United Nations Alliance Of Civilizations
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Final Reports of the 2017 EUNA Cohort
"The role of Media and Civil Society
in combatting hatred and fostering inclusion"

Report I:

ONE GOD

FOSTERING INCLUSION AND COEXISTENCE THROUGH A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN AND STORYTELLING

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Fellowship experience, the EUNA region, and the perception of Islam

Fellowship can be described as a friendly association, especially with people who share one's interests. The UNAOC Fellowship was an amazing opportunity to discover new cultures and countries within a group of young professionals, learn more about the MENA region, and the religion of Islam. But learning about it is just a first step. Like education, the Fellowship has meaning only if we can use it in our work, and if we find a suitable job position, project or working space where our knowledge can be useful. Yes, the UNAOC Fellowship has definitively developed our personalities and created a strong community among us, so let us build on this.

Looking back to our very first day of the Fellowship in Spain, we had a very inspiring meeting with an NGO named Foro Abraham, which focuses on interreligious and intercultural dialogue mainly on the national, but also on the international, level. Since the Foro members and leaders are from all the three Abrahamic religions–Judaism, Christianity and Islam-they are very genuine sources of information and a shining example of united community where differences are not perceived as a burden, but as a splendid diversity, which creates a safe garden for all the believers.

While speaking with the MENA Fellows at the commencment of the Fellowship and then visiting various institutions and organizations in the MENA region, we were slowly able to identify the most onerous issues connected to this culture and dominant religion. As if we were to compare Slovakia to the UK, Hungary to France, or different states within the USA, among the countries from Morocco to Qatar we can find a tremendous amount of differences. And as we cannot say all the Christians from the very conservative, orthodox Catholics to liberal Protestant churches are all the same, we have to understand different school of thoughts in Islam, as well as cultural backgrounds. Touching the sacred texts, it is so easy to misunderstand them and thus dangerous to share false interpretations. Only if we read them in the historical and cultural contexts, consult with experts, and search for the meaning with an open mind and heart, are we able to discover what the text is truly trying to tell its readers. Thus, it is very important to share the true meanings of those texts and not just leave this space to very active radical groups.

Media space and religious freedom

Several of the countries visited during the UNAOC Fellowship, in particular Egypt and Qatar, are currently experiencing a wide range of issues related to the media, news, and freedom of expression. A 2017 index compiled by [Reporters without Borders](#), ranks Egypt at 161 in terms of press freedom out of a total of 180 countries around the world. Meanwhile, the Qatari based broadcaster, Al Jazeera, has faced numerous calls by several Arab states including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE for it to [be closed down as part of a series of demands](#) around alleged claims made around the funding of terrorists in the region.

In addition to this, the issue of interfaith dialogue and communication between members of different religious backgrounds can often be a contentious issue. A trip to the Qatar Center for Interfaith Dialogue illustrated the extent to which religious minorities in the country were allowed to practice their faith in an open fashion. A question raised during the visit to the center, around the level of freedom afforded to adherents of minority non-Abrahamic faiths such as Hinduism and Buddhism, demonstrated their relatively restricted rights. Although Hindus and Buddhists were 'allowed to practice their faith', they were forbidden by law from openly preaching or propagating their religious beliefs, as well as prevented from building public temples or places of worship on account of being part of a non-Abrahamic religion.

Subsequently, the issue of utilising media resources and platforms to promote interreligious dialogue and discussion is a potentially contentious issue in the MENA region, despite the apparent existence of government backed interfaith organisations. The perception that both Islam and the state laws which are claimed to be derived from the faith is at threat in the region by allowing other faiths, including the other two Abrahamic religions, to obtain complete parity in terms of religious freedom is an apparent one.

'Different Together'

In 2018, the BBC is hosting a week highlighting the best solutions focused journalism from around the world, sharing stories of divisions across the world which are bridged through positive connections and relationships. People within both the MENA and EUNA regions are feeling increasingly polarised along splintered lines including politics, religion and nationalism. People failing to inhabit the worlds of others, either real or virtual, has in turn led to less trust, more intolerance and a further polarisation of global communities across the board.

The Different Together project aims to contribute to fulfilling the BBC's public purpose of 'contributing to social cohesion', relaying stories about under covered and divided communities. In particular, the project aims to tap into stories about human connection, particularly across challenging terrain and engaging individuals on an emotional level, with the potential for transformational change, both for the contributors and for audiences.

Positive solution focused journalism stories have the tendency to do well on social media and are widely shared, particularly amongst younger news consumers. The opportunity to inspire, educate, and give perspective with editorial rigour allows a more accurate picture of world, portraying people as agents of change and possibility, rather than victims. The Different Together project also aims to serve as a correctional vehicle to traditional news coverage, which can often focus on negativity, problems, and predicaments.

The internet offers the opportunity to engage with a diversity of varying opinions, though users often communicate within their own individual silos, resulting in the formation of echo chambers which reinforce pre-existing beliefs and values rather than challenging them.

As a result, the Different Together initiative could serve as a means by which to highlight the work of the One God project, providing multiplatform exposure and media coverage on an international basis. Through gathering different stakeholders and actors from a range of perspectives and faiths, positive stories of opportunity, bridge building and conflict resolution can be told.

Campaign One God, sharing positive examples and message of possible coexistence

As we have previously stressed, media are in many cases focusing on negative content and in several countries and regions, Islam is synonymous with terrorism. If we look closer at where the radical thoughts are coming from, we discover those are regions with very little exposure to other cultures and Islam in particular. People fear what they don't know, and if this fear is supported and secured by mainstream messages from Syria and Iraq, Palestine, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria or other places, it is not hard to identify why far-right political parties and official radical groups are on a rise in the EUNA region and in many cases supported not only by radicalized neo-Nazi groups, but also by non-violent communities and individuals.

To change the negative trend we need to find innovative ways to inform the wide public about real situations, about the true meanings of Abrahamic religions, and expose others to different cultures. How can we do this? By sharing real stories from all over the world, communities living together despite the differences, and individual friendships between people of different religions, we can find ways to cooperate and enrich each other. We will be using modern technologies to share local stories among the global community and support the dissemination of these stories worldwide through social media and strategic cooperation with national and local media groups.

The whole idea is based on a new online platform supported by a global campaign named One God, focused on collaboration among Abrahamic religions and presenting many examples underlining this idea of cooperation and common understanding.

This platform aims to mitigate tension between religions and cultures through a global campaign and storytelling. Storytelling is a very effective tool while advocating for a certain topic and widely used in successful businesses and marketing strategies. It shows real people in real situations instead of staying at the theoretical level, which gives the whole opinion on the topic credibility. It offers readers to identify with people who they might never meet, to explore places they might have never visited, and to provide insight to undercover life situations they might never go through.

The platform will also provide an online contact point for anybody to ask questions about the three Abrahamic religions, through a website and a mobile application. Anybody who would like to clarify any information or ask a question can make it through the online message system connected to the religious leaders who will be able to answer. We aim to cooperate with institutions like Al-Azham Observatory, Mohammed VI Institute for the training of Imams, Qatar University, Pontifical Academy and other, who are able to provide official statements on such questions.

In order to reach our objective and start the global campaign One God, we need to take certain steps. The preparatory phase has been started and a team of young professionals from the EUNA region had a chance to meet various representatives from the MENA region and connect with them. UNAOC created a net of international Alumni with a passion for intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Now the official project phase can be initiated.

Members of the core project team will commit part of their time to implement the idea. A new interactive website with its own CMS system and various admin accesses has to be

created, together with a mobile application and the whole campaign design. For this phase we will need an IT and design expert team.

Project plan

	1/18	2/18	3/18	4/18	5/18	6/18	7/18	8/18	9/18	10/18	11/18	12/18
Preparation of the website, mobile app	▓	▓	▓	▓								
Campaign design creation				▓	▓	▓	▓					
Connecting with the key partners	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓							
Collecting the real stories			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓
Media involvement				▓	▓		▓	▓		▓	▓	▓
Offical launch											▓	
Dissemination of the stories												▓

Misconceptions about Islam

One of the biggest barriers in interfaith and outreach work – and potentially an obstacle for the One God project – is the lack of intercultural dialogue, understanding, and exposure to communities of different faiths and in the current climate, Islam in particular. Both misconceptions and preconceptions about the religion and its estimated 1.6bn adherents across the globe is arguably at an all-time high, accentuated further by the growth of social media and the advent of 24 hour news channels.

The UNAOC Fellowship provided a safe space in which Fellows were able to share lived experiences both with one another but also ask questions of stakeholders in Spain, Morocco, Egypt, and Qatar, providing a relatively holistic representation of Islam and exploring the nuances of the faith as practiced within the MENA region. Through individual conversations and dialogue with stakeholders, it became evident that the vast majority of questions and queries were as a result of a lack of exposure to individuals from a Muslim background, as

well as the absence – or hesitation – in finding an opportunity in one's home country to find out more about the faith.

Queries around the role of women in Islam and human rights were brought up on a regular basis throughout the Fellowship, particularly in Egypt and Qatar, where several Fellows robustly challenged the default narrative delivered by the respective authorities. The intricacies and nuances of both Islam and those who practice the faith soon became evident, illustrating that a 'one size fits all' solution to many of the difficulties found in the MENA region proves challenging, if not impossible.

Subsequently, the One God project will aim to provide an open, transparent and comprehensive insight into the lives of Muslims around the world, detailing the stories of individuals from a variety of different sects, denominations and schools of thought. Islam in the media is often painted as a single homogenous community steeped in dogma, whereas the One God project will aim to highlight both the spirituality and faith of the contributors it chooses to cover.

Spreading the One God message

An array of different media tools, platforms, and strategies will be utilised in order to spread the One God project as far and wide as possible, building upon the lessons learnt from the number of interfaith organisations met throughout the duration of the UN Fellowship.

The One God project team will commission filmmakers from a variety of backgrounds to produce short documentaries, viral videos and additional content, outlining the stories of individuals from the Abrahamic faith and the commonalities which serve as a unifying force. As well as producing in house content, collaborations will be sought with other media outlets, across television, radio, and online. The remit of the work will be to focus upon the human element of the contributors, adding personality and depth to the outer shell of religion and faith.

This will be particularly important when producing content for particular geographical regions, such as parts of Europe, who may have a further deepened sense of distance from 'the other' as a result of incidences like the migrant movement or acts of terror in their native countries. Subsequently, it is imperative to produce bespoke content accordingly, tailoring the narrative of interfaith dialogue and social cohesion depending on the current climate of that particular audience. Many parts of Eastern Europe for example, remain religiously segregated and are on the whole closed to the possibility of having Muslims and Jews living openly in the country, regardless of their intentions to integrate.

Contributors with powerful stories of positivity, hope, and inspiration will be sourced, in an effort to promote the One God project but also highlight the efforts of interfaith communities on the ground to work together in an effort to build social and religious cohesion. Many of these videos will take the form of self-authored films, where the individual tells their story from a first person perspective. Versions for social media platforms including Twitter and

Facebook will also be produced, encouraging stories to be shared with as wide a network as possible.

Podcasts will also be recorded and distributed on a regular basis, where members of the One God team have intimate conversations with Muslims, Jews and Christians about their faith, what it means to them as individuals and the synergy they aim to create with their Abrahamic counterparts. Podcasts have increased in popularity over the last several years, despite predictions suggesting that they would be redundant in the age of visual social media sharing. Episode lengths would be up to half an hour long, detailing the lives of Muslims, Jews and Christians in an effort to relay a better understanding of the shared lived experiences to individuals from very different backgrounds.

Driving public interest through diversity

A thriving One God campaign appeals to the masses through its exposure to diversity–a diversity of the individuals who are showcased, a diversity in the stories that are shared, and a diversity of interpretations of each individual's faith. Diversity is an integral component of the One God message, and it is through a diverse set of contributors and anecdotes that the One God campaign captures the public's interest and fosters inclusion. The One God team thus defines diversity not only in terms of an individual's religious affiliation and interpretation, but also through the individual's gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, scope of work, and more. We strive to expose our readers/listeners/viewers to individuals who primarily identify with one of the three Abrahamic faiths, but who then also identify with a multitude of other aforementioned characteristics that create commonality between purportedly disparate groups.

