

Racism, Xenophobia and the Media

Towards respect and
understanding of all
religions and cultures

An EU seminar
in the framework of the
Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
Vienna, 22-23 May 2006

organised by:

- Austrian Presidency of the European Union
- European Commission
- European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)



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*Racism is man's gravest threat
to man – the maximum of hatred
for a minimum of reason*

Abraham J. Heschel

DISCLAIMER: This report was compiled and edited by the European Commission and the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). The opinions and information it contains do not necessarily reflect the policy and position of the European Commission, nor of the EUMC.

Foreword

The opening months of 2006 witnessed a heated debate on the role and responsibility of not just the media, but also political and societal actors, in intercultural relations. The so-called “cartoon crisis”, following the publication of cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper, triggered an intensive international debate about freedom of expression, hate speech and the impact of the media on intercultural relations.

However, this debate should go beyond recent events and be broadened to discuss the long-standing issues of racist and xenophobic discourse and other forms of intolerance including against religious and non-religious beliefs. These challenges have concerned Euro-Mediterranean partners since the signing of the Barcelona declaration in 1995.

Protecting people from racist and xenophobic discourse is a basic principle of any democratic society. Hate speech undermines free expression: hate speech and incitement are deliberately intended to cause harm to people or groups of people. Protection from hate speech has to go hand in hand with the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression – only together do they make democracy meaningful.

Beyond the final recourse of legal action against racist discourse, what other avenues can be explored? Can we not work with and encourage the media to look at opportunities to improve reporting and editorial standards, and implement its own codes of conduct? There is much to be gained by all actors through the media working more closely with civil society and faith-based organisations.

Open and inclusive dialogue is the best way to address the challenge of racism and xenophobia and of promoting freedom of expression on the one hand and respect for religious beliefs on the other. That is what the Euro-Mediterranean seminar on ‘Xenophobia, Racism and the Media’ set out to do. It offered participants the stage for that dialogue while also encouraging them to put forward practical proposals to deal with the many related problems of racism and xenophobia. This report summarises those discussions and proposals.

They now need to be followed up. Therefore we commit ourselves to work towards that end, and in close partnership with all stakeholders involved – journalists and media organisations – consider how, together, we can turn these proposals into actions.

Hans Winkler
Secretary of State
Foreign Ministry
Austria

Benita Ferrero-Waldner
European Commissioner
External Relations &
European Neighbourhood Policy

Beate Winkler
Director
EUMC

Executive Summary

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has for a long time promoted dialogue between cultures in the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries.¹ Along with the Partnership's political and economic objectives, efforts are constantly being made to foster intercultural and interfaith dialogue. At the same time ways have been sought to strengthen initiatives aimed at fighting racism and xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, including against religious or non-religious beliefs. From the outset, the 'Euromed and the Media' initiative highlighted xenophobia and racism as one of the key areas for attention and action in its dialogue and engagement with leading media practitioners from the region.

These concerns led to the Euro-Mediterranean Conference "Racism, Xenophobia and the Media: Towards respect and understanding of all religions and cultures", held on 22-23 May 2006 in Vienna under the auspices of the Austrian Presidency of the EU in co-operation with the European Commission and the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC).

Over 100 leading journalists, media practitioners and civil society representatives from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East convened to exchange views on the shared problem of racism or hate discourse, and to develop pragmatic and workable suggestions, and to explore together how media could have a positive influence on intercultural relations. There was representation from almost all EU countries and all of the EU's ten Mediterranean partners.

The topics under discussion included: improving reporting standards and accountability of journalists; self-regulation policies in the EU and in South-Mediterranean countries; impact of media reporting on ethnic and religious minorities; negative stereotyping (deliberately or inadvertently); recruitment practices in the media industry; balancing freedom of expression with the protection from hate speech; and making better use of expertise and experience of civil society. After an open exchange of views, the conference participants mapped out, inter alia, improvements in journalism practice and structures that might enhance understanding about cultural differences. There was consensus that freedom of expression comes with responsibility. While there was awareness about the role of regulatory systems, the emphasis throughout was on effective self-regulation through voluntary media standard bodies. There were also calls from journalists to learn (more) about cultural and religious diversity as part of their training.

¹ The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership comprises 35 members: 25 EU Member States and 10 Mediterranean Partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey). Libya has observer status since 1999.

The present report summarises the identified actions and activities which can be taken forward in a positive practical way to address the issues. These findings will now become part of the portfolio of recommendations of the 'Euromed and the Media' exercise, for continued development and potential transfer to future programmes and projects. Where appropriate, they will also be presented to relevant international organisations and fora.

The key recommendations focused on the following areas and centred on a common thread running throughout the conference, how to report in a more comprehensive and balanced way on issues which impact on race, ethnicity and faith while respecting freedom of expression and editorial independence:

- better representation of minorities in newsrooms through targeted training and recruitment;
- more diversity in mainstream and non-fiction programmes;
- making training in intercultural understanding a standard component of journalist education;
- networking and sharing of information and best practice among media from different regions (twinning and exchange programmes, training, forums and regular contact);
- more dialogue between ethnic, religious and cultural groups and the media to improve the quality of reporting, to be fully aware of the sensitivities around intercultural relations, and to avoid negative stereotyping and language inciting to hatred;
- improved self-regulation and more own initiatives by media to promote ethical and professional standards in reporting;
- a greater emphasis on comprehensive reporting, including minority voices and highlighting positive intercultural initiatives and examples of good practice;
- continued European level support for intercultural dialogue and inter-faith initiatives;
- a forum for media owners to discuss racism, xenophobia and related issues and the impact of media reporting on intercultural relations.

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1. Background

While the subject matter of the conference was not new in Euro-Mediterranean affairs, it was brought into sharper focus after the domino effect of events and reactions in the wake of the 'cartoons controversy', following the publication of cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper in late 2005.

The original conference concept had foreseen discussions to be held solely at technical level, and for media practitioners and civil society organisations only. However, the political upgrading that followed in the wake of the 'cartoons controversy' caused a rethink. It was decided to append a public session to the proceedings in order to allow an active political and public debate and to give the conference, and its subject matter, appropriate visibility. It permitted political representatives, panellists and the public to engage in an animated debate. The working groups were still the private preserve of the media and civil society whose proceedings were conducted under Chatham House rules.² The public session attracted a full house of approximately 200 participants, while the following expert discussions gathered around 100 leading journalists, media practitioners and civil society representatives from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. There was a broad representation from almost all 35 countries participating in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUT

The Euro-Mediterranean Conference provided policy-makers and media practitioners with a forum in which to share perspectives on different and common approaches to confront racism and xenophobia - and to promote respect towards all cultural and religious groups - in the media. The seminar was built around three areas developed as a result of earlier discussions in the Euromed region:

1. Regulation (legislation and enforcement mechanisms);
2. Self-regulation (codes of conduct, editorial standards, complaints mechanisms);
3. Structural approaches (diversity training, recruitment, representation of cultural and religious groups in media programmes).

The programme of the conference was divided between plenary sessions and expert working groups. The opening plenary laid the groundwork for the discussion in the working group sessions. Working groups had a Chair and a Rapporteur responsible for reporting back to plenary and summarising the working group's key conclusions which in turn formed the basis for the general conference conclusions, summarised in this report.

The seminar identified actions and activities which can be taken forward in a positive practical way to tackle the shared problem of racism or hate discourse and the issue of religious and cultural diversity in the media. Participants were able to discuss and suggest initiatives in EU and South-Mediterranean countries both at an individual level and in areas of joint cooperation, taking into consideration commonalities and differences between the countries and regions.

² The Chatham House rule reads as follows: "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed." The Chatham House Rule originated at Chatham House with the aim of providing anonymity to speakers and to encourage openness and the sharing of information. It is now used throughout the world as an aid to free discussion. Source: Chatham House website: www.riia.org/index.php?id=14

2. Conference proceedings

2.1. OPENING SPEECHES BY THE ORGANISERS³

The conference was opened with speeches by the Austrian Secretary of State Hans Winkler, by the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and by the Director of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) Beate Winkler.

