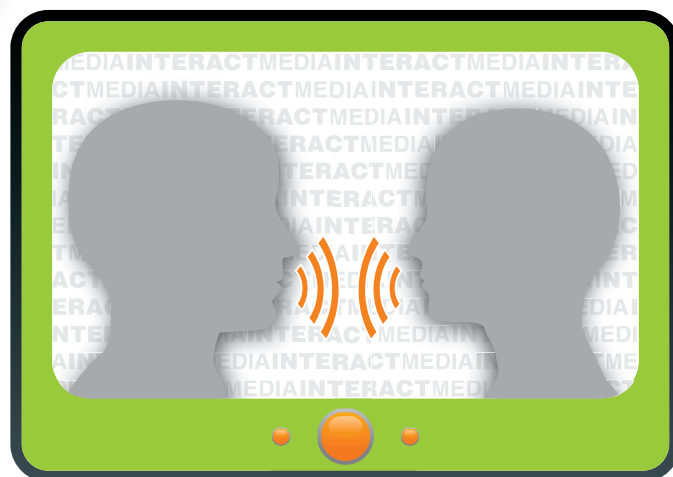


Media InterAct Project: Outcomes and Recommendations



Media
InterAct

*Promoting and mainstreaming
cultural diversity in the media
in Malta*

Report compiled by



June 2012



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Definition of Third-Country National (TCN) within the scope of the Media InterAct project:
TCNs are people who are living in Malta but are not nationals of Malta or any other Member State of the European Union. In addition, asylum seekers, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection do not fall within the scope of The European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals within which the Media InterAct project is being implemented.

	<p>General Programme Solidarity & Management of Migration Flows 2007 – 2013</p> <p>European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (IF) Project part-financed from the European Union Co-financing rate: 75% EU Funds, 25% Beneficiary's Funds</p> <p>Sustainable Management of Migration Flows</p>	
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What is the Media InterAct project?

SOS Malta in partnership with the Public Broadcasting Services Ltd (PBS) and the Institute of Maltese Journalists (IGM) participated in a project, “Media InterAct”, co-financed through The European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals.

Media InterAct was a one-year project running from July 2011 till June 2012 and its overall objective was that of initiating an avenue for mainstreaming the diversity and integration of third-country nationals (TCNs) within the media in Malta. The common element across the initiatives planned within the Media InterAct project was the acknowledgement that the media can play an important role in increasing positive awareness of cultures belonging to TCNs living in Malta, as well as facilitating intercultural exchange between people with different cultural backgrounds and society at large. This in turn will facilitate the integration of TCNs in Malta.

The foundations of the project were based on an initial research component focused on mapping out the current situation of TCNs and their representation within the media in Malta as well as the identification of best practices from other EU Member States.

The Media InterAct project also piloted the production of a thirteen-episode lifestyle/culinary TV programme series called “Minn Lenti Interkulturali” aimed at promoting intercultural exchange through the sharing of culinary experiences and traditions of TCNs and the simultaneous account of their integration experiences in Malta. These TV programmes were produced by PBS and were aired on TVM and TVM2/E22 throughout the months of January 2012 to June 2012. In addition, the project piloted the issuing of a magazine, “InterAct: A Portrait of Third-Country Nationals in Malta”, dedicated to cultural diversity and integration which was distributed in April 2012 with The Times of Malta. The project also introduced a new journalism award category for Malta entitled “Promoting Integration and Intercultural Dialogue”, featuring as a new element within the Malta Journalism Awards, an annual event organised by the IGM.

The overall objective was that of initiating an avenue for mainstreaming the diversity and integration of third-country nationals (TCNs) within the media in Malta.

The Media InterAct project then concluded with a multi-stakeholder networking conference in May 2012, bringing together various actors to explore ways of mainstreaming cultural diversity and integration within the media in Malta and to talk about the role of the media in facilitating the integration of TCNs in Malta. Following this, Media InterAct is publishing this report which includes a set of recommendations that can better promote and mainstream cultural diversity in the media in Malta.



**Thirteen-episode
lifestyle/culinary
TV programme
series - “Minn Lenti
Interkulturali”**

By means of these TV programmes, viewers were able to learn about the lives of these protagonists, their countries of origin, cultures, communities and their experiences in Malta so far.

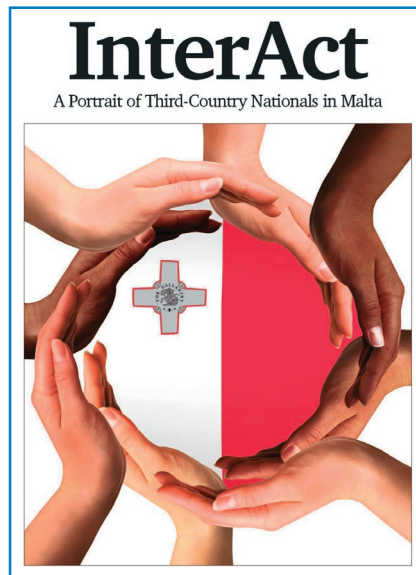
SUMMARY OF THE PILOT OUTCOMES

“Minn Lenti Interkulturali” was produced by PBS with the assistance of SOS Malta and sixteen TCNs participated as protagonists in this series, with contributions also made by some of their family members and friends.