From March – October 2018, initial stories will be collected through a combination of existing personal connections and referrals. Representing three vastly different countries and three vastly different professional sectors, members of the core project team will leverage their personal and professional contacts to identify strong, diverse, multifaceted storytellers to pioneer stories for the platform. These contacts will include members of the UNAOC Fellowship community, individuals at organizations visited throughout the 2017 Fellowship experience, and individuals who have been identified as powerful advocates of their faiths. Stories that are collected during the 2018 project planning phase will first be distributed to small groups for review in advance of the platform's official launch to ensure that our content is thoughtful and appealing.

The success of the One God campaign relies not only in its ability to break down barriers by highlighting inspiring stories solicited from various individuals affiliated with Abrahamic religions across the world, but also in its ability to drive public interest in both reading and then sharing stories presented through the campaign's mixed media and online platforms. The One God campaign will give particular preference to prospective contributors with substantial social media presences, also known as "influencers." Influencers are individuals who are widely and publicly revered due to some identifiable or popular trait, and who are

then able to dictate mass opinion on social media based off of their personal preferences. By showcasing stories submitted by influencers—who are then asked to share the final version of the One God campaign's coverage of their story on their personal social media pages, YouTube pages, blogs, podcasts, etc.—the One God platform will tap into the institutionalized popularity of these influencers and expose their hundreds of thousands of followers to our content.

Soliciting content

When soliciting information from prospective contributors, questions will be kept broad and succinct. This will create a sharing environment where contributors can take their story in the direction most aligned to their natural personality, while allowing the core project team to tailor responses to the desired length of the media platform in which the story is being shared (one contributor's response will not be shared the same way on Twitter as it is on YouTube as it is on a podcast).

Guiding questions, as highlighted below, will lead contributors to their unique story:

1. What religion do you identify with?
2. What do you enjoy most about your faith?
3. What do you struggle with within your faith?
4. What was your path to your faith?
5. Tell us a story about one of your faith-based encounters.
6. What would you tell others who don't know anything about your faith or the people who practice it?

The questions above will contribute to the platform's primary content. Feature stories and smaller campaigns within the platform will allow for the One God project team to roll out unique messages of faith and solidarity around particular holidays, social issues, and current events.

Challenges to implementation, barriers to success, and solutions

The One God core project team is aware of potential barriers to success and challenges to implementation throughout this project. Core areas of concern include:

1. Lack of inclusion of other religions outside Christianity, Islam, and Judaism
2. Building an inclusive community
3. Interactive platform methodology and potentially harmful comments
4. Technical support and upkeep

1. Lack of inclusion of other religions outside Christianity, Islam and Judaism

The One God campaign is committed to sharing stories that showcase individuals who identify with one of the three primary monotheistic religions: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. While there will be a number of individuals around the world who do indeed identify with one of these three faiths and a single God, we recognize that millions of people identify with polytheistic and other religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, Shinto, and more, or who do not identify with any religion whatsoever.

The goal of the One God campaign is not to dissuade people who choose not follow one of the three Abrahamic faiths, nor to create an exclusive platform that does not acknowledge or highlight the diversity of faith-based perspectives that exist across the globe today. The goal of the One God campaign is to foster interfaith dialogue and build peaceful coexistence through exposure to diverse, faith-based narratives. Our priority is to build community between Christians, Jews, and Muslims who represent three of the world's most dominant yet divisive religions. Nonetheless, we welcome stories and contributions from members who do not identify with one of the three Abrahamic faiths, and hope that they gain perspective from our platform as much as believers, and nonbelievers, of the three Abrahamic faiths.

2. Building an inclusive community

More often than not, people tend to highlight differences in situations and environments that are new. When participating in the 2017 UNAOC Fellowship, a select few Fellows were quick to solely identify the differences between Spain, Morocco, Egypt, and Qatar- differences in food, differences in transportation methods, differences in infrastructure, differences in governments and policies, etc. When meeting with representatives from various Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Human Rights Councils, which the Fellows did in each country visited, these same individuals solely viewed the institutions by their differences.

It is true that through difference we can begin to understand the other and that which does not match our lived experiences, but the One God campaign seeks to highlight these differences in an effort to display that we are not so different after all. We recognize that a lack of exposure and a lack of interfaith dialogue has led to the siloing of groups of people who share homogenous beliefs. The One God platform will apply all means necessary to ensure a safe space where individuals can build personal connections and spark vital conversations with people who they did not think they could relate to before, and do this in a respectful, curious, and tolerant manner. Only through exposure to different individuals and perspectives can we begin to build community, and the media-based distribution of the One God campaign will allow that exposure to be vast.

3. Interactive platform methodology and potentially harmful comments

As with any open platform, where comments and contributions will be solicited publicly, we run the risk of receiving negative and discriminatory comments from individuals who do not believe in the mission of the platform nor in the ability of diverse, interfaith communities to peacefully and successfully coexist. Hate speech and bigotry will not be tolerated on the One God platform. The One God core project team will carefully review all submitted content and

comments in an effort to monitor and remove potentially harmful, discriminatory comments that will disrupt the synergy and safety provided by the platform. The One God team will implement an anonymous feedback tool on the website where individual users can bring harmful and disruptive comments to the attention of the core project facilitators. The One God team will also strive to protect the privacy and personal information of the individuals featured on the site.

4. Technical support and upkeep

The technical support required to sustain the One God platform will be exhaustive. From videos to podcasts to social media uploads to interactive chat boxes, the role of the IT and design experts will be imperative. The IT and design experts will maintain the site, ensure that it is user-friendly, and ensure that it is easily accessible across a variety of technology platforms including desktops, laptops, smart phones, and tablets. The content also needs to be easily accessible to users around the world, meaning that users with relatively limited access to data and internet services should still be able to upload content as quickly and smoothly as possible. This will be no small feat, and one that the One God team deems an integral component of a successful operation.

Sustainability of the Action

The platform and campaign One God is not limited by the end of the year 2018. This year is just for the preparation of all necessary activities and collecting the base material. After the launch we are going to keep collecting stories, connect with new institutions, communities, individuals and other stakeholders and disseminate these stories through partnerships with the media. The year 2018 should be just a first one starting a new initiative, that will be developing throughout the next years.

We would like to ask UNAOC to assist us with connecting to official institutions, help us facilitate the whole process and support the project financially. We will need funding to initiate the whole story collecting process, mobilize journalists, set up strategic partnerships with the media and official institutions, and the creation of the online platform and campaign materials.

Report II:

In which ways can media and education contribute to mutual understanding between global citizens?

THE NEED FOR QUALITY EDUCATION AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

As UNAOC Fellows 2017, eleven young professionals from Europe and Northern America were given the opportunity to travel to Spain, Morocco, Egypt and Qatar to discuss and examine religious leadership, human rights, education institutions and interfaith dialog.

Speaking from a central European point of view, we had the impression that our own mainstream culture, education and media, doesn't offer a lot of opportunities for civil society to be exposed to Middle Eastern culture yet. Therefore, the predominant image of North Africa, the Middle East and Arab cultures is mostly influenced by movies and news. As news generally focus on negative current events, and mainstream fiction often reproduces stereotypes which stem from decades and centuries in which our cultural ancestors were enemies or colonialists who exoticized or demonized the cultural "other", there is a tendency for a negative impression of North African and Middle Eastern people which is subconsciously adopted by a majority of the population.

"Humans express themselves through art, poetry, theater, music. They show our connected humanity and the beauty in our differences." – EUNA and MENA meet in Madrid

The fellowship offered the possibility to be partially immersed in the cultures of urban Morocan, Egyptian and Qatari culture and meet government officials, NGO-representatives and civil society. It's been a great privilege to ask representatives of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the Spanish relationships to the European Union, the Middle East and North Africa as well as current developments with regards to hosting refugees. At "El Mundo" we reflected on the power of media and possibilities to *raise awareness of global topics*, such as the Sustainable Development Goals or the importance of covering education news more extensively in mainstream media. Representatives of the interfaith organization "Foro Abraham" set a beautiful example of interfaith and intercultural dialog, inspired many of us and reminded us of the ever-existing presence of Islamophobia, Christianophobia and Antisemitism in many cultural settings and the need to actively work against such tendencies. In an effort to present Arab culture, Casa Arabe, presented a place of encounter, in which our human qualities – such as the connection to art, poetry, expression and beauty – are pronounced in contrast to human differences which are often presented to us. Our host at Casa Arabe stressed how religion is not a reason for terrorism but that it is fueled by radical interpretations of religion which abuse faith and spirituality. Spending time in Madrid with UNAOC fellows from North Africa and the Middle East was a highlight of the fellowship. We learned that many of our fellow travellers were uncomfortable with the term "Arab world" for it felt like a generalization of diverse cultural identities into one simplified concept.

It was at Casa Arabe that the thought of creating dialog between EUNA and MENA through

collaboration first came up: "We often feature exhibitions of Arab artists collaborating with European artists. They create dialog." The concept of collaboration for intercultural understanding is incredibly convincing: While working together, we are forced to be precise about our perception of the world and our vision. Therefore, the depth of dialog is increased and understanding needs to be created to proceed. Similar concepts were presented to us, e.g by the Egyptian National TV which reported about a collaboration between their own news program and Deutsche Welle TV. When journalists cooperate they exchange ideas about the purpose of journalism, the expectations of their viewers and they create opportunities for mutual understanding and multi-perspective perception of the cultural "other".

The Islamic Cultural Center of Madrid offered a possibility to learn about the teachings of Islam in Madrid. In contrast to other places, the focus is not yet on encounters with other religions, but on creating identity in the Islamic community of Madrid. According to our conversation with our hosts there, radicalization of youth was not considered an issue that the mosque is concerned with. It was stated that youth isn't radicalized in mosques, but outside of them and that therefore mosques do not play a role in anti-terrorism either. As a teacher, I have to question this statement, for radical tendencies in our youth are always of everybody's concern and all stakeholders in civil society, be it media, education or religious institutions, share a responsibility to question practices that might lead to radicalization and *implement programs to help oppose radicalization*. A powerful program that supports intercultural understanding is the European Union's ErasmusPlus program. Meeting Jochen Müller at the EU-Parliament in Madrid, we had the chance to ask about extending the ErasmusPlus program to support numerous collaborations between European countries and regions in North Africa and the Middle East and to link the ErasmusPlus program to the Sustainable Development Goals in an effort to explicitly encourage teachers and students to join the mission of a shared humanity and contribute to the world's most hopeful plan.

"We are one." – The Role of the Media

The 17 Goals for Sustainable Development can be communicated to all people in the world through mutual efforts of media and education. Neither at "El Mundo" nor at the "Spanish Radio & Television" or at the "Egyptian National TV" did we find answers to the question of why the Sustainable Development Goals are currently hardly communicated through the media. It seemed that many media outlets include some of the topics raised through the SDGs, but do not inform their audiences about the Agenda 2030, the common mission that brings all people together. Journalists at the Spanish television told us that for them "it is a pleasure to share positive news from the Middle East", for after decades of learning about and traveling the region, they felt that "we are one" and wanted to transmit this feeling to their audiences. Their documentary "Mahmadou" tells the story of a refugee from North Africa who sets foot in Spain. In this documentary, the immense role of education for empowerment is stressed: "I think *education is the way to development*. And the best way to overcome poverty." For educational contexts which aim to support understanding between the EUNA and MENA region and to create empathy, the documentary is a good starting point. It can help students to see the world from another person's point of view. A particularly positive example of the influence of media in local communities is the Egyptian Media Development Program that started community newspapers which encourage local improvement. With

regards to education, they offer a great opportunity for our students to learn about the impact of giving a voice to the diverse members of a society, of pointing out areas of improvement and bringing people together to become agents of change.

