

A PRACTICAL
GUIDE
FOR JOURNALISM
TRAINERS

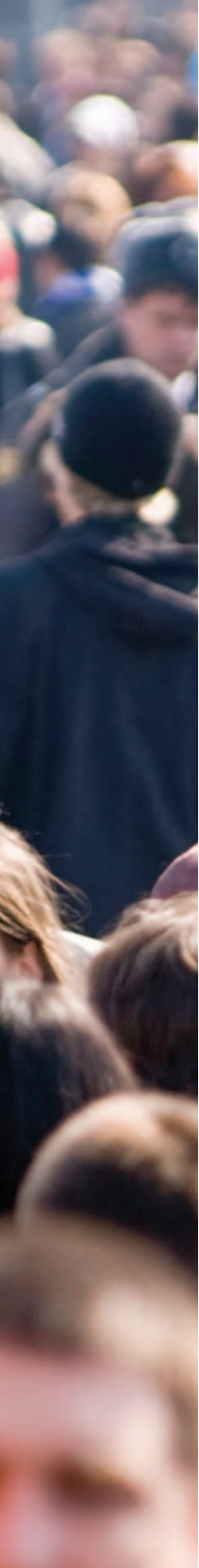
**TO ENGAGE
FUTURE
JOURNALISTS
WITH EUROPE**

INSIDE
EUROPE



micro-EUROPA
CAMPUS
RADIO
NETWORK
www.micro-europa.eu

With the support
of the **Directorate-General For Education
and Culture** of the **European Commission**
under the **'Europe for Citizens'** programme



3 PREFACE

**5 SECTION 1
SIMPLIFYING EU**

- how to cover the EU maze so citizens can understand it

**9 SECTION 2
CONCRETE EUROPE**

- linking local issues and people with the EU

**13 SECTION 3
DEBATING THE COLLECTIVE CHALLENGES
OF EUROPEANS**

15 PRACTICAL EXERCISES AND TOOLS

25 USEFUL LINKS

CONTENTS

PREFACE

The scope of the European Union's powers has been permanently extended but public interest in Europe is lower than ever. Over 500 million Europeans don't realise (or just don't care about) the size and significance of the European community, and therefore they don't feel concerned by what their representatives decide on their behalf at the European Parliament.

European and national political leaders are increasingly worried by this trend and have tried to reinforce public communication strategies about Europe, but so far they haven't succeeded in reducing the information gap between European institutions and civil society. The main reason for this is their insistence on a rather undemocratic, top-down and overly centralised information format.

There is a way to get Europe out of this deadlock. It is a method based on giving the floor to citizens, ensuring that their voices will be heard and taken into consideration by political decision makers. This means freeing Europe from technocratic/expert hands and allowing the general public to engage in deep, thorough, comprehensive debate.

For that to happen, the European public sphere needs journalists participating at all levels of public debate – local, in the first place, but also national and Europe-wide. Local journalists have a huge role to play within the European democracy because they are better placed to link what happens at the EU level with local realities (and vice-versa). They have a unique role in deciphering EU acts and policies, making them understandable to the (non-specialised) majority of the population.

The EU debate urgently needs to be taken outside the walls of the public institutions and deep into the structure of European society (local, community actors, NGOs) in such a way that information and diverse points of view can circulate widely before political or legal decisions are taken – as should be the case in a real, living, and citizen action-oriented democracy.

Whether one likes it or not, political Europe is of central importance to the lives of all European Union citizens. Approximately 70 to 80 per cent of national legislation, as well as many amendments to international laws, originate in European institutions. These reflect the existing political balances in the (at present) 27 Member States, and therefore the democratic choices of their voters.

This practical guide for bringing the EU into journalism teaching is aimed at lecturers. They are encouraged to take curriculum suggestions, exercises and other resources from the materials within to use in their courses. Real, life-based exercises are provided to link the pedagogy of journalism education with the concrete realities faced by European citizens, and with EU policy debates and the decision-making process.

Micro-Europa, the radio network managed by journalism schools, has published this innovative guide with the support of the European Commission's Programme Europe for Citizens. The materials are an important part of the network's project connecting European issues and decisions with citizens' everyday concerns.

As a continuation of the Micro-Europa student guide published in 2010, this guide has European, intercultural and interregional dimensions to stimulate active citizenship and democracy.

PREFACE

There are three main parts to the guide: How to make the EU understandable to citizens; Concrete Europe - linking local issues and people with the EU; and The Debates - finding and presenting issues affecting the EU.

Three defining words - “pedagogy”, “concrete” and “debate” - inspire Micro-Europa pedagogical guides:

PEDAGOGY

Pedagogy is the means to ensure that the general public can understand the EU’s political system, its decision-making processes, its institutions and policies. But how to get Europe into classrooms and workshops? Which pedagogical tools should we use? Which methods should we adopt? How can we innovate?

Teachers and their students will be encouraged to always question facts and events from at least three standpoints: the point of view of the citizen and the local area; the national interest; and the common European position.

By focusing European journalism classes on the systematic, public scrutiny of the EU’s machinery (policies and institutions) through rigorous analysis and debate, our approach identifies pedagogical methods and good practises to enable students and professors to understand the European dimension of public life.

CONCRETE

This guide pays attention to the concrete implications of the EU’s decisions for real people, for local, regional and national communities. We link European to national challenges.

Our teaching strategies and tools are aimed at creating the conditions for an interaction between journalism schools and all the participants of European democracy. For this to happen, much of the emphasis will be put on the views of various valuable “European sources”: NGOs, thinktanks, social and economic organisations, professional associations, trade unions, corporate, state, public and private interest groups and so on.

The so-called Brussels bubble is almost incomprehensible to anyone who lives away from it. It has to be translated in clear, thorough terms to bring it closer to the national/local situation. In this context we place future European journalists and their trainers in the position of privileged observers acting, without bias, as the honest brokers between European political and economic elites and all the other sectors of society.

DEBATE

By promoting public debate about the collective challenges ahead our concept of European journalism underlines the main features, the advantages and disadvantages, or indeed the contradictions of political decisions and legislative projects. It disseminates views and opinions and emphasises common denominators between distinct national views or conflicting interests, thus enhancing students’ awareness of the European public sphere through critical thinking and deep analysis.

By offering resources linked to every player in political, cultural and social life - from the individual person, village or town to the regions, states and institutions of the EU - this guide aims to strengthen the dialogue between Europe and its citizens, and to encourage democracy and active EU citizenship.

Alexandra Lobão

Coordinator, Micro-Europa network

SECTION 1 SIMPLIFYING EU HOW TO COVER THE EU MAZE SO CITIZENS CAN UNDERSTAND IT

The European Union (EU) was not designed according to a specific plan. It is a product of historic, political circumstances. Being the result of a delicate balance associated with a set of compromises between very different national realities, the EU has extremely complex structures.

