

# cmfe

Community Media Forum Europe

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2021

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### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Birgitte Jallof

While it has been an honour to be the face of CMFE the past two years as its President – it has even more been a joy to return my life-long engagement in support of community media globally, to my own continent, to Europe – learning from all of you what community media is all about here, now.

And – not surprisingly – the issues surrounding our work here are, at the core, much like how I have met it in Africa, Asia, in Latin America, the Middle East and North America:

*A platform where ordinary people meet up to – together – formulate what life is all about in each our reality, to share the challenges, the cultural expressions, the celebrations – getting a voice, contributing to the surrounding society, making sense of it all, while making what is heard in the public more diverse, more colourful, more true.*

In CMFE we have over the past year continued to focus our work on what we did the year before under the headings outlined in our strategic plan:

1. **Policy advocacy** for an enabling environment for community media in Europe
2. **Visibility** of and understanding of what 'community media' is all about
3. **Cooperation for change** within our sector
4. **Our own continued sustainability**

## Working for results through a multitude of partnerships and collaborative engagements

This report focuses upon the different engagements CMFE has been involved in, all with a view to advance our strategic goals within our strategic focus themes. Results take a long time to really materialise from this kind of work, but we have noticed the following:

- We definitely find that CMFE is better known - and better known in areas, where this is wanted by us. This is the result of the work by many, many people in and around CMFE over the past eighteen years;
- There is a growing recognition of the quality that CMFE brings to the table. We find this expressed in more pro-active invitations by the sector for us to engage in collaborative either project or reflective (research, debates) work;
- Through our newsletter we reach close to a thousand community radio advocates, policy makers, researchers and activists 10 times a year – and in the post transmission reports, we see that many of those engage actively with the newsletters' contents (open the newsletters, click on links).
- In two of three cases where we have actively supported community media environments under pressure, we have seen that we have contributed to successful outcomes of the struggles – and have been recognized to having had that role.

## During the past year, the following are examples of important activity we have engaged in:

**Ad 1: In terms of advocacy,** we have continued to open doors, ensuring a proper reflection of community media in the different relevant fora:

As part of our work as observers within the **Council of Europe (CoE) CDMSI Steering Committee on Media and Information Society** – covering “the Council of Europe’s work in the fields of freedom of expression, media, internet governance and other information society related issues” we among others have:

- taken part as observer at the CoE expert-group on media reform in the ongoing meetings, this year mostly happening online. D
- our CMFE Expert group member Toby Mendel prepared and submitted to MSI-REF a detailed analysis of the Draft Guidance Note on Prioritisation of Public Interest Content.
- in addition to that Note, CMFE participants within the MSI-REF committee of experts, commented with much detail on two other documents prepared during this period:
  - Draft recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on electoral communication and media coverage of election campaigns
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- Organised the World Café session and Exhibition on Media Information Literacy (MIL) projects at CoE Conference of Ministers on Artificial Intelligence foreseen to take place in Cyprus in 2020, but postponed to 2021, where is still took place as an online event:
  - <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/exhibition-space>
  - <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/media2021nicosia-recordings>

- Within the committee on combatting hate speech ([ADI/MSI-DIS](#)) we provided comments to documents, mostly taken on board – ensuring a proper reflection of the potential and role of community media.

**Media Pluralism Monitor** – (MPM) is based in the EU centre for media pluralism and media pluralism, presenting (bi-)annual reports to assess the risks for media pluralism in a given European country.

- We have read many of the national reports, realising the absence of a proper reflection of community media in many. We have then engaged with the national experts preparing them to ensure a proper reflection of community media.

#### **EMIL - EPRA's Media and Information Literacy Taskforce**

- CMFE's Vice-president Helmut Peissl was invited to become a participant of this exchange group on Media & Information Literacy set up by EPRA. On behalf of CMFE Helmut attended 3 of 4 meetings, ensuring coordination of thinking and work by CMFE, CM in general and of [COMMIT](#).

#### **UNESCO Paris' MIL activities**

- Because of CMFE's engagement with MIL, UNESCO's responsible for these activities, Alton Grizzle from UNESCO-Paris has invited us to collaborate ([GAPMIL](#)).

**We have in situations of legal challenges at national level, given our solidarity and support:**

#### **Luxembourg:**

- Radio ARA in Luxembourg in its fight for continued legal space and support. This battle was won – for now.
- This support was partly underscored during the Press Freedom Conference in Luxembourg around the CMFE GA 2020, creating a meeting ground between Luxembourg legislators with their peers from other European countries for dialogue.

