

WHAT A COLOURFUL WORLD!



Breaking the ghetto-mentality of the media is not an easy thing to do but one very active and dynamic Finnish Development Partnership (DP) is giving this challenge "its very best shot". This DP believes that there shouldn't be programmes for "us" and "them." It wants to create an intercultural rather than a multicultural society – a society in which immigrants have the opportunity not just to be the objects of programmes or articles but to become the subjects and represent an influential force in the media. The overall aim is to blur, or even erase, the borders between native Finns and immigrants.

Finland is no different to many other Member States, as the participation rates of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the media are very low, whether it is television, radio, press or internet. One solution that has been adopted by other EQUAL DPs throughout the EU is to train people with immigrant or ethnic minority backgrounds to a high enough standard that they then have a real chance of gaining employment in the media sector. However, in Finland the situation is extremely difficult, as there is a massive oversupply of media professionals. Every year 3,000 graduates leave colleges or universities with some form of media diploma or degree and more than 2,000 are unable to find a job.

One potential answer that is being piloted by this EQUAL DP called MUNDO is to develop not only the professional skills of immigrants and ethnic minorities but also their cultural know how. The work of this DP closely mirrors the Council's Recommendations on the implementation of Member States' employment policies.^[1]



Mundo Basaari editorial department on excursion to St. Petersburg

"The only way to get attention for our students and to separate them from hundreds of Finnish students and media professionals eager to get the job, is to underline their immigrant background." says Marita Rainbird who is Project Manager of DP in YLE. YLE or Yleisradio, in full, is the Finnish Broadcasting Company and it has been joined in this venture by Helsinki Polytechnic Stadia and the independent production company DreamCatcher Ltd. In the DP, which is administered by YLE, the Helsinki Polytechnic Stadia is responsible for the educational phase. The production team of YLE's TV1 programme series 'Basaari', together with the publisher of the multi-cultural publication SixDegrees - DreamCatcher Ltd are jointly responsible for the work experience element of the training.

LEARNING FOR REAL

MUNDO is essentially a media education and work training project that offers the opportunity to attain a high standard of education, tailor-made individual study plans and a variety of training and learning experiences in different media fields.

For some ten years, YLE has been running a 30 minute weekly programme called Basaari that features the every day lives of immigrants and the social and cultural issues that are relevant to

them. There had also been some experience within the Basaari editorial department in the training of immigrants and when the Ministry of Labour were promoting the funding that was available through EQUAL, the concept of a more structured framework for training began to take shape and MUNDO was launched in the first half of 2005.

One issue that had to be resolved at the outset was how the beneficiaries of the project would be able to exist, financially. Under Finnish regulations, if adults study full-time then they lose their unemployment benefits. Thus, the DP had several meetings with the public employment service and, in the end, it was agreed that if the project participants studied part-time thereby gaining 20 training credits per year, they would still receive full benefits. In addition, the project discovered that younger students who studied full-time might qualify for a state grant and, of course, it was always possible that the most talented students might receive fees from the commissions that they would find or be offered.

The training possibilities provided by the DP were widely advertised on television, in newspapers and through those local community centres that are used by immigrants and ethnic minorities. A total of 82 people applied and submitted two written exercises and from these, 42 individuals were selected to take part in an entrance test not so much on the basis of their competence in Finnish, but on the content of their

exercises. The entrance test was very demanding and it was spread over two full days but people were allowed to use other languages such as English, French, German and Russian. The test involved an assessment of all types of communication skills, audio-visual aptitudes and the capacities to work as part of a team. In the end, 26 individuals were chosen for the two



year study programme but two subsequently left for personal reasons – one young lady moved to another city and one elderly man found that combining the training with his other part-time job was just too exhausting. Now, there is a real mix of 24 students who are all depicted below. They are aged between 18 and 58, come from 18 different countries and all have very different backgrounds. Some of the students are experienced in media work or have qualification in media studies gained in their country of origin, whilst others are only just starting their media education and careers.

The theory ...