We visited three Human Rights Committees (in Morocco, Egypt and Qatar), where we learned that the committees themselves are not fully satisfied with the human rights situations in their countries. To a certain degree there was an awareness of a lack of protection of the rights of minorities and human dignity, e.g. with regards to protection from corporal punishment. In many cases were we told that a general attitude in the public, like the belief that men who love men and women who love women commit 'public indecency', was responsible for people being in danger of arrest or physical harm. We heard about individual attempts to offer Human Rights Education in public schools: For example, the Human Rights Council in Morocco told us about their concept which involves detecting and removing what evokes hate from teaching resources. It was stated that „Education is key to achieving peace and human rights" and that strategies need to be implemented. There are further opportunities for implementing *Human Rights Education* in the education systems of our planet. It is indeed a matter of education for humans to understand the dignity of and right not to be harmed for all humans, be they locals or foreigners, believers of the same faith or another, in a relationship with another human that has the same gender or another gender, be they men or women or identify as neither, be they poor or rich, whether they have the same or a different skin color than the majority.

"Every religion on this planet shall give its believers happiness. If it creates dispair, there is something wrong." – Institutions of Religious Education and Interfaith Dialog
Very interesting places that we visited on the journey were Islamic education institutions, like the Training Center for Imams in Rabat. Their leader, Adesselam Lazar, convincingly states the institute promotes a "moderate, positive and inclusive Islam" and that it is the explicit intention for their graduates to bring peace, restore the true image of Islam and counter terrorism. The teachings are focused on spirituality, not dogma. The Religious Leader Summit was introduced to us as a conference in which plans are discussed of how to live together on the planet. *The Sustainable Development Goals are considered an umbrella* for religious collaboration, for they connect human needs for a healthy planet that lives in peace. The League of Religious Leaders partners with the Ministry of Education in Morocco: It is their aim for 300,000 kids in 2018 to learn to be peaceful and support sustainability. Al Azhar Islamic Institution Cairo trains 500,000 students for their academic future. Their research institute monitors the media in other countries closely with regards to finding tendencies that could increase Islamophobia. It is crucial for our institutions to monitor each other but also ourselves: "Which are the structures, the beliefs and dogmatisms that allow for hate, violence and extremism to grow and how can we question and overcome them?" Qatar University presented itself as an institution of comparative religious studies, where *knowing self – knowing others* is crucial: "Our students study Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. We look at our similarities before our differences. We build relationships, then discuss." This statement goes well with the teachings of Dr. Hanan Youssef from the Arab Organization for Dialog who says that it is not an issue to be different, but a sin not to try to understand each other.

„We can't prevent all terror with security. What we need is quality education.“
The role of education for a peaceful world was stressed in all meetings. Whether we talked to religious leaders, educational institutions or politicians, to Imams or human rights specialists, NGOs or media: Education was considered the key. It is therefore surprising to see education and its development underfunded in many countries of the world and underrepresented in most media publications.

The Education Above All Foundation shows that funding dedicated to improving the quality or accessibility of education is a crucial factor for the improvement of the planet and the living conditions of all human beings. While there are still 260 Million children out of school all over the world, Education Above All has pledged to give 10 Million children sustainable access to education and has achieved for 8 Million children to access education over the last years. Their concept seems highly effective. For our world to not fund organizations and projects that help us provide education for ALL children on this planet is a crime against humanity. In addition to that, we have to be aware that the failure to educate a child anywhere in the world risks instability for all of us. Hence, it must be a priority to secure Quality Education for all children.

According to Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education doesn't only refer to free and equitable education for all, but to an education that ensures "that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development [...], human rights, gender equality and a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development." This type of education is supported and constantly developed by a number of stakeholders in the education sector such as UNESCO, Harvard Graduate School of Education, the World's Largest Lesson, the Global Teacher Prize, the Council of Europe's Pestalozzi Programme and the Global Educator Task Force (@TeachSDGs), a connection of thousands of educators and education ambassadors who encourage students to make a difference by increasing their ability to learn, feel and act on behalf of the planet.

While all countries have agreed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, few of them have linked their national curricula and their teacher trainings with Global Citizenship Education and therefore based learning on activities that help us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As all our hosts in our visits in Spain, Morocco, Egypt and Qatar have pointed out: It is crucial to strengthen education; to raise awareness of global topics, foster collaboration and implement programs to help oppose radicalization. Hence, strategies need to be developed that actively help train teachers and students to work for a healthier and more peaceful world, in which all humans realize: We have the same fears and the same goals, we work on them together.

TEN REASONS WHY WE #TEACHSDGs

— @TEACHSDGs

1 / There is no Plan B because there is no Planet B.

2 / People who suffer because of war or hunger deserve a plan. A plan known to all.

3 / The challenges we face are bigger than any one of us, but smaller than all of us.

4 / Kids have a natural drive to take action, when they see inequality.

5 / Students can find their purpose and develop a project. Or vice versa.

6 / Learning and acting on behalf of the Global Goals works at any age and at any intellectual level.

THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

The Sustainable Development Goals are 17 Global Goals developed by the UN and its 193 member states to transform our world.

7 / Teachers and students will support each other because they are on the same mission.

8 / Students develop determination, strategies, problem-solving skills and self-efficacy.

9 / Kids who have learned to help each other, won't see any point in fighting each other.

10 / Youth can take the lead and be life-long learners, if we let them experience that their actions matter.

The Sustainable Development Goals help us focus on human similarities instead of human differences: We are all threatened by climate change and war. We all need food, health, reduced inequalities and peace. Global Citizenship Education as a concept supports collaboration between teachers and students in different countries not only through exchange, but also through video conferences and other tools of online collaboration. Still, not all educators know how to create a connection or initiate a collaboration. Not all educators know how to set goals with students, work on a project and encourage student leadership.

Therefore, the following strategies should be implemented and funded:

• Adapt national curricula to focus on Global Citizenship Education.
• Train teacher trainers on how to help educators become global educators who can initiate global collaboration.
• Encourage collaboration between media and education, e.g to help students use multiperspective approaches for researching issues in other countries.
• Implement media competitions for excellent reports about Global Citizenship Education in different countries.
• Create vacancies for educators to promote the concept of Global Citizenship Education.
• Provide funding for research on the development of Global Citizenship Education.

The UNAOC fellows and the UNAOC alumni network

The UNAOC fellows and the alumni network can help raise awareness through the media and education connections they hold. They can help advocate for quality education at governments, NGOs or institutions that support education development. UNAOC fellows and alumni also can be trained to be experts for Global Citizenship Education and offer training courses in their countries. Moreover, they can help sensitize educators for the importance of

. 1) Informing students about the Sustainable Development Goals
. 2) Focusing on SDG-related topics
. 3) Encouraging actions that help achieve global citizenship and sustainable developments
. 4) Including other teachers by dedicating a week to the SDGs in a whole-school-approach
. 5) Making local and global connections to gain multi-perspective insights and create empathy
. 6) Encouraging student leadership
. 7) Creating a culture of appreciation and growth.

THE ROLE OF "THE MEDIA"
The role of "the media" was an often-discussed issue during this year's UNAOC fellowship. The term is very general and includes a lot: In the field of *traditional media*, it stands for newspapers, print magazines, radio, television and digital media from tabloid through special-interest to mainstream quality media. This already shows the first questionability: Talking about "the media" – does it mean "The New York Times" or the British yellow-press "The Sun"? Does it mean Fox News or the BBC? Does it stand for NPR or Howard Stern's Sirus XM? Does it mean the Huffington Post or Breitbart?

Furthermore, there is the growing field of *social media* like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram or Twitter that basically are not controlled by any journalistic supervisory unit but by algorithms that define whether users see more messages from media people like Watergate journalist Carl Bernstein or neo-con commentator Bill O'Reilly, from liberal Kim Kardashian or conservative Clint Eastwood. So, a tweet from George Clooney stands for the general term "the media" just as much as a CNN documentary that was investigated for weeks and months. This shows how difficult any generalization is, in this regard, no matter whether people from the Middle East or North Africa (MENA) generalize or people from Europe or North America (EUNA).

The Issue of Trustworthiness
Beyond that, the issue of trust in media is very present in both MENA and EUNA countries. In both regions of the world, trust in traditional and social media is declining but from very different levels. According to the fifth annual survey of media use and public opinion by Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) in 2017, Arab nationals are twice as likely as Americans to trust traditional media (66 percent vs. 33 percent).
The study also shows a significant difference within MENA states. Two-thirds of the population trust media from their own country, but only half the population trust news from other Arab countries (66 percent vs. 52 percent).
During the UNAOC fellowship, *many speakers criticized "Western media"* for their alleged bias against Islam and the Arab world. However, the NU-Q poll shows that Americans are more likely than Arab nationals to believe that. 33 percent of people in the MENA region think international news is biased against the Arab world, while 43 percent of Americans think the same. For the record: The study explores perceptions in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Lebanon, Jordan, Tunisia and Egypt. The first place we visited during this year's fellowship, Morocco, is not among the investigated countries.
How crucial the role of traditional media for governments and society still is, can be seen on the access we got or we did not get during our fellowship. The best-known media organization in the countries we visited, Qatar's TV network Al Jazeera was not part of the official program organized by the foreign ministry. The formal explanation for this non-visit was tight security. In fact, Al Jazeera is one of the most discussed issues in the current crisis between Saudis and Qataris (Saudi Arabia accuses the TV network, funded by the Qatari government, of supporting terrorism). It could also be seen as an extra precaution not to visit such a controversial organization with a U.N. related delegation in times like these.

What we have seen during our fellowship are news outlets in Spain and Egypt, with some similarities and some differences. The Spanish state-run broadcasting network *RTVE has its own unit to combat hate-speech and foster inclusion*. They produced, for instance, the before-mentioned award-winning documentary about a Muslim immigrant and his many difficulties on Spanish soil. The film was re-run on other European and North African stations.

Prestigious "El Mundo", one of the three largest newspapers in Spain, has its own guideline for *preventing hate speech through language regulations*. One of the boldest examples is avoiding the Spanish word for "scandal" and using "controversy" instead. An investigation at the Austrian Academy of Sciences on a developing story about the controversial Italian author Oriana Fallaci, who was an outspoken critic of Islam, has shown that "El Mundo" – without using the word scandal – had significantly less polemic postings under their online articles than news organizations with the same influence and audience size that used stronger language.

How Free are Journalists to Work without Being Influenced?

In Egypt, the fellowship shed light on two very different media outlets. Mantiqti, a newspaper for downtown Cairo, was founded by the Egypt Media Development Program (EMDP) to *encourage mutual understandings among local communities*. While people were skeptic at first whether they should show their faces in a newspaper (which was an issue especially among Muslim women), they gained trust and developed an active and diverse readership, according to their enthusiastic co- founder Ahmed Montasser.

When visiting the state-run television station in Egypt, ERTU, officials also spoke at length about combating hate-speech and fostering inclusion. Concrete examples were not given. It needs to be said that the changes in government during the last years since the Arab spring 2011 had a deep impact on the trustworthiness of Egypt's state-run TV. In private conversations, journalists at ERTU admit a lack of trust in their news organization among Egyptians since the military and politicians controlled their coverage during some days of the upheavals. However, they also say that they are working heavily to gain more trust through independent reporting. Nevertheless, the strong hierarchies within ERTU were obvious during our visit and could raise questions on how free journalists can do their independent and uninfluenced work there.

A Five-Point Test for Hate Speech

The fact that *hate speech is on the rise* was admitted by all the speakers we had the chance to talk to. However, Egypt has its most substantial program against hate speech so far. In October 2017, EMDP together with both the Department for Journalism and Mass Communication at the American University in Cairo and the Ethical Journalism Network based in London launched a "Glossary of Hate Speech in Egyptian Media to help media identify hate speech and deal ethically with dangerous words and images".

