

WHO BELONGS TO EUROPE? A MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CITIZENSHIP, MOBILITY AND THE ECONOMIC PRIVILEGE OF THE EUROPEAN PASSPORT

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Abstract: This paper examines how media discourses construct the meaning of European citizenship, mobility, and the economic value of the European passport. While the European Union is built upon principles of freedom, equality, and solidarity, access to mobility and economic opportunities remains strongly connected to citizenship status. The paper argues that the European passport functions not only as a legal document but also as a form of economic and symbolic capital that shapes individuals' life opportunities. Using qualitative media discourse analysis, the paper explores representations of European belonging and mobility in two media outlets: Klix.ba from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Deutsche Welle as a European media platform. The analysis focuses on how these media frame the relationship between citizenship, freedom of movement, labour opportunities, and social inequality. Particular attention is given to narratives surrounding EU citizenship, migration, and the experiences of citizens from non-EU countries. Drawing on theories of citizenship, global inequality, and mobility, the paper explores whether media narratives challenge or reproduce the idea that birthplace and inherited citizenship determine access to European opportunities. The paper argues that media representations often reveal a paradox at the heart of the European project: while Europe promotes universal values, the possession of an EU passport continues to function as a powerful determinant of economic possibilities and social belonging.

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KO PRIPADA EVROPI? ANALIZA MEDIJSKOG DISKURSA O GRAĐANSTVU, MOBILNOSTI I EKONOMSKOJ PRIVILEGIJI EVROPSKOG PASOŠA

Ključne riječi: evropsko građanstvo, medijski diskurs, evropski pasoš, mobilnost, ekonomska nejednakost, Bosna i Hercegovina, Evropska unija

Sažetak: Ovaj rad istražuje način na koji medijski diskursi konstruišu značenje evropskog građanstva, mobilnosti i ekonomske vrijednosti evropskog pasoša. Iako je Evropska unija utemeljena na principima slobode, jednakosti i solidarnosti, pristup mobilnosti i ekonomskim mogućnostima i dalje je snažno povezan sa statusom državljanstva. U radu se zastupa stav da evropski pasoš ne funkcioniše samo kao pravni dokument već i kao oblik ekonomskog i simboličkog kapitala koji oblikuje životne mogućnosti pojedinaca. Primjenom kvalitativne analize medijskog diskursa, u radu se istražuju predstave o evropskoj pripadnosti i mobilnosti u dva medija: Klix.ba iz Bosne i Hercegovine i Deutsche Welle kao evropskoj medijskoj platformi. Analiza je usmjerena na način na koji ovi mediji predstavljaju odnos između državljanstva, slobode kretanja, mogućnosti zapošljavanja i društvene nejednakosti. Posebna pažnja posvećena je narativima o građanstvu Evropske unije, migracijama i iskustvima građana zemalja koje nisu članice EU. Oslanjajući se na teorije građanstva, globalne nejednakosti i mobilnosti, rad istražuje da li medijski narativi preispituju ili reprodukuju ideju prema kojoj mjesto rođenja i naslijeđeno državljanstvo određuju pristup mogućnostima koje pruža Evropa. U radu se zaključuje da medijske reprezentacije često ukazuju na paradoks koji se nalazi u samoj srži evropskog projekta: dok Evropa promovise univerzalne vrijednosti, posjedovanje pasoša Evropske unije i dalje predstavlja snažan faktor koji određuje ekonomske mogućnosti i društvenu pripadnost.

1. Introduction: Europe, citizenship and unequal mobility

The European Union has long presented itself as a political community founded on the principles of freedom, equality, solidarity, and the free movement of people. Among its most celebrated achievements is the creation of a common area in which citizens can live, work, study, and travel across national borders with relatively few restrictions. European citizenship, formally introduced through the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, has become one of the defining features of European integration, symbolising not only legal membership in the Union but also participation in a broader political and social community. In official narratives, European citizenship embodies a promise of equal opportunities and shared rights regardless of national origin within the Union. Yet this vision of Europe is marked by a fundamental paradox. While the European project promotes universal values and the removal of internal borders, access to these freedoms remains deeply conditioned by the possession of a particular citizenship. Mobility, employment opportunities, educational access, and social rights are distributed unevenly according to nationality, transforming citizenship into one of the most significant determinants of individual life chances in contemporary Europe. For millions of citizens from countries outside the European Union, the opportunities associated with Europe remain mediated through visas, residence permits, labour regulations, and lengthy accession processes. Consequently, the distinction between those who possess an EU passport and those who do not represents not merely an administrative difference but a profound form of social, political, and economic inequality. Recent scholarship has increasingly challenged the assumption that citizenship functions solely

