

# INTERNSHIP AT THE EUROPEAN JOURNALISM CENTRE



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**MA Media Culture**

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## **Introduction**

As an integral part of the curriculum for the Master Programme “Media Culture”, every student in the second semester has the option of writing an individual Master’s thesis, of participating in a collective research project, or doing an internship. I opted to do an internship, because I wanted to put to practice what I had learned during the first semester of the Master Programme and also because I wanted to gain experience by working in a professional setting.

Guided by my professional plans for the future and my aspiration to work as a journalist, I was looking for internship opportunities in journalistic organisations and institutes. After facing some problems while searching for a suitable internship (many journalistic organisations required from interns to be fluent in Dutch), I came across the European Journalism Centre. I contacted the director of the European Journalism Centre, Mr. Wilfried Ruetten, and we arranged a meeting, after which I was offered a place as an intern. The prospect of working in an international environment at a prestigious journalistic organisation was very promising, so I accepted the offer.

My internship at the European Journalism Centre was arranged to begin on February 12<sup>th</sup> and end on April 26<sup>th</sup>. Because of my study schedule, Mr. Ruetten and I agreed that I would work part-time until March 9<sup>th</sup>, which was the last day of courses for our Master Programme, and then expand my working schedule by working full-time, until the requirement for 8 weeks (or 40 days) full time internship would be covered. Mr. Ruetten agreed to be my internship supervisor within the European Journalism Centre, while Dr. Renée van de Vall would be my faculty supervisor.

In this internship report, I will describe my duties while working at the European Journalism Centre. I will begin by giving a brief summary of the history, activities and goals of the European Journalism. Then I will proceed to analyse my duties and contributions during my internship, and also describe the connection between the content of the internship and the “Media Culture” Master Programme. I will end this report with an evaluation of my internship experience.

## **European Journalism Centre**

The European Journalism Centre is an independent, international, non-profit institution, based in Maastricht. It was founded in 1992 as a joint meeting place for European media in order to help the professional media meet the challenges of tomorrow. The European Journalism Centre is governed by leading figures of European professional organisations and advised by high-ranking journalists from all over Europe. Building on its extensive international network, the European Journalism Centre operates as a facilitator and partner in a wide variety of training projects.

The European Journalism Centre offers a wide range of further training opportunities for journalists and editors and supports journalism trainers in promptly reacting to the needs of the industry. The European Journalism Centre plays a unique role at the European level as a partner and organiser for media companies, professional organisations, journalism schools and governmental bodies seeking to establish activities and projects. The European Journalism Centre is now in its fifteenth year of operations, and more than 9000 journalists, editors and journalism trainers have participated in one or more of its seminars. Every year, the European Journalism Centre offers about 100 training activities in various locations all over Western and Eastern Europe.

Many of the training activities are oriented towards European subjects, such as introductory courses to European institutions and their political agenda. Special issues like EU enlargement, the Single Currency and Common Agricultural Policy are treated in seminars and briefings with high-ranking officials and politicians. The European Journalism Centre also has extensive journalism training programmes addressing colleagues from Central and Eastern Europe; these seminars are both skills and subject-oriented. The European Journalism Centre also runs a number of training seminars in broadcast and online journalism, as well as an executive newsroom management programme.

The main goals of the European Journalism Centre are to:

- promote high quality journalism through professional training, particularly in a European context;
- provide a forum for discussion, debate, and exchanges of views and experience for journalists, editors, media executives and other media professionals;

- support, through training and networking, high standards of journalism in developing countries;
- promote further journalism training that answers the needs of media professionals and the media industry;
- monitor and reflect, via research, surveys and publications, on the present and future challenges facing the media;
- create and support networks among media professionals within Europe and with other parts of the world.<sup>1</sup>

### **Learning goals of my internship**

When I began my internship, I had various learning goals in mind. First of all, I wanted to work in a professional journalistic environment and gain important insight on the working process. Since I had not been in a professional setting before, gaining valuable “hands-on” experience would be an asset for my future professional course. A second learning goal was to find out how I would function in a working environment and how I would cope with the duties and responsibilities I would be given. Third, it was important for me to exercise my skills and see if I am currently ready to embark into my career of choice, or if I still need to gain more knowledge and experience. Finally, I wanted to see whether what I had learned during the “Media Culture” Master Programme could be useful or beneficial for my internship. I tried to fulfill these learning goals by working and fulfilling my duties, by participating in staff meetings, asking experienced colleagues for input, and being always ready to gain new knowledge.

