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# European Studies Programme

## Producing "European" News Case of the Pan-European News Channel Euronews

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Translated From The French by :  
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European Studies Programme  
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## Producing "European" News

### Case of the Pan-European News Channel Euronews

Olivier Baisnee and Dominique Marchetti

This paper<sup>1</sup> is based on a research monograph on the rolling news channel Euronews. It aims at understanding in vivo the functioning of a media which has a European perspective, that is to say a media which deals with international news targeting an audience located in a very vast geographical zone. Launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1993, this channel constitutes a particularly pertinent field of study for understanding how news is produced in the context of a journalism that claims to be European, its programmes being aired, in the beginning of the 2000s, in six languages (German, English, Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese) and created by teams of journalists having different nationalities. Putting it another way, we are dealing here with a kind of "laboratory" of Europe, with almost all of the employees of the channel (particularly the editorial staff) concentrated in a single place. This example allows us to gain a concrete sense of how these individuals seek to homogenize points of view on news as well as journalistic practices and hierarchies of very different types of news, in order to construct a "European" editorial content. This is also a way of engaging with these issues starting from an uncharted terrain, for existing research on this theme has rarely been on the media itself (for example Korkikian, 1993; Utard, 1997; Machill, 1998 and Slaatta, 1999) and has mainly focused on the institutions.

In this article we will first situate the creation of this channel in the context of the transformation that the political as well the media spaces underwent. Our objective is to reconstruct the 'logic at work' within this media that claims to be European, but more generally to bring out the

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<sup>1</sup>This is a shortened and modified version of a chapter that appeared in a collective work (Marchetti, 2004)

obstacles in the construction of a transnational media. Further we will look at the way in which journalists, through their day-to-day work and organization, seek to construct a "European perspective" on current events that are said to be international.

This investigation relies on some 20 odd interviews with personnel who are or have been working for Euronews (these are different types of journalists, those in-charge of human resources, of distribution, of relations with tele-viewers, artistic directors, etc.) and ethnographical observations made during the two sojourns to the head office of the channel located in the town of Lyon in France. During these brief periods, the management of the channel<sup>2</sup> allowed us to circulate amongst the editorial staff, to have

### **The Transformation of Media and Political Spaces**

Understanding the genesis and development of this channel would benefit from a quick recall of the major changes that have affected the national journalistic fields and the national political fields in Europe<sup>3</sup> and the connections that they have with each other. The creation of Euronews in 1993 is part of the transformations that national media spaces, especially the television channels, have undergone (Kelly-Holmes, 1999). The politics of so-called deregulation and, co-relatively, the increasing use of instruments for obtaining viewer ratings, favoured an increase in the fare on offer, that is to say, a multiplication of the number of channels aired through cable or satellite or the terrestrial route, and at the same time, the segmentation of viewership and therefore of advertising. Alongside the existing general

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<sup>2</sup>We would like to thank all the journalists as also all the employees of the channel, particularly Dominique Gicquel, human resource official, who contributed to convincing the management of the usefulness of such a study and Bill Dunlop, head of the editorial staff at the time, for having permitted us to carry out such a study.

<sup>3</sup> This investigation was also completed through several interviews with ex-journalists of the channel, but also people working at the headquarters of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) at Geneva where Eurovision News (EVN) is produced and the sharing of footage between numerous European channels takes place.

entertainment channels, specialized channels addressing a more limited viewership also developed: thematic television channels or those addressing viewers located outside the traditional national geographical framework. On the one hand, depending on the country, local or regional channels were created at varying scales; stations with a national or international perspective "nationalized" or "regionalized" their programmes by bringing into play handovers and advertising or by increasing the number of languages used. On the other hand, transnational channels (Hjarvard, 1993; Chalaby, 2002; Esser, 2002) were created, notably in three major domains where activities are particularly international (Utard, 1997): music, news and sports-with the emblematic examples of CNN (1980), MTV (1981), Eurosport (1989) and BBC World (1991); and general national channels began airing foreign versions or their national versions abroad. Programmes on Europe were also created on national channels, for instance in France or in England (Taylor, 1999). Comparable evolutions could be studied in the print media too.

Another series of transformations in the national media spaces owes much to the intensification of commercial competition. The multiplicity of what was on offer on television led simultaneously to concentration (through the creation of major communication groups or the arrival of large businesses in the media sector), an internationalization of companies whose markets went beyond national geographical boundaries, as well as a diversification, in as much as these businesses have activities in different domains and were often multimedia. While the national situations were very variable, this heightening of competition had the impact of developing or strengthening the sector of private channels whose numbers became higher than the public channels in European countries: there were four private television channels in Europe in 1982, there were 58 in 1992 and more than 250 in 1997 (Collins, 1999: 2000). The genesis of Euronews must therefore be situated in this context that prevailed at the beginning of the 90s. The principal members of European Broadcasting Union (EBU), that is the public channels, were then seeking to consolidate, in the face of the development of commercial channels, their relations in the domain of news and sports, primarily for economic reasons (Collins, 1998: 655). "The EBU - European Broadcasting Union (the English abbreviation is used more frequently than its French equivalent, UER) was forced to reconsider its own

role: from an organization which was the representative of all the national televisions of Europe, it now became the representative of an interest-group, the public televisions," thus wrote Tony Naets, the official in-charge of the coordination of current affairs of EBU (Cohen et al., 1996: xii). According to the work of Stig Hjarvard, the involvement of the EBU in pan-European television projects can also be explained by political factors: it demonstrated its goodwill to European institutions that were contributing more and more to the regulation of the audio-visual market (Hjarvard, 1993: 81). It is for these reasons that EBU took part in the creation of Eurosport and Euronews. However, these two projects did not garner unanimity within the organization. Hence, many German public channels (ZDF and ARD) British ones (BBC) or Scandinavian ones, among the most active members of the EBU, were opposed to the birth of Euronews. The opposition of some of them was in part due to the fact that this new television channel could be perceived as competition to "their" channels or to "their" projects of transnational news channels. It was thus the French channels (France 2, France 3), the Italian channel (RAI), the channel from Cyprus (cyBC), from Greece (ERT), from Egypt (ERTU), from Belgium (RTBF) from Portugal (RTP), from Spain (TVE), from Monaco (TMC) and from Finland (YLE) that gave substance to this project, without however wanting to, in the absence of means, take financial risks.

