



## Greek Turkish Media Programme

**Country:** Greece, Turkey

**Organisation:** Search for Common Ground – [www.sfcg.org](http://www.sfcg.org)

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**Partners involved:** N/A

**Target Group:** National media, regional media, journalism students, general public through targeting the media

### Programme Description:

Turkish and Greek relations have suffered from chronic tension for a long time. Considering the fact that 95% of Turkish people feel that Greeks are not to be trusted, although 93% have never met a Greek, and 70% of the Greeks asked would not trust a Turk even though 70% have never met a Turk, the tension seems to lie in mutual suspicion and fear rather than in personal experience. In the past these feelings have been instilled through social institutions, schools, families, and the mass media.

To facilitate improved communication between the two groups a multilayered programme was developed. The first part of the programme was to consult leading media executives from both countries and understand their feelings on how the media currently portrays the other community. They were also asked to give their feedback and support for the activities planned.

Training was carried out for working journalists and journalism students from Greece and Turkey. The sessions focused on Greek-Turkish relations in journalism ethics, conflict resolution, reporting on diversity and adversity. To completely let go of past negative experiences between the two cultures, history books from both countries were studied and the issues of refugees discussed. This attempted to reactivate the mourning process, work through the feelings of loss and anger, and eventually let those feelings go. Identities rather than ethnicities were promoted in an attempt to build trans-ethnic identities that people could relate to. Media content that reveals different groups of society in conflict – women and youth, environmentalists and business people, academics and music lovers – contributed to understanding commonalities amongst so called enemies.

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*“Overall, the experience of Search for Common Ground showed that the design of the programme toward constructive communication, breaking the cyclical nature of communication prevalent in ethnic stereotypes could be summarised in the African National Congress leader Andrew Mazono’s words: ‘Understand the differences; act on the commonalities’. Search for Common Ground.*

**Challenge:** Overcoming suspicion of the project from local policy makers to the police.

**Solution:** An exaggeratedly inclusive policy was established to enable the project to continue. This meant people who were against the project were included in discussions on how to implement it as well as its supporters. A code of conduct was drawn up to ensure all sides of the argument were heard.

### Impact and Success Stories:

- The media content became a media story. The content was re-produced by other media, increasing its reach significantly.
- Official agreements were reached between Greek and Turkish media to exchange news items in the future.
- Yahoo mailing groups were created to discuss the content of the project and the issues it discussed. Years after the project some of these groups are still visited regularly.