

OSCE: High Commissioner on National Minorities: Guidelines on Societal Integration Identify Important Role of Media

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The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies, adopted in November 2012 by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), recognise and explain the important roles that the media can play in facilitating societal integration.

The Office of the OSCE HCNM was established in 1992 “to be an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage in regard to tensions involving national minority issues” (p. 2). The purpose of the Ljubljana Guidelines is to “provide policymakers and States’ representatives with guiding principles and practical advice on how to elaborate and implement policies that facilitate the integration of diverse societies” (p. 5), but it is also hoped that they will prove useful to a wider range of other actors and stakeholders.

The Guidelines are organised as follows: Structural principles; Principles for integration; Elements of an integration policy framework; Key policy areas. “Media” are identified as one of the nine key policy areas, but their relevance is also acknowledged at various other junctures, e.g. in Guideline 11 on the fields covered by integration policies and in Guideline 28 on the potential contribution of private-sector actors (including private media) to integration.

In the dedicated section, “Media” (pp. 60-63), two specific guidelines - nos. 48 and 49 - are set out and subsequently explained and expanded on in detailed fashion. Guideline 48 reads:

“State policies should aim to promote and facilitate the capacity and awareness of the media to reflect and respond to the diversity within their societies, including by promoting inter-cultural exchange and by challenging negative stereotypes and prejudices and in other ways countering intolerance”.

This guideline is inspired by the functions of the media as forums for exchanging information and ideas, and as channels for receiving and disseminating information and ideas. In light of these functions, the media have the potential to foster inter-cultural exchange, understanding and tolerance. This potential is also recognised in Articles 6 and 9 of the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and in the 2003 OSCE Guidelines

on the use of minority languages in the broadcast media (see IRIS 2004-1/2).

Guideline 49 addresses the relationship between State and minority languages in the media. It reads: “Measures to promote the State or official language(s) in the media should not disproportionately curtail the right to use a minority language”. The implications of this balancing act are then explored in a variety of contexts: language quotas for public service broadcasting (PSB); subtitling, quotas and/or rebroadcasting requirements; “minorities’ access to and presence in general public media programming” (p. 62); PSB and cultural and linguistic diversity in society; transfrontier broadcasts; recruitment and retention policies for journalists with minority backgrounds; private and community media; print media and new media(-related) technologies. It is added that while “no language limitations are permitted for print and internet-based media, any limitations on choice of language in the broadcast media, whether public or private”, must be proportionate and fully respect freedom of expression (p. 61). The exploration of this guideline references the FCNM, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the 2003 OSCE Guidelines (mentioned above) and the Thematic Commentary on Language that was adopted by the Advisory Committee on the FCNM in 2012 (see IRIS 2012-9/5).

The Ljubljana Guidelines follow a number of earlier initiatives of thematic engagement by the HCNM. Previous focuses of the HCNM’s thematic work have been: education, language, participation, broadcast media, policing and inter-state relations.

Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, November 2012

<http://www.osce.org/hcnm/96883>