Hans Winkler, Secretary of State, Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Austria:

“Change of attitude and social transformation will happen only if we can open our minds and hearts through education and consciousness”

“Freedom of expression and the freedom of the press are the hard-won fruits of years of struggle in Europe. They are fundamental rights of a functioning democracy. They must under no circumstances be put at risk. Those freedoms allow controversial ideas and discussions. The right to freedom of expression must however be exercised with responsibility especially when protection of the rights and feelings of others are involved,” said Austrian State Secretary Hans

Winkler in opening the conference. “Freedom of expression and the mutual understanding and respect for the cultures and religions of others are not incompatible but complementary. Our main goal has to be a credible commitment of a democratic and pluralist Europe to the dialogue of cultures and civilizations.”

Winkler furthermore stressed that “change of attitude and social transformation will happen only if we can open our minds and hearts through education and consciousness.” The Austrian Secretary of State suggested: “One way to achieve a higher degree of objectivity and to foster understanding of the situation of members of minority groups would be to hire more journalists who belong to minority groups and support participation of immigrants in the media. This would give them a platform for self-representation, which might help to reduce prejudices and stereotypes that exist in their regard. At the same time, it might support minorities and in particular immigrants in their search for identity.”



**Hans Winkler, Secretary of State,
Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Austria**

³ For the full text of the speeches see Annex 2

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, European Commission:

Europe was only too well aware, from its own bitter experience, about the threat that racism, xenophobia and intolerance represent, the Commissioner said in her opening remarks. From the cataclysm of intolerance that engulfed twentieth-century Europe the European Union was born. And today Europe is united by her diversity and determination to prevent such a threat overwhelming it again.

That is not, however, to deny that problems still exist. Europe still struggles to overcome the “oldest hatred” on its continent: anti-Semitism, she added. There still remains a lot of work to be done to fight prejudice in the media and society as a whole, whether that be Islamophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of religious or ethnic bias. The public’s concerns and fears are often prompted by perceptions – imagined or false. She cited the supposed danger to jobs and security posed by migrants, and added that migration is of necessity high on the EU agenda, while emphasising the positive elements of migration.

In a call to action to the gathered media, while underlining their pivotal role and given their power to shape societal attitudes, she urged them to act against racism and xenophobia.

On the subjects of freedom of expression and freedom of religion Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner stressed that both freedoms are non-negotiable, the latter a fundamental right of individuals and communities. Freedom of expression is a central tenet of Europe’s values, but its preservation depends on responsible behaviour by individuals. By extension, it was not for public authorities or the European Commission to regulate the media or impose codes of ethics. Regulation should come from within the media.

“There still remains a lot of work to be done to fight prejudice in the media and society as a whole, whether that be Islamophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of religious or ethnic bias”



Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, European Commission

Closing her address with a reference to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008, the Commissioner underlined the need to reach out beyond the elites, to the man and woman on the street in the fight against racism and xenophobia. The media would play a key role in achieving that.

Beate Winkler, Director of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC):

“Dialogue between media, civil society, faith groups and policy-makers, is a central way forward to reduce racism,” said Beate Winkler. “The EUMC reports on Antisemitism, on Islamophobia as well as our Annual Reports underline that media impact on the situation of cultural, religious or ethnic minorities. They can reflect and fuel existing intolerance in the public. This must be addressed. Protecting people from racist and xenophobic discourse is a basic principle of any democratic society. Therefore, all EU Member States maintain certain legitimate limits to freedom of expression in their legal system.

Yet, the media is also our major ally in further developing a broad public awareness about how cultural differences enrich our societies and everyday life. Reflecting cultural diversity in mainstream programmes, employing journalists of different cultural backgrounds, and intercultural training of journalists, can reinforce this positive role that the media can play.” Beate Winkler made three concrete proposals for further discussion at the seminar:

- to encourage media to follow the example of some public broadcasters and establish diversity desks that can advance these issues internally;
- to launch and support specific recruitment and training initiatives for members of minority groups which are underrepresented in the media; and
- to expand existing media training programmes and to include diversity education to help journalists and editors develop a better understanding of issues relating to racism and xenophobia, as well as religious and cultural differences.

“The media is also our major ally in further developing a broad public awareness about how cultural differences enrich our societies and everyday life”



Beate Winkler, Director of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)

2.2. KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE UN SPECIAL RAPPOR- TEUR ON RACISM

The opening speeches were followed by a keynote address by **Doudou Diène**, *United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance*:

In his speech, Doudou Diène highlighted the following trends relating to racism in Europe: the political instrumentalisation and banalisation of racism, characterised by the growing influence of racist political platforms of the extreme right in the political programmes of democratic parties; the intellectual legitimisation of racism by scholars and the media; and the increase of violent manifestations of racism and xenophobia, as witnessed in the recent killings in Belgium. According to him, besides the resurgence of old forms of racism against Blacks, Arabs and Jews, new forms of discrimination are appearing, as reflected in particular in the increase of political, legal and popular expressions of intolerance and discrimination towards Muslims in Europe, especially since the 9/11 attacks against the US.

Mr. Diène identified the new targets of racism: foreigners, migrants and asylum seekers who are being criminalised and not treated according to international conventions. According to him, the most worrisome underlining factor is the non-recognition by Europeans elites, both political and intellectual, of the depth and significance of the identity crisis that European societies are undergoing. The clash between the old national identities, defined ethnically and religiously by education and history books, and the reality of the dynamics of multiculturalism in European societies lies at the root of the

resurgence of racism and xenophobia in Europe. The Danish cartoon crisis is an illustration of this identity crisis. This identity crisis is a neglected issue on the European agenda.

Diène spoke of a “strip-tease” approach to integration in Europe; foreigners, migrants, asylum seekers are requested to enter “naked” in Europe, that is, without any cultural, religious or even ethnic specificity or identity – only then would they be accepted. Diène expressed understanding for the fact that European countries seek to impose certain values and norms. Yet, he called on Europeans to recognise and accept the fundamental reality that these people are not coming from the cosmos but from rich cultural and spiritual backgrounds and consequently that integration should be inspired by the spirit of intercultural dialogue, of giving and taking, and practising cultural diversity.

For Diène, the role of the media, in the full respect of freedom of expression and information, should be:

- To take more into account the historical depth of racism and xenophobia, and in particular of Islamophobia in Europe;
- To contextualise the resurgence of violent manifestations of racism and xenophobia, in particular the banalisation and political instrumentalisation of racism and xenophobia, and the threat that racism poses to the democratic process;
- To oppose the intellectual legitimisation of prejudice and hatred;
- To reflect more profoundly, editorially and structurally, the multicultural dynamics of European societies.

2.3. PANEL DISCUSSION AND PLENARY DEBATE

After the opening speeches and the keynote address, the issue of media and racism was addressed by a panel discussion with the following participants:

- **Isil Gachet**, *Executive Secretary, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Council of Europe*
- **Miklós Haraszti**, *OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media*
- **David Gardner**, *International Affairs Writer, Financial Times*
- **Aidan White**, *General Secretary, International Federation of Journalists*

The discussion was moderated by Gerfried Sperl, Editor-in-Chief of the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard*.

Isil Gachet, Executive Secretary to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), referred in her statement to the work of ECRI, as an institution that “undertakes activities aimed at ensuring that the right to freedom from discrimination is enjoyed by all persons present on the territory of the Council of Europe.” Gachet pointed to three main areas for which ECRI has recommended measures and action: (1) legislation, (2) self-regulation and (3) structural approaches. According to her, these three areas must be approached in an integrated way. Gachet stressed that acts of racism needed to be criminalised. Freedom of expression may be restricted with a view to combatting racism in accordance with article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), as confirmed by case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. ECRI’s General

Policy Recommendation N° 7 offers guidelines regarding national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination.⁴ It also relates to provisions against racist expression. These do not address the media in a specific manner, but are to be applied generally, whether they are breached by the media or otherwise. The latter shall, however, only be the case, if offences are committed intentionally. She stressed: “This is perhaps the best safeguard for those who fear for the balance between the different fundamental rights.” In her final remark, Gachet pointed out that “it is entirely possible to combat racism while respecting freedom of expression.”