as a legal status. Instead, citizenship is understood as a form of capital that grants differential access to resources, mobility, and security. Shachar (2009) conceptualises birthright citizenship as inherited property that distributes privileges according to the accident of birth, while Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital provides a useful lens for understanding the passport as a resource that carries both material and symbolic value. In this sense, the European passport operates as more than a travel document; it represents a mechanism through which opportunities are allocated and inequalities are reproduced. Individuals holding an EU passport possess significantly greater freedom to cross borders, participate in labour markets, pursue education, and exercise political and social rights than citizens of neighbouring non-EU states. These inequalities are not experienced solely through legal regulations but are also constructed and normalised through public discourse. The media play a particularly influential role in shaping collective understandings of citizenship, migration, belonging, and Europe itself. Through the selection of topics, framing of events, and representation of social actors, media outlets contribute to defining who is perceived as legitimately belonging to Europe and who remains positioned at its margins. Discourses surrounding European integration, migration, labour mobility, and visa regimes therefore do not merely describe reality; they actively participate in producing symbolic boundaries between inclusion and exclusion, privilege and disadvantage.

Bosnia and Herzegovina offers a particularly revealing context for examining these discursive dynamics. As a candidate country for European Union membership, it occupies an ambiguous position between political aspiration and institutional exclusion. While its citizens increasingly identify with European norms and seek participation in European educational and labour markets, they continue to encounter structural limitations that distinguish them from citizens of EU member states. This intermediate position provides an opportunity to explore how media narratives negotiate the meanings of Europe, citizenship, and mobility from both an external and an internal European perspective. Against this background, this paper examines how media discourses construct the relationship between European citizenship, mobility, and the economic value of the European passport. Through a comparative qualitative analysis of articles published by *Klix.ba* and *Deutsche Welle*, the study investigates how these media frame European belonging, freedom of movement, labour opportunities, and the experiences of citizens from non-EU countries. Particular attention is devoted to the ways in which the European passport is represented as a source of economic and symbolic privilege and to whether media narratives reinforce or challenge inequalities embedded in contemporary European citizenship. By analysing these competing representations, the paper contributes to broader debates on citizenship, mobility, and the social boundaries of Europe, arguing that media discourse reveals the continuing tension between the European Union's universal normative ideals and the unequal distribution of opportunities that accompanies membership in the European political community.

2. Social and symbolic capital: a bourdieusian theoretical framework

To understand the European passport as something that extends beyond its formal, legal function, Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus is particularly useful, especially his typology of capital developed in *The Forms of Capital* (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu distinguishes between economic capital (material goods and money), cultural capital (knowl-

edge, education, dispositions), and social capital (networks of relationships and belonging that grant individuals access to resources). Above these forms stands symbolic capital, that is, the recognition and legitimacy that a given form of capital acquires within a social field, transforming it into something perceived as natural, deserved, or self-evident (Bourdieu, 1989). The European passport can be read through all three fundamental forms of capital simultaneously. It functions as economic capital because it grants access to labour markets, services, and mobility without visa restrictions. It functions as social capital because it inserts the individual into the institutional and legal network of the European Union, opening access to resources that remain unavailable to those outside that network. Finally, it becomes symbolic capital at the moment its value ceases to be perceived as the outcome of legal or historical circumstance and instead comes to be seen as a marker of personal or national worth, order, and belonging to the 'civilised' part of the world. It is precisely this process of symbolic conversion that media discourse actively produces and sustains. Bourdieu (1991), in *Language and Symbolic Power*, shows that language and discourse are not neutral tools for describing reality but instruments through which social hierarchies are presented as legitimate. When media outlets discuss EU citizens in contrast to citizens of B&H in the context of travel, labour, or migration, they do not merely describe differences in legal status; they discursively naturalise them, converting a legal asymmetry into a symbolic hierarchy of value. This approach is further developed in more recent literature on citizenship and mobility. Shachar (2009), in *The Birthright Lottery*, argues that citizenship functions as a form of inherited property, comparable to inherited wealth, which draws a direct parallel to Bourdieu's understanding of capital as something acquired through origin rather than merit alone. Mau and colleagues (2015) introduce the concept of the global mobility divide, showing that visa regimes materially split the world's population into those with free access to movement and those whose movement is conditioned, controlled, or hindered. Kochenov (2019) goes a step further, arguing that EU citizenship constitutes a form of legal-economic privilege that, despite declarative rhetoric of equality, is distributed in a markedly unequal manner. For the case of B&H, this theoretical background opens space to view the passport as a boundary symbol: it simultaneously signals proximity to Europe (through historical, cultural, and geographic heritage) and distance from it (through the country's formal status outside the EU). Media discourse, in this sense, does not merely report on visas, migration, or EU accession; it actively participates in producing the symbolic boundary between the 'European' and 'non-European' citizen, whereby the passport becomes a form of capital whose value is not given but is continually and socially reproduced.

