

COPEAM

28<sup>th</sup> annual Conference  
Media narratives for intercultural  
and interreligious dialogue

Rome, 27 October 2021

Rai

## GENERAL PRESENTATION

Due to the restrictions related to the current health emergency, the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Conference of COPEAM was held online on 27 October 2021, upon kind invitation of Rai-Radiotelevisione Italiana.

Representatives of public broadcasters and cultural and audiovisual operators of the Mediterranean region gathered to discuss the topic **“Media narratives for intercultural and interreligious dialogue”**. The event has been a “virtual stage” of debate between experts from Europe and the Arab world on this sensitive and topical issue, highlighting the **current trends and best practices put in place by the media, the CSOs and international organizations for enhancing dialogue** across the Mediterranean Region. In particular, in these crucial times when financial, migratory and health crisis are triggering intolerance and xenophobia worldwide, media narratives are very powerful and effective tools for backing integration and social cohesion.

The Conference took place on Zoom, with a live streaming also available on COPEAM Facebook page. Part of the works were held at RAI’s headquarters in Rome, in the stunning setting of *Sala degli Arazzi*.

### The 2021 COPEAM Conference in figures



**+100 registrations**

*Zoom platform*

**+400 views**

*Facebook streaming*



**13 speakers**

*Online or in presence*



**24 countries**

*Europe, MENA Region,  
Latin America*

# Opening Ceremony

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**Claudio Cappon**, Secretary General of COPEAM, opened the Conference, welcoming all the attendees and giving the floor to RAI representatives, hosting the event.

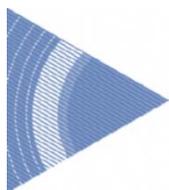
The President of RAI-Radiotelevisione italiana, **Marinella Soldi**, addressed a welcome speech to the participants, pointing out that cooperation between Mediterranean broadcasters, which is at the heart of COPEAM's mission, is an opportunity for a better mutual understanding between countries and societies, thanks to the sharing of values and of professional know-how. She affirmed that RAI remains committed to find richness and new prospects from the diversity characterizing the Mediterranean Region, in particular through the participation in international co-productions, projects and trainings.

**Simona Martorelli**, director of RAI International Relations' department, reminded the tight and solid bond between the Italian broadcaster and COPEAM, grown stronger over the years since the foundation of the Association, in 1996. She added that the theme of this Conference comes in a crucial historical moment, giving - at just the right time - the possibility to Public Service Media to reflect together on the importance of their role in fostering dialogue, starting from the common Mediterranean legacy. The Conference topic, she concluded, ultimately embodies the core meaning of a partnership: *"to exchange experiences, to confront on differences, even to share problems and challenges"*, which is the best way to reaffirm the existing bonds.



# Key-note speeches

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## ***Preservation and promotion of cultural and religious diversities***



**Gabriela Ramos**, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences at **UNESCO**, focused her message on the importance of preserving and promoting cultural and religious diversities in the world, bringing some significant initiatives implemented by UNESCO both globally and in the MENA region.

Ms. Ramos underlined that ***“we need to make the most of the Media to shed light on the role of intercultural dialogue as a tool for innovation and cohesion”***: media actors have to catalyze the positive message of unity in diversity, especially in the Mediterranean area, a natural crossroads between civilizations and cultures. ***“We have to draw on the historical lessons and highlight how dialogue forged the Region as we know it today”***, she said, calling for a joint action to embrace cultural diversity, share solution experiences and aspirations.

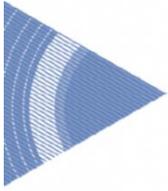
Among the pertinent actions led by UNESCO, she mentioned the **“International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures”**, an initiative ending in 2022 but with the very relevant purpose of developing a universal global consciousness, free from stereotypes and prejudices.

She also cited the **“International University network on Media, information literacy and intercultural dialogue”**, aimed at helping youth assess critically the information found on the internet. Established 10 years ago by UNESCO and the UNAOC - United Alliance of Civilizations, the project counts on the participation of Universities from Morocco, Italy, France, Spain and Egypt, and is a key asset to provide cutting-edge research and promote capacity building on media and information literacy.

Another important initiative in this field concerns the **training on intercultural competencies for young leaders in the Mediterranean region**, organized with the Anna Lindh Foundation. Through an innovative **“story circles” methodology**, she explained, it aims at ***“empowering individuals from all ages with the social emotional skills to step outside of their own logic and systems of thought, engaging with others and appreciating different cultural perspectives”***.

