Recommendations following the first Conference of Syrian Radio Stations

The first Conference of Syrian Radio Stations, entitled “The role of radio in conflict situations and during difficult political transitions”, was held on 21 and 22 July 2015 in Gaziantep (Turkey), under the sponsorship of CFI.

Numerous representatives from radio stations took part in the Conference and discussed various issues that are vital to the operation of radio stations and to the staff working there. These discussions took place over the course of nine workshops, which were enriched by contributions from a number of invited speakers from the media sector, and in particular from Arab or foreign radio stations who have experienced conditions similar to those in Syria right now.

The participants at this Conference formulated a number of recommendations which are summarised below:

Recommendations for radio stations:

The staff at Syrian radio stations believe that the success of work by media organisations depends on the following factors:

- Adopt a media discourse calling for civil order and insist on the need for traditional justice values;
- Adopt journalistic codes of professional conduct and adopt a media ethics charter;
- Hold regular meetings of Syrian radio stations with a view to discussing the current situation regarding the work conducted by these radio stations, and also the current situation on the ground in Syria;
- Call for the establishment of a common fund to help journalists who have suffered in the course of their professional duties; call for a focus on the rights of correspondents and employees, call for working conditions to be made subject to explicit laws and for the provision of all the forms of support required;
- Call for the highest possible degree of transparency in relations between radio stations and their staff on the one hand, and relations between radio stations and their audience on the other, particularly with regard to the sources of support made available to radio organisations;
- Organise the journalistic work among radio stations and forge fruitful partnerships among stations, with a view to exchanging experiences and information and producing joint programmes;
- Conduct a marketing campaign for the radio output not only via radio stations, but also via different media outlets;
- Call for a resolution of the technical problems that hinder radio broadcasting throughout Syrian territory;
- Call on radio stations to give greater importance to developmental aspects within Syrian society, in light of the increasing problems in the country which are having a visible effect on its citizens;
- Call for the adoption of a behavioural matrix aimed at changing the image of women in the Syrian media, support female journalists and correspondents, and increase the number of programmes relating to women beyond the long-established stereotypes;
- Call for the creation of mechanisms for cooperation between Syrian radio stations and foreign and Arab radio stations and initiate joint projects;
- Call for the management of radio stations to seriously consider their future, to look for sources of self-funding, by means of marketing of the radio output, and to also look for sources of funding at a national level;
- Call on radio stations to work together on joint national media campaigns, tackling the problems facing the Syrian people, so as to ensure that radio content relating to these campaigns is broadcast simultaneously and via these radio stations themselves.

**Recommendations to donors:**

The staff working at Syrian radio stations believe that the relations with donor organisations must be consolidated and reinforced by means of the following actions:

- Work towards the establishment of strategic plans to develop the work conducted by radio stations and ensure that donors support journalism programmes aimed at improving the production level of radio stations;
- Encourage networking and collaboration with new radio stations which have not received sufficient support and which need to be developed, so as not to focus on radio stations that have already benefitted from a cooperation scheme; also adopt a principle of fairness and transparency in the distribution of forms of support and analyse in detail their results;
- Make it possible for all radio stations that wish to apply for support to have a fair opportunity to do so, by means of advertising and by advertising for donations in a transparent manner, so as to ensure that they are all able to access these funds;
- Establish plans for long-term support and extend the agreements proposed now and until the situation in Syria stabilises, whilst implementing monitoring plans and making unplanned support activities more effective;
- Encourage networking between media organisations and active civil society organisations that are supported by the donors;
- Dedicate a percentage of programming to matters relating to women and, when signing financing agreements, assign a number of managerial positions to female journalists in order to give women an effective role in journalism, which will encourage a change in the perception of women;
- Call on donors to help set up and support the common fund to help journalists who have suffered as a result of the war;
- Strive to protect journalists working at Syrian radio stations by encouraging them to register as members of global journalism associations which will issue them with credentials ensuring they are protected as international journalists.

**Recommendations to partner organisations:**

The radio stations call on all of the current partner organisations to:

- Cooperate with the radio stations in a focused and more intensive manner and to hold regular meetings with them;
- Provide genuine work experience opportunities that are useful for correspondents and staff at the radio stations, award them with work experience certificates and offer significant work experience possibilities in terms of management;
- Communicate with the international media to create a space for exchanging information and reports, so as to ensure that listeners from all over the world have access to news from Syria;
- Create exchange programmes enabling journalists working at Syrian radio stations to visit international media outlets;
- Help the radio stations to find sources of self-funding;
- Forge partnerships with new radio organisations.