



## DIGITISATION IN THE COMMUNICATION SECTOR. A EUROPEAN CHALLENGE

### Going digital: learning new techniques, and re-learning the profession

**Most media companies in Europe have been immerse for some time into adding new technologies to their newsrooms and journalistic routines. This fact has caused many changes into the daily work of media professionals, most importantly provoking internal labour reorganisations and new training needs.**

This was the starting point of the "Digitisation in the communication sector: a challenge for Europe" or "Media DigIT" Leonardo project, that has been developing itself for over a year in Cyprus, Norway, Portugal, Romania, and Spain. The initial field research was carried out in a sample of media companies throughout the participant countries, in press, radio, and TV newsrooms of both public and private media outlets, and at national, regional, and local levels. The results of the research showed, in respect to the job's map and tasks' distribution, the disappearance of certain jobs (specially many technicians), the reorganization of tasks of existent positions (adding new tasks to the professional's daily workload, most times without a parallel improvement in their contracts, with a very obvious result on radio and TV journalists that edit sound and video), and finally the creation of new positions as marked by the new digital processes (new specialists for new routines, such as ingest managers, or different kinds of graphic designers/programmers).



Meeting with Neophytos Epaminondas, Director of the Cyprus Radio Television Authority.

Even though most of the editors, directors, and human resources interviewees assured that there were almost no redundancies during the digitisation process, the truth is that changes among associates or affiliates were clear for many journalists associations and unions. A proof of this is the article about digitisation of the Portuguese media in this same newsletter, where the Portuguese partners have



#### THE PROJECT

The project "Digitisation in the communication sector: a challenge for Europe", also called "Media DigIT", is being promoted by the Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya and coordinated by Fons Formació Zona Mediterrània, both from Spain. Co-financed by the European Commission within the frame of the 2nd phase of the Leonardo da Vinci program for vocational training, it is being developed in the period 2005-2007 with the participation of partners in Spain (Sindicat de Periodistes de Catalunya - SPC), Portugal (Centro Protocolar de Formação Profissional para Jornalistas and Sindicato dos Jornalistas - SJ), Romania (Centrul pentru Dezvoltare i Inovare în Educație -TEHNE), Cyprus (Union of Cyprus Journalists) and Norway (Rogaland Kurs-og Kompetansesenter - RKK). The project aims to design training itineraries with transnational validity to help media professionals adapt to the new competences required by the ongoing digitisation of processes. Based on two phases of research in each country –a field research of the digitisation processes undertaken by various media outlets, and a later analysis of the training programmes for media professionals– is hoping to compare the available training offer with the media employees' real needs, to later create adapted training pathways to fill the possible training gap.

identified the profile of the most affected media professional on males older than 50 (a profile unfortunately easy to transpose to other countries.) At the same time, it became apparent that even though the digitisation process was always carried out along a training plan for the media professionals involved, there is still a wide array of training needs among those professionals who suffered the switch from analogical to digital work processes. Apart from the obvious need to learn the technical aspects related to the newly acquired hardware and software, as well as its adaptation to the media routines, what was most revealing of this research was the need of media professionals to revise basic knowledge related to the exercise of journalism in respect to the new environment. As such, many executives, editors, journalists, and human resources personnel interviewed around Europe claimed the need of media professionals to update their knowledge of such basics as:

- Evaluating the quality and relevance of information published in the internet
- Learning how to double-check new sources
- A new general understanding of the society we live on, or in-depth knowledge about the community and its people

## THE PROJECT'S TIMELINE

- **Workpackage I** (from 01/10/05 to 30/11/05)  
Constitution of bodies and operativisation of working plans.
- **Workpackage II** (from 1/12/05 to 30/06/06)  
Research and formalisation of methods and tools.
- **Workpackage III** (from 1/07/06 to 28/02/07)  
Research on educational lacks and elaboration of training tools.
- **Workpackage IV** (from 1/03/07 to 30/09/07)  
Validation, edition and final valorisation.