Finally, Ms. Ramos pointed out a relevant action intended to enhance the **role of youth as global citizens in the field of peace building**, through the protection of cultural heritage as well as the promotion on media and information literacy to detect lies and reject messages of hatred. This project was developed by UNESCO and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

To conclude, the importance of the protection of freedom of expression was also highlighted, with a special mention of the 2 journalists winning the 2021 Nobel Prize, Maria Ressa and Dmitri Muratov, who were awarded for their efforts to safeguard such a freedom, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace.



## Conference introduction



**José Manuel Pérez Tornero**, President of Radio y Televisión Española (RTVE), delivered an introductory video message focusing on the contribution of Mediterranean media in relation to dialogue, cooperation and support to culture.

In particular, due to its diversities, the Mediterranean has always been a sensitive Region, he said. Media professionals from this area are thus invested with a broad mission: informing about the current events, describing the everyday development of societies, producing fiction, launching new narratives, entertaining the public, but they also have the important task of promoting cooperation and exchanges between societies and populations.

Since today's main challenges go way beyond the local scale - he added - the solutions can be only found together and outside the national borders. Therefore, he highlighted the **need to focus the action of the Media on accelerator projects which can allow effective cooperation and fulfil the existing potential**.

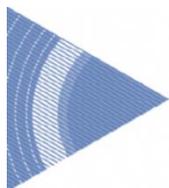
As a meaningful example, he proposed the creation of a **Mediterranean Audiovisual University**: *"a physical and virtual place to learn, share, promote young talents, and, above all, create a community"*. This institution could start off from an alliance between broadcasters and Universities. If relationships between communication professionals in the Region are enhanced, the benefit can then be extended to the whole citizenship.

Another pregnant initiative he suggested concerns the **launch of a joint platform for the dissemination of science and culture in the Mediterranean region, supported by the audiovisual sector**: *"starting from the contribution of national broadcasters, education and scientific progress can gain momentum and vigor"*.

As a final point, Mr Pérez Tornero underlined the urgency of implementing such projects both *"from a strategic and technological point of view"*, calling the media operators of the Region who share the same ideas and values to unite forces around these initiatives.

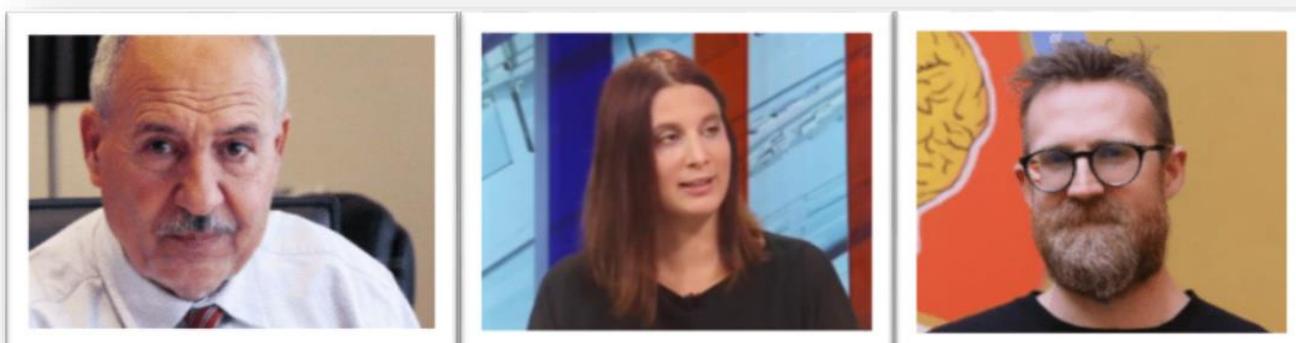
## Panel

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### **Media narratives for intercultural and Interreligious dialogue**

In the panel moderated by **Marina Lalović**, journalist at the Foreign Desk of RaiNews24, three experts took the floor for a joint discussion about the main topic of the Conference: **Federico Ruozi**, University researcher and expert at Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose (Italy), **Jelena Jorgačević Kisić**, regional representative for Europe of IARJ - International Association of Religion Journalists (Serbia), and **Nouri Lajmi**, President of the HAICA - Haute Autorité Indépendante de la Communication Audiovisuelle and of the REFRAM - Réseau francophone des régulateurs des médias (Tunisia).



