

ANOTHER TYPE OF EURO-VISION

A very proactive transnational partnership called [EquaMedia](#) that operated during the first round of EQUAL has laid the firm foundations for a European network of media projects. One of the partners in EquaMedia was [Online / More Colour in the Media](#) (OL/MCM). This is a European foundation that was created by a [Mira Media](#), an independent co-operative body founded by the major Dutch migrant organisations. OL/MCM has been working for the last ten years in areas such as employment, career orientation, research and media-education and it now acts as the coordinator for this network.

With the assistance of OL/MCM, the projects and organisations in the network are sharing their knowledge and experience and at a practical level some of them are also cooperating together within new EQUAL transnational partnerships and in a three year European project called Roots&Routes. At the level of policy, the network is also trying to make a firm impression on two main fronts. OL/MCM is being given Observer Status by the Council of Europe and intends to use this status to promote the network's concern about the need to recognise the cultural contribution of new Europeans. Secondly, the network is pushing the Working Committee on Diversity in Broadcasting that has been established by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) to create a Diversity Charter that will be countersigned by all the member companies of the EBU.

RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MEDIA

In terms of work on social inclusion, the press and media can either be seen as saints or sinners but they cannot be ignored. The press and media have a profound effect on the perceptions and attitudes of their readers, viewers and listeners. If their reporting contains overt or covert racism and stereotyping, it will tend to confirm prejudices towards immigrant groups and exacerbate exclusionary and discriminatory behaviour in our societies. On the other hand, there



Helping to get things in focus

are many ways in which the media can be used to offering a more balanced portrayal of these groups and a more accurate view of the multicultural nature of society. At the same time, the media can also provide a route to empowerment for migrant groups and NGOs and a new source of career and employment opportunities for young people from migrant backgrounds.

In the context of the Tampere and Lisbon agendas, it is important that migrants should be successful integrated into the EU Member States. This implies that the

host country should provide for the equal participation of migrants in economic, social, political, cultural and civil life and that migrants should respect the fundamental norms and values of the host society and participate actively in the integration process, without having to relinquish their own identity. The media can play an essential role in this process.

This role is recognised by the European Union, as one of the four initial priorities for its Action Programme to Combat Discrimination is “Working with the media on how to avoid publishing or broadcasting material which is discriminatory or encourages discrimination and from discriminating in their employment policies.” Similarly within this area of activity, the European Commission has launched a five-year, EU-wide Information Campaign “For Diversity – Against Discrimination”. This Campaign is designed to inform people about their rights and obligations under European and national anti-discrimination law, as well as promoting the positive benefits of diversity for business and for society as a whole.

MAKING AN IMPACT

In this new millennium, with ever improving technology and ever faster methods of communication, it is vital that the air waves are not totally dominated by commercial or professional interests and that the public and especially the disadvantaged public can continue to exert some influence over programming and also have some direct access to media outlets. Fortunately, public as well as commercial broadcasters are struggling to legitimise their existence in the face of ever-growing competition between stations over ratings and, at the same time, audiences in all EU-countries are becoming more and more multicultural. So whilst, diversity within the media is essential for the full integration of the groups of “new citizens” into the national societies, it is also important for the future sustainability of the national mainstream media.



Getting a share of the air waves

However, to make the types of linkages that can actually result in positive change across Europe there is a need for a wide network both in terms of geography and interests. This was understood right from the beginning of the EquaMedia transnational partnership. Within the EquaMedia project there were five Development Partnerships (DPs) from four different countries – Greece, Italy, Netherlands and the UK. However, these five DPs included almost 70 national partners and other collaborators such as media companies, training institutes, NGO's, anti-racist organisations, public broadcasters, community media, national authorities, school of journalism and other types of organisations connected to the media. This vast source of knowledge and experience was put to good use by EquaMedia. *“Transnational meetings did not only include DP*

coordinators, as is sometimes the case for other partnership”, explains Martina Valdetara OL/MCM’s Project Officer, “we set up working groups to accommodate the interests of the various national partners, which included groups, for example, for Universities/Schools of Journalism, local broadcasters, community media and NGOs”.

Through these national partners and collaborators, the list of contacts available to EquaMedia continued to grow and grow until it was possible to invite over 250 people to [its final dissemination conference](#). This conference was the spur that kicked off a whole new range of action. The three days that were spent in the Netherlands during September 2004 provided opportunities for workshops on a range of themes and also time could be spent in discussing ideas for new projects. Shamanee Kempadoo who mainly works for Dutch public broadcasting stations in the cultural programme sector explained that *“This was not to be another conference which again wandered down roads paved with good intentions, but the idea was to come up with concrete goals. Not only were we to review problems which have been reiterated at numerous conferences, but to pin these problems down and go on from there with a definite plan of action.”* In the end this ambition was fulfilled as the conference yielded four very concrete outcomes.

