



## **18<sup>th</sup> annual Conference of COPEAM Agia Napa, Cyprus, 12 -15 May 2011**

### ***"A shared Mediterranean audiovisual landscape New challenges for COPEAM after 15 years of action"***

*"[...] Informing so to build up a common and coherent Mediterranean relies on the respect of equality among countries, their sovereignty and mutual understanding [...]"*

This is what was stated by Mustapha Chérif<sup>1</sup>, one of the keynote speakers, with Gianni De Michelis<sup>2</sup>, invited to open the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Conference of COPEAM, on 14 May 2011, in order to recall together the Euro-Mediterranean political cooperation process over the last 15 years, since the constitution of the Association with the signature of its By-Laws, and to jointly reflect on the future of the Mediterranean region.

Alongside the new scenario which is currently emerging in the Mediterranean area, these two speakers clearly underlined the crucial role media play in representing the events occurring in the Region and in conveying a correct and accurate information on current affairs: *"...on the one hand, there is the role of media, on the other hand, there is the understanding of the message to be conveyed..."*, as Mr. De Michelis remarked. Moreover, the function of Internet, social networks and mobile phones in the fast and effective development and spreading of these phenomena within the majority of Arab societies should not be disregarded.

The influence and the speed of these new information tools replaced the institutional slowness in the different scenarios of the recent revolts, therefore contributing to further develop the dialogue among civil societies and to produce a message, a completely new communication, coming from *the bottom* and able to change the respective social and political establishments.

Nevertheless, the deregulated and often superficial use of the so-called social networks entails substantial problems, as Mr. Chérif pointed out, and their diffusion within some countries is still weak, he added. This is the reason why the responsibility, i.e. the participation in these processes of organizations such as COPEAM, associations of media, becomes essential: the task these actors shall fulfil vis-à-vis the emerging challenges is to assist the national broadcasters of the Southern shore in evolving into public information systems, thus becoming the "warrantors" of the opinions of everyone, as well as in playing an effective role in favour of the expression of their citizens and societies' needs.

COPEAM achievements, reached thanks to the power of the *network* approach held during all these years of activity, show *"that it is possible to live together, sharing and overcoming situations of conflict"*, as Mr. Chérif concluded.

Re-launching *"the Euro-Mediterranean perspective"*, quoting once again Mr. De Michelis, taking the ongoing events as an opportunity to proceed in the same direction: this is our future challenge in order to avoid the clash.

Subsequently, three debate sessions, gathering policy-makers and experts from the two Mediterranean shores, allowed an analysis of the efforts deployed over the last fifteen years by the Association as well as of the changes in the regional audiovisual landscape. The first session assembled, for three key projects of COPEAM, the representatives of organizations partners in significant initiatives – supported by the European institutions – from the two shores, as well as the CEOs of two broadcasters of the region: Jean-Luc Hees of Radio France and Habib Belaïd of Radio Tunisienne. If the Euromed News project, concluded in December 2010, enabled to *"picture a Mediterranean audiovisual community"*, Terramed Plus, that was recently launched, should enable to *"develop a Euro-Mediterranean audience"*, thus creating an

"*audiovisual bridge for a concrete dialogue among cultures*". These initiatives are accompanied by numerous TV (Inter-Rives) as well as radio (The Waves for the Mediterranean) co-productions, some excerpts of which were shown during the session, therefore providing a concrete idea of the regional productions.

Moreover, a discussion on the theme new forms of information for societies undergoing change allowed comparing the opinions of professionals working for all-news channels, press agencies and international organizations. The CFI-COPEAM initiative *Ulysse 2.0*, presented by Rachida Taame from the Moroccan television SOREAD-2M as a "*virtual trip to discover the Mediterranean youth*" was a useful illustration of the debated issues. This project, gathering young journalists from the Mediterranean area, puts technology, namely the *web-documentary*, at the centre of the new journalistic practice, thus suggesting an innovative solution to inform the general public.

The third and last round table allowed deepening the theme of technologies, assessing the usefulness of the new media for an open audiovisual landscape. The encounter of specialists on this matter, working for Dailymotion or the EBU, with the Algerian sociologist Belkacem Mostefaoui, generated a rich and productive debate enabling to state that "*new media open new possible expression spaces for the citizens of the region*". The Secretary General Alessandra Paradisi took the floor during this debate in order to present to the participants the *Med-Agora*, a multimedia platform aimed at enhancing, through capitalizing on the social network technologies, the regional audiovisual production.

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