

## **Youth in media – FAST FORWARD**

### ***Case study on journalism practice in media production***

Sylvia Sammut (ROOTED Radio Station, Malta) &  
Ekaterina Marinova (National Alliance for Social responsibility, Bulgaria)

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#### **BACKGROUND**

The current exchange was funded by the European Exchange of Media Practices of the MEDIANE program of the Council of Europe and gave 2 youth workers and media professionals the opportunity to spend time with the community in Malta and Bulgaria, learn more about the living/ working environment in both countries, the attitude to diversity and the way it reflects the youth work and the participation of the young people in the life of the community.

The flow of the exchanges and the outcome reflect our shared beliefs/values:

1. Find the common ground and do not differentiate in a way that excludes some groups;
2. Channel youth creativity: now age and experience show us that the young people nowadays have the time, energy and the access to information and communication that were once not available. We are convinced that this energy and time have to be channeled and encouraged in an appropriate way;
3. Peer pressure and modern living can make some young people feeling isolated and cut from the society. They need to be the agents of change and have a positive contribution to life.
4. Communicate, observe and spend more time with the local community: that gives a better awareness on diversity!
5. Involve representatives of the minorities/ under-represented groups in the media production/ planning educational training or sessions.

#### **CASE STUDY 1**

##### **Varna Free University: University Radio Centre: Varna, Bulgaria**

**Contact person: Petar Pavlov:** Manager of the University Media Centre

The Varna Free University /VFU/ is a private one and therefore – tuition is paid and the University is a preferred one by students from Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Romania, Moldova and Russia.

The University Media centre encompasses an university radio – airing once a week for 3 hours: every Friday and also – an University Multimedia Centre. That department of the university is used as a technical lab for the students in media and also – for the editing of the films and videos, presenting the activity of the university, the assets; the networking in development and research –on an national and international scale; the information on webinars and/or distance learning courses.

At present, the media centre is producing 300 videos per year, 10% of them cover social causes and community development initiatives.

15% of the videos are dubbed in English, but NO video is developed by a 100 youth team of students.

The VFU – having a big number of potential and current students is not producing videos or airing radio coverage of the potential the University offers as a post-graduate career.

The University videos are not targeted at young people with physical impairments or their specific youth groups/ people. One good reasoning about that is the fact that the University addresses all audiences and makes no difference between recipients of the videos: be it young people with or without disabilities or people in active age who are willing to continue their education.

Willing to be involved in more socially meaningful causes, the team of the VFU is supporting the VISION agency social development in Varna /a service provider to people with disabilities/ in the development of their audio and video policy;

The workshop on photo and video editing for people with physical disabilities, users of the community-based social services, provided by the VISION Agency for Social Development.

The workshop on photo and video editing is catering for the communication and self-expression needs of 10 persons with physical disabilities, in active age, but at thus stage the minimal age of their users is 47 and there is not any young user, aged 19-35, although the team is in search of young people.

The reason of not having any young user who would be involved in the photo and video editing/ media production even in the community of the younger people who represent a minority social group in Bulgaria and in need of a socialization and self-expression is the fact that the workshop currently only offers sessions for persons with disabilities and provides no integrated learning environment.

The next step to enhance the participation of the younger people with disabilities in the media production is to have a person in active age that has sufficient knowledge and stamina and will to develop inclusive media. Ideally, but not necessarily the workshop manager could be a person with a disability. This act of a **positive discrimination** will be encouraging for those young people who represent a minority group, to show them that there is continuity between the formal/ non-formal learning and the employment/ incentives and **entrepreneurship when producing media content**. It will also be encouraging to see that the merits and abilities of a person with a disability should be taken into consideration when producing inclusive media esp. on disability matters – in this particular case, is **to move away from the disability** and allow the team to cover a diversity of aspects of the community life. **Assignment-based/ project based responsibilities**, assigned to different team members – some of them might have a disability or represent a different minority are also a possible way to attract more and younger participants. Another important aspect of making the minority media attractive for younger people is **the empowerment** of the young people to participate in the decision-making process. The **technical advancement** of the process of media production itself, and **the networking** it provides is also a ground for a better youth involvement.