3. Methodology: critical media discourse analysis

Media texts are not treated as simple descriptions of reality. Instead, they are understood as spaces where ideas about inclusion, exclusion, and inequality are formed and discussed. This paper uses qualitative media discourse analysis to show how European citizenship, mobility, and the value of the European passport are presented in media narratives. The aim is not only to identify which topics appear in the media but also to understand how ideas about citizenship, belonging, and opportunity are created. Our analysis focuses on how the passport is given meaning beyond its legal function, especially in re-

lation to mobility, opportunity, and belonging. The paper uses Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital as the main analytical framework. It examines the European passport as a form of economic capital through access to jobs and better opportunities, social capital through access to European networks and institutions, and symbolic capital through ideas of European identity, status, and belonging. The corpus includes 40 articles: 20 from *Klix.ba* and 20 from *Deutsche Welle*, published between 2022 and 2025/2026 to capture contemporary media discourse on European citizenship and mobility. The articles were selected through purposive sampling based on topics related to the European passport, EU citizenship, mobility, migration, Schengen, and B&H's relationship with the EU. The analysis uses thematic coding to examine how the passport is constructed in both media contexts. The focus is on whether media narratives present the European passport mainly as a source of opportunity, a marker of belonging, or a symbol of unequal access to mobility. In the text, *Klix.ba* articles are labelled as K_A and *Deutsche Welle* articles as DW_A, followed by the corresponding article number. In the tables, only A and the article number are used, as the respective news portal is evident from the table description.

4. Analysis: the European passport as capital

The analysis presented below examines how the two media outlets construct citizenship, mobility, and the European passport as forms of economic, social, and symbolic capital, in line with the Bourdieusian framework outlined above. The *Klix.ba* corpus is discussed first, followed by the *Deutsche Welle* corpus presented in section 4.2.

4.1 KLIX.BA: the passport as opportunity

This section analyses 20 *Klix.ba* articles published between 2022 and 2026, comprising a corpus of approximately 10,720 words. The articles were selected through a keyword search using terms such as European passport, EU citizenship, mobility, migration, Schengen, and B&H's relationship with the European Union. *Klix.ba*, as the leading news portal in B&H, addresses the European passport primarily from the position of a non-EU citizen looking towards Europe rather than from within it. The *Klix.ba* corpus foregrounds the passport as a practical instrument of opportunity: a document that opens or closes access to work, family reunification, travel, and a more secure future. This positions the passport less as an abstract marker of European values and more as a tangible resource whose absence is felt daily by B&H citizens.

4.1.1 Economic capital: work and mobility

The *Klix.ba* articles construct the European passport above all as an economic asset, one that can be acquired, lost, or exploited for financial gain. This is most visible in the coverage of 'golden passport' schemes. K_A17 reports on investment-citizenship programmes offered to wealthy Russian nationals in the Western Balkans and shows how these schemes risk the visa-free regime that Serbian and other regional citizens already hold with the EU. Economic capital, in the form of investment sums, is here directly convertible into legal status, echoing Bourdieu's (1986) claim that one form of capital can be transformed into another. K_A5 confirms that the European Court of Justice later declared such schemes illegal, framed as a corrective measure that protects EU citizenship from being purchased

outright. A second economic strand concerns B&H citizens acquiring a second, EU-based passport. K_A19 documents the steady flow of Bosnian citizens obtaining Croatian citizenship, mainly to secure EU labour-market access rather than for cultural reasons. K_A14 similarly frames citizenship acquisition as a relocation strategy, ranking countries by how easily their citizenship, and their labour markets, can be reached. K_A10 and K_A6 describe the new ETIAS fee and Entry/Exit System as financial and administrative burdens placed on third-country nationals, including B&H citizens. Mobility towards Europe is thus presented as a resource that must increasingly be purchased and monitored, reinforcing Shachar's (2009) claim that citizenship functions as inherited property whose absence carries a direct economic cost.