**Mr. Ruozi** started by explaining what **religious illiteracy** represents today, in the society and within the media in particular. Despite the different theories on the secularization of societies – he said - religions still persist and have taken on *“an enormous role in the public sphere”*.

Especially in the media sector, such illiteracy represents the “elephant in the room”. Far from being a mere sociological fact, it intertwines the educational system, society at large, the knowledge generated and produced by school, and the media - both traditional and new media. He therefore pointed out that any analysis of illiterateness relating to religion and any attempt to reverse it should start from considering all these aspects, avoiding the risk of picking one of them at a time. **“The role of the media is strictly connected with the issue of education”**: the mediocre, standardized contents on historical religious issues that we find in many history textbooks adopted at school – and which cause a lack of functional literacy about the topic - can also be found in some TV programs. He affirmed that this problem also reveals itself in **“the approximation of languages in which also the media have a responsibility”**, providing the example of the word “radical” improperly used on TV and on the news to define terrorists and which, on the contrary, is a very noble expression in political and spiritual contexts.

Finally, an important reflection concerned the concept of the **“social cost” of religious illiteracy**: *“common places, prejudices and lack of knowledge lead to cultural incidents and conflicts in the civil community, and create obstacles to coexist in social integration. All of these have to be considered as costs for society”*.

**Mr. Nouri Lajmi**, from his side, emphasized the difficulty of finding a universally-accepted definition of “**hate speech**” and, by this difficulty, how it is challenging to set boundaries between freedom of expression and discrimination.

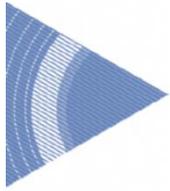
*“Preventing hate speech means preventing tensions, laying the foundation for a peaceful society”*, he said. **Media regulators** such as the HAICA have the mission - stated by the Constitution - to ensure the **freedom of expression** but, at the same time, they are called to **protect the human dignity**. For this reason, regulators - which are independent bodies - are called every day to take decisions against the media who convey **messages of discrimination**. Although hate speech is a global phenomenon touching even democratic societies - he stated - differences in its content of course occur at both national and regional levels: for instance, the islamophobia caused by extremism and terrorism is one of the main issues when it comes to hate speech in Europe. In Tunisia, on the contrary, messages of discrimination and hatred are often addressed to non-believers or those blamed for being “bad Muslims”.

The REFRAM, which gathers over 30 entities, also carries out joint activities aimed at monitoring and eradicating hate speech in the media: in particular, Mr. Lajmi mentioned a pilot project concluded in 2017 targeting both traditional and social media in Morocco, Tunisia and Ivory Coast.

Finally, the lack of self-awareness of some media operators was also indicated as an issue to be tackled. Hence, he added that the action of prevention of hate speech led by regulators also resides in **training and awareness-raising activities addressing journalists**. He concluded pointing out that some positive shifts occurred in the last years thanks to such initiatives.

**Ms. Jorgačević Kisić** mainly focused on interreligious dialogue. In detail, she brought up the difficulty of providing an overall picture of this complex issue, because countries and societies differ a lot in terms of relations between state and religion, level of integration, majority and minority religions, media scene etc. However, some common problems were pointed out, such as the lack of academic and scholar papers dealing with media narratives on interreligious dialogue, and the **level of knowledge and specialization of journalists**: *“if you want to give the context, provide analysis, find the adequate interlocutors to cover a topic that is of public interest, it is important to have specialized or actually literate journalists in the field”*. If journalists are educated, in fact, especially in times of crisis they can avoid the risks of reporting with superficiality and falling into stereotypes.

Moreover, she highlighted how the **media religious discourse** usually steps in when something happens, while journalists should act preventively by producing stories even before, through the so called **constructive journalism**: *“Some people say that when it comes to journalism, bad news is a good news, and that media are not interested enough in constructive topics”*, she said. Yet, **public service media** and professional journalists should put the public interest in the first place, and interreligious dialogue certainly is a topic of the “highest public interest”, clarifying that constructive narratives are not necessarily positive, but **informative and reliable**.



## Presentation of COPEAM Prizes' winners

COPEAM's international awards and prizes for the year 2021 were announced with a video presentation.



