

Aidan White Transcript

"The report reveals that there's a massive challenge in reporting migration on both sides of the Mediterranean. We find actually all over the region the first response of the media to the migration crisis is very much one of sympathy and solidarity and empathy with the victims of tragedy- there have been so many people killed in the last year. But very often that sympathetic coverage changes within a short period of time to a more negative narrative which focuses on wider concerns and anxieties about the impact of migration upon settled communities and so on. Unfortunately, the media find themselves under undue political pressure. We see the rise of hate speech, we see migration being used by unscrupulous politicians who try to make political capital and we find that everywhere. Media at the same time have a massive problem of their own which is to do with the question of their resources and their capacity and the amount of money they have to employ good people to make sure they have time to research the wider issues and report on migration effectively, so there's a whole range of problems that are revealed in the report. The report also makes a number of recommendations about how to improve the situation, these involve for instance providing training for journalists and encouraging more national and international dialogue between journalists and other stakeholders on the migration question. Certainly, it's about also bringing into the migration story the migrants themselves. There's an absence of migrant voices in the way that media reporter the story both in Europe and in North Africa. SO that question of combatting the lack of visibility for migrants in the stories is one of the major questions. But perhaps the biggest challenge that was identified in the report is the need to promote the civil discourse in the public sphere over migration. The problem isn't just one of media who are just reflecting and reproducing hate speech of politicians, the problem is also in the need of an informed, wide, inclusive public debate on the issue and that needs to be really much more extensive and much better informed and policy makers have a responsibility to work with media to try to promote responsible communications about migration to make sure that people are not responding emotionally and are not being manipulated by political extremists who are trying to use the issue in order to build hatreds between different communities and try to promote a better understanding, even a positive approach from the community in general about the political, economic, social and indeed cultural advantages of migration. So these economic and cultural benefits of migration which tend to be ignored in media coverage need to be brought to the forefront. The report deals with all of these issues in a very complex way. The fact of the matter is it's no longer possible to tell a migration story in a simplistic and superficial way. We've got to go into it in-depth, but in order to do that we need more resources and we need political commitment to eliminate hate speech around the migration issue and to have much more positive rather than negative narrative coming from the political community as well as the media community. When that begins to happen, I think we'll see a much more rational, reasonable and much more productive debate which will focus on the benefits to everyone of controlled and well-organized migration."