



## Fostering Integrated Journalism Education in Europe

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### Abstract

*This communication introduces the ERASMUS LLP project IJIE: Integrated journalism in Europe. A model developed on four main aspects: media integration, simulation training, collaboration with media companies and internationalization. This European research project intends to create a new framework for testing innovative integration formulas, incorporating Web 2.0 tools in both design and teaching and finally implementing best practices.*

*An integrated newsroom is defined as "one capable of feeding content to two or more media through a single production unit" [1]. The concept of integrated newsroom is still under debate in the current communicative context, especially due to the fear that this kind of work may create an "orchestra journalist", which is has gained a negative connotation in the field of Journalism. If one focuses on the positive features of the concept, however, one finds a versatile journalist, who is able to participate in integrated production and distribution platforms, key elements in many existing media groups.*

*The four main aspects are what draw a difference over other experiences and previous courses:*

- *Integration of media*
- *Professional simulation*
- *Collaboration between universities and media companies*
- *Internationalization*

*The model introduced in the IJIE project and tested first in the Pompeu Fabra University can be evaluated as being as being successful by the students' acceptance, the involvement of media companies' managers in the classes and the interest from other European universities to establish agreements.*

### 1. IJIE "Integrated journalism in Europe"

With the revolution of the communication ecosystem, universities must adapt their curricula to the new social and economic reality. They should also promote and research the new dynamics of the newsroom, in order to train a new generation of journalists who understand multimedia, hypertextuality and interactivity. Thus the university could further its role as an active agent in the media landscape. Moreover, it must undertake innovation and development initiatives, that until five years ago were mainly done by media groups. The project "Integrated Journalism in Europe" funded by the EU, ERASMUS LLP(528057-LLP-1-ES-ERASMUS-FEXI), is linked to changes in the European higher education curriculum and global media changes. This project looks to implement these communication changes in the classroom, to extend this experience to the European citizens through the future journalists. Six universities (Pompeu Fabra University –Spain-, Babes-Bolyai University- Romania-, Paris 8-Vincennes-Saint Denis University –France-, Westminster University – UK-, Danish School of Media and Journalism- Denmark-, Linnaeus University – Sweden-) form the consortium that is conducting this research.

### 2. Media convergence and higher education

Today the media are constantly adapting and seeking their future business forms. The mainstream use of the Internet has revolutionized the communication ecosystem. Universities should promote and investigate the new dynamics of newsrooms. Journalism convergence is a multidimensional and continuous process, ranging from cooperation to integration of at least two different outlets: press, internet, radio and television. "It is an open system, generated from a technology hub that branches in several dimensions: business, communication, professional and organizational, with an active role from the audience. Therefore there's a need for establishing a two-way flow of information between these branches in order to foster and improve the convergence process." [2]

As for knowledge management, universities must work with private companies and must act as a sponsor of the changes. The School of Journalism at the University of Missouri has been one of the



pioneer universities in driving the relationship between university and companies. But there aren't many universities that include the relationship between academia and media companies within the context of school lessons. In fact, many universities have detected the importance of this connection, and start preparing new formulas to achieve that. For example, in the USA, Columbia Journalism School and Stanford's School of Engineering are teaming up to create an Institute for Media Innovation. The Institute hopes to bridge the gap between journalism and technology; and encourage further collaboration between the two disciplines. The project won't begin until 2014.

Because of this commitment to media convergence, in order to teach Journalism in European higher education it is really important to start work and to experiment with convergence. Students should finish the university with the skills necessary to deal with an increasingly, multi-tasking and convergent profession. Researchers such as Quinn [3] pointed out the new needs required by journalists in this new convergent landscape. Flores and Salinas[4] address the need for reinvention of the media and universities. They conduct an analysis of trends and proposals for collaboration between media and journalism students. Other authors like Salaverría and Negrodo[5] study the reorganization of newsrooms. Lee-Wright and al.[6] recently reflect on the changing face of journalism.

Both media and universities have to adapt to the new reality of media convergence and transmedia. Therefore, this project promotes four basic factors to consider in journalism education today: the convergence of media, the relationship between universities and the business sector, professional simulation and the internationalization of teaching. The main objective is to make class simulation an effective method for acquiring professional skills. After examining the state of the art, the consortium has detected that other universities are interested in trying new forms of teaching journalism, more adapted to the contemporary context.

All the universities try to prepare their curricula to the EHEA reform and to the changes taking place in the media. The Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, one of the consortium universities, has decided to adapt its studies to the new guidelines. This is the beginning of the background to this project. The new reform of the EHEA in the Pompeu Fabra's Bachelor Journalism degree has been used to incorporate new curriculum elements that have been regarded as highly innovative. With the new curriculum, the university makes simulation a daily formula. The UPF journalism studies are pioneers in this adaptation by introducing in the curricula the "Integrated Journalism Workshop" [7]. For this workshop, a fully equipped newsroom has been built, where students can work for an entire year in one continuous simulation of a professional experience. This year, the new initiative that is the "Integrated Journalism Workshop" is becoming a great success for students and for the Pompeu Fabra university. In fact, there is an agreement with several media to publish/broadcast the students' products. For instance, with the El Punt-Avui local newspaper, with a circulation about 35.000 copies; Barcelona TV (BTV), a local TV station; Vilaweb.cat, an on-line newspaper; and UPF Radio. Noting the success of the UPF project and the opinions and experiences of European universities, it was considered necessary to make guidelines to implement different "integrated journalism workshops" for different European universities. This implies implementing different teaching forms and increasing contact between companies and academia and between European universities.

