

world perspectives:
**minority voices
report**

Prepared by menac – the middle east and north africa committee
of the european youth press



Contents

- 3 Summary
- 4 Introduction
- 6 The theoretical approaches:
 - Logic
 - Human Rights
- 8 The practical approach:
 - Media production
 - iMinority
 - Storify your news
 - Mobile reporting
- 10 Follow-up
- 11 Conclusion

Study session in collaboration with Council of Europe's Youth Department, Minority Rights Group Europe and Concordia International Group.



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Report prepared by menac - the middle east and north africa committee of the european youth press.
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Summary

Media has the power to influence perceptions and to sway opinions. All the more it is important for media to be as fair and balanced as possible. However, media often is biased and reports in a one-sided way, sometimes without journalists even being aware of their own biases. Many times this is the case when it comes to reporting on minorities.

These issues were the reason for the development of the study session World Perspectives: Minority Voices (short: Minority Voices), held in Budapest from 22-28 April 2013, bringing together 25 young journalists and activists from different countries and cultural backgrounds. During the six day training the participant worked on the topic of minorities in order to address possible problems and biases that can emerge and learned how to recognise biased information and how to avoid it in their own work.

The objective of Minority Voices was to raise the critical thinking skills of participants and to provide them with the tools necessary to assess information impartially, thoroughly, and rationally. The study session was a joint project by menac – the Middle East and North Africa committee of the European Youth Press, Concordia International Group and the Minority Rights Group Europe in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

The programme of the study session consisted of three blocks. The first block addressed the rules of logic, aiming to provide participants with the tools necessary to objectively analyse information they may come across and to identify and categorise possible biases in the media or in political discourse.

In the second block, the participants learned about minority and human rights, with the purpose of sensitise participants to the challenges and multiple forms of discrimination faced by minority communities and how these issues can be understood in terms of human rights violations. A second part of this block was an introduction to the Human Rights-based Approach to media. Participants increased their knowledge on the use of images when reporting about minority communities and elaborated their own code of conduct.

The third and last block consisted of practical media production. Participants were split up in three groups, each of them with a media facilitator to support them in their work. One group created the website iMinority.eu, another one used Storify and the third group produced media for the Orange magazine. Participants reported on topics such as the Roma communities, Afghan Refugees in Hungary and on the question what minorities are.

The diversity of the group, activists and journalists working together as well as different cultural backgrounds gave added value to the training and informal learning positively influenced the group dynamic. Minority Voices had different dimensions empowering and completing each other. This specific combination resulted in quality media outcomes as well as in a remarkable motivation of participants to further explore the topic and the presented methodologies. On different levels follow up activities of Minority Voices will take place. There will be a transfer and exploitation of the results in other environments and a focus on networking among other activities.

Introduction

In modern societies media has an important role. It is the main source of information for most citizens about topics ranging from government policies, world events to local events. Media helps a country's citizens to form their own opinions in order to participate in public debates and the political process. Media, above all, is supposed to give a voice to all groups of society.

Media has the power to influence perceptions and to sway opinions. All the more it is important for media to be as fair and balanced as possible. However, media often is biased and reports in a one-sided way, sometimes without journalists even being aware of their own biases. A lot of times this is the case when it comes to reporting on minorities. Especially mainstream media often portray minorities in a one sided and stereotyped way.

The above mentioned issue was the initial reason for the development of the study session World Perspectives: Minority Voices (here after referred to as Minority Voices), held in Budapest from 22-28 April 2013. Minority Voices brought together 25 young journalists and activists working on the topic of minorities in order to address possible problems and biases that emerge.

During the six day training the participants learned how to recognise biased information, and how they can avoid it in their own work. The aim of the study session was to raise public awareness about the presence (whether deliberately planned or not) of biased information in the news, and the frequency with which they appear. This study session specifically targeted young media makers so that they de-

velop a future professional approach that is more balanced and more fairly reflects and involves the experience and perspective of minorities and migrant communities.

The participants of the study session came from different countries and cultural backgrounds. They were legal residents in countries which are members of the Council of Europe or in countries from the Middle East and North Africa. Many of them have a minority background themselves.

They all are involved in either:

- journalism and media,
- working with young people,
- human rights,
- issues relating to minorities,
- migrant and refugee communities or
- the Middle East and North Africa.

The objective of Minority Voices was to raise the critical thinking skills of participants and provide them with the tools necessary to assess information impartially, thoroughly, and above all rationally. Furthermore to create a space to share experiences, and opinions about specific news stories and to identify examples of fair and balanced media coverage as well as examples of double standards and biases in the media. Another objective was to produce a series of news stories related to current issues in Europe and to raise awareness on human rights.

