. (2021) show that in areas with limited ethnic diversity, deactivation of social media might limit exposure to diverse viewpoints, which is useful for democratic engagement. It suggests that offline interactions play an important role in shaping attitudes, potentially leading to increased polarization when social media is removed. In contexts where people have limited opportunities for positive intergroup contact, offline environments can become more insular and less inclusive. This can contribute to deepening ethnic divides, making it harder to foster democratic values such as mutual respect and understanding.

Trust in media is shaped by the belief that non-institutional forms of communication are less influenced by power and more capable of providing information that mainstream media are thought to either conceal or ignore. Diminished trust in traditional media and expert knowledge has paved the way for alternative source of information (Morozov, 2017); and ethnic media can also fall into this category, given that many such outlets are relatively insular and do not consistently adhere to professional standards, often operating as hobbies.

## Methodology

The research aims to employ the theory of critical junctures on changes in Austrian history at the national level. It analyses the history of ethnic media in Austria in the 20th century and in the beginning of 21st century aiming to highlight the pivoting points in the formation of ethnic media in Austria. The development of ethnic media usually depends on government policies and changes in media regulations including not only synoptic, but also incremental changes. Being a significant part of the media democracy concept in being an alternative to mainstream media, ethnic media in Austria have been formed by historical critical junctures in the state provoking changes in the Austrian media system. Junctures are “critical” because they place institutional arrangements on paths or trajectories, which are then very difficult to alter (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). In institutional analysis, critical junctures are characterized by a situation in which the structural (economic, cultural, ideological, organizational) influences on political action are significantly relaxed for a short period, with two main consequences: the range of plausible choices open to political actors expands substantially, and the consequences of their decisions for the outcome of interest are potentially much more significant. Contingency is paramount (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007) and legacy is enduring (Collier & Munck, 2017). Researchers do not simply identify the critical juncture but instead deepen the investigation

of the historical material to identify the key decisions (and the key events influencing those decisions) steering the system in one or another direction, favoring one institutional equilibrium over others that could have been selected (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). Critical juncture can be not only synoptic, but also incremental (Donnelly & Hogan, 2012). Two steps that precede the critical juncture are: (i) the antecedent conditions, which encompass the economic, social, political features that provoked the critical juncture; (ii) the cleavage or shock. Critical juncture is routinely seen as growing out of a fundamental societal or political cleavage. The theory of critical junctures consists of three elements: economic crisis, ideational transformation, and the nature of the policy change (Donnelly & Hogan, 2012), which means the happening can be a critical juncture, when all three elements alter.

The review of the history of media in Austria (Karmasin & Oggolder, 2019) demonstrates that historical events, policy shifts, and social movements have significantly influenced the media landscape, including ethnic media. These changes can be regarded as critical junctures, as they encompass economic, ideological, and political transformations, and exhibit both incremental and synoptic characteristics. The authors assess how these shifts impacted Austrian media during each period, marking times of profound change that reshaped society and influenced the development, suppression, or transformation of media. The dissolution of Austro-Hungary led to the formation of new states and the emergence of ethnic media reflecting these new realities and that period saw the founding of several newspapers aimed at ethnic groups. The period of National Socialism involved the rise of extreme nationalism, militarization, and the consolidation of power under a totalitarian regime, particularly in Germany. Non-nationalist and ethnic media were often shut down or heavily censored, as the regime sought to control the narrative and suppress dissenting voices. Post-war economic growth and liberalization led to significant migration from Eastern and Southern Europe, which brought diverse ethnic groups into new environments. This migration created favorable conditions for the development of ethnic media, catering to the needs of immigrant communities and helping them maintain cultural ties. Austria's accession to the EU introduced new economic opportunities, regulatory changes, and a broader acceptance of diversity. The development of digital technology revolutionized media by making information more accessible and transforming how media content is produced and consumed. Digital platforms enabled ethnic media to migrate online, expanding their reach but also challenging traditional print media formats.

