



Gender, Conflict and the Media in Cyprus

Country: Cyprus

Organisation: Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies (MIGS) – www.medinstgenderstudies.org

Contact: Susana Pavlou – susana@medinstgenderstudies.org

Partners involved: N/A

Target Group: Media within Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, particularly women journalists

Programme Description:

This project aimed at exploring how the Cypriot media report on issues of gender and how these relate to ethnic and other types of violence and conflict, especially those relating to Cyprus. Given the important role of media in influencing public opinion, attitudes, and policy, MIGS saw addressing the media's weakness in reporting on gender issues and ethnic conflict as an essential part of challenging general misperceptions.

First, essential research took place looking at how media in Cyprus reports gender and what the implications are for the ethnic and social issues in both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. Findings were then presented and discussed in a seminar with the participation of 20 media owners and editors. The links between reportage, gender issues and democracy were emphasised and efforts were made to instil a sense of social responsibility among media professionals.

2 training workshops were organised for female journalists from both the Turkish and Greek communities to raise awareness amongst the participants on gender issues, the lack of gender sensitivity in the media in Cyprus and how this hinders women's participation in national debates. Later, an International Conference entitled "Gender, Diversity and the Media" brought together scholars, NGO professionals, journalists and local media owners from the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

The project culminated in the publication of "The Gender and Media Handbook: Promoting Equality, Diversity and Empowerment". The handbook includes an assessment of the situation in terms of gender in Cyprus, and a coherent series of steps on how to improve practices and support journalists to represent both genders more fairly, and, more importantly, how to promote women to become more directly involved in decision making. The handbook also includes clear guidelines on best practices for media professionals.

Whilst specifically tackling the issue of gender, this project aimed to illustrate the possibility of disparate communities working together towards a common goal of equality and empowerment.

"Although more work needs to be done in this area, civil society work and issues of gender and diversity are taken more seriously and play an important role in public dialogue and policy formulation." MIGS

Challenge: This was a first of its kind project in Cyprus. Very little information about diversity or gender issues already existed in the public domain.

Solution: This gave the project a kind of freedom it would not have otherwise had. As it was the first of its kind the researchers felt that they were pioneers on the subject. This increased the morale and scope of project and the research in particular.

Impact and Success Stories:

- By working together the Turkish and Greek Cypriots learned a lot about each other's working conditions, which helped to build confidence and trust amongst the academic and media community.
- "The Gender and Media Handbook: Promoting Equality, Diversity and Empowerment" generated unprecedented interest from other organisations and distinguished academics in Europe and beyond.