

# 2010

## Methodology guide for students

**Local-level European journalism in practice**

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



**RESPONSIBLE PUBLISHER**

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

[www.micro-europa.eu](http://www.micro-europa.eu)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Overview

### Introduction

#### SECTION 1 – Analysis of two reports

Starting with a local event: ‘National identity’

Starting with a European issue: ‘Privacy’

#### SECTION 2 – 4 countries, 4 reports, 4 angles: one subject

A comparison

A programme

A journalistic approach

#### SECTION 3 – Three members of Micro-Europa discuss their practice

#### SECTION 4 – We covered, they covered...

# SUMMARY

**THIS GUIDE IS** for all (trainee) journalists eager to cover European news by making it more accessible for citizens. It is rooted in a two-year project that involved a European network of European student radio stations in five countries (Romania, Belgium, France, United Kingdom and Germany): Micro-Europa, [www.micro-europa.eu](http://www.micro-europa.eu). The 2010 guide is based on the work done in this network. It complements and therefore enhances the first version of the theory of ‘local-level European journalism’, which featured in the 2009 practical guide.

Several key ideas emerge in this 2010 guide:

- All too often, European news is covered in a purely institutional way. Yet the objective of the sort of journalism that we are championing is to show that the European Union’s (EU) current political affairs are linked to geographical areas, and that these affairs have an influence on these areas. The journalist who wants to ‘relocalise’ European news can do this in two ways: by showing the local impact that a decision taken at the European level can have or, starting with a local event, follow the trail back to find out just what role Europe may be playing there, albeit somewhat hidden.
- Local-level European news should meet three journalistic challenges: it should be practical, it should educate and it should be debated.
  - > Reporting should be practical, it should tell a story that is meaningful for citizens. There are two ways to catch the attention of readers/listeners/viewers. One is to work in a geographical area that is close to citizens

(local media and geographical proximity). The other is to talk about more specific themes that interest the audience (specialist media and thematic proximity).

> The reporting and the programme should be educational. Few citizens are aware of European news. The institutions and the way Europe operates are poorly understood and come across as complicated. The journalist should always aim to explain what is happening at the institutional and political level, by way of interviews, guests, reminders, and so on. He should avoid jargon and help people to understand by using simple words, without oversimplifying and without distorting reality.

> The reporting, programme and article should encourage debate. Open debate can stimulate a listener's interest and awareness of being a European citizen.

With national situations being so different, local events will vary from one area to another. All too often, Europeans are not aware of the state of affairs facing their close or more remote neighbours. In order to create a sense of belonging to Europe and to awaken a broad citizen's awareness that goes beyond segregated communities, there is a need to transcend borders, to exchange news and reports among the countries – beyond any differences of gender and approach. That is what Micro-Europa does. This network is supported by the European Commission through its 'Europe for Citizens' programme.

This guide reveals the pitfalls and good practices in the work done by Micro-Europa, work that always strives to achieve this exceptional European journalism. It also features first-hand accounts and 'similar experiences'. Above all, this guide is the fruit of hard-won and genuine experience. It offers an overview of the difficulties and successes met by the network. We sincerely hope that our friends and future journalists will find much of interest here!

### **Charlotte Maisin**

Manager in the International and Further Education department at the Institut des Hautes Etudes des Communications Sociales (IHECS)

#### **AUTEUR**

Charlotte Maisin

#### **LAY OUT**

Natacha Brixy

#### **TRANSLATION**

?

# INTRODUCTION

This methodology guide has its origins in the practical work of the Micro-Europa network launched in 2008. Two years later, the network of European student radio stations has a name: Micro-Europa, a roadmap; the practical application of local-level European journalism and its drivers: eight European schools and universities in five countries. These two years also resulted in improvements in the communication between the partners, the exchange of shared working tools, and the development of working guidelines and shared ways of working for everyone. The machine is now up and running. And although it coughs and splutters from time to time and sometimes has to undergo maintenance, the mechanics are clearly determined to do everything they can to ensure it keeps on progressing. This 2010 guide, which combines the practice and theory of local-level European journalism, is making a useful contribution.

## EVENTS THAT GIVE CAUSE FOR CONCERN...

### A collapse

Between 2005 and 2010, the number of Brussels-based correspondents covering European affairs dropped from 1,300 to 752. There are two good explanations for this rapid collapse: a falloff in EU political activity and the financial crisis facing the media sector.

### The gap, what gap?

In June 2009, voter participation in the European elections plummeted to a minimum level of 43% on average. When it comes to the turnout of young people aged 19 to 24 years of age, the figure is even worse: in 2009, less than 30% voted in the European elections. We are seeing a tremendous paradox: while the powers of the European institutions continue to grow, influencing much of national legislation and thus the daily lives of some 500 million Europeans, these Europeans during elections underscore a growing sense of alienation from their Community representatives.

### European news: it comes at a cost

A job as European correspondent in Brussels is expensive, and not only due to office expenses and travel. Journalists there have still not been granted a special status, so foreign editorial offices pay 30 to 50% higher salaries to their correspondents in Brussels than to correspondents in their own country.

## WHAT IS MICRO-EUROPA ?

Through Micro-Europa, the various different associated journalism schools – the students with the support of the teachers – produce a joint European programme. Each month, the schools decide on a theme that they will cover together. Each school then makes a production (lasting three minutes) dealing with this theme. Through a production script that is translated into English, each school adapts the productions into their own language. Lastly, a European programme of 30 to 60 minutes is produced and disseminated on each web radio station.

## A PRACTICAL GUIDE AFTER A THEORETICAL GUIDE

This methodology guide is not the first in the series. The former, written in 2009 on the theory of local-level European journalism, was initially a partnership between journalism schools in Belgium, both Dutch-speaking and French-speaking. The students and their teachers, motivated by a shared enthusiasm for education, seek to apply this theory in the reports and programmes that they create monthly. This guide quite naturally appears a year after the publication of the former guide. It serves as a way to 'test' theoretical concepts in the field, so as to draw as many lessons as possible.

## THE GUIDE AND SITE : JOINT PRODUCTIONS

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the Micro-Europa network met on three occasions (in Cluj, Mechelen and Nantes). The website ([www.micro-europa.eu](http://www.micro-europa.eu)) was designed and structured in the course of these meetings. Today, the network's programmes and productions can be accessed via this site, just like the teaching and methodology tools. These three meetings also gave rise to a guiding theme for drafting the 2010 guide. The text in this guide draws on the outcome of the debate between students, with the teachers, the study of the scripts, reports and programmes made by the different partners, and the perspective provided by the 2009 guide. The network's students and managers participated in this 2010 methodology guide to throw a little more qualitative light on the way they apply the ideas of the Micro-Europa network to their own national situations.

## ... INNOVATIVE IDEAS!

### A wide range of powers

Citizens' interest can be sparked by linking the news to events that are meaningful for them and by giving the news a more human dimension. This is nothing new. But is it really possible to apply these concepts to European news? Is it essentially too technical and remote from citizens? Well, maybe not. For, given the EU's extended range of powers, the decisions taken by the EU have an impact on agriculture, the single market and trade, the environment, energy, research, social affairs, cooperation, etc.

### Twin proximities: thematic and geographical

A Brussels correspondent experiences the atmosphere inside the European institutions, while a local journalist is very much part of a territory and a specialist journalist has knowledge and contacts in a specific field. These anchor points for each journalist provide a platform for covering the news. Does this prevent the local and specialist media from speaking about Europe? Not at all, in fact the opposite is true:

- This is demonstrated by the fact that European news on employment and social affairs is mostly channelled through the specialist press, such as publications produced by unions.
- The other potential proximity is geographical: the EU operates very practically in the regions, especially through the European Structural Funds, which represent solidarity within the EU.

