



**Sports' Journalism, Discrimination & Diversity – Realities for the future...**

**SPEAK OUT  
AGAINST  
DISCRIMINATION**

**Council of Europe  
campaign**



Sports' Journalism,  
Discrimination & Diversity –  
Realities for the future...

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## Media, Sport & Discrimination – Challenges to be addressed...

The “Speak out against Discrimination” campaign focuses on the media and media professionals and proposes tools to help them understand the complex nature of intercultural issues, but also encourages journalists to discuss these matters and work together to introduce new views on the way in which certain subjects are addressed.

The media are undeniably key players in intercultural dialogue because the information they disseminate helps the public to form an opinion on certain subjects.

Sport is now a major social phenomenon; it is one of the subjects people talk about most frequently because it receives so much media coverage. However, in the media, sports-related subjects give an unbalanced view of contemporary European societies. For example, the most frequent stereotype is that sports are for men and that a typical sportsperson is a healthy male athlete.

A large number of people are therefore discriminated against because of their gender, their sexual orientation or their disability. Spectators in sports stadiums also all too frequently make racist remarks or demonstrate racist attitudes towards sportspeople. It is therefore essential to take a look at how the media should tackle discrimination and racism in sport. Some media reports give the public an unrealistic view of sport. Sport’s extraordinary potential to bring people together and teach them to abide by the rules of the game and to behave with dignity, both in victory and in defeat, continues to be neglected.

What can be done to counter racism and discrimination in sport? How can all the protagonists in sport and the media work together to ensure that sport becomes a symbol of goodwill between peoples?

These are the questions that were put to the participants during the debate on “Journalism, Sport & Discrimination – Don’t let us be offside!”, organised by the “Speak out against Discrimination” campaign in partnership with the

Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport of the Council of Europe during the "Assise International du Journalisme et de l'Information".

On the basis of the conclusions of the report "Sports journalism, discrimination & racism - Which training for which solution?", the plenary session took stock of the work carried out in Europe, in particular with regard to ethics and deontology. It also provided the opportunity to discuss proposals for future activities to ensure that not only journalists, club managers and sport-people but also supporters and spectators play their full role in countering discrimination in sport.

The debate, which included contributions by journalists, researchers, sport-people and heads of European sports organisations, was also illustrated by excerpts from two documentaries<sup>1</sup> on disability and sexual orientation in sport (see the boxes).

The discussions, which were covered by the journalists of the *European Youth Press* network, are set out in full in this booklet to enable the media and media professionals to develop a truly inclusive and intercultural approach to the material they produce, including in the field of sport.



Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport On May, 11 2007, the Council of Europe adopted Resolution CM/Res(2007)8, establishing the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), in order to give fresh momentum to pan-European sports co-operation and address the current challenges facing sport in Europe – building on more than 30 years of activity in the field. The EPAS provides a platform for intergovernmental sports co-operation between the public authorities of member states of the agreement. It also encourages dialogue between public authorities, sports federations and NGOs. This contributes to better governance, with the aim of making sport healthier and fairer and ensuring that it conforms to high ethical standards. The EPAS aims to promote the development of sport in modern society, while emphasising its positive values. It develops policies and standards, monitors them and helps with capacity building and the exchange of good practice. It uses Council of Europe sports standards such as the European Sports Charter, the Code of Sports Ethics, the European Convention on Spectator Violence and the Anti-Doping Convention as the basis for drawing up its own strategies. Thirty-three countries are currently members

1. "Sports and homosexuality, what's the problem?" by Michel Royer. Broadcast in January 2010, *Canal +*, France

"Inside Incredible Athletes", Mike Christie broadcast in August 2010, *Channel 4*, United Kingdom.

(Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") and seven sports organisations (including ENGSO and UEFA) are non-governmental partners of the EPAS.



The "4th Assises Internationales du Journalisme et de l'Information" took place on 16, 17, and 18 November 2010 for the second year running at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The 3-day programme consisted of meetings, debates, professional workshops and social activities. This year's Assises coincided with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Convention on Human.

"Sports et Homosexualité, c'est quoi le problème?", a documentary by Michel Royer, was broadcast in January 2010 on *Canal +*, France. Matthew Mitcham is the first openly gay Olympic champion. His homosexuality is a private matter and does not add or detract anything from his performance. But there are many people who think that the two words "sports and homosexuality" do not sit well together. Is there a problem between sport andw gays? Simply by raising the question we are breaking a taboo of the sporting world, which is governed by the law of silence, many prejudices and sometimes unabashed homophobia.

"Inside Incredible Athletes", a documentary by Mike Christie, was broadcast in August 2010 on *Channel 4*, United Kingdom. Why do spectators not show the same enthusiasm for the Paralympic Games as for the Olympic Games? "Inside incredible Athletes" shows disabilities in another light, by offering magnificent footage of the sports performances of seven disabled sportspersons, who hope to take part in the 2012 Paralympic Games. They were filmed at symbolic venues in London, showing viewers paralympic sports as never seen before.





## **“Talking about the problem opens up the debate!” Interview Yoann Lemaire.**

**Alexis Sarini, *Orange Magazine*, 18/11/10**

Yoann Lemaire, a 28-year old man living in the Ardennes, was recently elected “Gay of the year”. Why did he receive the award? Because of a murky example of homophobia of which he was a victim in 2009 when he was playing for Chooz Football Club. In 2003, Yoann Lemaire came out. Of the 2,300,000 football players registered with the French Football Federation, he is the only one to have ever done so. Initially all went well and he had no problems with his teammates until new players joined the club. From then on he was the target of homophobic comments, followed by insults and was gradually relegated to the bench. Here’s what he had to say about what happened to him.

