

Brush up community media

Edited version of the speech of Gabriella Velics - the leaving vice-president of CMFE - on the occasion of "Conference on Migration and Media Awareness 2017" in Hamburg. The opening panel's topic was: „Migration: Community Media - an effective tool to foster inclusion and combat racial intolerance.“

A brief overview of the condition of community media in Europe

According to the CMFE 2012 mapping¹ a total of 2237 community radio stations and 521 community television stations are active across Europe. If we see these numbers only, we could have an idea of everything is all right, we are strong enough, and there are plenty of community media stations all across Europe.

But, the picture is more complex, the conditions are different:

WE ARE NO EQUALLY STRONG

1. In several European countries the community media sector is vivid such as France with around 600 community broadcasters and the United Kingdom with more than 200 stations. These can't compare with the Eastern European or Balkan countries, where community based media not recognised, or not exists, or only a few exists or still working as local radio station with private or commercial media licence.
2. Some country has a well established financial support system open especially for community broadcasters, other countries use project based financial system or give support only to those broadcasters which are doing in favour of the governmental expectations.
3. We can see nearly the same with the legal background of community media. While we have a recommendation² to EU states to give legal recognition, access to spectrum (both analogue and digital) and funding to the sector, it's in very different status in different EU countries. Some countries have community broadcasters with limited freedom, such as organised and oriented by church or have strong connections to local or national political entities.

While community media have been recognised not only by the United Nations and UNESCO but also by European institutions for many years as a distinct and complementary third media sector next to public and commercial media, we still found ourselves in strange situations several times when we talk with politicians

¹ In 2012 CMFE conducted a mapping and rating project in collaboration with EPRA, the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities. Download: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1hzhZ6Fs0qO1mOCPF5Ef5ftWkM9zkW3ENvFV2sjdkZDw/pub?single=true&gid=0&output=html>

² European Parliament Resolution 2008/2011 and 2009 Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

or academics who has no or only blur idea of what we are doing and representing in our societies. The European Parliament Resolution 2008/2011 (INI) and the 2009 Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the role of community media both acknowledge the social value of community media as a source of local content, cultural and linguistic diversity, media pluralism, inclusion and intercultural dialogue and recommend to member states to give legal recognition, access to spectrum (analogue and digital) and funding to the sector. In particular, the EP Resolution 2008/2011 (INI) “16. Calls on the Commission to take into account community media as an alternative, bottom up solution for increasing media pluralism when designing indicators for media pluralism.”

After nearly 10 years a lot has realised around community media but also a lot has changed in our societies, which also have effect on overall condition of community media in Europe. The societal changes should be more in focus and next to it; the recommendation should be overviewed, monitored and even refresh, now it's very acute. It might sound a bit idealistic, but those who are in general responsible for media, and internet, and social changes in the EU, should put effort to support community media broadcasters with clear legal background and clear financial source dedicated for the sector.

As I experienced - working with CMFE for the last 6 years - community radio and TV could be a suitable tool for cooperative learning, and helps integration with team work where everybody can share her/his expertise for the wellbeing of the community and the person as well.

I know, that we still should do a lot.

Now, at the opening panel of the “Conference on Migration and Media Awareness 2017” I would like to share you some data from a research to underline my thoughts.

The data come from the Refugees Reporting: A Project of the World Association for Christian Communication (Europe Region) and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe: “Changing the Narrative: media representation of refugees and migrants in Europe”³

Key findings:

1. Invisibility: Only 21% of news items on asylum and migration reference a refugee or migrant. Over 75% of the stories don't identify an individual refugee or migrant, not include their voice or experience.

³ Download the full report in English: http://www.refugeesreporting.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Changing_the_Narrative_Media_Representation_of_Refugees_and_Migrants_in_Europe.pdf

Download the summary in different language: <http://www.refugeesreporting.eu/report/>

2. Certain groups are even more invisible: Of the 21% of articles that mentioned a refugee or migrant, only 27% was the person a woman. Of all people mentioned in this kind of articles, only 6% were refugee women. The research found the Afghans and Nigerians are also under represented. Citizens of West-Africa were present in only 2% of the article; however they give a considerable part of the migrant population in Europe.
3. Voiceless people: Of the 21% of articles that reference migrant or refugees, less than half (40%) of the article quote them directly. This means the trend of indirect representation. Direct quotes are the most accurate way to represent people. Inaccuracy of representation can lead to misunderstanding and lack of tolerance.

In general, voiceless people are perceived as incapable to stand for themselves. Which is certainly not true, all these people are expert in something. I hope, CMFE as organisation and also our members can help migrants and refugees to access to a wider social communication in order to ensure their rights to information and to freedom of expression.

Community media should be the platform for sharing not only the information, the knowledge, but also to listen to each other, let the stories flow and learn from each other!