

### **3(b). Reporting Europe**

*Meeting summary report by rapporteur Jo Buelens, Erasmushogeschool Brussel, Belgium; syndicate expert/chair and background report author George Terzis, Vesalius College/Vrije University, Brussel, Belgium; and team members.\**

In this syndicate group, participants, the majority Dutch and Flemish, discussed the way journalism education could help improve reporting on Europe.

Group members agreed on the idea that Europe is more than the sum of institutions and that reporting Europe is linked to knowledge, skills and a multicultural attitude.

Reporting Europe is increasingly important, and higher-level decision making should not be taken for granted. So how can journalism education programs get more students interested in learning about Europe and improving their reporting on it? The group agreed that teachers should make Europe as attractive as possible. It also agreed that since experiencing Europe is one of the best ways to do so, they should add visits to/throughout Europe into their curriculum whenever possible.

The skills needed most for quality Europe reporting received extended debate. Language skills were the first to be highlighted. Any comparison with another country, or access to specific data in a country, requires the knowledge of languages. Participants also raised concerns about the role of interpreters. Journalists needing interpreters must realize that they may introduce bias into their reporting. The interpreter can make mistakes or can be restricted by his culture to translate questions and answers certain ways.

The group also stressed that “contact and collaboration” among students of different nations and cultures should be promoted in order to improve reporting of Europe. While in-person contact is preferred when possible, the social media offer new opportunities to exchange ideas and maintain long-distant contacts, which are so needed for international relationships.

Best practices were also exchanged. Many participants spoke of the need to bring students in contact with a wide range of European actors/sources. For example, a meeting with correspondents gives young journalists insight into their future jobs. Also, meeting with think tank and local agency representatives, along with lobbyists, can give students more insight than they might gain from websites or books. And students should be taught that every European university has its own academics specializing in some aspect of European life, sources which are often neglected.

The group also discussed the important need for good internships, which are rare. International press agencies have a large number of candidates for internship positions but few vacancies. The fact that more and more freelance international reporting jobs are popping up means even less traditional internship opportunities. That said, participants wondered if future internships could also be fulfilled at home, where many journalists work today.

### **Recommendations**

*The group concluded with the following five recommendations for journalism education to improve the quality of Europe reporting:*

- 1) Create interest in the European level. Experiencing Europe is better than studying it. Contacts with correspondents, lobbies and local agencies are more effective than visiting a parliament to increase European interest.
- 2) Intercultural competences are the starting point for successfully dealing with Europe. Students need to be made aware of their own culture and to deal with cultural differences.
- 3) Specialized courses on European reporting must encourage entrepreneurship skills for students. The future is for those students able to cover specific news and find their sources in Europe (other countries and EU institutions).
- 4) Teach students how social media and new apps provide new opportunities to find European news and contacts.
- 5) Teach students that they need to understand different languages. As Europe is more than EU institutions, students must be able to communicate with other cultures and not just focus on official documents.

*\*Additional Reporting Europe participants: Bram Bartelts, Christelijke Hogeschool Windesheim, The Netherlands; Renaat Bogaert, Thomas More Mechelen, Belgium; Arie de Jongh, The Utrecht School of Journalism, The Netherlands; Jeroen de Vuyst, Xios Hogeschool Limburg, Belgium; Anastasia Grusha, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russian Federation; Bartho de Looij, Ede Christian University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands; Manuela Manliherova, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria; Elena Plakhina, Tyumen State University, Russian Federation; Johan Snel, Christelijke Hogeschool Ede/Ede Christian University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands; Tom Tiepermann, Plantijn Hogeschool Antwerpen, Belgium; Leen Van Tolhuysen, WJEC-3 and Thomas More Mechelen, Belgium; Carien Touwen, Applied Sciences, University of Utecht, the Netherlands; Wilfried Vanderhaeghen, Plantijn Hogeschool Antwerpen, Belgium.*