The classic scheme for the creation of an EU law is as follows:

By its own suggestion or by the initiative of either the Council or the Parliament of the Union, the European Commission (EC) proposes a draft law to be approved either by Co-decision (jointly by the Parliament and the Council) or via a simple Consultation process (under which the Council can approve it alone without the agreement of the Parliament consulted in due course).

Co-decision is reserved for the majority of legislative areas in which the EU is active, where national sovereignty is currently most limited. The Consultation method, on the other hand, is applied in those few areas (such as taxes, external and security policies, or Constitutional issues) where the bulk of the political power is still in the hands of individual Member States.

An overview of the **decision-making system** shows powers at the EU level dispersed among various actors that become important at different stages of the process; all of them are potentially fine to use as journalistic sources:

Stage 1 Preparations are based on formal and informal public consultations held under various formats (bilateral hearings, conferences, Internet consultations etc.) These are conducted with external stakeholders (representatives of civil society, industry, academia and research institutions, media etc.) on the basis of Green Papers (containing ideas that serve as food for thought) and White Papers (containing concrete proposals).

Stage 2 Informal and formal discussions take place internally between the relevant commissions' directorate-generals ("inter" and "intra" services). Discussions are then extended to include interest groups and experts from national ministries.

Stage 3 Impact Assessments are integrated into the process and inter-service consultations are intensified and extended to members of the commissioners' cabinets. Draft proposals become more and more political.

Stage 4 The European Commissioners present a formal legislative proposal

Stage 5 By this time, the proposal is in the hands of both the Council of the EU and the European Parliament (EP). Each of the two legislative bodies does its own 'homework' by analysing the Commission's proposal.

At the council it goes from the technical Working Groups concerned to the hands of COREPER (the 27 Member States' Representatives to the EU). After intense technical and political negotiations between national governments, the proposal is approved by the EU-27 Ministers.

Meanwhile, **in the Parliament**, the Commission's proposal receives the input of the Political Groups and the specialised parliamentary committees. After being subject to final negotiations, the draft proposal is approved in a plenary session. If needed, conciliation negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament Assembly take place before achieving a political agreement.

The stages of the ordinary legislative procedure are explained in a detailed way at: http://ec.europa.eu/codecision/stepbystep/text/index_en.htm

The corresponding chart is here:

http://ec.europa.eu/codecision/stepbystep/diagram_en.htm

SECTION 1 SIMPLIFYING EU HOW TO COVER THE EU MAZE SO CITIZENS CAN UNDERSTAND IT

OVERVIEW OF THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

The EU's political system is like no other federal and intergovernmental structure. Power is dispersed across several layers – the Commission, the Parliament and the institution representing Member States (the Council of Ministers) – all of which have to co-operate and act as partners in drafting, adopting, implementing and enforcing legislation.

Member States are also represented at the European Council, the highest body of the European Union and composed of heads of state and/or government. The national leaders don't participate in the daily work of the EU: unlike their ministers they have no legislative role, but they set the tone by giving political guidelines that direct the work of the Commission-Parliament-Council trio.

The EU is a piece-by-piece construction with an ever greater number of member countries and ever-increasing powers. It is run under a system of "checks and balances" in which the Parliament and the Council of Ministers control the Commission (the Commissioner's team can be sacked by the MEPs), and the Commission also controls, at least partially, the actions of national governments (the way they spend EU money and the way they transpose EU law). The Court of Auditors controls all three entities in the institutional triangle (Commission, Parliament, Council). The European Court of Justice and the European Central Bank have the final word in their own fields.

EU treaties set the limits of EU action. Political EU leaders supervise the overall structure. The European Union's sophisticated power sharing structure doesn't automatically oppose Brussels to the Member States.

Teachers can guide their students through the EU political system by asking and answering these questions:

How is EU legislation drafted?

At which stages of the legislative process are citizens and groups representing their interests admitted to the discussions?

Who controls the implementation of the EU laws in the Member States?

The strengths and limits of EU institutions will be covered in the classroom.

Students will subsequently be introduced to all the main actors in the system, in which ongoing negotiation is driven by rotating presidencies of the Council and by the European Commission. Negotiation occurs both between national Governments, and between Member States and the European Parliament.

The Commission - the executive body - is the initiator of EU laws and the guardian of European interests, while the Court of Justice is the source of EU jurisprudence.

With their thousands of officials, some based in EU capitals and working for dozens of EU agencies, European institutions are major providers of information about past and present issues - information that is readily available for journalistic treatment.

The question is: how to get the relevant data out of a huge quantity of raw material ?

ACCESSING INFORMATION AND EXPERTISE

Advisory committees: there are nearly a thousand of them and they define how the Member States control the executive powers of the European Commission. This means EU institutions rely on stakeholders (mainly economic and social associations and federations) and national experts to provide relevant information under a system of consultation put in place by the Commission and the Council on a wide range of issues.

Their composition is only partially public. Nevertheless, the technical expertise of their members is at times quite helpful for journalists.

Based throughout the European capitals, the national experts who have a seat in one of the advisory committees that meets regularly in Brussels act as information disseminators for national media professionals in the early stages of the legislative process.

A similar role is played by the members of the EU's Committee of the Regions (COR) - in which European regional authorities meet in Brussels from time to time to present their views on issues related to their competencies at home - and of the European's Economic and Social Committee (EESC), in which European workers and employers meet regularly in Brussels and set their positions on economic and social policy. In both cases they act as consultative bodies for both the Commission and the Council. COR and EESC Working Group members can provide good background /technical information to journalists back home.

IN THE CLASSROOM

A huge variety of resources already available on the internet and in print (it is up to the teachers and students to choose the most useful for them) will give life to the EU's supranational system and its democratic control mechanisms, its co-decision making and voluntarily shared sovereignty.

Independently of the chosen support materials, lecturers should make sure students get concrete answers to the following basic questions, answers which come from a single source: **the Treaty of the European Union.**

- What are the milestones on the road to European integration (past, present and future)?
- How is the EU run and by which governing institutions? Under which procedures? What kinds of laws does it have?
- How much money is there to run it? (Expenditures and revenues need to be explained).
- What do Member States have in common? Which principles and values do they share?
- What are the political, economic, social and cultural objectives of the EU?
- What place is there for the EU in the wider world?
- What is the current situation of the EU and what would it like it to be in the future?
- Where does Europe begin and end?
- What are the agendas of the EU's mainstream political forces?

Addressing such questions will motivate trainers and students to go through the EU framework and take a close look at its most important features.