According to the authors, since the Arab Spring in 2011 – or since "The Revolution" as Egyptians call it – hate speech in media became increasingly used to pursue cultural,

sectarian and political agendas, as well as to discriminate against activists and those wanting to participate in political debate and civil society. The glossary provides examples of where media have fallen short of their ethical responsibilities when dealing with dangerous language and images. But it also illustrates good practice and provides guidance to help journalists and media identify hate speech and report on it in an ethical context using a *five-point test for hate speech*.

This leads directly to what we, as a society, and what people working in the media business need to change and what to learn to combat hate-speech and foster inclusion.

First, education of soon-to-be journalists and training on the changing requirements for longtime media people is key. *The Ethical Journalism Network's five-point test for hate speech is a concrete example that should be exported to every newsroom and implemented in the daily work there. Journalists and editors must pause and take the time to judge the potential impact of offensive, inflammatory content.* Every text or manuscript can easily be reviewed and help media people placing what is said and who is saying it in an ethical context.

For the third time already, the organization also held a seminar called "Turning the Page of Hate in Arab Media". It brought together media and academics from around the Arab world to create plans of action to address hate speech in Arab media. They will also hold a workshop on hate speech at the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism's annual conference in Jordan in December and launch new or adapted glossaries in Lebanon and Jordan in 2018.

These initiatives must be seen as an example for media around the globe to emphasize on the rising

problem of hate speech and gain more awareness among journalists on how much every word counts in their work. Despite budget cutbacks in almost every traditional media organization nowadays, journalists themselves need to become active, take part in conferences and discussions and also must learn how to make colleagues aware when their work is likely to provoke hate speech. However, this should not replace controversial topics and opinion pieces. On the contrary: *Facts should be put in the right context and opinionated articles should be highlighted as such.*

Strengthening Freedom of Speech and Diversity

A second important step to combating hate speech and fostering inclusion actually is an old hat: Strengthening freedom of press and freedom of speech for journalists within their media organizations. The fellowship showed quite plainly that this is still not the case in TV stations, newspapers and other media in the MENA region. However, it has also shown that journalists working in such news organizations do not accept the status quo and fight for more uninfluenced working conditions. This is an important sign and needs to be supported alongside the first step of pivotal education for journalists.

Thirdly, and probably most importantly, *it is more diversity that can prevent media from promoting hate speech*. In 2016, only 0.5 percent of journalists in the United Kingdom were Muslims, according to data provided by the City University of London. In comparison, five percent of the national population in the U.K. state Islam as their religion. The phenomenon

of under- representation extends to racial and gender diversity as well. The American Society of News Editors surveyed 598 newspapers and 63 online-only news sites and found that people of color made up 16.55 percent, down from 16.94 last year. Among the total population, just the group of African- Americans and Hispanics represent 30 percent, according to the U.S. census in 2016. Women made up 39.1 percent in U.S. newsrooms, compared to 50.8 percent of the national population.

When talking about diversity, one fact is often missing: *We also need diversity with regards to political views.* After the election of Donald Trump for President of the United States, media in the U.S. asked themselves how they missed the Trump swell – probably accompanied by the rise of offensive and inflammatory language. One explanation could be that only seven percent of U.S. journalists identify as Republicans and Trump voters, compared to 28.1 percent leaning towards the Democrats and 50.2 percent calling themselves independents. Journalist Nate Silver pointed out that the ideological clustering led to groupthink and opened the door for the "media bubble" to miss what Trump's voters wanted to be talked about. Another factor, according to Silver's analysis, is the lack of geographical diversity in newsrooms, claiming that most journalists in the U.S. were born either on the East or West Coast but do not come from the heartland. Everyone who has attended editorial meetings knows that the presence of a person of a different sex, race, faith, age, political view or native country changes the tone and broadens the discussion fundamentally. This is a key factor for inclusion and also for restoring trust in media.

Moreover, the call for more diversity is even more important outside of news programs. Data show that consumers of TV news, newspapers, news magazines, news radio shows and online news sites are not the majority of media consumers. News are watched, listened to and read by people with higher education than average. If we really want to combat hate speech and foster inclusion we also need *more diverse characters in daily soaps, movies and TV series as well as candidates and hosts in entertainment shows*. Only if media do not present minorities as different anymore but as citizens of the country we live in like everybody else, we can display human differences as normal and as a consequence foster inclusion.

Collaboration programs like the one between Egyptian ERTU and German Deutsche Welle sound like promising concepts for fostering understanding between regions and the cultural "other". Journalists who work together on news and documentaries are likely to influence each other's work and thinking and understand each other's views, hence they are also more likely to evoke understanding and unprejudiced views in their audiences.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA EDUCATION

While the education of journalists needs to involve awareness of combating hatred and education needs to be based on global goals to support inclusion, education also needs to focus on media li- teracy, to help civil society make conscious choices with regards to media consumption and demand free, quality journalism that informs and does not evoke hate. Being exposed to diversity, multiper- spectivity and different narratives as youth can have a very positive impact on inclusive thinking and acting and, at its best outcome, change societies for the better. When working with youth on combating hatred and fostering inclusion, it is important to highlight the role media outlets play in both reception and

creation of a picture of "the other" and in forming one´s views and values. In schools, textbooks, teacher input and peer-to-peer debates are the core of information transfer and opinion forming.

Outside of schools, a dominant role on information transfer and opinion forming belongs to the media and it is often difficult, especially for youth, to differentiate between objective reports, opi- nionated features and fake news. During the UNAOC fellowship, we had the chance to meet with people involved with media and education in the MENA region, as mentioned above.

The professionals representing these institutions mostly agreed that (young) people are often expo- sed to simplifying narratives of the other region – the MENA region in EUNA media and vice versa – and that *there is a great need to improve not only the quality of media itself, but also media litera- cy in schools*. This supports the call of many educators who feel that the gap between information transfer and opinion forming in schools on the one hand and outside of schools on the other hand is a grand challenge for current teacher practice and school curricula.

In German curricula, for example, media literacy aspects start to be more and more rooted and connected to other formerly existing contents. Yet in teacher training, media literacy is, if only, still a side note. Many educators try to close this gap through professional development programs and find ways to teach media literacy in their respective subjects. While this is already a step in the right direction, the expectation concerning contents of classes and the structure of exams and grading are still strongly connected to traditions experienced in previous decades. Until now, teachers have only limited options to implement media literacy in classes. So which steps can be taken to improve the situation and to work on *combating hatred and fostering inclusion through media work with youth?*

Establishing Media Programs at Schools

While there are differences between the educational systems and teacher trainings on an internatio- nal level, the challenges in implementing media literacy programs in high school teaching are simi- lar. One solution to close the gap between in- and outer-school media exposure on the one hand and needs and means on the other are *external partners* schools and teachers can collaborate with. Also, there are various ways to implement active and creative media work in schools without the need of great formalities.

Before I started teaching, I had already been involved with media on a broader level (eg. participa- ting in the production of documentary films with intercultural topics, creating a website on films de- aling with the Czech-German border) and wanted, as a starting teacher, to share the experience of working closely on topics dealing with intercultural questions, working in a team, learning about ca- mera, interview techniques and editing and combining analytical and creative work with my stu- dents. This approach resonated with the young people I taught. What started off in lessons, connec- ted to the school curriculum, quickly grew into a passion: students meeting in their free time to shoot interviews, spending weekends at school with editing, proud to show their first film on a big screen in front of the school community, proud of their skills and their team work. From this expe- rience on, I started to offer film programs on a regular basis, trying different formats. A first step,

teachers can offer film clubs on documentaries (e.g. dealing with human rights issues), which can be implemented without greater efforts. Websites of leading human rights film festivals present the shown films online with synopses and trailers, most films can be purchased either on itunes, ama-

zon or vimeo. Some festivals, such as the One World Documentary film festival of Human Rights, even offer platforms (http://www.promitejity.cz) where educators can register and download films (for free or for a small fee) specifically selected for school screenings (often accompanied by educatio- nal material that can be used in lessons). For the film club it is advisable to specify a focus topic (e.g. our last year´s club focused on indigenous youth around the world) and prepare questions for debates based on the films. In addition to screenings and debates, the film clubs can invite guest speakers (most people are very open when approached by students wishing to learn from their expe- rience and to debate about topics relevant to them) or visit relevant institutions.

When analyzing documentaries connected to human rights topics, *students can benefit both from learning about content and about methods*. Students should not only analyze the story they see and hear, but also how it was created: how were the interview partners selected? What parts of inter- views got lost in editing? Are there other opinions connected to the topic that are not presented in the film? If so, why? What were the reactions to the film and how can they be explained? Was there some kind of censorship at some point of the production process? If the club has the chance to meet with the director of the film (choosing at least one film by a director based in the same region is ad- visable), these questions can be addressed in a first-hand experience, leading students towards a greater sensitivity towards the production process, showing them the inevitable subjectivity and perspectivity of media products.

From Analysis to Production

Another option, when working on media literacy, is to *mentor students to produce their own docu- mentary films*. In our film club's case, we agreed on the topic of migrant women in Prague, showing the work of „Ethnocatering", a catering company hiring women with a migrant background who would like to share their traditional cuisines. For the women from mostly MENA backgrounds, this offers a great option for the first step to integrating into the new country. The students had to arran- ge interview dates, organize the technical aspects, divide the tasks among the group, interview, shoot and edit. In the feedback session, many said that the documentary offered the possibility of approaching people with a different background and learning about their stories. So the recommen- dation would be that teachers identify a relevant topic in their community together with their stu- dents, teach them the technical and organizational skills they need and lead them through all steps of documentary film production. In order to work on inclusion and combating hatred, it is advisable to choose from subjects connected e.g. to regional minorities, gender questions. Socially excluded people. Again, the Sustainable Development Goals are a great source of inspiration.

