

network media.diversity!

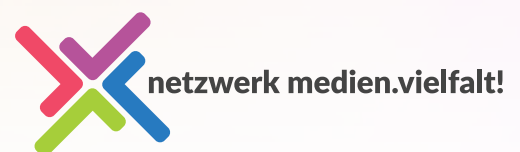
Results of the scientific monitoring at a glance

(Period: 2020 - 2021)

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The scientific support (research institute tifs e.V.) has conducted interviews and participatory observations in the network **medien.vielfalt!** in which editors for refugees from independent radio stations and other organisational structures in Germany work together, conducted interviews, group discussions and participatory observations and continuously fed back findings to the network. Recommendations have to a large extent already been incorporated into the follow-up application and into an extensive restructuring process for 2022. In view of the objective of building a sustainable network, the main focus was on the structures of the network (supra-regional coordination, coordination round, regional coordinations and coordination points in the local refugee editorial offices), communication and the empowerment of the individuals in the project from a gender and diversity perspective.

Project support: Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration



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Good practice at national, regional and local level - "It's crazy what we've been able to get up and running"

Joint activities such as nationwide networking meetings (face-to-face and online), workshops, cooperation on the content of a free radio magazine (Corax), joint productions or discussions about one's own self-image and self-designations ("refugees", "migrants", "migrantised" etc.) increase the "we-feeling" in the network. Despite the Corona situation, which led to great fluctuations in the active participation of refugees in the local editorial offices, many things were developed: "It's crazy what we've managed to do".

In the time frame of the project funding (2020-21), the network is divided into four regions, each with a regional coordinator as contact person for the local refugee editorial offices or the local coordinators of the network. With regard to the regional structural level, the regional online meetings (e.g. on topics such as the "Corona situation", "integration and culture") as well as direct contacts and visits by the regional coordinators were named by the local office owners as conducive to the development of familiar relationships, the development of a discussion on content or also the discussion of problems in editorial offices. The network's goal of having at least one out of four regional coordinator positions filled by a person with refugee experience/BiPoC person after one year has been achieved.

At the local structural level, it is predominantly media workers with migration and refugee histories who hold the position of local coordinator, who is responsible for uploading programmes to the common online platform "Colourful Voices", for coordination and communication in the local editorial office and between the editorial offices. However, these job constructions are experienced in different ways: some of the local job holders rate the income, which roughly corresponds to a mini-job, and the official proof of the job in their current life situation positively. However, this does not apply to all people, nor to all life situations (e.g. women with children), as it is not possible to secure a livelihood.¹

¹ These constructions are due to the programme's project funding conditions, which focus primarily on building a network of refugees working on a voluntary basis. In combination with the legal and financial conditions of people with a history of flight and migration, they prove to be an obstacle to the development of structures in this network.

The importance of the network for the individual - "It's a safe space"

Statements like "I love the network, I feel integrated, I feel like a human being", "it's a safe space" show the great importance of the network for the media workers. But they also refer to their overall situation as people with a refugee and migration background in German society with experiences of exclusion. At the same time, there is a diversity of life situations among the members of the network: there are different initial conditions with regard to flight and migration background, different legal residence conditions and related work and life situations. These play a role in the subjective meaning of the network, as does the situation in the network itself, how much meeting is possible in the face of the Corona epidemic, whether paid or voluntary work is done in the network, which languages are used for communication or how open communication is made possible.

Communication and participation opportunities - "What do you want to talk about in the meetings?"

The local editorial offices are compared by the media professionals active in the network with islands that should be connected more. Planned editorial visits and joint productions in addition to face-to-face meetings could only be implemented to a limited extent due to the Corona pandemic. So much for the external hindering conditions. However, internal factors in the network are also significant: opportunities for participation in the network exist in principle, but are not sufficiently transparent, and in some places are unclear and obscured by the organisational structures and work processes that are still developing (e.g. where is what organised and decided?). It is also clear that the structures and areas of responsibility need to be clarified and written down - for example by the local office owners.