The selection of themes is not an end in itself. It is a means to make Europe more comprehensible. The choice of the angle will depend on the local context, the closest possible contact with each community, and each particular journalism student.

Following on from this, it would be useful to point out:

- the innovations contained in the current EU treaty (the Lisbon Treaty)
- the most emblematic and important EU policies and policy tools
- the most significant areas in which the EU appears as a global player, including the Euro, global governance (G-8, G-20, the UN, etc.) and Climate Change. ■



SECTION 2 CONCRETE EUROPE LINKING LOCAL ISSUES AND PEOPLE WITH THE EU

Irrespective of whether they are dealing with European/international or national/local affairs, our European journalism classes or workshops will apply the basic, time-tested questions: who, what, where, when, how and why? This guide uses this journalistic approach to underline the concrete implications of the EU's decisions for real people, for local, regional and national communities.

In order to stay competitive in the media market, journalists have to constantly anticipate EU decisions – a difficult task for every media professional but even harder for those who are based outside of big cities.

The information flows between Brussels and the European periphery being quite irregular, local and regional journalists rely heavily on the national and regional experts (public and private, political/state authorities/officials, NGO employees, social and economic agents) who are closest to them.

The same happens with local reporters who are assigned the task of confronting European institutions with local realities. Due to the EU's complexity (its shared competencies), and the length of its decision-making process, journalists spend a lot of time (days, weeks, months or even years) covering the issues at stake. The most controversial of these are likely to come back several times to the top of the media agenda.

National and regional reporters who struggle to extract new stories and angles out of the same repetitive but important subjects, and who have little expertise on European issues, tend to turn their attention, as we said, to more accessible specialists prior to any contact with remote EU officials.

Local experts and actors who are professionally connected to European policies and institutions are better placed to brief journalists on the direct implications of EU decisions at the local level.

This can't, of course, be ignored by journalism schools. **Trainers should therefore recommend that trainees:**

- Bear in mind that EU complexities reflect the coexistence of 27 cultures, 27 histories and 23 languages
- Try to cover Europe from a local point of view even before EU decisions are taken
- Always ask what the financial, economic, and social consequences of a European decision will be at the local level
- Show the practical challenges of EU legislation; highlight contradictions; debate the arguments 'for' and 'against'
- If possible, begin a news story with a local event and try to use it as an illustration of something happening at the European level (and vice versa)
- Mention what other EU regions do and how they deal with similar issues
- Show the practical and local impacts of projects financed with European money
- Clearly identify the positions and interests of different stakeholders and actors: lobbyists, political groups, economic and social groups - all those who try to influence European public perception
- Make systematic comparisons both among EU countries and with countries or country groupings outside the EU is also part of the journalistic routine. History and geography are mandatory tools to learn about and understand the features of Europe .

SECTION 2 CONCRETE EUROPE LINKING LOCAL ISSUES AND PEOPLE WITH THE EU



SUGGESTED TOOLS FOR TEACHERS

- Lectures, Q&A, PowerPoint, brainstorming, debates. Encourage debates to question collectively what the point is of having a European Union. Does it make sense at all? Do we need it? Why?

- Jargon-busting and other exercises to help students read between the lines and see through spin: these will open the way for picking out relevant information.

Using methodology based in critical thinking, students should proceed through a number of steps, as follows:

- Study the premises of a given problem picked from the EU's agenda; identify the different interests at stake (the banking industry and the owners of capital versus the workers and consumers, for instance)
- Compare the solutions proposed by all actors (national governments, industry, trade unions, political parties, NGO's etc.)
- Critically evaluate the scope of one specific achievement of the EU
- Even more importantly: ask who benefits the most and the least from EU decisions
- Use case-studies and Q&A sessions to help explain EU Acts: directives, regulations, decisions, recommendations, communications. Also soft law items: voluntary codes of conduct, industrial agreements, benchmarking, standardisation and corporate social responsibility
- Making use of Europe By Satellite video streaming is a free of charge and easy way to watch live

European Commission & European Parliament press briefings and press conferences that provide students with fresh new material for analysis in the classroom

Prior to any discussions in the classroom, trainers should make it mandatory for trainees to critically and systematically read as many news articles and research papers on relevant topics as they can find. If possible, the media research should be extended to other countries' press. All kinds of additional sources (see 'links' list below) also deserve to be consulted

Knowledge and interpretation abilities can be promoted by asking students to search the major news headlines for a given time period noting the main topics they found in Europe-related news.

Another useful exercise is to identify issues that are better addressed at the national or local level, and those that are better dealt with by working with EU partners.

Groups of students can each choose one topic and describe the different ways it is addressed in two or three countries. They should identify the goals of national governments in tackling the issue and finally present the current state of play at EU level.

Regular discussions of present/recent events of relevance for the EU are strongly recommended. Case studies can be the starting point for group discussions and/or small team or individual assignments. (After a number of sessions, students should be asked to choose a subject that they will follow in greater depth, individually or in small groups. Later they can be evaluated on presenting their conclusions).

At this point, two questions could be asked by teachers:

1. What is the role of the EU; what is its added value?

2. Does media coverage accurately reflect the distinct roles of national governments and European institutions?

Those who report or will report the EU should never forget to assess the link between European and national interests.

The “**common interest**” is attached to issues important for a majority of Member States (MS), or groups of MS, or the whole of the EU-27. Considerations of ‘common interest’ can be presumed to relate to the core reasons why each of them joined the European club in the first place. The “**national interest**” specific to each EU country often, though not always, has the potential to generate huge conflicts among Member States.

Lectures on the challenges of and possible solutions to reporting the EU, as well as analysis of best practice examples of EU reporting – articles/audio/video pieces on EU affairs – are strongly recommended.

Based on our experience, the identification of possible items for a class virtual newspaper - outlining content and examining an EU event or issue from different viewpoints - proved popular among the students.

OTHER TESTED PRACTISES INCLUDE

- Undertaking internet research: get students to search for and gather raw EU data; they also need to check if the sources are correct (who is behind the data?)

