

## **Europe and the Media: Building a new kind of Europe; is mass media the key?**

**Edited by: Lee Duffield & Gary Ianziti**

**Published: VDM Verlag, 2010**

This excerpt accessed from: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/31262/>

### **Preface**

The authors of *Europe and the Media – a Symposium* are academics and journalists from six countries who have each worked extensively in Europe; with Lee Duffield and Gary Ianziti as editors for the project. The outcome is truly a symposium, in that diverse and differing perspectives are represented. The intent of the authors is to bring those perspectives together to focus on whatever progress is being made with the “European project” or “European idea”. A binding element is their concern with cultural factors in creating a common European identity, especially through the European Union. That is opposed to seeing it strictly as an economic entity and monitoring only policies and practices of governments. The book therefore studies factors like education for life in a common European home, youth interests, and preponderantly, roles of mass media in making or sustaining an emergent new Europe. It is timely, appearing as the European Union now enacts the hard-won Lisbon Treaty, its latest move towards expansion and an intensified integration of its membership, of almost 500 million citizens.

**Lee Duffield** was a journalist for over 20 years with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, serving as its European Correspondent at the fall of the Berlin Wall. His doctoral thesis (PhD, 2003) was on the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in Europe, and he published a book on the topic, *Berlin Wall in the News*, in 2009. He has been teaching Journalism since 1997, currently at the Queensland University of Technology, in Brisbane. He returned to journalistic practice for “industry immersion”, for one year during 2006-7, in Brussels, and in that time gathered material for the present book on Europe and the media.

**Gary Ianziti** is an Associate Professor at the Queensland University of Technology, Australia with research interests in European history and Renaissance studies. His publications include contributions to *Il principe e la storia* (Novarra, 2005); *History Australia* (2005) and *I Tatti Studies*, vol. 10 (2005). He has a Doctor of Philosophy degree from North Carolina University

and Dottorato di Ricerca from Pisa. Dr Ianziti is Chair of the Australian Foundation for Studies in Italy; an executive member of the Australian Council for Italian Studies; and member of the American Medieval Academy, and Renaissance Society of America. He is a regular reviewer for periodicals including *Renaissance Quarterly*, *The Journal of Modern History* and the *American Historical Review*.

**Karmen Erjavec** is an Associate Professor at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia and holds a PhD in Communication Studies from Salzburg University in Austria. She has published widely in books and scholarly journals, including *The Journalistic Quality* (1999), and more recently “Beyond Advertising and Journalism” in *Discourse and Society* (2004), “Hybrid Public Relations, New Discourse” in *The European Journal of Communication* (2005), and with Z. Volcic, “The Kosovo Battle” in *The Harvard International Journal of Press and Politics* (2007).

**Miriam Klausner** is a journalist with the German international radio and television service, *Deutsche Welle*. She completed Masters studies at Johannes Gutenberg Universitat, Mainz, in Germany, with a study on media correspondents working in Brussels. Previously she conducted practice-led research, for an MA from the Queensland University of Technology, Australia, producing multi-lingual radio documentaries in South-east Asia.

**Geoff Meade** is Europe Editor with the Press Association, of the United Kingdom. He is among the longest-standing members of the Brussels media corps, having been accredited there for the first time in 1979, and in that capacity is often called on as a commentator for media outlets throughout Europe, North America and Australia. Hundreds of despatches from Geoff Meade have charted major developments and breaking stories, like the 1987 sinking of the ferry *Herald of Free Enterprise* at Zeebrugge, the 1997 death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in Paris, and successive, decisive gatherings of the heads of government of the European Union.

**Franja Pizmoht** is a researcher and student in the computer science faculty of Maribor University in Slovenia. She has worked in the field of radio and television, and video and audio production, citizen journalism, convergent media and new media. Her awards for academic distinction include a University of Maribor Rector’s Award for 2008. Franja Pizmoht is active in publishing and writing for media outlets in Slovenia – in the newspaper *Vecer*, academic

newspaper *Katedra*, and television station RTS – and is a member of the organising committee of the International Festival of Radical Communication, *Memfest*.

**Aneta Podkalicka** is a research Fellow in the Institute of Social Research, at Swinburne University, Australia. Her work is part of a youth media project called *Youthworx* carried out in collaboration with a community radio station and the Salvation Army. Ethnographic research on this project focuses on young people's experience of their involvement in media training, together with creative work and the development of evaluative methodologies for community-based media initiatives. Dr Podkalicka is a graduate of universities in Poland, Germany and Australia. Her PhD research (2007) involved an interdisciplinary study of translation in media-related environments, with case studies from European and Australia. Her publications on that topic include an article in the journal *Convergence* (2008), and two forthcoming book chapters.