By means of these TV programmes, viewers were able to learn about the lives of these protagonists, their countries of origin, cultures, communities and their experiences in Malta so far. The protagonists moved to Malta from different countries - Pakistan, Egypt, Nigeria, Russia, Syria, Libya, Palestine, China, USA, Indonesia, the Philippines and Moldova - but each protagonist had an equally interesting story to tell.

This series was broadcast on the following channels, at the following times:

Week starting 2nd January 2012 until 4th March 2012	
E22 (TVM2)	Wednesdays 20.30; Thursdays 19.30; Fridays 15.00; Sundays 09.30
TVM	Fridays 11.00
Week beginning 5th March 2012 until 11th March 2012	
TVM2 (E22)	Thursday 18.15; Friday 14.15; Sunday 21.50
TVM	Friday 11.00
Week beginning 12th March 2012 until 1st April 2012	
TVM2 (E22)	Tuesdays 21.45; Thursdays 15.15; Saturdays 17.45
TVM	Fridays 11.00
Week starting 2nd April 2012 until 1st July 2012:	
TVM	Wednesdays 22.30; Saturdays 08.15



Magazine - “InterAct: A Portrait of Third-Country Nationals in Malta”

New journalism award category for Malta - “Promoting Integration and Intercultural Dialogue”

Work on this magazine was coordinated by the Service Provider, MediaMaker Ltd., with the assistance of SOS Malta. This magazine included interviews with thirteen of the same TCNs that were protagonists in the “Minn Lenti Interkulturali” TV series as well as recipes from each of the thirteen different countries. Approximately 20,000 copies of this magazine were distributed with The Times of Malta on the 18th April 2012 and the thirteen interviews were also uploaded onto The Times of Malta’s online news portal.

This year’s Malta Journalism Awards, an annual event organised by IGM, launched a new category aimed at encouraging people who work within the media to address the subject of cultural diversity and related topics more regularly.

In total, seven submissions were received for this category, “Promoting Integration and Intercultural Dialogue”, however it transpired that none of the seven fit into the participation criteria that had been issued by IGM and SOS Malta. Six of the seven submissions focused mainly on refugees and people with subsidiary protection and asylum and detention issues when these groups do not fall within the scope of The European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals within which the Media InterAct project is being implemented. On the other hand, the seventh focused on a particular ethnic group in Europe without it being related to Malta. In order to be eligible, the submissions should have included the direct participation of a TCN residing in Malta or the topic of integration, cultural diversity and/or intercultural dialogue in relation to TCNs residing in Malta. In view of this, it was decided that the award would not be given out.

Despite the challenges encountered with this pilot initiative, IGM and SOS Malta see the value of such an award for Malta. As a result, this category will continue in the coming years, so long as sponsorship is found. The award will continue to be discussed and improved in line with the lessons learnt from the pilot initiative of this year.

Concluding remarks

All three pilot initiatives have shown the need for better promotion of cultural diversity in the media in Malta. Whilst these initiatives took the subject of cultural diversity as their focus, the media can go about promoting cultural diversity in many different ways. A list of recommendations on how this can be done can be found on pages 8 to 10 of this report.

Research survey with media organisations/representatives

This research study reveals interesting findings that reinforce that which emerged throughout the duration of the Media InterAct project.

SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Two research surveys were carried out as part of the Media InterAct project by the Service Provider, APS Consult Ltd. One survey was carried out with media organisations/representatives and the other with TCNs. The objective was that of mapping out the current situation of TCNs and their representation within the media in Malta. A summary of these findings are described in this section of the report.

Despite efforts to receive feedback from media persons who work with all the main media organisations in Malta and from many others who freelance, the response-rate was very low and only thirteen replies were received in the end. This is telling in itself as it shows the interest, or lack thereof, that the media has in the topic of cultural diversity and integration. Nonetheless, this research study reveals interesting findings that reinforce that which emerged throughout the duration of the Media InterAct project.

Portrayal of TCNs and related issues in the media in Malta

When respondents were asked about the extent of coverage of TCNs and TCN-related topics in the media in Malta, 61.5% answered that they feel that the extent of coverage is inadequate whilst 31% feel it's fairly adequate.