# INTRODUCTION

## Who said “European news is boring”?

The theory goes that the European Union generates less ‘sensational’ news, which means it is... boring. However, several events – including the resignation of the Santer Commission in 1999, the French referendum on the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005 and, more recently, the appointment of the President of the European Council – all stirred strong reactions among citizens. Yet these stirring moments only occur sporadically and all too late, in reaction to reports of European developments, and they tend to occur once a decision has already been taken. If nothing is done to inform and involve citizens at an early stage, enabling them to make their voices heard, then control of the European Union will be handed forever to the experts and technocrats... and the EU will then be heading straight for a disaster. This means that when a choice must be made between the European correspondent in Brussels and another correspondent, the former will lose out.

## Extensive powers

In light of these facts, the media offer poor coverage of European affairs. Yet according to Eurobarometer 67 (spring 2007), almost 45% of citizens feel that they are not sufficiently informed on European affairs. Are they right to say that? Yes, because an increasing percentage of Member States’ national legislation is influenced by the European Union, as a result of which the EU now has extensive powers. In short, ever-greater numbers of citizens want to learn more about the EU and fewer and fewer media keep people informed about the EU.

## PRIOR SUPPORT LEADING TO PROSPECTS FURTHER DOWN THE LINE

Les huit universités et écoles – EuradioNantes, la City University of London, l’Université de Tübingen, l’Ihecs (Bruxelles), la Babes-Bolyai University de Cluj (Roumanie), la Katholieke Hogeschool Mechelen (Belgique), la Hogeschool West Vlaanderen Kortrijk (Belgique) et Business and Information Technology School de l’Université d’Iserlöhn (Allemagne) – ont participé activement à la réalisation de ce guide, par leur présence aux réunions internationales du réseau et leur implication dans les débats. Néanmoins, les partenaires de Micro-Europa ne veulent pas rester entre eux. Le réseau Micro-Europa a vocation à s’élargir, à essaimer, à partager théorie et pratique. Cette action collective n’existerait pas sans le soutien du programme «L’Europe pour les citoyens» de la Direction Générale de l’éducation et de la culture de la Commission européenne. Nous en profitons pour la remercier vivement car elle permet à notre action collective d’ancrer son action dans le temps et d’imaginer des perspectives futures.

## **THE GUIDE : POINT BY POINT**

In short, this methodology guide is based on the practical work done over two years of Micro-Europa, during which the network's eight student radio stations jointly covered some 15 subjects.

The first section of the guide analyses two reports produced by Micro-Europa students. The first report builds on a local event, while the second starts with a more general European issue. The theoretical input enables organisation of the analysis: this is a vertical kind of analysis.

The second section compares the reports by the different schools and universities on the same subject, resulting in the production of a programme that brings together these four reports: this is a horizontal kind of analysis of the reports.

The third section features three students and a teacher from the Micro-Europa network to illustrate the need to cover Europe in a different way, in three separate national situations (Germany, Romania and Belgium).

The fourth and final section lists several multilingual news sites that meet the objectives of Micro-Europa or that may be of help to journalism students seeking information.

## **Defining local-level European journalism**

Le journalisme européen cherche à combler le fossé qui éloigne les citoyens de l'Union européenne en reliant l'information à des sujets et à un territoire proches des citoyens. Objectif ? Rendre l'information européenne intéressante et «reliée» et, ainsi, stimuler le débat sur les enjeux en présence. Ce journalisme exige une connaissance aigüe d'un sujet, d'un territoire et des mécanismes européens. C'est l'option que promeut Micro-Europa en intégrant théorie et pratique depuis plus de deux ans.

# SECTION 1

---

## Starting with a local event : «L'identité nationale et l'Europe»

---

### ANGLE

Aubel is a Belgian village, located in the centre of the 'Euregio Meuse-Rhine'. This region includes areas of three countries: Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. In the 1990s, when borders came down, the regions that were part of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine increasingly grew closer to one another. Several languages are spoken in the region, but how strong is the sense of national identity among the people living in Aubel? The report focused on the Sunday market in Aubel, featuring interviews with citizens. It also included a meeting with the burgomaster ['mayor' in France] of the village, asking him about the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, the way it operates and its added value.

### RADIO INTRODUCTION

**Presenter:** Several projects have been set up to strengthen the contacts between the various nationalities. One of these was in the village of Aubel, located at the crossroads of three countries – Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. This village is part of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, one of the longest established cross-border-cooperation partnerships. Last Sunday Aurélie Pirkenne, Jean-François Vanwelde and Bertrand Habay visited the market in Aubel..

- Good morning, madam!
- I would like some Herve cheese
- Here you are, madam

**Voice Over :** Although it's cold and snowy, the people of Aubel and others have turned up. Yet although the village is somewhat isolated, it could not be more multicultural. As happens every Sunday, no fewer than four different nationalities may gather in the market square – a feature of the village that pleases the market traders.

- Here in Aubel, for example, there are plenty of Dutch and Germans too.

**Reporter :** Do you also go to other markets?

- Yes, I do six every week.

**Reporter :** And in the other markets, you see fewer...

- Fewer foreigners because these markets are held in the region of Liege. So here, it's because we are in a small village close to the borders, we're very close to the three borders.
- 6,05. let's say six euro.
- Thanks sir, that's very kind of you. That's great. Goodbye and have a nice Sunday, ladies and gentlemen.

---

Report by the students of the Institut des Hautes Etudes des  
Communications Sociales (IHECS), February 2010, on 'Iden-  
tity in a cross-border region'

---

**Voice Over** : Far from all the community disputes, everyone makes an effort for the others. Here, the French-speakers make an effort to start a discussion in Dutch.

- That is with blue cheese. You mean this one?

- No, this one. It's spicy. Would you also like to taste it?

**Voice Over** : To overcome language barriers, six regions decided to get together and pool their work. The Euregio Meuse-Rhin was born in 1976. Jean-Claude Meurens, the current burgomaster of Aubel, was a member of its Parliament for three years.

**Jean-Claude Meurens** : The Euregio is thus a structure for bringing people together, it's a euregio, euregional, Parliament that includes the region of Aachen, Maastricht, the Dutch Province of Limburg, the Belgian Province of Limburg, the Province of Liege, and Belgium's German-speaking Community. Of course it's complex. There are several languages, which means translators are needed. There are many projects, which need to be agreed everywhere; the projects must often be supported by three attending parties. For the Euregio project, the regions must be autonomously involved in the projects, and they must present and complete these projects while convincing the partners to reach the goal.

**Voice Over** : So the situation is not always easy to deal with, although the result is worth the trouble. Many projects are created, such as a joint transport network for the three countries. Cooperation has been set up between the region's different hospitals, and at the end of February, some 14 million euro was found to fund nine projects. Aubel, at the heart of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, aims to be a model of this collaboration. Here, everyone is made to feel at home. This small town, in a remote part of the Province of Liege, symbolises a truly European identity.