Maria Friman and Carlos Marroquin planning their futures at Helsinki Polytechnic Stadia

Taking account of the need for part-time study the course lasts for two years during which the participants will accumulate a total of 40 course credits. This will enable them to take a competence test for the "Further Qualification in Audiovisual Communication" or the "Specialist Qualification in Audiovisual Communication," in autumn 2007. For everyone, the training at Helsinki Polytechnic Stadia commenced during the orientation phase in August 2005 and during that phase, an individual study plan was designed for each student. The teaching includes the history and culture of the media, applied media analysis, communications in society and media literacy. The course also familiarises students with communications legislation and regulations. At another level, the training focuses on planning, production and development tasks in television, radio, network communications, sound engineering and working in media education and production companies. The individually tailored elements of the training start from the students existing education and practical experience in the field of media. It can be chosen from an "à la carte" menu that includes visual communication, filming and lighting, sound recording and editing, video editing, multimedia and network communication, audiovisual journalism and practice, project management, planning, organisation, regulations and contractual agreements.



Nadezda Pojasnik and Tahir Aliyev reporting on a big fire at old warehouses in Helsinki

... the practice ...

However, the most important aspect of the training process is the hands-on experience that the students gain from real work in a variety of situations. In the radio and newspaper work, the students familiarise themselves with the various processes and tasks that take place on a day-to-day basis in any editorial office and at the SixDegrees paper they can specialise in photography or the writing of articles. As part of the work experience, the students also become familiar with the production of internet pages and with radio journalism.

However, one of the most significant and visible opportunities is the weekly ten minute Mundo slot, which gives topics or stories about Finland a guaranteed ethnic spin. This slot can be seen in the YLE TV1 Basaari programme series on Mondays at 17:10, and as in a re-run on Fridays at 15.50 on YLE TV1 and Tuesdays at 10.10 am on YLE24. These Mundo slots are short documentaries one hundred percent produced by the Mundo students. In fact, every two weeks during this 8-week-long period of work experience, each student is expected to prepare one short documentary.

Thus, during the TV work training, students are introduced to the production process in the Basaari/Mundo editorial department and they broaden their skills in using cameras, recording equipment and editing suites. In addition to these technical skills, the various stages of the production process are refined during this work experience. The training includes planning of the topic for the documentary, formulating a script, booking a cameraman, procuring permits for film locations, directing the filming, organising interpretation where necessary and handling any criticism, or indeed praise, that results from the screening of the documentary.

... and the outcomes

The benefits of this process are very clear to the students. Maria Friman, a Finnish Roma, one of the "trainees" explains that *"considering that I had no training or experience in television production prior to the project, I am very pleased with the work opportunities that I have received. During the past year, I've had the chance to work on about 30 programmes."* Also through the employer encounters that Mundo organises she says that *"every one of these seminars or events*

has brought offers of work for me. I want to emphasise the words 'every one'." Tahir Aliyev had been working as a lawyer in Baku, Azerbaijan before he joined the project. He is "glad that theoretical education has not been the main focus of the programme as I think that people learn the most when they have to do real programmes, mistakes and feelings of success included. The students have been given free hands to develop their ideas and even dreams in the fields of TV, radio and printed media."



Fernando Colombo and Pia Barclay hosting SixDegree's live show on local radio

However, there have also been considerable benefits for the host company. *"Mundo has brought more nuance and diversity to the channel's programming. The Mundo students have also challenged the professionals working in YLE to think about the position of the immigrants in a new way,"* reports Riitta Pihlajamäki who is Channel controller of YLE TV1. She adds, *"the students have visited many of the programmes commissioned by the channel and through their input brought more colour to their content and knowledge."* Saija Uski, the Executive Producer of Factual Programmes is on record as stating her belief that *"the Mundo project has carried out important pioneering work in promoting immigrant issues in Yleisradio. It has created a good foundation from which to build towards sustainable immigrant and ethnic minority media policies. This could include, for example, the discussion of issues from minority perspectives on prime time television programmes."*

MAINSTREAMING SUCCESS

Having achieved quite a lot in a relatively short period of time, Mundo is very anxious to ensure that the knowledge and experience that has been acquired is not lost in the mists of time. Mundo believes that it has created three main products:

- A model of tutoring and work training of a multicultural group;
- 24 professional camera operators, editors, directors, journalists or designers;
- A television programme.