The proposal is an ambitious idea but one that is sound and feasible. Universities often work independently from media companies, and vice versa. The proposal aims to innovate in media convergence, in teaching methods, in relationship between universities and companies and to internationalize the "integrated journalism workshop" to create European citizens with ICT, intercultural and language skills in communication.

### 3. IJIE aims and objectives

The project aims to innovate through cooperation between European academia and companies. This cooperation will materialize in a partnership in education and professionalism, and also in the pursuit of innovation and European leadership. In fact, IJIE aims to foster excellence and innovation in European universities with activities that improve education and research methods.

This European project wants to share, adapt and export the teaching innovation project "integrated journalism". It is a successful educational initiative launched by the Pompeu Fabra University the last academic year 2011-2012, and focused on the four main aspects are what draw a difference over other experiences and previous courses:

- Integration of media: The merger of the former media subjects of the BA level Journalism study programs (print, television, radio and internet) has led to a necessary change of mentality of teachers. They should rethink themselves according to new teaching guidelines.



- Simulation: In the previous workshops and other activities, professional simulation was used as a key learning method.
- Collaboration between universities and media companies: The work done by students becomes a real journalistic product that could be published and distributed by media companies. This increases the students' motivation and serves to involve businesses in the training of professionals thus creating new synergies. It is a relationship that complements the usual practice "in situ", which still plays an important role, but opens up possibilities to go much further.
- Internationalization: On the one hand it aims to break boundaries with the use of ICT, which today allow online communication between students from different countries, as do the Erasmus offline. On the other hand, working with a second or third language enables the development of other transversal competences.

To be exported, it will be adapted to different models of communication education in Europe. Universities and companies have detected that the media landscape is changing. And both institutions –academia and enterprises- should rethink their goals in terms of up-to-date competences both offered and sought. . Therefore, the biggest project objectives involve providing cooperation between higher education institutions and companies, strengthening European universities communication, providing real media professional simulations in the classrooms, innovating on media convergence, and internationalizing all the participant universities and the project. Based on these goals, the objectives of the project are to:

1. Develop methods for dealing with the convergence of media within newsrooms.
2. Internationalize universities by activating an online platform to create a Journalism Student Network of Correspondents, in order to publish works from one University to another EU University media outlet.
3. Provide proposals for true simulation training in college.
4. Propose different integrated journalism models for different universities and companies.
5. Achieve greater business involvement at college level.
6. Develop a pedagogical methodology that would enhance new skills for journalists, such as ICT, language, ethics and intercultural skills. (EUROMAIN)
7. Develop educational materials to promote the integrated newsroom model. This will involve: a) organizing a conference on media convergence, globalization and collaboration companies /universities; b) Publishing and disseminating the results in prestigious journals; c) Publishing a book with the experiences and results.
8. Maintain and promote a network between European universities

In addition the IJIE project will also focus to an European dimension. The project includes specifications on education in Europe and poses a major project based on pillars driven into the new European educational commitment. It aims to create and strengthen a European interuniversity and company network.

Moreover, it will help developing new conscience on European citizens as students will work providing exposure to linguistic and cultural elements from other countries. The on-line platform EUROMAIN addresses at first 7 EU target languages, but it might be later easily adapted to many other languages. Also by promoting a collaborative way of work, people from different countries will find a common place to share experiences and cultural knowledge in order to fight prejudices and xenophobia practices. Any university in the EU which wishes to teach and innovate in journalism education with this integrated journalism workshop could profit, participate and use the results of the project. These results were conceived with the idea that they be used by European universities and companies. The online platform that will be developed as part of this project will help attain this goal.

Institutions from six European countries will work together with their educational and professional expertise. Also students from these universities in different countries with different educational policies and different needs will provide their field knowledge and practical observations in the process of journalism and its use in journalism education.

Furthermore, the project aims at providing a technical European system that can be used to learn and teach in any European country and university through the future technical infrastructure (web, network,



EUROMAIN). By disseminating the project and sharing the results, the participants in this project hope to improve the current situation in journalism education in several European countries.

### 3. Integrated journalism further development

Based on these emerging models of information, new professional profiles require a kind of knowledge, as to why the university must change its training plans. The present project will propose during its development an innovative way of achieving media convergence and direct collaboration between the media and universities. It creates and strengthens cooperation between European universities and promotes the creation of a network of Euro-correspondents. A new cohort of “integrated journalists”, with the ability to work cross-platform and control the production processes, proceed with the news coverage with any tool that can be carried in a backpack, and edit choosing the most appropriate language for each kind of information. They will have team-working and news-criticism abilities, and despite having a predominant media they will be able to work efficiently with any other. For further information on the development of the project, it can be followed in the IJIE website: [www.integratedjournalism.eu](http://www.integratedjournalism.eu).

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