- “Working” as a journalist: practise doing interviews as a learning exercise

- Finding websites and databases to set up long-distance co-operation online

- Understanding the numerous roles and forms of debate in European affairs (exposure to and analysis of real-life debate between opposing views). Get students to work in teams to create debating points; have them examine a sample event/issue from a range of perspectives

- Deciphering current affairs: students conduct their own analysis of a news event for subsequent guided discussion by the class; assign students to each prepare a news/features list for collective discussion and review

- Interpreting news/features coverage of events and the respective contributions of spokesmen and reporters; examination of the roles of people putting out the news

MORE TIPS FROM LECTURERS

- There is no single truth

- Everybody has an agenda

- Think about historical sensibilities

- Check the opposite forces

- Distinguish between formal and informal news

- EU affairs are not only institutional

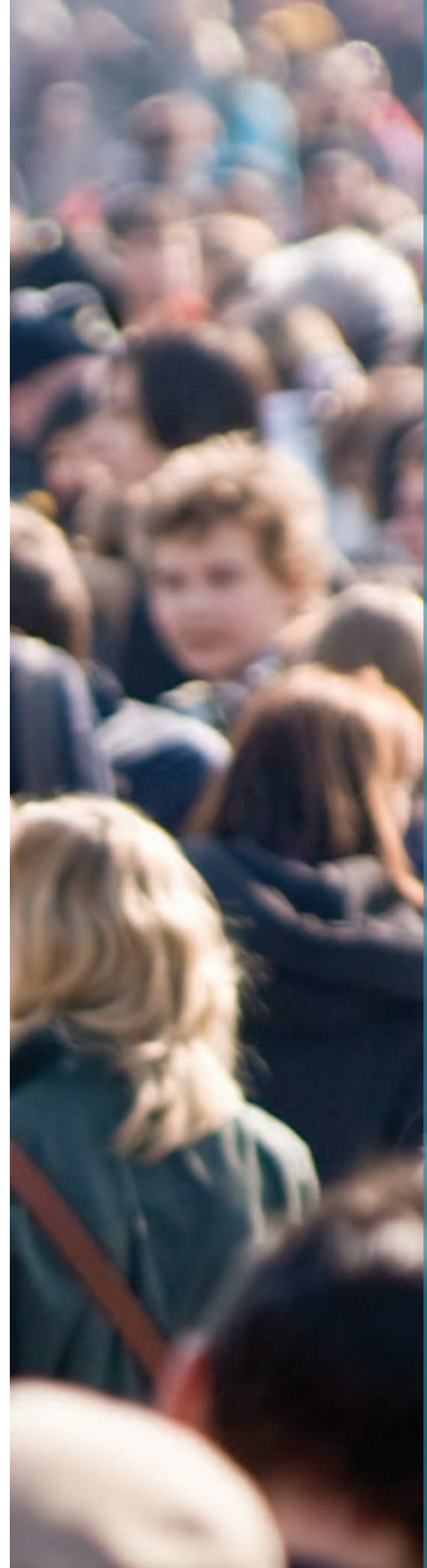
- Identify all the actors concerned prior to writing a European story from its different angles

- Don't trust anyone's 'truth' but instead look for their bias and identify trends

- Seek out the underlying political message – look for the untold: **What drives the EU? Who pushes for what items on the EU's agenda? Where do Member States stand?**

MORE GOOD PRACTISE TO COMMUNICATE TO STUDENTS

- Use direct quotes from EU sources
- Reference other research findings, identify contradictions
- Keep a record or database of EU organisations
- Keep in touch with EU sources – sign up to mail-outs from relevant organisations; remember NGO communication officers usually make good allies
- Double check statistics and other research
- When interviewing very busy people by email, remind them about your deadline
- Ask EU sources permission to use their identification details
- Get interested in a topic and develop an expertise
- Make use of statistics, opinion surveys and studies ■



SECTION 3

DEBATING EUROPE

FINDING AND PRESENTING ISSUES AFFECTING THE EU

Students should learn from what the famous Flemish journalist on European affairs Rob Heirbaut once said: “Anyone who wants to know what will be on the national agenda in two years has to observe Europe now. Anyone who wants to understand today’s local debate, must know what is said about this before in Europe.”

WHAT DOES THE EU DO? WHAT IS THE EU’S MISSION? HOW WAS IT CREATED AND WHY?

Citizens have the right and duty to assess how to get the best possible performance out of their representatives. If one ignores how the European decision-making system and the European social and economic model work, and how they affect people’s lives, how can citizens have a say on their own present and future?

For democratic and pedagogical reasons, Europe as a political entity needs to be humanised. The way for journalists to aid in this process is by placing ourselves - teachers and students - in the position of privileged observers, without bias, occupying a mediating role between the various layers of European civil society.

Debate stimulates European citizenship and a better understanding of other EU countries - before, during and after the approval of EU decisions.

Looking at conflict through a comparative approach is one way to engage debate: how does a particular approach work in the other Member States? How are European issues perceived in other parts of Europe?

Our playing field is a shifting one. Every day European laws and political agreements are creating an integrated, politically complex Europe. At the same time, this unique political union of independent states is subject to a good deal of internal contradictions.

Unlike individual countries, this convergent Europe is and will always be under construction, mutating into new and different forms as reality dictates and as Member States wish. European governments and citizens might decide at any time to put a brake on their co-operation. The idea of a group of states as victims of an out-of-control bureaucratic monster is little more than a caricature.

A truly journalistic approach can’t ignore that the fact of nations sharing sovereignty imposes duties and rights on all the members of the “Club”. Political responsibility and democratic accountability are not the monopolies of individual countries or of Brussels institutions.

In the face of problems requiring collective solutions for the sake of its collective interest, the EU looks for European solutions. Then the problem solving process gives way to a creative tension between politicians, institutions, technocrats, social and business forces from different countries and sectors - factors to which journalists have to be particularly attentive.

Common agreements are often found after tough and long negotiations. Consensus can be achieved through formal votes and procedures or in more informal ways like the ‘least common denominator’ rule, peer review or scoreboards of best practise.

All this has a significant multiplying effect on the tasks assigned to journalists.

We should bear in mind the limited scope for national governments to achieve what they hope and want to achieve at the European level. Success doesn’t depend only on diplomatic skills and on the power to influence decisions. It depends heavily on the makeup of Europe and the specific circumstances at a particular moment in history.

SECTION 3

DEBATING EUROPE

FINDING AND PRESENTING ISSUES AFFECTING THE EU



Any assessment of EU decisions can't ignore the EU's internal challenges (citizen protection - of consumers, tax payers and workers; the European economy and currency; social Europe; conditions for research; the environment...) and external challenges (frontiers, immigration, security, energy, developing co-operation, etc.)

Controversial issues on the EU's agenda for Autumn 2011 include:

- Immigration, Schengen, the rise of populism
- How to balance free market/corporate interest and general/public interest?
- Regulation versus deregulation
- Is the EU really committed to sustainable development?
- What is the European Social Market economy?
- What should the EU do- or not do - to prevent economic and financial crisis? Emerging criticism of the EU's new neo-liberal stance.

Some key EU policy areas: Competition, the Single Market, Agriculture, Environment, Health, Food Safety, Energy/Climate Change strategy, Economic and Monetary Union, Economic governance, Justice and Home Affairs, External and Security policies.