**“If it has to be good, let’s do it ourselves!”** is the type of encouragement the editors in chief and the owners of the minority media have to foster in order to attract an active youth audience and people, involved in the media production. To create a supportive environment where the young members of the editorial team show that they can achieve their personal and professional goals and their skills and contributions are valued and taken into consideration beyond the fact that they are a minority, the media team had to offer regular exposure to communication with the community, the news production, editing, managing readers feedback; appraisal incentives.

There is a belief that covering disability/minority issues makes a media inclusive. That approach – of stressing on the disability is a matter of a discriminatory practice /if not managed well.

## CASE STUDY 2

### **National Alliance for Social Responsibility: Varna, Bulgaria**

A national network, of social service providers: public, private and representing the civil sector and the local authorities in Bulgaria who are both social service providers, but also subcontractors to social service providers and a paying authority.

NASO is managing a website, a twitter account, a newsletter and an youtube channel.

98% of the media coverage is aimed at the promotion of the activity of the NASO members – around 1100 organisations from Bulgaria.

Around 2% of the coverage promotes innovations in the disability field in Bulgaria, but the trends of the coverage in general tend to reflect the “professionals and supporters of people with disabilities, doing something for them” – in 107 of the 120 articles, published in the newsletter or on the web page on the organization: [www.naso.bg](http://www.naso.bg) or the newsletter [www.nasoki.bg](http://www.nasoki.bg) in the month, preceding the exchange visit of Mrs Sylvia Sammut to Varna, Bulgaria.

In a session on getting to know each-other with the members of the English classes team, the time with the local community was dedicated on getting to know each-other, finding out about each-others’ countries, families, learning more about the attitudes to the people with disabilities in the community, the place of the women in the community in Malta and in Bulgaria traditionally and in the modern time.

The topic of the inter-generational dialogue in more traditional communities, like the Maltese and the Bulgarian and the role of the younger people in the decision-making process and in shaping the opinion of the community on the participation of the minority groups in the life of the community and the role of the media in shaping the community attitude to the minorities in the community.

The members of the groups also encountered that normally they do not participate in the process of media production and/or providing testimonials about their satisfaction with the effectiveness of the media in raising the profile of the people with disabilities in the community.

The topics that the participants in the English teaching class wanted to see covered in relation to inclusive media were:

1. Travel and networking possibilities;
2. A different type of a newsletter, edited by the NASO, covering news about a particular country: Malta was a country of a specific interest, given the fact that Valetta is the European Capital of Culture for 2018;
3. Representing the different roles the people with disabilities have in the society and promotion of the positive examples;
4. To the participants in the discussion, the disability media have to be more actively involved in standing against the negative media coverage on fraud with the disability allowance;
5. The participants stated that the editorial team of the NASO should be more proactive in promoting the diversity in the media community;
6. The editors in chief – 3 people confirmed that their media has to be proactive in covering adequately the trends in a changing community;

7. The participants in the discussion – men and women over 40, all of them with an university degree – now retired, due to age of disability, have shared the opinion that the newsletters and the media policy of the NGOs, promoting the integration of the people with a disability in the community have to have a more active promotional policy as thus they could be reaching out to a community of people with disabilities or the ones who are working with them and empowering a community group that us under-represented, portrayed in the media in a negative way or facing strong and negative attitudes.

At the time, the participants in the discussion were confirming that the Bulgarian media in general tend to promote negative media news as these are the ones that sell.

### **CASE STUDY 3**

#### **Youth Radio/ school-age auditoria: College of Economics – Varna**

A project-funded college radio with the College of Economics in Varna was operational for 5 consecutive years, thus providing an opportunity for young people, aged 15-18 to get to know the basics of the media production, to cooperate with the Chief Editor of the Sports Department of Varna Radio, Mr. Rumen Genov and to gain a practical experience in media production, communication with adults, pre-work experience, shaping the attitude of the community, making one's point heard. The youth media team: 6 people/ 23 young people were included in the media production project.

The youth media team was developing media coverage on youth issues, sport, diversity 2 times a week and airing – within the College itself – for half an hours once in every 2 weeks. The youth media team was involved in the media production program as a part of the after class program.

The young people were working with a team of 3 other youth workers/journalists: 2 males, 2 females. Each young journalist has signed a template contract with the "Radio" and an Ethical Charter on Diversity Coverage, developed in cooperation with peers, representing various minority groups. The 2-pages ethical code was also available as a collage of images/ situations.