## Early 20th century: the End of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

The end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 and the establishment of the First Austrian Republic is a synoptic

change with a collateral economic crisis, ideational and policy amends that led to the closure of some old and emergence of new ethnic media outlets primarily by immigrant communities from Eastern Europe. The two peace treaties resulting from the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 caused a major redrawing of the map of Europe: the independent status of newly emerged nation-states on the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, with their own media systems. The Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye divided the Austrian part of the Dual Monarchy between the interwar Austrian state, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Treaty of Trianon divided the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy between the interwar Hungarian state, Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Austria and the Free State of Fiume (today Rijeka), which emerged in 1921, operated under the auspices of the League of Nations and was annexed to Italy in 1924 (Venken, 2020). Furthermore, following the dissolution of the monarchy, numerous magazines in the national languages of the former multi-ethnic state largely disappeared. After 1918, only one foreign-language magazine title could be found, “*Hvezda ceskoslovenskych pani a divok*” (“The Star”, 1927–1941, Prague & Vienna), in contrast to several magazines aimed at German-speaking minorities and groups in the former crown lands (Krainer, 2019). Despite the lack of information about ethnic media during this time, the development of some newspapers is known. For example, the newspaper “*Nase Novine*” in Croatian language closed in 1918, however in 1919, the Hungarian newspaper “*Bécsi Magyar Ujság*” did emerge. In 1922, shortly after the annexation of Burgenland to Austria, politically committed Croats, including Lorenz Karall, founded the “*Hrvatske Novine*” (Atlas Burgenland, 2023). Following the First World War, the “*Dělnické listy*” (“Workers’ Papers”), a workers’ publication in the Czech language, was renamed the “*Vídeňské dělnické listy*” (“Viennese Workers’ Papers”) in 1926. It was published until 1934, when it ceased to exist due to political developments in Austria (Bláhová, 2011). They were based on the idea of the worker’s movement. Under the Czech name “*Dělnické listy*”, German workers’ sheets, some magazines and sheets appeared after 1872 to the present day, which were basically socialist and social-democrat oriented or felt committed to the ideas of the workers’ movement. They appeared in Bohemia (Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy) alternatively in Vienna, in Czechoslovakia (or today in the Czech Republic), but also inspired sister projects abroad, such as in Argentina and the United States (Bláhová, 2011). “*Nedelja*” (“A Sunday” in Slovenian) is the Slovene-language religious newspaper of the Diocese of Gurk and is the oldest weekly newspaper of the Carinthian Slovenes. It was founded in March 1926 by a group of Slovene-speaking priests. During this period, Esperanto, a constructed language, experienced a notable surge in popularity. A considerable portion of its lexicon was at its zenith of usage. Several

newspapers were exclusively published in Esperanto, such as “*Sennaciulo*” and “*La Progreso*”. To conclude, the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, created some ethnic media publications from the autochthonous communities in Austria. At that time, it was only print media. Sometimes these media outlets were small and short-lived, but they laid the groundwork for future development of ethnic media in the country. This critical juncture contributed to a change in the ethnic media landscape by slowly forming the future status quo.

### 1930s-1940s: National-Socialism

With the de facto sidelining of the parliament in March 1933, Austria’s path towards dictatorship began. The Dollfuss government attempted to maintain the facade of legality through emergency decrees, but in reality, a gradual coup was taking place. The opposition was disciplined, suppressed, and banned. The authoritarian regime established control over media, communication, and propaganda outlets, securing access at institutional, personnel, and content levels. All media – whether press, radio, or film – were synchronized, censorship was reinstated, and press freedom was eliminated. Overall, the media propaganda activities and alignment tendencies of the Austrofascist “Corporate State” proved to be largely unsuccessful<sup>1</sup>.

During the National-Socialist era, journalism was defined as a regulated task of the state. This led to a contraction of the Austrian magazine market, including a substantial impact on women’s magazines. Non-Nazi press was prohibited, while the remaining press was (as much as possible) centrally controlled, monitored, and subjected to censorship. The rise of fascism and the Nazi regime in Austria had a profound impact on ethnic media. Many publications cease to exist. “*Vídeňské Noviny*” and “*Vídeňský Věstník*” were established in 1934, however, also in this year, “*Vídeňské Dělnické Listy*” was closed. The newspaper “*Pravda*” was closed in 1938 and “*Vídeňské Noviny*” ceased to exist in 1941. “*Dělnické Listy*” was closed in 1934. In 1941, the “*Nedelja*” was discontinued by the regime. After the Diocese of Gurk, the Slovenian Pastoral Office, took over the editorship of the newspaper in 1945, the “*Nedelja*” became the official Slovenian-language religious newspaper of the Diocese, the first issue after the war was published in December 1945 (Pressestelle der Diözese Gurk, 2023). “*Vídeňské Svobodné Listy*” was established in 1946. What the new weekly dealt with primarily on its pages was re-emigration

