



COLLABORATIVE MEDIA INITIATIVE (CMI)

A Potential Untapped: Media Working Together across the Divide in Cyprus

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For more information:

Cyprus Community Media Centre

Web: www.cypruscommunitymedia.org

Email: info@cypruscommunitymedia.org

Phone: +357-22-660838 & +90-392-22-80654

Twitter: @CCMCCyprus

Facebook: CCMC Cyprus Community Media Centre



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www.cypruscommunitymedia.org

A Potential Untapped: Media Working Together across the Divide in Cyprus,

written by Michalis Simopoulos, is the final report of the Collaborative Media Initiative (CMI) project. The CMI, funded by the United Nations Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) and supported by UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust in Cyprus, aims to improve media collaboration between the communities in Cyprus, through an increased capacity of stakeholders to collaborate on media, and through laying the foundations for the development of a collaborative media platform in Cyprus.

The creation of a common media platform has the potential to act as a foundation for the integration of the media landscape in Cyprus in the interim period before a solution is achieved. It will require participation and a significant investment, both human and financial, from all stakeholders with an interest in bringing the two communities closer together.

The case for media collaboration in Cyprus

The activities implemented throughout the CMI have led to the formulation of a set of recommendations to all stakeholders, based on the premise that increased media collaboration in Cyprus can contribute to improving intercommunal trust, cooperation and understanding.

The recommendations fall broadly into three categories:

Creating a vision for an integrated media landscape in Cyprus

The Cypriot media landscape should include provisions for the creation of a multilingual and multicultural islandwide broadcaster. Steps can be taken now to support this vision. The example of ARTE TV, established by France and Germany could be utilised as a model of best practice for creating media that can be shared following a period of conflict, and can also help to further integrate a reunited Cyprus with the rest of Europe. This could serve as a platform for a common media institution in a future Cyprus that will foster a sense of ownership amongst all Cypriots. Support from decision makers is a key element to showing Cypriots that positive change can be achieved despite years of division.

Encourage media collaboration on a professional basis

Media professionals from both communities stand to benefit from working together. Collaborative work is taking place, but has remained under the radar due to its nature and delicacy in the current political situation. Journalists' organisations, directors, and editors-in-chief should encourage their staff to work with colleagues from the other community and participate in events that concern both communities. International organisations with an interest in supporting this process of integration, including the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe, should also pay attention to work along parameters that encourage solid and sustainable partnerships.



Strengthening the links between Media and Democracy in Cyprus

Media is an essential element of a democratic society, where fair and accurate reporting can provide citizens with the necessary tools and access to information required to make informed decisions. For media to fulfil its role, conditions for media pluralism and freedom of expression must be established where a diversity of voices can enrich debate and accurately reflect all segments of the population. Improving the quality of access to media, and in particular new media through the internet, is crucial to strengthening levels of media literacy in Cyprus, and the capabilities of Cypriots to connect with each other. In this process, civil society will have an important role to play in creating a space for dialogue and cooperation. In this regard, organisations such as CCMC, with reach into all communities, can play an important and strategic role in this process.

All Stakeholders

Embrace the potential of media collaboration and encourage dialogue

Dialogue and participation should be encouraged and discussion platforms expanded to include colleagues and peers from across the EU.

Recognise the importance of language

The language discrepancy in Cyprus means that reliable translation and interpretation are key ingredients, and resources should be spared to encourage such efforts.

Take head of research

Research presented at the CMI Conference revealed some interesting statistics on media usage online of young Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Failure to address these statistics will hinder positive efforts at reconciliation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots.

Scope the Landscape and Identify Measureable Aims

Coherence with past efforts and sustainability are key components of devising any initiative aimed at facilitating media collaboration.

Policy Makers

Bring the Media into the negotiations

Consider the media within the context of a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus Problem, and in particular the appropriate mechanisms that will enable the convergence of the two systems of media governance.

Establish an Advisory Committee on Media

The Committee should be tasked with working on media policy and the legislative framework for media within a reunified Cyprus.

Work towards establishing a common Public Service Broadcaster

Public service broadcasting has been a problematic element of post-conflict societies in other parts of the world, and ARTE TV is a shining example of how media can help tackle difficult issues of the past while maintaining a broader outlook and focus.

Improve provisions for Access to Information

In line with the principles set out by the Open Cyprus Coalition, all steps should be taken to improve access to official documentation for both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot journalists.

Recognise Community Media as a third sector

Community media should be recognised and supported as a distinct third sector in the Cyprus media landscape, as it can serve as an example towards producing content that respects the principles of diversity and multiculturalism.

Media

Journalists' Organisations

Set aside their disputes in international fora

Journalists' organisations should redefine their relationship along professional lines, focusing on strengthening the profession in Cyprus.

Chief Editors and News Directors

Bring the other community into the mainstream

Existing and future media programming and reporting should afford greater space to human interest stories from the other community, as well as opinion/commentary articles from journalists across the divide.

Cyprus Community Media Centre

Make Media Collaboration a Strategic Priority

CCMC should incorporate media collaboration into its core activities, aiming to become 'a first point of call' for journalists, media professionals, and academics who wish to cooperate with colleagues based in the other community.

Offer support to media collaboration initiatives

CCMC should continue to support media collaboration initiatives, offering, *inter alia*, assistance in project proposal writing, facilitation of meetings, and financial incentives for collaborative media projects.

Promote the work of civil society as a resource to media

A deeper engagement with the media from both communities will aid and promote cross-community work, offering valuable content for media production and showing that issues of common concern transcend boundaries.

Offer membership and create a common contacts database

CCMC should offer membership to media professionals from across the island further strengthening CCMC as a space where people can work together on common projects.