**Zala Volcic** is a post-doctoral Fellow at the Queensland University Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies, in Brisbane, Australia. She investigates cultural consequences of nationalism, capitalism and globalisation -- emphasising international communication, media and cultural identities. Dr Volcic has published numerous books and articles, including: "The Machine that Creates Slovenes", on Slovene national identity, in the *National Identities Journal* (2005), "Blaming the Media: Serbian narratives of nationalist identity", in *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* (2006), and "Yugo-nostalgia ..." in *Critical Studies of Mass Communication* (2007).

### **Cover notes**

The front cover photograph for this volume is of the headquarters building of the European Commission in Brussels, the famous Berlaymont, site also of daily briefings for the Brussels media corps. The back cover picture is of the adjacent European Council building, the location for regular summits of the European Union heads of government.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction - Mass Media in the Re-making of Europe.**

The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty on 1.12.09, a major restructuring of the European Union made to accommodate its ongoing growth, is a fresh iteration of a seemingly unstoppable progress. Yet that progress, as with this latest Treaty, has had its stops and starts, periods of assent, and contretemps. Sometimes deliberate implementation of change by governments flows easily, at other times it fails if it's not in accord with the more "natural" processes of life and society. Revolutions take place but are never made to order. Europe is being re-made, or may be re-made, amid both optimistic proclamations in support, and skepticism on almost every quarter. The European Union declared optimistically at its fiftieth anniversary: "Today we live together as was never possible before." Togetherness and possibilities are themes of this book about Europe going into its next Century. They are themes appropriate to looking towards the future. Among the possibilities -- a mix of certainties and imponderables -- one fact has been taken up to guide us: as with the world at large, perceptions of reality in the experience of life are to be shared far more widely and more avidly than in previous times in history. Life of society becomes an issue of communication. That will mean, as before, a slow and traditional transmission of values and knowledge for living, but now also, increasingly, an experience of rapid, original and interactive transmissions of ideas and information, *en masse*.

Mass communication media are a subject of this work because we see more of life being experienced through these media, which are pervasive, impressionistic, diverse and preoccupying. In the European way, we, the editors and authors, disagree among ourselves on key points. On one hand, we make an observation that the Europe envisaged in the so-called European project, the ideal of a united Europe, may be well in process, as a revolution of cultures. As such it will be happening in unplanned ways, following "natural" courses -- and

engagement through mass media will be central to it. On the other hand, we'd recognise that legitimately, skepticism abounds about any thorough-going coming-together of the Europeans. No wonder, perhaps, considering the agonies and divisions of the past; no wonder either, considering the satisfactions of life in the hundreds of separate identifiable cultures of the European continent as they are. At every point in this brief look at Europe, which is to do with cultures and communication, we find grounds to think that the process of formation of a true greater Europe might still reach early limits, break down, peter out before any concluding stage is achieved.

So our description of the process of change is a qualified one, of a sometimes haphazard and ungainly progress: for three steps forward, always at least one step back. Certainly no argument is attempted that a propagated, constructed European entity, legislated from Brussels, is to take hold as planned in any thoroughgoing way. Efforts in that vein are seen to be effectual only indirectly, in service to something else which, we suggest, does appear to be happening in mass society. The Europe seen in this study is on its way to unification more at a cultural level, and that will be through common experience of day-by-day life, shared among millions.

It is a study of Europe-and-mass-media, setting out to look at European society through an appraisal of its media, and from that perspective, we consider that the power in the "Europeanisation" of Europe is in the hands of citizens. We consider that it is being exerted judiciously by citizens; people who are interested in the development of their identity, shrewd about what it may bring them, and always cautious. The definitions and boundaries of this process are those of Europe: its continental limits and proximities, association of cultures and languages, shared history, prospective collective problems, and the ever-increasing integration of a shared, dynamic economy. The dynamics of change will have both universalistic elements and elements peculiar to the European situation. The argument here would recognise other new cultures emerging across the borders of countries outside of Europe, nourished by the fact of open and free communication; all part of what globalisation will entail. Here, that broad phenomenon is to be examined specifically as an aspect of the change in Europe, in the present epoch.

In Chapter 2 the argument is opened by Gary Ianziti, defining the “European project”, the drive for integration at the heart of Europe’s experience since 1945 -- and taking up the issues of skepticism about that project as the European Union negotiates its various crises. He focuses on a loss of contact between the EU and its population at large, and looks back at perennial efforts to set up and mobilise pan-European systems. Languages are discussed in this chapter initially as obstacles to unification. Similarly national identity, and national

media systems are recognised as a potential hindrance to the formation of a more generic European public space.