Taken further, respondents were asked to evaluate the manner in which TCNs are portrayed in the media in Malta and only 15.4% replied saying that they feel TCNs are portrayed in a positive light. Whilst the majority gave a neutral response, 38.5% think that TCNs are most often portrayed negatively. Respondents also made comments about the way TCN-related topics are addressed in the media. One respondent talked about culture and how this theme is often presented as “something exotic at best, and weird most often”.

Participation of TCNs in the media in Malta

Respondents were also asked about the participation of TCNs in the local media. The overall consensus was that media organisations rarely offer their workforce the opportunity to work with TCNs or on TCN-related topics. At the same time, the responses show that these media representatives very rarely take the initiative to carry out such work themselves whilst TCNs too rarely approach them with ideas. This shows that this added drive needs to come from both the media organisations/representatives and the TCNs alike.

Related policies

This research study also looked at current policies that may facilitate TCN participation. With regards to this, 46.2% of those who took part in the survey feel that current policies do facilitate TCN participation in the media in Malta. One respondent commented that media organisations do not deliberately exclude TCNs but the extent of coverage of such topics depends on the agendas of these media organisations that may give higher priority to other issues considered more news-worthy.

The media's role in raising positive awareness of cultures in Malta

Interestingly, it was seen that 69.2% agree that the local media can play an active role in raising positive awareness about cultures. One respondent

Research survey with TCNs

pointed out that “we can focus on success stories, cultural differences, different gastronomies, the beauty of diversity in general”. Another respondent talked about how TCNs should be mainstreamed and therefore “invited not as foreigners but as people on panels and programmes”. This was emphasised further by others who feel that TCNs should not be singled out as coming from particular countries and less emphasis should be placed on nationality. In conclusion, 46.2% do feel that mainstreaming TCN participation will be positive for the media in Malta.

As part of this research study, a total of fifty-three third-country nationals were interviewed.

Portrayal of TCNs and related issues in the media in Malta

When asked how the media portrays TCNs in Malta, 36% answered that they are most often given coverage in the news alone and 21% of these TCNs feel that this coverage is related to bad news, frequently linked to accident or crime-related incidents. In addition, 32% feel this coverage is generally inaccurate.

Comments were also made about how the media should cover issues that show TCNs in their normal, everyday activities instead of mentioning TCNs only in bad news and when reporting about culture and country-specific events. In line with this, a number of those interviewed made reference to how the media mentions nationality when reporting accident and crime-related incidents.

Some of the TCNs interviewed also mentioned there not being enough TV programmes they can follow and relate to on Maltese TV channels. In fact, 57% feel the media should develop its content to also suit TCNs who are part of the media’s audience in Malta.

Participation of TCNs in the media in Malta

Talking about the participation of TCNs in the media in Malta, it resulted that only 18% of those interviewed had been invited by the media for participation, and in most of these cases, participation was in the form of either a voxpop or short interview.

Comments were also made regarding the need for TCNs to be more proactive in their approach to the media should they wish for more and better coverage and a media more suited to their needs.

Besides the issues of media content and TCN coverage in the news, the other most common feedback received from the TCNs interviewed was the language barrier. Many TCNs living in Malta may not be able to follow or participate in the media due to language.

In conclusion we can say that what has emerged from this particular survey is the need for the media to include media content that will reach a wider audience. Besides this, it is clear that third-country nationals living in Malta can take a more active role in bringing about a change to Malta’s media.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

A networking conference took place on the 3rd May 2012. The conference brought together stakeholders to explore ways of mainstreaming cultural diversity within the media in Malta, which will in turn facilitate the integration of TCNs in Malta.

By means of this networking conference and other deliverables implemented within the project, including the three pilot initiatives and the research mentioned earlier in this report, this project has contributed towards identifying new media-related initiatives, structures and policies that can better promote and mainstream cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. These recommendations to media organisations and its workforce as well as the Maltese government are listed hereunder:

Portrayal and participation of TCNs and other migrants

- More mainstreamed participation of TCNs and other migrants in TV, radio, print and electronic media in Malta
- Agreed quotas in TV, radio, print and electronic media that include the participation of different community groups in Malta
- The use of areas of interest that we can all relate to, such as the arts, food, entertainment, employment, family, with TCNs and other migrants as part of these media stories
- Days/national events relating to different community groups present in Malta marked in the media
- Coverage of issues that affect TCNs and other migrants and reflect other realities present in Malta
- More media coverage in Malta given to the daily and more ordinary aspects of the lives of TCNs and other migrants rather than the sensational
- News reports in TV, radio, print and electronic media should limit the mention of nationality - the emphasis is often exaggerated and

This project has contributed towards identifying new media-related initiatives, structures and policies that can better promote and mainstream cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

unnecessary, often done when reporting about accidents and crimes, portraying migrants as ‘aliens’ and problematic to Maltese society