CREATING A WIDER AND MORE EFFECTIVE NETWORK

Now the scope of these media activities has grown so large that attempts are being made to find more secure funding for their coordination and promotion. Some 32 organisations in 21 countries are behind a project to create a more stable, European “Online/More Colour in the Media network”. Two of the main lines of action in the future will be the European Week of Media and Diversity to be held between 15 and 21 March 2006 and a conference that will be organised in 2007 in the framework of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. During the European Week, a wide range of events will take place in dozens of countries to promote a public dialogue about the representation of excluded groups in the media and the empowerment of excluded audiences. Members will use this occasion to present the network to journalists, broadcasters, editors and other relevant stakeholders including national and local authorities and NGOs. In the case of the conference, the focus will be on the necessity and the right, for socially excluded groups, to have equality in terms of being fairly portrayed and represented in the media. During 2006, roundtables and working groups will prepare contributions to the conference on:

- Empowerment of audiences by NGOs and minority organisations;
- Diversity policies in broadcasting;
- Portrayal by the media of women from excluded groups;
- Training methodologies of ethnic media outlets and media centres.

DISCOVERING ROOTS AND ROUTES

Work during the EquaMedia conference also resulted in a successful application to DG Education and Culture for a transnational [Roots&Routes](#) project. This project started in spring 2005 and will continue over the next three years in France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal.

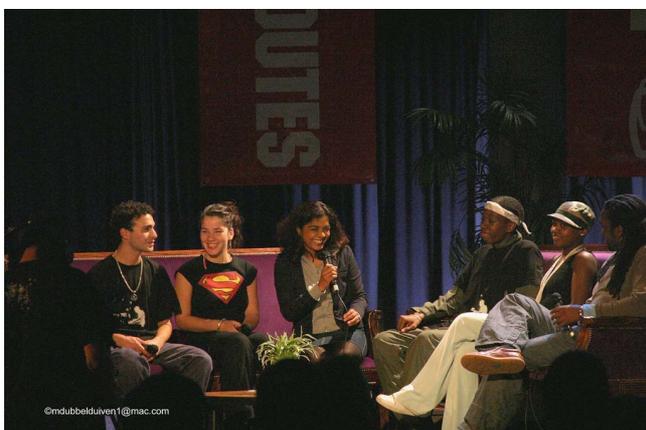
The project is scouting for and then inspiring and coaching musicians, dancers and media producers who would not normally find their way into the established stage, media and arts schools. They will all get the chance to perform and to make programmes for local and regional radio and television. The project will end with a massive transnational concert held in the Netherlands in 2007, as another contribution to the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.



A chance to dance

ADVANCING IN THE SECOND ROUND

A number of people including representatives of television channels came to the EquaMedia conference because they were interested in the possibilities of making an application for the second round of EQUAL. As a result of the contacts made during the formals sessions or over a cup of coffee or a glass of beer, three new EQUAL transnational projects have been established. They go further than EquaMedia in that they include other target groups or they use new methods such a digital storytelling to help people present their views and interests in one minute video or, in the case of prisoners, to prepare their own audio-visual CV. [DigiTales](#) is using media as an empowerment tool for minority ethnic and cultural groups, young people 'at risk', users/survivors of mental health services and disabled people. [Immediate](#) is empowering people and communities who face exclusion and disadvantage, to combat racism and other forms of discrimination, and to promote a rich and diverse media culture that will meet the aspirations and needs of multicultural/diverse societies. [Open Windows](#) is targeting prisoners, ex-prisoners, young people at risk and women facing double discrimination to (re)integrate into the labour market, by developing tools and training methods which will help them to work on their unexplored cultural talents and skills within the field of theatre and media. For example, a Dutch DP in this partnership is taking a very adventurous approach and training young people at risk to become stunt men and women for the media industry.



Media and networking can also be fun

PILING ON THE PRESSURE FOR CHANGE

Mira Media, the parent body of OL/MCM is represented on various Dutch DPs in each of the transnational partnership. This means that already the three transnational partnerships are using and experimenting with

each other's methods and approaches. *"It is the potential for change that EQUAL represents that is so important if we are to push the boundaries forward"* says Ed Klute the Project Director *"our evidence to the Council of Europe and our dealings with Diversity Officers of member companies of the European Broadcasting Union are all informed by concepts that have been tried and tested in EQUAL."* In reality, through this new European network, EQUAL transnational partnership are providing the bricks that can be used to build new policies on how the media should portray, treat and involve people from migrant communities and other disadvantaged groups.

Contact

Online/More Colour in the Media

Ed Klute / Martina Valdetara

C/o Mira Media

Mariaplaats 3-1 Postbus 1234

3511 LH Utrecht 3500 BE Utrecht

The Netherlands

Tel: +31 30 2302240

Fax: +31 30 2302975

E-mail: info@miramedia.nl

Links to the Dutch DPs in which Mira Media is involved:

[Kiezen voor je leven](#) ;

[Dolle Zina](#) ;

[Etnische ondernemers in de media](#) ;

[Utrechtse Held](#) .