



VRT Diversity Unit

Country: Belgium

Organisation: VRT – Nation Flemish Broadcaster, Belgium - www.vrt.be/diversiteit

Contact: Gianni Marzo, Diversity Unit, VRT – Gianni.marzo@vrt.be

Partners involved: N/A

Target Group: Minority groups, particularly people with disabilities and ethnic backgrounds

Programme Description:

In 2003 the VRT began extensive dialogue with ethnic minority communities in Flanders. The aim was to understand their point of view and incorporate this knowledge into the VRT Diversity Policy and Diversity Charter.

The Diversity Unit is within the VRT to implement the actions outlined in the Diversity Policy and Charter. The Unit looks at a wide range of diversity issues, particularly those faced by ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. Affirmative action towards minority groups is part of the daily work of the Diversity Unit.

This action includes a training programme for existing VRT staff on “How to deal with Diversity”. The training programme is part of the corporate training schedule, which new staff is expected to participate in. The training includes workshops on how to confront stereotypes, how to communicate with diverse communities, teams or staff members and how to see the value of the differences and similarities people share. Specific sessions are also available on topics such as, the portrayal of diversity on the small screen and how to cover ethnic diversity appropriately.

To connect with young people from ethnic minorities VRT offers a 1 or 2-day introduction seminar at their offices in Brussels. Every year the focus is on a different type of media, for example news and current affairs, radio or television production. VRT also offers an afternoon visit to regional offices where young people can take an interactive radio workshop or a TV News workshop.

Annually VRT offers 5 research traineeships and 1 in technical production to people from ethnic minorities or people living with disabilities. Over the 6-month placement the trainees are given specialised training in a range of production skills. A mentor is assigned to each trainee to oversee their progress and highlight any problems.

“The VRT drama programmes in particular are breaking the stereotypical images that are often brought up concerning ethnic minorities.” Gianni Marzo, Diversity Unit, VRT

Challenge: A lack of understanding of the issues of diversity was shown when trying to implement the diversity policy into the overall VRT policy.

Solution: Communicating and practically illustrating the value of diversifying staff for programme making. Since the diversity policy has been put in to practice existing staff have seen the importance of having different perspectives on old problems.

Impact and Success Stories:

- 6 trainees are now full time staff members at VRT
- More people from ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are applying for jobs at VRT
- A 2007 survey showed that 17% of people in non-fiction programming on VRT Channel Een are from ethnic minorities: 7% higher than in 2004.
- The Diversity Unit gives input in to new programme and format ideas across VRT, as well as offering specific structural advice where necessary.