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'We have all the reasons to celebrate diversity. Historically, Lebanon has been the place where dozens of cultures, religions, ethnic groups and languages have met, mixed and influenced each other' – said Dr Adnan Sayyed Hussein, President of the University of Lebanon, opening a conference held in Beirut on 5th of December.

The event marked the end of a two-year project called [“Towards an Inclusive and Responsible Media in Lebanon”](#), run by the Media Diversity Institute and its Lebanese partner the [Maharat Foundation](#), an organisation working on building a more democratic society through freedom of expression.

While the University of Lebanon, the oldest academic institution in the country, has been the main project stakeholder willing to introduce modules to help journalism students learn how to report in an inclusive and responsible way, it was the media the project was aimed at. According to the EU's Head of Cooperation in Beirut Alexis Loeber who also spoke at the conference, 'the media have become more polarised and constrained serving as the propaganda outlets of businessmen and politicians over the last three years. Regrettably, this polarisation between

media has also reinforced Lebanon's social and political polarisation'.

This project is only a start and the Maharat Foundation should be congratulated for its pioneering work in the media and diversity field. Without the media industry, and, in particular, without those in decision making positions accepting their part of responsibility for this polarisation – the positive changes towards the 'others' in Lebanon would be impossible. Only together - media educators, NGOs such as the Maharat Foundation and the media - can contribute to a more cohesive Lebanese society', said MDI Executive Director Milica Pesic. 'We can only hope that the EU and Lebanon's other international partners will continue to support this kind of project since the path from polarisation to pluralisation is neither easy nor fast '.



The overall objective of the project has been to encourage responsible media coverage of diversity, reduce tensions and promote peace through an inclusive and responsible media in Lebanon.

Introducing a Reporting Diversity module developed during the project to be used by journalism academics as well as journalists, Roula Mikhael, Director of Maharat Foundation expressed her willingness to 'bite into a new cake' – practical, production oriented work with journalists interested in improving their skills in reporting on the most sensitive topics in the country: religious intolerance, sectarianism and extremism.