The European Union has a variable political topography . In some of the areas where power is shared between Member States and the Union, governments have the choice between staying in or out of the common framework. Debates in the classroom

should be dedicated to issues such as the Euro and the free movement of people on which groups of Member States decided in the past to deepen their co-operation (even though their decisions had implications for the remaining partners).

At this point, we recommend a careful analysis on reasons behind the opt-outs or derogations (voluntarily staying outside a given project) negotiated by some countries, without forgetting those equally interesting cases of countries that have aimed at joining the "avant-garde" groups but have been unable to jump in due to lack of preparation.

Both situations provide trainers with great material to explain the subtleties of Europe. ■

PRACTICAL EXERCISES AND TOOLS

Journalism students are expected to explore the rich information provided locally by a whole range of sources: European, national and regional political groups, professional associations, the Europe direct network, European experts and advisors working in ministries.

Official eu sources: The Commission; spokespeople's service; the EP's political staff and members; diplomats; the Council; the rotating presidencies; the Court of Justice; press services; the main EU agencies; Eurobarometer and Eurostat (EU organisation gathering statistics from EU-27 Member States, directly dependent on the European Commission; it has outstanding databases all available to journalists, researchers, students and the general public).

In order to keep independence and some distance from EU official communication and propaganda it is essential to acquire knowledge of non-institutional sources.

Non institutional sources: NGOs; industry; lobby groups; foreign press; thinktanks; cultural and political foundations; political parties; trade unions; professional associations and networks.

Networks facilitate the exchange and dissemination of information locally, all across the European territory, promoting meetings and intercultural knowledge.

Lectures on different types of EU sources are available; looking at how these sources are organised and their potential for manipulating public perception is most important.

EXERCISES TO HELP STUDENTS DISTINGUISH RELEVANT INFORMATION DERIVED FROM THE EU'S OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The number of lobbyists in Brussels is estimated to be 15,000. Students will be asked to:

1. Take a look at <http://europa.eu/transparency-register/> which includes a list of all accredited lobbying groups.

- Which categories can you distinguish: National companies? Multinationals? Sectorial/professional associations? Trade unions? NGOs?
- Which category seems to be the most represented?
- Find an example in the media of when and where that group was involved in influencing policy.
- Try to interview one or more lobbyists on their job and on how they attempt to influence policy making and media coverage.

2. Consider the REACH set of chemicals directives, or Chocolate or Car Emissions directives. Try to find out which different groups were consulted beforehand and how they may have influenced (and even changed) the plans of the EC in one way or another.

3. Do the same exercise with the so called Bolkestein directive (the directive on services in the internal market).

PRACTICAL EXERCISES AND TOOLS

Trainers should give priority to explaining how Brussels journalists organise their work and set their agenda and priorities. Students need to be able to identify what is useful for journalists and to be able to find EU information quickly and reliably.

More practical tips

- To hook in your audience be clear about the focus of the article in the first paragraph; identify the most newsworthy aspect in the headline
 - Always explain specialists' terminology
 - Be selective: EU documents often have several points to explore. It is better to just pick up on two or three and explain them in detail
 - Use maps, graphics and other documents to support your reportage
 - Try to find an original angle
 - Look at other institutions besides the three main ones
 - Use case studies and personal portraits in order to emphasise the human dimension and emotional aspects (how the public is affected); putting a human face on the issues helps to make Europe a livelier topic
 - Highlight contradictions
 - Debate the arguments 'for' and 'against'
 - Review key moments in European history and the values that define Europe
 - Look into the EU Budget and the EU's own financial resources structure:
1. Try to identify the main political priorities

2. Discuss which challenges and problems explain those political choices as reflected in the budgetary framework

3. Discuss future developments by introducing the Financial Perspectives (multi-annual budget) into the discussion.

PRACTICAL PROJECTS FOR ENGAGING STUDENTS IN REAL MEDIA EXERCISES

THE EU DECISION-MAKING PROCESS: THE ROLE OF MEMBER STATES

To study/illustrate the limits to action of national states and the subsequent role attributed to the EU through practical examples, teachers could introduce into the debate one specific topic or problem that has already been tackled by the EU. They should identify the related European decision or the policy adopted and provide a brief outline of the different stages prior to that specific EU action/act. The objective of the exercise is to try to figure out whether or not the European solution was the best deal possible.

THE EU DECISION-MAKING PROCESS: A SIMULATION EXERCISE ON THE WORKS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE EU

Howest School collaborates on this project with the Flemish Ryckvelde Foundation.

In this exercise, students choose a topic that will become the theme of a special simulated meeting of the European Council. First, students get informed on the role they will have to play. One student is the President of the European Council and leads the meeting. Other students represent the different

countries of the EU. But there are also representatives of the European Parliament and lobbying groups.

Two weeks before the simulation takes place, all students receive an individualised dossier with some basic information on the party or country they represent and the basic points of view the country or organisation has on the chosen theme. With this information in mind, the student has to prepare for the debate day by finding extra information and increasing their understanding of the context and the position she or he will take on the proposal.

On the day of the simulation exercise, students are shown round the European Parliament and meet an MEP who works on the chosen theme. This happens in a real meeting room of one of the European institutions (whether it be the European Parliament or the European Commission in Belgium).

After an introductory round, every party has to propose and defend its own position on the legislation proposal. Discussion rounds begin followed by the voting rounds, with bigger countries having more weight in this than smaller ones. There may even be several suspensions, in order to get feedback from the advisors or to lay foundations for new alliances or compromises in the corridors.

Lecturers are there to monitor, moderate and evaluate. The result of the process is an adopted text, which gets enough votes to be able to take effect. New media are integrated into the process before, during and after the simulation day. For example, opinions are posted on Facebook, “observers” tweet or leak information during the negotiations, and the final results, pictures and press releases are posted afterwards.

THE EU DECISION-MAKING PROCESS: THE EUROJOURNALISM PROJECT

Students get an official press accreditation for the European Parliament in Strasbourg. For one week, when a plenary session takes place, they report for radio, television and written press. Radio and TV reports are broadcast by the Howest Media lab (using web radio) and articles are integrated into a special magazine (there are plans to publish them in the much-read weekly *Krant van West-Vlaanderen* - Journal of West Flanders - in the near future). Students are coached by an accredited journalist in European affairs. Four weeks before the Strasbourg journey students receive a variety of press releases, notes and information. Their task is then to interpret and select from these materials, choose interviewees and make appointments.

CHOOSING SOURCES

Exercise 1: interview a well-known journalist in European affairs. Choose from among radio, television, written press and online journalism and compare their ways of working. Which sources do they choose? How did they build up a network? What are the formal ways of working and the rules EU journalists have to follow? What are the informal ones? How does this differ from other branches of journalism and reporting?