This politico-economic assemblage is also linked with the transformation of national political fields, given the increasing importance of the European dimension of public policies and regulations in the audio-visual domain. In effect, the creation of Euronews is in part linked with two earlier projects - to mention just the most recent ones-for creating "European channels" (Eurikon and Europa TV) in which many members of the EBU participated in the 1980s and which ended in failure (Hjarvard, 1993: 78-79). More generally, these projects lay within the framework of a policy that aimed at promoting audio-visual European programming (Polo, 2001). Some countries that were prominent within the European Commission and Parliament turned to EBU in order to study the modalities for creating a pan-European general news channel. The project did not garner full support, as recalls a founder journalist of the channel: "M (the head of the editorial staff of the time) counted a lot on the Parliament and the Commission. He would moreover succeed in getting the European

Parliament to vote, several times, for granting subsidies that would allow us to get started, despite the negative advice of the Commission. The Commission was less interested in our starting up because there were the British, who were doing hectic lobbying to stop us from getting started". Euronews was also the product of a larger political project promoted, through community directives or financial support, by some European leaders, notably the French government. It was constructed, at least at the level of discourse, against American, or even Anglo-saxon domination (Machill, 1998: 428 - 429) on programming and, more specifically, on news said to be international, especially after the Gulf war which brought to fore the supremacy of CNN as the source of footage.

"So the Gulf war had a triggering, activating effect, because at the time of the Gulf war, all the television channels had signed a contract with CNN. Everyone was scared of not having any footage, nobody had much confidence in the capacity of Eurovision to circulate footage, including France 3 [...] My successor B, [director of national editorial staff] estimated, just like people in France 2, like those in TF1, like those in TV5 at that time, that there weren't that many solutions, that one must cosy up to CNN [...] So this did end up provoking a reaction in the political world." (former editor-in-chief and director of the editorial staff of Euronews and member of the working group of EBU in charge of the project of pan-European channels).

Ultimately, the creation of Euronews was perceived by its initiators as a means of finding a new prop that would contribute to forging a "European identity" and a "European public space". A segment of the European political executive leadership strongly believed in the impact of the media in constructing a cultural homogeneity, thus assuming that distributing the same cultural product would contribute to the formation of the same interpretation by its viewers (Schlesinger, 1993: 12). This political voluntarism and its logic, which led to support for the creation of Euronews, was visible in the Commission's discourse on the questions of culture and identity. The paradigm, as Philip Schlesinger sums it up, is the following: "News (culture) is thus supposed to play a role in homogenization and the articulation of a will: it is about a profoundly idealist and voluntarist vision of the construction of a desired social order" (Schlesinger, 1990: 203).

Moreover, as early as 1985, the Adonnino report (Shore, 2000), commissioned by the European council in 1984 following the low turnout in the European elections, suggested, among other measures aimed at "reinforcing and promoting the identity of the Community and its image for its citizens as well as for the rest of the world", that a European "audiovisual zone" be created. This was primarily to be done by putting in place a television channel that was "truly European". It is this logic that - after the ratification of the treaty of Maastricht which laid emphasis on issues of European citizenship - was to find its concrete form in the creation of Euronews.

When European parliamentarians were officially asking questions about the means needed for a good communication on the European Union (Pex, 1998), they spoke explicitly of Euronews as one of the possible vehicles: "The Parliament and the Commission must promote [...] the production of televised programmes on the activity of European institutions, which could be aired by Euronews or by other media". Further, in the same report, the European parliamentarians indicated that they wished - in a manner that had also been touched upon by the commission of culture, of youth, of education and of media of this assembly - that "the subsidy given to Euronews be replaced by a news contract in 1998 so as to permit the European Union (EU) to use Euronews as a full-fledged instrument of its news policy". This change in the policy of support to the channel got translated into a system of co-production of programmes that broadcast a series of community policies. One can clearly see in this, on the one hand, the extremely voluntarist manner in which news is envisaged as a means of unifying "identities", of bringing out a "European identity", and on the other, the conception of a channel which has acceptance among European parliamentarians as an instrument of communication of the EU. In fact, the creation of Euronews was also a means of conferring legitimacy on agents and institutions that had been largely devoid of it.

In order to retrace more fully the genesis of Euronews, it would be appropriate to situate its development more broadly in the transformation of various national social spaces and their relationships with each other: the development of economic exchanges, increase in immigration, increase in the usage of foreign languages etc. To be more precise, one must also show

how this project meets the interests and preoccupations of dominant segments (economic, intellectual etc.) of numerous social spaces, while also being a product of these.

### **The Logic of Politics, Economics And Media**

The strong political will of the European executive leadership, however, came up against objective realities. Social and historical conditions that had made the development of Euronews possible cannot be understood except by simultaneously taking into account the logics of media, economics and politics. All three dimensions run through the short history of a channel that moved from the initial logic of a public service channel to the logic of a commercial channel. To sum up, this history may be divided into two phases, beginning 1993 and 2000 respectively. The first phase, between 1993 and 1997, is characterized by a certain improvisation which is at the same time political, economic and editorial, as recounted by one of the "old timers":

If my memory serves me well, for three months one did nothing but news. One had got it horribly wrong [...] With five journalists for each language, that meant that one could do nothing but bring out a news bulletin.

And how often did you bring it out?

One tried to bring it out every hour but we had a news bulletin on the hour and on the half hour and so one was actually bringing it out continuously. But the tools were not fully in place and the journalists didn't have the tools of the trade because one hadn't had the time to get them broken in, so one was getting into one's stride on the air [...] At the level of productivity one was clearly below what was desirable [...] but one saw very soon that in airing nothing but news on the hour, the half-hour and the quarter hour etc. it would remain always the same bulletin, and we would not get any viewers...