Minority Voices was a common project by menac – the middle east and north africa committee of the european youth press (EYP), the Minority Rights Group Europe and Concordia International Group

in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

The programme of the study session consisted of three different blocks:

- 1) Rules of logic
- 2) Minority rights and human rights
- 3) Media production

The first block provided participants with the tools necessary to objectively analyse information they may come across and to identify and categorise possible biases in the media or in political discourse.

The second block sensitised participants to the specific challenges and multiple forms of discrimination faced by minority communities and how these issues can be understood in terms of human rights violations. It furthermore helped participants to become advocates of an inclusive society as journal-

ists. They increased their knowledge of the use of images when reporting on minority communities and elaborated their own code of conduct. They also learned about the Human Rights Based Approach.

In the third block, participants were split into three media groups. Each group had a facilitator with whom participants had regular editorial meetings in order to organise their own media production. During the media production, participants applied the knowledge they had gained during previous sessions and critically reflected on their own media pieces.

By combining these three blocks, participants got a comprehensive set of tools to use in their daily work when reporting on minority and migrants issues or when working as an activist in the respective field.

The theoretical approach

Logic

The session aimed to provide participants with the tools necessary to objectively analyse information they may come across and to identify and categorise possible biases in the media or in political discourse.

It is almost impossible for anyone to be completely free of prejudices, and for journalists especially, it is important that their personal biases-whatever they may be- not influence their professional activities.

The main objective with this session was to heighten participants' critical thinking skills by examining different examples of biased and possibly biased information taken from well known media outlets. The basic rules of logic were explained to participants, who then were asked to apply them to identify errors in reasoning and possible non sequiturs in various articles they were given.

The focus was not on ideologies espoused, positions taken or conclusions reached by the media, but on reasons given and arguments made to support their viewpoints. This logic-based approach allows participants to analyse information in a more neutral manner; the laws of logic determine what information is 'prejudiced', not the facilitator nor the participants.

A number of articles was collected and prepared before the session; some were used as handouts, others were read on the projector in the plenary.

At the last section of the session, there was a small discussion about current issues related to minority groups in Europe

Instructor: Jamil Majed from Concordia International Group.

Human Rights

The purpose of the session was to sensitise participants to the specific challenges and multiple forms of discrimination faced by minority communities and how these issues can be understood in terms of human rights violations. By the end of the session, the participants should:

- Have a greater understanding of the specific ways in which minorities may face discrimination, or how they may experience a particular human rights issue differently from the majority community
- Be able to relate issues affecting minorities to recognised international and regional human rights standards
- Have a better understanding of the range of international and regional human rights standards and are more able to articulate issues they write about in the language and framework of human rights

As well as awareness of the human rights issues affecting minorities, the exercise should challenge

two often common assumptions, that minority rights are 'special rights' and that there is a 'hierarchy of rights' i.e. one right is more important than another; instead the exercise should demonstrate the interdependence and interconnectivity of human rights and how minority rights act to elaborate basic human rights more effectively for minorities.

In plenary, a short introduction was given to the exercise. The participants were divided into small groups and given a case study, based on real scenario of a person identifying themselves as a minority. In the groups, the participants read the case study and as a group, they analysed the case study and made a list of the issues they think could affect the individual in the case study, based on the situation described. They were then asked to refer to the different human rights standards and list the different rights that might be violated next to the different issues on the flip chart.

The three case studies covered an ethnic and linguistic minority in Kyrgyzstan, a religious minority in Denmark and a refugee in Ukraine. In addition, participants who work on minority right were asked to present case studies from their areas.

Instructor: Neil Clarke from Minority Rights Group Europe

Human Rights-Based Approach to Media

The session was designed to help participants to become advocates of an inclusive society as journalists. Participants increased their knowledge on the use of images when reporting about minority communities and elaborated their own code of conduct.

They learnt about the Human Rights-Based Approach so that they can apply them as they selected interviewees and approach minority communities.

As an introduction of the session, participants discussed the role of journalism in democracy and to what extent journalists should become advocates of an inclusive society, or be seen as neutral observers of reality. They talked about the importance of reporting about campaigns, advocacy, etc. which minorities launch on their own behalf to bring their issues to their decision-makers.

The participants then received two pictures of two minority communities (the Masai and the Endorois) used in the media and discussed in two groups what messages the pictures convey about the groups and to what extent the CONCORD Code of Conduct on the use of images and messages applied; they shared their conclusions in a plenary. Then a short introduction was given to the basics of the Human Rights-Based Approach and how the principles of using the human rights framework, participation, non-discrimination, empowerment and accountability can be applied in order to ensure that the voices of minorities are heard in the journalistic piece so that the message empowers the community. Participants were then asked to plan how to approach a minority community and prepare for the interview based on these principles.

Instructor: Bernadett Sebaly from Minority Rights Group Europe.

