

Tuning in to Diversity 2010

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Tuning in to Diversity 2010 Conference Budapest, 25 and 26 (morning session) February 2010

“Media and NGOs, a touchy relationship” workshop for NGOs representatives

Strategies to enter into and/or improve your relationship with the media.

How media works: understanding the system. How to develop and maintain the relationship? Which information to provide to the media? How to take appropriate action towards the media, when needed?

Best practices, experiences and tips from all across Europe.

Report by Cristina Lupu (Center for Independent Journalism, Bucharest)

Chair: Ioana Avadani (Center for Independent Journalism, Bucharest)

Presentation of best practice: Katleen De Ridder (Minority Forum, Brussels)

Starting session – evening, February, 25

Dedicated to the relations between NGOs and media – how frustrating is for a journalist to try to get information from an NGO and not to get it? how frustrating is for NGO people to try to send information to the press and then they do not become news?

Ioana: When the participants enter in contact for the first time with the idea of diversity?

- When I was nine I moved to Holland – my school was very diverse, I had to explain everyone from where I was – it was a pleasant experience
- Alexandra – Argentina is a immigrant country – is a very diverse country, very international, in my case, my father came from Spain, from my mother side I am Italian and I live in Germany. I have been living in Germany for 9 years and I’m starting to know other places – I think that diversity is a never-ending concept.
- All the big cities are multicultural. I grew in Pakistan, when I was a kid we had Christians, Muslims, even British – nobody told us not to play with different children, I learned what means to be different when I arrived in Denmark.
- I am a minority, I realized that I am different when I was 3 years – the breaking point was when I met people from the Algerian community and they were not visible in the media, this is my challenge.
- Small village in Hungary, in the communist regime, and I was at art school with Roma children – they were discriminated, I was fighting with the Roma – I went out with a black guy – I was always the disgrace of the village...I was comply of the line.
- I was born in Greece, I went to a white school, diversity is a very sensitive topic in Greece, there is a intolerance in the people and in the Government. The people are full with prejudices, Greece is becoming multicultural, but people still don’t.
- I was 4 years old when I came to Holland (1968) – I got a lot of attention, everyone was inviting you to talk about your country, only after 9/11 I experienced what means to be a Muslim in Holland – I had to do something with my identity – I rediscovered religion and I saw that the mosques was not taken proper care and we decided to do something about it.
- The Caribbean is a very diverse part of the world – everybody has a different color, I was used to be diverse, it was a normal thing, and I felt in Hungary a little bit a switch – something became negative – do you need help? Is this your first mobile phone? We are still seen as victims – they have to became more visible, to come out with more positive images, normal, standard images.
- I spent 18 years explaining why I am different, I got tired “why did you come here, your country is always warm”....In high school I had high grades, but people still tried to help me...

- Our life is about stereotypes, stamps.
- Some of us are born in the country – this is my country – I don't want to move, we are stuck in the middle.
- Diversity is more than religion, race and so on.

Day two– February 26, morning

Task : - investigate how the media work, how to develop and maintain a good relation with the media, best practices and challenges.

How the NGO deals with the media

Presentation: Minderhedenforum (Minority Forum) – Belgium by Katleen De Ridder

Who we are: an umbrella organization for immigrants, refugees and travelers, funded by the Belgian Government.

Big part of the lobby is done through the press, we know what we want to use the press for.

This is the first mistake that an NGO can do – go out in the media with very general statements and not with a clear message

You have to answer to some questions:

What is your reason for writing press release?

What is your Unique Selling Proposition? You have to be creative!

Identify your target group. The journalists are your target group – it is not true, they are only your means. Your target group has to be the same one journalists address.

For the NGO the big public is not the public, for them Key Opinion Leaders are the public, the politicians. They do not address popular press and this is a problem because their public does read them.

Sometimes they have to decide how radical they have to be – for their public have to be radical, for the politicians they do not want to be always the troublemakers.

The message has to be clear. Message for the media has to be singular and very concrete.

NGO usually sell opinions, in the nowadays press the opinion is very present, it is much cheaper than sending your journalist to look for the news. Take it into your advantage - you can put out your opinion into the media.

What we think it is news usually journalists don't consider it a news. Our solution is to play the game following the rules of the press. Go to media training and learn what it is news for the press. You have to adapt to the player. Most of the time I noticed that the NGOs establish reactive press relation – the subject is already in the press and most of the NGOs just react to what is already there. It is the easiest thing to do.

Solution – get out of the negative tone, go to the positive tone. Offer them your solutions, not only critique. Play it smart.

Active – you have to put your story there, it can be very difficult, because NGOs don't have a lot of influence, politicians can do it.

Use formats of the media itself.

Give media compliments – the prize for the best journalist, article, etc because the press loves to write about themselves. Say nice things about them.

Stick to one message, don't give them 2 messages because you offer them the possibility to choose.

We can control the news circuit!

The golden rule when working with the media is to give them materials in their formats.

What media wants is news, news, news – what they may also want?

Also you can give them stories, thing to write about. Try to find out the nice stories. You have to know exactly what type of media do you address – make a research about the media and journalists, don't forget the free-lancers. Make your own list, don't use only the standard channels. Don't forget about the social media. The internet will fill the information gap, the public likes human stories.

I have this topic and I have 2 interesting stories to tell you about this subject. Give them cases, introduce them the sources.

You have to know personally the journalists – the bound is more powerful.

A handy way was to have a very influential and well known director, a story "itself". The media comes when they learn that he has something to say.

We have researchers working to find subjects – reacting, but also trying to identify which will be the subject 6 months after (the trends)

Don't try to keep information from journalists or to give the information preferentially.

I think that generated information is the key point – news is fresh info, but we have always data – they almost can be a news.

As a media person I get hundreds press releases. I respond usually to the ones that I know personally.

Media is a business – speed is vital and is interested in making money. Don't forget that speed is crucial. Put information on Facebook, Twitter, be the first that sets the trend and put the info in the way you want to be reported.

We should treat media fairly, but I can't trust a journalist. If I did something stupid, I don't expect to be protected by a journalist, also if he is my friend.

A good relation means that – I can call him if he publishes wrong information .

Questions:

“How many of you have a list of a media”, “a database of journalists “ – this is the basic tool. How many of you have visited the newsroom? How many of you spent a day in the newsroom, following the track of information? You have to know all the things about the media – who is putting the titles, at what time is the news edition closed.

What can I do if the information that appeared in the media is wrong?

If you know him, call him and ask him...if he tells you that the editor changed the news item – call the editor, if he does not want to respond, send him a letter – if it is info, if it is opinion you have to deal with.

Other information:

A person that can provide credibility for an NGO – to talk about your problems.

You can't do both in the same time –grass root and politicians. You have to choose depending on your subject.

Create your own media packages. Don't forget that the power of internet is unlimited. You can play with the media platform the way you want.

Find in your countries media consumption reports. In Romania 80% of the people watch news on TV, but only a small fraction watch talk shows. Don't spend too much time to put a person into a talk show until knowing the audience of the talks-shows.

People are intelligent and sometimes we tend to give much more power to the media.

Message of the group:

Dealing with media can be sometimes challenging but it is always exciting for an NGO. We have to play by their rules, while remaining true to our grass-roots audience. It is a balancing act between criticism and advancing solutions. We have to be creative and proactive. As NGOs we have the big advantage of being flexible and adaptable. If we learn to create our own communication platforms we can step into the media field as actors not only as passive beneficiaries. Media are just means of communication, the more professional we get in communicating our message, the more difficult it becomes for them to ignore us.