The journalists of that period were soon confronting political and economic contingencies. Thus, from its very launch, the editorial team went through political struggle for control between the executives nominated by the principal founding channels and Italian journalists who

occupied pre-eminent positions in the beginning. Besides, the political desire of the initiators of the project was not followed up by the necessary financial backing. Not only were the returns on advertising not up to expectations (the existence of a pan-European market being problematic) but the executives of the channel also had to, above all, face an insufficiency of public revenue (from partner channels, local funding, and especially the European community itself). The company which was operating the channel opened up to the private sector - more specifically, by selling 49% shares to Alcatel-Alsthom, a French company, which became at the end of May 1995 the main operator, through its subsidiary, The Western General (La Générale Occidentale). This marked the ascendancy (as yet relative) of an economic logic over the political ones.

Till the British group ITN bought back the shares in 1997, this first period of the history of the channel is also marked by much editorial improvisation. Many journalists located at different levels in the hierarchy bear witness to this.

One used to fill the air (ironic smile), one used to bring out a bulletin, which you see... The bulletin that one created in the morning, it was still the same the next morning [...] There was a Canadian, who used to work here, who had found this rather funny formula, it was ... Euronews, wait, what was that? Yesterday's news for Tomorrow, it didn't fit badly at the time (laughter), it was really that! (Journalist)

With ITN buying back the shares of Alcatel-Alsthom began the second phase which reinforced the commercial logic of the channel and especially its relative professionalization. The British consortium - held primarily by large groups such as Reuters, Carlton Communication and Granada Group - which supplied the news bulletins of the three British channels ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, was seeking to establish itself in the international market by making Euronews its 'showcase' in the face of its competitor BBC World. The executives of the group were keen on restructuring the channel's recovery from a very difficult financial situation by seeking to increase their funds through advertising. At the same time, it was also about "saving the reputation of this channel", to use the expression of the director of the editorial staff of the time. This was done by changing the programmes and their get-up: strengthening the bulletins at the expense

of the magazines, highlighting certain features (Sports, Economics etc.), giving priority to live coverage, developing local news, etc. From 1997 the financial position of Euronews got relatively stabilized and, since the end of April 2003, it has once again become a channel that is 100% held by the 19 partnering public channels.

### **The Europe of Euronews, A Definition Under Constraints**

Apart from handling these obstacles, Euronews had to right away define its so-called European identity. By going outside the traditional national or international frameworks within which the journalistic profession functions, the members of the channel came to slowly define what news with a European perspective meant. Whether it was with regard to addressing the issues of languages used by the channel for reaching large audiences (in the geographical and linguistic sense), distinct from the national television channels, or establishing practices in matters of selection of news, Euronews journalists were continuously inventing a definition of "their" Europe. If one follows Chris Shore on the report writers of European institutions, "forging a superior 'European identity' was simply a matter of grafting a superior collective identity under and above national and regional identities, like so many Russian dolls or Chinese nesting boxes" (Shore: 2000: 51). However, as Philip Schlesinger notes, "despite rhetorical proclamations, the EU possessed neither a culture nor a transcendent and common identity akin to the national cultures and identities of the States that composed it" (Schlesinger, 1997). Yet, the journalistic treatment of news in general rested on certain socially shared references, which it isn't necessary to make explicit here. In the framework of this channel that in principle was supposed to address a multinational audience-which, by definition, and despite the voluntarist discourse of the Commission, did not possess such common references - the construction of one or many perspectives was constrained in many different ways.

### **A Channel Dependent On External Sources**

Like all the television channels that do news, Euronews is dependent on a plurality of sources for footage. It is all the more so because, in the absence of sufficient financial means, almost all of the stories come from external sources since only certain magazines financed by the European Commission use footage shot by the channel itself. It is thus a so-called channel of post-production, therefore without cameras. It relays footage coming from external sources and has neither anchors nor sets with journalists. On this very same footage, the voice-over commentaries are delivered in many languages. The main audiovisual sources were the two international picture agencies APTN (Associated Press Television News) and Reuters Television, the channels which share their footage in the framework of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and Independent Television News (ITN), this being the principal operator of the channel at the time of our study. Its dependence was also very marked with regard to global or national print-based news agencies, which constitute one of the main sources of commentaries. One of the assistant chief-editors summed up this configuration when he explained: "We are a televised news agency, we take, we cut, and we re-cut and we deliver something". This dependency obviously constrained the definition of the Europe given by the channel. While there was the desire to propose a European perspective on current affairs, the footage, even though sourced from multiple agencies, sometimes turned out to be inadequate for illustrating the stories of Euronews.

This very strong constraint introduces two types of effects. Firstly, in a situation of quasi-monopoly on the footage of international current affairs, the editorial choices of the large Anglo-Saxon audio-visual agencies-Reuters Television is British and APTN is American - obviously have more or less direct impact on those of Euronews. Numerous themes such as "employment" are particularly delicate to deal with as is indicated by those in charge of the features covering the economic and political questions in Europe. They are often led to draw upon the archives and info-graphic resources (such as maps, graphics etc.) to fill in the absence of footage, and sometimes they are even forced to abandon certain stories. It is the same for certain geographical regions that are less covered by the audio-visual

agencies. The dependence of the channel on Anglo-saxon suppliers thus prompted the journalists to not limit themselves to the Europe of community treaties in the strict sense of the term, and to treat international current affairs more traditionally, while doing this with a hierarchy of news that is different from its competitors. This is not to say that this quasi-monopoly of the Anglo-saxon agencies aroused any regular internal debates.