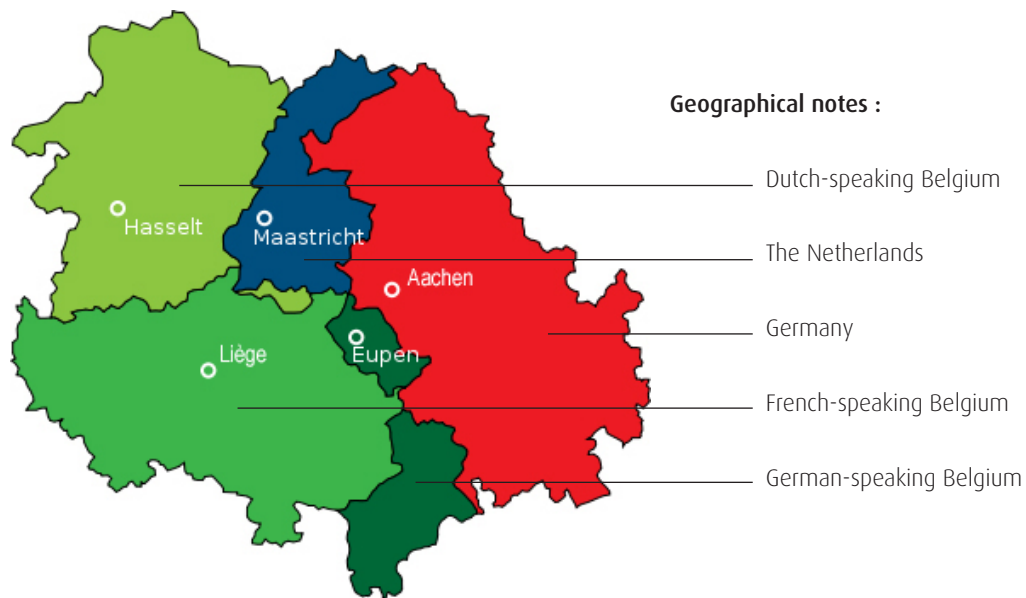
## **RADIO REACTION**

**Presenter** : Mr Lorenzen, you are an advisor to the European Parliament. What is your view of regional and national partnerships such as the Euregio Meuse-Rhine?

**Hannes Lorenzen** : This is where Europe begins. When people work together, across borders, on something that concerns everyone, Europe is born. I also believe that nation states are defined by their borders, whilst regions are defined by their identity. Even if their identities are different, it is possible for regions to work together on common themes, such as economic and educational cooperation, on projects to protect the environment and so on. In this Euregio or within European projects such as LEADER, people are working together on common themes that must certainly not be reduced to national problems.

**Presenter :** You have just mentioned LEADER. So are there similar sorts of European projects? One thinks in particular of community projects in which LEADER is involved. It's worth underlining that these are programmes that support projects between regions in different countries, particular near borders. These initiatives have been stopped. You wrote that they were, however, the best link between Europe and its citizens. What did they consist of and, in your opinion, should they be reinvented?

**Hannes Lorenzen :** Yes, these initiatives were remarkable, countering the 'top-down' approach, which is not very popular. European institutions wish to invest at a local and regional level. In the case of European initiatives, it was quite astonishing that these programmes originated directly from the European Commission. These community initiatives confirmed the need to support citizens' needs and their organisational ideas in different sectors. For example private initiatives, NGOs and others, who wanted to work together on an environmental or local development project, were able to devise their own programme, without waiting for regional or local support. They were independent, both managerially and organisationally. These projects were directly selected and supported by European institutions. This was great, because it was a bottom-up approach begun at a European level. People noticed that, even with little money, it was possible to work together at a local level, to be linked to other European local initiatives. And they saw that Europe was of tangible help to them. It was the humiliation of regional and local authorities that led to the end of Community initiatives, as these authorities had no control over these initiatives, which were directly financed on a European level. A number of Member States therefore called for the end of these initiatives, saying that they took away the authority of local and regional bodies. However, these initiatives were very popular with citizens and local stakeholders; so I think that it was this success that scared the authorities. Today, we have returned to a 'mainstreaming' perspective, which lets Member States choose and control projects. This clearly detracts from the quality of the link between the citizen and Europe.



## STARTING WITH A LOCAL EVENT

- > **Advantages:** the law of proximity, the notion of a Europe that starts in local areas and regions. Avoids the need to deal too directly with the abstract nature of Europe, which can be off-putting for the public.
- > **Disadvantages :** limited space devoted to the European dimension. Fails to take the European agenda into account.
- > **Tips :** good for subjects where there is a link between the local and European agendas or for subjects that can be compared.

### FOUR ELEMENTS OF 'LOCAL-LEVEL EUROPEAN JOURNALISM' TO ASSESS:

- > Target AUDIENCE for the news
- > News FLOWS
- > SUBJECT of the news
- > TIMING of the news

### THREE JOURNALISTIC CHALLENGES

- > Education
- > True impact
- > Debate

## FOUR ELEMENTS

### Target AUDIENCE for the news

	Central areas	Peripheral areas
Upper Classes	Strongest supply	Average supply
Middle Classes	Average supply	Average supply
Lower Classes	Average supply	Weakest supply

### *Who are the target audiences for the report's news?*

**GEOGRAPHICAL TARGET :** The regions. The report calls on the example of Aubel, a small village in the Province of Liege, Belgium, and highlights the European aspects of its geographical location. All European regions – notably cross-border ones – may find something of interest in the news.

- > **Peripheral areas**

**SOCIAL TARGET:** All targets. The report was produced during a Sunday market held on the village square. It underlines the potential and value of collaboration between citizens from different regions and countries.

> **All social classes**

> **News FLOWS**

- 1) Top-down news: produced by the European institutions and/or national institutions for citizens
- 2) Bottom-up news: the opinion of citizens is gathered/or local events are examined, in order to take them into account with respect to the European superstructures
- 3) Horizontal news: opinions and events are exchanged, from one European area to another

***What are the news flows in this report?***

**HORIZONTAL NEWS :** On apprend que plusieurs régions européennes, situées entre l'Allemagne, la Belgique et les Pays-Bas, coopèrent ensemble depuis 1976. Elles ont créé un Parlement. Grâce à celui-ci, elles présentent, défendent et réalisent des projets ensemble.

**BOTTOM-UP NEWS :** This organisation is a local action, of potential value to the European superstructures. The difficulties mentioned by the burgomaster of Aubel could serve to raise awareness among the institutions and stimulate them to find solutions.

**TOP-DOWN NEWS :** This is not part of the report. In this case, the guest in the studio provides the 'top-down' information. He reacts to the report by answering questions from the journalists. Through this interview, listeners gain more complete and detailed information on the European programmes that encourage this kind of collaboration between regions.

> **SUBJECT of the news**

**Explain the decisions, legislation, policies: Very active**

**Convey the financial opportunities: Fairly active**

**Stimulate debate and active European citizenship: Fairly rare**

**Better understanding of the situation and culture of each European country: Very rare**

***In this report, what are the subjects of the news?***

**EXPLAIN THE DECISIONS, LEGISLATION, POLICIES :** This subject is not part of the report. The studio guest provides this aspect.

## CONVEY THE FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

This subject is not part of the report; but it is touched on by the guest in the interview after the report.

## BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION AND CULTURE OF EACH EUROPEAN COUNTRY

Although the situation and culture are not explained, the ambient sound of Aubel's market captures the listener's attention. The languages intermingle and help to highlight the village's cultural situation.

## STIMULATE DEBATE AND ACTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

This report serves to show that identity is not exclusive. In fact the opposite is true, since Aubel is a village with its own identity, local produce, traditions, etc. But beyond all those things, the village has acquired a more European identity as a result of the exchanges and collaboration between the adjacent regions. The Euregio Meuse-Rhine Sunday market contributes actively to these exchanges.

## TIMING of the news

### Three levels :

- after the European decision is taken
- during the taking of the European decision
- before the European decision is taken

### ***What is the timing of the news in the report?***

The news in the report does not take into account the European agenda. That is one of its limitations. During the interview after the report, we learn that the European programme in question (the Community initiatives) is over. It would have been better to mention the subject before or during the decision-making rather than after it.

## THREE JOURNALISTIC CHALLENGES

**True impact:** Show the links and practical implications that European decisions have on local daily life (regions, towns, areas).

The report aims to bring out the practical aspects of European decisions and to show their impact on citizens' daily lives. To improve the 'practical' side of the report, it would have been useful to develop a specific collaboration project. In this respect, while both the market and the Euregio Meuse-Rhine do bring out the subject of the report, they are not directly connected to one another.