It is now making every effort to disseminate these products at national and international level through organising and participating in such a wide range of conferences seminars, exhibitions and fairs that they cannot all be fully described and so only the main activities are mentioned. In terms of promoting its model in Finland, it has joined forces with four other DPs. Three of these are also working with immigrants, whilst the fourth is working with Swedish-speaking disabled people. Together they have organised a series of activities to share and exchange their know-how. They are currently working on the development of common tools that can be used to fight discrimination and inequality on the labour market and to raise the expectations of disadvantaged groups that they should receive equal treatment in employment issues.

At an international level, Mundo participates actively in meetings of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). It is also contributing its experience through the [EBU's Intercultural Programme Group and a Swedish-led EQUAL Mainstreaming Platform](#) to the development of an Ethnic Diversity Toolkit for editors and journalists who are involved in news, current affairs and factual programmes. The Mundo method was also featured at Basel Karlsruhe Forum in January 2007 and it will be presented during a Summer Media School, in Lithuania during July 2007.

For its students, Mundo has organised a number of seminars with potential employers and students have also participated in the DocPoint festival, the EDUCA educational fair and many other events where they have a chance to display their work and demonstrate their skills. For

example, last September, Mundo performed at the Love&Anarchy Festival in Helsinki when in addition to its own show, Mundo short documentaries were screened as opening films to the main features. Then, the following month, Mundo participated in the Helsinki Book Fair, where it arranged two stage performances.



Wendell Coelho and Pedro Herrera celebrating with soup after Mundo's successful screening at the DocPoint Film festival

The project also organised a photography competition for its students, the results of which were shown to the general public at "Labour Photo Exhibition á la Mundo" in Helsinki Railway Station at the end of April and the first week of May 2007. The opening of the exhibition took place right after a big seminar with international speakers from Holland and Belgium, held in YLE, on 26 April 2007. Postcards of the photos are now also available free of charge in public places throughout Finland. All of this work to promote the public profile of its students was given an immeasurable boost when, last spring, the [CIVIS Media Foundation](#) awarded the *prestigious jury's special prize to the Mundo documentaries and the Mundo project*.

The Mundo programme reaches a big audience as it has, on average, 19 to 27% of the market share and every opportunity is used to boost audiences and bring the programme to the attention of new viewers. The overall intention is that the Basaari/MUNDO slot will be developed during the course of the project, so that it can achieve its own format in the future and, by extension, its own rightful place in TV1's prime-time programming.

All of the above activities will culminate in a final Mainstreaming Event to be held, in Finland, on 27 September 2007. There will be speeches, the Photo Exhibition will be remounted, and there will be screenings of Mundo TV-programmes and DigiTales. DigiTales is an idea developed within the [EQUAL transnational partnership](#) of which MUNDO is a member and it involves people making their own digital stories with the help of professional tutors. There will also be some "freebies" for the audience at the Mainstreaming Event such as a Book on Mundo's Best Practices and Experiences, DVDs of Mundo TV-inserts and DigiTales and, of course, the photo postcards. It is very much hoped that this day will be a real celebration because by then, the DP will have a very good idea if, and how, its three products will be sustained or further developed.

The Three Most Important Lessons from Mundo

In the opinions of Marita Rainbird, the Project Manager, and Linda Lappalainen, the Communications Executive, the following are the lessons learned through EQUAL:



The recent exhibition of Mundo's photos in Helsinki Railway station

1. "We have seen how vital cultural intelligence is. It's not a question of being clever. You need to be aware of different modes of communication and of different cultures and be able to combine the two. At the beginning, this cultural intelligence was missing from some of the organisations that we were dealing with.
2. We also recognise the need for emotional intelligence and here we are talking about empathy, respect, trust and team spirit but not forgetting discipline. We wouldn't have been able to do what we have done without the commitment of the staff and the students. We have regular feedback sessions to take on board their views and we also organise regular social events like a meal out, or visiting the theatre, playing football or going bowling. This helps everyone feel and understand the interdependency that exists in the project.
3. The transnational work was a real eye-opener. Working with other European countries, with a long history of dealing with diversity, made us realise that, in Finnish society, immigration is on a much smaller scale and, thus, it is not such a significant issue compared to the UK, the Netherlands, Germany or Sweden. It also explains the lack of experience and interest in developing diversity within the Finnish media, as now immigrants represent about only about 2.2 % of the population but that figure it is increasing rapidly."

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