*What triggered the “Yoann Lemaire affair”?*

It was in 2009. *France 3* television was making a documentary about homosexuals in football in the context of Anti-Homophobia Day. While I was being interviewed, one of the players in the team openly insulted me in front of the camera, saying that he didn’t like gays. The pictures were broadcast and many viewers and journalists reacted strongly. The club, for its part, chose to remain silent. I was so disgusted that I decided to stop playing and to write a book about homosexuality in football. “I am the only homosexual football player, at least I once was ...”. Following this affair, the Chooz football club refused to renew my licence, saying that I was “dangerous for the club...”.

*How did the football bodies react?*

The French Football Federation (F.F.F.), initially embarrassed by the affair, organised a mediation session with all the protagonists: the President of the Chooz Football Club, the President of the Champagne-Ardenne Football League and the Mayor of Chooz, who had taken the club’s side, and myself, supported by Paris Foot Gay.

(Editor's note: Yoann Lemaire obtained the right to play for Chooz again but was forced to leave the club once and for all some time later after receiving death threats from one of the coaches. It was only some time later, when the media got wind of the affair, that the FFF, with the encouragement of the Ministry of Youth and Sport, took steps to penalise FC Chooz by removing the President's licence.)

*What can you say about the media coverage of your case?*

The press, in particular l'Agence France Presse and French television, talked a lot about the affair. If the media hadn't talked, I would have kept quiet. It was thanks to them that Rama Yade and the FFF took steps to impose (a very mild) penalty on my former club. The whole affair does not only concern me personally but is a problem throughout society. Talking about it opens up the debate and draws people's attention to the problem. Then people realise that "bloody faggot" is just as much an insult as "bloody Arab". The sporting press needs to get to grips with the problem. Let me just give you an example: I was on *iTélé* live with a journalist and the editor-in-chief of a well-known sports newspaper. During the programme, the latter whispered in my ear: "I'm warning you, I don't want to talk about homosexuality, racism or sexism, as there are fascists and homophobes who buy my newspaper and I can't afford to lose those readers given the crisis we're facing." So you see ...

*How do you explain the widespread homophobia in football ?*

Football is a very popular sport with a genuinely competitive spirit. I think what needs to be done is to raise the coaches' awareness of the problems of sexism, homosexuality and discrimination. I remember when I was younger, during the Champagne-Ardenne football selections, there was already a strong competitive spirit; the coach used to say to us "you're not queers, we're not poofers...", he "heterosexualised" from a very young age and always expected us to be "real men". The macho, seductive footballer with his beautiful car and plenty of money is idolised and sporting values are forgotten. Ignorance leads to intolerance.

*Has your example helped to change attitudes?*

I hope so. The Ministry of Sport has launched campaigns against homophobia in football and that has opened up the debate. Maybe that annoys some people and makes them even nastier but if we want to take the debate forward, we have to talk about the problem. I have received a huge number of messages on *Facebook* and by e-mail from not only young but also older people, gays and straights, who have been moved by my story or are in the same situation. So my case has done some people a lot of good.

However, one person said that he was also a gay footballer but, having seen the contempt with which I had been treated, he had gone out with a girl so that his mates would think he was heterosexual. I don't know what to say. It's a shame when it has to come down to that. However, I get the impression that things are beginning to change. There are more and more awareness-raising campaigns. Associations like Paris Foot Gay and foundations like Lilian Thuram's "Education against racism" are very active and helping to change things.



# Sports journalism, discrimination & racism

## Which training for which solution?

Fiona Chesterton, consultant & rapporteur

### Executive Summary

**1. The Council of Europe campaign 'Speak out against Discrimination'** has focussed amongst other priorities on the training of media professionals for journalism to be better equipped for a multicultural Europe,

**2. Discrimination issues** in sport have evolved from a primary focus on combating racism in football to more complex and challenging themes:

- 2.1 Women's sport still struggles for equal attention. There are relatively few women sports journalists and female students on sports journalism courses,
- 2.2 Homophobia – case of homophobic abuse have been recently reported in France and the UK. Even where media coverage is sympathetic, commercial and cultural pressures make it challenging for athletes to 'come out',
- 2.3 The Paralympics in 2012 will be the biggest yet. Disabled sport however gets poor levels of coverage and research suggests journalists lack confidence to report it appropriately,
- 2.4 Research suggests there is much hidden discrimination including institutional discrimination in sport, even in countries with liberal values. This requires more in-depth journalism to tackle, in spite of commercial and economic pressures,
- 2.5 While much progress has been made in eradicating overt racist abuse in football, there are incidents in other sports, in amateur as well as professional sport and in football in some countries in Europe.

**3. There has been a move from more informal ways to enter sports journalism** towards entry via Higher Education and vocational qualifications. In recent years, sports journalism training has developed into a discipline in its own right and is very popular with students.

- 3.1 It is vital to diversify the sports journalism workforce, and the student body in training to ensure the perspective of women, ethnic minority groups, people with different sexual orientations and disabled journalists are represented in newsrooms,
- 3.2 There are a range of approaches across journalist training institutions to the curricula and many offer students the option to study ethics and the social, cultural and political contexts of sport. There are a few good examples of where issues around racism and discrimination are explicitly covered in the syllabus.

**4. There is only a limited amount of continuing professional development and mid-career training** for working sports journalists. Much still depends on experienced editorial guidance and on the job experience. Online learning offers the potential to provide a new resource for working journalists. The BBC College of Journalism has pioneered this in the UK and offers a range of interactive learning for sports specialists.

**5. The report makes some recommendations for discussion:**

- 5.1 Continued development of specialist sports training provision across all Council of Europe countries,
- 5.2 Sports journalism courses should ensure that all students have the opportunity to study social, cultural and political context, including discrimination issues,
- 5.3 Priority should be given to improving the diversity of journalist trainees with regard to gender, disability, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation,
- 5.4 Working journalists should be encouraged by editors to develop more in-depth sports features and have opportunities to reflect on and discuss work with colleagues,
- 5.5 More online resources should be developed to enable journalists wherever they are to improve their work and deal with challenging issues in a changing world.

