Citizen engagement is the most direct method of closing the vertical communication gap, and improving the quality of governance. Citizen journalism such as “social networking” and “blogging” along with increased media skills in areas such as podcasts and short audio/visual documentaries can generate more inclusive, more representative and better informed public dialogue.

The Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC) has been implementing the “MultiCommMedia” project since July 2012. It aims to use communications as a medium to better inform the general public about efforts towards reconciliation in Cyprus, as well as to bring together and work with key actors across Cypriot society to help create an inclusive environment for reconciliation. CCMC has achieved a great deal since it opened its doors in December 2009. It has expanded its membership base of civil society organisations, built relationships with the mass media, and empowered civil society activists with media tools. Its impact has been considerable at the civil society level, with large numbers of attendees at its training programmes resulting in increased capacity of local CSOs in media and communications, active use of its community spaces and a broadening network of partners.

The success of public discourse in Cyprus depends on its nature as a moderated medium for communication and information dissemination. Community generated media has the potential to bridge the gap between the two communities as well as the two media systems. Through the work of MultiCommMedia a niche has been carved out for how civil society can have its voice heard, and the demand for this will only continue to increase. CCMC was created in 2009 with support from UNDP and USAID. The organisation is now an independent NGO.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- A 44-member strong consortium of CSOs from across Cyprus working on a range of issues including the environment, social problems, human rights, health, youth, education and gender
- More than 170 videos, podcasts, radio shows and short documentaries about the work of civil society in Cyprus created in the first two years of operations
- Over 350 people trained in various media skills, including strategic communications, press release writing, video production and editing
- MultiCommMedia productions have been aired on various mainstream media outlets including SIM TV, The Cyprus Weekly, Radyo Mayis, 107.6 FM and CyBC Radio 2, giving civil society a greater voice all over the island
- MultiCommMedia’s “On the Road” training initiative has taken workshops to various locations around the island, including Limassol and Lefke
- CCMC’s website is the first community media website in Cyprus, and receives around 1,000,000 hits per year
- CCMC’s advocacy work with the relevant media authorities has opened up the possibility of recognition of Community Media in Cyprus
- Partnerships between mainstream media across the divide have been supported through the Incentive Awards Scheme for Media Collaboration

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Duration: 2009-2011 (Phase 1)
2012-2013 (Phase 2)
Budget: 761,700 EUR (Phase 1)
475,720 EUR (Phase 2)
Project website: www.cypruscommunitymedia.org
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