**Debate:** Show the challenges of the political and legislative projects. Highlight the contradictions, arguments 'for' and 'against'. Circulate the opinions.

A debate is launched thanks to the comments of the market traders in the village of Aubel and during the interview with the village's burgomaster. However, the opinions are not compared. A longer report could have featured other people, who could have given their opinion on the organisation of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine and the importance of inter-regional collaboration.

**Education:** Help people to understand the EU's institutional and political system and European politics.

The report does not explain in real terms that this is a cross-border programme and the ways in which it can bring Europe closer to its citizens. The educational aspect is provided by the interview after the report.

**THE LIMITATIONS OF THIS REPORT THE GOOD POINTS OF THIS REPORT**

There are no links with  
the European agenda

A lack of debating in the report

The report's practical aspect is  
not directly linked to European news

## THE GOOD POINTS OF THIS REPORT

L'Europe est vécue dans le quotidien concret des citoyens qui interviennent dans le reportage

The interview compensates for any weaknesses in the report

The targets for the news and the news' subject differ from what one normally hears about the EU

---

# STARTING WITH A EUROPEAN ISSUE :

## «Privacy»

---

### ANGLE

The issue of personal data protection is one of the EU's priorities. Each EU country has its own rules on protecting personal data, but with different measures. Who has access to this information? How do we protect people against fraudulent use of personal data? And how does existing legislation protect us? These are some of the questions that the following report tries to answer.

### REPORT

**Voice Over** : At international level, the problem of losing privacy arose as soon as our personal data was exposed in cyberspace. What is the purpose of collecting our personal data? How does it reach some companies' databases without our agreement? And how much does this information traffic affect us? Our colleague Andrada Lăutaru looks at the Romanian 677/2001 law on the protection of people and the processing of personal data.

### INTERVIEW 1

**Andrada Lăutaru** : The present law aims to guarantee and protect people's rights and liberties, especially the right to privacy, family and private life, with regard to personal data processing. The exercise of rights as called for by the present law cannot be limited, except in the expressly mentioned cases under the law. Personal data processing can only be carried out if the person notified gives their approval for the specified data processing.

**Voice Over** : In this way, with the aim of tackling terrorism and crime, it seems that it has become normal in the 21st century to label each one of us. In a country like Romania, with a recent history of communist dictatorship, the access that authorities have to information about our religion, sexual orientation or political affiliation could generate a feeling of excessive control. The European MP Renate Weber speaks of the dangers of uncontrolled access to this information

### INTERVIEW 2

**Renate Weber** : I really believe that is unjustified this excess of collecting so many personal data. I feel like we are all countered. The biggest fear is that all this informations float somewhere in the cyberspace and we do not know how these may be used by someone neglectful or even malevolent.

**Voix OFF** : In the European Union, many discussions on the team of protecting the personal datas appear in the context in which the legislation of the member states does not contain concrete forecasts in this concern. The European MP, Renate Weber again.

**Renate Weber** : I would say that European Parliament is the only institution which mostly focuses on guaranteeing that the access to the personal data is made for some purposes only and only part of the informations may be processed and sent forward. This is, for example, one of the problems that most interests us.

**Voix OFF**: Another problem is risen by the volunteer disclosure of personal informations, under the the aegis of the confidentiality policy which the internet involves. However, the internet remains the most productive area for the so named identity thieves. In this context, technology covers both our public and personal life, and we find ourselves in front of an international crisis. About the solutions that we might get in this situation speaks Chereches Zoltan, IT specialist.

---

A report by the students of Babes-Bolyai University  
in Cluj (Romania), April 2010, from the angle  
of 'protection of privacy on the Internet'

---

### **INTERVIEW 3**

**Chereches Zoltan:** First of all, the person that fills in his personal data must know if he can trust the site. Only when the person has the guarantee that the site is trustworthy, the responsibility to protect personal data goes to the company. It has to be an ambivalent agreement.

## STARTING WITH A EUROPEAN ISSUE

- > **Advantages** : By keeping to the European agenda, one guarantees the possibility of greater democratic participation by European citizens, by informing them in advance of European decisions to come.
- > **Disadvantages**: The risk of encountering public apathy, in the face of an abstract and jargon-laden Europe. More education is needed.
- > **Indications**: This is a matter of making known the centres of local interest behind European decisions.

### FOUR ELEMENTS OF 'LOCAL-LEVEL EUROPEAN JOURNALISM' TO ASSESS:

- > Target AUDIENCE for the news
- > News FLOWS
- > SUBJECT of the news
- > TIMING of the news

### THREE JOURNALISTIC CHALLENGES

- > Education
- > True impact
- > Debate

## FOUR ELEMENTS

### Target AUDIENCE for the news

	Central areas	Peripheral areas
Upper Classes	Strongest supply	Average supply
Middle Classes	Average supply	Average supply
Lower Classes	Average supply	Weakest supply

### *Who are the target audiences for the report's news?*

GEOGRAPHICAL TARGET : The report mentions the Romanian law on protection of privacy as well as the history of this country with regard to protection of personal data. In so doing, the report targets Romanian listeners. But all Internet users may feel that the report has relevance for them.

- > National territory

**SOCIAL TARGET** : Anyone who surfs the web may feel that this subject concerns them. According to data from Eurostat in 2009 , in the EU27, 49% use the Internet daily or almost daily. This mainly applies to the upper and middle classes.

> **Upper and middle classes, fewer lower classes.**

## News FLOWS

- 1) Top-down news: produced by the European institutions and/or national institutions for citizens
- 2) Bottom-up news: the opinion of citizens is gathered/or local events are examined, in order to take them into account with respect to the European superstructures
- 3) Horizontal news: opinions and events are exchanged, from one European area to another

### **Who are the news flows in this report?**

**TOP-DOWN NEWS** : In this report, we learn that Romania has had a law protecting personal data since 2001. It is becoming increasingly clear that the European Parliament is especially focused on issues like this and that through its legislation it aims to strengthen national laws in this field. This is top-down news.

**HORIZONTAL NEWS**: The report tells us about Romanian legislation on protection of personal data. It also looks at the historical traditions, regarding the control of this private data, in a country that experienced years of communist dictatorship.

**BOTTOM-UP NEWS**: This type of news is not included in the report.

### **L'OBJET de l'information**

**Expliquer les décisions, législations, politiques** : Très présent

**Communiquer les opportunités financières** : Assez présent

**Susciter le débat et la citoyenneté européenne active** : Assez rare

**Mieux connaître les réalités et cultures propres à chaque pays européen** : Très rare

### **In this report, what are the subjects of the news?**

**EXPLAIN THE DECISIONS, LEGISLATION, POLICIES** : While the report only mentions European legislation on the protection of personal data, it underlines the important role played by the European Parliament on such issues. Romanian law is mentioned and briefly explained.

**BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION AND CULTURE OF EACH EUROPEAN COUNTRY** : The section on Romanian history may raise awareness in listeners and inform them about other cultural situations.

<sup>1</sup> Statistique (2009) des «Particuliers utilisant fréquemment l'internet» : <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=fr&pcode=tin00092&plugin=1>

## STIMULATE DEBATE AND ACTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

The final interview involves citizens by explaining to them their responsibility in concrete terms. Although other people in the report do not challenge the argument made here, it may stimulate a debate following the report, for example in a programme.

## CONVEY THE FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

This is not the aim of the report.

## TIMING of the news

### Three levels :

- after the European decision is taken
- during the taking of the European decision
- before the European decision is taken

### ***What is the timing of the news in the report?***

Bottom-up type information can help facilitate a 'linkage' with the European political agenda and thus be used before or during decision-making. In this report, no mention is made of debates on the agenda of the European Parliament, or of changes to the law. This report mainly aims to explain. It lacks any 'political relevance'.