### **Inter-Rives 8 COPEAM/ASBU Special Prize**

The prize for best documentary of the coproduction Inter Rives 8 "*SustainAbility: Stories of Changemakers*", went *ex aequo* to: **Athina Kazolea**, ERT/Greece, for "Blue Mission", and to **Dina Amin**, PBC/ Palestine, "Um-Slimam Farm".

The Special Mention "*Woman*" in memory of *Raffaella Rossetti* was attributed to "Sky Sign" by **Mohammad Elmihiy**, NMA/Egypt.

### **2021 ERN-Med Prize**

The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the ERN-MED Prize, devoted to "*Media & Science: the importance of accurate information vs misleading news*", was given to **Mariam Benzekri**, SNRT/Morocco, for the best exchanged news on "COVID19: Fighting fake news". The award was assigned by a COPEAM-ASBU-EBU jury with the support of UNESCO.

### **"Making a Story from Archives" 2021 Prize**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of this Prize, devoted to "*The relations between Mediterranean countries: an historical perspective*", went to **Marija Vitas**, RTS/Serbia for "Sephardim - The Thread of the Mediterranean" (TV category) and to **Mouna Benameur**, SNRT/Morocco for "Assrar Al Andaloussi - Les secrets de la musique arabo andalouse" (Radio category).

### **"Nuits Méditerranéennes" COPEAM Prize**

The Prize was awarded to **Abdenoure Ziane** (France) for the film "Jeûne d'été" (*Summer fasting*).

### **IFAD/COPEAM "Thematic documentary" Special Prize (Sicilymovie Festival 2021)**

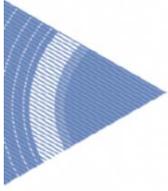
This special prize jointly established by COPEAM and IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) in the framework of the *Sicilymovie* - Festival del cinema di Agrigento 2021 was allocated to **David Rodríguez Muñoz** (Spain) for his work "Beyond the Glaciers".

### **ICO Solutions/COPEAM Prize "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)".

### **UNAOC/IOM PLURAL + Video Festival 2020 - COPEAM Special Prize**

The Prize of the 2020 edition of the Plural+ Video Festival was assigned to **Jorge Orellana Lorenzo** (Spain), for "Both sides of the coin".



## Best Practices Showcase

*Contributions from inside and outside the COPEAM network*

In the afternoon session, moderated by COPEAM Deputy Secretary General **Paola Parri**, representatives of broadcasters, cultural institutions and international organizations partnering with COPEAM presented some relevant initiatives promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue as best practices in the field.

In particular, the session was enriched by the following contributions:



# france•tv

## France Télévisions

*Sunday morning interreligious programming*

Every Sunday morning, France Télévisions – in its capacity as public service media - broadcasts religious programs devoted to the **main faiths practiced in France**: Catholicism, Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Protestantism and Buddhism.

Between 8:30 am and 12:00, **“The Paths of Faith” programme on France 2** gives voice to all these different confessions. The related contents are produced under the responsibility of the different religious representatives.

In addition, some special programs are aired throughout the year on the occasion of important celebrations such as the Ramadan, Easter, Christmas, the ceremony of remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust, etc.

Finally, ecumenical and interfaith special programs promote interreligious dialogue through debates on major topics such as science and religion, gender equality and secularism.



Union for the Mediterranean  
Union pour la Méditerranée  
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط

## UfM/UpM

*The intercultural Euro-Med Universities EMUNI & UEMF and “The Mediterranean Day”*

**Isabel Pardillos**, Head of Unit Communication & Public Affairs at the Union for the Mediterranean, presented two intercultural Euro-Med Universities supported by this intergovernmental institution: EMUNI, based in Slovenia, and UEMF, based in Morocco. Both of them were established to promote regional dialogue, knowledge-sharing and **intercultural exchanges in the fields of higher education, research and innovation**. They have the ambition of shaping a unique “regional vision”, open to the younger generations. Another significant initiative presented in this framework concerns the setting-up of the first **“Day of the Mediterranean”**: coinciding with the anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration in 1995, which laid the foundations for the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean, this special day is celebrated on the 28<sup>th</sup> November every year starting from 2021. The aim is to foster a common Mediterranean identity and to raise awareness about the efforts undertaken by all the stakeholders who work on a daily basis to **enhance cooperation and integration in the Euro-Mediterranean area**. It is also an occasion to hold *ad-hoc* events, exhibitions and festivals across the region with a view to **strengthening ties between the two shores**, promoting intercultural exchanges and dialogue, and embracing the diversity of the region. All the broadcasters of the region were invited to endorse the initiative.