## Background

The Council of Europe has identified Sport as having a key role in promoting intercultural and international dialogue. Sport it recognises as the single most popular activity in modern society, which can promote social integration, tolerance and understanding. It can also be a theatre for conflict and intolerance. From the time of the Heysel disaster in 1985 the Council of Europe has led initiatives to combat racism and violence.

In 2001 Ministers from Council of Europe member countries committed themselves to act to prevent racism, xenophobia and racial intolerance in sport. This<sup>2</sup> gave national sports organisations, clubs, and anti-racist associations the principal task of implementing awareness-raising, educational and information programmes on racism. A whole range of initiatives was launched both in individual countries, like Kick Racism out of Sport in the UK, and more international campaigns, like the Football against Racism Network (FARE).

Subsequently, the focus has moved to the role that the media and individual journalists can play.

The Council of Europe campaign "Speak out against Discrimination" has sought to engage media professionals across all 47 member states, and set as its first objective; to prepare and train media professionals through lasting partnerships with European training schools for journalism to be better equipped to work in a multicultural Europe.

A focus on sports journalism training brings together naturally these two streams of work. The Council of Europe held a seminar in Strasbourg in 2008, with the support of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)<sup>3</sup>.

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2. Recommendation Rec(2001)6 on the prevention of racism, xenophobia and racial intolerance in sport, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers to member states, 18 July 2001.

3. **Sport & discrimination: the media perspective - Strasbourg, 20 November 2008** - The "Sport & discrimination: the media perspective" seminar was held with and for sports media professionals. This event took place within the framework of the activities of the Council of Europe's "Speak out against Discrimination" campaign during the European encounters on *Sport and diversity* which was organised by the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) with the Agence pour l'Education par le Sport (APELS, "French agency for education through sport"). The sport and discrimination seminar focused on two aspects of the theme which links "Sport, discrimination & the media". On one hand, it dealt with the relations between "Intercultural awareness, racism and sports journalism" and, on the other hand, on those between "the media and fight against discrimination". The main contributors to this seminar were: Gabriella Battaini-Draconi, Director General Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, Coordinator for Intercultural Dialogue, Council of Europe; Jonathan Hill, Head of Brussels Office, Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), Kurt Wachter, Project Coordinator, "Football Against Racism in Europe" (FARE) and Lilian Thuram, President, "Education against racism Foundation".

This considered the question of how journalists can contribute to a fair, more balanced coverage of competitive sport between nations.

## **Discrimination - the issues in 2010**

For many years from the 1980s the prime focus for combating racism has been the football terraces, where racist and anti-Semitic verbal abuse of players on the field has been assiduously tackled by football authorities across Europe. While this has not been eradicated, especially in Italy and some Balkan and Eastern European countries, a policy of non-tolerance by both media and sport has made a big difference.

New issues around discrimination have emerged, however, which are more complex and challenging for sport and for journalists. There have been new targets: Islamophobic abuse and hostility to Roma people, for example. The latest research from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shows that 'despite significant progress made... sports continues to face a number of challenges related to racism and ethnic discrimination'<sup>4</sup>. This report identifies issues in particular around failures to recognise or monitor discrimination in amateur sport and in sports outside professional football.

### **1. Fair play for Women**

Women's sport still struggles for equal attention with men's sport and participation levels by women especially women from ethnic minorities is low. The International Press survey in 2005<sup>5</sup> suggested that only 5 per cent of coverage was given to sport played by women. There are still relatively few women sports reporters and editors, and candidates for sports journalism courses are still overwhelmingly male.

### **2. Homophobia - The perils of Coming Out**

There have been relatively few sportsmen and women who have felt able to declare their sexual identity publicly, and even in the past year there have been cases where those who do are subject to homophobic abuse. For example, in the UK, the rugby player Gareth Thomas (here the rugby authorities fined the club Castleford for its supporters' verbal abuse of the player) and in France, the footballer, Yoann Lemaire have been causes celebres.

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4 "Racism, ethnic discrimination and exclusion of migrants and minorities in sport: situation in European Union", Vienna, EU Fundamental Rights Agency, Nov. 2010. [www.fra.europa.eu](http://www.fra.europa.eu)

5. "International press survey on sport", Vienna, Play the Game 2005.

While media coverage has been generally supportive of these players, there is still concern that commercial pressures (where being gay may reduce the perceived brand value of the star player concerned) and in some cultures, more deep rooted antipathy to homosexuality make this a challenging issue for sport and for journalists.

### **3. Disabled Sport - Into the mainstream**

When the Olympic Games come to London in 2012, the Paralympics will be coming home to where they started in the 1940s but transformed with more attention and status than ever before. In the past fifty years, there has been a huge growth in the number of countries taking part, from just 23 in 1960 to 136 in 2004, with more than a million people watching the Paralympics events at the Sydney Games in 2000. In 2012 for the first time there will be the possibility that at least one Paralympian will be competing with their 'able-bodied' teammates in the Olympics themselves.

But as Dr Cristoph Bertling of the Deutsche Hochschule in Köln demonstrates in his research<sup>6</sup> there is still much less coverage of the Paralympics in the German press than its growing popularity would warrant (and it is surely the case that the German example is replicated across Europe). His survey of journalists indicated that there were real issues of journalists lacking in confidence in covering these sports, with, for example, embarrassment as to how to handle photographs of disabled athletes.

### **4. Hidden Discrimination - A role for more in-depth journalism?**

Some researchers and commentators have suggested that sport has become complacent about more complex and ingrained issues around racism and other forms of discrimination and that this sort of hidden discrimination is barely reported on by the media.

In their article on racism in sport in Norway, for example, Professor Kari Fasting and Prisca Bruno Massao of the Norwegian School of Sport<sup>7</sup> have suggested that there are many areas where the experience of black athletes in a country which prides itself on its values of tolerance can be difficult. For example, there is a lack of role models and mentors amongst coaches and sporting administrators. Their research suggests that there may be some complacency, and particular challenges for countries which have only relatively recently gained significant ethnic minority populations.