Ianziti settles on elitism as a chief hindrance, cleavage between cosmopolitan elites and nationalised masses being responsible for foundering efforts to “conjure into existence something called European culture”, where mass media become “part of the problem”. The chapter reviews efforts to set up pan-European media systems, indicating that with their many setbacks and handicaps, especially dilemmas with language, such media as presently conceived are unlikely ever to work as a lead factor in creating a culture of Europe. The structures and functions of media systems are to be dealt with further, in later chapters. A conclusion is reached that there will be no further development of Europe through reforms of institutions without wide participation, and some answers are identified in history: the story of the initial emergence of “Europe” as a “geographic and civilisational concept”, and an understanding of the *realpolitik* of the initial formation of the EU. It is seen, not as the rhetorical new Europe, but as a product of necessity: “In the early decades European integration had less to do with intention than with developing a response to a very specific set of circumstances”. The message is to identify the set of circumstances now which might impel change in the second half-century of the EU’s existence.

In Chapter 3 Lee Duffield picks up signs of such an attack on circumstances, in the declarations of the 2007 Jubilee summit of the EU at Berlin. The assembled heads of government three months before had elevated climate change to priority status in the European agenda. They identified a common destiny best managed together. “We are facing major challenges which do not stop at national borders”, they said. New circumstances are described in terms of the effect of sweeping economic and social change occurring over fifty years, and new possibilities, for instance as raised by Groebel who suggests a new start

arising from transformation, “if the cards are reshuffled, if we seek a community of values once again”. Duffield argues for the existence of an emergent “culture of Europe as a way of life”, with very distinguishing features in its youth culture and attachment to sport. He then, as a journalist, makes a professional appraisal of the organised efforts of the European Union to discuss its actions with citizens who may be sharing this “way of life”. Some of the campaign activities are seen to be maintaining an old didactic stance; others working for more effective communication, like the regular and searching Eurobarometer polls, or the EC media service’s adoption of a “story-led” news agenda. A compilation of announcements by the European Commission is used to show the penetration of the actions of the “supranational” tier of government to the level of everyday experience – and therefore, through the aid of news media, to the consciousness of many more Europeans.

In Chapter 4, Aneta Podkalicka matches doubts about the value of EU language policy with a more positive statement about how diverse languages can be employed in future mass media services. The writer examines tensions surrounding the policy of recognition of national languages in official business, aggravated by claims made on behalf of excluded minority languages and the ascendancy everywhere of English – somewhat working against the EU’s “underlying aspiration to construct a European communicative space”. The chapter then reviews attempts to cope with language diversity in providing broadcast services, up to the present time, and draws lessons as to how improvements can be made. It ends with a proposal to graft the national, multicultural system from Australia, SBS, onto European markets, with each country to have its own “SBS”, explaining how that system deploys translation to provide effectual social communication.

Chapter 5 is the first of a set of three focused on the workings of the mass media centre of the European Commission in Brussels, a major international hub, the world’s biggest in terms of the number of resident accredited media representatives. In it, Lee Duffield provides a short observation study made during ten months as one of the accredited correspondents. The study characterises the content of news managed through the centre, verifying what is often said, that the news from Brussels goes first to elite media outlets, including specialist financial or business services, but then flows on to more general mass media outlets. The news is seen as directly relevant to the everyday life of citizens. It is argued that the treatment of issues in the news, and the impact of them, will be shared across the territory of the EU. An example is given of a safety measure to be imposed on trucks in every EU country, expected to save



thousands of lives across them all; a matter for discussion at breakfast tables everywhere. Because of such commonality of experience, the distribution of news through national outlets, following national patterns of language use, is not seen as necessarily an impediment to fostering a European “communicative space”. The writer reinforces these findings using extended interviews with six members of the international media corps, to obtain their observations on their audiences in the context of a wider European community, and their interests and purposes in reporting or commenting on news.

In Chapter 6 Geoff Meade, a practitioner at the EC media centre over thirty years, gives a personalised account of how it operates, how it has developed, and likely implications of his practice for the evolution of European society. He charts the growth of the enterprise from a relative backwater for news, to a hectic and sophisticated, large-scale purveyor of “lifeblood” information to half-a-billion citizens of the European Union, and the world beyond. He argues that the distribution of news at Brussels has a unique character: being shared among very different users it is less susceptible to “spin” or distortion in the interest of any national government, and yet, not originating from a source holding the concentrated power of a national government, it can lack credible force. The process remains highly democratic, not lending itself out to the promotional drive to generate more European “identity” among publics: “Here’s the EC’s dilemma – it has no trouble generating coverage but it has little control over the type of coverage”, he writes. He describes the executive Commission of the EU as a locus of actual political power, more than other institutions including the European Parliament, making it the point of most attention from journalists. He also refers to deliberate media bias, usually of a “Euroskeptic” stripe, mentioned also in some of the other chapters -- though seen as mostly overcome by the sheer volume of unprejudiced news and opinion out on the markets.

