

# The Coverage of Minorities in the Media

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Over the last decade, Greece has seen the arrival of many hundreds of immigrants and refugees, a phenomena which has led to the rapid evolution of minority media. As Maria Kontochristou and Anna Triandafyllidou point out, this development is a reason, more than ever, to put in place clear policies for how cultural diversity is addressed within the media sector as a whole. In addition, the writers propose that there is a need to build on emerging positive practices such as multi-language broadcasting and media training.

In Greece there is not a particular policy strategy for minority media or a significant agenda for media and cultural diversity issues. There is also no inclusive code of practice pertaining to and regulating the television or press news reporting on cultural diversity, ethnic minorities, racism and other related subjects. Cultural matters are regulated by general codes of practice while the National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV), acts as a watchdog. In particular, The Code of Journalist Ethics (Code of Ethics) as well as other related codes (e.g. Code of Ethics of Information and other Editorial and Political Programmes) authorized by NCRTV, and the professional journalists' codes, create the basis for the protection of human rights and fair treatment. Furthermore, Greece has made provisions to transpose in the national law, the New Audiovisual Media Service Directive, which endorses specific rules regarding the protection of minorities.

## An Insight into Media Production

Themes related to media and cultural diversity have been a subject of research principally during the course of the last two decades. Research is primarily focused on the press coverage of immigrants and minority issues (e.g. Mikrakis and Triandafyllidou, 1994; Vamvakas, 1997; Koiliari, 1997; Pavlou, 2001; Konstandinidou, 2001; Lalioti, 2005; Koundouri, 2008), while there are few studies that provide an analysis of both the press and TV coverage (e.g. Triandafyllidou, 2002; Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2009), a limited number of studies that map the minority media and Greek media's role in cultural diversity issues (e.g. Georgiou, 2002). In addition, there are studies which examine journalists' attitudes regarding foreigners (International Organization of Immigrants, 2004; Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2006), books on good practices for journalists (e.g. Equal-Dream, 2004), comparative studies on multicultural radio (e.g. Commedia.net, 2004).

At the same time, however, there are no follow up studies and practically no research has been carried out with reference to the: Media policy analysis and state strategy regarding

cultural diversity; Agenda setting mechanism and the way that effects the content and form of minority and ethnic issues reporting; TV/radio programming policy, programme text analysis and systematic audience analysis with reference to cultural diversity.

The arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants and refugees from the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, Asia and Africa has created new conditions in the Greek media landscape. Minority media – apart from that of Muslim minority media in Northeast Greece – started developing rapidly during the last decade as a result of immigrant flow. Today there are about twenty-four migrant newspapers in Greece that are circulated on daily and regular basis (e.g. Panorama Arabic, Gazeta e Athines). Most of them are bilingual and set their agenda around issues of legalisation, employment, security as well as culture, social and everyday themes.

In the broadcasting sector, some positive steps have been made towards greater openness to migrant and minority populations, especially by the public operator. The Voice of Greece, FILIA 665 AM, Athens International Radio, which broadcasts in many languages and have multi-cultural content, are amongst of them (see 'Media Good Practice'). As regards television programming, the public operator broadcasts programmes that are produced exclusively for migrants, TV programmes of antiracist and multicultural content as well as of informative content about legal and policy immigrants issues (e.g. Metropolis of the Word, Balkan Express EURODOC- Europe, 2013). In the same vein, in the last couple of years there has been an increase in information programmes and in private television, that dedicate time to themes related to irregular migration, migrants living conditions and rights (e.g. Research Mega and Pandora's Box, Alpha TV). Furthermore, TV stations have produced series which deal significantly with - or have as a main plot line - cultural diversity issues such as migration, mixed marriages, religion (e.g. Secret Paths and Don't Tell Me Goodbye, Ant1

TV). It is interesting to note that over the last years, popular television programmes, soaps and reality shows, have been including migrants in their casting (Triandafyllidou, 2005).

Moreover, ERT participates in the European programme 'MIM Migrants in the Media Project', which aims to improve Public Service Broadcasting as a platform for intercultural dialogue. In particular, ET3 has the obligation to translate and integrate in the Greek media landscape the 'Diversity Toolkit' of good practices.