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6. BERTLING Christoph, SCHIERL Thomas, "Disabled Sport and its Relation to Contemporary Cultures of Presence and Aesthetics", London, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2008.

7. MASSAO Prisca Bruno, "Race and racism: experiences of black Norwegian athletes", *International Review for Sociology of Sport*, vol. 45, n°2, pp. 147-162, June 2010

The recent report from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)<sup>8</sup> also points to what may amount to institutional racism in sports clubs and associations. It points to a 'glass ceiling' in many sports for ethnic minorities and migrant populations and a range of barriers to equal participation. They also suggest that in many EU member states there is inadequate monitoring of discrimination by sports authorities or Governments.

The Danish-based research organisation "Play the Game" has also pointed to the superficiality of much sporting journalism. 40 per cent of sports stories refer to only one source according to their International Sports Press survey 2005, and many stories are 'spoonfed' through sports PR people. An American survey from the same year suggested that sports issues made up less than four per cent of total coverage, which is dominated by match previews and results.

There is a real challenge for investigative journalism in sport. In those European countries with a tradition of in-depth reporting, commercial and economic pressures are making this more difficult to sustain. While in those countries in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans, where there were Communist controls on a free press, and now there are economic pressures as well, it is especially difficult to nurture a culture of investigative journalism.

## **5. Racist abuse - Not yet eradicated!**

While the early focus (and much of the action against racism) has been in football, there has not been the same attention paid to challenging racist abuse where it may manifest itself amongst other sporting crowds. For example, when crude racist placards were held up at the Spanish Grand Prix in 2008 to taunt Lewis Hamilton, the Spanish press demonstrated a rather ambivalent response. According to a report in *BBC News*<sup>9</sup> while the abuse by a small group of fans at the Formula One circuit in Barcelona was denounced by Spain's sporting authorities, some of the Spanish press commentary both in the press and online suggested that the matter was exaggerated. This was disputed by an antiracist organisation based in Barcelona, "SOS Racism", whose spokesman pointed out that these issues had not been confronted in the same way in Spain, where there has been a big increase in immigration in recent years. Isabel Martinez of "SOS Racism" said 'The

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8. Op. cit., [www.fra.europa.eu](http://www.fra.europa.eu)

9. Spain struggles to tackle sport racism, Danny Wood, *BBC News*, Madrid, 06 February 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7229551.stm> [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/Europe/7229551.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/Europe/7229551.stm)

things that happen on a football field or in motor racing are a reflection of the reality of day to day life in Spain.’

The EU report quoted above again confirms that there is a lot still to do in a range of sports, including athletics and basketball, and many unreported incidents in amateur sports in many countries. Nor can there be any complacency even in football, where there are still racist incidents, especially in countries with less direct experience of immigration and integration of different ethnic groups.

## **Journalism training and the Growth of Sports Journalism as a discipline**

Journalism is traditionally a profession, some would say a trade that has been open to all comers, with experience gained on the job. Sports journalism has been no exception to this, with passion for the subject, and in some cases, experience as a player, qualifications. In recent years, in most European countries, there has been a growth of Higher education entry routes into journalism – with both undergraduate and post graduate degrees and diplomas on offer. Until recently, Sports journalism was offered usually as a specialism in a general journalism course, but in many universities across Europe, from the University of the West of Scotland to Moscow State University, there is now the possibility to do a complete degree course in sports journalism. This growth has been driven by increasing demand from students to make careers in sport.

This report does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of this education and training provision. Nor is it possible to offer a survey of how many opportunities there are for students to tackle issues around racism and other forms of discrimination in their courses. We will, though, try to offer a few examples of how these issues are being tackled.

Firstly, though we need to address the issue of how the composition of students on these courses, their gender, social, ethnic and cultural diversity may play its part.

### **1. The Role of Journalist Training Institutes in Diversifying the Workforce**

The “Speak out against discrimination” Campaign’s report on Media and Diversity<sup>10</sup> concluded that recruitment was a vital issue and recommended that media organisations should seek to diversify their recruitment base. This

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10. “Next steps to promote minority access to the Media”, Final Report; “Speak out against discrimination” Campaign, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, December 2009.

can start with recruitment onto vocational courses, such as sports journalism.

While there are no comprehensive figures available, it is clear from research for this article that recruiting female students onto sports courses is still a challenge. Similarly, in different countries and cultures, some ethnic groups may be harder to attract than others. Where there are countries with few state-funded universities providing sports journalism courses, the cost of courses may be a deterrent for poorer students.

Universities may need to develop policies to ensure that their students mirror the composition of the communities that they recruit from, and take positive measures – perhaps in partnership with schools – to encourage women and young people from minority communities to apply for sports journalism courses.

The UK’s “Economic and Social Research Council” is currently running a year-long project in British universities focussed on Widening Ethnic diversity in Journalism. Their first seminar, held at Newcastle University identified journalism education, and recruitment of students as a key issue.

Across Europe, there is an increase in student mobility so that many Universities now benefit from international students bringing some cultural diversity to their institutions. The University of Zagreb, in Croatia, talks on its website for potential international students of its commitment to creating a ‘tolerant and democratic international environment’. Such an environment benefits its own domestic students who may be from different ethnic backgrounds as well.

Elsewhere in the Balkans, in Kosovo,<sup>11</sup> the Institute of Journalism and Communication has made efforts to ensure that their journalism students are recruited from both Serb and Albanian backgrounds.

It is hard to discern, however, that overall, there are explicit commitments and policies to ensure that journalist training institutes and universities across Europe attract students from all sections of the community where they operate. In sports journalism, they may need to make particular efforts to recruit women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities and to ensure that a tolerant academic culture is also welcoming for students who may be gay or lesbian.

