

Media and global instabilities: what contribution to peace?
Médias et instabilités globales: quelle contribution à la paix?SOFIA, BULGARIA
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SUMMARY OF THE WORKS

The 29th annual Conference of COPEAM took place in Sofia on 24 June 2022, upon kind invitation of the BNT- Bulgarian National Television, in the stunning setting of *the National Palace of Culture*. Representatives of public broadcasters and cultural and audiovisual operators of Europe and the MENA region gathered to discuss around the topic ***“Media and global instabilities: what contribution to peace?”*** .

In consideration of the recent socio-political instabilities in Europe and in other areas of the world, such topic was selected to stimulate a debate about possible common answers on the role that the Media - and in particular the PSMs - can play to strengthen social cohesion, to favour pacific relationships between countries and peoples and ultimately contribute to conflict transformation and peace-building.

*The 2022 COPEAM Conference in figures***+70***Participants in presence***+200 views***On [Youtube](#)***10 speakers***From the Media sector and CSOs***+20 countries represented***From Europe and the MENA Region*



Opening Ceremony



Claudio CAPPON, Secretary General of COPEAM, opened the Conference, pointing out that the theme of the 29th Conference is a topical theme that also summarizes COPEAM's ultimate mission: that of reinforcing the audiovisual sector and of creating conditions for peace, progress and mutual respect in our region: *"We all know the power of the media, their responsibility in shaping citizens' mindset, as well as their role in raising awareness about the principles and values of human coexistence, a world that we hope to be stable, respectful and peaceful"*, he concluded.

The floor went to **Anton ANDONOV**, Member of the Management Board of the Bulgarian National Television, who - on behalf of the organization - warmly welcomed in Sofia all the attendees and expressed the satisfaction of BNT with hosting this event on such a crucial topic.

"The crisis caused by the Covid pandemic and then the military conflict in Ukraine" – he said – "have sharply underlined the issue of media's mission and public duty in times of global uncertainty, and how they can contribute to stabilization. Times of instability are usually those in which the political class has to make quick decisions with strategic consequences, and it is then that media are applied to keep democratic instinct alive for democratic practices to survive and function".

Finally, **Robert ŠVEB**, Director General of HRT - Hrvatska Radiotelevizija and President of COPEAM, pointed out that the role of media is defined by their democratic responsibility to practice inclusion and showcase diversity. *"However, it is also our task to be the voice of the oppressed and condemn any suffering caused by war. It is necessary that we influence those in power to find peaceful solutions and create content that gives hope and that educates. We are the ones who hold the power to affect our public - the citizens - in ways that they can learn from the past, move forward, build dialogue and live in peace"*. The cooperation within COPEAM is vital in these challenging times - he concluded - creating the opportunity for joint initiatives and fruitful exchange of experiences.

At the end of the opening ceremony, a [promotional animation video](#) about COPEAM and its mission - produced by the students from the ALBA (Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts) - was projected.





Conference introduction

Key-note speech

Prof. **Hussein AMIN**, Director of the *Kamal Adham Center for Television & Digital Journalism* at the American University in Cairo, introduced the topic with a particular focus on the possible contributions of the media to peacebuilding processes.

There is a long history of research on media and propaganda in war times that mostly began during the Second World War. More recently though, there have been many attempts to analyze the issues of media reform and transition to peace in conflict or post-conflict countries, he said.

Since the early 19th century, the concept of “Peace journalism” was born with the aim of shedding light on structural and societal causes and consequences of violence, as they affect people’s lives in any conflict zone (in antagonism to the concept of “War Journalism” that emphasized, on the other hand, coverage of violence and conflict in any war).

He explained that, today, the role of the media in general, and of Public Service Media in particular, in building peace includes several objectives and basic stages. The first is to define the causes of conflict in society and to determine whether they are political or economic, social or cultural. The second is to identify the fundamental differences between all. The third is to prevent the re-emergence of old problems and conflicts, and to engage the parties in the conflict. The largest number of citizens is needed in the process of building bridges of community peace. The fourth is to help in building institutions that can manage and mitigate conflicts and prevent violence.

