



all different, all equal :
from principle to practice

**European contribution to the world conference against
RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA
and RELATED INTOLERANCE**

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REPORT OF WORKING GROUP IV

**Information, communication
and media**

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WORKING GROUP IV: Information, communication and media

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The discussions in Working Group IV were structured around the following five topics:

- Good practices concerning the use of the media as a means to reflect the diversity within society and to empower people from minority backgrounds
- Measures to prevent racism and hate speech in the media
- Legal and technical measures concerning internet communications
- Strategies to counter the development of racist music and video games
- Challenges ahead

Much attention was paid to the traditional media and well-known issues concerning the manner in which such media may propagate, reflect or, on the other hand, counter racism and related intolerance. The Working Group devoted less time to new means of communication, reflecting the lesser familiarity with such means. The Working Group realised from the outset that the media are not only a vehicle of information, but they also reflect and create attitudes, emotions and even prejudices. Furthermore, they play a crucial role in the construction of identity and our imaginary communities.

It was emphasised that despite the importance of minority media and other means of expression, there is a danger that this may lead to the segregation and ghettoisation of minorities. Furthermore, there is a concern that the fragmentation of the public as a result of the development of increasingly specialised media might contribute to the further division of societies and decrease the role of the media as a space for interaction and coexistence. The fear was voiced that in light of the presence within European countries of media promoting hatred and more subtle prejudices leading to the banalisation of intolerance, the above-mentioned trends might undermine the efforts to combat racism and intolerance as well as the existence of democracies based on the recognition of diversity.

The context of globalisation was also highlighted as a potential factor leading to increased intolerance.

Concern was furthermore expressed at the increasing predominance of commercial media as well as the trend towards media concentrations and the negative impact that this may have on the media as a space for dialogue among individuals and communities.

Against this background, a range of different suggestions were offered, on the one hand to combat the dissemination of hate speech and intolerance via the media, and, on the other hand, to promote diversity in and through the media.

With respect to speech which incites to hatred and violence, it was recommended that states should not only enact penal legislation, but also ensure the means effectively to enforce such legislation, in accordance with international obligations such as those defined under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the European Convention on Human Rights.

It was also noted that experience has shown that journalists and media in general may have a responsibility for consequences of incitement to hatred. In the context of recent armed conflicts, the possibility of criminal prosecution of journalists should, in some cases, be considered. In the same vein, the obligation of media to publish timely and accurate retractions of misleading or false information must be stressed.

It was underlined, however, that such measures should not be used in a way which prevents the media and the public from expressing opinions and disseminating information in a climate of freedom. At the same time, it was noted that the importance of ostracising racism should not be overlooked.

Besides the international instruments which already exist, it was recommended that racism should be addressed in the context of the draft Convention on Crime in Cyberspace being prepared by the Council of Europe. The suggestion was made that a specific Protocol dealing with this matter could be prepared for this purpose.

In addition, international co-operation between states in the fight against racism should be increased.

Although it was acknowledged that legal measures are a prerequisite for the effective fight against racism and intolerance, it was also stressed that legal instruments are not sufficient in and of themselves. They should be supplemented by a range of further policy and practical measures. It was noted that a number of recommendations adopted in different fora, including the media, already advocated such measures. Further efforts should be made to implement such recommendations. The Council of Europe and the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia could be instrumental in promoting and supporting such initiatives by the media. Attention was also drawn to the contents of the Declaration on "Antisemitism in Europe today", adopted on 27 March 2000 at a consultation meeting organised by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

In order to avoid the above-mentioned risk of a ghettoisation of minorities, it was suggested that measures should be taken to ensure that minority perspectives are reflected in the mainstream media. It was emphasised that, toward this end, it is essential that measures be taken to encourage people from minority backgrounds to enter the profession of

journalism and to recruit minority journalists in the mainstream media at all levels of the editorial process.

With a view to promoting better understanding between majority and minority communities, it was strongly recommended that the networking of majority and minority media and journalists from different communities should be promoted. Efforts of cooperation and joint initiatives between different groups should be undertaken in such a manner as to enable the diversity of perspectives and voices to gain expression.

In view of the challenges which commercialisation presents for the reflection of diversity within the media, it was pointed out that an effective way of promoting such diversity would be to recognise and support non-commercial civic media and to ensure the maintenance of public service broadcasting. In this regard, it was noted that states should secure appropriate financing for public service broadcasters and ensure that attention is given to the importance of catering to the needs of minorities when defining the remit of public service broadcasting organisations. It was also pointed out that measures should be taken to preserve the independence of public service broadcasters vis-à-vis public authorities so that they may freely express minority viewpoints.

Furthermore, it was suggested that when designing and implementing support schemes for the media, States should pay particular attention to the way in which diversity is included and portrayed by these media.

Training programmes to increase awareness amongst journalists, editors and programme managers about racism, discrimination and diversity should be developed, including an analysis of the manner in which the media disseminate prejudices and stereotypes. Such training initiatives can be enhanced by the establishment of networks between minority groups, journalists, NGOs and other interested parties.

Careful consideration should be given to the need to conduct research studies on initiatives undertaken to promote respect for others via the media. This research should be aimed at assessing the impact of such initiatives, and possibly adjusting them.

It was suggested that non-journalists such as NGO officers, communication officers and key representatives of minority groups should be trained so as to work more effectively with the media in order to ensure that diversity is better reflected. Along the same lines, it was proposed that minority groups should create a network of contact persons and experts able to liaise with the media and provide them with accurate information about their perspectives.

During the discussion, the importance of implementing and exchanging good practices amongst all concerned parties (media, public authorities,

NGOs, etc.) was also emphasised. Such exchanges should cover self-regulatory initiatives in traditional and new media, means by which to increase diversity within the media and means of combating racism and intolerance.

It was noted that although traditional media have a certain role to play in the fight against racism and intolerance, their role as a vehicle for the dissemination of information is diminishing as a result of the development of new communication technologies and services. All individuals and groups can now reach a wider public for better or worse and therefore hold responsibility for an enhanced understanding within society. Education and training initiatives need therefore be aimed at the public at large, both as a receiver and disseminator of content. This should include training in a critical approach to the new technologies including the internet, video games and music.

It was recalled that questions of racism and intolerance concern not only the media, but also the public at large, including the silent majority. Among the different segments of society, particular attention should be paid to young people and children and the forms of communication by which they are most influenced or in which they are most involved. Specific concerns were expressed in this respect regarding the impact that racist music may have upon them. The need for anti-racist measures within such media was emphasised.

In conclusion, it was suggested that a public campaign and anti-racist movement should be launched in preparation for the forthcoming UN World Conference Against Racism. Prominent figures, such as artists, musicians and athletes could be involved in such a campaign.