Chapter 7, by Miriam Klaussner, fills out the anatomy of the strategically placed Brussels press corps with a study of the experience of German and Polish journalists, the latter of special interest as representatives of the new, mostly East European members states that joined the European Union from 2004 onward. This study sets up a comparison of the working lives of the newly-arrived, mostly cash-strapped Poles and the much better established German delegation. It finds them engaged on different missions, in view of the expectations that people would have of the European Union in their respective home markets. Yet, whereas the news being reported to Poland reflected a mission to explain and teach, and

German media took more of a “watchdog” stance towards the European institutions, the interests of the two groups in serving their own segments of the common European market were still found to have their similarities, overlapping on many points.

Chapter 8 begins the concluding segment of the book: two chapters meant to show how the European idea is being received in the course of everyday life; and connected with ways that mass media will be used, entering into life’s experiences. These chapters are based on studies made in Slovenia as one of the new member states of 2004. On the premise that the “new Europe” is anticipated as a cultural Europe, and education can sustain cultural life, Zala Volcic and Karmen Erjavec report on a schools initiative in Slovenia launched in the hope of preparing children for a lifetime of contact with free, and free-flowing mass media. The study interrogates twenty of some 100 primary teachers recruited by the country’s first “post socialist” government to teach media studies, offering in the process, materials about life in the open space of greater Europe. Their responses reflect an early disillusionment in the country over the EU, the respondents bemoaning inadequate experience on their own part to warrant teaching about Europe. Secondary information comes through that does betray keen interest in exploration beyond the national frontiers, and so some affirmation of the ideal of a transnational life. That is framed by complaints about the slow pace of integration into Western Europe, a circumstance actually much changed since the study was carried out; as Slovenia has now acceded to the Schengen agreement on open borders and free movement, and to the Euro currency area, and occupied the Presidency of the European Council in 2008.

In Chapter 9 Franja Pižmoht takes a look at youth, through the blogosphere, the form of mass media used most prominently by young people. Its advance is as strong in Europe as anywhere; the continent is information rich; European Union Internet users in November 2007 accounted for over 78% of world usage. This survey of web-logs -- blogs -- perceives an unfolding of profound social change. Control measures by governments notwithstanding, the blogosphere “allows people to search for answers, it gives a voice in the global conversation unrestrained by national borders”, and Europeans continue registering *en masse* as citizen journalists. They are seen to be more generally living in “synthetic spaces” where material boundaries and the strictures of local custom count for less. It is a change in the complexion of reality not lost on the European Union, which has engaged in a set of programs to facilitate and exploit the use of new media at many levels -- new communication

technologies as a “perfect tool for social integration”. The chapter acknowledges an explosion of use, blogging on the move from highly personal applications especially among the young, to many more that include a growing dependence on it in business and the economy.

Chapter 10 provides a conclusion. The chief thrust of “Europe and Media” is that in the current story of Europe, one of accelerating change, a person’s life is lived manifestly in relationship with others *en masse*; this life is experienced through mass media, and experienced also as a relationship with these media. “Mass media” are the mainstream, major chains of television, radio and the press, and also diverse other media, including the new media of cyberspace. The first implication is that experience of life must change qualitatively as the balance of social experience, work, relationships, or perception of the world continues to shift away from material landscapes towards more synthetic spheres. In more down-to-earth terms Europeans find themselves being leaders in a new world order where communication and information play a bigger part in all economic production or social relations.

Change driven largely by technology promotes other sweeping change, most spectacularly the European project – removal of barriers, and integration of the economy and society of a continent. It is posited here that Europe as an entity, with its particular geography, economic standards and people, actually is leading the rush of global change towards new forms of human existence. While there is valid doubt about how far such change will run, and resistance to it, we say the force of history, the momentum for change, is helping the movement towards greater European integration. The expressions of it are mixed. Our argument however is that where the building of Europe can be seen, and more than in any other way, it is seen as a record of daily experience of the Europeans. In this Century, experience of and through mass media is essential to that, and essential to the vision outlined in this book of the continent and its destiny.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Conclusion**