## THREE JOURNALISTIC CHALLENGES

**True impact:** Show the links and practical implications that European decisions have on local daily life (regions, towns, areas).

Here, the European Parliament gets closer to the real and everyday

concerns of citizens: the protection of personal data on the Internet is of interest to everyone. The interview with a Romanian Euro-MP, who comes from the country where the report was made, also brings a practical interpretation of European politics and organisation.

**Debate:** Show the challenges of the political and legislative projects. Highlight the contradictions, arguments 'for' and 'against'. Circulate the opinions.

This report underlines the necessity to regulate the gathering of personal data on the Internet. This subject merits debate, but the opinions aired are not compared and all say the same thing.

**Education:** Help people to understand the EU's institutional and political system and European politics.

This report shows citizens that the European Parliament works on practical subjects and has a genuine added value. Yet it does not provide any practical information on related European legislation (Directive 95/46/CE on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data).

## THE LIMITATIONS OF THIS REPORT THE GOOD POINTS OF THIS REPORT

There are no links with the European agenda

The top-down information lacks details: further analysis of European legislation would have made the report more informative

The report stimulates debate but does not compare the arguments for and against

## THE GOOD POINTS OF THIS REPORT

This is 'top-down' information of relevance to many citizens

The report adds a practical dimension to its arguments by interviewing different people and mentioning the responsibility of citizens.

The educational aspect is significant, because of the highlighting of the link between the EU, the nation State and citizens.

# EXAMPLE

'Le Soir' is a Belgian French-language daily newspaper. This article appeared in the regional pages of the 2 October 2010 edition. It offers a concrete example of 'local-level European journalism in practice': the article starts with a European issue that it then covers at the local level.

## A CONCRETE EXAMPLE IN 'LE SOIR'

### 'The people's Europe is 20 years old'

DURIEUX, SANDRA- Saturday 2 October 2010

#### Cross-border: the Interreg programme promotes proximity

While it has a terrible name, Interreg represents a real revolution for European citizens. Launched exactly 20 years ago, this European co-financing programme, which promotes cooperation between different regions of the Community, has enabled the setting up of tens of thousands of projects in each of the 27 Member States.

What they all have in common is that they address the real needs of people in terms of mobility, healthcare and economic development. In short, they form one of the rare visible European policies, yet account for only 2.5 % of the EU's budget. "I would like to see an increase in the budget for regional cooperation," said Johan Hannes, European Commissioner in charge of regional policy, at yesterday's symposium on this cooperation in Tournai.

Launched in 2007, the fourth version of the Interreg programme runs until 2013. It identifies three types of cooperation: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (B) and interregional (C). Wallonia is involved in three cross-border cooperation programmes which link the provinces of Hainaut, Namur, Liege and Luxembourg with the French regions of Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Picardie, Champagne-Ardenne, Moselle, etc., and also with Flemish provinces, the German-speaking community, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and some German Länder.

With a budget of 250 million euro, of which over half is financed by Europe, the 'France-Wallonia-Flanders' Interreg programme is the largest in Wallonia. It finances 142 projects as diverse as the development of tourism, the prevention of flood risks, the creation of unique local healthcare services, etc. Moreover, it ensures the

creation or protection of some 600 jobs.

Through Interreg, Wallonia has been able to exploit the uniqueness of its border areas to set up productive partnerships and therefore attract European money. It has also served as a model, notably for the Eurometropolis of Lille-Tournai-Courtrai, the very first European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), which has inspired another six since, as well as 16 that are being prepared.

#### An international orchestra

The 'Vis à Vis' network aims to enable musicians and cultural professionals from the regions of Nord-Pas-de-Calais, West Flanders and Wallonia to create joint musical productions on the theme of popular and festive music. This network resulted in the formation of the Vetex International Orchestra, a cross-border brass band made up of musicians (from these three regions) who were previously totally unknown to each other. The orchestra quickly made a name for itself thanks to its festive and dynamic music, and has already recorded two albums, performed 400 concerts and created a live show in the Balkans.

puis et 16 en préparation.



---

## The network's theme : «Strike and protest»

---

4 COUNTRIES, 4 REPORTS, 4 ANGLES: ONE SUBJECT

---

### Report by the Institut des Hautes Etudes des Communications Sociales (IHECS)

Belgium sees fewer demonstrations than most other European countries. This is because many workers belong to trade unions and because of the system of social dialogue set up after World War Two. But on a European scale, it is harder to organise collective action, due to differences in national interests. And while the economy is becoming more global, employer associations still face many difficulties in coming to agreements with international associations of workers.

#### The report by IHECS features:

- Marc Sinnaeve : Social information teacher at IHECS.
- Claude Rolin : Secretary General of the Confederation of Christian unions in Belgium (CSC).
- Drivers stuck in a traffic jam caused by a strike.

#### Subjects tackled include :

- Belgian social organisation, the country's 'dialogue culture' and the high number of workers who belong to a union (60% of workers in Belgium compared to 8% in France).
- The small number of strike days in the country (a total of 90,000 work days were given over to strike action), a figure comparable to that in Scandinavian countries.
- The idea of organising European strikes to protest about measures taken after the crisis.
- The difficulty of getting organised internationally and of linking workers – given the differences between social systems, the traditions and socio-economic situations in each European country.

## Report by the University of Tübingen

Any Germans who decide to take a look at their neighbouring countries will be surprised. The citizens of other European countries are happy to go on strike, with greater commitment, often for longer periods and they are often more numerous. So what is going on in Germany? It is clear that German workers are more reticent. Or could it be that they protest more tactically and appropriately... in line with the German character.

### The report by the University of Tübingen features:

- Jörg Neuheiser: a researcher at the University of Tübingen specialising in the history of social conflicts.
- Reinhard Bahnmüller: an employee at the Tübingen Institute for technology, work and culture.
- Jasmina Gherairi: a PhD student studying the effect of speeches on strikes.

### Subjects tackled include :

- The low number of strikes and demonstrations in Germany (3.6 days a year per 1,000 workers, compared to 100 in France and Spain and 203 in Canada). The first mass demonstrations took place around the middle of the 18th century when industrialisation was taking off. But notwithstanding a revival in the early 1970s, there have not been many other large-scale strikes.
- The fact that Germany has a constitutional law protecting the right to go on strike. This law allows only organisations that defend workers to 'call' a strike, which may only be held if 75% of the employees take part in it. If the workers' organisations support the strike, they are responsible for paying the salaries of the workers. This strengthens solidarity.
- The symbolic language used in strikes to reach their goal: burning a car in Germany does not have the same repercussions as it would in France...

## Report by EuradioNantes

En France, il se peut que vous arriviez à la gare pour prendre un train... pour constater que tous les voyages sont annulés. Alors, vous allumez la radio, mais on y passe que de la musique. Votre enfant vous appelle de l'école pour prévenir que son professeur ne donnera pas la classe. Le pays est-il rentré en période d'hibernation ? Non, c'est probablement une nouvelle grève ! Les Français en ont peut-être l'habitude mais, pour les étrangers, cela peut sembler extrême. Aurélien Frances et Joanna Impey d'EuradioNantes ont cherché à comprendre pourquoi les Français sont aussi prompts à rejoindre les rues.

### The report by EuradioNantes features:

- Bruno Lefèvre: an anthropologist and sociologist specialising in the workplace, based at the University of Nantes.

### Subjects tackled include :

- The great propensity of the French to strike when political plans call into question the social agreements of the last few decades. To that end, the French specifically protest against European directives aiming to privatise services, reduce budgets for education and health or change the legal retirement age.
- For strikers, the difficulty lies in capturing the attention of the media and altering the behaviour of the strikers: nowadays, there are more strikes than there were 15 to 20 years ago, but they do not last as long.
- The fact that strikes and demonstrations are part of the nation's culture. But they can be somewhat misleading, because in reality it is very hard to assess the level of solidarity in France.

