



Euromed and the Media

Proposals & Recommendations

1. Information / Visibility

The parallel questions of access to information on the EMP and the visibility of the process have been discussed at length. On the one side there is a sense that the 11 years of actions since the Barcelona process began have produced little in the way of public knowledge about the various efforts and the considerable investment. On the other is a sense that finding information about the EMP is not easy and that it is difficult to track what is being done because the information structures are not easily navigated.

The suggestions for further work in this theme included syndication of materials commissioned by Euromed, the production of Euromed publications by combinations of appointed journalists, establishing a Euromed news agency, and production of a 'whitebook' on journalism to document the current state of the profession in the region across a range of topics including freedom of expression, gender equality, press regulation, etc. This final item has already been the subject of further development.

Proposals for action:

- Syndication of materials commissioned by Euromed: access for all Euromed media interests to materials commissioned under EMP activities. This should be retrospective as far as possible but should be a condition of future commissions.
- Production of Euromed publication as combined exercise: create an editorial team of journalists representing the region to produce a publication on Euromed issues important to journalists. Ensure the freedom to tackle issues selected by the team, free from interference at EU, Euromed or single country level. Also suggested as a bi-partisan activity from training schools and an activity that should be fostered in high schools.
- Provide Euromed information on a single country level: to overcome the fact that journalists in some countries cannot find information they need on their own government actions, particularly in respect of their positions and decisions within the EMP.
- Establish Euromed news agency: specific agency to deal with Euromed issues as resource for North and South alike.

- Open up Euromed process more to media: allow journalists access to detail of processes that take place before the issue of a communiqué.
- ‘White book’ on journalism: document on the current state of journalism, covering the region across a range of topics including freedom of expression, gender equality, press regulation, etc.

2. Training and accreditation

Proposals for action on training were put forward in volume during this process, reflecting very keen interest on the part of training establishments across the region to address matters that they believe could have a positive effect on the profession. Some of the best supported calls for action include listing of training opportunities, research into the comparability of training courses in different countries, looking at the potential for common accreditation systems and setting up exchanges for training purposes.

Other possibilities focused on content. The need to train in safety matters, Information Technology, freedom of expression, ethics and Euromed perspectives were all mentioned in initial discussions: the potential for training to improve intercultural understanding and so help reduce racism and xenophobia in the media was discussed at length in Vienna. The potential for endowing chairs of Euromed studies in journalism schools was also raised.

Proposals for action:

- European Training Foundation hosted meeting in Hungary: ETF proposed hosting of a meeting in Hungary to discuss what the ETF and CEDEFOP could progress to meet the proposals on this theme (already completed).
- Possible Study Visits project: to examine the potential for expanding the existing Cedefop study visits programme to cover journalist interests.
- Investigate potential Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) Training of Trainers Network relevance for journalism: the TNet (Train the Trainers network) is hosted on Cedefop's European training Village. It could be of value as a model in helping journalism trainers work together on a variety of topics.
- Evaluation of EU activities in training and research: to see what EU programmes/projects are already in place and what benefits they might have for the industry.
- Establish chairs of Euro-Mediterranean studies: provide a cost-effective means of developing studies into Euro-Mediterranean matters, specifically in relation to the media, ethics and society. A further proposal on this theme was development of common Euro-Mediterranean diplomas.
- Provide a directory of journalist training in the region: determine what training exists for journalists across the region and what comparative skills result from different approaches.
- Summer schools with Euromed focus: use existing training facilities to support specialist Euromed-themed training during the summer.

- Continuing vocational training for journalists: develop programmes of continuing training for journalism; provide opportunities and encouragement for constant updating of skills.
- Licensing/accreditation study: evaluate different systems of accreditation/licensing for comparability and possible development of common standards.
- Develop online training modules: offer training through online system of specific modules (ethics, standards, gender, etc.)

3. Networking and sharing of experience

There was much positive comment about the beneficial effect of the opportunity to network with peers throughout the process. It was noticeable that work between groups of participants continued beyond the formal sessions of the meetings and sometimes late into the night. If bringing journalists together in discussion were the sole measure of success, Euromed and the Media would be deemed to have achieved its target.

The suggested specifications for continuing dialogue in this way range from an annual meeting on the scale of that which took place at the Dead Sea to a series of smaller meetings reflecting regional concerns or specific issues raised by participants. It has also been suggested that there should be an independent body with the task of organising exchanges on a variety of levels, along with ancillary activities such as offering prizes for journalistic work that supports the aims of the EMP/Neighbourhood Policy.