In addition to the further development of equal and transparent structures, the strongest challenges in communication are: different languages, the use of different communication channels (WhatsApp, email, etc.) and the associated difficulty in conveying information, getting to know each other, the - only rarely existing - support from the independent radio stations and other host organisations and a lack of feedback culture in the network (professionally related to produced radio programmes and podcasts, but also to the communication itself).

The understanding of socio-political issues has taken place in part, often in smaller groups, but in the future it should take place more intensively in the entire network. This includes, for example, topics such as inclusive, racism-critical, gender-just communication and language and the intertwining of power relations based on gender, race, age, disability, etc. (intersectionality). (intersectionality).

Solutions to difficulties in communication are already being practised in rudiments at the end of the first project funding, such as increased exchange in language groups, i.e. by people who speak the same language (in addition to interpreted portions at meetings), improved provision of resources (e.g. equipment), equal use for disseminating the multilingual information in the WhatsApp group and the email list, and increased discussions on content. However, thoughts are also already being given to further organisational development (e.g. reduction of regional coordination positions with simultaneous creation of new specialist positions to be filled by refugee, migrant media workers, longer-term foundation of an association, etc.).

Power Sharing and Empowerment -

"Our voices are heard, that's important to us".

Interviewees mention strengths as *individual empowerment*, such as the further development of skills like organising, creativity, perseverance: "I have learned a lot", "everything is possible". *Collective empowerment* is also visible: "Many people have prejudices - we cannot change these prejudices if we do not speak (...) we also need to be heard (...) Our voices are heard, that is important to us. "

Empowerment is mainly referred to the history of flight and migration. The intertwining with gender, including trans- and inter-genderedness, hardly takes up any space in the meetings. However, interviews and individual productions - mainly by women* - show that some people are aware of this.

Internal power relations and lines of conflict - for example between members of the white 'majority society' and BiPoC's - represent another field of learning. For example, the comparatively low representation of media professionals with migration and refugee histories is increasingly being discussed and reflected upon in the coordination round. It became clear that the fear of being divided into a 'you and us' with regard to the thematisation of the distribution of roles in the network, the perceived power imbalance due to the distribution of knowledge and the desire to belong makes it more difficult, especially for BiPoCs and refugees, to address inequalities and the feeling of disadvantages on their own. This was taken up by the academic support to add the concept of *power sharing* to the concept of empowerment, which has received a lot of attention in the network. The central point here is that those who have more possibilities for action and privileges use them for the marginalised or share them with others. This happens selectively with the reflection of how difficult it is to become aware of "one's (own) incredible privilege" as a member of the 'majority society' - and to change something about it.²

Latent lines of conflict should also be mentioned among the refugee and migrant media professionals in the network, which can be related to different - socio-structural - starting conditions, political positions, etc. The focus, however, is on solidarity and shared experiences as people with a migration and refugee background. However, the focus will be on solidarity and shared experiences as people with a migration and refugee background.

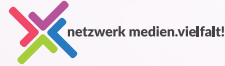
Power sharing also includes cooperation between local refugee editors and free radio/host organisations. In one radio station, a person from the refugee editorial team who is in the network is invited to regular meetings at the station, advice is given by a kind of mentor, the writing of funding applications is supported or taken over. Actively approaching and supporting refugee media professionals is important because of the unequal and difficult starting conditions. However, there is usually little support, which may also have to do with the low resources of the independent radio stations. In any case, a transcultural opening of the host organisations or independent radio stations has yet to take place. The network activists see a starting point for themselves in transmitting more information about the numerous activities from the network or the refugee editorial offices to the respective host organisations.

The desire for more and sequential workshop offers and the transparency of the further education concept to increase professionalism is expressed. And the possibility to offer workshops themselves is experienced as empowering: "(...) *when people can offer things themselves.*" This is also an opportunity for empowerment and power sharing.

² It should be noted, however, that employment conditions in independent radio stations generally prove to be predominantly precarious.