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11. All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population in this text shall be understood in full compliance with the United Nation’s Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

This is an essential building-block to ensure that diverse perspectives are included in the sports journalism workforce in future years.

## **2. Tackling Issues around Discrimination in the Curriculum**

There are a very wide range of approaches to the curriculum of sports journalism courses: some are more academic, some more practical and skills-based.

Many Universities offer students the possibility to study aspects of social, cultural and political contexts of sport, as well as journalistic ethics. Ethics may often focus around codes of practice, law and self-regulation, so ensuring that this learning is practical rather than theoretical. While these course elements offer the possibility to include issues around racism and discrimination, it is rare to find them explicitly covered.

In the research conducted, we have found just a few examples where this is the case.

The University of Lincoln in the UK is developing specific sessions for student sports journalists this year which will consider racism in sport. Professor John Cafferkey says that this will focus on the “Kick It Out” campaign, look at whether there is any institutionalised racism in sport, and also looking specifically at gender politics, homophobia and attitudes to sportsmen with mental health issues. Students on the International Journalism course at Newcastle University (not specialising in Sport) are required to produce a project on the theme of diversity: this year a group produced a website on Newcastle United Football club as a driver of diversity which won them a “Broadcast Journalism Training Council” award<sup>12</sup>.

In Croatia, the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb runs a course called the Political and Social Aspects of sport. The Associate professor, Dr Drazen Lalic, whose doctorate subject was the behaviour of football fans in the former Yugoslavia, reports that amongst the topics covered on his course are: fans and their sub cultures, sports and globalisation, sport and politics of identities, including analysis of issues regarding gender, racial and other discrimination.

There are no doubt other good practice examples to be found, in this developing field of sports journalism training.

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12. <http://keysie.co.uk>

## Continuing professional development for working journalists

While there are growing opportunities for students before entry into a career in sport journalism, it is much less clear what is on offer as continuing professional development (CPD) for working journalists in sport. There is much less of a tradition of CPD and mid-career training in journalism unlike other professions, as there has been a reliance on mentoring by experienced editors, and by on the job learning. This is still to be valued, but there are disadvantages to this informal approach, given the rapid changes in journalism and sport, and the particular issues around discrimination discussed here.

While there are a range of forums in which some working journalists may find opportunities to discuss professional challenges around discrimination issues, there are many who may not have the time or possibility to attend conferences or to undertake Masters' courses. That is one reason why the growth of Online learning offers the potential to provide a new resource for learning at the workplace or even at home.

In the UK, the BBC has recently made accessible many of its training resources for their in-house journalists to the wider industry<sup>13</sup>. "BBC College of Journalism" (CoJo) is also available on subscription outside the UK.

Amongst a range of learning modules for sports journalists, there is what they call an interactive scenario relating to the reporting of racist abuse at a football match. There are also blogs by leading journalists, sections about journalistic ethics, a guide on football commentary amongst a wealth of still developing material<sup>14</sup>.

There is real opportunity for other broadcaster and training institutions to develop useful and flexible learning resources for working journalists, especially to raise awareness and understanding of discrimination issues and how to report them.

## Sports journalism training, a way forward & some recommendations

### *1. Continued Development of Specialist Sports Journalism Training Provision*

As we have seen, there are many Universities and training institutions now offering high-quality sports journalism degrees and training, but there is still

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<sup>13</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/journalism](http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism/skills/writing-styles/journalism-tutor/football-chant.shtml>

scope for more to be offered, especially in those places which currently only offer general journalism training.

It should be possible for students in all Council of Europe countries to study sports journalism of a high standard.

*2. Sports Journalism Degrees and Qualifications should ensure that all students may have the opportunity to study the social, cultural and political context of sport, with discrimination issues explicitly included.*

The recommendation that the Committee of Ministers passed back in 1997 that "Schools of journalism and media training institutes might usefully introduce specialist courses (...) with a view to developing a sense of professionalism which is attentive to the involvement of the media in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies"<sup>15</sup> is equally applicable to sports journalism training. It is important that studying sports journalism is seen as of equal standing as traditional journalism, and that understanding the ethical, cultural and social context is as vital as studying technical and practical skills.

*3. Priority should be given to improving the diversity of journalist trainees and working sports journalists, both in terms of gender, disability, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation.*

Media training institutes and universities should take positive action to ensure that potential entrants to the journalist profession come from a wider range of backgrounds. Particular effort should be taken to attract women and people with disabilities as well as ethnic minorities onto sports journalism courses.

In turn, broadcasters and news employers should make greater efforts to ensure that their sports newsrooms contain women as well as men, an appropriate ethnic and racial mix, and people with disabilities. They should also provide a tolerant environment for gay and lesbian people.

*4. Working Journalists should be supported by their employers and editors to broaden the range of sports journalism, including investigative features, and to have opportunities to learn from colleagues and reflect on their practice*

In the face of considerable economic and commercial pressures, journalists can need support to do their job fully, to pursue more stories in-depth, to go beyond the daily sports news agenda, and sometimes pursue investigations.

Journalists should be encouraged to discuss and improve their writing and reportage through proper editorial support, through debate with colleagues and sometimes with formal learning and professional development.

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<sup>15</sup> Recommendation n°(97)21 on the Media and the Formation of a Culture of Tolerance, Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Strasbourg, October 1997.

*5. More Online learning resources should be developed to enable sports journalists at all stages of their career to deal with challenging issues in a changing society and world*

The "BBC College of Journalism" demonstrates the potential that exists for broadcasters, universities and other training organisations to develop online resources (whether free or on subscription) which may offer journalists engaging and practical ways to refresh their practice and improve their understanding of discrimination issues.

