

Seminar

Engaging the Media to Foster Integration

Good Practices from NGOs & Regional Authorities

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Abstract

Identified as a major policy challenge for EU Member States, the integration of migrants is a growing area of interest for the EU. As stressed in the recent Communication from the European Commission 'EUROPE 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'¹, the contribution of migrants to the European economy is fundamental, especially as the European Union will increasingly face demographic challenges. A conference organised by the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Prague in February 2009 also emphasised the potential of migrants to increase EU competitiveness when successfully integrated into the labour market and receiving societies².

At the same time, immigration has given rise to significant changes in the social and cultural contexts in EU member states. Immigration is still perceived as a threat by certain parts of the general public, and the media often treats migration themes in a sensationalist way, exacerbating social tensions around migrants' integration. However, the conditions which migrants face, the attitudes of receiving societies and a positive public discourse on the benefits of migration and diversity are vital elements to the success of integration policies.

The role of the media is therefore a strategic one, providing information, it can play a key role in promoting the fight against discrimination and better public understanding of the benefits of migration. The media contribute to shaping perceptions of European societies and constructing new ways of living together.

To raise awareness about the work of NGOs in this field, as well as to foster synergies between them and public authorities, which are becoming more and more conscious

¹ <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

² <http://www.eu2009.cz/event/1/299/>

that supporting initiatives in favour of intercultural communication is a step towards creating more favourable conditions for better integration of migrants, is as well important.

The relevance of the role of the media in migrants' integration has also been receiving great attention of the European commission and other relevant EU bodies, for example with the third edition of the *Handbook on Integration for Policy Makers and Practitioners*³, the Fundamental Rights Agency's toolkit on diversity⁴, and the relation between migrants and the media discussed at the third meeting of the Integration Forum in June 2010 in Brussels⁵. The necessity to recognise the positive aspects of migration and to continue to promote methods that help to fight racism and xenophobia was also highlighted during the Ministerial Conference on Integration⁶, organised in April 2010 in Zaragoza by the Spanish Presidency of the European Union.

Finally, the protection of cultural diversity is one of the priorities of the current Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which will organise in May, together with IOM, an international conference, aiming at analysing current practices in media reporting on migration.

Aims of the Seminar

The purpose of the seminar is to discuss and raise awareness about the role that the media can play to foster integration, encourage more balanced understandings of immigration and promote greater social cohesion in the EU.

The seminar also aims to provide an opportunity for the exchange of information and experiences among different stakeholders, at the European and the local levels, and taking the occasion of the Hungarian Presidency's attention to these issues, discuss good practices in media work relating to migration from NGOs and Regional Authorities.

The ERLAI Network and EPIM welcome the participation of European institutions officials, local and regional Authorities, civil society representatives, media professionals and all interested stakeholders, to debate and exchange good practices on the conference themes.

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³ http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/docl_12892_168517401.pdf

⁴ http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/media-toolkit_diversity_en.pdf

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/static_38_374784307.pdf

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/docl_13055_519941744.pdf