4.1.2 Social capital: access and networks

Where economic capital concerns money and labour access, the *Klix.ba* corpus constructs social capital through membership in institutional and administrative networks, above all the Schengen system and the EU's external visa policy. K_A18 shows the European Commission requiring B&H and its neighbours to align their visa policy with the EU's, making B&H a gatekeeper of a network it does not yet belong to, illustrating Soysal's (1994) point that participation depends increasingly on institutional recognition rather than nationality alone. K_A20 frames B&H's position on the external Schengen border in the same ambivalent terms, as a source of proximity and benefit but also of continued exclusion from the network itself. This ambivalence deepens in later coverage of new administrative conditions. K_A8 and K_A7 detail additional checks and requirements imposed on B&H travellers, conditions not required of EU citizens moving within the same space. K_A12 reinforces this pattern, presenting each new travel rule as a further administrative reminder of B&H's outsider status. K_A2 and K_A16 which report the roughly 100,000 people who renounced B&H citizenship over three decades, the corpus presents citizenship as a network membership individuals must choose between, weighing the ties of one community against the mobility offered by another.

4.1.3 Symbolic capital: belonging and status

The symbolic dimension of the passport is most explicit in articles addressing B&H's own EU membership prospects. K_A15 questions whether B&H's accession is a realistic prospect or a symbolic gesture. This ambivalence intensifies in K_A1, which uses the metaphor of an 'eternal waiting room' to present prolonged candidacy itself as a marker of exclusion rather than a neutral administrative stage. K_A4 goes further, framing B&H's failure to meet EU expectations as risking a new 'dark age', casting European integration as a marker of civilisational progress and its absence as regression, in line with Balibar's (2004) argument that European borders produce inclusion and exclusion by defining who counts as properly European. Public attitudes reported in K_A9 reinforce this symbolic framing from the citizens' side, treating widespread support for accession as evidence of B&H's cultural and historical belonging to Europe despite formal exclusion. Even the everyday acquisition of a second EU passport, as in the Croatian citizenship figures reported in K_A19, carries symbolic weight beyond its economic function, since holding an EU passport is implicitly treated as proof of a European identity that B&H citizenship alone cannot provide. Together, these articles show the passport operating as a boundary sym-

bol in Kochenov's (2019) sense, marking B&H as historically European while placing its citizens on the excluded side of the legal-symbolic divide.

Table 1 summarizes the key lexical choices and metaphors found in the *Klix.ba* corpus (A1–A20), showing how citizenship and the European passport are constructed as forms of economic value, administrative access, and symbolic belonging from the perspective of a non-EU candidate country.

Lexical choices	Meaning
<i>zlatni pasoš/ golden passport; investicijsko državljanstvo/ investment citizenship</i> (A5, A17)	Citizenship is constructed as a purchasable financial asset, obtainable through capital rather than residence or origin.
<i>bezvizni režim/ visa-free regime</i> (A17, A18); <i>dobiti pasoš/ obtain a passport</i> (A14, A19)	Mobility is framed as a scarce economic good, one that can be gained, extended, or put at risk.
<i>naknada od 20 eura/ €20 fee</i> (A10); <i>EES sistem, dodatni uslovi/ EES system, additional conditions</i> (A6, A8)	Access to EU space is reframed as a monetised, administrative transaction rather than a free right of movement.
<i>preseliti se, raditi u inostranstvu/ relocate, work abroad</i> (A14, A11); <i>tržište rada/ labour market</i> (A13, A11)	The passport is presented as a work permit in disguise, its value measured by labour-market access.
<i>vanjska granica/ external border</i> (A20); <i>vize za treće zemlje/ visas for third countries</i> (A18)	B&H is positioned as a gatekeeper of EU social space without being a member of it.
<i>dvojno državljanstvo/ dual citizenship</i> (K_A13, K_A11); <i>povrat državljanstva/ reclaiming citizenship</i> (A3)	Citizenship is treated as a negotiable network membership, held or reclaimed as circumstances require.
<i>odreklo se državljanstva/ renounced citizenship</i> (A2, A16)	Giving up B&H citizenship is normalised as the price of entry into an EU-based network.
<i>realno članstvo/ realistic membership</i> (A15); <i>vječna čekaonica/ eternal waiting room</i> (A1)	EU accession is framed as a symbolic threshold whose indefinite delay itself signals exclusion.
<i>mračno doba/ dark age</i> (A4)	Non-membership is cast as civilisational regression, not merely political or legal exclusion.
<i>podrška ulasku u EU/ support for EU entry</i> (A9); <i>evropski put/ European path</i> (A15, A9, A1)	Popular aspiration is used as evidence of B&H's cultural and historical belonging to Europe, despite formal exclusion.