## Media, Sport & Discrimination – A first regard on the debate...

Sport as a means of integration? Not so certain...  
Eléonore Payró, *Orange Magazine*, 18.11.10



*1995. The South African Springboks win the rugby world cup in front of the first black president of a country racked by institutionalised racism. Having overcome their differences and apartheid, the people support the national team and prove to themselves that it is possible to find common ground.*

The sporting values of fair play, equality and respect call for the acceptance of other people and may be regarded as a universal language. However, there is a great deal of discrimination in this area. Only recently have coloured athletes been fully accepted in the stadiums. Although the public and sports professionals have realised for some time, thanks to anti-racist cam-



paigns, changes in mentality and changes in the law, that skin colour has no adverse effect on the quality of a sports person, other categories of people are still discriminated against. Women, homosexuals or, indeed, people with disabilities feel sidelined by an area of activity in which hyper-masculinity and a cult of alleged perfection are commonplace. As the performances of men in the peak of health are taken as the benchmark, "marginal" athletes are always compared with the incomparable. While gender difference is accepted as a construct of society, there are nonetheless biological differences that explain this range of abilities, and it is clear that a wheelchair-bound athlete will not perform as well as a runner.

Sport used to be on the back page of newspapers but is now the subject most spoken about by the public. During the world cups, the Olympic Games and other major competitions, all the world's media concentrate on sport again for a specific period but their focus is mainly on sports engaged in by men in good health. Women's teams are relegated to a short intermezzo, while the Paralympics are only briefly commented on. Prisca Bruno Massao, a researcher at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, says: "the stereotypical view that sport is for men and based on men is very firmly entrenched. The media coverage of women's sport is just 5%. The female audience is not considered important by the media". Could the public be responsible for this discrepancy? Apparently not, if we are to believe the audiences who watch Michel Royer's documentary "Sport et homosexualité, c'est quoi le problème?" and "Inside Incredible Athletes", a film about disabled athletes broadcast on *Channel 4* in the United Kingdom. According to Fiona Chesterton, former *BBC* journalist and author of the report "Sport journalism, discrimination and racism, that film had a large audience and the feedback was extremely positive". Michel Royer added that *Canal +*, the channel that broadcast his film, had had the highest audience figures for a documentary in its history.

The public accordingly seem to be concerned about issues relating to minorities in sport. However, in an excerpt from Michel Royer's documentary shown during the conference, a journalist on *L'Equipe* claims that homo-

sexuality in sport is not a problem, that it belongs to the athletes' private sphere and that it is not the media's role to deal with these matters and rumours. Yoann Lemaire then rose to speak. An amateur in a French football club, he was the first to come out and had his playing licence withdrawn for his honesty, which is surprising in a nation supposed to support liberty, equality and fraternity. The first journalists interested in the case did not specialise in sport but in social issues. Yoann Lemaire then filed a complaint and was able to draw justified attention to a problem of serious homophobia. He informed us that, thanks to the intervention of Rama Yade, he was quickly able to obtain a new licence at a more tolerant club. He commented on Michel Royer's film on the basis of his own personal experience: "If the sports newspapers think homosexuality in sport is not a problem, that's because there's a real taboo in operation. It's necessary to tackle these matters, and people must be made aware of them in order to deal with this problem". Although it is not necessarily the journalists' job to ensure things are changed, it is their role to address these issues. By avoiding the subjects of sexism, racism, homophobia and discrimination in general, these problems remain invisible and cannot disappear. When homophobic insults are commonplace, when it is traditional to define national athletes as being of foreign origin when they lose, when sportswomen are only there "to save the honour" (the widely used headline of articles reporting on the victory of the French women's fencing team) and when athletes are forced to conceal their sexual orientation, then sport has not finished dealing with its discrimination problems. However, what about racism and ethnic minorities? Has this problem been dealt with? Prisca Bruno Massao informed us that although there are many coloured athletes in almost every area of sport they are still very much a minority on the sports governing bodies.



young people in the media and freedom of expression.

The "European Youth Press" is an association that groups together 48,000 journalists throughout the whole of Europe. Its members include 17 "youth press" organisations and two international media organisations: *Indigo Magazine* and *Journal Europa*. Its aim is to promote the role of



The mouthpiece of the "European Youth Press" network, *Orangelog.eu* is a multimedia platform that enables the association's journalists to cover various events and subjects relating to European issues. The three complete issues of *Orange Magazine* published during the Assises can be found at [www.orangelog.eu](http://www.orangelog.eu)



## Media, Sport & Discrimination – The main themes of the debate

### Training of journalists



On 11 July 2010, over 14 million French people had their eyes glued to *TF1* during the World Cup Final, despite the fact that their national team had been eliminated in the first round. Sport used to be on the back page of the newspaper but is now shown on prime time and is the subject that receives the most media coverage and has the highest number of viewers. Major sporting events, such as World Cup matches or the Olympic Games bring in vast sums of money: corporate and private sponsors, advertising, media coverage, television ratings... Sport is now a big business. According to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in 2003 it accounted for some 1.73% of France's GDP, i.e. more than 27 billion Euros, over half of which was reportedly generated by private individuals. However, violence and discrimination are common. Given the racism in sports stadiums, the homophobic remarks and the lack of media coverage of women's teams, sport no longer appears to be a model of integration. Fair play, respect for oth-

ers and emphasis on sportspeople's qualities... the values of sport are all too often flouted in a context where hypercompetition and profits take precedence. The issue of sport, the media and discrimination was discussed at the "Assises Internationales du Journalisme et de l'Information", which took place in Strasbourg on 16, 17 and 18 November 2010. In the context of the Council of Europe "Speak out against Discrimination" campaign, the round table moderated by Reynald Blion was attended by speakers from all over Europe: Fiona Chesterton, a former *BBC* reporter, who is now a media consultant in the United Kingdom; Prisca Bruno Massao, a researcher at the Norwegian School of Sport, who has recently published a study on racism in sport in Norway; Yoann Lemaire, an amateur footballer in France; Michel Royer, who produced the documentary "Sport and homosexuality, what's the problem?", broadcast by *Canal +*; Drazen Lalic, a lecturer at the Faculty of Political Sciences at Zagreb University in Croatia and Willem Houwen, a trainer of journalists at the Kosovo<sup>16</sup> Institute of Journalism and Communication.