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# EBU

## European Broadcasting Union

*EURORADIO joint event for the “UNESCO World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development”*

The EBU is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion and has designated these topics as strategic priorities, recognizing the vital importance of such issues for its members and their audiences.

On the occasion of the 2021 edition of the “UNESCO World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development” in May ‘21, the EBU involved **45 public radio channels from all over the world with music and spoken word events that underline the importance of music and culture in promoting diversity as an agent of inclusion, prosperity and positive change**.

Artists from all over the world – such as musicians, singers, composers - joined this initiative with their performances and also with some short interviews on the topic promoted.

Some video-testimonies of the campaign were shown during the COPEAM Conference, including those of the European composer and activist Max Richter, of the Egyptian soprano Fatma Said and of the Catalan viol player Jordi Savall, who said in his interview: *“The best way to understand distant cultures and what intercultural dialogue is, I think, is music. It speaks to us without any need to understand the language and speaks to us directly to the heart. And because with music we can't lie, you are sure that by hearing a song, a beautiful melody from any culture, you will easily understand the soul and the beauty of that culture”*.



## UNESCO - The U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

*Story Circles for Developing Intercultural Competencies*

**Joyce Monteiro** - Associate Programme Specialist, “Inclusion, Rights and Dialogue Section”, Sector for Social and Human Sciences - presented the “**Story Circles for Developing Intercultural Competencies**”, with a special focus on the trainings jointly organized with the Anna Lindh Foundation and designed for the **Mediterranean youth**.

“Story Circles” is a structured yet flexible methodology for developing intercultural competencies in a variety of contexts, both formal and informal. The **methodology** has proven to be effective on a variety of different issues - from migrants’ social inclusion to dialogue between indigenous peoples - with participants acquiring strong **skills for tolerance, empathy, critical thinking and listening for understanding**. The initiative is organized in the context of the UNESCO project “Building Resilience through the Development of Intercultural Competencies”, which proposes to implement regional training on this innovative approach for governments, CSOs’ representatives, religious leaders and educators in order to share good practices about intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution, foster local ownership and contribute to the monitoring and overall evaluation of the methodology.

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### **PakaPaka TV** (Member of TAL network)

*Animated series: “When we meet, we grow” and “My family”*

PakaPaka TV is an Argentinian children and educational channel associated to TAL, the network of televisions of Latin America.

**Cielo Salviolo**, Director of PakaPaka, presented two successful animated series promoting dialogue among the youngest. The first, “When we meet, we grow” (*Encontrarnos nos hace crecer*) is an initiative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF, the Argentinian National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and the Family (SENAF) for the integration of migrant children: through the different habits in playing, dressing, eating and celebrating, this series focuses on the ways in which cultural diversity may also unite, complete and enrich us.

The second series, “My family” (*Mi familia*) is a journey through the wide galaxy of family groups seen through the eyes of children. Short extracts of the two programmes were shown.



## Rai-Radiotelevisione Italiana

The TV magazine “Mediterraneo”

RAI presented “Mediterraneo”, a historical international magazine co-produced by the TgR (the regional news dpt.) and France 3. The Spanish broadcaster RTVE was a regular co-producer until the end of 2006 and has recently joint the partnership again. The **magazine**, which is now at its 30<sup>th</sup> season, **deals with social, political, cultural and environmental issues concerning the whole Mediterranean Basin.**

It represents a high quality showcase of the natural and cultural heritage of the region, keeping up with the social transformations, the cultural interconnections, the migration phenomenon and the integration issues of this common “space”.

Since its creation in 1993, several televisions from all over the Mediterranean have broadcast this program, including Arab countries through the involvement of ASBU.



# Conference side events

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## **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**. In consideration of the health emergency, in the year 2021 all the Commissions gathered online prior to the annual Conference, during the month of October, bringing together delegates from COPEAM network, partners and external players. These operational groups are aimed at supporting, in particular, 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.



## Links

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Click here to watch the full Conference: [Morning session](#) - [Afternoon session](#)

[Click here](#) to watch the Video presentation of COPEAM 2021 activities

[Click here](#) to watch the video of the 2021 COPEAM Prizes' winners

[Click here](#) for COPEAM Commissions' summaries

[Click here](#) to see the photo gallery

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