Table 1: Lexical Realisations of Citizenship as Economic, Social, and Symbolic Capital in *Klix.ba* Articles

4.2 Deutsche welle: the passport as rights and identity

This section analyses 20 *Deutsche Welle* articles published between 2022 and 2026, comprising a corpus of approximately 19,255 words. The articles were selected through a keyword search using terms such as European passport, EU citizenship, mobility, migration, Schengen, and B&H's relationship with the European Union. Since the number of articles focusing specifically on B&H was relatively limited, the sample was expanded to include articles addressing broader themes of mobility, EU citizenship, and the 'EU/German dream' in the wider European context.

4.2.1 Economic capital: opportunities and resources

The DW articles present mobility as a resource strongly shaped by economic capital. Following Bourdieu (1986), economic resources can be converted into other forms of advantage, including legal status and social recognition. In migration contexts, wealth often determines who can access greater mobility opportunities. This is evident in DW_A13, which presents residency and citizenship as forms of access obtained through financial investment. Countries such as the UAE, Egypt, Turkey, and Jordan attract foreign capital through investment migration programmes, while wealthy individuals gain residency, security, and greater international mobility. These examples show how economic capital can be transformed into legal and symbolic status (Bourdieu, 1986). The connection between wealth and mobility is also emphasised in DW_A6 and DW_A12. These articles challenge the idea that passports provide equal freedom by showing that mobility is shaped by citizenship and financial resources. As Shachar (2018) argues, citizenship functions as a valuable asset that creates unequal access to global opportunities. Individuals with greater economic resources are often able to overcome mobility restrictions through investment opportunities, visa programmes, or relocation options. Economic capital also shapes state migration strategies. In DW_A16, Germany's labour shortages are presented as a key reason for attracting skilled migrants. Reforms such as the opportunity card and simplified recognition of qualifications frame migrants as economic contributors who are needed for national development. Overall, the articles present mobility as an unequal resource shaped by both individual wealth and state economic interests.

4.2.2 Social capital: rights and access

The DW articles construct social capital through citizenship, legal recognition, and access to social participation. Migration is presented not only as movement across borders but also as a process of gaining belonging within a community. Germany's citizenship reforms illustrate this process. In DW_A11 and DW_A9, citizenship is presented as a tool of integration. Dual citizenship recognises migrants' existing social ties while encouraging participation in German society. This reflects Bourdieu's (1986) view of social capital as the resources gained through recognised networks and groups. Similarly, DW_A16 shows how legal status can promote inclusion. Moving migrants from 'tolerated status' to residency illustrates how institutional recognition can transform exclusion into participation, which is in line with Soysal's (1994) argument that belonging increasingly depends on access to rights and institutions, not nationality alone. However, the Schengen-related articles highlight unequal access to mobility. The articles DW_A17 and DW_A7 show that EU citizens and non-EU migrants experience different levels of access to European space. Based on all this, we can see that the articles present social capital as shaped by citizenship, residency, and institutional recognition, which influence who can fully participate in European society.