One is dependent on the suppliers. For instance: I see a press-release that is very engaging, very interesting and all. If I don't have footage, I cannot do that story. There. And the footage in relation to (...) the big agencies, it isn't always simple to work on it. Because they have their own vision, you depend on the vision of others. And one depends on the vision of a culture, which, sometimes, is not necessarily linked to the culture of Euronews, is not linked to the European culture, is not linked to the culture of certain European countries. One depends, on the whole, on an Anglo-saxon mentality and culture (...) Sometimes one has Spanish and Italian journalists who get angry and who say: "eh, in Spain, this happened. Why didn't we cover it? On the contrary, one put in the bulletin the cat of the English lady who had climbed up on the tree, they went off to save it. Why England, why America and not Spain, not Latin America, not Italy..." But the reason is that it is not an editorial choice, it is simply a necessity ... a concrete one." (Italian Journalist, in charge of the feature)

The second effect of this dependence, though less conspicuous, is that the footage of Euronews coming from EVN too cannot have a "European" framing, first because they are "national" in the sense that they have been taken originally to satisfy the bulletins of national channels. It is a complex issue to understand and show very precisely how these may appear as a "national" point of view on an event, except by comparing its coverage by the different national media who have their teams in place (Veron, 1993). Moreover, all this seems to lead one to think that the conclusions of Olivier Boyd-Barrett and Michael Palmer in their book on the world press agencies remain valid. These two authors had brought out how much local bureaus contribute to relaying "the definitions of the national

journalistic news at the international level" and the extent to which these agencies "present a vision of the country where the news collected in the capital and from official sources dominates" (Boyd-Barrett and Palmer, 1981: 652-653)

## A Commercial Channel

The European dimension of Euronews should not make one lose sight of the fact that it is also, and perhaps before all else, a commercial channel<sup>4</sup>. First of all, economic constraints manifest themselves through the audiences that the channel addresses (that is to say also the advertisers, because the channel is "sold" twice). The importance of viewership ratings manifests in a manner that is different from that of the traditional terrestrial channels: "one stays with a very, very empirical way of functioning", explained the assistant chief editor. The most important numbers for the commercial service and the distribution service of the channel are not just the general measures of actual viewers in the main European countries, but above all the numbers of potential viewers (the number of homes that get Euronews) that are calculated from the distribution of the channel. In effect, unlike the cable or satellite 'pay' channels, it is not so much seeking revenue from the distributors - the channel is often offered to them free - but a potentially maximal viewership. According to figures communicated by the channel, in 2002, it was reaching 124 million homes in Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America via cable and digital satellite. In these regions it is very much part of the "basic services" that correspond to the least expensive offers proposed by those in charge of the bouquet of satellites and cable. In the terrestrial networks its programmes are taken up very partially by the big general national channels (for example the Rai Uno in Italy, France 3 in France and TVE in Spain).

More and more dependent on advertising revenue<sup>5</sup>, Euronews

<sup>4</sup>The extracts of interviews, presented within quotation marks in this text are, except when otherwise indicated, extracts of discussions carried out in 2000 and 2001.

<sup>5</sup>The revenue of the channel comes from the sale of advertising spaces, sponsoring contracts, subscriptions by cable operators, the rights of terrestrial distributors who retransmit its programmes. Other revenue is generated by the sale of its own productions and by co-production contracts signed with the European Union.

primarily addresses a relatively pin-pointed audience, "an intelligent audience from a high socio-cultural level", as expressed clearly in a flyer of its communication service distributed in 2000. The figures of surveys conducted in 2001 by EMS (European Media and Market Survey), highlighted on the internet site of the channel in 2002, show that the accent is on "more well-to-do homes" of the "key markets". It is at least as much the "socio-cultural level" as the "socio-economic" level, to continue with the vocabulary adopted there. Among the ostensible viewership profiles posted one finds "senior executives", "opinion leaders", the "deciders" and "the-more-than-three-business-trip-last-year types". "We were ambitious, we wanted to have business, we wanted to reach people who are interested in news and need it. It is for this reason that we had very clearly pin-pointed news and magazines and we did not intend to create a popular and general entertainment channel, that was clear. We really wanted to go in this direction, which moreover is the same today", remembers one of the creators of the channel. Secondly, it is a channel in search of a geographically maximal distribution. This is why it needs to bypass the strict European Community boundaries with regard to its distribution and its shareholders. Like several European organizations (the EBU in the audio-visual sector or the UEFA in Football), Euronews counts among its members countries such as Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Slovenia, The Czech Republic and Romania; and moreover its principal countries of transmission are numerous countries of East Europe and the Mediterranean basin. Beyond its principal transmission zones, its leaders continue to seek a distribution on all the continents even though there exist (mainly in the eyes of the advertisers) the European "key markets" - primarily Germany, Spain, France and United Kingdom.

Economic constraints get equally manifested in the editorial positioning exhibited by the channel. It may be explained in part by the fact that the channel has had to carve out its position in the midst of national media fields in which its principal rival channels are no doubt the national rolling news channels wherever they exist, but mainly CNN and BBC World. In other words, one must reason simultaneously in terms of national competitive spaces, because these relationships between the channels work out differently depending on the countries, but also in terms

of transnational spaces, the European scale not making much sense in fact, if one takes into account the transnational character of news channels such as CNN or BBC World. The European positioning of Euronews allows it to occupy a "niche" in highly competitive markets, the one left free on the one hand by the big Anglo-saxon rolling news channels and on the other hand by national channels which, depending on the country, accord a very unequal place to international news in their news programmes (Heinderycks, 1998: Chapter 2). The directors of Euronews seek to demarcate themselves from a conception of international news that may be judged to be too Anglo-saxon and/or American. News therefore needs to be defined in the negative, just as the totality of the so-called European cultural products are defined, by resisting "American domination" on the production of news (Lang, 2000) and programmes (Darras, 2004). This international struggle also plays itself out in the imposition of other languages, with Euronews advocating multilingualism in the face of its competitors who essentially telecast in English.

The director of the editorial team of the time explained the positioning that the channel sought vis a vis its competitors:

"There are many, many competitors, CNN evidently and BBC, but also the national channels. For us, against this major competition, it is very important, I feel, to find a unique position in the market. And for us, the unique position is: we are not a national channel, but we are also not a global channel like the CNN or the BBC. We are a European channel [...] And also we are unique at the level of languages. The fact that we speak to the public in their own language. BBC... CNN... a bit with the Turkish CNN, they are beginning to have agreements with the local channels. But if we are looking at broadcasts at all the hours of the day, always with a European agenda, we are unique (...). For example, Bill Clinton delivered the "State of the Union address", a major annual speech, which took place here during the night because they are 6 hours behind us [...] BBC and CNN, they made it their first headline with the 6 O'clock morning bulletin. Bill Clinton said: 'blablabla'. We, we made it our second headline; for us, the lead (news classified as

the headlines) was the increasing crisis in Austria with Jorg Haider who had met with the 'Chancellor' Schüssel the evening before [...] We are not forcing ourselves to be European to the point of being comical, but [...] one always tries to find a European lead and a European angle to the story, to the topic [...] We are not local, but we are not global [...] It is, I feel, a complementary service to the national channels".