<sup>1</sup> The “masses” could not be even remotely mobilized for the system. Instead, Austrians engaged in a “reader,” “listener,” and “newsreel strike.” Additionally, political and media pressure from Nazi Germany remained significant. However, the authoritarian regime’s ambivalent strategy towards the National Socialists also came into play, fluctuating between confrontation and appeasement (Moser, 2019 cited by Krainer, 2019). In 1934, there was a “latent civil war” (Children, Hilgemann & Hergt, 2005 cited by Krainer, 2019). In 1932, Engelbert Dollfuss was elected as the Chancellor of Austria, who from 1933 onwards established an authoritarian regime (Austrofascism 1933–1938), marked by the reintroduction of censorship and significant restrictions on press freedom.

to Czechoslovakia as well as the post-war and political problems of the time. Due to re-emigration, many people wondered whether the Viennese press written in Czech would be needed at all in the future. The editors at that time consisted of representatives of the Czech-Viennese Social Democrats, National Socialists, Communists and People's Democrats. The editorial's guiding idea was the unity of the minority, regardless of party or association affiliation. The first edition was published in a circulation of 10,000 copies and was sold at the price of 30 groschen (*Vídeňské svobodné listy*, 2023). "Glasnik" was created in 1946 (*Volksgruppen ORF*, 2023). From June 1946, the Carinthian Slovenes were able to publish the *Slovenski vestnik*, which saw itself as the organ of the Liberation Front. Its appearance was not without controversy, and for a period, its place of publication was not Klagenfurt, but Vienna. After its founding, the Council of Carinthian Slovenes began publishing its own organ, the "Naš tednik", from September 1949. Just one year later, it was merged with the "Koroška kronika" (Enotna Lista, 2023). Esperanto was still popular in that time.

During the era of National Socialism, all forms of opposition, including the media, were systematically suppressed, and prohibited. The entirety of social-nationalist media, spanning print, radio, and film, was subjected to synchronization, thereby reinstating stringent censorship measures and completely eradicating press freedoms. Consequently, the regime, driven by its nationalist objectives and exerting strict control over political media in Austria, significantly impeded the advancement of ethnic media outlets. These media platforms not only served as conduits for diverse cultural representations but also as forums for varied opinions. However, despite severe restrictions, these outlets were not entirely eradicated. Following the collapse of the National Socialist regime, commencing from 1945, numerous ethnic media sources experienced a resurgence.

### 1960s-1970s Migration from Southern and Eastern Europe

From the 1950s onward, a dynamic print media market systematically developed, marked by the rise of robust new tabloid newspapers and the emergence of the initial independent political and economic magazines, coinciding with a decline in party newspapers. During a phase of concentration commencing in the late 1980s, national oligopolies (such as Mediaprint, Styria, and the News Group) solidified their presence in Austria, involving major German conglomerates, alongside numerous regionally influential print media conglomerates. Presently, these entities have extended their operations as private broadcasting providers and have ventured into online services. The concentration processes were facilitated by hesitant and largely insufficient media policy regulation aimed at preserving

the diversity of media titles<sup>2</sup> (Kaltenbrunner, 2019 in Karmasin & Oggolder, 2019). The end of World War II in 1945 and the establishment of the Second Austrian Republic led to the re-emergence of ethnic media outlets and the resurgence of ethnic media in Austria, as new waves of immigrants arrived from Southern and Eastern Europe. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, despite the limited emergence of ethnic media in Austria during this period, it holds significant legislative importance as it served as a foundational phase for subsequent ethnic media outlets. It played a crucial role in establishing frameworks that paved the way for the establishment and evolution of ethnic media entities in 1990s. As to already existed publications, they were often focused on providing information and support to immigrant communities, and they played an important role in helping these communities integrate into Austrian society. The signing of the Austrian State Treaty led to the recognition of autochthonous minority rights, which created a favourable condition for the establishment of new ethnic media outlets, especially later, in 1976 when the Austrian Ethnic Group Act (Volksgruppengesetz) recognised Croatian, Slovenian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian and Roma ethnic groups as official minorities in Austria, imbuing them with special rights and supporting them in media production. Compared to West Germany and Switzerland, Austria was relatively late in attracting foreign countries' workforces. This was partly because the labour shortage in Austria was exacerbated by the emigration of Austrian workers to Switzerland and Germany. The recruitment of foreign workers was made possible by the Raab-Olah agreements concluded in 1961 (Bauer, 2008). The post-war history of Austrian media can be narrated as a sequence of waves of concentration, illustrating concentration as an inherent component and inevitable consequence of competition-oriented economics. Media policy measures did not put a stop to the concentration process, at best delaying it or even promoting it. Media and opinion diversity are values threatened by media concentration (Trappel, 2019, p. 222). Hence, this period exhibited both favourable transformations, notably in terms of migration and institutional modifications, and adverse changes, such as