### **My duties at the European Journalism Centre**

The website of the European Journalism Centre ([www.ejc.net](http://www.ejc.net)) is a very important tool that provides journalists with a rich collection of journalistic resources and helps them with reporting and commenting on news and current affairs. The European Journalism Centre also provides the content of [www.eu4journalists.eu](http://www.eu4journalists.eu), a website with extensive background information on European Union institutions and main policies.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ejc.net/about/mission\\_statement/](http://www.ejc.net/about/mission_statement/)

When I began working at the European Journalism Centre, the websites [www.ejc.net](http://www.ejc.net) and [www.eu4journalists.eu](http://www.eu4journalists.eu) were being remodeled and relaunched, so that they could offer the same high quality information, but with a more user-friendly design and with the most up-to-date Web applications. The [www.ejc.net](http://www.ejc.net) website would offer tools such as a variety of RSS feeds on international news, journalism, technology and audio/video as well as an extensive resources section with links to useful websites. It would also provide an updated overview of the media situation in 34 European and neighbouring countries, as well as an overview of all seminars organised by the European Journalism Centre.

My duties revolved around the relaunch of the two websites. I was to search on the Web and find suitable material online for various sections of the websites, put and format the content of the website on publishing platforms, and also verify needed information. The nature of my duties was quite technical, but also helpful in order to familiarise myself with online journalistic practices.

## **Providing website content**

### *i. Media Landscape*

One of my main duties was to provide content for the “Media Landscape” section of the official European Journalism Centre website ([http://www.ejc.net/media\\_landscape/](http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/)). I had to find media resources, such as newspapers, television and radio stations, media institutions etc. for a number of different European countries and make a list containing the websites of those media resources. In the beginning, I used search engines such as Google! in order to find the desired results. However, I was not completely satisfied with my findings, and so I proceeded to use comprehensive media lists compiled by Wikipedia. Due to the open-source character of Wikipedia, and the fact that everyone can edit its content, I decided to cross-check the Wikipedia media lists with similar lists compiled by official media organisations, such as the BBC. I checked every website in order to assess quality and content; in case of doubts about a particular media status or quality, the BBC media list was a helpful guide in determining whether I should add another media organisation to my list or not. Finally, I would compile a list of media resources I had chosen for each country, which was divided in categories: Newspapers, Audio/video media and Media Institutions. In total, I found media resources for the following 13

countries: Armenia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK.

*ii. "Resources"*

Another part of my duties was to supply content for the "Resources"

[\(http://www.ejc.net/resources/\)](http://www.ejc.net/resources/) section of the European Journalism Centre website; it is a tool that provides journalists with links to various websites that can help them in order to find information and do a better job in reporting. The "Resources" section has different categories, and I was to provide links, along with a short description, for the following categories:

Journalism on the Web, News on the Web, Newspapers and Magazines, Online Reference, Audio and Video Archives, Country and People Facts, Maps, Tools, E-Books. Again, for this I employed the help of search engines, as well as consulting journalistic websites for additional information. I tried to include in my list websites from well-known and trusted sources, as well as websites that offer something new in journalism.

*iii. Links for [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us)*

[del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us) (<http://del.icio.us>) is a website that allows users to share the links of their preferred website with other [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us) users. The website is used by the employees of the European Journalism Centre as a way to share information and links that could be relevant for the EJC website. My duty was to find links regarding media matters in Greece, the greek blogosphere, and the European Union Treaty of Rome. I was to put those links on my [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us) account, give them a title, provide a short description for each and label them with "tags", that is, keywords regarding the theme of the link, that could also help other users find my links while searching for those keywords on [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us). It was a quite helpful system, as it allowed me to share information with my colleagues and facilitated the working process.

*iv. Finding visual material*

Every website uses visual material, such as photographs and video, in order to accompany text material, illustrate a point, or simply provide an interesting background. However, not every photograph that is available on the Web can be used in every website, due to copyright and intellectual property laws; it is considered best if one uses photographs which are royalty-free,

that is, pictures that are usually acquired for a 'one time only' fee. Several websites which host a large number of photographs offer this service, one of which is Shutterstock ([www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)) I used this service in order to find and download pictures that would be put into a stock library, in order to be used later on in the [European Journalism Centre website](#) and the [eu4journalists.eu](http://eu4journalists.eu) website. I downloaded pictures from several categories, such as countries, landscapes, buildings/landmarks, people etc., so that the stock library would contain a variety of pictures suitable for many different uses. I kept the official character of the two websites in mind, and tried to acquire pictures that looked well-shot and professional in theme.