Connecting with External Partners

Reaching the level of analytical film clubs and student film teams, there comes a point at which it is helpful to establish partnerships with external professionals and institutions.
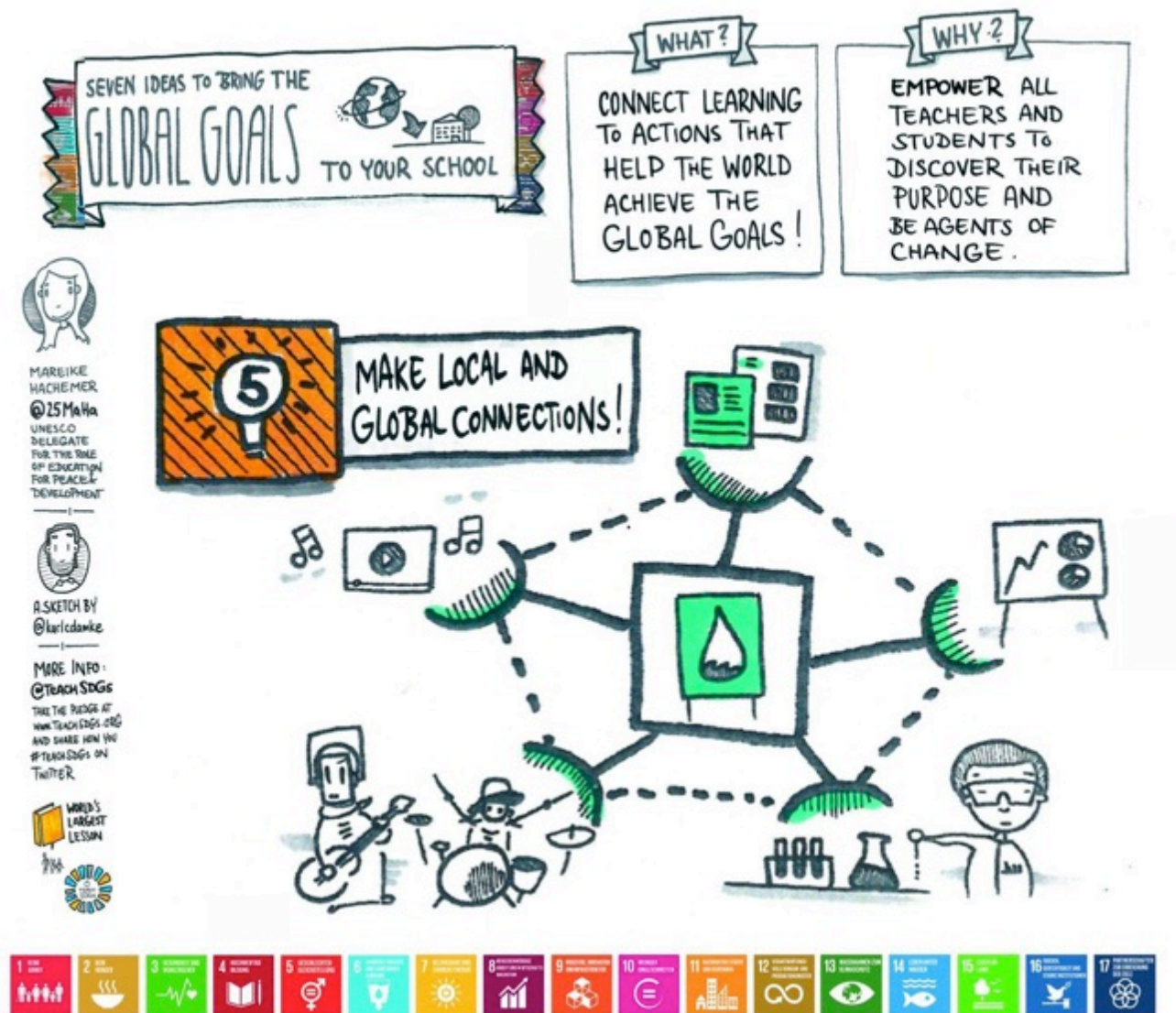
Teachers can approach film makers, journalists, film festival, culture institutes and other actors to find out whether they of- fer programs for students (often that is the case) and if not, whether they are open to start a new co- operation. Based on experience, most professionals and institutions are honored and very open when approached by youth wishing to learn from their experience and pointing their work out as re- levant for them. At my school, we established a partnership with the annual One World Documenta- ry film festival on Human Rights and with a former industrial building which is transformed into a creative space and on the way to become a culture center. Supported by these two institutions, my students are encouraged to establish their first film festival by students for students which will be held in June 2018 in the newly created cultural center. It's also helpful to approach suppliers of tech- nical equipment and film and photo services – often, they offer e.g. vouchers that can be handed to student film festival winners as prizes. Above the regional media level, there is of course always the option to approach ministries of culture and youth, supranational programs (such as e.g. Erasmus Plus) and film universities. These partnerships offer mutual learning, resources, visiting experts, connections between school and civil society and student independence.

Media Projects in So- cial Work

For educators and stu- dents it can be very re- warding to open up to media actors in their community, as shown above. Yet the other way around is also of high importance: ope- ning educational insti- tutions through film to otherwise excluded youth. One pilot pro- gram is implemented in the German City of Mannheim: The initiati- ve "Buschgirls" in the city´s district Jung- busch works with ex- cluded youth who fled war and seek asylum. New experiences come with challenges: lear- ning German, integra- ting into the local school system, not getting alluded by the often crime-affected street scene or ex- tremist salafists; these are difficult burdens for youth in their teenage years. As a prevention to ex- clusion and extremist tendencies, the city established a media program engaging youth into filming the world around them, creating their own fiction and films, creating music videos. Young people work together with a social worker and a professional film maker, have a meeting center and pre- sent their work in public events. The social workers and professionals can support and monitor the young people, connecting them e.g. to advanced educational institutions.

The Future of Media Literacy Education

Throughout the fellowship, we discussed ways to prevent exclusion and combat hatred through media and civil society. While it is crucial to work with all age groups on these goals in order to re- ach sustainable peace, the work with youth is often highlighted as especially important and effecti- ve. Supporting young people in a critical and creative way to approach media reception and produc- tion, helping them choose media and critically consider its content, fight stereotypes and face their community, country and the world as interested and participating young global citizens is a goal many educators in both the EUNA and the MENA region share. Looking beyond simplifying media content, young people should be encouraged to search for different facettes of a a story and for sto- ries narrated not only by

people who have limited access to details of the given issues. This step by step guide, following questions and needs raised during debates of the UNAOC fellowship 2017 and building upon best practise by a teacher involved with media literacy, documentary film analy- sis and documentary film production, could give a first orientation for starting and strenghtening media programs in schools in both the MENA and the EUNA region. The next step could be to create a common platform for educators from both regions to engage their students in multiperspec- tive media work. E.g. students from both regions could create a common platform (website and in- person-meetings) where they could share their information and opinions on current issues, translate media content about their countries for each other and maybe even create articles, features and films together which are balanced, anti-stereotypical, critical and inclusive.

Conclusion

To increase understanding between EUNA and MENA region through education and media we suggest the following steps:

Global Citizenship Education, Focus on Media Literacy

• Implementation and funding for teacher training for global citizenship education to support knowledge of global issues, global-mindedness, analytical and critical thinking, openness towards cultural otherness, intercultural understanding as well as empathy and responsibility

• Aligning national curricula with global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, supporting emphasis on media literacy

• Helping learners become active for human rights, gender equality, sustainable development and peace (through project-based and connections-based learning)

• Initiating cooperation between education and media, e.g. in the form of collaboration in film making and media training for students

Media Development Programs and Collaborations

• Combating hate speech through implementing five-point test for hate speech

• Awareness training for journalists for avoiding or openly pointing out bias in news

• Supporting diversity in media to make voices of minorities heard

Wiesbaden/Vienna/Prague, November 15th 2017

The report was prepared by Mareike Hachemer, Florian Danner and Klara Hoskova.

Report III:

**Navigating Freedom of Expression and Hate Speech
in the MENA region :
Highlighting Examples from the Morocco, Egypt and Qatar**

To deny people their human rights, is to challenge their very humanity
N. Mandela

If we restrict liberty to attain security, we will lose them both
B. Franklin

Elena D'Angelo   Indre Anskaityte   Kay Atanda

INTRODCUTION

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is rich with history, culture, diversity, and natural resources. The region also faces a wide range of challenges including high youth unemployment, persistent gender differential, and increasing threats from terrorist groups such as al - Qaeda and Daesh. While a number of MENA countries have shown notable progress in civil liberties with a flurry of proposed and adopted reforms toward modernization and a more democratic and open society over the past decade, most countries have remained mostly authoritarian in practice. Political scientists have long debated and opined on the several reasons behind the persistence of authoritarian regimes including the effects of Islamism, sectarianism, and ethnicity; they are, however, unanimous in the consequences. According to Freedom House - which surveys global political and human rights developments along with ratings of political rights and civil liberties - the MENA region is only five percent free and historically regarded as the least free region in the world.[1] MENA regimes have increasingly shut off media for political expression and responded to protests with overwhelming force. The 2011 Arab Spring, which was expected to encourage sweeping pro - democracy political reforms, ultimately failed to meet its intention; instead, regimes in the MENA have cracked down heavily on dissent and curtailed channels supporting freedom of expression.[2]

A challenging aspect with regard to the MENA region, that was raised several times during the interviews conducted within the EUNA exchange program, is linked to the balance between national and regional security and fundamental rights: generally speaking, states must exercise caution when drafting legislation and policy that are 'rights limiting'. They must strike a balance between protecting the safety of the state and their citizens through laws that are rights - limiting, while also safeguarding the rights and freedoms of their citizens. Only by doing so can a state ensure safety and security, while also providing rights and freedoms to its people.[3]

However, how should the balance between limitation of freedom and security of citizens be established? What if liberty is the default position and the balance with security – a good we have instructed government to obtain – can not be balanced? And if security becomes an 'excuse' to limit someone's freedom to express his/her opinion: where do we draw the line?

While this paper does not pretend to answer these ever - challenging questions, it will take into consideration two fundamental rights, freedom of expression and the right to equality and non discrimination. The paper begins with an overview of the existing international norms surrounding the freedom of expression. Preceding this background, the paper presents a detailed review of the state of press, internet freedom in Morocco, Egypt and Qatar.[4] The latter portion of this paper considers the status of fundamental right to equality and non - discrimination and the phenomenon of hate speech, drawing from an analysis from on - the -

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[1] https://freedomhouse.org/regions/middle-east-and-north-africa

[2] Anderson, Lisa. "Demystifying the Arab Spring", Foreign Affairs. June 2011

[3] Rogers, Stephen "Striking a balance between fundamental rights and national security"

[4] The reflections contained in this paper are drawn primarily from Morocco, Egypt and Qatar – countries which the authors visited as part of the 2017 UNAOC Fellowship Program

ground interviews and considering the challenging balance between free speech and hateful speech.

In the last section the authors provide recommendations on how to improve the media's role in combating hatred and fostering inclusion in Morocco, Egypt and Qatar, as well as a set of practical recommendations on how to promote inclusivity and combat hatred phenomena in the MENA region.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental right, which has to be granted to every individual. The Declaration states that everyone has a right to express his or her opinion without interference, and to seek, receive and impart information through any media. Majority of UN member - states voted in favor of declaration in 1948, so did most the MENA region countries.[5] However, today this fundamental right is often restricted by harsh laws, censorship or threats to journalists and media outlets. Even though, the Arab Spring in the MENA has sparkled hopes of increased liberties and democratic values, the MENA region continues to remain one of the most suppressed regions in the world. Besides Tunisia, which has transitioned to democracy and has ensured media freedoms at least partly[6], other Arab Spring countries have failed to achieve their revolutionary goals.

The latest World Press Freedom Index[7] shows that 14 of the 22 MENA countries have restricted press freedoms even further over the past year. In many cases restrictions have spread out to the Internet and social networks since governments have found new methods to track and control online discussions. Nevertheless, due to its form and complexity, the Internet and social networks remain partly free in several MENA countries while traditional media experiences a total control of authoritarian governments.

Morocco

Although, Morocco has a partly free political environment (with regular multiparty parliament elections, and officially shared power between government and the monarch), its media is still ranked as not free by the Freedom House.

Legally, Morocco guarantees freedom of the press and prohibits censorship in the 2011 Constitution. The Parliament reformed a press code in 2016, which besides other

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[5] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly by the majority vote. 48 voted in favor, none against, eight abstained. Saudi Arabia was amongst those countries, which abstained.

[6] According to Freedom House, despite the 2014 constitution, which includes protections for press freedom, journalists continue to face restrictions under criminal and military laws that predate the country's 2011 uprising, many media outlets have links to political parties or politicians

[7] Reporters Without Borders 2017 World Press Freedom Index

improvements strengthened fair - trial provisions for journalists, and protection for journalists' sources. However, the code prohibits any publication containing an offense information to the King, the royal family, Islam, or territorial integrity (Article 71). This article helps the authorities to avoid any criticism to the King, the royal family or Islam, it also increases self - censorship since journalists are well aware of fines, prosecutions that might lead to imprisonment.

Morocco's Broadcast media is fully controlled by the regime. The board members and the president of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HACA) are appointed by the King, the prime minister and the presidents of the two chambers of Parliament. The HACA issues licenses and monitors content; it can restrict critical coverage on issues such as Western Sahara or monarchy by implementing the 2016 Broadcasting Law. Mean while, print media either local or foreign, has to obtain accreditation in order to publish their outlets. Critical content on sensitive issues can be censored and media outlet can face a shutdown.

Online media is controlled the least in Morocco. There has been no policy of widespread site filtering implemented yet. However, press and antiterrorism laws allow for the shutting down of news sites or removal of content. Even though, websites are rarely blocked in Morocco, there are number of cases[8] of editorial pressure and censorship on websites or blogs. Social networks are the freest space on the Internet. However, self-censorship still exists among online activists.