The practical approach – the media production

Three workshops – one goal

With the theoretical part of Minority Voices over, the participants dove into the practical media production. Within minutes, they were gone – scattered all over Budapest in the search for interviewees and stories on minority rights. The participants were divided into three groups working together with a media facilitator to support them in their work.

The participants were free to choose their own topics and medium, as long as there was a connection to minority rights. Using everything from Storify and Twitter for online reporting, to good old-fashioned face-to-face interviews, they had two days to complete their media. On the second day, the participants were running up and down the stairs of the European Youth Centre in search for free space to edit, make a phone interview and look for lost team mates. They described their moods as ‘happy-tired’, feeling that the initial stress was gone, and that they had found a structure to work with in terms of already planned interviews, background material assembled and finished.

An important part of the practical media approach was the peer review. The idea behind this was for the participants to use and reflect about the new approaches they had during the course of the session – logic and human rights approaches to the media. It created a space where the participants had the time to really see and discuss what their peers were working on and offer constructive criticism and to give positive feedback in order to improve the final product.

iMinority

What are minorities? That was the question asked by iMinority, one of the media groups at Minority Voices. The group took to the streets of Budapest to ask this seemingly simple question. They followed up with interviews with NGO workers, artists and media people, resulting in a five minute video and several shorter ones, all published on www.iminority.eu. The videos are also available on iMinority’s vimeo channel. iMinority stands for intercultural minority, something that reflected the group and united them. The workshop was facilitated by Rebecca Bengtsson.

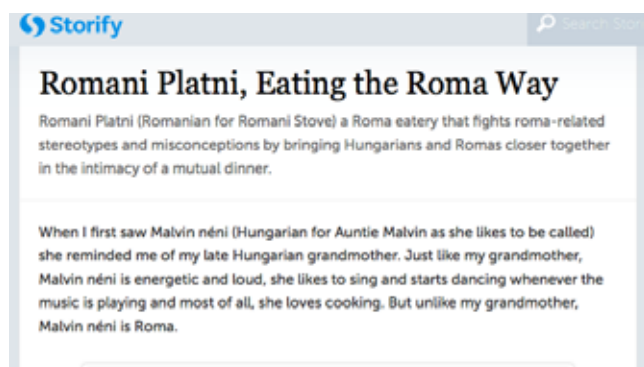


The team: Mikkel Marienlund (Denmark), Martin Hanzel (Slovakia), Marietta Le (Hungary), Nara Narimanova (Ukraine), Shadi Zatarra (Palestine), Tamar Tomaradze (Georgia) and Alina Rodenkirchen (Germany).

Storify your news

The second group worked with Storify as a means of conducting journalism. The group was facilitated by Carl Fridh Kleberg.

During the week the eight participants in four groups set out to report on the situations of Hungarian minorities using mixed media forms and equipped with their new knowledge about minority rights. In the end all ended up reporting on the pressing issues that the Hungarian Roma communities face, and how these issues are described and perceived by the wider society.



Using the online tool Storify the participants collected material from social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram, and combined it with their own first hand reporting to produce varied and fascinating reports on the situation of the Hungarian Romas.

The team: Nadia Muhanna (Spain), Laura Quintana (United Kingdom), Nika Aleksejeva (Latvia), Marion Bacher (Austria), Ania Varfolomeeva (Russia), Samir Beharic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Arzu Abdullayeva (Azerbaijan) and Miroslav Cakširan (Serbia).

Mobile reporting



Orange magazine organised one of the workshops during the Minority Voices study session. The facilitator was Dobriyana Tropankeva from Orange magazine. Divided into four media teams they focused on the following stories:

Multimedia

The Hungarian Roma Women: A Multimedia PreZentation.

Podcast

No home, No job, How can we live? The Afghan Refugees in Hungary

Television

Hungarian Jews: "We Feel Targeted"

Text

Home is where the citizenship is. Does citizenship boost ethnic identity for young trans-border Hungarians?

The team: Csilla Volgyi (Hungary), Ahmed Anchour (Tunisia), Nicolina Karaolia (Cyprus), Imran Mehr (Pakistan), Lena Odgaard (Denmark), Lukasz Cundy (Poland), Dmitrii Romanovski (Moldova), Una Cilic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Luisa Dos Santos (Brazil).

Conclusion

The World Perspective: Minority Voices study session, which aimed to raise awareness on how to report on minorities, consisted of three different blocks and gave participants comprehensive insight into a variety of aspects on the topic. The academic-standard training on rules of logic aimed to improve participants' critical thinking skills, the sessions on Human Rights delivered knowledge about the topic from an activist's point of view, whereas the media production workshops put all that into practice. Each block had its specific role in the learning process.