### **Formatting website content**

Part of my duties, which was directly linked with the relaunching of the [EJC](#) and [eu4journalists.eu](http://eu4journalists.eu) websites, was to copy text material from the previous websites onto a publishing platform. I was then to format the text accordingly, by creating headlines and paragraphs, applying bold and italic font on certain words, create clickable URL links and e-mail addresses etc. I would preview the page, in order to check if everything was in order; if so, it would be published in the new website. Due to the size and amount of the text files, it was a long and very technical process. In order to create headlines, paragraphs, URL links etc. I had to use certain programming codes next to the word/paragraph in question. If I happen to miss putting the code, I could not get the desired result, and had to search through the text to find what had gone wrong and correct it. I have to admit that it was a rather tedious procedure. However, since missing even a small detail could make things go wrong, it caused me to be more meticulous in the way I worked; I became more particular and acquired an eye for detail, by carefully inspecting my work before submitting it. I had to put the following countries from the “Media Landscape” section of the [European Journalism Centre website](#) onto the publishing platform: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, and Estonia. I also had to put several text files onto the publishing platform for the [eu4journalists.eu](http://eu4journalists.eu): those files were “Key policy makers and contacts” for the categories Agriculture - Fisheries – Food, Competition, Education - Culture - Youth, Employment - Social affairs - Health, Economic and Monetary Union and the Euro, Enterprise and industry, Environment, External relations - Trade - Development, Fraud, Internal market, Justice - Home affairs, Regional policy, Science & Research, Transport – Energy; they

all belong to the “EU Dossiers” section. I also added “The Commissioners and their Spokespersons” and “The Directorates-general” to the “Contact guide” section.

### **Information verification**

As part of relaunching the two websites, contact details that pertained to the European Union, the European Parliament, the Commissioners, press officers etc. had to be checked and verified, since personnel changes are quite often. I had to make several phone calls to the permanent representation office of several European Union member states in Brussels, in order to confirm the name, e-mail address and phone number of their press officers. In cases where the permanent representation office could not be reached, I had to search through various official European Union websites, in order to find the information that I needed.

### **Connection with “Media Culture” Master Programme**

The skills I acquired during the “Media Culture” were in fact quite useful for my internship. Writing and maintaining my study weblog, and also the HTML programming that was taught as a part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Module, “Digital games” helped me a lot with the website content formatting part of my internship; some functions were actually identical with the ones that exist in the weblog publishing platform I had learned to use for my study weblog, thus making it easier for me to learn how to use the software used for formatting the website’s content. Albeit I encountered some difficulties with formatting the content of the website, that mainly had to do with the large amount of text that I had to work with, which was not so easily manageable as the shorter entries in my weblog.

Another set of skills that proved useful to me was the skills training for the second assignment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> module, “The body an interface”, which consisted of finding a way to classify and categorise photographs by using appropriate keywords. This set of skills was useful when I was providing links for the *del.icio.us* website, as well as when I was searching for appropriate pictures to download from Shutterstock. In both cases, finding the right kind of keyword to use was important, since tagging my links in *del.icio.us* with appropriate keywords

would make it easier for other users to find the links, whereas in Shutterstock, using a series of keywords would help me in finding suitable photographs to download.

During my internship, many of my duties were of a more “technical” nature, and touched upon things I had learned in the Master’ programme, or had already some knowledge myself; other things I learned were of a more theoretical approach and had to do with journalism, like how to find and assess the quality of resources. I think that the broad academic perspective of the “Media Culture” Master could perhaps make use of more references and topics about journalism, especially about the way modern day journalism interweaves with the digital culture, since it is possible that some students of this programme might aspire to work in the journalistic field after the completion of their Master.

Before I began my internship, I had certain ideas about our contemporary media culture: namely, that the advance of the Internet and all of the technologies that are available on the Web will have a significant influence on all aspects of our lives, including business, social networking and journalism. My internship confirmed my ideas, especially about the big impact that Internet has had on journalism. I saw that Internet technologies such as blogging, online video production and sharing, podcasts, RSS feeds etc. have been increasingly accepted and adopted by major journalistic organisations, as a way to satisfy the audience’s need for quality information, and also in order to approach the younger generation of readers, who are more accustomed to these services. The tasks that I did during my internship strengthened my belief that modern day journalists shouldn’t just be good reporters and writers, but they should also know how to use the Internet as a research tool, have knowledge of how to use online publishing platforms, photograph editing software, video editing and uploading software etc., since a large part of their work is now transferred online. The new era for journalism has arrived, and those that want to be good professionals should adapt to it and make good use of all the tools they have at their disposition.

### **Evaluation of internship**

First of all, I have to say that I feel very glad that I had the opportunity to work for the European Journalism Centre. Working for an institution of such caliber was a great opportunity to gain working experience and a very good start for a future professional career in the field of

journalism. My colleagues were very helpful and willing to “teach me the ropes” so to speak, when it came to performing certain tasks; I was treated as a part of the team, which made me feel welcomed. Due to the European Journalism Centre being an international organisation, my colleagues came from many different countries, which made for some very interesting conversations regarding the media situation in their respective country and helped me gain some perspective regarding journalism as a whole. I’m also very appreciative of Mr. Ruetten, my internship supervisor; he was very cooperative and flexible, providing me with much information about my research topic, and open in listening to any ideas or input I could contribute.