Proposals for action:

- Continued Euromed and the Media networking: annual conference as per 2005 Dead Sea – as a minimum.
- Twinning/partnership between media: expand journalist knowledge of other approaches/systems/cultures through mutual exchanges of staff.
- Provide means for virtual exchanges: establish means whereby Euromed and the Media participants can maintain contact and exchange information, views and materials on various aspects of operation.
- Media retreats to discuss specific topics: establish series of small, informal meetings for exchange of views on specific topics (IPI model already in action in other areas).
- Create independent ‘foundation’ for Euromed and the Media process: address need for impartiality and provide central direction for the process of consultation by establishing an independent body as coordinator: to be entrusted with professional approach separate from any political inputs.
- Thematic networks: establish networks based on shared interest in content.

4. Journalist safety and security

There was universal agreement across the meetings on the need for action in this area, with much of the discussion backed by examples of imprisonment, harm and even death suffered by media professionals. It was accepted that the topic is a mix of the personal and the political and that action at different levels is essential to achieve the needed improvement.

On a personal level there is much that can be done to train journalists in taking care of their own safety in dangerous reporting situations. Courses already exist in some countries/organisations: investigation is required of whether they are suitable for use by all those interested and how it might be possible for them to be accessed by greater numbers. However, personal training alone is not a complete answer.

Questions of attitudes and culture need to be addressed to create a situation where harming journalists – whether accidental or officially sanctioned – is not tolerated. Demands in this ranged from the need to get authorities to accept responsibility for reporters operating in conflict situations to promoting a culture that does not accept intimidation of journalists by those wishing to control the news agenda. As with all matters of cultural change discussed in this process, finding simple routes to achieve the desired ends is likely to be a challenge. Early investigation of the opportunities that already exist will allow areas requiring new initiatives to be identified.

Proposals for action:

- Training in journalist safety: document what currently exists in training for safety and what is missing: see what can be accessed on a general level to provide regional coverage.
- Statement of ethics on journalist safety: prepare document stating what media professionals should expect in the way of support and protection as they go about their duties: aim to have this adopted as official policy as widely as possible.
- Meetings on journalist safety and security: investigate possibility of current programme accommodating specific meetings on this topic. Investigate others in this area and possibility for cooperation in meetings.
- Convene principal media with journalists working in conflict theatres to assess best practices in matters of safety.
- Country specific directory of legal frameworks (government) and media codes to assess 'red lines'.

5. Freedom of expression and the press / Independent Media

The Cairo focus group meeting was held in the eye of the storm surrounding publication of the Danish cartoons. In consequence, there was extensive discussion of this specific example of potential conflict between free expression and responsible use of such

freedom. Views across the whole spectrum were expressed but discussion continued without extreme positions developing and being allowed to dominate the proceedings. The event demonstrated that, even where divergent views exist, there is the potential for such divergence to be discussed in a positive manner.

The broader aspects of freedom of expression – government and owner interference in what journalists can say, commercial factors inhibiting free discussion by preventing access to media – were discussed along with more personal considerations. The possibility of self-censorship, among those seeking career advancement or being unwilling to raise their profile in a manner that might attract negative attention, was one element where participants in the meetings were asked to look at their own actions as much as the influence of others.

Proposals for action:

- Media accountability systems: International Press Institute work on evaluating accountability of individual media to assist in assessing position vis-à-vis freedom of expression.
- Media country reports: assist in disseminating reports on the state of the media in different countries and in originating such report where they do not exist.
- Media ombudsman: create position of press ombudsman to investigate and document misuse of media, from complaints about treatment in media coverage to abuses of press power.
- Meetings on freedom of expression: arrange specific meetings on this topic alone.
- Training in freedom of expression: seek to extend training on this topic to provide regional coverage.

6. Gender equality

Discussion of gender equality in the media focused on those aspects related to the profession and those that reflected more general social matters. There was concern over the existence of a glass ceiling for women and a gender division in the allocation of staff to specific areas of reporting and broadcasting. There was interest in investigating how women compare with men in terms of work type, positions achieved, pay, etc.

At the same time there is acceptance that women in the media are largely a reflection of women in their specific societies and that tackling the broader inequalities is a different challenge. Further work on specific goals, the research required to support calls for action, and the possibilities of working with other resources will help determine what actions could be proposed in this area.