## Report by City University London

The report is on a demonstration that took place in the centre of London to protest about the UK's involvement in the war in Iraq. On the same day, Tony Blair was being heard by the 'Chilcot' Commission, which was studying the UK's role in the Iraq war. Tony Blair tried to justify his decisions to the Commission. Eight seats were reserved for randomly selected witnesses while the demonstrators gathered in front of the building where the hearing was taking place. The reporters asked a key question: Do demonstrators today sometimes meet their goals and what role do demonstrations play in English society?

### The report by the University of London featured:

- Militants at the demonstration in front of the building where Tony Blair's hearing was taking place.
- A witness at the hearing of Tony Blair.
- James Anslow: a journalist of 30 years' standing, who was long pro-Blair.
- Steve Richards: chief political commentator of the 'The Independent' newspaper.

### Subjects tackled include :

- Comments by the activists who called for Tony Blair to be judged at The Hague Tribunal.
- The fact that since the 13th century London has seen many strong demonstrations (Peasants' Revolt in 1381, the pro-democracy riots in the early 1800s, and recent protests against the G20).
- The opinion of a journalist who places the arguments of the anti-Blair militants into perspective.
- The impressions of a witness at the hearing of Tony Blair.
- Steve Richards' analysis of the increasingly weak impact of the demonstrations and strikes on the UK government's decisions.



**The creation of a radio programme including these four reports allows for:**

**• THE USE OF CONFLICT THROUGH A COMPARATIVE APPROACH :**

“How does this work in other EU Member States? How is a European issue perceived in another European region?” This approach underlines the convergence and/or divergence of practices in the different sectors of social and political life that are of particular concern to citizens. It also promotes horizontal intercultural dialogue.

**• THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HORIZONTAL NEWS**

Opinions and facts are exchanged between European areas



**EDUCATION**

The heterogeneous nature of target audiences calls for a major educational change. The use of effective computer graphics and interactive means will be of great help in making very complex data understandable.

> These four reports and their participants are dynamic, and they help to make the content accessible and to stimulate the interest of listeners. Starting with these reports, it is easier to add ‘cross-cutting’ information, i.e. European or targeted at the country broadcasting the programme. How can this be done? By getting special guests to participate and react to the reports.

> If this programme is available on the Internet, it may be useful to accompany it with data and links. For example, by putting statistical data in a box or by suggesting resource sites on the subject in question. (An example in this case is the European Trade Union Confederation)

# EMISSION



## CREATION OF ITS MEDIA:

European information is a victim, in too many editorial offices, of the idea that Europe does not sell. But the Internet offers a major outlet for the creation of new media. Blogs, web-radios and web-TVs can be created at minimum expense. Web-radio seems particularly suited to modern media. Being 'Podcastable', its content can be listened to everywhere, unlike other media. Radio offers twin advantages: it is more easily accessible than the press, as it does not require sophisticated technical means. It is also more economical than television.

> To support the system that it has set up, the Micro-Europa network has chosen radio. This offers great freedom of use to every school and university, enabling a wider range of writing and requiring no professional translators; content can be posted on-line through the Internet, via a web-radio, which allows for greater flexibility than broadcasting over the airwaves; and it is all fairly economical, given that recording and editing equipment are provided by the schools or universities.



## DIVERSIFICATION OF SOURCES

The European Commission, although central to the European institutional system (it is the EU's government and has the monopoly on European legislative initiatives), is not the only institution that matters. Other organisations such as the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions, play an important role in providing a clear picture of current European affairs. European civil society (NGOs, associations, etc.) is also important, helping to provide a concrete image of European challenges.

> It should be noted that none of these four reports mentions or brings into play either civil society organised at a European level (e.g. the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the social NGOs, etc.) or European institutions (e.g. the European Economic and Social Committee). Only civil societies organised at national levels (the Confederation of Christian unions of Belgium), the academic world and the media are involved. This gap can be filled by the programme as well as its interviews and guests.



## ORGANISATION IN A NETWORK

Often small in scale, local European information bodies benefit from being in a network. A network facilitates the exchange and dissemination of information, and promotes meetings and inter-cultural knowledge. It also enables more aid and grants to be obtained.

> For a programme of this kind, it can prove difficult to find reports that cover the same subject, in different countries, in a similar and adapted format. Furthermore, the language barrier is a major obstacle. Micro-Europa is a network that has sought to overcome these constraints. Every month, students from eight universities and schools of journalism make a report on a single subject while adhering to common formatting rules. They then transcribe the reports and translate them into English, calling on a script shared by the whole network. These scripts, exchanged via a server, enable students to translate and dub their colleagues' reports, and then to integrate them into a radio programme that will be broadcast on the Internet or over the airwaves.

## Parler de l'Europe : le résultat d'une démarche journalistique...

### **Making use of conflict/debate**

This involves organising exchanges between participants at different levels: European Commissioner, citizen, civil society organisation, politician, etc.

**Report by Ihecs and City University London: Citizens,** a trade union boss and journalists holding different views have their say during a single report. The positions are also varied.

**Report by EuradioNantes:** While this involves an anthropologist whose words are neutral and analytical, he is the sole participant in the report. This does not encourage debate.

**Report by the University of Tübingen:** Several participants have their say, which is good. But they are (almost) all from the world of academia, which stifles any debate.

- + There is a debate thanks to the multitude of participants in the different reports.
- Some stakeholders are not or are hardly represented, such as politicians or European civil society

### **The human dimension and emotion**

How can the public be 'affected'? We propose two avenues:

- > Use of the portrait: the face of a well-known European or local politician, or a member of civil society, can help to give 'character' to Europe and make it more lively.
- > Covering a situation or current event with a strong emotional impact can help to create a hook.

**Report by City University London:** The report is anchored around an event that launched many debates among citizens and politicians (the UK's role in the war in Iraq). This is a story that everyone can own. Moreover, the report starts with an intervention by a demonstrator who presents himself and explains why he is there.

**Reports by EuradioNantes and the University of Tübingen:** The introduction draws in listeners, because it brings into play different situations from the daily lives of French people and sketches out the character of Germans. These situations catch the attention of listeners.

- + The human dimension is found in several productions, where the reporters have ventured into the streets and covered demonstrations that lend subjects a more human angle.
- Europe seems absent from the human dimension of the reports. Yet the EU is made up of people and decides policies, which means that it should be possible to use emotional aspects to capture the attention of listeners.

### **Economy**

Quelles sont les conséquences économiques et sociales, au plan local, d'une mesure européenne ? L'emploi, selon les enquêtes d'Eurobaromètre, apparaît comme le principal sujet de préoccupations des Européens... et des Belges, des Anglais, des Roumains, des Allemands, etc.

- The socio-economic field is not tackled in the reports. Yet this subject lies at the root of most of the demonstrations in

Europe, especially in these hard times of economic crisis. And as it is worth recalling, the EU is no stranger to the socio-economic field!

### **Morality**

Whether you recognise or reject morality, it is important to our society in its various dimensions (religious, civil, etc.).

**Report by the University of Tübingen, EuradioNantes and City University London:** In the German report, the reporter starts by asking a question: "What is happening in Germany?" He seeks to analyse and understand German behaviour in terms of protests and symbolically ("Is it alright to burn cars in Germany?). This is a question linked to morality. In the French report, we see that the reporter pays attention to countries other than his own, with a strong tradition of protesting, and that he is trying to understand this national tradition that other countries may view as "extreme" (as the reporter puts it). Lastly, City University London assesses the impact of the strikes in the UK on political decisions and questions the "role" of protests. Again, we are not so far from moral issues...

