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Region: Morocco, MENA

With the Arab Spring in the background, new constitutional arrangements to be implemented and the back stage negotiations to form a new government led by an Islamist prime minister for the first time ever, the political environment could not have been any better to motivate and inspire the 13 young radio journalists who participated in a 5 day Responsible Journalism training course in Casablanca from 17-21 December 2012, organised by the Media Diversity Institute.

All the participants were particularly keen to explore professional ways which would allow them to push further the boundaries of acceptable and permitted coverage. The buzz words all through the workshop were: 'Responsibility', 'Distance', 'Impartiality' and 'Reality'.

The Justice and Development Party which won the recent general elections focused their campaign on an anti-corruption ticket. The proof of the pudding being in the eating, the head of the official anti-corruption institution and a representative from civil society specialised in anti-corruption activities were the first guest speakers at the workshop. They were both equally challenged rather vehemently and passionately about their respective methods and lack of tangible results.

The next guest speakers also had a hard time facing the course participants; two prominent political figures, one from the Islamist party and one from the USFP (Socialist Union of People's Forces) who refused to be part of the government coalition. They both



talked about the need for Morocco's future development to rely on a professional media and accepted to be 'grilled' by some journalists on the course, who treated the exercise so seriously that they gave the impression they forgot it was not a real-life interview!

The King, Islam and the country's territorial integrity are still clearly regarded as taboo subjects but the scope of the reports produced by the participants during the course show that there is definitely a wind of change blowing through the media in Morocco. 'Corruption', 'The homosexual community and the new political order', 'The daily lot of Moroccan Jews', 'The 20th February Movement', 'The female street traders', 'The sub-Saharan migrants' and 'The Bloggers' power' are just a few examples of the reports produced by the radio journalists during the course.

The course was organised within the framework of the Media Diversity Institute's 2 year project 'Media Evolution: Towards an Inclusive, Responsible & Independent Media in Morocco', supported by the European Union Delegation in Rabat. It was one of 5 training courses for journalists, among many other activities, including round table debates, training for NGOs and TV programmes, that will be organised during the life of the project. The objectives of the project are to encourage a public debate on the future of the Moroccan media, ensure greater coverage of social diversity in the media, improve freedom of expression and access to information, ensure greater responsibility by the media through self-regulation, and improve respect of media freedom by the government.