The second panellist was **Miklós Haraszti**, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. One of the Representative’s specific tasks is to fight intolerance in the media. At the 2004 OSCE Ministerial Council in Sofia, however, he was given the additional task of combatting potential misuse of hate speech regulations in silencing legitimate dissent or alternative opinions. “The problem is that we don’t have universally applicable measurements for what is legitimate speech limitation. At the same time, there are a growing number of countries that, all in good faith, pass specific speech regulations.” That development can undermine freedom of expression as a universal value. In his intervention, Haraszti stressed that preserving dignity should not contradict freedom of speech, but be part of it. According to Haraszti, freedom of expression is a constitutionally secured form of tolerance, which historically, sociologically, and statistically is intertwined with freedom of religion. In this respect, he stressed the importance of building tolerance through intercultural dialogue.

⁴ ECRI general policy recommendation N°7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination. Adopted by ECRI on 13 December 2002. http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/ecri/

David Gardner, International Affairs Writer at the Financial Times, referred to the cartoons controversy and pointed out that, as a matter of principle, the Danish newspaper had the right to publish the cartoons, irrespective of how crude or stupid these may have been. He spoke against the political instrumentalisation of the “cartoons affair”. He expanded on the manipulation of the controversy and the interplay between certain governments and the ‘public’ demonstration of anger. It seemed to him that some governments were happy to see anger directed at the cartoons and their publishers as a justification of their own approach of keeping a tight rein on what could be printed. He emphasised the irony that the freedom of speech debate ultimately fed the wishes of many who wanted to see that freedom curtailed. Also, according to Gardner, freedom of speech should be regarded as an important right; however, it should not be abused. At the same time, he underlined that religions needed to accept that they can become subjects of satire.

Aidan White, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, addressed the question of how media can be encouraged to positive action. In this regard, he pointed to the important role of political parties and leaders for setting the tone in discussions. According to White, politicians are to be held responsible for addressing the rise in racism, xenophobia, Antisemitism and Islamophobia. White agreed with Gardner that freedom of expression included the right to offend. But according to him, freedom of expression is not just about the right to publish; it is equally about the right not to publish. He stressed that in the end hardly one per cent of publications in Europe decided to publish the controversial cartoons. He warned against increasing government interference in media affairs and insisted that regulating ethics was the collective business of professional journalists alone. However, media should be encouraged to positive action in order

“Media should be encouraged to positive action in order to remove stereotypes, prevent fuelling racism and sensationalist reporting”

Aidan White, *General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists*

to remove stereotypes, prevent fuelling racism and sensationalist reporting. In this respect, White stressed the importance of dialogue with and among the media. According to White, “we do not need more positive images in the media; rather we need to tell the (whole) truth. We need the media to express truth and independence.” White concluded that there is a lack of context and lack of quality in parts of the media. Therefore, the media needed to launch an ethical journalism initiative that could reinforce ethics and credibility, improve the quality of journalism, reassert editorial independence and promote excellence in training and recruitment.

In the ensuing public plenary, representatives of Euromed countries, panellists and the public engaged in an animated debate. While the cartoon controversy and its effects was to the fore in the discussion there were diverging views regarding the responsibility of the media and of politicians for the escalation of events. However, a consensual theme was the need for journalists to realise and consider the political context in which they work and report.

This closed the public part of the conference and the following working group sessions were held at expert level between media professionals, civil society organisations and cultural/religious minority representatives.

2.4. WORKING GROUP SESSIONS

2.4.1. Regulation and editorial policy in EU countries

Bettina Peters, Director of Programmes at the European Journalism Centre, chaired the working group. Keynote presentations were given by William Gore, Assistant Director of the UK Press Complaints Commission, and Fuad Nahdi, publisher of the Muslim magazine Q-News in the UK.

The working group reviewed experiences and challenges with regards to:

- Regulation (laws, statutory bodies);
- Self-regulation (voluntary bodies in media industry); and
- Editorial practices and initiatives – what the media can do.

The working group discussed existing initiatives of statutory regulatory bodies, specifically referring to the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (www.epra.org), the Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (www.ririm.org) and the Broadcasting Regulation and Cultural Diversity (www.brccd.net).

In developing recommendations, the working group agreed on the need to consider the context when talking about racism, xenophobia and the media. This context was seen to be characterised by fragile community relations, a volatile political environment which created sensitivities and suspicion, and a perceived conflict between the West and Islam. According to the participants, other influencing factors include a crisis of European identity and changes within the media industry itself (less mainstream, narrow cast, bloggers, higher competition, etc.).

2.4.2. Regulation and editorial policy in the South-Mediterranean countries

Ramez Maluf, Director of the Beirut Institute of Media Arts, chaired the working group. Keynote presentations were given by Ibrahim Nawar from Arab Press Freedom Watch and Barbara Surk, Middle East correspondent with Delo newspaper.

Thematically the working group covered the same issues for the South-Mediterranean countries as did working group 1 for the EU. With regards to the regional context, the working group identified five major deficits:

- Legal environment (press freedom, licensing systems);
- Almost state monopoly given to broadcasting media;
- Absence of press associations/journalist unions;
- Lack of self-regulatory schemes/frameworks;
- Professional practice does not reflect diversity of opinions within civil society.



Seville Charter of Audiovisual Mediterranean Operators

<http://www.copeam.org/foglia.jsp?id=236>

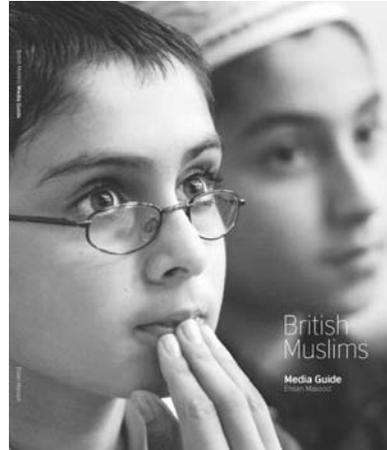
In identifying suggestions for improvements and recommendations, the working group also discussed the situation in the EU where it was felt that the media was conveying a stereotypical portrayal of different religions and cultural groups. The need for more knowledge transfer and the exchange of experiences between “North” and “South” was a key message coming out of this working group.

In response to the lack of self-regulatory schemes, COPEAM (Conference of Audiovisual Mediterranean Operators) established the Seville Charter (7 May 2005) containing self-commitments by broadcasters from northern and southern Mediterranean countries (<http://www.copeam.org>). The Charter has so far been signed by 26 Euro-Mediterranean radio and TV public broadcasters.

2.4.3. Cultural diversity in media programme and structures

Anastasia Crickley, Chairperson of the EUMC Management Board, chaired the working group. Keynote presentations came from Noha Mellor, Senior Lecturer at the University of East London, from Michael Jempson, Director of MediaWise Trust, and from Edouard Pellet, Delegate for Diversity and Integration at France Télévisions.

The working group discussed the representation of cultural and religious minorities in the media. It identified barriers to cultural diversity in media programmes and structures, and developed suggestions for improvements. Recruitment policy and diversity management in the media industry was a particular focus of the discussion. In this context, the working group heard from one of the keynote speakers about positive experiences with introducing a diversity desk at a national public broadcaster. The working group also discussed the importance of giving



The “British Muslim Media Guide”
http://www.fairuk.org/docs/British_Muslims_Media_Guide.pdf

ethnic and cultural minorities a voice in the media, including through alternative media but mostly by gaining access to mainstream media. Lastly, the need for more media education and international media dialogue about cultural and religious differences was highlighted.

2.4.4. Relations between media, civil society and institutional mechanisms to combat racism & xenophobia

Dr. Traugott Schoefthaller, Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures, chaired the working group. Keynote presentations were given by Zeynep Tugrul from the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers & Migrants (Turkey) and David Meyer, Executive Board member of the Centre Européen Juif d’Information.

The working group discussed how to introduce the perspectives of people with minority background and faith communities in the media and how a constructive relationship can be

WORKING GROUP CONCLUSIONS

Each working group developed practical recommendations on how to make improvements in the areas discussed. These recommendations are summarised as proposals for action in the conclusions section of this report.