- + Morality never fails to capture people's attention, as these reporters have clearly understood in their reports. Calling on participants from the world of academia illustrates this urge to "illuminate with some moral light".
- While it can be useful to mention morality, it should not usurp information, which should first be based on checked facts and figures.

### **Responsibility**

Which institution, which group lies behind a specific problem? Who has the solution to it? Showing the chain of responsibilities behind a European decision and its local impact can capture the public's interest.

**Report by IHECS:** A key problem is raised: the organisation of workers at a European level. Although there is no in-depth coverage of the subject, the responsibility appears to lie with the national union organisations. This cries out for greater coverage of the question.

**Report by City University London:** The notion of responsibility is found at another level and is expressed in terms of the reasons for the demonstration. In this case, the responsibility is that of Tony Blair, who is judged on the legitimacy of the UK's role in the Iraq war. This is of great interest.

**Report by EuradioNantes: In the French report (EuradioNantes),** the European directives are mentioned as a source of people's discontent. The EU is therefore implicitly considered to be responsible for some demonstrations.

- This is a good start, but we would have liked to find out more...

# SECTION 3

## Three members of Micro-Europa discuss their practice...

**Oana Moisil, a member of 'Micro-Europa' and a student of journalism at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj (Romania)**

Romania is one of the youngest European countries, so some people might think that we are not familiar with Europe. However, more and more events and current affairs are linked to the European agenda. The EU is well aware of this: journalists are an especially interesting target for disseminating information and helping to create European citizenship.

At the Faculty of politics, administration and communication sciences in the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj (Romania), we benefit from theory classes handed out by the EU and we learn about "European media legislation". For this, the students can explore European legislation through research projects. There are other initiatives, such as the European Journalism Festivals which take place from 9 to 12 September in Targu Jiu and from 18 to 28 July in Timisoara. National media websites also increasingly publish news taken from the EU portal.

All these events underline how European journalism is thriving in Romania!

Concerning Micro-Europa, it is not hard to find local angles to the subject that we share each month, which is not as we imagined things would be at the start of the project. The chief difficulty is deciding on the angle.

After an exchange of opinions and an initial "immersion" in the subject, we do a search on Google and [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu). For sure, some subjects may look rather tough for us to cover. Following this early work, we make comparisons during editorial meetings of these angles, before selecting the most original one – the one that best matches the European issues with local problems and the one that should have the greatest impact on listeners.

This task is not easy. But through hard work and persistence, we manage to get in contact with key people who work in the European institutions and who are open to discussion. Although we don't always get a chance each month to interview a Euro-MP, whenever we can, we do and we explore a subject in depth.

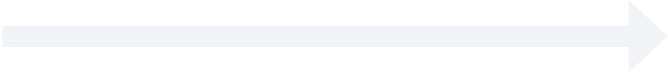
Since we started working on the Micro-Europa reports, our team has developed new skills that help us everyday in our journalistic practice. We are fans of Micro-Europa because we believe that we can create a link between local problems and European issues.

Thanks to the exchange of reports, we learn more about the problems faced by the citizens of other countries. But we also learn how to approach Europe through people rather than policies. As an example, we have been pleasantly surprised by the reactions we have had following the broadcast of our programme on poverty. Many Romanians have discovered that there is great poverty all over Europe. People realise that other European countries share the same problems as them and in this way they can identify more closely with the 26 other Member States



### 1) “How do things work in your country?”

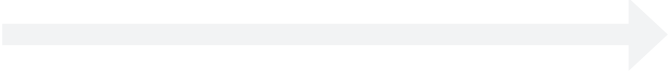
Whoever said that the new Member States were not European? Enthused by the new situation, journalists in these countries are no doubt the ones who give the most thought to Europe. This is what emerges from the text by Oana.



### 2) “How do you make use of Micro-Europa in practice?”

According to Oana, working on European journalism in the sense given by Micro-Europa requires:

- **Journalistic research** at the local level and institutional levels (European and national). If you would like a complete directory of European information sources, check out the ‘Practical Guide 2009’.
- **Editorial meetings:** the angle should feature several elements (the local anchoring, European relevance, originality and attractiveness for listeners).
- **Making contacts:** To organise a debate on a subject, the viewpoints must be varied. Interviews can be arranged with people who work at the European level, in Brussels and Strasbourg and in the Member States. Dive in!



### 3) “Lastly, does Micro-Europa really help to change things?”

In the words of Oana:

- YES. For whom? For the journalists. Since this exercise gets them to search, debate, investigate, and gather documents. Reporting on the EU can often feel like diving into the unknown...
- YES. For whom? For the listeners who, in addition to learning about Europe, discover who their neighbours are. Creating a sense of European citizenship thanks to the discovery of others. That is a big challenge for European news!

**Charlotte Maisin, a journalist and manager of the group of students at the Institut des Hautes Etudes des Communications Sociales (IHECS) in Brussels (Belgium) working in the Micro-Europa project**

In Belgium, people get the news. Lots of news. Communication means are increasingly developed. But being bombarded with news does not mean that people are better informed. First of all we have the ever-growing Internet. The printed press, the first victim of the media crisis, is worried by the success of information found on the web and has concluded that to attract readers the papers should “copy the Internet”. But because this involves fewer costs, editors are leaping headfirst into a trap. A trap, really? Yes, because the collapse of investigation, the limited number of reports and background articles do not help to bring in readers. Quite the opposite in fact. You don’t have to be a genius to see what people will choose when offered a choice between an online factual and free press and a paper costing 1.20 euro but containing very little extra information. So where does this leave European information? Things are just the same. While editors would like to offer news on Europe, due to a lack of human and financial means, a lack of time and choice, too often the news tends to rely on releases from press agencies or to process messages that come directly from the communication departments of the European institutions. When the information is top-down, and is more technical than political, and is informative rather than worthy of debate, the European news comes across as pretty vapid.

Nevertheless, people’s preconceptions that “everything that emerges from Europe is dull, annoying, and boring” is wrong! The Micro-Europa students at IHECS have learned this for themselves. Climate change, European elections, sport, tourism, energy, national identity, night-life and so on. All these subjects have been tackled directly by the students and featured in a ‘L’Europe une fois’ programme, which brings together the reports done by their group and by the partner members of the Micro-Europa network.

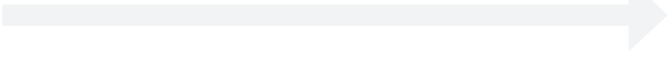
Was it easy? No. People had to roll their sleeves up and do some brainstorming, carry out research, understand subject matter and make it concrete, accessible and educational, vary the viewpoints, and stimulate debate on it. In short, the news had to be created instead of going out to find it all “neatly packaged” and ready for use. How did they do it? The first step was to do a report. But to link Europe and local elements, students had to go much further and create a complete programme, with reports from different countries, guests in the studio, interviews and additional subjects. For while the Micro-Europa network provides diversity, the ‘horizontal’ news, it can be difficult sometimes to say everything in a report lasting 2’30”.

That is why the Ihecs students learned how to make a radio programme of 45-50 minutes. They invite guests to the studio to supplement the information (e.g. top civil servants from the European Commission’s DGs, advisors to the European Parliament, researchers from universities, local politicians, members of associations and NGOs, etc.). They also envisioned a ‘Point actu européen’ (European news centre) to underline some ‘forgotten’ European news from the traditional media and a ‘European press publication’ on the programme’s subject (e.g. for the programme on national identity, the students went through French, British and Spanish newspapers and found that the theme of national identity was very much in evidence there. Websites such as [www.presseurop.eu](http://www.presseurop.eu), translated into several languages, are very useful for this kind of exercise). Lastly, these programmes obviously include three reports together with those from the other university members of the network plus the ‘made in ihecs’ report. Great results can be achieved, in terms of originality and professionalism, if the students succeed in managing the content (the information content) and the style (radio techniques). And the experience is fascinating. So... Let’s dare to innovate and cease saying the same old things about Europe. This is what Micro-Europa is and ‘L’Europe une fois’ is what it strives to do every month!



