

Joint Statement on Journalism and the Challenge of Intolerance Conference

Journalists, journalists' unions, media NGOs and anti-racism activists met at the conference hosted by the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) in Brussels together with the Media Diversity Institute and ARTICLE 19 to debate the media's performance in reporting on ethnicity and religion, and strategies to improve the skills, resources and environment for working journalists reporting on Europe's minorities. (3 - 4 May)

The conference **endorsed** the recommendations to journalists, editors, civil society organisations, universities and journalists' unions in the report '[Getting the Facts Right: Challenges of Intolerance in Journalism](#)' launched at the conference that was jointly produced by the EFJ/IFJ, MDI and ARTICLE 19 in collaboration with journalists unions from Lithuania, Greece and Slovakia. It further underlined the following:

Believing that journalists should be alert to the danger of discrimination being furthered by media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on such grounds as, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Recognises that freedom of expression carries with it certain responsibilities and duties and may be legitimately limited in certain circumstances such as to protect against hate speech.

Highlights the impact of the financial crisis facing the media industry on ethical standards. The slashing of editorial budgets, resources, time allocation and general cutting of journalists' working conditions dramatically damages the capacity of media to maintain the level of professionalism which ensures the ethical standards and provide accurate and fair reporting on ethnicity and religion;

Concerned that the lack of investment in training and investigative journalism due to the crisis will further reduce quality in journalism leading to poorer reporting of vulnerable and minority groups and the danger of increased intolerance in society;

Recognises the need and benefit of building coalitions between journalists unions, editors and employers' organisations, civil society groups and journalism schools in order to improve the capacity of journalists to defend ethical standards that underpin an inclusive society;

Recognises that ethics are the foundation of accountable journalism that serves the public interest and holds the authorities to account; that campaigning for journalism ethics should go hand in hand with campaigns for the rights of journalists by journalists' unions;

Recognises that while journalists' unions have to manage the use of resources for competing priorities, campaigns on ethics and anti-discrimination should also be seen as an opportunity for unions to engage with their members on issues central to their professional identity.

Calls on journalists' unions and associations to better enforce and promote the ethical code

for journalists. Where necessary the journalistic community should consider reviewing its codes to take account of new guidelines regarding reporting diversity and, in doing so, engage their full membership in the debate;

Calls on publishers and media owners to be accountable for the ethical standards in journalism; to develop social dialogues with journalists' unions in enforcing these standards, promote diversity and gender, create a culture of equality and respect within the newsroom. We further call for publishers to commit to greater transparency in ownership, internal governance and editorial policies.

Calls for the recognition and enforcement of the conscious clause in collective bargaining agreement for journalists across Europe. The right to refuse assignments that breach our codes of ethics is a working right central to our professional identity.

Calls for reform or examination of current self-regulatory framework or press council to ensure the representation of members of the journalists, editors, publishers and the public in its decision-making; and enforcement of such decisions. Self-regulatory systems need to be properly funded, independent and effective in order to uphold standards and avoid the threat of restrictive legislation.

This conference is co-funded by the European Federation of journalists, Media Diversity Institute, ARTICLE 19 and the European Union's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme.

About

The EFJ is the European group of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). The EFJ represents over 260,000 journalists in 30 countries

MEDIA DIVERSITY INSTITUTE is an international organisation entirely devoted to working with the media in order to improve reporting on diversity issues which can cause disputes or conflicts at the local, national, regional or international level.

ARTICLE 19 is an international human rights organisation based in London. It seeks to develop and strengthen international standards which protect freedom of expression.