<sup>2</sup> The first wave of concentration took place in the 1950s. During this period, daily newspapers represented a diverse spectrum of opinions and were complemented by radio programs. Following World War II, the publication of newspapers was subject to licensing or permission by the occupying powers. Depending on the occupying force, either party-affiliated newspapers or those owned by private individuals were allowed to operate. In 1945, the three major parties ÖVP, SPÖ, and KPÖ reached an agreement to collectively publish "Neues Österreich" ("New Austria"). Additionally, each party established its respective newspapers. The second wave of media consolidation impacted the industry between 1967 and 1972, during which five daily newspaper titles were either discontinued or acquired. This phase commenced in 1967 with the discontinuation of the three-party newspaper "Neues Österreich". The "Kronen Zeitung" strategically moved towards market dominance by engaging in horizontal concentration, acquiring its competitor "Express" in 1970 and subsequently ceasing its publication in 1971. In the attempt to counteract this trend in 1975, the government introduced direct press subsidies. The main aim of this initiative was to halt the continuous decrease in the quantity of independent newspaper titles, or at the very least, slow down the ongoing process of media concentration (Trappel, 2019, p. 212).

media concentration, exerting influences on ethnic media outlets.

## 1990s European Union Membership

Austria entered the EU on the 1st of January 1995. Membership in the EU has had a decisive impact on the country's foreign and European policy and makes it possible to advocate Austrian concerns within the EU decision-making structures. Representatives of Austria participate in the decision-making process in the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies; furthermore, there are directly elected Austrian members of the European Parliament as well as Austrian representatives in the other EU institutions. The EU's issues feature prominently on the daily agenda of Austria's foreign policy; it is important that Austrian interests and positions are pursued further on the European level in the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The EU's initiatives encompass various multilateral initiatives focused on safeguarding civilians in armed conflicts, enhancing human rights and minority rights, promoting disarmament, and implementing arms control and non-proliferation measures concerning weapons of mass (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, 2023). In the early 1990s, Austria faced the prospect of condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights. Eventually, in 1993, the ORF's radio monopoly was abolished by the "Regional Radio Law" ("Regionalradiogesetz"), terminating the state broadcasting monopoly and enabling pluralistic regional private radio. In 1993, the "Association of Free Radios" ("Verband Freier Rundfunk Österreich") was created. Following legislative and juridical challenges in the private broadcasting sector, ORF radio programs have had to contend with commercial competition nationwide since 1998. However, the ORF remains privileged in several respects compared to private competition, especially regarding frequency allocation. The television monopoly was officially dissolved with the "Cable and Satellite Broadcasting Act" in 1997 ("Kabel- und Satellitenrundfunkgesetz", 1997). The institutional changes that fostered a favorable environment for the development of private media and facilitated a more diverse media landscape, contributed to the emergence of new ethnic media outlets. A lot of new media outlets were established in the 1990s. The magazine "*Romano Kipo*" has been in publication since 1991 and serves as the quarterly informational newspaper for the Cultural Association of Austrian Roma in Vienna. Similarly, "*Romano Centro*", a quarterly journal affiliated with the "Romano Centro" association, has been published regularly since June 1993. In 1989, a regional studio commenced broadcasting television programs like "*Dobar dan Hrvati*" for Croatians and "*Adj' Isten magyarok*" for Hungarians (Atlas Burgenland, 2023). The "*Nowyi Wenskij Journal*" ("New Vienna Journal") is a monthly Austrian periodical published in Russian since January 1996. It encompasses various informative and reference materials about Austria, articles concerning the lives of compatriots

within the country, and accounts from travellers. The Austrian Polish magazine known as "*Polonika*" has been in publication since March 1995. Widely available throughout Austria, it operates as an informational and social magazine, facilitating the integration of the Polish diaspora into their country of residence. The publication primarily focuses on issues related to the lives of Poles residing in Austria, offering information on significant events concerning the Polish diaspora, Austria, and Poland (*Polonika*, 2023). "*Jupiter*"<sup>3</sup>, a socio-cultural quarterly magazine, has been published since June 13, 1999, with a literary focus. Acknowledged as one of the foremost Polish diaspora media outlets worldwide, the magazine emphasizes literature in its content.