Egypt

Since Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took power in Egypt, the basic freedoms have been restricted. The current situation shows that individuals cannot freely express their political opinion since freedom of speech and assembly is severely constrained. There are number of cases when thousands of people have been arrested during peaceful demonstrations. For instance, security forces arrested around 1300 people in Cairo protests against el-Sisi government in April 2016.[9]

Activists and journalist face arrest and imprisonment on charges such as inciting, participating in protests or disseminating false rumours. Egypt had the third highest number of jailed journalists in the world in 2016.[10]

Legally, Egypt guarantees freedom of thought, opinion, and expression in the 2014 Constitution. The Constitution specifically mentions that freedom of the print, broadcast, and digital media is guaranteed and media censorship as well as prison terms for press crimes are banded. The independence and neutrality of all state - owned media outlets is declared in the Constitution as well. However, the same Constitution allows media censorship "in times of

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[8] The investigative news site Lakome was blocked in 2013; news site Badil targeted on charges of defaming public officials and publishing false information in 2015.
[9] Amnesty International Annual Report 2016/2017
[10] Committee to Protect Journalists 2016 prison census: 259 journalists jailed worldwide

war or general mobilization", and leaves an open space for legal interpretations on how press crime is defined. Moreover, a number of laws prohibits journalists from publishing information related to "sensitive issues", such as violent military actions.

Media in Egypt is completely controlled by the regime. According to the Freedom House, neither printed, broadcasted media nor the Internet is free. The "unfriendly" media outlets or websites were shut down in the past thus, today both private and state - owned Egyptian media express their support to the regime.

There are relatively new initiatives to enrich very constrained Egyptian media landscape by publishing only politically neutral content. For example, Egypt Media Development Program launched a newspaper "Mantiqi" in 2011, which focuses on life of downtown Cairo and Zamalek neighborhoods and avoids any political content in the freely distributed newspaper.

Social networks such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter are free and user - generated content is not blocked there. Nevertheless, digital activists experience arrests and penalties for their online posts related to the regime, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

Out of 180 countries, Egypt ranks 161 in World Press Freedom Index 2017.[11] These rankings were dismissed as not reliable enough by the Egyptian State Television during the official meeting with the UNAOC fellows. The state-owned television claimed that it followed values of objectivity and gave equal airtime for opposition and activists.

Qatar

The freedom of expression is heavily restricted in Qatar. The Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression "according to circumstances and conditions prescribed by law" (Article 47). However, its legal formulation leaves room for uncertainty and possibility for different interpretations. Qatar does not have any active freedom of information law.

All print and broadcast media is owned by the ruling family members or their associates . Thus, neither newspapers nor televisions spread any critical information and in many cases are used to publish or broadcast censored information.[12] For instance, Al - Jazeera is well known for its critical voice in the Arab World, however it does not apply the same rules when it comes to national issues coverage.

The Internet is widely used in Qatar, thus, its content is restricted by the government. Wide range of websites that do not meet Qatar's religious, cultural or political stance are banned. For instance, Qatar blocked the Doha News website in 2016, which among other critical stories published an article t hat alleged that Qatar's cybercrime law was being used to

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[11] Reporters Without Borders 2017 World Press Freedom Index
[12] The government, the Qatar Radio and Television Corporation, and customs officers are authorized to censor media for religious, political, and sexual content

"silence" people. [13]

Qatar's cybercrime law imposes fines and imprisonment[14] for online defamation, spreading false news, violating social values or principles or any other online activities that can jeopardize state security. The vague legal language and definitions can be interpreted in various ways, thus the right to freedom of expression can be easily abused.

Self - censorship is very common in Qatar since journalists or any other individuals can be prosecuted for criticizing the Qatari government, the ruling family, or Islam.

Despite the fact that freedom of expression is guaranteed in the Constitutions of Morocco, Egypt and Qatar, this right is restricted in all three countries. In all three cases, critical information on the ruling families, the governments and Islam is considered offensive and any individual would be prosecuted for publishing it. While print and broadcast media is controlled by all three regimes, Moroccan online media is restricted the least out of the three. It is common to ban or block websites in Egypt and Qatar. Social networks remain the freest space in all three countries. However, self - censorship is widespread due to possible arrests and prosecution for online activities.

HATE SPEECH IN THE MENA REGION AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

It is imperative to consider fundamental right to equality and non - dis crimination, including how this right can be violated through forms of threat to the security of citizens, and in particular through the dissemination of hate speech and instigation to violence. In t his section concrete experiences to monitor online contents and combat hate speech are then presented, both at EU level and in the MENA region.[15] Moreover, the difficult relation between freedom of speech and hate speech is approached at global level – by highlighting some challenging aspects related to MENA region.

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[13] Qatar's cybercrime law is being abused by criminals and must be changed
https://dohanews.co/qatars-cybercrime-law-is-being-abused-by-criminals-and-must-be-changed/
[14] Fines can reach up to 100,000 dollars while imprisonment can last up to 3 years for cybercrimes

[15] The main experiences from the MENA region herewith presented were collected through the interviews conducted during the EUNA exchange program. Almost all the relevant actions presented in this paper are related to Egypt. In fact, in Qatar these topics were almost never touched during the different meetings: one question was raised to the National Council of Human Rights with regard to freedom of expression, but the official response was that no cases related to freedom of speech were never reported to Council. In Morocco, the issue of hate speech was briefly discussed during the meeting at the Training Center of Imams. One of the main purposes behind the establishment of such training center is to teach to future Imams a correct (and modern) interpretation of Islam, also in view of avoiding spreading of extremist or hateful speech with the Muslim communities in their origin countries. And with the final aim of preventing radicalization and other forms of extremism.

The substantive equality among human beings, including freedom from discrimination, is a foundational principle in human rights, as stated in Art. 1 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, which states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights".[16]

On the basis of the principle of equality and dignity of every human being, international law condemns all statements that refuse to recognize the equality of all individuals. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1996), in its Art. 20(2) requires states to prohibit any form of hate speech, and specific ally: "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law".

Hate crime and hate speech do represent a real threat and a damage to the life of individuals, and increase the sense of fear in entire communities. During the different meetings and discussion that took place within the EUNA fellowship program, the issue of hate speech and hateful incidents both online and offline was raised a number of times.

While the set of initiatives and the general awareness on the topic in the MENA region is still on a different level than in other parts of the globe, there is an increasing attention to such phenomenon. This is also related the role of the MENA region in the current international scenario, where phenomena such as the migrations flow and its difficult management within Europe, the terrorist attacks claimed by Daesh all over the world, the raise of new xenophobic movements together with sentiments of Islamophobia (but also Christianophobia and anti-Semitism) are spreading a general sentiment of insecurity and fear of the 'otherness'.

Online and offline hate propaganda, violence, hostility and intimidation directed towards people because of their identity/perc eived difference are a serious growing threat, furthermore they have strong interdependencies with other relevant criminal phenomena (e.g. trafficking in persons, illegal migration, terrorism).

Over the last years, developments in IT technology, notably in online media, have spurred an exponential increase in global information and data exchange. Despite the huge potential, such proliferation poses many risks in the area of hate crimes and, in particular, the spread of online hate speech. Symbols and languages can be dangerous ways to convey xenophobic, racist, homophobic and, more generally, discriminatory messages. Computer and smart - phone screens, acting as a barrier between the perpetrators an d the outside world, including their potential victims, increase the acceptance threshold with regard to the rhetoric of hatred, decreasing the level of sensitivity typical of personal relations. This contributes to a process of normalizing hate, which spa ns from the acceptance of stereotypes, through acts of dehumanization and discrimination on different levels, to reach the most serious manifestations, such as hate crime and, in their most extreme forms, phenomena such as the mass atrocities and genocide.

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[16] http://www.un.org/en/universal - declaration - human - rights/

In this picture, while the media and the online social media too often play a crucial role in supporting and strengthening these stereotypes and misconception, at the same time they can play an important role in creating different narratives and convey correct messages .

Even though the media themselves rarely produce forms of hate speech, unless they act as vehicle for hatred contents, the hate speech encountered on social platforms is often fed by bad or fake news. The accuracy in the information can be an antidote to hatred and, at the same time, contribute to build a sense of critical thinking and inclusiveness in the society. Journalists, editors and all the actors involved can play a crucial role in filtering bad and fake news, even though this is not enough. They have to dialogue with all the other stakeholders, including the politicians. Moreover, the media can be crucial in fighting hatred contents by promoting a counter narrative. These alternative narratives should include all relevant actors f rom the institutional arena as well as from the civil society.

Some media organizations are already working in this direction: in 2014, the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN)[17] launched the campaign 'Turning the Page of Hate'[18] to mark the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. As part of the campaign, the EJN created a 5 - point test for journalists[19] to use to identify hate speech. More recently, a group of journalists in Cyprus – in cooperation with the OSCE, launched a ground - breaking program to help building a bridge against hate.[20] One of the objectives of this initiative is to work, with both Turkish and Greek Cypriot journalists, to develop a common glossary – in English, Greek and Turkish – against the stereotypes in the media system and to counter hate speech phenomena.

A similar initiative was reported during the meeting with one of the Egyptian representatives within the EUNA exchange program, namely the Egypt Media Development Program (EMDP).[21] EMDP, in co - operation with the American University in Cairo (Mass - com department), recently worked on developing a glossary of terms in Arabic to support media professionals and journalists in avoiding discriminatory terms and stereotypes and channel certain messages. The glossary should be also presented during a conference to be held in Amman (Jordan) in December 2017, with the idea of further expanding the glossary with new words to be used in the Jordanian media.

Even the Egyptian Radio and Television Union, during its presentation to the EUNA cohort, mentioned the need to exchange experiences with Europe on regulations to combat hate speech online. However, the topic was not further expanded and no concrete initiatives emerged at that stage.

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[17] http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org

[18] http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/tag/turning-the-page-of-hate

[19] http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/hate-speech

[20] http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/cyprus-journalists-against-hate

[21] http://emdponline.com/en/

While the role of media is key in preventing and combating forms of intolerance and hate, as previously mentioned, the online media and the social networks bring the whole issue at a broader and even more challenging level. In this view, the monitoring of the web can be crucial and technology can play an important role.

To give a concrete example, the European funded project eMORE developed an IT tool for reporting and monitoring online hate speech. The tool is composed by a mobile phone application (APP) and a crawler: on one side, the APP allows collecting hate speech reports from the 9 EU Countries involved in the project; on the other side the crawler, starting from a set of keywords in 9 languages and a list of websites which contain hate speech, analyses the web and provides with a huge list of web contents potentially exposed to hateful contents. The results of both the APP and the crawler are then aggregated into the main tool – WEBAPP – for an in - depth analysis of hate speech which includes different aspects: main categories of discrimination, countries, geo - localization, main platforms of hate, number of reports collected etc.

A similar tool for monitoring online contents was presented during the meeting with the Observatory for combating extremism of the Al Azhar Islamic institute.[22] The Observatory is composed by several departments related to different languages / countries, including Spanish, French, Chinese, Persian and of course Arabic. The analysts working in the Observatory constantly check the online contents to try to provide with co unter narratives to extremist discourses. However, the coordinator did not reply to more technical questions, such as which types of software, logarithm, redirection tools etc. are used by the Observatory. Interesting to note that, according to the coordinator of the French department: "Extremism is stronger in Europe than in the Middle East, because in the MENA region there are limits [related to the implementation of Sharia] that are not implemented on texts published in Europe". This is quite a strong statement, that would certainly need further explanation; but unfortunately, there was no time to further discuss the issue with the representatives from the Al Azhar institute.

HATE SPEECH vs FREEDOM OF SPEECH: WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE?