2.5. CLOSING KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The conference closed with a keynote address by **Thomas Hammarberg**, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights:

Drawing on his own professional experience as a journalist, Thomas Hammarberg called on political institutions to understand better journalists' professional ethics. Journalists needed to be wary of two main external threats undermining their independence: censorship and economic interest. Therefore, their professional instinct would be to oppose instrumentalisation for any specific political or social goal – even if they were desirable: “Journalists do not like to be megaphones of certain political interests. Yet, they are happy to contribute to positive developments simply by being good journalists.” Hammarberg accepted that ethical standards were the prerogative of journalists themselves. However, he saw the need to evaluate how effective self-regulation and voluntary bodies (complaints councils, media ombudsmen) had been. Hammarberg recognised the sensitivity of finding the right balance between freedom of expression and freedom of religion, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights. According to him, more clarity is needed to define what constitutes a legitimate restriction of freedom of expression for the protection of the rights of others. He considered that more such



IOM Resource Pack for Journalists
<http://www.emn.at/media/>

built between civil society and the media. The working group discussed cultural sensitivities regarding language used in public and media discourse. The working group heard from one of the keynote speakers about the misconceptions associated with refugees which can be a result of media coverage, such as failure to distinguish between refugees and economic migrants. Additionally, the working group heard about examples of good practice and initiatives between members of Jewish and Muslim communities. In this context, it was highlighted that such initiatives do not receive sufficient coverage in the media. This was to some extent ascribed to the inability of civil society organisations to create newsworthy material for media. The working group considered inter-cultural dialogue, and media's role in it to be the key to reducing stereotypical images of different religious and cultural groups.

cases must be brought in front of the European Court on Human Rights in order to define these limits through case-law.

The Human Rights Commissioner concluded that racist discourse in the media could be confronted by activities in four interrelated areas:

1. Strengthening human rights education;
2. Countering xenophobic discourse in political campaigning;
3. Encouraging NGOs to feed the media on human rights issues; and
4. More dialogue to improve mutual understanding for cultural differences.

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3. Conclusions, recommendations and proposals for action

3.1. PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION BY MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

Strengthening self-regulation and ethical standards

Voluntary bodies of media organisations can play a constructive role in self-regulating the industry and reinforcing ethical standards while respecting editorial independence. They can monitor compliance with existing codes of conduct and adjudicate citizen complaints. To ensure that press complaints bodies, media ombudsman and other self-regulatory bodies are effective, participants suggest that media organisations:

- Ensure that self-regulation is user-friendly and based on a clear code and an easy, free-of-charge complaints procedure; that self-regulatory bodies act quickly and transparently and have the support of the media industry so that decisions are credibly enforced;
- Make self-regulation more visible to the public. More coordination and publicising at European level coupled with more dialogue among self-regulatory bodies on both sides of the Mediterranean;
- Share European knowledge and experiences of self-regulatory systems with media in the South-Mediterranean countries;
- Raise awareness among journalists and editors about existing codes and ethical standards.

Ensuring diversity of the workforce in the media industry

Diversity in the workforce will not automatically lead to a better representation of minority con-



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The workshops led to concrete and practical recommendations on how to tackle the shared problem of racism or hate discourse and how to promote inter-cultural understanding and respect.

The summary below lists the main proposals for action, addressed to the various stakeholders.

This summary cannot do justice to the regional and national specificities, which were represented in the working groups. Therefore some of the more general recommendations may not be equally relevant for all countries in the Euromed region. The summary is intended to provide an overview of the action that participants deemed necessary in the region as a whole.

cerns in mainstream programmes. However, having more members of ethnic, cultural or religious minorities succeed in the media will ensure that the industry reasonably reflects the diversity in society. Multicultural human resources can also be a factor in media's economic success as they enable media to cater for an increasingly diverse audience. Participants encourage mainstream media:

- To make use of provisions in anti-discrimination legislation, where existing, and to enhance the number of minority journalists through equal opportunities policies coupled with positive action (e.g. targeted recruitment, bursaries, training);
- To introduce diversity desks with the responsibility to undertake diversity audits and to develop diversity action programmes for the management;
- Investigate the potential for making intercultural competence a mandatory job requirement for media professionals.

Engaging with civil society and minority groups in programme production

There is a need for better understanding between civil society and media on issues relating to cultural and religious differences. Engaging with minority groups in particular will help the media to improve the quality of reporting, to be fully aware of the sensitivities around intercultural relations, and to avoid negative stereotyping. Participants recommend to media professionals:

- To make full use of the diversity in sources of information and to give minority communities and the subjects of reports a voice (i.e. refugees, immigrants, religious groups);
- To develop programme formats on members of different communities and their daily lives (non-fiction);

- To show diversity as a normal feature of society in popular programmes (fiction).

Dialogue and cooperation between media professionals of different cultures

Media professionals need to continue discussing editorial standards with regards to intercultural relations. International exchanges raise awareness on restraints on freedom of expression in different societies and enhance professional solidarity between journalists. Participants suggest to media organisations:

- To create a forum for media owners to discuss racism and xenophobia issues and the impact of media reporting on intercultural relations;
- To promote the exchange of good practice of responsible and ethical journalism and to discuss how to avoid language that incites prejudice, hostility and inter-community tensions (including in consultation with community leaders);
- To adopt a "Diversity charter", a declaration with specific commitments by media (with political backing), and annually report on progress (on a designated "Diversity Day");
- To use and expand international twinning programmes between media professionals, with a focus on young journalists to ensure that tomorrow's media practitioners are exposed to different cultures;
- To engage in international co-productions that can enhance intercultural understanding;
- To give more access and link to Southern experts in Northern media as special columnists, commentators, etc.;
- To institutionalise Euromed media cooperation by establishing secretariats, networks or specific information tools (e.g. a newsletter for female journalists).

3.2. PROPOSALS FOR ACTION BY JOURNALIST TRAINING INSTITUTIONS AND PROFESSIONAL BODIES

Supporting training and diversity education for journalists and editors

Excellence in training and education of journalists should reinforce professional standards and fight ignorance about cultural differences and concerns. Participants encourage journalist training institutions (e.g. schools of journalism) and journalist professional bodies (associations and unions):

- To identify gaps in teaching programmes and to develop specific training initiatives to improve support for quality education on racism issues. Training initiatives should be targeted towards editors, practising journalists, professors of journalism and self-regulatory bodies;
- To make diversity training a standard element of journalist training curricula, including learning about religious and cultural differences;
- To reach out to minority groups and encourage minority youth to pursue journalism as a career (e.g. through bursaries);
- To develop training programmes that bring professionals from the “North” to the “South” and vice versa;
- Produce manuals, toolkits, glossaries, and other self-learning material for journalists (for example: ‘Online Tool for Journalists Reporting on Migration’, www.emn.at/media).

3.3. PROPOSALS FOR ACTION BY CIVIL SOCIETY / MINORITY GROUPS

Building media capacities in civil society

Civil society organisations and minority groups can make their voices heard in the media if they succeed in developing pro-active communication strategies and provide journalists with consistent and reliable information. This will also help in countering the standard portrayal of cultural communities as monolithic blocs. Participants propose that civil society:

- Build mature media relations by designating and training specialised spokespersons who can explain the issues in journalistic jargon and can speak on behalf of minority communities and vulnerable groups;
- Produce media guides on the diverse groups in society with background, sources, reliable data etc. (example: ‘British Muslims: Media Guide’, http://www.fairuk.org/docs/British_Muslims_Media_Guide.pdf);
- Develop and support media initiatives from within civil society – as alternative sources of information to mainstream media;
- Encourage minority youth to pursue journalism as a career.

Strengthening media monitoring capacity of civil society

Civil society can play a key role as media watchdogs. Participants recommend:

- To develop skills and capacity to monitor media reporting and to interact with complaints bodies (ombudsmen, equality bodies, press councils) to report cases of racism or hate discourse.

3.4. PROPOSALS FOR ACTION BY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Developing and publicising innovative interfaith initiatives

Religious leaders have a high moral standing in their respective communities. Therefore, they can play an important, conciliatory role in interfaith and intercultural relations. Innovative interfaith initiatives can also offer newsworthy feature stories for the media. Participants propose that religious community leaders:

- Undertake twinning projects among synagogues, churches and mosques and support newsletter exchanges between places of worship;
- Create exhibitions on other faiths in places of worship;
- Continue with intercultural and interfaith initiatives and publicise these among one's congregations.