#### **Hungary:**

- We here offered the Regulatory Authorities a neutral platform to meet with Regulatory Authorities from other countries, so as to consider more open policies towards community media. This invitation was kindly declined.
- CMFE has also engaged in documenting and sharing the hardship for our sector in Hungary when obscure reasons were found to close FM channels for the last community voices.
- In connection with the latter, we engaged with our sector's EU commissioner Veera Jourova, who recognized our efforts and offered collaboration with CMFE in the area.

#### **Slovenia:**

- CMFE organised a European alert and signature collection via the GFMD platform when Radio Student was at risk of removal of the financial basis and a resulting de-facto closure. CMFE's Slovenian board member, shared a greeting from the radio stressing, that this support had been of core importance for Radio Student coming through the major political and funding crisis over the past year.

## Ad 2: In terms of visibility:

### CMFE's external visibility and expression

- We have a **new logo and look** masterminded by our board's Vladimir Radinovic;
- We have a **new webpage** – a major effort headed by our board's Larry Macaulay: [www.cmfe.eu](http://www.cmfe.eu)
- We continue the **monthly newsletter** we started last year (10 issues per year) curated by myself, supported by Nadia Bellardi, taking up issues of importance to community media in Europe – and beyond. This is most often based in some of our active engagement in activities elsewhere reflected in this report:
  - [Women & Community Media 2021](#)
  - [Women & Community Media 2020](#)
  - [Media and information literacy](#)
  - [New Neighbours – countering racism](#)
  - [Community Media Providing Social Benefit & Public Value](#)
  - [Language\(s\) & Community Media](#)
  - [Community Media & Migration](#)
  - [Peace journalism](#)
  - [Student and Campus radio](#)
  - [Community Media & the Corona Crisis](#)
  - [Celebrating Radio and World Radio Day](#)

### Planning major project(s) to map community media in Europe

- As a community media forum, we should also like to be a well-informed resource-base about the status of our sector in Europe – including clear and in-depth information about our strengths and success, and our remaining challenges. We therefore in last year's General Assembly agreed that updated mapping would be important (earlier mappings are from 2007 and 2012). We are working at two different levels - mapping community media in Europe:
  - A thorough project, hopefully with European funding, with Vice President Helmut Peissl and CMFE experts Josef Seethaler and Nico Carpentier in front;
  - A broad overview of the situation in each country, focusing on a collection of core data available, headed by outgoing President Birgitte Jallof (who now has time – after handing over the Presidency).

### Participation in webinars and conferences, speaking on behalf of CMFE – a few examples

- Università Cattolica Online Seminar – where Nadia Bellardi represented CMFE: We tell a different story – the role of documentary film, alternative and community media in reporting migration <https://youtu.be/eO5XEa6WFB0>;
- Global Dialogues, initiated and implemented by the UNESO Chair on Community Media, based in Hyderabad, India – CMFE coordinated with AMARC Europe, two European dialogues;
- OSCE & Access Now Expert Workshop on AI and FoE on 14 April (not public, so no docs to share) Nadia Bellardi represented CMFE;

- OSCE-UNHCR Webinar Series on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Migrants and Refugees, Part III: “Access to and Use of Media by Refugees and Migrants”, (also not public, so no docs to share) Nadia Bellardi represented CMFE.
- EC STRUCTURED DIALOGUE ON SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS, Module III on "Journalists and equality – Addressing gender-based attacks and supporting journalists representing minorities”, Thursday, March 25, 2021. Nadia Bellardi represented CMFE;
- Media & Migration in Europe Network (mailing list, live meeting in Berlin in September 2021, participation ongoing) Nadia Bellardi represented CMFE;

#### **Upcoming:**

- OSCE-UNHCR Webinar Series on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Migrants and Refugees: Importance of Alliances and Consolidated Approaches
  - Final Hybrid event (tbc), 17 December 2021, 10:00 – 13:00h CET (hopefully public this time!)

### **Ad 3: Cooperation – via partnerships and projects:**

CMFE has, over the past year, continued to nurture and expand potential collaboration in the form of partnerships and projects. **The partnerships** on the one hand ensures that community media are remembered in policy work, statements and priorities; on the other, it keeps CMFE – and our sector – informed about new initiatives. **The work with** creation and implementation of **projects**, represent opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in the sector to advance our agendas in synergy.