## SECOND SHORTLIST OF COMPETENCES

### Competences for media professionals (general)

- Multimedia reporting
- Evaluating the quality and relevance of information in the internet
- New regulation of the media sector
- Ethics and deontological codes

### Press-related competences

- Advanced writing and oral skills (including proofreading)
- Understanding your community and its people
- New regulation of the media sector
- Ethics and deontological codes
- Evaluating the quality and relevance of information in the internet
- Need for familiarity with the digitised press and the changing formats in use
- Multimedia reporting

### Radio-related competences

- Advanced sound techniques and editing software
- Multimedia reporting
- New regulation of the media sector
- Ethics and deontological codes
- Voice over techniques
- General understanding of society

### TV-related competences

- New regulation of the media sector
- Ethics and deontological codes
- Advanced sound techniques and editing software
- Advanced image techniques and editing software
- Multimedia reporting
- Communication and negotiation skills
- General understanding of society
- Evaluating the quality and relevance of information in the internet

- Learning foreign languages
- Updating the knowledge about the new media legal framework
- Learning about the new media deontological debates...

Getting to a consensus about what competences would be the most appropriate for all countries involved in the Leonardo project was probably one of the most delicate steps that all partners had to take. In the second Media DigIT transnational meeting in Stavanger (Norway, July 2006), after two consecutive shortlists out of the transnational list of competences obtained from the respective field research, partners voted a final set of six competences, as seen in the box. During the fall and winter 2006 – 2007, the different partners carried out a second field research to find the training gaps in respect to

the chosen competences. Once the educational field was covered and the gaps identified transnationally, the partners proceeded to develop the corresponding training itineraries, which were finally introduced in the third Media DigIT transnational meeting in Larnaca (Cyprus, February 2007). Currently, each of the developed training itineraries are being assessed by experts from at least two more countries, in order to offer a tool that could be comfortably used transnationally. The final set of itineraries will be introduced in mid-September 2007 in Barcelona, in what will be the professional open-doors session that will set the end of the project.



### Future prospects

During the research carried out to identify the immediate training needs of media professionals, many market prospects were also made by the interviewed experts in all fields. The one that has arisen as shockingly obvious is that media professionals shall be ready to face many more changes in the years to come. New platforms such as mobile phones, service channels for DTT, or even service channels for game consoles, will create the need to produce new content, and in many cases will have to reach new publics; therefore the need for journalists with a new mind and skills to produce this content is imminent. Facing this situation,



▲ Visit to TV Vest, Stavanger (Norway).

though, there is a main handicap for media professionals: the somewhat natural reluctance to changes.

However, media professionals are left with few options: they will have to set their minds, from now on, on the fact that journalism will be a profession always susceptible of changes, given the speed at which technology is changing. And the best way of being prepared, either for

another change within the media outlet, or even possibly facing the challenge of the worker's lay off, would be attending continuing training.

Luckily, it seems that most media outlets are increasingly setting complete human resources plans that include on-the-job training. On the other hand, they are unfortunately reluctant to include this training in the professional's schedule (not even in part.) This fact not only prevents many professionals from attending the courses (journalists many times work long hours), but also does not help to improve the quality of their worker's daily tasks. It seems that a compromise will have to be made from both parts. •

## FINAL LIST OF COMPETENCES

**1. Being able to correctly handle digital and multimedia tools, deepening in the knowledge of the software and hardware related to their own work area, as well as the new digital media routines involved. The expected result will be the media professional's adequate usage of the mentioned competences.**

The journalists' daily work is increasingly complex, especially since the new technologies appeared in newsrooms. Nowadays, there is a trend to require the versatility of journalists --who should know how to elaborate texts for a written mainstream media or for a web page, create pieces for a radio or television station, and even take pictures, record sound and images, in unfortunately not as extreme cases. Equally, because of the vertiginous advances of the new technologies, the journalist must be able to adapt to the use of any electronic device that he/she may encounter (laptops, PDAs, satellite phones...) and at least to have some more than basic knowledge of the software to handle (from the basic word processors and media management software, to web page design software, basic sound and image edition software, etc.)

**2. Being able to use sound techniques and their editing software, through an updated knowledge of them, to reach an optimal level of quality in the everyday journalist or technician's routines.**

**3. Being able to use image techniques and their editing software, through an updated knowledge of them, to reach an optimal level of quality in the everyday journalist or technician's routines.**

The reorganisation of journalistic companies has also caused a reorganisation in work. It is significant, from amongst them, the work change produced in digital radio and TV newsrooms, concerning professional categories; this way, the number of professionals involved in the processes of creation and broadcasting of news has been reduced, with the consequent

transfer of attributions to the other professionals that remain in the mentioned process, or to the few new positions that the new technologies brought along. All the involved media professionals (both journalists and technicians) have to adapt to the new technologies of image and sound, in relation to their new attributions.

