

The role of media, journalists and propaganda in the refugee crisis (Let's name it)

The sad reality of the so called refugee crisis in the Central Europe and Baltic States is the fact that there is a huge refugee crisis and hysteria without almost any refugees physically present in the region, Islamophobia on the sharp rise but without Muslims being here and plenty of politicians happily playing the role of our saviours gaining significant support from less informed but very frightened citizens. In fact, the refugee issue has become the main hope of irresponsible politicians for future election gains putting aside all the real problems of our societies ranging from widespread corruption, terrible demographic prognosis, stagnating quality of education and health care or environmental problems. Furthermore, the propaganda targetting always refugees, the EU, Angela Merkel, Muslims, NGOs and the USA created negative attitudes of the general public towards the solidarity and cooperation of national states as well as within the European Union, NATO and United Nations.

In the two days long conference taking place in Prague from **26 and 27 January 2017** in the European House, Jungmannova street 24, we will take a look at the work of media and journalist during and after the refugee crisis, we will explore what the experts and CSOs can do for journalists and media to make their outputs more balanced and how to loudly name and address the growing problem of propaganda and political populism playing tricky games with myths and facts surrounding the issue of migration. We will also look at how internal political actors are using this media discourse for making their populist arguments more visible and 'rational'.

The urgent questions are the following: What are the key alternatives for such a negative and one-single sided media response? Are there any good examples, how independent media channels apply (or should apply) ethical protocols while covering issues of our concern? Or are there any other effective instruments for reshaping media discourses in our region?

A side event on 25 January will bring to Prague (European House, 1 pm) key civil society organisations acting in the field of refugee protection in Central Europe, most of them member agencies of ECRE – the European Council on Refugees and Exiles. They will present their brand new report concerning the unlawful practice

of push-backs (*refoulement*) of refugees at the external borders of the EU in Central Europe as well as highlight some of deterrence measures applied vis-a-vis the people in need of protection such as detention or prolongation of the RSD procedures.

Please confirm your registration at eva.kalicinska@opu.cz A valid ID with picture will be required at the entrance door to the conference. The conference language is English only.

Agenda:

Thursday 26 January

- 1.0 Opening Statements, Martin Rozumek, Organisation for Aid to Refugees (OPU)

Assessment of media coverage of the refugee crisis in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia –Adéla Jurečková, People in Need Foundation, Prague, Zuzana Kepplová, SME, Slovakia
- 1.40 Talk Decoded – Dr. Anna Szilagyi – Language Matters: the Constructions of the Refugee Crisis in Political and Media Discourses in Hungary
- 2.10 Discussion
- 2.20 – 2.30 Break
- 2.30 Presenting the facts – avoiding myths surrounding refugees, how CSOs and experts could support journalists in their work, Tomáš Lindner, Respekt and Martin Biben, Hospodářské noviny
- 3.10 Overview of public attitudes in the Czech Republic and possible recipes against blackpainting of refugees and migrants – Pavel Fischer, STEM, and Magda Faltová, SIMI
- 3.40 The medias manic-depression in covering the refugees crisis or how we failed to do our job
Clemens Neuhold, Profil, Austria
- 4.10 Discussion

Friday 27 January

- 10.00 Mysterious concerned citizens and anti-propaganda efforts in Lithuania". Daiva Repečkaitė , People of Change Foundation, Malta
- 10.30 Czech state and non-state responses towards the propaganda - Jakub Janda, Think-tank European Values
- 11.00 What is Russia´s new hybrid warfare and how important is the role of propaganda? The example of the Lisa-Case from Germany, Steffen Dobbert, Zeit Online editor, Germany
- 11.30 Discussion, Q and A
- 12.00 Break with „chlebíčky“ /Snack and refreshment
- 12.30 What can we do for better future? Are there any other effective instruments for reshaping media discourses in our region? How EU citizens can be objectively informed about refugees and the advantages of EU cooperation in the asylum and migration agenda. An overview of views, good ideas and initiatives from the participants from various countries:
- Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania,
- 14.00 Farewell and end of the conference

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