- More complete portrayal of the migrant population in Malta - the media in Malta focuses primarily on migrants who have come to Malta to seek asylum when the migrant population is a lot more diverse
- The media should also present multiculturalism as an economic opportunity for Malta and show how migrants bring new skills, knowledge and contacts which Malta can use to its advantage
- The production of films and documentaries relating to TCNs, other migrants and related issues, which will make interesting and educational viewing in Malta
- More English-language TV programmes targeted towards those people living in Malta who may not understand the Maltese language
- English subtitles available for Maltese-language TV programmes targeted towards those people living in Malta who may not understand the Maltese language

Regulation and monitoring

- Broadcasting and editorial policy on how TV, radio, print and electronic media in Malta talks about TCNs, other migrants and related issues
- A Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Committee on Cultural Diversity for Malta to discuss existing media-related policies and legislation and recommendations for change - this Committee should include representatives from all the main media organisations, the relevant government entities, NGOs working with migrants, and community groups present in Malta
- An independent and neutral body set up to monitor and penalise biased and inaccurate reporting of TCNs, other migrants and related issues, on TV, radio, print and electronic media in Malta
- Better regulation of blog content on online news portals
- A complaint system in Malta that people can use when they feel the media has been inaccurate, biased, unfair etc with its coverage relating to TCNs, other migrants and related issues



Behind the scenes

- More participation of TCNs and other migrants behind the scenes in media organisations in Malta
- Agreed quotas in recruitment that will bring more cultural diversity to the media workforce
- National graduate trainee scheme in communications/journalism for TCNs and other migrants

Acknowledging and celebrating diversity

- An award for contributions in the media in Malta made about TCNs, other migrants, issues that affect these groups, and cultural diversity in general

Intercultural competence

- Glossary and guidelines drawn up for media organisations of terms/ correct language to use when talking about TCNs, other migrants and related issues
- Intercultural training for students of communications/journalism
- Intercultural training for media organisations, representatives and contributors
- Learn from best practices of other countries
- Creation and support of an NGO for TCNs and other migrants that will enhance the migrant voice

CONCLUSION

The findings, outcomes and recommendations that came from the Media InterAct project show why and how the media can and should play a role in promoting more positive messages, cultural assets and life experiences of non-Maltese living in Malta.

Doing this will contribute towards an increased sense of open-mindedness and understanding of diversity in Maltese society. This, along with greater intercultural dialogue, will imply a smoother integration process for non-Maltese residing in Malta and facilitate improved public support for positive inclusion measures.

As an organisation, SOS Malta believes that integration is a two-way process. As also reinforced in the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union, **“the integration process involves adaptation by immigrants, both men and women, who all have rights and responsibilities in relation to their new country of residence. It also involves the receiving society, which create the opportunity for the immigrants’ full economic, social, cultural, and political participation”**.

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SOS Malta's Aims and Activities

SOS Malta is a registered Voluntary Organisation, set up in 1991, which works with local and international partners.

The organisation assists socially disadvantaged groups in improving their quality of life by providing support services and opportunities to implement development and change. SOS Malta also encourages advocacy on behalf of social causes.

SOS Malta works on four pillars that encompass the above objective. These are: Overseas Development; Social Solidarity; Research and Training; and Volunteering.

Within the pillar of Social Solidarity, SOS Malta implements projects advocating for increased intercultural understanding and the introduction and implementation measures which contribute towards the two-way process of integration and social inclusion of migrants living in Malta.



Contact Details

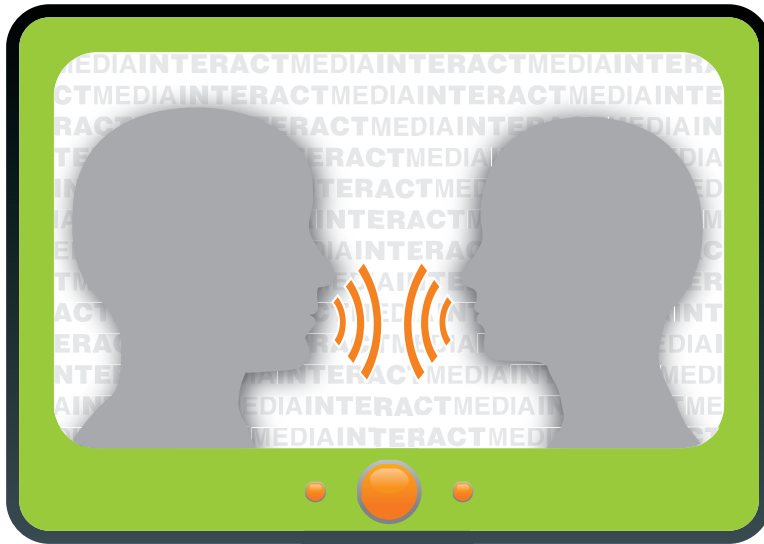
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Media InterAct



Mainstreaming Diversity



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