**4. Being able to handle advanced writing skills, proofreading and texts edition, in order for the media professional to obtain an optimal writing expression.**

The gradual disappearance of proofreaders within the media, the acceleration of work in newsrooms and the need of immediacy in the news publication, as well as the increasing weakening of the written language in our present society, requires to specially pinpoint the linguistic and grammatical correction of media professionals. Equally, the new media have new writing techniques and a different treatment of the news to be learned.

**5. Being able to handle the deontological recommendations to adequately apply the exigencies of the ethic and deontological code.**

**6. Being able to handle the legal framework, both at international and national levels, in order to satisfy its exigencies in a work environment as well as to watch over the own worker's rights.**

New technologies have created new situations for the Media in the legal framework as well as in ethics. Many of these situations are going through discussions, not only at a state level but also at international levels, such as the case of the intellectual property and author's rights, or the right to privacy and to security clashing with freedom of expression. At the same time, and from the worker's perspective, they have to keep updated on their rights and duties as media professionals, in order to avoid their vulnerability.

## PORTUGAL

# Reorganizations excluded more than 300 journalists in six years

By **José Luiz Fernandes**. Sindicato dos Jornalistas

**Most media companies in Europe have been immerse for some time into adding new technologies to their newsrooms and journalistic routines. This fact has caused many changes into the daily work of media professionals, most importantly provoking in six years, from 2000 to 2005, around 330 to 350 journalists have been lead to rescind its employment contract during the reorganization processes, at least, in part motivated by the introduction of the digital technology in the Portuguese media newsrooms.**

The number is esteem from the 280 affiliates in the journalists union (Sindicato dos Jornalistas – SJ) who in the period (2000-2005) had left the four organs of social communication where the reorganization processes had been deeper: the public television, *RTP*; the public radio, *RDP*; the national agency of news, *Lusa*; and one of the most important daily newspapers, the *Diário de Notícias*. The study, elaborated by the Portuguese investigation in the ambit of the project *Digitisation in the Communication Sector - A European Challenge*, shows that of the four analysed newsrooms, was in *RTP* that was verified the biggest number of professionals exits (128), followed by *RDP* (60). It was in the two public companies (in the meanwhile merged in one) that the exit of journalists was bigger, coinciding with a deeper technological reorganization, especially in the public television, that excluded more than the double of the journalists excluded by the public radio.

In the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, 48 exits were registered; and in the *Lusa* agency the small number was registered, 44 exits. In these two media, the introduction of the digital technology had less impact in the productive process of the newsrooms, what justifies the less exits.



The year of 2003 was the one that registered the biggest total number of exits of journalists (81) and also in three newsrooms: *RTP*, 31; *RDP*, 14; *Lusa*, 27.

### Men and with more than 50 years

The socio demographic analysis of the 280 excluded journalists affiliated in the SJ of the newsrooms, between 2000 and 2005, shows that the number of men is almost the double of the number of women, as in the example of the case of *Diário de Notícias* with 30 men vs. 18 women.

This bigger number of men is because of it its major presence in the profession and also in time, whose feminization in Portugal only started in the 70's and acquired

greater rhythm in the end of the 80's.

The journalists most aged had been reached by the reorganizations. The age group of the 55-59 years is the one that presents greater number of excluded. It is followed by the 35-39 years; after the 50-54 years; and the 60-64 years. The ones that had less left the four media studied had been the journalists with age inferior to 30's.

The arise of the age group of the 35-39 years can seem strange between the two groups above the 50 years, where it is concentrated the thick of the excludes. The explanation is that many journalists had decided to move of profession before the 40 years, fearing to be reached for any other reorganization, years later, already after the 40 years, when is more difficult to reorient its professional life.

