

STATUS OF THE *DIMITAR PESHEV* JOURNALIST AWARD FOR ETHNIC AND FAITH TOLERANCE IN THE MEDIA

SETTING UP THE AWARD

As a follow up to its activities related to the minorities and the media, at its session on 17 July 2003 the Management Board of the *Multi-Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights /MEIHR/* Foundation initiated the setting up of annual journalist awards for ethnic and religious tolerance in the media.

The purpose of the initiative has been to attract the attention of the journalist community to these issues, to encourage the development of journalist materials which go beyond the existing paradigms about the minorities and foster a positive attitude to ethnic diversity and cooperation. The long term goal of this effort has been to promote the cultural ethnic pluralism in the media, and through them – in the entire society.

It was decided that:

- The award shall be named after Dimitar Peshev as a symbol of civil dignity in promoting the principles of multi-ethnic tolerance and cooperation.
- In the first two years the competition shall be oriented to the major national daily papers, gradually expanding towards the electronic media with national coverage, and subsequently – to the regional electronic and print media.
- Board of the Founders and Selection Panel shall be created for the management of the competition process.
- The Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency and UNDP shall be invited as co-founders of the competition.
- Recognized journalists and media experts shall be invited as members of the Selection Panel who have demonstrated their sensitivity to the above topic, who are respected by the journalist community and exhibit team work skills. Part of members should have a minority origin, and the principle of gender equality should be observed. The following names were discussed and selected – Neri Terzieva, Vessela Tabakova, Georgi Danailov, Georgi Koritarov, Vasil Chaprazov and Krusty Krustev.
- The Awards Fund shall be raised on annual basis by the members founders of the award.
- The status of the competition shall be adapted and improved with the extension of its scope.
- The Board Chair of the *MEIHR* Foundation shall invite the above institutions as co-founders; invite the journalists mentioned above as members of the Selection Panel; coordinate the development of the selection criteria and the criteria for assessment of the materials; develop the announcement for the competition in the media in a process of consultation; organize the administration of the award.

NATURE OF THE AWARD, AWARDING PROCESS AND AWARDS FUND

The *Dimitar Peshev* journalist awards for ethnic and faith tolerance in the media are structured into two categories. They are awarded to:

- Journalists with publications in the national daily papers, weekly publications and magazines for reports, investigations, analyses, comments and stories. *
- Specific media – for their overall policies of tolerance to the ethnic and religious diversity.

* In 2006 the Awards included electronic media with national coverage as well, and it is expected to include also regional electronic and print media.

In the first category there are three awards – first, second and third. A certificate and a cash bonus are conferred to all nominees, and the first award nominee also receives a statue.

In the second category there is just one award – the nominee receives a cash bonus, certificate and a statuette.

The annual Awards Fund amounts to 7 000 BNG for the cash bonuses, and 1000 BGN for the statuettes. The funding is raised by the members founders of the award, own funds and various programs.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

For the management of the process and the implementation of the competition the following bodies are constituted: Board of the Founders and Selection Panel.

The administration of the awards (announcement of the competition, receiving the nominations, logistics related to the organization of the work of the Selection Panel and the awards ceremony, preparation of the awards, etc.) shall be carried out by the *MEIHR* Foundation. The latter shall cover all costs related to the administration.

COMPOSITION AND COMPETENCES OF THE BODIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE AWARD

Board of the Founders

The Board shall include one representative of all organizations which initiated the competition. The Board shall discuss and approve the annual Awards Fund, and consider all issues related to fundraising, the organization and implementation of the competition, possible changes in the composition of the selection Panel, and possible changes in the status of the competition with respect to its expansion.

The members of the Board of the Founders shall participate in the official awards ceremony.

Selection Panel

The Selection Panel shall include 5 to 9 persons – recognized journalists and media experts who have demonstrated sensitivity to the topic, who are respected in the journalist community and exhibit good team work skills. Part of them shall be of minority origin themselves, and the principle of gender equality shall be respected.

The members of the Selection Panel shall be nominated by the Management Board of the *MEIHR* Foundation and approved by the Board of the Founders.

The members of the Selection Panel shall have a two year mandate and may be re-elected.

The members of the Selection Panel may not be nominated for this award.

The Selection Panel shall discuss the materials submitted in three rounds: selection, nomination, awarding.

The Selection Panel shall decide itself on the technical aspects of its work – frequency and duration of the session, electronic communications, etc.