Regarding my internship content, when I began working at the European Journalism Centre, I thought that I would also have more traditional journalistic duties, such as writing articles and reports; however, many reports were dealing with the inner workings and policies of the European Union, which I was not familiar with at all. Seeing that, I realised that such reports would be better written by someone with a journalistic background and a good knowledge of European Union structure, policies and main actors. Since I lacked both, I was assigned different tasks.

I did have minor complaints regarding my internship, such as the very technical nature of most of my tasks, problems caused by lack of hardware, or defective computer software system, and a lack of clarity in the distribution of tasks, which sometimes resulted in not knowing what exactly I had to do. However, I do think that most of these problems were the result of 4 interns working at the same time at the European Journalism Centre, which was something that hadn’t happened before, so such logistical problems were to be expected to some degree. As for the technicality of my tasks, after I got into a “routine”, I became used to it and was not bothered anymore, since after all, such tasks have to be performed when working over the Internet.

After completing my internship, I believe that it has been a very useful experience. I enjoyed working over the internet, and I learned some very important skills that every journalist should know; even the mechanical tasks are very important in order to be able to fully use all the tools that modern journalism employs. A place like the European Journalism Centre would be for me a very good place to start a career in journalism, and I would gladly work there if proposed so. Being a professional journalist has been a personal ambition of mine, and now I feel I have gained perspective and knowledge that will help me in working on my goal.

## Weekly calendar

In week 1 (12.02 – 16.02) I:

- Had my internship organised
- Verified the name, phone number and e-mail address of the press officers of the European Union members permanent representation in Brussels
- Found links regarding the Treaty of Rome for delicious

In week 2 (26.02 – 02.03) I:

- found links for the “Resources” section of the [EJC](#) website, for categories: Online reference, E-books, Tools
- formatted Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic for the “Media Landscape” section of the [EJC](#) website
- found media resources for Croatia and Czech Republic for the “Media Landscape” section of the [EJC](#) website

In week 3 (05.03 - 09.03) I:

- formatted Denmark and Estonia for the “Media Landscape” section of the [EJC](#) website
- found media resources for the UK, Greece and Germany for the “Media Landscape” section of the [EJC](#) website
- found links for the “Resources” section of the [EJC](#) website, for categories: Journalism on the Web, News on the Web

In week 4 (12.03 -16.03) I:

- found media resources for Sweden, Denmark and Norway for the “Media Landscape” section of the [EJC](#) website
- found links for the “Resources” section of the [EJC](#) website, for categories: Newspapers and Magazines, Audio and Video Archives

In week 5 (19.03 - 23.03) I:

- found media resources for Iceland, Russia and Armenia for the “Media Landscape” section of the [EJC](#) website

- found links for the “Resources” section of the [EJC](#) website, for categories: Countries and People Facts, Maps

In week 6 (26.03 - 30.03) I:

- found media resources for Portugal, Switzerland and Turkey for the “Media Landscape” section of the [EJC](#) website
- Formatted content for the “EU Dossiers” section of the [eu4journalists](#) website, of categories: Agriculture - Fisheries – Food, Competition, Education - Culture - Youth, Employment - Social affairs - Health

In week 7 (02.04 - 06.04) I:

- Formatted content for the “EU Dossiers” section of the [eu4journalists](#) website, of categories: Economic and Monetary Union and the Euro, Enterprise and industry, Environment, External relations - Trade - Development, Fraud

In week 8 (09.04-13.04) I:

- found links regarding media matters in Greece for [del.icio.us](#)
- searched and downloaded photographs from [Shutterstock](#)
- Formatted content for the “EU Dossiers” section of the [eu4journalists](#) website, of categories: Internal market, Justice - Home affairs, Regional policy

In week 9 (16.04 – 20.04) I:

- found links about blogs and bloggers in Greece for [del.icio.us](#)
- searched and downloaded photographs from [Shutterstock](#)
- Formatted content for the “EU Dossiers” section of the [eu4journalists](#) website, of categories: Science & Research, Transport – Energy
- Formatted content of ” The Commissioners and their Spokespersons” to the “Contact guide” section of the [eu4journalists](#) website

In week 10 (23.04 – 25.04) I:

- searched and downloaded photographs from [Shutterstock](#)

- formatted content of “The Directorates-general” to the “Contact guide” section of the eu4journalists website