3.5. PROPOSALS FOR SUPPORT BY EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND FOUNDATIONS

Providing support to media research and networking

European/international institutions and foundations can facilitate the process of dialogue between media professionals and civil society groups in a meaningful way. International seminars, conferences and workshops improve the exchange of knowledge on different cultures and values between regions and support transmitting this to the broader population. Participants encourage European/international institutions and foundations:

- To organise a workshop / roundtable for editors-in-chief and commissioning editors from all 35 Euromed countries to discuss racism and xenophobia at the highest media level;
- To fund the publication of a White Paper for media highlighting laws, policies and practises relating to regulation and diversity;
- To support the production by Euromed media of a White Paper on common standards on journalism;
- To support networking and training initiatives such as reporting diversity, ethics in practice and ethical journalism initiatives across borders;
- To continue journalist exchanges and media initiatives such as the Euromed Journalist Prize on Cultural Diversity;
- To fund research examining the presence and

form of discriminatory discourse in the media and the impact of such discourse on public perceptions and attitudes;

- To support interfaith and intercultural initiatives and projects.

Creating an enabling environment for good editorial practice by the media

Political institutions are responsible for creating a political and legal framework that promotes diversity in the media and works to curb racism. The basic legal framework is in place, and includes, inter alia, the European Convention on Human Rights (art. 10 in particular), the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, and in the EU, its anti-discrimination legislation. This needs to

be complemented with transparent and effective media regulatory mechanisms. Participants propose that political institutions:

- Prescribe clearly the role and position of regulatory mechanisms in law and to protect regulatory systems from any undue interference;
- Address the root causes of racism and prejudice through the education system, e.g. by introducing intercultural elements in standard school curricula;
- Create links between EU and UN Years which focus on issues relevant to tackling racism and improving intercultural understanding, for example during the proposed European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008;
- Establish a World Tolerance Day on Religion which can be part of a broader media campaign to explain the three Abrahamic religions.



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Annex 1: Agenda

Opening session: Monday, 22nd May 2006, a.m.

Chair - Gerfried Sperl: *Editor-in-Chief, Der Standard (Austria)*

09:15 – 10:00 **Opening addresses**

Hans Winkler: *Secretary of State, Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Austria*

Benita Ferrero-Waldner: *Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, European Commission*

Beate Winkler: *Director of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)*

10:00 – 10:20 **Keynote address**

Doudou Diène: *United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance*

10:20 – 10:45 **Press briefing**

10:45 – 11:30 **Panel presentations**

Isil Gachet: *Executive Secretary, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Council of Europe*

Miklós Haraszti: *SCE Representative on Freedom of the Media*

David Gardner: *International Affairs Writer, Financial Times*

Said Essoulami: *Executive Director, Centre for Media Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa (prevented from coming for personal reasons)*

Aidan White: *General Secretary, International Federation of Journalists*

11:30 – 12:45 **Public debate**

12:45 – 13:00 **Summary and closure of opening session**

Working group sessions: Monday, 22nd May 2006, p.m.

Working Group 1: Regulation/editorial policy in EU countries

Chair: **Bettina Peters:** *Director of Programmes, European Journalism Centre*

Speaker 1: **William Gore:** *Press Complaints Commission, UK*

Speaker 2: **Fuad Nahdi:** *Publisher, Q-News*

The following may be considered in this session: other appropriate topics are welcome.

- a) Basic conditions and norms for freedom of expression and hate speech
- b) Regulation in written press and publishing (regulatory bodies)
- c) Regulation in broadcasting and “new media”
- d) Self-regulation (codes of conduct, complaints bodies such as press councils)
- e) Editorial interests

Working Group 2: Regulation/editorial Policy in the MED countries

Chair: **Ramez Maluf:** *Director, Beirut Institute of Media Arts*

Speaker 1: **Ibrahim Nawar:** *Arab Press Freedom Watch*

Speaker 2: **Barbara Surk:** *Middle East Correspondent, Delo Newspaper*

The following may be considered in this session: other appropriate topics are welcome.

- a) Basic conditions and norms for freedom of expression and hate speech
- b) Regulation in written press and publishing (regulatory bodies)
- c) Regulation in broadcasting and “new media”
- d) Self-regulation (codes of conduct, complaints bodies such as press councils)
- e) Editorial interests

Working Group 3: Cultural diversity in media programme content and structures

Chair: **Anastasia Crickley:** *Chairperson of Management Board, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)*

Speaker 1: **Noha Mellor:** *Senior Lecturer, University of East London*

Speaker 2: **Michael Jempson:** *Director, MediaWise Trust*

Speaker 3: **Edouard Pellet:** *Delegate for Diversity and Integration, France Télévisions*

The following may be considered in this session: other appropriate topics are welcome.

- a) Institutional barriers to cultural diversity in the media
- b) Recruitment policy and diversity management in the media industry
- c) Role and tasks of diversity desks in national public broadcasters
- d) Representation of cultural and religious minorities in the media – cultural and religious minority media
- e) Media education (training of journalists in diversity issues, role of journalist schools etc.)
- f) Identifying examples of good practice and initiatives (incl. media prizes)

Working Group 4: Relations between media, civil society and institutional mechanisms to combat racism & xenophobia

Chair: **Dr. Traugott Schoefthaller:** *Director, Anna Lindh Foundation*

Speaker 1: **Zeynep Tugrul:** *Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers & Migrants*

Speaker 2: **David Meyer:** *Executive Board, Centre Européen Juif d'Information*

The following may be considered in this session: other appropriate topics are welcome.

- a) Introducing perspectives of people with minority background and faith communities
- b) Identifying gaps and challenges in the relations
- c) Building a constructive relationship (NGOs as source of information for media, media monitoring by NGOs etc.)
- d) Identifying examples of good practice and initiatives

Plenary session: Tuesday, 23rd May 2006

Chair - Beate Winkler: *Director of the EUMC*

09:30 – 12:00 **Presentation of results of Working Groups 1 - 4**

- Questions and clarifications
- Conclusions and future strategies

12.00 - 12.20 **Keynote address**

Thomas Hammarberg: *Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights*

12:20 – 12:40 **Closing remarks**

Hans Kogler: *Ambassador, Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs*

Annex 2: Speeches by the Organisers

Speech by Secretary of State Hans Winkler, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Austria

The continued existence of racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination and intolerance, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia is, unfortunately, an undeniable fact. Such phenomena exist in all our countries, I am afraid, even increasingly so. The news that reach us almost every day are most concerning. Immigrants are being harassed, worse, attacked, even killed, racially motivated crimes are on the rise and inter-religious and inter-cultural relations are under a heavy strain.

What is particularly disquieting for me is the fact that the situation is as alarming as it is despite the laudable efforts of the many well established organizations and institutions in the field of combating racism and other forms of intolerance. They all have a vast amount of acquired experience and expertise through their involvement in the fight against racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. Beginning with the United Nations system, which includes the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in Europe with institutions like the EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, the Council of Europe with ECRI, OSCE with ODIHR and its special representatives and many other organizations and institutions which all are unanimous in condemning all forms of racism, have produced numerous studies and analysis and have adopted scores of resolutions and action plans, the danger of resurgence of these evil scourges continues to exist.

But, let me also state my firm conviction that we must not be discouraged. Despite the bleak picture that I painted in my introduction, we must never give in and accept evil. Governments, civil society and international organizations and certainly not least, the media, must continue to stem the tide, work hand in hand and take into account the efforts of the others. Only a comprehensive strategy, involving all layers of society will lead to the desired results.

Today we discuss these issues in a very special context, in the framework of the Barcelona Process, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The Barcelona process provides, indeed, a crucial framework for the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of migration and, most particularly, by serving as a tool for the promotion of mutual respect and understanding, for the interaction of civil societies and for the creation of a dialogue between cultures on the basis of an equal partnership.

When the Barcelona Process has sometimes been criticised for a lack of results, it has to be taken into account that the difficult political situation in the Middle East weighs heavily on the initiatives undertaken within the Barcelona Process.

This partnership between the EU and the countries around the Mediterranean - including Israel - is of particular relevance not only in general political, economic and cultural terms, but in particular in the context of the fight against racism and intolerance.