This tone, distinct from its competitors, constitutes a commercial argument when it comes to "selling" the channel on national markets with cable operators or with those in charge of the satellite bouquet. By showcasing Euronews's treatment of events that are less covered or not covered at all by its competitors, notably in East Europe, those in-charge of the commercial service and the distribution service of Euronews can thus emphasise the interest that this channel could hold for these tele-viewers.

"CNN has a very strong branding, it is like MTV if you take the equivalence from another domain [...] thus everyone knows them. Now, the way Euronews presents the news is very well received in Europe because it is not American, because, especially in East Europe, Euronews covers stories that are never covered, current affairs stories that are never covered by CNN. So, obviously, we play on that too" (In-charge of distribution)"

Yet, Euronews can hardly ignore the hierarchy of news or its treatment by its competitors because it is positioned in the same markets but also because, as one has seen, all the international channels draw largely from the same sources of footage and print news.

Finally, the commercial constraints exercised on the editorial content get translated in the conditions of news production. As one of the members of the editorial team puts it, Euronews makes "cheap T.V.", meaning that it does so with few human resources (135 journalists in 2001)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Among these journalists, there are 8 chiefs of editions, 8 producers, 3 in-charges of features, 3 assistant editors-in-chief, 1 chief editor and 1 director of the editorial team. But this figure supplied in 2002, which could appear high, is explained by the fact that the channel was telecast in 6 languages in 2000.

as well as material resources (between 20 to 40 million Euros) (the letter of the CSA, 2002: 15). For example, its very rapid rhythm of work is necessitated by the fact that news has to be produced faster and faster (frequent updating of bulletins, prioritizing "live coverage"), its work organization resembling that of a "factory"<sup>7</sup> ("here, once one sits at the sewing machine, one stitches all day long" remarked a journalist). This demonstrates the extent to which Euronews is also a "laboratory" for analyzing economic constraints that weigh on journalistic activity in the rolling news channels (Baisnée and Marchetti, 2006). For example, it is revealing that probably the best known programme of the channel is titled No Comment because it consists in telecasting footage without commentary, and this is chosen not by journalists but by those doing the editing.

### **Institutional Europe, a not so media-friendly subject**

The treatment of institutional Europe illustrates this dependence with regard to both footage as well as the commercial logic, which can sometimes be in opposition to the "European" objectives of the channel. The type of footage available, with its routine character, does not favour converting the activity of community institutions (ie. the EC institutions) into media-friendly subjects. The editorial board however needs to give an important place to its programmes since there exists an ever-expanding cadre of European political executives, creating its own on-going news. The work of the journalists is then caught between constraints that are simultaneously editorial and commercial, for it requires the treatment of a subject considered "difficult" for several reasons. In the first place, a widespread journalistic presupposition would have it that following the activities of European institutions doesn't lend itself well a fortiori to media treatment and television coverage. In effect, the current affairs of European institutions are considered as not being totally 'telegenic', in as much as the images remain very predictable: arrival of personalities, buildings, going around the table, "the shake hands please", smiles, etc.

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<sup>7</sup> Expression used by a member of the editorial team during an interview.

Secondly, the problem of footage, also faced by national channels in their coverage of the domestic political news, is made doubly difficult by the fact that the contours of the European political system remain very fluid: unknown political personnel, absence of political symbolism, relatively new mechanisms with regard to the division of powers at the national level, and debates and stakes that are considered esoteric. The major consequence of this symbolic deficit is the difficulty of framing this political game in images. There is no familiarity or proximity to this political game, which is looked upon as an internal "Brussel-Brusselian" cuisine. Moreover Europa, the daily feature of Euronews that deals with the current affairs of the European Union, also doesn't escape the internal criticism of being too institutional, too preoccupied with the political life of Brussels: "Its annoying, that feature [...] and according to me, it is not serving the interests of Europe because it is really a feature that is too institutional [...] I myself have never been able to succeed in seeing it through fully, because it just isn't interesting", explains a journalist... As the editors who cover the current affairs of the institutions of the European Union complain, one has to regularly re-explain what the Council is or the "third pillar" is etc.

Finally, this difficulty raises the issue of the very identity of the channel. The journalists of Euronews seek to avoid too institutional a treatment of these questions and to distance themselves from the image of "the channel of the European Commission". It is for these reasons, which are simultaneously professional and commercial, that the main editors of Euronews tried to deal with European questions in a different way, notably in 2000 through co-produced magazines financed by the European Union: *Meridian*, a monthly on the external relations of the European Union; and *Europeans*, a weekly current affairs programme "on all the major European issues that affect the life of citizens". It entailed imposing a more "lively" treatment, which was "close to people" as noted the person in-charge of these, the assistant chief editor of the magazine. As in the other domains that are covered (notably the economic domain), the aim of those in charge of the channel is finally to develop a more commercial conception of the subjects, by laying less emphasis on decision-making, for example, and more "on the impact on the consumers, on the life of business", in the words of the brochure of the communication service of the channel in 1998.

Following other medias, Euronews also gave importance to an editorial format which consists in giving an account of the institutional activities through "scandals" or "controversies", even though the channel has no means of investigation. Finally, the air-time share of the institutional current affairs of the European Union has got reduced; there is less of "live coverage" and it is of shorter duration.

### A "European Perspective" On International Current Affairs

Now that these constraints have been delineated, it would also be of interest to understand how the journalists of Euronews very concretely "cobble together" this "European perspective", which is necessarily fluid. One of their main problems stems specifically from the editorial and journalistic interpretation of a "European news and a European view of the world", as put forth by an advertising flyer. Being mostly devoid of a social dimension, the reference to Europe appears difficult to make explicit a priori. When questioned on the subject, those interviewed moreover defined it by negation, by what it was not: it is neither Anglo-saxon, nor national, nor international.

