



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION, RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION: THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN VIOLENT CONFLICT (INFOCORE)

Policy Recommendations for NGOs and Policy Makers:

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This Policy Brief presents policy recommendations based on feedback from the policy synthesis and local stakeholders' seminars of INFOCORE.

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INTRODUCTION

This policy brief delves into the input provided by participating stakeholders in the final policy synthesis seminar of the INFOCORE project and focuses on NGOs and policy makers. It also addresses salient concerns identified at the preceding local stakeholder seminars, and gives concrete recommendations for NGOs and policy makers.

What stakeholders use from INFOCORE's work strongly depends on the social, economic, political and media governance structures of a given country, which vary widely from one country to the next, as well as on the nature of the conflict.

Thus we do not propose here that every NGO or policy maker unconditionally adopt the recommendations mentioned in this document. Rather, these recommendations should help to inspire NGO personnel and policy makers to take actions adaptable to the social, economic, political and cultural realities of their respective countries.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs)

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) provide valuable information services in conflict areas, often operating in zones that are inaccessible to international media outlets. As such, recent developments have seen NGOs, in addition to fulfilling their missions, act as news producers and reporters. This phenomenon has led to the realization that there is an urgent need to ensure that NGOs that regularly engage in journalistic activities receive the appropriate training for their personnel. Furthermore, close collaborations with INFOCORE and other relevant academic researchers, media, and journalism training programmes would boost NGOs' standards for news production and reporting, and ultimately serve the loftier goal of providing a balanced account of a conflict.

NGOs should also establish and communicate clear and quantifiable goals when designing initiatives inspired by INFOCORE's findings, in order to promote and introduce responsible reporting on conflict in a specific organisation or across several organisations. Having clear, measurable goals ensures that progress can be monitored continuously and fully evaluated once an initiative has run its course.

In a time of high polarization and significant focus by donors and NGOs on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), INFOCORE's scope of work is crucial. Indeed, media development NGOs are increasingly pressured by donors to promote moderate voices and provide audiences with alternative narratives. In such cases, it is paramount that digital and traditional media's roles be analysed using INFOCORE's findings in order to implement activities that will efficiently address the possible negative role of media in the polarization process.

Moreover, interactions between NGOs and media are extremely important and useful especially in countries with a lack of independent media and/or a weak civil society. To establish or improve this cooperation, the invited stakeholders recommended that NGOs use INFOCORE's findings and expertise when:

- * Ensuring correct preparation, for instance through needs assessments or feasibility studies, and implementation of projects related to media and conflict.
- * Considering media relation training of NGO personnel working on conflict issues, where INFOCORE's findings and expertise can help them improve their knowledge and understanding of how media work and how to set up effective media partnerships and strategies to promote diversity.

- * Engaging with media and journalism schools as sources of expertise and information offering to help NGOs design and produce programmes covering conflict issues.
- * Monitoring media content related to conflict reporting and developing new projects related to media and conflict.
- * Advocating ‘transferability’ of knowhow across borders and regions while keeping in mind the specifics of countries and regions.
- * Developing sustainability strategies for conflict and media initiatives, exchanging best practices on the implementation of projects with media partners, and developing guidelines for choosing partners and contractual staff for media initiatives.
- * Exploring networking and partnership opportunities with other NGOs, which have complementary skills or resources that can strengthen planned or existing media and conflict initiatives, such as NGOs specialising in training on media relations, programme production techniques and tools.
- * Actively searching for information about existing funding opportunities for media and conflict initiatives from different EU and other international funds and programmes.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

In this policy brief, policy makers include the EU institutions, intergovernmental organisations, funding agencies as well as other institutions, international or national, which support the policy framework, training and financing of initiatives related to media or human rights projects that aim at conflict prevention, responsible conflict and post-conflict reporting.

Due to the frequent lack of **understanding of fundamental media rights** by policy makers, stakeholders supported the idea of providing them with legal training on media regulation including media bills and laws. Stakeholders also recommended strengthening the capacity of the local public sector and increasing its professionalization through trainings of media regulatory bodies on principles concerning press freedom and access to information.

To safeguard the **independence of the media** in conflict zones, stakeholders recommended awareness raising campaigns among political actors on principles and practices of good governance, including the role of a strong and independent public media.

An issue that was discussed extensively in the seminars was the lack of financial independence of media outlets. Stakeholders recommended the creation of a media trust fund, supported by policy makers from local governments and the international donor community. To further promote their financial independence, policy makers should also introduce specific instruments to support the local media sector directly and indirectly (e.g., through price reductions for transportation, tax benefits for media professionals etc.).

Another important topic was the dissemination of hate speech in **social media networks** and the lack of media literacy among local populations. For this reason, stakeholders recommended that policy makers create plans for the provision of trainings on digital and critical media literacy for civil society, media professionals and local populations to raise awareness about hate speech and to increase knowledge on the use of the Internet and social media. Media literacy also needs to be enshrined by policy makers in school and university curricula.

Moreover, according to the stakeholders’ recommendations, policy makers could benefit from INFOCORE’s findings when:

- * Facilitating or conducting a mapping of policies related to recruitment (within the media), with a view to assembling effectiveness data, generating debate and action, and providing benchmarks to evaluate progress.
- * Developing long-term funding programmes or plan for follow-up funding for relevant media and conflict initiatives.
- * Giving support to media content production following the principles of responsible reporting.
- * Disseminating information among all the interested parties with regard to the existing funding opportunities for initiatives connected to conflict and media.
- * Supporting media awards for responsible conflict reporting and measuring their impact in order to promote quality and enhance standards in journalism as related to conflict issues.
- * Supporting networking of project and dialogue platforms, which facilitate exchanges of good practices in conflict and media projects around the world.
- * Encouraging the establishment of bursaries, promoting training, as well as training-of-trainer projects linked to how to cover issues related to pre-conflict and post-conflict occurrences.

CONCLUSIONS

The overarching observation during INFOCORE's synthesis seminar was that there is a noticeable degree of consensus in the need to enhance collaboration efforts among academia, NGOs, policy makers and media practitioners to improve the role of media in conflict prevention and resolution. It is highly recommended to use the INFOCORE findings to improve the dialogue by encouraging and participating in balanced, inclusive dialogues, platforms for reflection, debates, cooperation and partnerships between academics, policy makers, Civil Society Organisations and media organisations on the role of media in pre-conflict and post-conflict situations. This will help identify emerging issues and opportunities and exchange best practices.

Given the more recent role of NGOs in covering developments in conflict areas with limited access for media, it is imperative to train their staff members who engage in journalistic production.

PROJECT IDENTITY

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| PROJECT NAME | (In)forming Conflict Prevention Response And Resolution (INFOCORE) |
| COORDINATOR | Prof. Dr. Romy Fröhlich |
| CONSORTIUM | Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität – LMU – Munich, Germany King’s College London – KCL – London, United Kingdom Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya - IDC – Herzliya, Israel The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Jerusalem, Israel Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy – ELIAMEP – Athens, Greece Global Governance Institute ASBL – GGI – Brussels, Belgium School of Journalism and Public Relation – SJPR – Skopje, FYROMacedonia Universidad Rey Juan Carlos – URJC – Madrid, Spain Université Libre de Bruxelles – ULB – Brussels, Belgium |
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