**1) “How do things work in your country?”**

We have ‘information overload’. But perhaps we should redefine what information is. In our post-modern society, new means of communication, which focus on speed, do not always favour information that develops a critical mind and thus contributes to the revitalisation of democracy. European information, which calls for a genuine journalistic commitment, embodies this way of working and is paying the cost.



**2) “How do you make use of Micro-Europa in practice?”**

Producing a programme for ‘Micro-Europa’ is essential. It enables us to distribute information that is more complete by linking local news, that from other countries, and politics. A debate may also be launched within a complete programme, by having various guests.



**3) “Lastly, does Micro-Europa really help to change things?”**

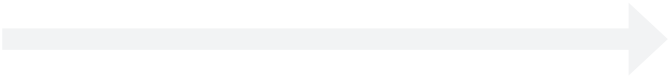
Micro-Europa aims to show that information should not rest on its laurels. That is it possible and indeed necessary to resist the current trend to produce uniform content for reasons of speed. Micro-Europa aims to show that efficiency does not come from speed and that there is a tremendous need for different ways of providing news on a Europe that cannot shy away from critical and soundly argued media views. In so doing, Micro-Europa aims to help bring about a change.

**Fabian Henning Gundlach, Member of 'Micro-Europa' and former journalism student at the University of Tübingen**

European journalism can be found in Germany: each of the major media organisations has a correspondent in Brussels who strives to cover and publish news from the European political institutions. The EU's popularity in Germany has grown over the last decade. This is thanks to the extensive presence of European affairs in the media and to Chancellor Merkel, who has won the respect of the other large European countries thanks to her ability to find compromises and to cooperate. Furthermore, Germany is not the country that contributes the most to European income. This helps to ensure that the EU is popular with Germans. All the same, European topics make rather rare appearances in German's media landscape, and one could reasonably ask what they are all about. In most cases, the newspapers have a European section and TV stations produce European programmes; but few of them forge any links with Germans' daily lives... In the main pages and editorials, the media rarely show the country's citizens that the EU is practically involved in their lives and that it influences them. Local newspapers and the local sections of the biggest papers relegate European subjects to the margins or back pages, because the "EU seems too remote" and it is much easier to imagine how society could get along without it. Arguments like this are commonly heard, with the result that citizens living in large urban centres – people who tend to read the media and are more open to the world at large – are better informed than others. But that's not all. The vast amount of information and the way in which it is covered are often very unsatisfactory. That said, for the small circle of people interested in and aware of the EU, it is not hard to find clear information on European politics. One could therefore sum up the news flows linked to the EU as: 'Seek and you shall find'. It's as simple as that.

Given these facts, it comes as little surprise that it is tough to find a local angle to make European politics more readily understandable. But that does not mean we should avoid the issue... Due to the complexity (and lack of knowledge) of the European political system, it is an uphill struggle to keep people's interest. That is the first obstacle we encounter. To overcome this difficulty and offer listeners something that is still educational, the EU should not be viewed as a mishmash of institutions. Instead, it makes more sense to start from the local perspective: to show the similarities between countries and to compare situations.

This is the only way to develop a feeling of belonging to the EU. For curiosity brings knowledge and this knowledge of the situations in other European regions can create a feeling of community. The network of European student radio stations symbolises this. And that is the value of Micro-Europa.

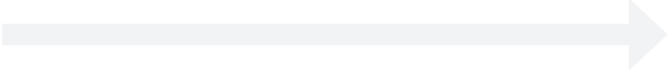


### 1) “How do things work in your country?”

Fabian raises several key points about Germany’s media landscape:

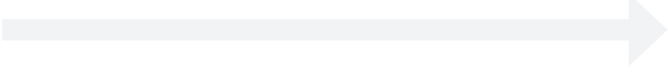
- The relatively good reputation the EU has in Germany
- The way European subjects are grouped together in the main media’s ‘Europe’ sections
- The near absence of European subjects in the local sections or local media
- The greatest interest for European subjects is found among the upper classes
- The lack of links between Europe and Germans’ daily lives
- The fact that information on Europe means “Seek and you shall find”.

Most of these points can be made for other countries too.



### 2) “How do you make use of Micro-Europa in practice?”

By highlighting the need to stimulate listeners’ curiosity about Europe. For this to happen, we should stop thinking of the EU only from the viewpoint of its institutions – which listeners do not know. We need to be educational and it would be better to start with the local approach in order to compare countries’ situations.



### 3) “Lastly, does Micro-Europa really help to change things?”

Fabian believes that Micro-Europa enables comparisons to be made of the situations in different countries, to find similarities there and to create, in this way, a Community spirit. This would be a real bonus, he believes.

# SECTION 4

## We (Micro-Europa) covered, they (this media) covered

### MICRO-EUROPA, THE SUBJECTS OVER TWO YEARS OF PRACTICE

Mois	Sujet
January 2009	Food waste
April 2009	Minorities in Europe
May2009	European elections
June 2009	Start-ups
July 2009	Why are students no longer revolutionaries?
October 2009	The cost of higher education
November 2009	Low-cost travel
December 2009	Climate change
January2010	Strike and protest
February 2010	National identity and Europe
March 2010	National sport
April 2010	Privacy
May 2010	Poverty
June 2010	Tourisme
July 201	Night life
October 2010	Energy
November 201	Agriculture
December 2010	ERDF Funds

Find all the programmes and reports by Micro-Europa at

**[www.micro-europa.eu](http://www.micro-europa.eu)**

## **MICRO-EUROPA, ONE EXAMPLE OF JOURNALISM AMONG OTHERS...**

### ***www.presseurop.eu***

Coordinated by 'Le Courrier International', this project aims to acquaint people with the local situations in each European country by translating articles from regional daily papers and periodicals into 10 languages (English, French, Romanian, Italian, Spanish, German, Polish, Portuguese, Czech and Dutch). While the angles are national, they are organised into sections by experienced journalists to ensure that they will be of interest to everyone.

### ***www.cafebabel.com***

An online participative publication translated into six languages (French, Italian, English, Spanish, Polish and German), Cafebabel calls on contributions from budding journalists across Europe to write on subjects that the editors cover locally. They introduce themselves as "the first multilingual European current affairs magazine, designed for readers across borders. Cafebabel.com revolutionises European media through participatory journalism, providing a unique platform of expression for the eurogeneration, the first generation living Europe on a day-by-day basis thanks to the Erasmus programme, the internet and an increasing level of mobility." It is a young and dynamic multimedia site, freely covering everything from the economic crisis to poverty, and the great and petty aspects of multiculturalism.

### ***www.euroduvillage.eu***

The 'Euros du Village' site features information and analysis of European issues, translated into five languages (French, English, Italian, German and Spanish). Its financial backers include Arte.tv. The site is respected for its independence and provides a genuine journalistic perspective.

### ***www.europa451.fr or www.europa451.it or www.europa451.es***

'A group of European journalists, working between Brussels and the borders of Europe. Their objective is to analyse the issue of European information, not by creating new media but by «europeanising» those already published.' The site is translated into French, Spanish and Italian.

### ***www.youthpress.org***

The European Youth Press (EYP) is a network of associations of young European journalists (media-makers), with more than de 48,000 journalists under the age of 30. Its members include 18 national associations and two international media organisations (Indigo Magazine and Journal Europa). The EYP provides information on its site, and promotes the role of young journalists and freedom of expression in Europe.

**... Non-exhaustive list. Watch this space!**

Interested in finding out more?  
Visit the website of Micro-Europa:

***[www.micro-europa.eu](http://www.micro-europa.eu)***

---