Parallel with other multinational work spaces, Euronews tries to define its own identity, one that does not simply add up to the juxtaposition of the points of view that it accommodates (Abélès and Bellier, 1996: 434). This assertion ties in with the analyses of Marc Abélès and Irène Bellier who insist, in effect, on the necessity for the agents of the European Commission to invent "compromise" concepts. They also underline the fact that the practice of European functionaries is not the sum of its components but that it is original in as much as it became necessary to invent new methods and habits that were adapted to a multinational context where different administrative traditions rub shoulders (a pluri-lingualism that produces "the euro speak", etc.). Such problems and their consequences are also seen at Euronews<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup>When one compares our observations with the processes described by Marc Abélès and Irène Bellier (1996) about the European Commission, it turns out that the notion of "political culture of compromise" is more descriptive than explanatory and deals in a very secondary manner with the internal struggles that led to these "compromises" or followed them. On the other hand, the problem of "compromise" is posed very differently at Euronews because, in most cases, the multiple editorial decisions for instance are not the product of a long process, as it is in the case of the Commission. These choices are made rapidly by the executive cadres of the channel most often without discussion, which seem to occur a posteriori.

## Neither National, Nor Global

To explain the formation of this "European point of view", those in charge of the channel initially put forth a notion of journalistic objectivity ("Euronews is a carrier of a style that is its own in dealing with news, in which there is no political, national, religious or geographical leaning" thus sums up a brochure of the communication service of the channel in 1998), that is to say a sort of point of view above or by the side of other points of view: "For example, if we limit ourselves to France, to a French public, we propose a viewpoint that is a little above. We go out of the (French) hexagon, we place ourselves at a little higher altitude... the naysayers will say that we place ourselves nowhere, but we propose, if you wish, a vision which is a little different from what is shown on the French screen normally", notes an assistant chief editor of the channel.

Once again, in the absence of common referents, this European angle on international current affairs gets defined by what it is not. It is in effect by demarcating themselves from the rival Anglo-saxon channels (CNN and BBC World) and the national general or rolling news channels, that the journalists define their approach. One of the people in charge of the editorial board sums it up by taking the example of the war in Kosovo, during which the national channels, in contrast to Euronews, often showed themselves as being extremely partisan by, according to him, systematically taking the side of the western camp (through the "victimization" of refugees from Albania) and by over-simplifying the situation.

We were the television that first started taking an interest in what was happening there [...] and we found a language that was in total contrast with what the other news channels, including the national news channels, were doing. I am not speaking of the direct competitors like CNN and BBC, I am speaking also of the national channels, which were, which allowed themselves to be, self-complacent, even though they had their special correspondents [...] it was non-stop laments about the Albanians and all that [...] One year later, we saw that we had been right in being a little skeptical about this conflict. Thus there we had a language that was clearly our own [...] and this without special correspondents, without camera crew on the spot, with the same

footage as everyone, covering the same press conferences as everyone.  
(Assistant Chief Editor)

Faced with the absence of a common history or a shared unconscious, those in charge of Euronews had to find the right answers and develop professional reflexes that made them stay away from subjects that would not "speak" to their public(s) even as they appeared pertinent to such and such a nationality represented within the channel.

What one tried to do [...] was to have an editorial coherence. In fact it appeared quite spontaneously [...] because Euronews suffers from the ills that Europe suffers from. It has the advantages and disadvantages of Europe, seeing that we are partly emanating from it... spiritually, I mean to say (laughs) [...] Frankly there is no common denominator of interests for all Europeans [...] so, editorially, it is quite difficult to construct it." (Assistant Chief Editor)

This "cobbling together" thus gets manifested in the general principles that guide the selection of subjects<sup>9</sup>: a national subject which has repercussions for other member countries, a subject generating surprise through anecdote (those which can "surprise", reflecting the behavior of neighbouring countries) or even an international topic treated from a view point where European connections of events taking place outside the geographical or political Europe are made evident. One can thus see clearly that, confronted with an elusive European identity and behind a discourse that idealizes the 'European' point of view, the reactivation of national stereotypes is one of the "recipes" for producing subjects that "speak" to the European T.V spectators. Another response of the editorial group is embodied in the magazine Perspectives, which offers a selection of reports of partner

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<sup>9</sup>An ad hoc working group of the EBU, in charge of putting in place a project of a pan-European television, had, in 1984, put forth a certain number of principles: degree to which tele-viewers are affected or interested in the importance and repercussions of the event; expressing the different existing points of view in Europe, reflecting the economic, political, ethnic, religious and cultural pluralism; Europe as geographically defined and not to be confused with the borders, etc. One can refer to the extracts of the conclusions of this working group in the annexures to an article (Hjarvard, 1993: 92-93).

national channels on the same topic. The obvious objective is therefore to give the spectators the possibility of seeing how news is perceived and dealt with in European countries, by incorporating the main topics of the televised evening news bulletins of several countries. Europe is here constructed in the plural, by the juxtaposition of national journalistic points of view and not by the fabrication of a "European point of view". The journalist in charge of this magazine remembers moreover that this type of approach practically rules out a certain number of subjects, which even if they are pertinent for Euronews, are not dealt with by all the national channels.

First one chooses a theme and it isn't necessarily my choice in as much as that depends on what has been done. The topics, I can't invent them [...] I remember when there was, for example, the signing of the accord in Northern Ireland. Me, I wanted to do Northern Ireland, but the others, the national channels, that is typically the kind of subject that they simply didn't care about (laughs) [...] Each time that I wanted to do Northern Ireland, it wasn't possible because they didn't send their correspondents, they do subjects that are a little [...] factual, and the choice, it is made on this thing, where there are correspondents on the spot, where they do real reporting. Because, if it means viewing the same footage provided by the agencies once again, it is really not worth it. You need topics that are 'angled'.