Proposals for action:

- Study of gender equality in media: examine the challenges faced by women in competing for job in the media.
- Women's Euromed publication: production of regular publication by and for female Euromed journalists, allowing opportunities to consider matters of professional interest.
- Women's Euromed conference: dedicated Euromed conference on women in the media.
- Meetings on gender equality: arrange specific meetings on this topic alone.
- Training in gender equality: seek to extend training on this topic to provide regional coverage.

7. Xenophobia and racism in the media

This discussion ranged over questions of what specifically constitutes xenophobic reporting – as opposed to statement of fact in relation to racial/religious groups – and whether individual journalists are capable of setting or fighting editorial agendas. This

problem was acknowledged but it was also accepted that sales/audiences could be boosted by playing on fears among certain sectors of society and that commercial pressures were difficult to combat.

The seminar on racism and xenophobia in the media, held in Vienna in May 2006 in partnership with the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) and the Austrian Presidency of the EU, allowed detailed discussion of this topic. Specific factors addressed included the potential for regulation and self-regulation, the potential for improving intercultural understanding and the potential for cooperation between the media and government/NGO operations.

Proposals for action:

- International media working group against racism and Xenophobia: International Federation of Journalists initiative to re-launch international campaign against racism and intolerance.
- A workshop for editors-in-chief/commissioning editors to discuss xenophobia, etc. at the highest media level: examine the criminal justice system as it applies to racism in the media: provide comparative information as the basis for a potential common approach.
- White paper on laws, policies and practices in region: examine the criminal justice system as it applies to racism in the media; provide comparative information as the basis for a potential common approach.
- Training on diversity/representation of minorities: investigate the existence of current courses on appropriate depiction of minorities in the media: see whether existing materials can be offered on a broader basis.
- Produce manuals, toolkits, glossaries and other self-learning material on

associated matters for journalists.

- Language assessment/training for media: consider language used across region in relation to racist reporting and establish document explaining positive and negative language use.
- Affirmative action to offset stereotyping: dissemination of materials specifically aimed to providing positive images of those seen as stereotypical 'others'. Additional suggestion that this be done at school level also.
- Networking on reporting diversity, ethics in practice and ethical journalism: arrange specific meetings on this topic alone
- Self-regulation to become visible to the public: formulate of means of ensuring that the public sees and understands what self-regulation exists.

8. Reporting Terrorism

Reflection on media positions

- Journalists should resist efforts to assign them a role on any issue.
- Journalists must have a clear idea of what they perceive their role to be and not readily take on the positions of government.
- Media should not label causes but provide contexts for current affairs, promoting understanding.
- Journalists must oppose censorship in all its forms, even in the guise of 'anti-terror' legislation.
- Journalists are divided on the need for specific codes of conduct but agree that adherence to any codes should be completely self-regulatory and not enforced through legislation.
- Journalists are divided on whether they should engage with militant groups and whether this constitutes providing them with 'publicity'.
- Journalists should be aware of the dangers of stereotyping, understand and respect other cultural/political orientations, and apply norms of common humanity to reporting.
- Need for greater ethical awareness among photographers and editors about the use of images of victims and the damage inflicted by terrorist attacks. To photograph, design and illustrate is to select, just as in direct reportage.

Reflection on government positions

- Greater transparency is needed within the media as well as within government.
- Terrorist groups are very good at propaganda and journalists need to be aware that they can be used for such purposes.
- Journalists should strive to ensure they are telling all sides of the story or, at least, be honest about which side of the story they are examining.

- Despite filters used by some states, it is difficult to effect internet regulation – even if this were desirable.

Reflection on possible actions

- The creation of forums for peer review, so journalists representing northern and southern media can examine each other's work.
- Forums through which journalists can exchange information about different political, religious and governmental issues.
- Development of handbooks, guidelines or information packs on specific issues to act as reporting tools within the news room.
- More information through various EU programmes, to explore the diversity of the Euromediterranean region.
- Foster a sense of inclusion among minorities by recruiting from minorities and by exchange arrangements between the North and South.
- More systematic contact between the media North and South, academics and think tanks; pooled syndication arrangements between North and South.
- Curricula for journalism schools on reporting diversity.
- Curricula for journalism training schools to include an awareness of peace journalism, offering a stronger voice to the moderate majority.