In terms of seniority in profession, the number of exits was verified in journalists with profession time between 26-30 years, 16-20 years and 21-25. These last two groups had been the ones that left more, in the four analyzed newsrooms, with special incidence in *RTP* and *RDP*. The younger journalists with less than 6 years of time in profession had been the ones that had less left the four newsrooms - *RTP*, *RDP*, *Lusa*, *Diário de Notícias* - in the years of 2000 to 2005. •

ROMANIA. By **Olimpiu Istrate** and **Romina Surugiu**. TEHNE

## E-Learning – Preparing to e-Citizenship

### Elearning.ro – the First Romanian Website on ICT in Education

**D**igitisation, e-Government and e-Society. Who is preparing us for the next times? Online tools and virtual communities. We use them, we need them – for some activities, it is hard to imagine our life without them. We exchange messages on the Internet, we buy online, we enrol in online courses, we are part of online communities, we share materials, documents, ideas, models of behaviour, hopes and wishes within virtual groups of mates and even friends. It seems that the future is now!

Ten young researchers on education launched in September 2006 elearning.ro, the first Romanian website dedicated to the use of ICT for education. The website is the main component of the Elearning.Romania national programme, aiming to raise the quality and the efficiency of the computer-assisted education area through offering theoretical support, best practices models and channels for significant e-learning experiences dissemination. As the times are changing, the concept of “social learning” shifts towards “social e-learning” and consequently, to “learning e-society”. Elearning.Romania programme is set to assist these shifts.

Elearning.ro has currently more than 700 users, and the number grows constantly, with 100 users per month, without any special advertising. The website is updated every two days, featuring 3 to 5 new articles and studies each week, posted by the members. But where all these began?

Digitisation is a process that produces changes in social, cultural, economic, and professional aspects of contemporary life. From “new technologies”, the computer and the Internet are shifting towards the status of “just technologies”, in a changing general framework from the Information Age to the Knowledge Society. Far more than a simple implementation and integration of ICT, the Knowledge Society is shaping instruments that put the basis of e-Government and e-Society – a society comprised of knowledge-citizens, in which the concept and the practice of “e-citizenship” is constantly growing in importance. The components of the Knowledge Society are therefore strongly related with a series of domains which are developing with a thrust from the technologies: e-Government, e-Health, e-Learning, e-Business, e-Culture, e-Entertainment, and so on.

The online communities were made possible by the digitisation process. Today, people meet online for social, economic, cultural and entertainment activities.

E-learning is the domain which mainly determines the success of the other “e”- components of the Knowledge Society. Governments, international institutions, large companies are constantly measuring the *e-readiness* of population or employees, being aware of the importance of the ICT competences, in a dynamic and competitive economic environment. But the e-readiness is mainly achieved through e-learning, being it formal or non-formal, and this is why a

**“At the end of 2006, the number of registered users of MySpace e-community was 106 million. If it were a country, it would be the 8th in the world by the number of inhabitants, between Mexico and Japan.”**



particular attention is paid to the development of specific knowledge, skills, abilities, capacities and attitudes.

Therefore, as the team members argue, Elearning. Romania programme is legitimated on two-folded basis: on one hand, the need to develop a common understanding of the computer-assisted education process, in the view of larger goals and in the framework of e-Society, and, on the other hand, to develop a community of practice comprised by institutions and persons which are acting towards innovation.

*“Within the Elearning.Romania project, school managers, education software developers, researchers, academics, and decision makers are given the opportunity to have a voice and to actively contribute to the development of ICT in education sector. The result is a set of materials, shaping the state-of-the-art practices and theoretical developments in the field of e-learning in Romania”* says Luciana-Simona Velea, researcher on education and editor at elearning.ro. According to Velea, up to 70% from the website’s registered users are

teachers in pre-university education and higher education. The rest 30 % is given by employees of Ministry for Education and Research, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, representatives of companies active in the e-learning domain (around 7%), trainers (5%), researchers in education and IT (around 5%). Mihaela Preda, teacher and editor assistant, argues that elearning.ro is the first Romanian “magazine” / e-zine exclusively focused on computer-assisted education. *“There are some other websites dealing with the concept of e-learning, such as www.elearning-forum.ro – says Preda – but this is the first open forum in Romania where anybody interested may have a voice, and share his/her opinions, experiences, knowledge in computer-assisted instruction domain”*. Elearning.ro is a sort of a moderated wiki tool, which allows the publishing of materials within a specialised community of practitioners, researchers, opinion-leaders, software developers, decision-makers – all interested and working in the hybrid field growing between education and ICT domains. A hybrid field that aims mainly to provide answers to contemporary dilemmas: how to use ICT to lever the education process and on a general level, how to prepare for the e-society. •