In this context, another challenging aspect to be discussed is how to find a balance between protecting freedom of expression on the one hand, and protecting vulnerable groups from verbal – and in turn potentially physical – persecution on the other. Any attempt to limit free speech is usually perceived as an attack to freedom of expression, which is a funding element of Western societies.[23] However, all rights come with responsibilities: freedom of speech implies duties and responsibilities and, as such, m ay be subjected to restrictions or penalties as prescribed by law. This implies that in democratic societies, governments may limit freedom of expression where necessary, in the interest of national security, territorial integrity

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[22] http://www.azhar.eg/observer - en/
[23] V. Pejchal, K. Brayson (2016), How should we legislate against hate speech? Finding an international model in a globalized world

or public safety among others[24], but only in so far as they are provided for by law and in a manner which is proportionate. The test against which such limitations are evaluated is a strict one.[25]

As outlined in the previous section, freedom of expression is guaranteed in the Constitutions of Morocco, Egypt and Qatar. However, this right is restricted in all three countries – often justified with the need to ensure the state security by banning or blocking certain news platforms or social networking sites. Even self - censorship seems to be widespread to avoid persecutions by online journalists and activists. Against this context, which is to a certain extent different than in the 'Western' countries, the paradigm of how to find a balance between limitation to hate speech and freedom o f speech is now different. The terms of the discussion are different, thus the discussion itself is assuming new forms and opening different scenarios.

A thorough analysis of the existing legal frameworks in the MENA region, as well as of the status of h ate speech and hate crime in the region, could help in further understanding the main elements of the problem and try to outline new possible solutions. But this cannot be done without a continuous dialogue with other regions of the world, including the We stern world, as only complex responses can try to answer to globalized and ever - evolving challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS - THE WAY FORWARD

Based on the analysis and preliminary outline on fundamental rights and security issues in the MENA region carried out in this report, a set of recommendations is herewith presented. They include both suggestions on concrete actions to be implemented at national and regional level, in synergy with local actors, as well as proposals for policy makers:

Capacity Building
- Tailoring existing training materials to the local and regional context in the MENA region and developing training curricula for different targets, including: i) journalists and media professionals; ii) teachers, professionals working with youth; social workers, members of Civil Society Organizations etc ; iii) Law enforcement authorities, judges and prosecutors; iv) officers of local administrations, ombudsman, policy makers etc.
- Organizing workshops on hate speech and media tools against it for journalist s.

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[24] The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), in its art. 10(2) specifies that *The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in con dence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary .*

[25] UNICRI, 2014, LIGHT ON: investigating and reporting online hate speech, Training manual, p.90

Workshops should aim to help journalists to identify hate speech, to publish (or not) with the required distance and to obviate manipulation. The workshop could be organized in cooperation with institutions such as the Ethical Journalism Network, which has developed a five - point test for hate speech.

Reporting and Monitoring
- Fostering monitoring and reporting activities on hate speech and hate crime through the support of technological tools: building upon existing tools (eMORE project, Observatory on extremism etc.), developing technological tools such as crawlers, big data analysis software, mobile phone applications for reporting, algorithms etc. to support the work of analysts, researchers as well as of Law enforcement agencies

Legal Framework and Policies
- Advocacy at local and regional level for a coordinated action to strengthen the legislation and policies on hate crime and hate speech, including working on a common definition
- States should ensure implementation of / compliance with main inter national instruments
- Independent authorities should be established to investigate cases of violation of fundamental rights - where human rights councils are already established, monitoring action to assess their independency should be ensured

Knowledge Generation and Awareness - raising
- Developing further research on hate speech and hate crime in the MENA region, by including at least the following areas: comparative analysis of the current legal framework both from the international and the national point of view; understanding haters' profiles and main target categories of victims of hate speech and hate crime; mapping the existing reporting mechanisms and collecting data on hate crime and hate speech in the target countries
- Encouraging networking activities, through workshops and virtual platforms, among professionals in different fields (journalism, legal, CSOs etc.) from both the MENA and the EUNA region
- Encouraging the publication of more politically neutral neighborhood newspapers that would focus on its neighborhood issues and give a voice to people of various backgrounds and promoting citizens' journalism
- Encourage media coverage on native religious minorities in national Egyptian and Moroccan media (in cooperation with Interfaith Dialogue Centers and religious communities);
- Foster media coverage on migrant communities so that diversity of the countries would be reflected (in Qatar in particular).

Figure 1 – Strategy to foster inclusion and combat hatred in the MENA region
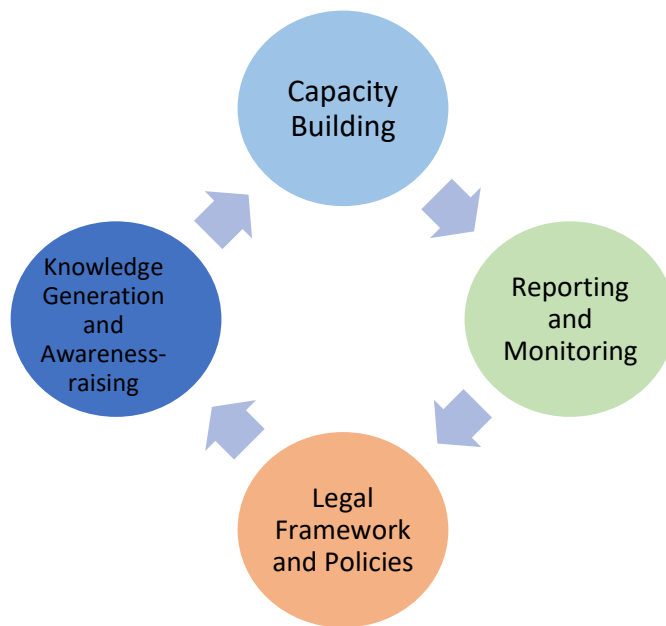
Report IV:

Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the MENA Region: A Comparative Analysis of the National Human Rights Institutions in Morocco, Egypt, and Qatar, written by Jasmin Hasić

Introduction

The promotion, protection, and enforcement of human rights norms has gradually become one of the guiding principles of modern states. Many of them opted for institutionalization of this mission through the establishment of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI). Over time, the legal and policy outputs of the NHRIs have contributed to fundamental changes in perceptions on how human rights standards are upheld internationally.[26] In some cases, their existence has proven its initial purpose of impartiality, autonomy, and adequacy in providing education about human rights, while in other cases the NHRIs have turned out to be costly, contentious, government- controlled projects that evoked more problems than resolutions to HR challenges.

Ensuring the establishment, and later the independence and efficiency of NHRIs in some of the MENA region countries, as well as accepting the international HR discourse within the government portfolios required a high level of political compromising. The effective administration of internationally established human rights norms, particularly within the complex historical, social, and constitutional frameworks of Morocco, Egypt, and Qatar, clearly demonstrates the complexity of the task. Morocco is a constitutional monarchy, which gained its independence in 1956. The country's political system has undergone constitutional reforms implemented in response to the fairly recent Arab Spring. Egypt, a semi-presidential republic, independent since 1922, has transformed its constitution under large-scale protests and multiple government overthrows during the Arab Spring. Finally, the State of Qatar, a constitutional monarchy, which gained its independence in 1971, has only been moderately influenced by the Arab Spring.

This report examines the creation of NHRIs in three aforementioned countries[27] and provides a comparative overview of the mechanisms and principles used to ensure institutions' position within the legal system; to identify the most common challenges in their work; and to highlight the potential for development of international cooperation aimed at promoting HR standards and principles. The report ends with a set of recommendations for improvement of the current practices. A very limited number of scholarly works has been published on NHRIs in the three aforementioned countries, and second to none in a comparative perspective.

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[26] Reif L. (2000): Building Democratic Institutions: The Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Good Governance and Human Rights Protection.

[27] National Human Rights Council of Morocco (est. in 2002); National Council of Human Rights of Egypt (est. in 2003) ; National Human Rights Committee of Qatar (est. in 2002).

Key Information Related to the NHRIs in Morocco, Egypt, and Qatar

The World Conference on Human Rights[28] recognized that 'it is the right of each state to opt for the legal framework that is best suited to its specific needs.' National Human Rights Institutions in the three aforementioned countries were established in 2002 and 2003 in accordance with the Paris Principles[29]. All three national human rights councils/committees work to ensure that the national government bodies and all other institutions properly apply laws regarding international and national norms to uphold human rights. All three NHRIs hold a Status A^{30} classification of full compliance with Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions accreditation standards[31]. In the past 15 years of their existence, many functions of the NHRIs have evolved, mainly in terms of accepting international normative benchmarks, and increased the institutional integrity. These institutions have also been exposed to a series of criticisms for their ineffectiveness in solving cases, inability to put pressure on their respective governments to enforce the HR principles, and a failure to reduce or remove legal and other shortcomings that prevent advancements of human rights.

An Overview of NHRI's Mandate and Programs

The work and functions of all NHRIs are outlined and specified in the relevant national legal acts, and their respective amendments[32]. The Moroccan National Human Rights Council is mandated to intervene at five main levels: monitoring (observe and follow-up on the situation of human rights at the national and regional levels), handling the complaints (tackling cases of human rights violations), mediation and early intervention (proactively and urgently involvements if there's a tension that may lead to individual or collective human rights violations), investigations and inquiries (related to the violations occurred, irrespective of their nature or origin and submitting its findings, conclusions and recommendations to the competent government authorities), and finally reporting and treaty practice (drafting special and thematic reports on everything that is likely to contribute to better protecting human

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[28] Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, U.N. GAOR World Conference on Human Rights, 23d Sess., 157th mtg. 83-98, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.157/23 (1993).

[29] The Paris Principles provide clear guidance and direction on the formation of NHRIs, as well as and key principles that NHRIs have to follow in order to function effectively in their respective countries. For more details, please see G.A. Res. 134, U.N. GAOR, 48th Sess. U.N. Doc. A/RES/48/134 (1993)

[30] NHRI Accreditation Standards and Indicators, text available at
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/MetadataNHRIAccredtation.pdf
Accreditation status as of 24 January 2017
https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/Documents/Status%20Acrreditation%20Chart.pdf

[31] Accreditation of National Human Rights Institutions, Last Updated: 24 January 2017
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/NHRI.pdf

[32] The mandate of the National Human Rights Council of Morocco (NHRC) in the area of human rights protection has been set out in its founding law, Royal decree (Dahir) of March 1, 2011, thus replacing the former Advisory Council on Human Rights, set up in May 1990; The mandate of the National Council for Human Rights of Egypt has been stipulated in the Law No. 94/2003, adopted on June 19, 2003; The Qatari National Human Rights Committee was established in accordance with Decree Law No. (38) 2002, adopted on November 11, 2002, and reorganized in accordance with Decree Law no. (17) 2010.

rights, nationally and internationally). The Egyptian Human Rights Council's[33] and Qatari National Human Rights Committee's mandates, though organized in a different manner, are fairly similar to the Moroccan one. The only crucial difference is that the latter two provide additional services: legal representation to the individuals and collectives whose human rights have been violated, before the national courts, and social support services and field visits to penal, detention, health and education facilities, correctional institutions and labor communities, as well as to monitor the human rights situation there.[34]

The Moroccan NHRC is organized into 13 regional human rights commissions, set up for close monitoring of the situation in the different regions of Morocco, while the Egyptian NCHR is organized into 7 specialized committees on rights (for instance civil, cultural, social, economic and other) and on 9 thematic units (conducting specific tasks). The Qatari NHRC organizational scheme includes 4 main departments, dealing with administration, international cooperation, education, and legal affairs.

An Overview of the Key Human Rights Cases and Challenges

The Egyptian NCHR, in their last available Annual Report from 2012, specifies that the number of complaints related to human rights violations dropped significantly, to a total of 2846, by the end of March 2012. A large percentage of them involved collective complaints filed by a 'large segments of the society.' An example of this is a large group of Egyptian workers who formerly worked in Iraq and demand their remittances before the first Gulf War, known as *Hewala Safra*. These are followed by the complaints related to economic and social rights and complaints connected with civil and political rights, that were characterized by a new waves and patterns of physical violation, such as violation of women's dignity, or demands to open old files that were closed under threats and oppression.