The recent controversy over cartoons in a Danish newspaper made us realize how fragile relations between different cultures and different religions even in our enlightened age really are. Different concepts sometimes meet head on. On the one hand stands the right to freedom of expression, a right for which generations fought and died and which today is not only a right enshrined in the European Convention of Human Rights but which is one of the center pieces of modern democracy and, on the other hand, religious sensitivities, flowing from an equally important right, namely freedom of religion and worship according to one's preference, must be taken into consideration.

This situation calls for increased dialogue, in good faith and with respect for the beliefs and the sensitivities of the other. We are privileged to have a forum like our Euro-Mediterranean partnership and we should make full use of it. Today's seminar is a good opportunity to have such an open and at the same time, respectful dialogue.

What then should we do?

I would like to mention three issues which, in my opinion, need to be dealt with in this context. First, we must pay attention to the root causes of racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance. As old as human history itself, intolerance, xenophobia and racism stem from institutionalized forms of exclusion, the pursuit and defense of privilege and internalized system of the quest of superiority of one group over another. While human diversity, be it cultural, religious or racial, attributes richness to human society, these differences have been misused to fuel hatred and tolerance to a level of destruction of communities. The last century has witnessed the most severe, serious and devastating expressions of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. These reasons were, at least partially, different from what they are today. Ideology of superiority propagated by certain groups and the denial of human qualities to groups, in particular Jews, were the root causes of the Holocaust and untold human suffering. Racism, however, is still with us in varying forms and degrees and is in fact gaining ground as the process of globalization, unfolds. Internal and international conflicts are today often the cause for racial tensions, hatred and intolerance against members of groups different from one's own group. It is vital that all domestic communities – whether ethnic, religious or national diasporas – are assured the right to coexist in social harmony regardless of conflicts between countries with which they may identify emotively, spiritually or nostalgically. Inter-communal relations must be decoupled from such international conflicts as a first step to containing the growth of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other expressions of hatred and intolerance.

Today's vulnerable groups which are particularly in danger of being victimized are different from the past. Migrants, asylum seekers, people of different sexual orientation and adherents of religions which are not the majority religion in a given society are today particularly targeted by extreme nationalists, shameless populists without any sense of responsibility and members of groups of the far and extreme right. This is the biotope in which racism, xenophobia and intolerance thrives. But, respecting diversity does not mean creating "parallel societies" separated by walls of indifference, ignorance and hostility. Multiculturalism or "cultural diversity" should not be used as an excuse for ignoring the fundamental human rights. We all know that anti-Semitism ultimately led to Auschwitz and other camps of mass murder. The evil of anti-Semitism is still with us. We should draw the necessary lesson from history and never ignore the development of discrimination against other races, religions and cultural orientations. I would like to mention in this context the importance of the work that OSCE has carried out in the field of combating anti-Semitism. It showed that while many features of this evil are identical to those of other forms of intolerance, it is my conviction that the fight against anti-Semitism requires in addition special strategies. The conferences held with this at the center, in Vienna, Berlin

and Cordoba have contributed valuable insights to develop such strategies to fight against anti-Semitism and Special Representative Weisskirchen is doing an outstanding job to raise public awareness and keep us alert.

Secondly, we must acknowledge and support the crucial role the media can play in a positive, but also in a negative sense. Any report on a specific event, of a situation, any description of the characteristics of a group, a minority or a religious community in a given society will by necessity be an abbreviation of reality. No report, no matter how lengthy it may be, can be a true and full copy of reality. Complexities and shades of meaning might be misrepresented, even if there is a genuine attempt at objectivity. Notwithstanding these difficulties, I believe, journalists and media representatives in general should try to present reality adequately and fairly. Of course, obviously, the most acute danger would result from stereotypes and prejudice in reporting being used on purposes with the intent to influence public, maybe even with the intent to hurt and insult. Stereotypes, as well as biased reporting by the media, can also have a profound impact on the impressions of the population with regard to certain groups of people. Sensationalist coverage often results in disproportionate reporting on certain groups that presents an exaggerated impression of the reality. On the other hand, and this is the positive side of the coin, freedom of the press and the free flow of information and ideas are powerful ways to combat racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. Societies that inhibit freedom of expression also inhibit the full enjoyment of human rights and foster intolerance in presenting an open and tolerant society to the public, and in countering prejudice and hatred.

What can we do to achieve this? Certainly not by trying to restrict freedom of the media by legal means. Legally binding code of conducts will not work and they run counter the principle of the right to expression. Only self-restraint by the media themselves is an option in my opinion. Media must have an interest, moral but in the final analysis also economic, to assume responsibility vis à vis the community they serve. They are part of that community and must therefore act responsible like any other member of the community. One way to achieve a higher degree of objectivity and of fostering understanding of the situation of members of minority groups would be to hire more journalists who belong to minority groups and – why not - more participation of immigrants in the media. This would give them a platform for self-representation, which might help to reduce prejudices and stereotypes that exist with respect to them. At the same time, it might support minorities and in particular immigrants in their search for identity.

Thirdly, the State and all its institutions bear a large share in the responsibility to fight racism and intolerance. Most important, the State – government and parliament alike – must create the legal and institutional framework in which discrimination for all the reasons laid down in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination are outlawed and cases of racism and discrimination which go beyond the limits of freedom of expression can be prevented through deterrence and if this does not work, prosecuted and punished by the independent court system. This sometimes raises difficult questions of judgment. There are no clear answers as the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights on cases involving Article 10 of the Human Rights Convention bear ample witness. In the end borderline questions must be decided by courts and nobody else. This is what a functioning system of rule of law demands; censorship by political authorities can certainly not be the answer.

But the responsibility of the State goes beyond providing a legal basis within which private persons, the media and civil society operate. As a matter of vital importance to societal harmony, it is crucial that the political leadership in every country actually raises to the task of leading every effort at local, regional, national and international level to create political, social and economic conditions in order to inhibit the breeding ground

for intolerance and discrimination. A key part of that leadership role is the formulation of pro-active and positive measures aimed at countering prejudices and promoting human values. Political parties, especially in times of election campaigns, bear a special responsibility. They set the tone that others will follow and they must show a degree of self-restraint one can expect in a mature democracy.

Needless to say, an effective strategy for eradication cannot solely rely on legal, political and judicial measures. An intellectual and ethical dimension should also be brought to life in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the cultural and ideological roots of these phenomena.

It is obvious that education is a big factor in influencing the thinking of individuals and can often shape their thinking towards other communities as well as their behaviors. Secretary General Kofi Annan said 2001 in Durban: "Let us remember that no one is born a racist. Children learn racism as they grow up, from the society around them - and too often the stereotypes are reinforced, deliberately or inadvertently, by the mass media." As was stated by a group of NGO's a few years ago: "Racism exists in our minds and hearts. Change of attitude and social transformation will happen only if we can open our minds and hearts through education and consciousness. Thus transformation within us is the first vital step. This will enable us to positively influence the communities we live in, in order to bring about tolerance, respect and appreciation." To build solidarity against racism, we need to network at the national, regional and international level to ensure that the commitments made on the global and the regional level, by legally binding texts or in resolutions or at various conferences are respected and observed. We must commit ourselves to combat against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance by joining hands together.

Speech by Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy

Intercultural dialogue: the media's role

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the European Commission let me welcome you to this seminar, part of a series we have sponsored to increase the media's involvement in the Euromed partnership.

Many of you were at our previous discussions on "Euromed and the Media" where we discussed issues like press freedom, gender equality, and the safety and security of journalists. I am sure this seminar will be just as productive.

I would like to take this occasion to thank you, and your colleagues who could not be here today, for your enthusiasm and dedication. Your contribution will make the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership stronger than ever.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin with the words of Abraham J. Heschel, "Racism is man's gravest threat to man – the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason".

Europeans know from bitter experience the gravity of the threat racism and xenophobia represent. Indeed, the European Union was born out of the cataclysm of intolerance that engulfed twentieth-century Europe.

Our task has been to invert Heschel's equation, minimising hatred and maximising reason. And today the European Union stands as a testimony to Europe's religious, linguistic and cultural diversity. We are a community of values, united by our diversity and our determination to prevent such a threat from overwhelming us again.