Exercise 2: research the MEPs for your country. Select a theme and find out which MEP would be your most interesting source. Relevant criteria could be: ideology, topic (which commission is she/he a member of?), region (if you work for a regional newspaper, it may be interesting to find out about European issues that are relevant for your working area).



DIVERSITY, EU VOTING AND WATCHING THE TIMETABLE

Exercise 1: Votewatch is an independent site where you can find out about all the activities, points of view and voting behaviour of individual MEPs and political groups. This site can be used by students to highlight how voting compares with what MEPs have said in public.

Exercise 2: Find some good, independent websites in your own country that give a critical, balanced and thorough view on European policy making. How did you find these sites? Who are the owners and editors? What are their goals? What are the positive and negative aspects of their approach?

Exercise 3: Students should be encouraged to regularly check the EU's political timetable and use it as a news alert to initiate contacts with NGOs, interest groups, and even with MEPs so that each of these can keep them up to date on things as they happen.

EVALUATE THE NEWS

Follow a newspaper, television news broadcast or radio news bulletin during the course of one week. Each time, note the news on Europe. What stage of the EU decision-making cycle has been reached? Are we only talking about a suggestion from a pressure group? Is there already a proposal for legislation? Who is behind the proposal, directive or regulation? Is the item being tackled by Parliament (what stage or reading has it reached there?), or by the Council or Commission? Has it been approved?

EVALUATE A DIRECTIVE

Take the example of the 'Bolkestein Directive' (the directive on liberalisation of services in the internal market). Describe its evolution from first draft to final directive. Find out in the archives if and how journalists from different media reported each step in the decision-making process. What were the main concerns in different newsrooms?

EVALUATE AN EU NEGOTIATION

Take the EU political compromise on tax and freight. The compromise paves the way for measures to make polluters pay more for using the roads. External costs, such as air and noise pollution, will be charged. The least polluting vehicles will be exempt from the first year of the levy on air pollution, while trucks in mountainous areas will pay extra.

Students should look at online archives of EU documents and press coverage, and statements from concerned political groups and organisations. What did the different interest groups want at the start? How did this change? How did media reports portray the negotiations and affect the process? Analyse the follow-up news on the topic as well. (Source: WDP, De Standaard, Tuesday, May 24, 2011)

PEDAGOGIC MEDIA ROAD MAP TO THE EU

- 1 Pick a news article based on one EU-related issue
- 2 Ask students to evaluate it: What is the newsworthiness of this item? Which were the editorial lines of the news team? Do you think the article is interesting and balanced from an EU citizen's point of view?
- 3 Ask them to create a list of organizations, agencies and institutions from their region, from which they would expect statements in line with the political mainstream.
- 4 Get them to make a list of at least ten organisations from their region that are rarely heard in the media and who could have a critical and constructive approach to EU policy.

5 Have them find an EU topic relevant to them but rarely addressed by the media. Write a text for radio on the topic with soundbites from at least three people.

COVERING CONFERENCES

Create on-the-spot simulation exercises on the European Parliament, covering a running news story from an event taking place there .

USING SHARED VIDEO FOR PRESS CONFERENCE TRAINING

Vimeo's website describes itself as a "community of creative people who are passionate about sharing the videos they make". Videos on policy in Europe are good to use for press conference training.

(<http://vimeo.com/>)

MORE SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. University students from one member country interview university students from another about their views on the EU and then post the resulting interviews online to form a growing survey of opinion. This enables each student to learn about the EU from other students' perspectives, and to make valuable contacts.

2. Students in each member country or university conduct vox pops (for TV and/or radio) with people in their own countries, on the streets or via website polling. The results are posted on a website accessible to all students and lecturers. Students then analyse the different aspects of the vox pop material for stories about the EU.

3. Students pair with students in another EU member country to research a story that affects their two countries or the EU as a whole. They then share and

use both their sets of research to each create their own independent story.

Consider and provide information from different angles

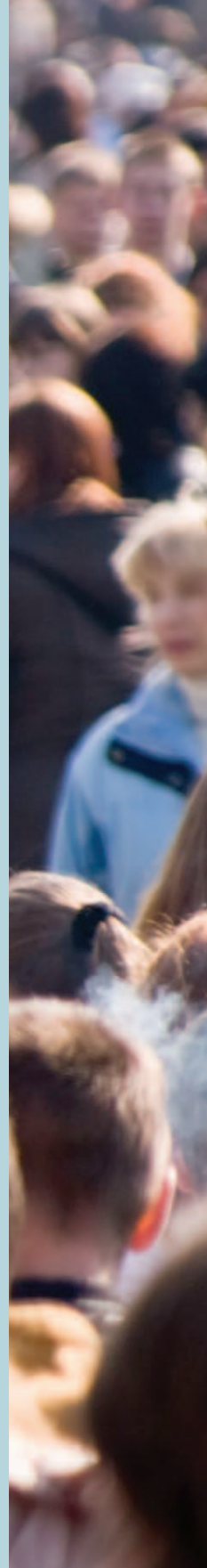
Young reporters should check what is happening locally by seeking out experts and other representatives from civil society, minimising the institutional bias in information provided about Europe. Often someone local will be able to give more meaning than anyone else to a story.

Ensuring the local audience is kept interested

News stories must be made accessible, useful and specific in order to maintain a concrete approach that is meaningful and interesting to a local audience. Focus on the experiences of people, their feelings, impressions and reactions. When considering what is useful content and will affect the audience we should seek to produce new information, rather than repeating that of other media.

Set the agenda; don't just follow it

Even though EU institutions will clearly be the major agenda setters when it comes to reporting on Europe, student journalists need to learn how to influence events by finding new and different information for their local audiences. Reporters need to search records, seek out interview subjects and create, not simply follow, the news.



CLASS-TESTED CASE STUDIES

THE NEED FOR CRITICAL JOURNALISM

In 2004, the Belgian minister of Consumer Affairs announced that she would introduce new legislation. She said that henceforward a two-year warranty on all household equipment would be the rule. The press spokesperson presented this as if it was a great achievement for the minister. What was not said was that this was merely the implementation of a European decision. And no journalist seemed to notice that Belgium was already three years late in implementing the rule, risking a condemnation at the Court of Justice.