This "European perspective" also gets constructed in the commentaries. The journalists are instructed to avoid all reference to any particular national context, for even if they are journalists working in a particular "language", they are addressing neither a country in particular (except in the case of Italians), nor the European territory in its entirety, since transmission of Euronews goes beyond the geographical frontiers of Europe. The potential public of the journalists is thus not defined only by the geographical zone but also and above all by the language that is spoken or comprehended. For example, a French language journalist does not simply address the spectators in his country but also those in Quebec, in Switzerland, in Belgium, in Africa and, more widely, individuals anywhere who understand the French language. The emblematic case is no doubt that of

the English language journalists in as much as Euronews has few or no transmissions in Great Britain. De facto, these journalists thus practically do not address their compatriots at all.

One doesn't write for a British public at all, thus one must always think that one is writing for the Scandinavians, for people who are in the Mediterranean Basin, even in East Europe, one really doesn't necessarily know where the people are, who are listening to us in English. And that changes things, the ways one writes, the terms one uses [...] One has to avoid playing too much on the words, a clarity of style is required [...] From the beginning, I was very conscious that it is not seen at all in England, in the United Kingdom, so it is really for the so-called Anglophones or for people who had English as their second language elsewhere, in Greece for example [...] And the Spaniards [...] now, they write for South America, they are aired there, and the Italians, they write for their country [...] and perhaps for Albania [...] The Germans write for Austria, for the Swiss Germans." (English language journalist)

The on-going debates within the editorial group show the difficulty of finding an editorial coherence that satisfies all the journalists of the channel. Journalistic practices that sometimes stem from legislations and conventions that are national, vary when it comes to showing on air the face of a minor or even a bare breast. What should Euronews do when some national televisions choose to show the face of an accused child in an affair, whereas others prefer to put a mosaic on his face? Eventually, the editorial team chose to show it on screen, choosing the least constraining legislation. In the second case, the journalists responsible for editing had to renounce showing female breasts filmed during the Rio Carnival because the director of the editing team of the period, a Scottish journalist, was opposed to it, imposing a practice that was current in United Kingdom.

### **The Importance of Editing**

In as much as Euronews is multilingual, it is necessary to ensure that the news aired be essentially the same regardless of the journalist in charge of the commentary, and thus the organization of the company and its

professional practices must adapt to this. This problem of coherence in fact refers back to a dual process: on the one hand, those in charge of selection and editing of subjects must ensure that the diverse national commentaries can adapt to a common canvas; on the other hand, the journalists of different languages must keep in mind the fact that their public is multinational and that in consequence they cannot mobilize traditional national references. While the channel does not produce a uniform product because each journalist writes his commentary himself, a form of on-the-air harmony had to be devised so as not to favour any national particularities. In effect one doesn't find within the editorial team of EU as many editors as aired languages, but there is a common hierarchy and different language journalists attached to each feature and edition.

The selection and creation of a hierarchy of news happens in the morning during the editorial group meeting (10.30 am). In this, there are present the director of the editorial team, the chief editors, the chiefs of the editions and chiefs of features (Sports, Economy, Europa), a member of the coordination service and one of the "forward planning" service<sup>10</sup>. Each one then proposes the subjects for the feature or the edition of the bulletin that he is in charge of; the coordination person is consulted to know what footage is available. In general the discussion is relatively short, the director of the editorial team deciding rapidly so that no major debates take place. The discussion could also be postponed to later, depending on the availability of footage (and its quality). It is also at this time that the decision of relaying "direct" or not is taken, the member of the service for forecasting announcing the possible "live coverages", their tenor and the technical facts that are related to them. Once again, the hierarchy takes a quick decision regarding the question of putting such a topic on air.

Once the decisions regarding the topics have been taken by the executive members of the channel, it is the chiefs of editions and features

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<sup>10</sup>This service is in charge of drawing up a watch-out list of news, of anticipating upcoming events, notably the live coverage, so that the editorial group doesn't find itself unprepared. It is also this service which puts together the documentation (Internet, press-releases, press cuttings) related to future topics.

that have a deciding role in the production. In 2000, Euronews had three chiefs of features and six chiefs of editions (each one in charge of ensuring a part of the 20 daily hours on the air). They ensure the putting together of the subjects from the footage that the coordination service, news<sup>11</sup>, has supplied them with. When they put their story together, the chiefs of edition and features must make sure that the six languages can adapt to the footage.

They attend the meeting of the editorial group in the morning, select the stories for the day and do the editing if the footage is already available. They show and explain the story and the editing that they have chosen to the six "language" journalists who will take care of the commentary. A discussion on the reportage, its pertinence, the commentary that must accompany it, can then take place. The sensitivities with regard to a subject may turn out to be different, depending on the nationalities and the professional traditions: some journalists may contest the interest value for "their" viewership, explaining that the editing that has been done is not adapted to the structure of the language or to the T.V. habits of their viewers.

Anyhow, the chief of editions decide fairly rapidly in these debates and there is hardly any time for discussion considering that the journalists sometimes have only fifteen minutes to write their commentary based on the available press releases of agencies or the documentation supplied by the forecasting service and enter into the mixing cabin to record the sound for the story.

However, it is the role of the chiefs of editions of features to anticipate problems (stories with a national angle, language structure) and to do an editing that would "pass everywhere", which is a product of compromise (Abélès and Bellier, 1996:432). "I look to doing a bit of synthesis of the way in which the six journalists may write the story [...] It's a

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<sup>11</sup>The coordination service is at the heart of the news of the channel, the "control tower" as one of its members explains it. It is in effect in this little room that footage arrives, coming from partner channels, from ITN, from EVN and from audiovisual agencies. In front of this barrage of footage, the members of the coordination service create scripts describing the available subjects (which are accessible to all the members of the editorial team from a database); they also receive and select footage corresponding to the subjects that the editorial team wishes for.

bit like lego, each one can write based on that", indicates one of the chiefs of features. It is in this editing, which constitutes a compromise between the different national journalistic traditions, that the Euronews 'tone' gets created.

This is what I say when there are new chiefs of edition who join or are substituting: 'you have to stop thinking in your language, you think in all the other languages. And you don't think in your language while constructing a story. You construct the story by thinking in the other languages to see how the others can write it' [...] One has to find the language of common images, the language of the explanations given by the common chief of edition, the common structure for all that, in order to arrive at a discourse that is held within certain parameters. It is perhaps not copied, identical in all the languages, but that in the end the message is the same," (Assistant Chief Editor).