The project ended on May 25, 2014 due to lack of funding. As of November 1, 2014 the project will be re-newed as an online information platform and at a later stage- an educational radio and e-portal that will be managed by the Life Skills Development Foundation Bulgaria and a team of youth workers who have background in media.

### **CASE STUDY 4**

#### **ROOTED Radio Station – St Paul's Bay, Malta**

A the time of the visit, in June 2014, ROOTED was a non-formal youth group, mentored by Mrs. Sylvia Sammut who is a Manager of a Learning Zone in a school for girls in Pembroke, Malta and a youth worker, interested in media production.

ROOTED is an "educational" radio station that does not have a real time airing, but provides a simulative and supported environment for the young people, interested in media production and editing, to gain the following practical skills:

1. To produce and edit news content;
2. To articulate in a correct way and structure and present news in a literate way and style: in Maltese and English;
3. To work in a team and listen to each-other;
4. To ask questions and to lead a meaningful conversation
5. To learn form the diversity – by meeting different people and communicating with them;
6. To follow up on an interesting topic and do a research;
7. To excel in the use of the new technologies when making a radio broadcasting;
8. To manage feedback – positive and negative and to give feedback on the performance of their peers.

The media production session with ROOTED radio was preceded by a meeting with the youth team of the ROOTED who has been coordinating the logistics in a conference on youth participation. This form of decision-making and holding a work meeting was later transferred in the radio broadcasting.

During the radio broadcasting with ROOTED I have been working with 4 young people: Sarah, Matthew, Sean and Steven who have had various roles, important for the production and airing of the radio emission: such as: technical editing, editing, presenting.

The topics of the conversation during the 'educational' radio airing were: my snapshot of Malta and Bulgaria: what is common and what is different; what made me choose Malta for the exchange; what is the key of the successful youth work.

During the EEMP I also met the colleagues of Mrs Sylvia Sammut in Pembroke school for girls which has helped me to be familiar with the educational system in Malta, the coordination between the school and after-class activities, the vision on diversity, the youth work. A special attention was given to the supported education for students with special educational needs.

I consider the time, spent with the teachers and the community as important as the "media" component of the exchange visit.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND GUIDELINES ON PRODUCTION OF DIVERSE/INCLUSIVE MEDIA**

The following list of guidelines is not an exhaustive one. It is developed, based in the presumption that both partners in the Mediane exchange have a background in teaching and are involved in youth projects on capacity building and integration of young people at risk in the mainstream community – using the formal and non-formal education.

However, we consider that the guidelines and conclusions are useful to any professionals who are involved in media production, editing or promotional activities or branding of youth work.

1. **Diverse teams make diverse media:** do not only involve media professionals only in the process of media production. Try to involve youth workers and teachers in the media production and do not forget the technical/ innovation gurus;
2. To us, the **diverse media production is successful when there is good communication**. Having said that, encourage the people you are working with to communicate with people from a diverse background;
3. **Assignment-based responsibilities in media production** also works, especially when including representatives of minorities in the media production;
4. **Combine different broadcasting channels:** radio, TV/visual/, comics, animation. Some of that can be used with educational purposes;
5. **Include experts by experience:** who knows best if not the representatives of the “media minorities” themselves? Having them on board will also help them recognize that they can work with people with different abilities;
6. **Make inclusiveness a MUST in your media and start educating as early as possible.** Do not make inclusive media, just because it is popular. Include the young people in the development of a roadmap or a strategy for inclusiveness and for its’ implementation. Does not have to be complex;
7. **Social media/ownership:** we have to admit that the young people we are working with openly miss sessions when working with us or manipulate us... just to log on to the FB a second after they have admitted that they have to study for an exam. The FB/social media gives them a feeling that they are creating and controlling everything that that it is “their own”, but in fact after publishing a comment or a picture out, no one has a control on the way in will be perceived/shared e.t.c. This sense of belonging/ ownership and approval from peers that the young people get from the online/ FB communication, we as youth workers need to foster and channel in order to make a good use of the social networks;
8. **Keep it simple and not wordy:** and also – do not generalize or separate. Keep the balance when describing diversity and promote the positive site and the contribution;
9. **Start diversity training as early as possible:** to us as educator media literacy and diversity training has to happen even in the kindergarten and is better done when practical: with controlled exposure to diversity, storytelling, age-appropriate feedback;
10. **Look for feedback:** from all parties. Testimonials and feedback will only make you improve your work and improve the ability of the people you are working with to manage different feedback.