Politicians will also announce popular proposals that they know will not be possible under EU rules, as shown by this quote from a politician on the current affairs show Nieuwsuur on Dutch television: “The Netherlands wants to make stricter rules for family reunification: a minimum age of 24 years to import brides. And immigrants should be tested for their relationship with the Netherlands”. The Rutte government wants immigration to be cut, but that is only possible if EU rules are changed. These provisions cannot be adjusted by individual member states. The initiative is on the EU-27 side. (Source: www.nieuwsuur.nl, May 25, 2011)

GAY RIGHTS AND PRESSURE GROUPS

Students are asked to discuss gay rights. If there hadn't been a lobbying organisation such as the ILGA-Europe (the European branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), and if there hadn't been a European Parliament Intergroup working especially on these themes, it is unlikely that anything would have hap-

pened on this issue. Students are asked to consider whether or not the following achievements would have been possible without pressure from interest groups: a toolkit to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights of LGBT people; European Parliament resolutions against discrimination and homophobia; the International Day Against Homophobia celebrated by all major EU institutions. (Sources and links: http://www.ilga-europe.org/home/guide/eu/lgbt_rights • <http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/>)

WHAT EUROPE IS DOING FOR YOU: REPORTING ON FARMING

Ahead of the 2009 European elections, the Flemish public news channel Radio 1 broadcast a series of four programmes called ‘What Europe is doing for you’. Rather than only using interviews with EU officials the programme makers chose to take stories from the street, about Flemish dreams that came true with the (financial) help of Europe.

- In one episode the reporter visits a farm and care centre in the hinterland of Antwerp. He talks with the farmer and his wife who, after the farmer had a hip replaced and couldn't do heavy physical work anymore, decided to employ vulnerable young people on the farm.
- Episode two is again about a farmer's family, but in West Flanders. The whole family is employed on the same farm, but the economic crisis has made traditional farming too hard. So the farm was expanded with a small shop, agrotourism activities and even a golf course.
- In the third episode, the reporter follows a priest in a working-class neighbourhood with a lot of immigrants in Ghent. The priest sees himself more as

a street outreach worker than as a vicar. He throws the doors of his church wide open and organises intercultural encounters in the neighbourhood.

- The last episode takes us to Mechelen, where a small brook, only 200 metres long, was opened after a roof had covered it from sight for more than a century. It has now become a real attraction for citizens. Source: <http://www.radio1.be/category/vrije-trefwoorden/wat-europa-voor-je-doet>

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE (GEJI)

Involving four Australian and five European universities, this is a European Union (EU)/Australia Cooperation in Higher Education and Training project. Students working together locally and globally produce journalism about environmental sustainability in the form of a wiki. <http://www.acij.uts.edu.au/geji/index.html>

COMPARATIVE EUROPEAN JOURNALISM

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism runs a project on comparative European journalism research, looking at how journalists in different European countries operate. Students could be encouraged to take part in similar projects to learn about each European state.

<http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/>

INTERACT WITH THE EU

EU student-visiting scheme as organized through MEPs in Member States or direct with the EU press office. Funds are available for students to visit the EU and MEPs will also visit universities.

Using time effectively

Course structures often prevent students from working on projects for a large amount of time. **Eur@dioNantes organises its work to allow reporters to produce valuable pieces of reportage** by using small surveys and in-depth discussions. For example, when the introduction of a jury court was being considered in France in early 2011 a trainee journalist worked on the story for two weeks, looking at European states that have already implemented such a system and what the outcomes have been.

In another example, a German student used his own experience as the starting point for an investigation into why such large deposits are necessary for shared bicycles in Nantes. She drew on links locally and across Europe, calling elected officials, the company in question and her bank in Germany.

Alongside the news, **Eur@dioNantes has developed its use of documentary**. One journalist spent a day with a farmer to find out what the milk crisis meant in practice. In the documentary the farmer explained his bills, the quotas imposed on him and the requirements of the European agricultural policy. This portrait of the farmer was followed by interviews with trade unionists and José Bové, an MEP and expert on agriculture.

Migration and the local authority

Nantes Métropole, the authority for Nantes, disseminated a press release announcing a conference debate on immigrants in Nantes during the years 1980-2010. Eur@dioNantes covered the conference focussing on how immigrants were treated, linking the conference with migration to and inside the EU.

Young people and other countries

When a delegation of Finish officials arrived in Nantes this presented an opportunity to link Europe with the local area. The officials came to Nantes to discuss how policies affect young people. A reporter was sent to meet them. This gave the radio station the opportunity to look at how countries around Europe deal with youth issues.

People with disabilities: nantes and other cities

When European charts of accessibility for people with disabilities were released they did not include any French city. Reporters were sent to check if Nantes had entered the competition. They found out Nantes had applied but was not selected. This investigation was used to produce a story ranking the city compared with the European charts.

Agriculture, national policy and eu funds

The French Ministry of Agriculture released the results of tenders for 'rural centres of excellence'. These projects aimed at promoting the development of rural areas were selected by the department. As such, they receive national and European funds. A trainee journalist was able to trace the links between the origin of these European funds, central government, the agriculture department and the local projects.

Animal welfare and following implementation of european policies locally

A European directive on the welfare of laying hens has been adopted by the Council of Ministers of the

European Union coming into effect in late 2011. The journalist checked the directive's text at the Journal of the European Union and sought the reactions of local farmers. A number of questions were asked about how the directive would affect them: How would it change their practice? Would they be ready? To provide an extra dimension, the journalist asked the same questions of two farmers in the UK, the student reporter's home country.

From international to local, from local to international

Reporters also considered international issues such as the revolutions in the Arab world or revolts in Côte d'Ivoire. They looked at the reactions of local groups with links to these countries in the light of EU Member States' reactions to these events. To add further context, the reporter spoke to academic experts and MEPs for the west of France.

The environment

When the Nantes local authority went to the UN's Climate Change negotiations a reporter looked at how this would link to the local communities' environmental strategies. This was the opportunity to look at wider environmental issues and to find a news backdrop for public concern about the construction of a new airport in Nantes - future European Green Capital for 2013. ■



USEFUL LINKS

European Union:

<http://europa.eu>

European Commission:

<http://ec.europa.eu>

A tool to save time when searching the Europa website:

<http://www.searcheuropa.eu/>

European Parliament:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu>

<http://www.europarltv.europa.eu/en/home.aspx>

<http://www.theparliament.com/>

- Find out how MEPs and European Parliamentary political groups vote on the issues that affect you and your audience: <http://VoteWatch.eu>

- Parliament voting statistics such as turnout, presence, and voting tendencies of every MEP: <http://epvote.eu/>

- Tweets from MEPs, TV:

<http://europatweets.eu/>

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu>

<http://www.europarltv.europa.eu/en/home.aspx>

<http://www.theparliament.com/>

Council of Ministers of the EU: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>

All sorts of info and potential sources on the Brussels media scene:

<http://mediapusher.eu/jays/pdf/reporting.brussels.2011.pdf>

<http://www.eu4journalists.eu/index.php/basics/english/C49/>

For general EU news:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en>

<http://euobserver.com/>

<http://www.europeanvoice.com>

European press reviews:

http://emm.newsbrief.eu/NewsBrief/clusteredition/fr/latest_en.html

<http://www.presseurop.eu/en/category/section/politics>

USEFUL LINKS



Policy papers from think tanks:

General issues

<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjpp20/18/2>

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy_advisers/experts_groups/index_en.htm

<http://www.epc.eu/>

<http://www.madariaga.org/>

<http://www.medeia.be/en/>

<http://www.friendsofeurope.org/Functionalnavigation/Aboutus/Whatwedo/tabid/1175/Default.aspx>

<http://www.coleurop.be/template.asp?pagename=EUDP>

Specialised - economics & business

<http://www.bruegel.org/>

<http://www.ecipe.org/>

<http://www.businesseurope.eu/Content/Default.asp?>

Well documented NGOs with good potential quote sources:

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Public/Page.php?ID=4>

<http://www.act4europe.org/code/en/default.asp>

<http://www.womenlobby.org/?lang=en>

Great statistics and data studies:

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>

<http://www.etui.org/>

<http://resourcecentre.etuc.org/>

Finding EU officials - the European institutions directory:

<http://europa.eu/whoiswho/public/index.cfm?fuseaction=idea.hierarchy&nodeid=3780>

<http://www.cafebabel.fr>

<http://www.eurosduvillage.eu>

Audiovisual/multimedia background:

<http://www.ena.lu>

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/eutube>

<http://www.europeana.eu>

Historical EU: http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm

Glossaries of EU terms and jargon:

http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/content/tips/tables/jargon_table_en.htm

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11767037>

For young audiences :

Especially for students and young journalists

Micro-Europa - Network and materials for encouraging students to understand Europe and its institutions <http://www.micro-europa.eu/>

The EJTA Mobility Catalogue <http://www.ejta.eu/index.php/mc>

European Young Journalist Award <http://www.eujournalist-award.eu/>

Forum for European Journalism Students <http://www.fejs.org>

Orange-Magazine <http://www.orangelog.eu>

Europocket TV <http://www.europocket.tv>

Indigo Magazine <http://www.indigomag.eu>

Journalism organisations:

European Neighbourhood Journalism Network - contains good links to discussion of and blogs on the EU

http://www.journalismnetwork.eu/index.php/_en

International Institute for Journalism (IIJ) <http://www.inwent.org/ij/>

Channel 4 BritDoc Foundation <http://britdoc.org/>

BBC college of journalism - guidance for journalists covering the EU and its institutions:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism/skills/writing/accuracy/european-institutions.html>

ABOUT MICRO-EUROPA AND THE NETWORK TEAM

Team members

BiTS FM www.bits.fm – 92.5 FM in Iserlohn (Germany)

Language: German - Institution: Business, Information and Technology School

Quindo www.quindo.be - Kortrijk (Belgium)

Language: Dutch - Institution: University College, West-Flanders

EC1 FM www.ec1fm.org.uk - 101.4 FM in London (UK)

Language: English - Institution: City University, London

Eur@dioNantes www.euradionantes.eu – 101.3 FM in Nantes (France)

Language: French - Institution: Radio Nantaise Européenne

Régie 5 www.regie5.be - Brussels (Belgium)

Language: French - Institution: Institut des Hautes Etudes des Communications Sociales (IHECS)

Supo www.supo.be - Mechelen (Belgium)

Language: Dutch - Institution: Mechelen University College

UBB Radio www.radio.ubbcluj.ro - Cluj-Napoca (Romania)

Language: Romanian - Institution: Babes Boylai University

Uni Welle Tübingen www.uni-tuebingen.de/uniradio

96.6 FM in Tübingen and Reutlingen Tübingen (Germany)

Language: German - Institution: University of Tübingen

La Sestina radio www.lasestina.unimi.it/ - Milan (Italy)

Language: Italian - Institution: University of Milan

UAB www.uab.es/ - Barcelona (Spain)

Language: Spanish - Institution: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

About the network:

<http://www.micro-europa.eu/>

The students who run these campus radios JOINTLY produce European programmes that are widely re-broadcast from each partner institution. By bringing together students and teachers, Micro-Europa serves as a genuine think-tank for innovative practices encouraging local European journalism.

Acknowledgements

The following contributors and institutions helped produce this guide:

Editing and coordinating

Barbara Schofield b.schofield@city.ac.uk

Micro-Europa president; Barbara is a course director in the journalism department of City University, London, UK.

Daniel Lee daniel.lee.1@city.ac.uk

Editor and coordinator of this guide; Daniel is a lecturer in the journalism department of City University, London, UK.

Cristina Nistor cristina.nistor@ubbcluj.ro

Researcher; Christina is a PhD Lecturer (Journalism Department) and the spokesperson for Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Rareș Beuran rares.beuran@polito.ubbcluj.ro
Researcher and also director of the Media Studio, Journalism Department,
Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania.

Frances Aurélien aurelien.frances@euradionantes.eu
Director, producer and radio journalist.

Justine Caurant justine.caurant@euradionantes.eu
Journalist for daily and weekly newspapers and news. Also coaches in jour-
nalism.

Cyrille Douillard cyrille@euradionantes.eu
Teaches journalism. Leads the Nantes Europe Express programme.

Laurence Aubron laurence.aubron@gmail.com
Head of online editorial and music, radio director and initiator of the Eur@
dioNantes project; Laurence is a director, editor and journalist.

Michel Vermeersch michel.vermeersch@howest.be
Journalism programme coordinator at Howest, University College, West Flan-
ders.

Jürg Häusermann juerg.haeusermann@uni-tuebingen.de
Professor of Media Analysis and Media Production at the Institut für Me-
diawissenschaft (Media Science), University of Tübingen.

Participating institutions

Institut des Hautes Etudes des Communications Sociales (IHECS)
<http://www.ihecs.be/>

City University, London, UK
<http://www.city.ac.uk/courses?query=journalism>

Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
www.ubbcluj.ro

Tübingen University, Germany
<http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/uni/qvr/e-30/m30-01.html>
ulrich.haegele@uni-tuebingen.de

Howest, University College, West Flanders
<http://www.howest.be/english>

Eur@dio, Nantes, France
<http://www.euradionantes.eu/>



INSIDE EUROPE

WWW.MICRO-EUROPA.EU

RESPONSIBLE PUBLISHER

Jean LEMAITRE
Institut des Hautes Etudes
des Communications Sociales (IHECS)
58-60, Rue de l'Etuve
1000 Bruxelles

DESIGN

Brix - IHECS 2011