

Tuning in to Diversity 2010

→ → → Thinking Forward



Tuning in to Diversity 2010 Conference
Budapest, 26 February 2010 – Afternoon session

“When the media get it *wrong*” workshop for NGOs and PSBs/mainstream media representatives
Sharing responsibilities of fair and accurate coverage on diversity issues between PSBs/mainstream media and NGOs.
Report by Katleen De Ridder (Minderhedenforum, Belgium)

Chair: Johan Flyckt (Sweden)

Presentations.

Why the media “helped” the Slovak National Party (extremist) rising? By Milan Pukancik (Slovakia)
During cucumbers season a right wing nationalist politician gets a lot of press coverage. He profits from it to say things such as:

“It is not normal that animals in the Slovakian army”? (he meant homosexuals)

Why is he in the media with his rude language?

How can we avoid that the media brings this?

Question 1: How can the media deal with nationalistic and racist parties?

When heavy prejudices against Roma people are in the media, who do we have to blame? By Ilko Jordanov (Bulgaria)

It happened last week on a private TV channel, the most popular channel in Bulgaria

A story about a small child being raped by his father was run and the prejudice felt that this surely was a Roma family. But it appeared not to be a Roma family. But it was too late; the story was run already. Who should be the ones to blame?

Question 2: Which are the traps for media when covering children’s topic?

QUESTION 1

In Belgium this kind of discussions was going on during the past two decades.

Political answer: exclusion of Vlaams Belang (nationalist right wing party) = *cordon sanitaire*

Media: no *cordon sanitaire*, the idea was: if you let them talk, the public will reject their ideas but this did not happen. The truth is: they were only growing, taking advantage of their underdog image.

Nowadays the idea is different in Flemish press. The idea is that you must consider their electoral basis which is huge. So you can not exclude them anymore. They could even grow because of their exclusion from power because they had the time to be with the people. They had nothing else to do than investing in their growth. Recently, the Vlaams Belang stopped growing.

This concludes the Belgian situation.

Other strategies:

Democracy is listening to all voices. You cannot exclude a party for which a lot of people vote. Media cannot ignore what a big part of the people thinks (says a journalist from Italy).

Ask them, the nationalistic and racist parties, also about education and other important issues, it is also a strategy because mainly they don’t have an answer to that.

Media can’t do that much due to the political lack of answers to problems linked to multiculturalism.

Media platforms as alternative media.

Use it as an opportunity: Nationalists are good for minorities because they have somebody to critic too. A fact is a fact, use it as an opportunity.

A journalist should ask the right questions and undermine these nationalists. A descend research is necessary.

Government and national media implement rules. Media are already used by others. As a media you play roles you point out for yourself, you can decide not to play this role. Media are not obliged to do it but this consideration is not made enough by the media.

This happened in some countries: neo-Nazis got media coverage till the broadcaster decided to stop it.

And again we move to Belgium: Why do people like those messages? Why do people vote for Vlaams Belang? You should listen to these people ...

Bring positive news: Minorities playing football making a report, not always it is done.

Better representation among different sources for journalists. How many media people in the workshop have sources in the suburbs?

Answers: In Sweden the PSB bought a list lately in PR companies. This is critiqued because the job should be done by the NGO's. But media lack time to find resources.

Or, should the homework be done by the media? WELL, THE RESPONSIBILITY IS ON BOTH.

Are journalists with migrant background a solution? The feelings are mixed. The example is given of the travellers. There is no journalist with travellers background. But thanks the NGO Minorities forum they got media training and the quality of their press coverage increased.

QUESTION 2

Traps

Not giving details, no background, due to structural problem due to the formats.

Stockholm case: Muslim girls don't want to learn to swim because the parents do not allow them. It is dangerous with all the water in Sweden. How to deal with this?

Solutions

Maybe local media are part of the solution because they write about positive things. We need local media platforms by NGO's. NGO's lack money to make marketing.

You can use wrong coverage as an opportunity to react to media. Contact them, each time they do this.

Roma journalists should react, Roma civil society should react

This happened: they asked right to answer and they got it.

Role of the media: just mirror or also suggest solutions. News is not for solutions but other programs are.

Journalists have clichés like any one else. You have to give them a different cliché.

Give media makers a training on diversity.

Quota? Not for private companies, only public companies can implement it. But this doesn't work enough because people forget about it after a week.

Monitoring can work because it puts pressure. It should be done on regularly basis.

Benchmark is a better idea. Benchmark is a number or percentage you want to be in 2020.

The relation between NGO' s and media is important.

Interculturalism must become a journalistic specialism

MESSAGE:

From hypes to responsibilities