That is not to deny there are problems in Europe. Racism and xenophobia stem from fear of the unknown, of the different, and in uncertain times they are never far from the surface. That is why we have set up the Monitoring Centre and why we are continually fighting for equality and tolerance. We must also face facts and accept that much of what prompts peoples' fears is a perception of a heightened threat from migrants. National debate in a number of EU countries is dominated by the supposed danger to jobs and security posed by migrants. At a time when the EU is profoundly aware of its obligation to respond to public concerns, migration is of necessity high on our agenda.

That is why later this week the European Commission will be discussing what we can do to address Europeans' concerns about illegal migration and trafficking, and the perceived flood of migrants to our shores. The other side of the equation is taking the necessary steps to encourage the migrants we need for Europe's continued economic development. We also place a high priority on integrating minorities into Europe's mainstream and on preserving essential European values like tolerance, diversity and peaceful dialogue. That is reflected in our adoption of Directives on equality, action plans, EU programmes, and intercultural and interfaith dialogue. Next month we will meet here in Vienna again to discuss criminal penalties for racist behaviour and what more we can do to combat racism and xenophobia within the EU.

Of course we are not unique in facing these problems. No society in any part of the world is immune to prejudice. Just as Europe must fight a rising tide of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, not to mention other prejudices against foreigners, migrant communities and ethnic and racial minorities, so must our partners in the Muslim world and in Israel.

Europe still struggles to overcome "the oldest hatred" on our continent: anti-Semitism. And the furore around the publication of cartoons of the prophet Muhammed revealed the depth of ignorance in much of Europe about what others might find offensive. It also revealed the depth of ignorance about what Europeans – of whatever religion or creed – find acceptable. The one thing we learnt from the accusations and counter-accusations was that no country can lay claim to the moral high ground. Around the world minority groups face persecution on religious, ethnic or racial grounds. There is no hierarchy of hatreds, each is equally repugnant. We all have work to do to fight prejudice in the media and society as a whole, whether that be anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, or other forms of religious or ethnic bias.

So today let me issue a **call to action**. All parts of every society have a responsibility to act against racism and xenophobia. But the media have a particularly crucial role to play, given your power to shape societal attitudes.

Media professionals must be aware of the impact of their words and images. As a judge of the Rwanda war crimes tribunal put it, "The power of the media to create and destroy fundamental human values comes with great responsibility. Those who control such media are accountable for its consequences." We need you to fully engage in the fight for mutual respect and understanding. We need you to do your utmost to minimise hatred and to maximise reason. And we need you to join with us in calling for responsible and meaningful intercultural and interfaith dialogue. At the heart of the debate over recent months has been the supposed conflict between freedom of expression and freedom of religion. This is certainly not a new debate, philosophers down the ages have struggled with it. What makes it so difficult is there is no straightforward solution.

Both freedom of expression and freedom of religion are non-negotiable. Freedom of speech is central to Europe's values and traditions. But its preservation depends on responsible behaviour by individuals. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right of individuals and communities. It entails respect for the integrity of all religious convictions and all ways in which they are exercised. There's no clear cut answer on how to reconcile the two, but rather two principles which should guide us. First, it is unacceptable that any one group in society – Christian, Muslim, Jewish or secular – seek the sole right to fix the parameters. And second, respect and understanding are the keys to any acceptable outcome.

The precise contours of a solution cannot be prescribed; they must come from each individual taking responsibility for his or her actions. By extension, we do not believe the media should be regulated from outside, but rather that you find ways to regulate yourselves. It is not for politicians, and certainly not for the European Commission, to impose a code of ethics on the media. You are the best judges of what is possible, and of where the boundaries between gratuitous provocation and legitimate debate lie. Freedom of expression is not the freedom to insult or offend. Hate speech is always abhorrent. Yet the line is sometimes blurred. That is why you will have discussions here among yourselves as media professionals, free from the constraints of politicians' presence. Together you will decide on the best approach.

I urge you to treat this matter with the gravity it deserves and, as a profession, to rise to the challenges it poses. In considering the question of self-regulation, I would also ask you to think about the need for monitoring from within your own professional bodies. I am convinced that will have a significant impact.

I look forward to hearing about your discussions and receiving your recommendations. As with the previous seminars, these will feed into discussions on future priorities for the euro-med partnership, and so form a valuable input for our decisions on future programmes.

Before closing, let me also remind you of the EU's other work to promote tolerance and understanding in the Euromed region, which you might consider in formulating your recommendations to us. Earlier this month I visited the Anna Lindh Foundation for dialogue between cultures, which is developing a wide range of programmes targeting young people. Projects on popular music, school magazines and encouraging scientific and information technology exchanges across the region will bring our young people closer together and promote mutual respect and understanding. In addition the Foundation has programmes promoting women's rights and networking female students and academics. And workshops promoting artistic creation in fields such as theatre, music, modern dance and arts, including travel grants for young artists from across the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2008 is the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, and I am determined that by then we will have made significant improvements in the level of mutual respect and understanding our communities have for one another. In the months and years to come we must reach beyond the elites to the man and woman on the street. That is a vital part of the fight against racism and xenophobia. And you will be the key to achieving that. Through you, the richness of our cultures, the similarities and the differences between us can be celebrated.

You know best how you can contribute, how to marry freedom of expression with respect for others, and minimise the hatred and maximise the reason. So I look forward greatly to hearing from my colleagues your suggestions.

Thank you again for your presence here and I wish you fruitful discussions in the days ahead.

Speech by Beate Winkler, Director of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia

Sehr geehrter Herr Staatssekretär,

Dear Commissioner,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recent period has put the spotlight on the media - not as news provider but as a news item itself. Politicians, institutions and civil society discuss how to prevent media discourse from fuelling racist, Islamophobic or anti-Semitic sentiment and behaviour.

In my introductory statement to this distinguished audience, I would encourage you to change perspectives for a moment.

I will not do what you might expect me to do. I will not list examples of racist discourse in the media and how they have impaired inter-community relations. Instead, I would like to point you to ways how the media can positively contribute to mutual understanding and respect for diverse cultures and religions.

Let me be very clear. We need to face head-on racist content and hate speech wherever it appears in the media. After many years of working together with the media I have to note regrettably that some media – certainly not all - handle the issue of diversity, foreignness and xenophobia in a surprisingly laboured, even divisive manner. These efforts can be counterproductive. In some cases they unwittingly advance the cause of xenophobia. Yet, the media is also our major ally in reflecting the diversity that can be such a positive feature of our societies.

You will hardly find any EUMC report that does not speak about the media - either in its analysis or recommendations. Our reports on Antisemitism, on Islamophobia, our Annual Report underline that media reports impact on the situation of cultural, religious or ethnic minorities. Terms such as “Islamic terrorism” or “Jewish Conspiracy” reinforce negative stereotypes, prejudices and racism. They can reflect and fuel existing intolerance in the public.

Yet, the answers to these phenomena are multi-dimensional. They involve society as a whole and not just the media. At EU level, the EUMC is making its contribution to develop strategies against racism, xenophobia, Antisemitism and Islamophobia in our societies.

Protecting people from racist and xenophobic discourse is a basic principle of any democratic society. Therefore, all EU Member States maintain certain limits to freedom of expression. These are defined and enforced by national law and also the legal systems of the Council of Europe. Freedom of speech is not an end in itself, but a means to a free society. So is respect for diversity.

Beyond legal action against racist discourse we should look at the opportunities that media have to reduce stereotypes in our society and to promote intercultural understanding.

We know from psychological studies that people tend to make judgements based not on facts but on emotions and the associations they conjure up. More often than not it is people's notions of the facts that prove decisive rather than the facts themselves. This also applies to issues surrounding the way we interact with one another.

The famous communication scientist Marshal McLuhan said that "all media exist to invest our lives with artificial perceptions and arbitrary values." We might disagree with this media critic. But undoubtedly media has enormous capacities to shape attitudes, perceptions and therefore human relations in our society.

Let us take advantage of this capacity to promote diversity as a positive feature of our societies.

In 2005, the EUMC undertook research on public opinion in EU Member States. We found that 80 percent of people in the EU had no problem in their daily dealings with minorities.⁵ Yet in abstract terms, roughly half expressed scepticism towards ethnic or cultural diversity. I am convinced that media can help narrow this gap between day-to-day positive experience and negative prejudice.