#### **Partnerships:**

- GFMD – Broad world-wide networking – planning to work on Community media
- IAMCR – CCAM – webinar series in the pipeline
- UNESCO Chair – global dialogues with AMARC Europe – ongoing collaboration
- AMARC Europe – different projects maturing on CM in the digital sphere and more

#### **Projects:**

- New Neighbours: National events (Italy, Germany) and Final Conference  
The aim of NN was to highlight the positive social and economic contributions made by migrants and refugees throughout communities across Europe, thereby fostering tolerance and acceptance of migrants and refugees inside the EU.
- SMART: offering the opportunity to create radio trainings for community radio based on resources collected for all relevant kinds of work in community radio. A search engine allows the user to find what is needed, collected, tested and adapted by international, experienced radio trainers.
- Get the Trolls Out! (GTTO) with MDI, ongoing. Working with partners across Europe, GTTO counters anti-religious hate speech through exposing individuals and organisations, finding and debunking dangerous narratives in the media, and educating young people how to spot and respond to online trolls.
- Miles – mapping Media and information literacy initiatives in Europe. Just started

- We have different proposals in the pipeline among others in collaboration with RSF (Reporters without frontiers) and FPU (Free Press Unlimited)

#### Ad 4: CMFE sustainability

##### Organisational Sustainability

CMFE works to be a coherent and functional advocacy organisation, driving the important mission and agenda forward through our individual and collective work in our national, regional and international networks. During the past year we have:

- Carried out lobby visits to Bruxelles to scout for and talk to inspire European agencies to support opportunities for structural funds. This could allow CMFE to set up a secretariat (even small) in support to the high frequency of voluntary work, presently making CMFE work.
- Worked to activate the 'CMFE Experts Group' through the start of online conversations, to on the one hand engage our experts more in the ongoing work to advance CMFE's agendas, on the other, for the active 'working board members' to get inspiration from the work and priorities of our experts. This I did, in order to dynamize CMFE and our action range.
- Developed a 'Board Repository', tracing board documents, General Assembly documents and others as far back as possible, so as to have our legacy, our history, available – while still possible. This, as I, as the President, wanted to ensure to be building on CMFE's past.
- Continuing the work to have an internal regulation including post descriptions for board members, travel regulations etc. for transparency and accountability – as above.

##### Social Sustainability

Social sustainability and relevance including ownership of our organisation by members and buy-in to our core issues by partners is a priority for us.

- We have planned to further strengthen our contact and communication with members. This work has started but needs to be continued – also to get more of the relevant actors in Europe not yet members, on board.
- As mentioned above, we have actively worked to develop new and active formal and informal collaborations with relevant partners.

##### Financial Sustainability

We have continued to ensure that we operate within a strict risk control environment with clear financial and accounting regulations and routines, transparency and accountability to partners, members and funders alike. Within the financially modest CMFE regime, free, untied funds are primarily used to contribute to board members' participation in the annual General Assembly – and funds allowing, also some additional active CMFE members based on an application process.

Ideally, CMFE should like to access – and our mandate would merit – access to additional structural funding, allowing to call for topical conferences during the year (outside of the GA, which is usually situated within a pre-existing event, piggybacking on thematic discussions, a broader participation and sometimes funding. Some of our efforts in this area are mentioned above.

We are pleased to report this year that CMFE's financial reality – and subsequent sustainability – within our modest frame, is positive:

- The core CMFE untied, regular funding source remains as our membership fees, hence linked to the point made above, about the importance of contact with existing and invitation of new members to the CMFE family.
- Projects represent the other potential source of funding, where admin fees are the other regular source of funding ensuring collaboration, visibility and cooperation –

and also possible funds for the things CMFE wants to do on our own. During the past year, we have had a couple of projects providing such funds.

- We are continually striving to secure funding from others through partnerships.

### **Environmental/Climate Sustainability**

This is a new area CMFE has started to discuss, but where we have not yet elaborated a framework.

### **Recognizing the immense work carried out by the CMFE board and its experts**

Upon closing up this annual report of the world of CMFE as seen from my desk and through my glasses, I should like to pay tribute to, recognize, honour and celebrate the incredible efforts made by all active CMFE board members and experts, to advance our shared belief and understanding. In a context where freedom of expression and access to information are increasingly endangered by concentration of ownership in the media field and by the spread of disinformation, community-run projects, whether online, radio or TV, are indicators of media pluralism, as the Council of Europe expresses it.

This is why we do what we do, and I should like to extend a warm, heartfelt thank you to all of you, who do this. I have enjoyed being at the core of this action for the past two years. Thank you, all!

## VISION

A society, where community media are recognized and supported as important platforms for dialogue and debate, owned by the communities, and where all communities in the community, citizens, have access to freely address issues of concern.

## MISSION

CMFE's mission is to advocate for community media in Europe, and thus raise awareness of the contributions of community media to media pluralism, democratic participation and development. This mission includes efforts to obtain legal recognition of the 3rd sector on a European and national level, secure funding opportunities and entertain dialogues with European bodies, provide links to research and activities that foster support, exchange and cooperation with new independent civic media initiatives.

## STRATEGIC THEMATIC WORK AREAS:

1

Legal, enabling  
background work  
- Advocacy

2

Communication  
and CM Visibility  
– Advocacy

3

Action for  
Cooperation and  
Change

4

CMFE  
Sustainability