The Selection Panel shall be logistically supported by a team of the *MEIHR* Foundation which shall accept the nominations and keep the minutes from the sessions of the Selection Panel.

COMPETITION ANNOUNCEMENT

The administrators of the competition shall proceed as needed for its yearly announcement in the mass media and its communication to the editors-in-chief of the relevant media.

APPLYING FOR THE AWARD

Publications in national dailies, weeklies and magazines in the current year can be submitted to compete for the award. They shall be collected as sent by their authors or their peers or by readers to the address of *MEIHR* Foundation or through a national press monitoring campaign coordinated by the administrators. Copies from the publications in the national press should be sent to the address of the *MEIHR* Foundation by the end of November at the latest.

AWARDS CONFERRING

Procedure

All materials for the competition are copied and filed in folders for each member of the panel.

Each panel member becomes acquainted with all materials for the competition.

The panel discusses the materials in three rounds: nomination, selection, naming the award winners. The panel holds a session for each round.

At the first session the panel discusses and selects materials according to *the criteria for eligibility*.

The materials nominated by each panel member are presented and discussed at the second session and the winners are nominated at the third session in accordance with the *criteria for nomination and final judgment*. Voting is by ordinary majority. The decision of the panel is final.

The Panel confers awards only if it has found such submissions among those received that meet the established criteria. If no sufficiently convincing submissions have been received in the specific category, the Panel submits a proposal to the Board of the Founders and the latter decides how to reallocate the award fund.

The Panel decision is issued before December 10th – the Human Rights Day. The awards are announced and presented at an official ceremony on that date.

Award conferring criteria

At an early stage in the establishment of the awards the Managing Board of the *MEIHR* Foundation outlined **the profile of the criteria for acceptance of publications for participation in the competition**. More specifically, they should be dedicated to topical issues concerning the minorities and the multi ethnic relations; they should help overcome the stereotypes accumulated in covering such issues and assert a positive vision of multi ethnic cooperation.

The nomination and final assessment criteria are applied to select publications that:

1. send clear messages concerning the cultural, ethnic and language diversity in society as a source of wealth and opportunities for development and not as a threat;
2. present the ethno-cultural specificities of the communities alluded to, the processes they undergo and their relationships with the surrounding world in a way that is well-informed yet unconventional;
3. expose and take a stand against the seemingly “acceptable” manifestations of ethnic and religious prejudices, racism, xenophobia, nationalism and chauvinism; emphasize the contradictions in the extreme racist and xenophobic calls against the values of the democratic civil society;
4. make understandably clear the nature of the concept of “protection of minority rights” not as privileges but as a set of specific instruments guaranteeing the same scope of rights as for all other citizens.
5. take a critical stand against the institutions in case of non-fulfilment of the international standards adopted for protection of the minorities and the inter-governmental initiatives in that area (such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion etc.);
6. interpret the issues of integration of the minorities in the society as a bilateral process of significance for the society at large;
7. reflect the problems and aspirations of the members of minority groups and consider them in the context of the topical tasks of the society and the general human values;
8. In the cases of interethnic tension the publications:

- Investigate the hidden causes of strain in the interethnic relations, outlining the main social, economic, psychological and political factors in the context of the events and allowing the public to understand all aspects of the issue at hand;
- Present the opinions of the participants in the conflict as opinions of separate individuals rather than viewpoints of the speakers of the group as a whole;
- Strive to consider the different ways in which the events are perceived by the different sides in the conflict and to provide clear arguments as to the reasons why one version is accepted as more convincing than another;
- Encourage the understanding of the public and support with facts the view that ethnic tensions can be curbed before they swell into conflicts; allow no sense of fatalism with regard to their existence;
- Underline that the responsibility for interethnic tension and conflicts is always borne by all sides and not only by “the other” side, i.e. the one that is not one’s own.
- The titles and illustrations are stirring and colourful without resorting to excessive dramatic effects and clichés concerning eternal villains and eternal victims;

The criteria are applied in combination depending on the nature of the publications.

In addition to the above characteristics of the individual publications, also considered in the profiled award for general media policy is the following:

- The frequency of the media products and the sustainability of their quality;
- The variety of the journalistic approaches to the task of shedding light on issues relating to minorities and interethnic interactions;
- The involvement of the minorities in media programming and the journalist teams of the media concerned;
- The existence of explicit rules regulating such policy.