



EU

EU LIFESTYLE

COMPETITION

MENTORS

WAYS INTO JOURNALISM

WORKING AS A JOURNALIST

The state of religion

[Manipulation - a journalist's good friend](#)

[Minority media battle prejudice](#)

[Foreign correspondent](#)

[A not so simple Europe](#)

[Journalism in a foreign field](#)

[Work hard, get your dream job](#)

WORKING AS A JOURNALIST

The state of religion

Opening dialogue between faiths resembles learning a dance. You need to know how far you can go, and when you have to step back so you don't step on others' feet. The turmoil that the turn of the new millennium has brought with issues regarding understanding between peoples of different beliefs is not something new to humanity - the holy trinity of politics, religion and media has always been the engine that shaped history.

It was 9/11 that set the intolerant mood of the dance floor in recent years. The most controversial happenings are well-known. Film-maker **Teo van Gogh** was murdered in 2004 following his controversial film about Islam; and the cartoons published in Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten in 2005 depicting the prophet Mohammed whipped up a frenzy. Recent repercussions of the cartoon-crisis happened lately, when eleven Danes involved in the case were summoned to appear before the Jordanian public prosecutor on a charge of blasphemy and threatening national security. These two incidents led to the pleading of a Pakistani delegation to the European Union countries to amend laws of freedom of expression.

With the spotlight on Islam, it is easy to forget the interplay between other faiths. The clumsy tap dance between the old and the new preachers as well as the limbo between atheists and the faithful, particularly within the youth, are often forgotten or ignored. Tibet is no less about religion than it is about politics.



The art of taking
a good picture

Secrets of a good
article

A Guide to
Pitching

The Route to
Journalism

History of the
reportage

Working as an
intern

ENTERING INTO
PROFESSION

GETTING SUPPORT

NETWORKING AT A
EUROPEAN LEVEL

SEARCH



DG ENLARGEMENT

Visit the website of
DG ENLARGEMENT



DG ENLARGEMENT
QUIZ

"From the outside, we're doing alright," said **Frans Jennekens**, chief editor and programme manager of **Netherlands Programmes Service**, during the 6th ASEF Journalists' Colloquium. "We have Islamic schools and universities, two Islamic broadcasters, we are doing everything to be tolerant. But it's like we're living separated, but together."

Often the media and governments of the globe fail to understand that there is more to interfaith dialogue than preaching tolerance or flashing a diplomatic smile while shaking the hand of a religious leader.

Mr. Jennekens highlights a clash between freedom of speech and freedom of religion. If people attempted to understand why the image of a sexual Christ may offend or why a caricature of Mohammed may spark outrage, then perhaps freedom of speech would not be questioned. The key words in the lyrics of faith are 'why' and 'dialogue,' rather than 'what' and 'tolerance,' because the later cannot happen without the first.

The media often underestimates the danger of preconceptions. **Otto Friedrich**, the editor of religious affairs in the Austrian weekly **Die Furche**, believes that unlike other fields of journalism such as politics and sports, those who write about religion in much of the media are out of step. "They talk about Islam, but they have no idea what they are talking about." Perhaps it's time to embrace the new Era of the holy book *Religion for Dummies*.

Meanwhile, the need for dialogue is filled with other events, such as the Second ASEM Youth Interfaith Dialogue conference held in Bandung (Indonesia) at the end of June, following the first one in Barcelona last year. Here, young people from all over the world discuss about the meaning of faith in the media, peace and education, while building up a statement on the topics. About this event, the General Rapporteur, **Pavlos Michaelides**, says that the Bandung statement might open minds to what is missing. "[By] teaching all leaders of this world a lesson on how to dialogue in peace, in beauty, with love and respect; educating us all on how to keep our attention on things important and issues that matter. But mostly, teaching us all how to maintain the focus on the most high endeavor throughout a process of dialogue which envisions a common humanity at once respecting every individual and collective, cultural or religious difference."

While the general public is oblivious to these initiatives, the internet is rich with sources of interfaith dialogue. Some websites may be more credible than others but there are blogs and chatrooms, while Facebook, MySpace and YouTube have become forums for discussion. Perhaps the new media, by allowing us to get closer in a tango or a waltz, will bring us some enlightenment.



by **Natasha Sá Osório**, former deputy Secretary General of the European Youth Press. Her favourite part of being a journalist is to ask the right questions and to meet people who make a difference.

No comments

[Post a comment](#)