On the other hand, the 2014 Annual Report of the Moroccan NHRC, highlights 4 key types of the most common and most challenging HR cases: achieving equality and parity between men and women and the fight against discrimination (including the improvements of the legal framework governing the fight of violence against women and domestic workers); reform of the judiciary and guaranteeing the right to a fair trial (including access to justice and the independence of the judiciary, eliminating and preventing torture, guaranteeing the rights of people deprived from liberty, and reforming and improving the penal system, by introducing alternatives to incarceration); advancing civil liberties (like right of associations, peaceful protests, and freedom of the press), and finally improving the legal framework and public

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[33] Eighth Annual Report of the National Human Rights of Egypt (p. 8-9) stipulates that The 2011 Revolution led to important changes in the political features of the society, by toppling the head of the regime and its government as well as removing a number of its institutions and placing new political and social facts on the ground. As a consequence, numerous legislations were issued following the Revolution, and the subsequent series of events that ensued including the collapse of the former regime, the transfer of power, interaction with the demands of the revolution, developments of the transitional phase and the rebuilding of the State institutions. Therefore, the NCHR in Egypt is tasked, within the context of its assessment of Human Rights, to monitor and analyze the legislative track in view of the impact on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

[34] These are provided to all residents of Qatar, and not only to the nationals.

policies related to the rights of vulnerable groups, particularly people with disabilities, children, older persons, foreigners and refugees, etc.

The 2016 Annual Report of NHRC of Qatar indicates a total number of 3231 complaints. More than half are related to the complaints filed by foreign residents in Qatar, and mostly related to their residency status, treatment at work, or other types of grievance related to their stay in the country. Egyptian nationals, followed by the Filipinos and Indians, filed the highest number of complaints.

An Overview of NHRIs' Public Impact and Cooperation with Other Institutions

The National Human Rights Committee of Qatar is strongly present at both regional and international levels. It has been accredited an 'A' status by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) in 2011. It also chaired the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF) from 2013 to 2015. On top of that, the Qatari NHRC Committee also held the presidency of the Arab Network for Human Rights Institutions until 2013.

The Moroccan NCHR is invested in building strong relations with the accredited diplomatic corps and strengthening cooperation with international and regional governmental organizations advocating for human rights and democracy, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union, and the Union for the Mediterranean. The NCHR takes part at the activities of the Permanent Arab Commission on Human Rights of the League of Arab States, as an observer. The NCHR is also a member of the High-Level Committee of Legal Experts, which will draft the statutes of the Arab Court for Human Rights. Moreover, the Council is a member of Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions, a regional network of Arab national institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights, Arab-European Human Rights Dialogue, a network of Arab and European National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) comprising 20 member organizations and observer member organizations; Francophone Association of National Human Rights Commissions, a network of national human rights institutions in the French-speaking countries, Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), a regional representative body that brings together the African National Human Rights Institutions, and the Arab-Ibero-American dialogue of National Human Rights Institutions.

Similarly, the Egyptian NCHR attempted to develop international cooperation with various international organizations that do not only promote human rights, but also

provide funds for HR projects in partnering countries. They initiated a cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2004 – 2008; another project of disseminating Human Rights culture 2007 – 2009, supported by the USAID; and a series of smaller projects in cooperation with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (ACAID) focusing on the review and proposition of necessary legislative amendments with a view to harmonize national legislation in alignment with Egypt's commitments vis-à-vis Human Rights; a project with the Regional Arab Ombudsman

Network in cooperation with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA); an Anti-Torture Project in cooperation with Denmark-based International Rehabilitation Institute for Torture Victims and the Dutch Embassy in Cairo; and finally a project of establishing the NCHR library in cooperation with the Norwegian Center for Human Rights.

Summary and Conclusions

The main purpose of this report was to give an overview of the work of NHRIs in Morocco, Egypt, and Qatar, and to provide a comparative overview of the mechanisms and principles used to ensure institutions' position within their constitutional systems, to identify the most common challenges at their work, and to highlight the possibilities for development of international cooperation aimed at further promotion of HR standards. In sum, the report briefly highlighted key concepts related to NHRIs' jurisdictions in their respective constitutional systems and the difficulties these institutions face in practice and their respective political and constitutional systems.

As outlined in the report, all investigated human rights institutions were established in accordance with the Paris Principles. However, they are located in and function within very different constitutional set-ups. After several waves of strong popular demands for political changes in the MENA region, the governments of said countries have been forced to react to public requests, and reform their institutions and practices. The national governments have attempted to adapt their legal frameworks to fit the necessary changes, and the NHRIs have slowly adjusted to the new circumstances. Their reformed mandates have given more space to pursue the set goals, but have also opened up some questions related to their independence, practical impact, and future development.

Meaningful and long-lasting advancements to the current systems can be brought only by a multi-level approach that requires compromise and political will to accept and incorporate feedback from various groups of societal groups. This inclusive approach should aim at creating an effective system of checks and balances for human rights violations, which can trigger further reforms of judiciary and other public institutions. Based on an extensive desk research and site visits to all three NHRIs headquarters in Morocco, Egypt, and Qatar, the following recommendations can be made:

- Initiating a set of reforms to include the adoption of specific legal provisions to ensure independence and higher competence of judges dealing with HR cases, to act swiftly and in the best interest of the party seeking the protection of their rights before the courts. Also, allowing NHRIs to make binding decisions in some minor cases of human rights violations.

- Extending the mandates of the NHRIs of Morocco and Qatar to act as legitimate parties in court proceedings, as in the case of the NCHR in Egypt. Extending mandates of all three NHRIs to mediation and arbitration, as well as other forms of ADR in the settlement of certain HR violations that are not in direct jurisdiction of the national courts.

- Facilitating the cooperation and exchange of feedback with civil society organizations, and other public human rights groups, nationally and internationally, to increase the legitimacy of the NHRIs in the public. Develop other partnership agreement with international organizations to provide free assistance to more vulnerable groups or individuals.

- Financially supporting research agenda and policy work aimed at bridging the potential divides between local understandings of HRs in MENA countries and internationally recognized standards. Also, invest more money into strengthening the existing human resource capacities.

Report V:

Horizons with(out) frontiers

Viorica Ionela TRINCU

Introduction

International migration is not a new phenomenon. The expression has been populated through the transfer of people in search of better life or to escape from different threats. Human history has been shaped by migration, but this phenomenon has gained unprecedented relevance due to its size, extension and the intense interdependence between expatriates and home countries. It has immense consequences in many fields and has had a major impact on multiple sectors.

The Arab Spring has significantly impacted the evolution of border control in Europe. Dissatisfaction with the repressive regimes in places such as Libya, Syria, Egypt has inspired a movement of people from the Middle East and North. The Arab countries are still subject to the tension process toward the democratic regimes and are far from being entirely stable.

During the course of 2015, more than one million people arrived aboard overflowing and often unseaworthy vessels crossing the Mediterranean Sea to the European Union. Global displacement stands at over 60 million people, counting refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people. This was the highest number since World Word II.

The link between migration and security has become a matter of priority on the international agenda. Migratory movements show us clearly that the Earth is shrinking concerning distances among people.

There is no doubt that the 21st century will be the century of migration, raising concerns in particular about illegal immigration, transnational threats and loss of national identity in host countries. The coming decades will constitute of mix of challenges and opportunities. In order to face these challenges and take advantage of these opportunities, we should be able to respond to two broad questions: What does the influx of refugees mean for European economies and security and how should Europe respond to the influx?

Implications of migration crisis for Europe

Migrations are growing because of population growth, demographic and class differences, changes in natural habitat, globalization, political and economic instability and technological advances. The main flows of migration are towards highly developed countries and areas. Due to this fact, Europe has become one of the most desired destinations, in the last couple of years.

Europe is aware of its unquestioned demographic aging and the necessity of rejuvenating society by attracting targeted groups of immigrants in order to maintain current levels of development.

Migrant workers are important drivers for economic growth and development. Migrants will boost Europe's economies as workers, taxpayers and consumers, increasing aggregate demand for goods and services, including those catering to migrant populations.

Of course, we cannot ignore that the crisis is squeezing the public finances of many European countries, particularly those at the front line.

Despite the costs, it is widely held that for most countries, migrants provide more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in individual benefits. The overall effect of a large number of migrants on Eurozone public finances, pensions, demographics and potential growth should be positive.

Although migration is part of this solution to ensure economic sustainability and development it can be seen as double-edged sword because migrants represent a challenge for development in the European Union.

The EU is at a crossroads because it has to harmonize a number of multidimensional platforms in the matter of migration, such as:
- migration policies acceptable to all member states;
- development and health care aspects of migration;
- respect and protection of human rights;
- absorption capacities for accepting migrants;
- illegal migration and related crime;
- common mechanisms between member states;
- implications of radicalization and xenophobia;
- terrorism.

A particular challenge is the need to integrate immigrants and their acceptance of the values of the host countries.

The EU has done much to discuss migration in the past couple of decades, discourse is still being conducted on the question of whether immigration is primarily an obligation of law enforcement. That approach is wrong since it is first a political issue, but also an economic one. Migration becomes the top security issue only when all others field (political and economic) have failed to deal with it.

Call to action for different actors

Taking into account the complexity of the issues, no single actor can tackle the migration crisis alone. Multi-sector collaboration is essential to grip the combined resources and expertise of local governments, the media and civil society groups. Policymakers and leaders from all sectors must work together to develop solutions, examine what works and what does not, and adapt their approaches accordingly.

Local governments

Local governments should implement the following policies:

- a greater commitment to preventive integration measures, taking into account different immigrant profiles and their asymmetric distribution;
- common action between central political power, security forces, local authorities, citizens' associations and nongovernmental organization;
- knowledge sharing and information exchange between migrants and non-migrants, by drafting guidelines on language, religion and culture;
- optimize the use of EU funds for asylum and migration.

The media

The media has an important impact on the lives of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and their degree of integration into society and their acceptance by society. Although there should be no unjustified restrictions on freedom of expression, the media has a responsibility to accurately describe the situation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and reflect their positive contribution to the society they live in. Also, the media has a responsibility to avoid the stereotypes of these people, which can contribute to discrimination, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in society. The opportunities of integration of refugees and migrants into national/European societies interweave with small and large scale changes and potential risks within specific countries and across the continent. Both opportunities and risks should be seen in the context of global and historical developments. The role of the media emerges as crucial in providing a platform for those complex issues to be unpacked and presented to the public.

The media should collaborate with other European and international institutions in order to:
- develop campaigns to promote inclusiveness in the media;
- develop trainings and workshops for journalist to enhance professional understanding of reasons behind refugee and migrant mobility;
- use the voices of migrants and refugees (by giving examples) in order to promote their communities and not to portray them only as victims or perpetrators of crime and terrorism;
- disseminate research on media coverage of migration and share research findings.

Civil society groups

In the case of migration civil society groups should provide a crucial link between governments and the communities they represent in order to:

- encourage innovation to solve long term problems that refugees and host countries face;

- help to bring reception conditions in line with the quality standards at the European and national level;
- help migrants to find new employment and business opportunities;
- inform the local governments on labor market needs, education and integration planning;
- inform the public debate and help affect more positive societal attitudes towards refugees.

Conclusions

Implementing these policies will not be easy, because they require a difficult balance among conflicting factors: economic interests, moral issues, humanitarian considerations and the fears and legitimate concerns of establish populations. Governments will encounter popular resistance to the imposition of some solutions and will risk electoral backlash and violent reaction by extremist domestic minorities. Information campaigns, international collaboration and open discussions with civil society groups will be necessary to create a social atmosphere receptive to the required changes that will give refugees room to rebuild their lives and become productive members of our societies.