## **Women viewers are not important**

There was immediate unanimous agreement that substantial progress had been made over recent years with regard to discrimination (in particular racial discrimination) in sport, but that new problems were emerging and the battle had not yet been won. Fiona Chesterton pointed out that as sports were now always in the headlines, there was an urgent need to address the issue of discrimination in sport and in the media. Although sportspeople from certain ethnic and racial minority groups are now better represented in sport than previously, other minorities continue to be ignored. For example, women and sportspeople with disabilities. As Prisca Bruno Massao said "women are under-represented in so-called mainstream sports, such as football, but constitute the overwhelming majority in other sports that are considered to be women's sports, for example dancing, ice-skating or rhythmic gymnastics." However, women's teams in collective sports with a less feminine connotation, such as football, handball and volleyball, are seldom in the limelight as the focus is always on their male counterparts. The stereotype that sports is for and about men is still firmly entrenched. Women's sports receive only 5% of media coverage. The media do not consider it important to attract women viewers." However, as Drazen Lalic pointed out, there are more women supporters in sports stadiums than ever before.

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16. All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population in this text shall be understood in full compliance with the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

## **“If newspapers think that homosexuality in sports isn’t a problem, then there is a taboo.” Yoann Lemaire**

The media aren’t prepared to take risks and they seldom spotlight “marginal” teams or address problems of discrimination in sports. Violence and discriminatory acts in this field do not interest sports editors, who leave such subjects to social commentators. This is particularly striking where problems of discrimination against “invisible” minorities, in particular homosexuals, are concerned. In his documentary, Michel Royer questions a journalist working for the French sports newspaper *l’Equipe* about homosexuality in sports, and particularly in football. The latter explains that the subject is considered irrelevant as it is a matter concerning players’ private lives and that it is not the job of a newspaper like *l’Equipe* to talk about this sort of problem, irrespective of whether it is a matter of rumours or proven discrimination. And that is where the problem lies: discrimination is frequently considered to be a non-issue. In predominantly male editing departments, dealing exclusively with mainstream sport involving healthy male athletes, female teams or disabled sports are only entitled to the briefest mentions. As Yoann Lemaire explained, cases of homophobia are generally ignored: after coming out, he was subjected to clearly discriminatory remarks and insults by members of his club, and his amateur football licence was finally withdrawn. His case, although very serious, initially interested only non-specialist newspapers. When they realised that it was becoming a major story, and in view of the support given by homosexuals’ organisations and Rama Yade, who was at the time French Minister of State with responsibility for Sport, the sports media finally decided to talk about the case, but it was already becoming obvious that sports editors did not consider homophobia to be an interesting subject. ‘If newspapers think that homosexuality in sports isn’t a problem, then the subject is really taboo. We need to address these issues, to bring them out into the open and show that they really exist in order to solve the problem’ said Yoann Lemaire in conclusion.

### **Integrating minorities through sport**

Nevertheless, the public at large seems to be open to this type of problem: “Sport and homosexualité, c’est quoi le problème?” had the highest audience ratings for a documentary in the entire history of *Canal+* and was rebroadcast more often than planned; “Inside Incredible Athletes”, a *Channel 4* documentary in the United Kingdom, showing professional and disabled sportspeople training for the Paralympic Games, received excellent reviews and was appreciated by viewers. When there are sexual scandals, cases involving underage escort girls or adultery (the French national football team

or Tiger Woods), editors go into overdrive and there is very wide media coverage of the event, also in the sports media. On the contrary, issues such as racial, sexist, sexual or sometimes physical discrimination are only addressed when the case is extremely serious and initially only in the “people” and not in the “sports” columns. A disabled sportsperson is perceived first and foremost as a person with a disability rather than as a sportsperson. A sportswoman will find that rather than admire her performance people will talk about her genes. A homosexual sportsperson will be considered as a gay icon rather than as a sports icon. Take for example Robert Mitchum, the Australian diver who won a gold medal at the Olympic Games in Sydney and who spoke freely about his sexual preferences. And what about ethnic discrimination? Coloured players are broadly represented in mainstream sports and racist remarks by other players or by spectators are generally condemned. ‘Foreign minorities are often integrated through sport’, said Prisca Bruno Massao. Drazen Lalic told a story about the situation in Croatia: a supporter of a small club had caricatured and made fun of a player of African origin, and the co-president of the club had officially spoken out against his behaviour. Nevertheless, at the same press conference, the latter had openly made homophobic remarks, saying that there should be no homosexual players in the club. ‘That shows that there is not just one type of discrimination but many and that it is our duty to combat all types of discrimination’, Drazen Lalic concluded. According to him, blatant racism is rare in the Balkans but people still all too often reject others on account of their family name or their ethnic origin, even if they have the same skin colour.

## **Training journalists**

What can be done to counter these types of discrimination? How should these new problems be addressed and how can the media ensure a more balanced coverage of sports events? Some people suggest increasing the number of female reporters while others suggest that minorities should not only be better represented on teams but also on the governing boards of clubs and sports federations, but everyone agrees that more emphasis should be placed on investigative and risk-taking journalism, which means that future journalists must receive training in these fields. Fiona Chesterton suggests talking about discrimination issues when training sports journalists. According to her some universities, particularly in the United Kingdom, now have sports sociology courses with specific training in discrimination issues. Such training provides journalists with genuine skills that they can use in their work. However, this type of training is very rare. The reason for this is that the people devising the curriculum themselves have not been made

aware of discrimination issues. '40 years ago nobody – neither researchers nor sociologists nor journalists – gave any thought to such matters', explained Willem Hooven. 'But it is down to those who are responsible for educational curricula to devise courses that take account of discrimination issues.' Another essential aspect is minorities' access to training courses. In Kosovo<sup>17</sup>, for example, the Institute of Journalism and Communication has made sure that it has students from both the Serbian and Albanian communities.