To conclude, Dr Amin pointed out that *“The media have the power to ease tensions before they become irreversible and to keep a critical eye on the government, the opposition and the society. By providing credible content and by reaching a large audience, the media can help manage conflict and promote the principles of democracy”*.





Media and global instabilities: what contribution to Peace?

Panel



The main panel, moderated by **Evgenia ATANASSOVA** (BNT), was animated by the contribution of international experts from the media and civil society, such as **Adrienne van HETEREN** (Institute For War & Peace Reporting, United Kingdom), **Irina NEDEVA** (Bulgarian National Radio and Association of European journalists AEJ-Bulgaria), **Nicolas BOISSEZ** (Fondation Hirondelle, Switzerland), and **Mark Clark** (Generations for Peace, Jordan – connected in remote), who showed concrete examples of peace promotion through initiatives and programs involving radio, television and capacity building projects in the journalism sector.

Ms. Van HETEREN pointed out, in particular, that *“at the time the media development work started, actually media were not seen as much as actors for peace. The media development work started in response to media being actors of war, instigators of inter-ethnic strife and hatred. Media were actually part of the problem”*. She then mentioned one of her experiences as founder of “Press Now”, an action group born in Serbia which started to provide support to fledgling independent media outlets throughout former Yugoslavia, with a view to making the voices of peace be heard in what was then an atmosphere of war also mongered by the national media of that time. Radio initiatives started in several countries of the Balkans, among which B92, a local radio station which became an active promoter of peace and a facilitator to let all the voices of all sides be heard in the Balkan crisis. By the smart use of available technologies, B92 managed to “circumvent the practical blockages in that particular media environment”, providing a model which has been replicated elsewhere, rooted in collaboration and courage in very difficult authoritarian environments.

Mr. BOISSEZ then took the floor to describe the work of Fondation Hirondelle, a Swiss-based NGO whose mission is to provide information to populations facing crisis and empower them in their daily life and as citizens. Mr. Boissez underlined that the organization has 27 years of experience developing and supporting media in fragile contexts. In many countries, especially in Africa, “radio

remains the number-one media, reaching the most remoted regions, and in places faced with conflict where it can contribute to create safe spaces for dialogue". More recently, the organization has started emergency support to local independent media in Ukraine, where they also run a website dedicated to international justice coverage with a network of correspondents worldwide.

"Access to fact-based information in contexts of war and conflict can be as vital as access to health care or to security", he said. "In contexts of conflict the role of media – and namely responsible public service media – is crucial in order to create spaces for dialogue that will help preventing the aggravation of violence and crises".

Ms. NEDEVA then argued that, during the world wars, radio was a military tool - a system used by soldiers and troops to connect to each other -, or a weaponized tool, used for propaganda. Media not necessarily supporting the governmental ideology, but that might serve as an independent actor, as a real fourth power serving the public interest, is a relatively recent and an absolutely essential concept.

Moreover, in her opinion the concept of "war" today needs to be revised: *"as we have seen it after 2016 with Brexit and the American elections, we also live in a time of infowars"*. Concerning the current war in Ukraine, she therefore stressed how important is to have access to independent points of view, ensured by international reporting and international correspondence there on the ground: *"without this internationally-approved professional standards of quality, we would be repeating again the same old story: one media against another media, infowars"*.

Mr. Mark CLARK finally introduced the work of "Generations for Peace" (GFP), a Jordan-based global non-profit peacebuilding organization dedicated to sustainable conflict transformation at the grassroots, through empowering volunteer leaders of youth to promote active tolerance and responsible citizenship in communities experiencing different forms of conflict and violence.

He remarked that the organization has recently started a youth media program in response to what is considered as a significant gap: *"very little digital media content in Jordan and in other countries is authentically engaging young people in dialogue on issues that really matter to them"*. GFP's Youth Media activities engage young people directly in the creation of digital media content, on issues prioritized by young people. The media content is spread through digital platforms using multichannel and multiformat approaches including podcasts, visual episodes, fictional series productions and blogs to amplify youth voices, surface their ideas and solutions, and advance positive narratives to support their efforts to reach out, attract, engage and influence young people, communities, stakeholders, parliamentarians, government officials and experts on different subjects.