As a final point on this, according to recent research findings of the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll, 14% of the sample population in Greece has received information from the media that has changed or may has reinforced its view in a more positive way regarding perceptions of people leaving in countries bordering the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea (while 82.3% has not). In particular, the most frequently mentioned sources of positive impressions are: television (37.6%), followed by the print media (19.9%), documentary films (11.6%), internet sources, and other sources (8.8% respectively). On the other hand, books (6.1%), films (4.4%), radio (2,2%) and blogs (0,6%) are considered as less referred sources that convey positive notions of people for the southern and eastern Mediterranean coast.

## Trends in Cross-Cultural Reporting

The coverage on minorities and relevant issues is event-driven and occasional. Reporting is based on the frequency, significance and appeal (attractiveness, dramatization of the events, etc.) and is not part of the every day agenda. The main themes of coverage are: illegal entry to the country, prostitution, robberies and attacks. Subjects related to migrants/minorities, cultural and sport activities, professional success or creative aspects of their lives are rarely or never covered. The press and television use as sources migrants themselves, the police and lawyers. There are very few and in the press only accredited journalists report exclusively on migrant, minority and related issues, while 71% of the journalists, that cover such issues, do not have a special training. It is worth noting that 32.3% of journalists that cover

the above subjects are crime reporters. The vast majority of journalists (89.5%) declare that they are not bothered by the migrants' presence in Greece, while 66.81% acknowledge the significant contribution of migrants in the country's economic growth and 94% maintain the view that migrants should work legally in Greece. Though journalists, as they state, do not treat cultural diversity issues in a racist way, they admit that the coverage is characterized by exaggeration and bias (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2006).

According to the study of Triandafyllidou (2002) which reviewed the press and general media coverage of migrant and minority groups in Greece during the 1990s, daily press (mostly the tabloids and some right-wing newspapers) and TV stations (principally commercial television stations) have adopted a nationalist and rather xenophobic standpoint. However, since the late 1990s the coverage of cultural and ethnic diversity has been gradually marked by an improvement resulting in more balanced accounts of immigration and minority issues. The media, during the last years, has contributed to raising, to a certain extent, public's awareness and sensitivity (Gropas and Triandafyllidou, 2005). Reporting is not focused predominately, as it used to be, on themes such as 'immigration and criminality', 'Greekness' and 'otherness', but also on minority and migrant problems. Indeed, the relatively recent (2004-2006) discussion in the media on the construction of a mosque in Athens (analysed in Triandafyllidou and Gropas, 2009) is indicative of this gradual even if hesitant opening to the principles and values of mutual respect, tolerance and multiculturalism. Indeed, the need for establishing an official mosque in Athens was accepted by the vast majority of stakeholders quoted in the media (state and non-state including the Church of Greece). Two topics actually dominated the media discourse, one was the role of the 'foreign factor' (e.g. Arab governments that offered to finance it but also presumed Islamist groups) in the establishment and functioning of an official mosque in Athens. The second was the value basis upon which the building of the mosque should be decided and implemented. Several newspapers both of the centre-right and the centre-left called for a dialogue between religions and cultures and expressed a willingness to recognize and accommodate

## Greece - Intercultural Radio Station

The multicultural and multilingual radio of Athens municipality 'Athens International Radio' (AIR 104.4) broadcasts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in 16 languages, informing and entertaining migrants and visitors. It was initially developed in 2004 to fulfill the needs of the Olympic Games, and then to meet the information needs of foreign communities, in Athens. Languages in which it broadcasts are: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Arabic, Albanian, Polish, Bulgarian, Romanian, Tagalog, Portuguese, Chinese, Urdu and Japanese. Locally produced shows revolve around the issues of the Greek capital's largest immigrant communities. News and all kind of useful information are broadcast in 16 languages whereas in weekends the programme is structured in a more casual mood, focusing in music, lifestyle news and useful tips on how to get the best out of Athens. The station also broadcasts content from the BBC World Service, Radio France Internationale, Deutsche Welle and CRI (China), such as major political and cultural events, foreign elections, and word's most popular shows.