### **“Homophobia in sport is treated as a social problem, whereas it is a sports issue!” Michel Royer**

The training of students and young journalists is a major problem, but it is also important to raise the awareness of journalists already on the job. It is striking that there are virtually no professional training courses on discrimination issues, which explains why sports journalists are reluctant to tackle such subjects. Some examples in France have demonstrated this. The Yoann Lemaire affair, for example, was reported exclusively by social commentators, who are more at ease with this type of subject. “Homophobia in sport is treated as a social issue”, explained Michel Royer. “However, it is first and foremost a sports issue which should be dealt with by sports journalists”. “Questions concerning attitudes to women’s sports and ethnic minorities are raised by sociologists and journalists dealing with more general subjects, but not by the sports media... The media are just beginning to become aware of the problem.” For example, the *BBC* in the United Kingdom has decided to make training tools available online to enable its reporters to improve their knowledge and the way they handle their information.

### **Educating the public**

However, not only the work of the sports media is being called into question. Sports bodies and sportspeople themselves need to take a firm stance. 'I have seen spectacular and rapid changes of attitude. For example, Jean-Pierre Escalette (former President of the FFF) told me in the documentary that by talking about homosexuality in sport we were creating the problem. Now he has changed his mind and is willing to sign the charter against homophobia. The stance taken by people like him and by well-known sportspeople has a much more effective impact on the behaviour of supporters and amateur footballers than any media campaign' said Michel Royer. However,

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it appears that discrimination is a problem that cannot be solved by the sports world and the media alone. 'It would be wrong to educate only journalists. It is above all the public at large which needs to be educated on this subject' said Drazen Lalic. It doesn't matter what type of discrimination (racism, homophobia, sexism...) is involved – the important thing is to take preventive action. 'When I was younger, I heard my coach say by way of encouragement to the team: we're not poofers, let's show them what we're made of ... We have to put an end to this kind of remark' said Yoann Lemaire. 'Some people are guilty of discrimination simply because they don't know any better. Educating them is the best response' said Prisca Bruno Massao. The media can make a major contribution here too. Is it not one of journalism's main aims to help educate the public? 'The media should be capable of condemning certain expressions or types of behaviour', said Drazen Lalic. 'Recently, Michel Platini gave his backing to a senior Croatian official who was openly racist towards a number of Serbian sportspersons, for political reasons. The media should have criticised his attitude. The excessive media coverage given to sport exacerbates situations. What we need to do is to return to the essential, original values of sport, ie sharing, showing solidarity, surpassing oneself and above all setting an example. The question is how to get the main protagonists in sports and the media to work together so that sport becomes a symbol of goodwill between peoples'.

## How can journalism tackle the subjects of sport, discrimination & racism in future?

“Some people are guilty of discrimination simply because they don’t know any better and educating them is the best response.”<sup>18</sup>

If the subject of discrimination is included in training programmes and journalists are made more aware of such issues, they will be more capable of understanding and reporting on such matters.

Journalist training courses should be more open to diversity. This applies particularly to sports journalism, which still shows little interest in problems relating to diversity and the need to combat discrimination.

Nevertheless, discrimination is a problem that cannot be solved by the sports world and the media alone and it is not sufficient to focus on training journalists; we need to draw the attention of the public at large to issues concerning minorities in sport. By improving the way people perceive and understand the social cohesion implications of intercultural dialogue, the general public will have access to information that reflects the diversity present in the field of sport.

As a follow-up to the “Speak out against discrimination” Campaign, the Council of Europe therefore wishes to encourage the establishment of a media network through the MARS (Media Against Racism in Sport) project. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the fight against racism and to foster mutual understanding in Europe by creating an open platform for dialogue and action at local, national and European level, focusing on exchanges of professional practices between mainstream media and minority media in the field of sport coverage.

This media network will help to foster genuinely inclusive and intercultural approach to producing information, thereby facilitating intercultural dialogue and helping strengthen social cohesion.

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<sup>18</sup> Prisca Bruno Massao, researcher at the Norwegian School of Sport.



The objective of the MARS – Media Against Racism – in Sport project, which is a joint Council of Europe/European Union programme, is to create a European media network against racism and for mutual understanding, conceived as an open and permanent platform of dialogue and action between mainstream and ethnic and minority media, to stimulate the exchange of professional practices in media training, production and management with a view to fostering a genuinely inclusive and intercultural approach to producing information. In practical terms, the network will comprise an electronic database of contacts and resources, regular media meetings in the field of training, media cross-practices and media content management and finally media cross “visits” at national and European level. Further information can be found on:

<http://www.coe.int/mars>

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

47 MEMBER STATES. 800 MILLION EUROPEANS.

The Council of Europe is an international organisation set up on 5 May 1949 to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law across Europe. It is based in Strasbourg, France.

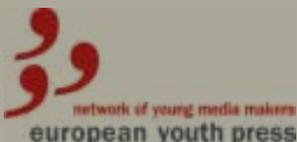
# IN THE 47 COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEMBER STATES **DISCRIMINATION IS A CRIME**

**YOU MAY BE THE NEXT VICTIM OR THE NEXT WITNESS, SO  
SPEAK OUT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION !**

This is the main message of the Council of Europe's anti-discrimination campaign, which primarily targets media industry professionals and has three main objectives:

1. to train media professionals on how to treat news relating to discrimination and intercultural dialogue;
2. to help people with a minority background to make their voices heard by facilitating their access to media professions and productions;
3. to inform public opinion about policies that combat discrimination.

The campaign, which focuses on the role of the media in a multicultural Europe, derives its mandate from the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity".



### Council of Europe

Avenue de l'Europe – F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 20 00

[www.coe.int/antidiscrimination](http://www.coe.int/antidiscrimination)