### Organizational Constraints

As we have seen, Euronews displays several unique features connected with its multilingual character. It is a channel without anchors, without sets, that is to say, a television without a face, which airs footage non-stop and in relatively short formats. In these conditions it would be extremely expensive for the channel to put in place sets and anchors corresponding to each of the languages in which the programmes are aired. The adaptation into six languages also imposes a fairly heavy organizational need for teams of six journalists for each story put on air.

The difficulties of creating a supposedly European media are further reflected in the work conditions of journalists, since this comes up against the employment markets in different countries. As an organization, Euronews's unique features owe primarily to the conditions of production, particularly the faster pace at which these journalists are required to work. This is what partially explains that the average age is under thirty, according to several journalists, and that the turnover of personnel is relatively high in comparison with the national terrestrial channels. These characteristics, similar to those of numerous new channels that are aired through cable and

satellite, (Marchetti and Baisné, 2002: 193-205), affect the recruitment and management of young journalists at Euronews, keeping in view the low career prospects they are faced with.

Much of the recruitment and management of teams of journalists is linked to the European character of Euronews, which reveals, in a miniature setting, variations in the journalistic spaces across different countries. In effect, the Spanish and the Italian teams don't pose major problems of recruitment because they find at Euronews a financial situation that is much better than in their country of origin, where work is rare and salaries generally not as high as in France. These teams thus tend to be composed of older journalists, more stable in the sense that some of them have been settled for many years in the Lyon region. On the contrary, the English and German language teams are more difficult to manage because the employment markets for journalists in Germany and England offer numerous opportunities. The recruitment of young journalists can thus be tricky and they often don't stay long. Young British journalists, for the most part, seem to look upon working at Euronews as a good "training" experience, which allows some to return to their country of origin or to join the rolling national or international news channels, or to get absorbed by the audio-visual press agencies headquartered in London. Given that Euronews was hardly known in the UK, the arrival of ITN as a major shareholder in 1997 also facilitated the recruitment of British journalists who hoped to benefit from this company's reputation.

The situation of French language journalists, in terms of recruitment as well as turnover, is somewhere in between. Those in-charge take the support of the national or local market to recruit freelancers and/or accredited journalists. One of the chief editors explained that it is difficult to quickly find young "experienced" journalists who had a sufficient "international culture". French journalists would be able to stay for many years, whereas others are simply passing through. But in all cases, it is difficult to find young people with a few years of experience in the profession, and at the same time having an "international culture" and who, over and above that, would accept a post as journalist for news. Differences across the nationalities can also be seen in salaries, an area in which

European harmonization does not exist. In order to attract journalists and freelancers, the department of human resources offers better salaries to journalists coming from countries where the employment markets for journalists are the most open (like Germany and United Kingdom).

### Journalists Adjusted to Euronews

To adapt voice-overs in each of the six languages, the new journalists learn on-the-job to avoid drawing upon explicitly national references or overly idiomatic expressions which would not necessarily be understood outside the country of origin (Abélès, 1992: 364). If they have had national journalistic experience, they must then "unlearn" some of their professional habits and routines.

I mean to say, that each time a French journalist begins to work here as a freelancer or on a contract, or in any other way, the first thing that I tell him is: 'Forget, forget that you are French, forget that you are in France, you don't work for a French television channel. It so happens that you speak French, that you are going to work in French, but that is all. You are going to be addressing a viewership that is mostly beyond France' [...] So 'get out of your French skin, you are not doing French T.V., OK?' (Assistant Chief Editor)

In these conditions, the profiles of young journalists get adjusted to the needs of Euronews. Considered more malleable by those in-charge of the editorial team, they would find it easier to get used to the practices of the channel. After spending some days assisted by a senior journalist, their first stories are closely monitored and the chiefs of editions make them remix their voice-overs till they are deemed acceptable. Besides this, there exists a system of 'reading over' among journalists of the same language and according to the linguistic competencies of each one, that is to say a sort of criss-crossed system of checks and balances, that allows for the correction of any possible errors.

In the end, the study of these social and professional journeys allows us to draw out some characteristics of the journalists of Euronews, which owe at least in part to its "European" dimension. Beyond their multimedia experience and evidently their mastery of a minimum of two or three

languages, numerous journalists - it is particularly true for the oldest ones who had to undergo an extremely selective recruitment process (Le Monde, 6th January 1993) - have not only got foreign experience but have worked for media of a language different from their country of origin. As an assistant chief editor states while speaking of journalists hired during the first years that the channel went on air, "these were people who were rarely below 30 years old and [...] who all had had experience abroad, national experience and experience in a country other than their country of origin". This isn't necessarily true of the young journalists recruited in the recent years for whom the experience is new. This international profile emerges from numerous academic courses for young journalists who have in part followed their studies abroad within the framework of the development of programmes and exchanges between different European universities, or have been trained in international relations. Others have lived for many years abroad, either for work or simply because they followed their parents.

This daily "putting together" of a "European perspective" on international news, that is also to say the search for an editorial coherence, owes a lot to some "old timers" who for the most part occupy responsible positions. They try to impose this "Euronews tone" on young journalists. In fact, this tone is the product of both an elevated conception of news, keeping a large part for "international" stories which are less and less treated by national channels except in the case of crises or conflicts, as well as growing commercial demands. Journalists are constantly torn between the "European" objectives of the channel (promoting a "European identity", defending a conception of news that is different from the Anglo-saxons, etc.) and the multiple constraints, particularly economic ones, mentioned earlier. These two logics of production of news can be found in the content of what is called "international" and "European" news. Today it covers news that is not so much strictly institutional (specially diplomatic) as a news that is either dealt with as 'news in brief' (wars, catastrophes, accidents, risks, scandals etc.) or through news items that allow for multiple identifications by the T.V. spectators ("human interest" stories, practical subjects etc.) or news that rests on "pretty visuals", to use the expression often employed by journalists of the channel. Besides, transnational and "European" news has also got transformed under the effect of the unprecedented escalation in the

pace of work in the audiovisual media, that is being handled with increasing speed, which leaves less time for the "commentaries" that in the olden days contributed to the prestige of this journalistic specialization.

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