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A National Media Encounter – Media Cross-Production for Inclusive Media Coverage

The VFRÖ - Association of Free Radio Stations in Austria - is holding a four-day national media encounter for journalists from all sectors (print, online, TV and radio) on behalf of the Council of Europe. The participants will join together in producing reports and investigating how the issues of diversity and anti-discrimination can be included in daily media coverage. The focus is on sport and sports reporting.

Overall, the Council of Europe is planning to hold national meetings in 15 different European countries under the MARS – *Media Against Racism in Sport* – European Union / Council of Europe joint programme. The September workshop in Austria will kick the process off. The programme is due to end with a Europe-wide meeting of the same kind for all participants in Portugal in 2012.

“Free or community media lead the way in anti-discriminatory and antiracist work in the media sector,” according to the head of the VFRÖ, Michaela Adelberger. *“Community radio stations, which stand for diverse reporting, have already carried out a series of projects on the issues and can look back on a long tradition in this area.”*

Reynald Blion, Council of Europe *Media & Diversity* and MARS Programme Manager, describes the project as follows: *“All too many people are still excluded from public discourse. While around 10% of the EU’s population are migrants, their share in news coverage is under 5%. Sportswomen are four times more likely to be featured by female journalists, but less than 5% of sport news and stories are made by female journalists. In the Council of Europe’s view, truly inclusive information is a decisive factor in social cohesion and democratic participation. That is why the Council of Europe set up the MARS programme with a view to establishing anti-discrimination and diversity as an ongoing angle of media coverage. Following the Council of Europe’s Speak out against discrimination Campaign, in which the VFRÖ played a leading role in promoting relevant media skills.”*

The national meetings are due to lead to a Europe-wide network of media outlets which work to combat racism and promote intercultural dialogue. The network will be an open and permanent platform of dialogue and action between mainstream media and free and ethnic minority media. The MARS programme aims at stimulating media cross-practices in the field of training, production and media ethics with a view to implementing an inclusive and intercultural approach to media content production.

The media encounter is being organised from 14 to 17 September by the VFRÖ and the CMFE (Community Media Forum Europe) as part of the Council of Europe’s MARS – *Media Against Racism in Sport* - Programme. More details are also available at <http://www.cmfe.eu/mars>. Further meetings will follow in the Netherlands in October and in Ireland, Germany and Hungary next year.

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