The session on rules of logic next to media production workshop is a new and exciting approach in regards to the media training structure of the European Youth Press. From the reaction of the group, we could conclude that the discussion about fallacies made participants not only to deeply realise the importance of the use of language in producing or consuming media but also gave them a new, concrete tool to analyse news and be critical of their own thinking. Most of the participants, especially the media-makers, were not used to work with logic rules before; therefore they felt that it was interesting to look at their work from a different perspective.

The Human Rights approach introduced by Human Rights activists gave to the group theoretic knowledge about the minority rights topic. The session was designed to bring contrast to the academically-based, purely scientific training on logic rules. Participants learned about specific case studies of Human Rights violation. This session enriched the participants' knowledge of Human Rights and introduced to the group a ways of finding information about Human Rights. Participants were actively participating in Hu-

man Rights sessions, showing great interest in the topic and the new information they were receiving.

The group had basic knowledge about Human Rights and the session raised their awareness meaningfully. It also showed how international law could relate to the reality of an individual, which proved to be a new aspect for many of the participants in the group. Several participants expressed their will in continuing exploring that topic after the study session.

The media production workshop gave participants the possibility of learning new skills on how to produce media. Most of them have learned something new; discovered a new social media tool or technique of media production. The participants also learnt how to work with an editor in chief and to follow proper editorial deadlines. The additional challenge was related to the fact that media pieces were produced in a foreign country together with a multicultural team in a short amount of time. Participants implemented the knowledge they had received in all blocks to the final media product.

The diversity of the group, activists and journalists working together as well as different cultural backgrounds gave added value to the training. Informal learning positively influenced the group dynamic and made the learning process smooth and easy.

The World Perspective: Minority Voices Project was multidimensional and intended to have different dimensions empowering and complementing each other. That specific combination resulted in quality media outcomes as well as in remarkable motivation of participants to keep on exploring the topic and presented methodologies further.

Follow up

The follow up activities of the World Perspective: Minority Voices study session takes place on different levels:

1. menac / European Youth Press and Minority Voices team

menac and European Youth Press together with Minority Rights Group Europe and Concordia International are planning to re-run the project in the near future. The second edition of the project will be developed taking into account evaluation results of the pilot version. The second edition will be held in the Middle East.

2. menac / European Youth Press, Minority Rights Group Europe and participants of the project

Participants of the World Perspective: Minority Voices project will take part in different European Youth Press projects as participants and team members. Some of the participants expressed their will of working voluntarily for the organisation. Participants proposed to organise workshops on social media topics. European Youth Press is considering this option. Several participants of the World Perspective: Minority Voices project have applied for an internship with Minority Rights Group Europe.

3. Project outcomes and commercialisation of project results

iMinority.eu will be used for follow up activities, it will be gathering further information about minorities in Europe. The menac blog website will be used as a platform for articles and media pieces relevant to minorities and human rights topics. Partici-



#minorityvoices2013

pants of World Perspective: Minority Voices will be encouraged to publish their stories on the blog. Several of the media outcomes were re-published in different portals and news channels.

4. Transfer and exploitation of results in other environments

Participants are going to use acquired media skills in their every-day work (editing, radio podcast, and photography). Participants are going to implement acquired knowledge about fallacies in their every-day work. Participants are going to use acquired social media skills at their work (social media such as: Storify, twitter).

5. Networking

The Facebook group created for the study session will be kept as a networking platform for participants. They will work on organising joint projects with their peers as well as participate in projects of their respective organisations. Participants can cooperate with each other working on different media stories in the future.

world perspective

minority voices study session



The participants: Mikkel Marienlund (Denmark), Martin Hanzel (Slovakia), Marietta Le (Hungary), Nara Nari-manova (Ukraine), Shadi Zatar (Palestine), Tamar Tomaradze (Georgia), Alina Rodenkirchen (Germany), Nadia Muhanna (Spain), Laura Quintana (United Kingdom), Nika Aleksejeva (Latvia), Marion Bacher (Austria), Ania Varfolomeeva (Russia), Samir Beharic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Arzu Abdullayeva (Azerbaijan), Miroslav Caksiran (Serbia), Csilla Volgyi (Hungary), Ahmed Anchour (Tunisia), Nicolina Karaolia (Cyprus), Imran Mehr (Pakistan), Lena Odgaard (Denmark), Lukasz Cundy (Poland), Dmitrii Romanovski (Moldova), Una Cilic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Luisa Dos Santos (Brazil).

The team: Katarzyna Morton (European Youth Press), Ruxandra Pandea (Council of Europe), Maria Wölfle (menac), Rebecca Bengtsson (European Youth Press/menac), Neil Clarke (Minority Rights Group Europe), Jamil Majed (Cordcordia International Group),

Facilitators: Carl Fridh Kleberg, Dobriyana Tropankeva (Orange Magazine), Solange Ummels