Impulses of scientific support for the medien.vielfalt network

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The theme of empowerment of refugee, migrant media professionals and power sharing of comparatively more privileged people in the media sector runs through the impulses/ recommendations for action for transcultural and discrimination-critical networking.

1. Shaping communication



Concrete starting points

- Clarify digital communication channels: Which information reaches as many people in the network as possible via which channels (whatsapp, email, Telegram, Matrix...)?
 - Use the (agreed) communication channels systematically
 - Respond to messages when asked for a reply
 - Consider language diversity: at (online) meetings, for example. Change language groups and use translation by interpreters; for messages for all: write them in different languages (or, if this is not possible, at least in another language that is most common among the users)
- This involves**
- a better exchange of information and opportunities to participate in the network - e.g. through joint productions and the joint development of content and forms right from the start
 - Discussions and understanding of content (e.g. on topics such as anti-racism, anti-discrimination, feminism, intersectionality, gender- and diversity-conscious language), which should be low-threshold due to the different individual preconditions.
- Regional office holders, persons with cross-sectional tasks/specialist offices and local office holders communicate regularly orally, specifically address others in order to involve them in the work
 - Regular exchange of local office holders about the work of the local editorial offices, contents, their role in the coordination in the network
 - Agree on constructive feedback in the network with regard to productions, cooperation, satisfaction with communication flow etc. and systematically anchor it (e.g. in the form of an exchange of ideas). and systematically anchor it (e.g. also through further training).

2. Developing structures in a gender- and diversity- conscious way and making them visible



Concrete starting points

- Make the committees in the network (especially the coordination group) diverse (race, gender, ability, age, etc.)
- Reduce the tasks of the coordination round, clarify the tasks for the individuals (division of labour) and form and make visible further targeted (long-term and ad hoc) working groups
- The local office holders network and discuss regularly in their own round
- Fill more positions, (specialist) posts with people with migration and refugee histories (also form tandems, where possible, in order to support each other)

This involves

- increased active participation of women* and men* with a history of flight and migration (representation) and a fair distribution of positions and resources
- Transparency of existing positions and their tasks, committees, decision-making structures, opportunities for participation.
- Sustainability of the network.

- Specifically describe the tasks of local, regional coordination and specialist offices
- Make the entire structure of the network and the decision-making and participation structures transparent
- For the sustainability of the network, further consider and develop forms of organisation together (e.g. founding an association).

3. Enabling, systematising and making continuing education accessible



This involves

- the further qualification of the media professionals involved in the network
- opportunities to contribute one's own competences in workshops
- Enabling longer-term perspectives in independent radio and other media for media professionals with migration and refugee histories.

Concrete starting points

- Write down the network's further education concept and publish it internally to make the spectrum clear: Formats = individual offers and workshops that build on each other; contents = media skills, professional, thematic (on racism, sexism, flight, empowerment and power sharing, etc.) and personal skills.
- Make the concretely planned workshops known and accessible to all in the network
- Enable participants in the network (more) to become active as providers of workshops and support them in doing so
- Disseminate information about qualification opportunities, also mentoring programmes at other organisations and enable participation
- Systematically issue certificates of attended trainings for all (professionalisation, qualification).

4. Expanding the public relations work and transcultural opening of independent radio stations, community media and other supporting institutions.



The aim is to

- motivating and inspiring people in general, and especially those with a history of flight or migration, to join the network and to work in independent radio and other media initiatives
- To familiarise independent radio stations and other host organisations as well as German society with the work and topics of the project *netzwerk medien.vielfalt!* and thus ensure a sustainable structure.

Concrete starting points

- Further expand the digital public relations work and supplement it with press work (local, regional, national/federal) and other activities (e.g. the planned exhibition about the network)
- Bringing more information about the network to the free radios and host organisations and strengthening communication
- Show free radios and host organisations where they can be supportive; this also includes feedback on transcultural opening (power sharing) if the organisations want to actively advocate for a just society (e.g. involving the editorial offices in regular meetings, support in project acquisition/financing).
- Develop contacts with other organisations in the media sector at local, regional and national level, also with multipliers from the field of media studies.