4.2.3 Symbolic capital: European belonging

The DW articles present European citizenship and Schengen membership as forms of symbolic capital linked to recognition, identity, and belonging. For Bourdieu (1986), symbolic capital develops when certain forms of status gain social value and recognition. This

is particularly clear in debates over investment citizenship. In DW_A4 and DW_A5, EU citizenship is presented as more than a legal status. Criticism of Malta's golden passport programme reflects concerns that citizenship loses symbolic value when belonging can be purchased. As Shachar (2018) argues, citizenship holds significant social and economic value, making access to it highly contested. Schengen membership also represents symbolic inclusion. In DW_A16, joining Schengen is portrayed as recognition of belonging within the European project. Croatia's entry represents acceptance and achievement, while the exclusion of Bulgaria and Romania highlights unequal recognition. The tension between openness and exclusion appears in DW_A8 and DW_A20. These articles show that European identity is shaped by both free movement and border control. As Balibar (2004) argues, European borders create inclusion and exclusion by defining who is recognised as belonging. The Western Balkans example further highlights this symbolic dimension. In DW_A18, EU integration is presented not only as political and economic progress but also as a process of gaining recognition as part of Europe. The articles analysed show how passports, citizenship, and Schengen membership function as symbolic capital by providing legitimacy, identity, and belonging, while exclusion from these systems creates symbolic marginalisation.

Table 2 summarises the key lexical choices and metaphors in the DW corpus (A1–A20) to show how citizenship and passports are constructed as forms of economic value, mobility, identity, and security.

Lexical choices	Meaning
<i>golden visa</i> (A4, A13, A14); <i>golden passport</i> (A4, A5, A13); <i>citizenship industry</i> (A13); <i>investment</i> A4, A12, A13); <i>sell citizenship</i> (A5, A11, A13)	Passport/citizenship is constructed as a marketable asset and financial resource.
<i>fast track</i> (A13); <i>guest workers</i> (A11); <i>dual citizenship</i> (A11, A14, A16); <i>opportunity card</i> (A16); <i>skilled workers</i> (A14, A16)	Mobility is framed as economic value; desirable migrants are those who bring skills and labour.
<i>wealthy individuals</i> (A4, A12, A13); <i>foreign currency</i> (A13)	Citizenship is linked to national economic interests and financial gain.
<i>free travel</i> (A3, A12); <i>freedom of movement</i> (A6, A7, A10); <i>borderless Europe</i> (A7)	Passport is represented as a gateway to mobility and social privileges.
<i>passport power</i> (A6, A12); <i>powerful passports</i> (A12); <i>visa-free</i> (A6, A12, A13); <i>hassle-free travel</i> (A12)	Passports function as unequal forms of mobility capital, granting different levels of access.
<i>integration</i> (A3, A7, A8, A9, A16); <i>citizenship rights</i> (A16); <i>residency</i> (A9, A13, A14, A16, A19); <i>family reunification</i> (A16)	Citizenship provides access to social participation, security, and legal recognition.
<i>European identity</i> (A3); <i>EU dream</i> (A7)	Passport symbolises membership and recognition within the European community.
<i>our country</i> (A9, A15, A16); <i>part of our country</i> (A16); <i>integration</i> (A3, A8, A16)	Citizenship discourse constructs inclusion and acceptance into the national community.
<i>security</i> (A3, A4, A7, A8, A13, A17, A18, A20); <i>external borders</i> (A7, A8, A19, A20); <i>protect our borders</i> (A20); <i>threat</i> (A2, A8, A16)	European identity is also constructed through exclusion and the control of outsiders.

<i>second passport</i> (A13); <i>EU Blue Card</i> (A16); <i>escape route</i> (A13); <i>protection</i> (A8, A16, A20)	Passport operates as personal security capital, offering protection from political and economic instability.
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Table 2: Lexical Realisations of Citizenship as Economic, Social, and Symbolic Capital in DW Articles