## 2000s-present Digital Transformation

The rise of the internet and social media has wielded significant influence on ethnic media in Austria, echoing the broader impact experienced across various media sectors. Numerous ethnic media outlets have shifted their focus to online platforms, concurrently witnessing the emergence of new digital-only publications. Simultaneously, traditional print and broadcast media have diversified by incorporating content tailored to ethnic minority communities. An institutional impetus for the advancement of ethnic media stemmed from a legal ruling preceding the European Court of Human Rights in Austria, leading to the enactment of a law in 2001 permitting private commercial broadcasting companies (Grünangerl, Trappel & Tomaz, 2021). The online platform "*Austriapol*", tailored to serve the Polish community in Austria, was established in 2000. Following this, in February 2002, the broadcast of the TV magazine "*Servus Szia, Szdravo Del Juha*", targeting diverse ethnic communities, commenced streaming (Atlas Burgenland, 2023). The weekly newspaper "*Novice*" began its publication in April 2003 (Enotna Lista, 2023). Another significant addition to the ethnic media landscape was the emergence of the Turkish-language newspaper "*Yeni Hereket*" in 2003. (Bülbül, 2023). "*The Vienna Review*", founded in 2006 by American journalist Dardis McNamee as a student newspaper for Webster University Vienna, initially served as the sole English-language newspaper in Vienna. Targeting the English-speaking community in Austria and Central Europe, expatriates, and tourists, it was published in print and online by Falter Verlag from 2011 to 2014 before transitioning solely to an online platform ("*The Vienna Review*", 2023). "*Mri Tikni Mini Multi*", a children's magazine published every two months from 1997 by the Roma Service association in conjunction with "ZORA", aimed to introduce Romani language to children through playful stories, fairy tales, rhymes, riddles, and songs. Though discontinued in 2005 (roma\_2020, 2024, it was succeeded by "*Mri nevi Mini Multi*" (the "New Mini Multi") published by the Roma Service Association and the Burgenland Croat Adult

<sup>3</sup> The newspaper ceased to exist in 2022.

Education Centre since 2006. The online portal “*ipolen.at*” was established in 2003. “KOSMO”, a free magazine geared towards the linguistics and content preferences of the 744,000 Austro-Bosnians, has been published since early 2009 by “Twist Zeitschriften Verlag”. A bilingual cultural art journal “*Creative Austria*” was launched in 2007, and in October 2015, Margaret Childs and Dardis McNamee founded “Home Town Media GmbH” and launched the first issue of “*Metropole*” titled “We Built This City”. This magazine delves into the international impact on the history of Austria and Vienna. It features contributions from former writers of “*The Vienna Review*”, which ceased its print publication at the end of 2013 but continued online (*Der Standard*, 2014). Despite this transition, “*Metropole*” continues to flourish. Although English media are not conventionally categorized as ethnic media due to English being a secondary language for many individuals in Austria, they are actively used by various ethnic communities. “*Russian Austria*” (Russian Austria, 2023) came into existence in 2004, contributing to the expanding array of ethnic media outlets catering to diverse linguistic and cultural communities within Austria.

notably, the progression of ethnic media within Austria. The factors that predominantly shaped ethnic media comprised synoptic institutional elements and inherent media characteristics. However, incremental changes, considered as critical junctures due to their gradual yet substantial, evident, and distinctive impact on the evolution of ethnic media in Austria, can also be acknowledged. The role of ethnic media remains pertinent in a globally interconnected world, particularly within Austria, boasting a considerable population with a migration background. The necessity for ethnic media traces back to the inception of the Republic of Austria following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918.

The End of the Austro-Hungarian Empire represented a significant critical juncture that catalysed economic, ideological, and policy transformations. This period resulted in the closure of established ethnic media outlets while simultaneously fostering the emergence of new ones, primarily established by autochthonous minorities. Media publications predominantly existed in print format during this era, laying foundational groundwork for the progression of ethnic media within Austria.