The organization also has partnerships with local and internationally renowned filmmakers to provide youth with masterclasses in media production and filmmaking, to enable them to tell their own stories by producing independent films. A recent example referred to a Belfast-based NGO called *Cinemagic*: youth was directly involved in every aspect of film production, from shaping a narrative to developing a script. After a series of consultations and discussions to identify the topics, the young participants reached consensus on selecting the topic of gender-based violence as the one of greatest concern to them, and which will result in a documentary.

Generations for Peace is ranked number three peacebuilding organization in the world and as the number one social good organization in the Arab world.



Presentation of COPEAM Prizes' winners

COPEAM annual Conference was also the occasion to award several international prizes, as follows:

The 2021 UNAOC/IOM PLURAL+ Video Festival - COPEAM Special Prize

assigned to Soheil Soheili for the video *"The art of being in the world of not being"*;

The 2021 ICO Solutions/COPEAM Award "Another view of the Mediterranean"

The Prize for the best contribution of this new coproduction went to Rimane Daou, Télé Liban/Lebanon, for her video-reportage "Mahmoud Chabaan (pêcheur à Saïda)";

2022 ERN-Med Prize

for the best news subject on *"Media and Peace"*, won by the Spanish television RTVE with *"Ukrainian Theater Company"* ;

2022 "À première Vue" Prize

Dedicated to the film and audiovisual schools of COPEAM network, it was assigned to the young Lebanese director Karim Nasr for the short film *"There must be something wrong"*.



Conference side events

➤ **28th General Assembly**

The event ended with the 28th General Assembly of COPEAM members, including the elections for the partial renewal of the **Steering Committee** and the appointment of the **new President of the Association, José Manuel Pérez Tornero**, President of the Spanish public television RTVE¹.

The composition of COPEAM Steering Committee 2022-2024 is the following:

BNT – Bulgaria; Radio France – France; HRT – Croatia; Radio Romania – Romania; France Télévisions – France; RAI – Italy; INA – France; RTSH – Albania; Jordan Media City – Jordan; RTVE – Spain; MySat – Lebanon; NMA – Egypt; PBC – Palestine; Télévision Tunisienne – Tunisia; TRT – Türkiye.

¹ Mrs Elena Sánchez Caballero being the new President of RTVE since September 28, she has consequently replaced Mr. José Manuel Pérez Tornero as President of COPEAM.










COPEAM Steering Committee

➤ **COPEAM Commissions' meetings**

COPEAM activities are structured around 7 thematic Commissions: **Television, Radio, Training, News Exchange, Cinema/Festival/Culture, Audiovisual Heritage** and **Gender Equality and Diversity**.

All the Commissions gathered online in the weeks prior to the annual Conference, bringing together delegates from COPEAM network, partners and external players. These operational groups are aimed at supporting the development of joint projects and initiatives and of synergies between different fields of action, the circulation of ideas and works, as well as the regional mobility of professionals. Each meeting ends with shared recommendations and action proposals. [Click here](#) for COPEAM Commissions' summaries and recommendations (end of the page).

Moreover, in the framework of the 2022 General Assembly, the new Presidents of COPEAM Commissions for the 2022-2024 term were also voted:

Presidents of COPEAM thematic Commissions 2022/2024			
 AUDIOVISUAL HERITAGE COMMISSION	Mireille MAURICE (INA)	 RADIO COMMISSION	Frank LIDON (RADIO FRANCE)
	Kaoutar HAMED (Télévision Tunisienne) - Co-presidency		
 CINEMA FESTIVALS CULTURE COMMISSION	Zina BERRAHAL (TV5 Monde)	 TELEVISION COMMISSION	Markus NIKEL (RAI)
 GENDER EQUALITY & DIVERSITY COMMISSION	Karina LATERZA (RAI)	 TRAINING COMMISSION	Claudia CRACLEANU (RADIO ROMANIA)
 NEWS EXCHANGE COMMISSION	Asunción GOMEZ BUENO (RTVE)		