What could media concretely contribute to intercultural understanding and the fight against racism? Our work with the media suggests that three areas could be explored further.

1) Firstly, mainstream programmes need to show much more ethnic, cultural, religious diversity.

The EUMC has much experience with media productions aimed at promoting diversity. We have for a long time supported conferences such as this, and are supporting a European media prize for diversity and integration – called CIVIS Europe. What we see is that well-meaning is not automatically well-done. We need more mainstream programmes that are entertaining, reach a broad audience, and show diversity as a normal element of our social reality. We propose concretely: that other media follow the example of some public broadcasters and establish diversity desks that can advance these issues internally.

2) Secondly, more colour in the media: more journalists from minority groups need to work in the media.

In many countries, minorities are objects of reporting. They are hardly ever subjects of reporting. The media industry must better reflect the diversity in society. We need more efforts to bring journalists with minority background into the media – starting from equal opportunities in education, and continuing with recruitment and training. This is not only a question of equality. It is also a question of economic success for the media, as their audience becomes more and more diverse. The UK is one of the very few countries with specific data on this. Even in a city as multicultural as London, only 5 percent of people working in the print and publishing sector are from ethnic minorities. With more journalists from minority backgrounds, media could better reflect the reality of our societies. This would offer important role models. We propose concretely: A specific recruitment and training initiative for minority groups which are underrepresented in the media. Examples exist - for instance for journalists with Roma background.

⁵ EUMC: "Majorities' Attitudes towards Minorities". Analysis of data from Eurobarometer and European Social Survey.
<http://www.eumc.eu.int>

3) Finally, media is most competent to regulate ethics and editorial standards themselves - but journalists need more training on how to deal with diversity.

In many countries, laws, self-regulatory bodies and codes on media conduct are in place. Dialogue between the different stakeholders and awareness-raising can help that these instruments work effectively. Good journalism is about having the right sources. Media reports are good when they reflect the perspectives of all communities concerned – including minority ones. We propose concretely: To expand existing media training programmes on diversity. They help journalists and editors to develop a better understanding of issues relating to race, religion and culture. This makes their reports more balanced, more complete. Simply better pieces of journalism!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dialogue is essential to effective crisis management. Yet intercultural and inter-faith dialogue should not only happen in times of crisis. If there is a lesson to be learned from past incidents of inter-community tension, then it is that any such dialogue needs to be continuous.

“Unity in diversity” is the motto of the European Union. Unity in diversity would also be a good motto for any of our multicultural, multi-religious and multiethnic societies. Unity in working towards a joint vision of a society! A vision that is based on common fundamental values as well as on mutual understanding and respect for each other’s cultural and religious differences.

This is the challenge for the future. I hope this Seminar will produce some inspiring conclusions on how the media could influence this important project in the Europe.

Therefore I would like to repeat my three main messages:

- 1) Firstly, mainstream programmes need to show more ethnic, cultural, religious diversity
- 2) Secondly, more colour in the media: more journalists from minority groups need to work in the media.
- 3) Finally, media is most competent to regulate ethics and editorial standards themselves - but journalists need more training on how to deal with diversity.

The emphasis must be on showing the positive side of resident and immigrant populations, majority and minority groups living side by side and, in so doing, promote the cause of intercultural competence – each and every day, not least in the media.

I wish us fruitful discussions and debates and that this conference will have a positive impact on our image and perceptions – on a culture of mutual understanding and respect.

Annex 3: List of participants in the working group sessions

Media

Agence France Presse (Brussels office)	Belgium
Ahram Hebdo	Egypt
Al Ahram Economic Weekly	Egypt
Al Ahram Newspaper	Egypt
Al Arabiya	Syria
Al Dastour	Jordan
Al Jazeera International	Qatar
Al Jazeera Newspaper	UK/International
Al Sharq Al Awsat	UK/International
Al-Ahram Newspaper	Egypt
Al-Arabiya TV	Egypt
Al-Hayat (London)	UK
Al-Mawkif (Tunis)	Tunisia
Al-Safir	Syria
Algerian Television	Algeria
Almajalla	Morocco
An-Naher Newspaper	Lebanon
ANSAMed	Italy
Assahra Al Maghribiya	Morocco
SIC-TV (Brussels office)	Portugal
Canal Algerie TV	Algeria
Cumhuriyet	Turkey
Delo Newspaper	Slovenia
Deutsche Presseagentur (DPA) - Middle East International	Belgium
Diario de Noticias (Brussels office)	Portugal
Elaph	Syria
El-Watan	Algeria
Financial Times	UK
France Televisions	France
Hungarian National TV [MTV]	Hungary
JRTV	Jordan
Kalima	Tunisia
La Presse	Tunisia
L'Economiste	Morocco
Liberté	Algeria
Lithuanian Television	Lithuania
Middle East News, MBC (TV)	Belgium
MTV3	Finland
Nile TV	Egypt
Q-News	UK

Radio Netherlands	Netherlands
Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI)	Italy
Radio France International	France
Tel Quel	Morocco
True Magazine	Turkey
WDR (Westdeutscher Rundfunk)	Germany

Other Media Organisations

AMIN (Arab Media Internet Network)	Palestinian Territories
Arab Press Freedom Watch	International
Article 19	UK/International
Beirut Institute of Media Arts (BIMA)	Lebanon
Conference of the Audiovisual Mediterranean Operators (COPEAM)	International
European Broadcasting Union (EBU)	EUR
European Journalism Centre	EUR
European Newspaper Publishers' Association	EUR
European Platform of Regulatory Authorities	EUR
Federation of Spanish Press Associations	Spain
I'lam (Media Centre for Arab Palestinians in Israel)	Israel
Index on Censorship	UK
International Press Institute (IPI)	International
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)	International
Israel Broadcasting Authority	Israel
MediaWise Trust	UK
Mediterranean Press Club	Egypt
Mira Media	Netherlands
Online / More Colour in the Media	EUR
Press Complaints Commission	UK
School of Journalism, Marseille	France
Second Authority Council for TV & Radio	Israel
Union of Journalists in Finland	Finland

Non-governmental, research and faith-based organisations

AMCOD (Association pour la Coopération et la Développement)	France
Anna Lindh Foundation	International
CEJI (Centre Européen Juif d'Information/ European Jewish Information Center)	EUR
Danish Institute for Human Rights	Denmark
Durham University	UK
European Network Against Racism (ENAR)	EUR
Forum against Islamophobia & Racism	UK
Human Rights Council	Morocco
Human Rights Watch	International
IEMed (Institut Européen de la Méditerranée)	Spain
Initiative of Muslim Austrians	Austria
Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna	Austria
International Helsinki Federation (IHF)	International
Islamic Community Austria	Austria
MRAX (Mouvement contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la xénophobie)	Belgium
Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation	Palestinian Territories
Pax et Iustitia	Austria
University of East London	UK
Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (ZARA)	Austria

Intergovernmental organisations and European institutions

Council of Europe, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)	International
Council of Europe, Commissioner for Human Rights	International
Euromed Civil Forum	France
EUMC (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia)	EUR
European Commission, DG Justice, Freedom and Security	EUR
European Commission, DG External Relations	EUR
International Organisation for Migration (IOM)	International
OSCE, Representative on Freedom of the Media	International
United Nations, Secretariat of the Alliance of Civilizations	International
United Nations, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance	International

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia

Racism, Xenophobia and the Media.

Towards respect and understanding of all religions and cultures

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Racism, Xenophobia and the Media:

Towards respect and understanding
of all religions and cultures
(Conference report) (EUMC, October 2006)

On 22-23 May 2006, some 120 journalists and media practitioners from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East met in Vienna to discuss the influence of media on intercultural relations and racism. Topics under discussion included improving reporting standards and accountability of journalists; self-regulation policies in the EU and in South-Mediterranean countries; impact of media reporting on ethnic and religious minorities; negative stereotyping; balancing freedom of expression with protection from hate speech; and making better use of expertise and experience of ethnic minority organisations.

The conference „Racism, Xenophobia and the Media: Towards Respect and Understanding of All Religions and Cultures“ was held in the framework of the Austrian Presidency of the EU, and was co-organised by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission and the EUMC.

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