[www.annalindhreport.org/goodpractice/athensradio](http://www.annalindhreport.org/goodpractice/athensradio)

religious and cultural diversity in Greece. However, there was no consideration of the fact that Greek national identity is also in the course of being re-defined in view of an increasingly culturally and religiously diverse migrant population that has settled in the country during the last twenty years.

### Good Practice and Areas of Action

As regards other migration related-issues, critical accounts based on objective presentation of the events and respect of human rights can be considered as examples of good media treatment regarding cultural diversity. It seems that many journalists tend to approach with sensitivity themes such as those which refer to: the difficult social and economic conditions of immigrants (mainly from Asia), the sexual exploitation of women who were brought illegally to Greece or under false work pretences and then were forced into prostitution (from eastern Europe and Africa); irregular immigrants (mainly from Asia and Africa) attempting to enter Greece on shipwrecks and under terrible conditions. In addition, the operation of multicultural and multilingual radio stations, such as Athens International Radio, or Community Radio, which have a variety of multicultural programmes and employ staff of diverse ethnic origin, can be acknowledged as a good example.

News on southern and eastern Mediterranean countries can be usually found on foreign affairs bulletins (in the press and on TV) or in the national news section if it is of national interest (e.g. themes related to defense). The coverage is mainly event-driven (e.g. political situation in Gaza; large-scale floods in Tunisia; Gaddafi's visit in Italy; earthquakes in Turkey; Cyprus' entry into the EU). Moreover, references were and are made about Southern Mediterranean countries in many television programmes of cultural and travel orientation (e.g. El. Culture, ET 1 TV; Traveling NET TV; Pictures, Alpha TV), information programmes (e.g. New Envelops, Sky TV; Detections, ET3 TV) as well as documentaries (e.g. Egypt: Beyond the Pyramids, ET-1 TV).

In North-Eastern Greece (mainly in prefectures of Rodopi and Thrace) there are radio stations (e.g. Isik FM, City FM, Kral/

King FM, Tele Radio) and newspapers owned and operated by the Muslim minority (e.g. Triakyani Ses, Gundem, Dialog, Ozgur Balkan, Ileri) as well as there are slip issues in Greek newspapers (i.e. Observant of Trace) that are written in Turkish language. Furthermore, two Arabic language newspapers circulate in Greece (Al Dafatan, Panorama Arabic) and there are radio news and programmes (transmitted, for instance, in Arabic or French, which play music originating from South Mediterranean countries) in multicultural and multilingual radio stations.

In light of the above findings, the following ideas are put forward for a more proactive media policy that would reflect Greek society's diversity and would promote intercultural dialogue and mutual respect and acceptance of minority and majority cultures. In the first place, the Ministry of Culture should establish a fund that would support the setting up and function of minority media. Such funding may also alternatively take place through tax facilitation towards ethnic media businesses. In media studies departments, there should also be more courses and specialised training regarding cultural and religious diversity, questions of racism and xenophobia. Such courses should be made compulsory also in private institutions teaching media studies (higher education colleges, schools functioning within major media groups). At the same time, public broadcast channels should include TV and radio programmes discussing cultural and ethnic diversity at time zones with high visibility, and a multi-lingual TV channel should be established that would broadcast news and programmes in the languages of the major ethnic groups in Greece (e.g. Albanian, Russian, etc). In terms of monitoring the media's progress in this regard, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education could work together for the establishment of an independent Media Observatory on cultural diversity.

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## Albania - The Bridge Magazine

Since 2008 'The Bridge' has been distributed in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia among Albanians in their native language. It is an unique magazine in this Region as it features articles about the impact of Islamic and Oriental culture in Albania and among Albanians, as part of their cultural, educational, historical, linguistic and literary topics. The main objective of the magazine is to make people know about the links between Albania and Albanians with the Orient and the influence of Oriental-Islamic civilization on their own culture. The Bridge's quality is assured by the Editorial Board and collaborators, who are mainly Albanian Orientalists or Albanians live and work in the Orient. They have been able to display, on a scientific basis, the long history of coexistence that has been characterising the relations with the Orient and many Albanians who were famous in the Orient for centuries, such as the old Albanian Arnaout. In the future, other language editions are foreseen to make this exceptional cultural and historical relevant magazine accessible to other people in and outside Europe.

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