“Europe and Media” is concerned with the possibilities of the future for Europe. As a symposium it is a contest of minds, giving space to differing interpretations of the historical trends; a field of contradictions in the process of being reconciled -- like its subject matter. As indicated in the Introduction, it admits an optimistic approach in a field of study where skepticism seems inevitable. We link future possibilities with the idea of a Europe-wide community of experience, nourished by the promises of mass communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In the chapters, we have sought to show the way that citizens in this part of the world share their life experience across former boundaries of territory, language, culture or belief. We have also recognised the limits to progress with this sharing and consolidation; limits imposed by the will of many of the participants. Europeans at a conscious level are frequently cautious about their European project; do not express a personal ownership of it, and will “apply the brakes” to the drive by political leaders and elites to carry it further. Consequently, while the future path is sign-posted, it is also obscured, and so challenges the imagination. What might happen if the European project moves ahead along the lines set out over the last half-century? What might happen if it stalls, stumbles and fails, invoking rejection by its publics, secession or disintegration?

To be sure at this time, while actions of the institutions of the European Union cause and facilitate new developments, Europe shows often that it does not really like *prescriptive* change. The European Union, as an institutional power, has emerged as a central force and propeller. With its constant elaboration of goals and concerted efforts towards more thorough integration, its field of authority has been widened both formally and in effect, so that it is now a highly credible, and powerful fourth tier of government. Yet, consistent with its democratic credo this supranational tier has its limitations and must go step by step. It is sometimes the chief leader in the remaking of Europe, and at other times just an influential participant in a process that has its own dynamic. Both its ability to influence and its relative impotence are very well illustrated in the linked cases of its difficulty in putting through change *via* national referendums, and the fate of its efforts to develop its communication with mass publics -- through general communication management and publicity campaigns, or its handling of relations with the mass media.

Using resources like the large media centre at Brussels it can set agendas and succeed in airing decisions and information of highest interest and impact among its member publics. However it cannot control the flow of information, must compete with other interests, and

must cede ground to citizens who persist in perceiving their situation in terms different to the official paradigm. Some relief is offered to enthusiasts for the European project outside of any control mechanisms, in the pattern of media use where avowedly national media outlets are discovering more “European” fare to be newsworthy to publics. This “European” business is found to be directly affecting daily lives; it is marketable among publics. Similarly, there are social and cultural reasons to expect new, citizen-based media will operate easily across borders. The communicators will have much in common, at one level with national compatriots (speaking their own language), at another with fellow world citizens, randomly found – and at another, through separate, shared daily experience in their common European home. The approach of the EU is rational with clear lines of organisation and set conclusions. Life itself, by opposition, is disorderly and more complicated.

The most comprehensible way to approach a “disorderly” European society is to accept that progress towards greater unity is a cultural phenomenon, and this book in parts has taken the pragmatic approach of describing it as a culture of everyday events and aspirations. Here we have been able to make suggestions about what may be happening. There is the issue of languages, where the judicious EU policy, based on national rights, fails to encompass all demands, although succeeding in assisting many Europeans with their multilingualism. The emergence of English, as not only the business and academic language, but as a casual *lingua franca*, a helpful “street” language, has well-acknowledged limits. While definitely not centrally promoted by the EU or any other agency, it demands to be recognised as a facilitator of commonality. We have offered two snapshots of life, from one new member country: the struggling experiment in media awareness and opening towards Europe in a small school system, in Slovenia, as teachers along with their pupils would begin to test the water in their own, enormous new back yard, the European Union; and the departure of the young into a somewhat artificial netherworld of blogging, putting into high relief the notion of a future European life that does not know any of the boundaries – cultural or otherwise -- of times past.

As this is a book about mass media in Europe it has involved both journalists and communications specialists among academics in writing it. As it has been written by journalists as well as academics it has been able to direct a spotlight into some of the inside workings of media; especially, the elite media formations that work in the main stream of information. To that end it dwells on the production of news and commentary about Europe

at its media heart in Brussels, providing a sociological treatment of the world of correspondents and editors, together with their contacts and professional informers. “Europe and the Media” also considers the shortcomings of media systems as agents of any European project, particularly in the chapter on language and media, with suggestions for how those might change.

The objective in writing has been to support efforts at grasping and explaining change taking place in Europe in this time. It is perceived as change in the direction of expansion and integration, in the first instance represented by the institutional growth of the EU, with its wider plan – the European project. In the second instance, it is argued that common European experience is evolving each day in every part of the EU, an experience of culture where media use is a key characteristic. Appropriate to that, our contribution is informal and pragmatic, and has set out to bring together a mix of perceptions, knowledge and ideas – much in the way of its subject, the discourse of life in Europe today.