5. Conclusion

What emerges from this comparative reading of *Klix.ba* and *Deutsche Welle* is not simply a picture of two media outlets covering the same policy area from different national vantage points but a demonstration, played out article by article, of Bourdieu's (1986) central insight that capital does not stay within the boundaries of the field in which it originates. The European passport, as it moves through these forty texts, is shown time and again converting itself from one register into another: money becomes legal status, legal status becomes access, access becomes recognition, and recognition, finally, hardens into something that reads as natural or deserved rather than as the product of historical accident. It is this chain of conversions, more than any single theme, that binds the two corpora together despite their very different starting points. Economic capital sits at the beginning of that chain in both datasets, and it is worth dwelling on how literally this holds. The 'golden passport' schemes covered in both *Klix.ba* (K_A5, K_A17, K_A25, K_A37) and *Deutsche Welle* (DW_A4, DW_A5, DW_A13) are not metaphorical illustrations of citizenship-as-capital; they are the thing itself, stripped of euphemism. A sum of money is paid, and in return a state grants membership in a political community, along with everything that membership carries, namely, freedom of movement, labour-market access, and the surplus of legitimacy such access confers. Bourdieu's (1986) claim that economic capital is 'immediately and directly convertible into money' and can be 'institutionalised in the form of property rights' finds an almost literal illustration here: citizenship itself becomes the property right, purchasable, transferable, and, as both corpora note, eventually revocable once the European Court of Justice intervened. That the Union felt compelled to outlaw these schemes (K_A5; DW_A4, DW_A5) is itself revealing: it is easier to prohibit the sale of citizenship outright than to disentangle citizenship from the economic logic that golden passports merely made explicit. However, economic capital's presence in the two corpora is not confined to these dramatic cases; it runs quietly beneath the more mundane coverage as well. When *Klix.ba* reports on the €20 ETIAS fee (K_A10, K_A30) or the administrative costs of the new Entry/Exit System (K_A6, K_A26), or when it tracks Bosnian citizens acquiring Croatian passports as a 'relocation strategy' oriented toward labour-market access rather than cultural affiliation (K_A19, K_A34, K_A39), the same logic is at work at a smaller scale: mobility is monetised, and the passport functions as what is, in effect, a pre-paid labour permit. *Deutsche Welle's* coverage of Germany's 'opportunity card' and its simplified recognition of foreign qualifications (DW_A16) shows economic capital operating from the opposite direction, not citizens purchasing access to Europe, but Europe, facing labour shortages, actively pricing certain migrants as economically desirable and fast-tracking their inclusion accordingly. In both directions, the passport behaves exactly as Bourdieu predicted capital should: it does not merely reflect existing economic relations, it actively reorganises access to future ones.

What the analysis then traces is how this economic capital does not remain economic for long. It is reinvested, in Bourdieu's sense, into social capital, into membership of the institutional and administrative networks (Schengen, the EU's external border regime, its visa architecture) that *Klix.ba*'s coverage of B&H's ambivalent gatekeeper status (K_A18, K_A20, K_A38, K_A40) and *Deutsche Welle*'s coverage of citizenship reform in Germany (DW_A9, DW_A11) both document from their respective sides of the border. And from there it is reinvested again, into symbolic capital: into the sense, made explicit in *Klix.ba*'s 'eternal waiting room' (K_A1) and 'dark age' (K_A4) framings, and in *Deutsche Welle*'s treatment of Schengen accession as recognition rather than mere administrative reclassification (DW_A16), that possessing the passport is not simply advantageous but a marker of civilisational belonging, while lacking it signals backwardness or exclusion. By the time this conversion is complete, the passport's original economic function has been obscured; what remains visible is only its symbolic residue, which is precisely the mechanism Bourdieu (1991) describes as symbolic violence, namely, the misrecognition of an arbitrary, historically produced hierarchy as a self-evident and legitimate order of things. This, ultimately, is the paradox the paper set out to trace, and the data bear it out with some consistency: media discourse on both sides of the EU's external border, even when explicitly critical of inequality, as in *Deutsche Welle*'s coverage of the Malta ruling or *Klix.ba*'s coverage of the ETIAS fee, still narrates the passport's superior value as the unstated baseline against which everything else is measured. The critique targets the corruption of the system (selling citizenship outright is deemed illegitimate); it rarely targets the underlying premise that citizenship should function as capital in the first place. In this sense, *Klix.ba* and *Deutsche Welle* do not stand outside the phenomenon they report on; they are part of the apparatus by which economic capital's conversion into symbolic legitimacy is made to look like common sense.

The study is limited by its scope, two outlets, forty articles, a four-year window, and a fuller account would need to test whether this pattern of conversion holds across a wider range of European and candidate-country media, and whether audiences receive these framings as naturally as the texts seem to present them. What the present analysis does establish, however, is that the passport's meaning in contemporary media discourse cannot be understood through its legal function alone. It has to be read, following Bourdieu, as capital in motion: economic at its origin, social in its operation, and symbolic in its final, most durable form.

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