Critical Juncture	Economical Change	Ideological Change	Political Change	Synoptic/ Incremental	Influence on Ethnic Media
<b>The End of Austro-Hungarian Empire</b>	Economic strain of war	Strengthening of cultural expressions of ethnic groups	Formation of New Nation-States	Synoptic	Several newspapers were founded
<b>National Socialism</b>	Self-sufficiency, militarisation	Nationalism, conservative roll-back	Anschluss (Annexation)	Synoptic	Non-national-socialist and ethnic media were closed.
<b>Migration from Eastern and Southern Europe</b>	Economic growth	Gradual moves to liberalisation and pluralism	Coalition government, reforms, social policies	Incremental	The development of favorable conditions for future ethnic media
<b>EU Membership</b>	Single Market, Structural Funds and Cohesion Policy	Embracing European values, moves towards diversity	Adapting to EU policies	Synoptic	EU membership provided opportunities for establishment ethnic media, migration created demand in ethnic media
<b>Digital Transformation</b>	Increased innovations	Acceptance and integration of digital technologies, fast access to information	Policy Formation, Digital Agenda	Incremental	The migration of ethnic media to the internet, at times resulting in the complete cessation of print editions

Table 1: Critical Junctures of Ethnic Media in Austria

## Conclusion

Five critical junctures have been identified concerning the evolution of ethnic media in Austria, spanning from 1918 until the early 21st century. These pivotal moments are: (i) the End of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; (ii) the Period of National Socialism; (iii) Migration from Eastern and Southern Europe; (iv) Austria’s accession to the EU; and (v) the Period of Digital Transformation. Each of these pivotal moments exerted varying degrees of influence on the country’s economic structures, governmental policies, ideological orientations, and

The National Socialist Regime, characterised by economic militarisation and nationalist ideologies, resulted in the suppression of ethnic media and the narrower media landscape. The regime took control of communication and propaganda platforms, asserting authority at institutional, personnel, and content levels. Media underwent synchronization, censorship, and the erosion of press freedom. Several ethnic media outlets gradually disappeared between 1934 and 1941, only to re-emerge post-1941. Noteworthy closures during this period include the cessation of publications such as “*Pravda*” in 1938, “*Vidensle Noviny*” in 1941, “*Dělnické listy*” in 1934, and “*Nedelja*” in 1941.



The migration waves of the 1960s-1970s from Southern and Eastern Europe did not distinctly lead to the emergence or disappearance of ethnic media outlets. Nevertheless, this period held significant importance due to institutional transformations and subsequent migration waves, which facilitated favourable conditions for the establishment of ethnic media. Gradual economic growth, liberalisation, and a move towards pluralism marked positive trajectories, paving the way for the establishment of new ethnic media outlets. The signing of the Austrian State Treaty acknowledged the rights of autochthonous minorities. However, a pivotal document emerged in 1976 — the Austrian Ethnic Group Act (Volksgruppengesetz) — formally recognising Croatian, Slovenian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian, and Roma ethnic groups as official minorities in Austria. This legislation granted them special rights and offered support in their media establishment.

Austria's accession to the EU in 1995 wielded substantial influence on the nation's foreign and domestic policies, its engagement within Europe. The EU's moves toward democratisation fostered conducive circumstances for the inception of ethnic media. The post-1993 period, marked by the establishment of the "Regional Radio Law" ("Regionalradiogesetz") and the Association of Free Radios ("Verband Freier Rundfunk Österreich"), witnessed prolific growth in new ethnic media outlets. Multilingual non-commercial radio stations emerged during this phase, focusing on serving multiple ethnic communities and diverse audiences rather than singular groups, thereby not falling under the classification of ethnic media.

The fifth critical juncture of the Digital Transformation starting in the 2000s, marked the most prolific period in

the establishment of new ethnic media outlets. From 2000 until 2006, significant emergence of ethnic newspapers such as "Austriapol", "Russian Austria", "Mri Tikni Mini Multi", and "The Vienna Review", all of which became active and continue to operate. However, the primary incremental change during this period was the transition to the online space.

Synoptic institutional elements were predominant factors shaping ethnic media in Austria. Yet, it is essential to acknowledge incremental changes, as these gradual but substantial shifts have distinctly contributed to the ethnic media evolution. Over the period, ethnic media ensures that the media landscape reflects Austria's multicultural society. By representing diverse ethnic groups, these media outlets contribute to a more inclusive and representative democracy. The growth of ethnic media have supported the recognition and protection of minority rights. As democracy evolved in Austria, so too did the development of ethnic media. Almost all periods contributed to their growth (except for the National Socialist period). Ethnic media play a crucial role in promoting democratic values through the representation of diverse communities. However, there is a need for more research into the content of ethnic media in Austria, as their impact on democracy is not uniformly positive. For example, challenges may arise when ethnic media predominantly disseminate news from their countries of origin, potentially isolating these communities from the broader discourse. There is also the propagation of misinformation within ethnic media, which can contribute to a distorted perception of reality, leading individuals to make decisions based on incorrect assumptions.

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