

Institution: University of Central Lancashire
Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Communicating the European Union to its citizens via the news media and internet
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study shows how high quality research into the key problems in communicating the European Union and its ideas and policies, <i>together with</i> the interactions of the researchers involved with politicians, media personnel and officials, had a significant impact on how the EU communicates with its citizens. Between 2008 and the present the resulting identifiable impacts have included a significant on-going contribution to the thinking that has occasioned major reforms in the press and information policy of the European Parliament. Key recommendations of the UoA's research have become the practice of the Parliament.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The key contextual information about this research is that, despite the fact that the decisions of the European Union have a considerable direct or indirect impact upon the citizens of the UK and the rest of Europe, many parts of the news media of the more Eurosceptic states like the UK have not made their readers aware of many of those decisions. Where they have, often they have not conveyed any significant beneficial impacts of EU decisions to their readers. Related to this, the press and information services of key institutions like the European Parliament and the European Commission have in the past frequently performed inadequately and have contributed inadvertently to the news media's lack of interest in the EU. Anderson, Weymouth and McLeod researched the reasons for this.</p> <p>The research that underpinned the case study was a substantial body of work that examined in detail the problems of communicating the European Union.</p> <p>This work began in 1995 with the involvement of Anderson and Weymouth, both at the University of Central Lancashire. Weymouth took early retirement in 1997 but continued to co-author with Anderson research on the British press and the European Union until 1999, when their joint book was published. It was enhanced by the recruitment of two PhD bursary students working in this area, Aileen McLeod^{3 and 7} and John Price² (see section 3). The research continues to the present day with another study co-authored by Anderson and Hobbs due to be submitted for consideration for journal publication in 2013/14 and the appointment of a new PhD bursary student specifically to investigate with the European Parliament ways in which it might more effectively use new media and social media in its attempts to communicate with the EU's citizenry.</p> <p>The research identified and analysed the carefully and consistently constructed mythologies at the heart of much of the UK newspapers' coverage of the EU and the occurrence of overt and covert journalistic bias. It explained the construction and use of these rhetorical strategies on a number of levels, including: culturally and historically derived viewpoints regarding other European nations; political motivations; the specific economic, market-driven concerns and news values of some publications; the poor performance of much of the EU's own press and information services in presenting its side of the story; and the inherently technocratic and challenging nature (from a news storytelling point of view) of much of what the EU presents to the public and the media in terms of policy and legislation. This research was picked up by a key member of the European Parliament's media committee who invited Anderson to address a relevant public hearing of the committee where, on the basis of the above research, he explained the nature of the obstacles presented by the news media of a state like the UK and the need for the EU Parliament's press and information services to improve their performance in a number of respects if they were to be</p>

able to respond to the challenges presented.

As a result of a commission from the UK government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the weaknesses of the EU Parliament's press and information provision were further analysed and explained. Recommendations were made to the FCO Public Diplomacy team, detailing how they could address some of the gaps created by these deficiencies within the UK public sphere. The senior commissioning official at that time, Dr. Philip Budden, has recently confirmed that our report, **'helped us – as the EU Public Diplomacy Team – to understand the various sources of EU information, and to work out where the 'added value' of FCO effort might be.'** He said also that, **'your work was useful for us, and had a real impact on our thinking about the UK sources and HMG's role...'** The non-confidential parts of that research, together with further research into the quality of the EU Parliament's press and information services, were publicly presented in 2003 and published in 2004. That research highlighted a number of issues, showing: how the audio-visual unit was talented but understaffed and poorly resourced; how the website presented a communication obstacle to journalists and the public; how leadership weaknesses and poor coordination within the press and information services damaged their effectiveness; how a lack of media training of key officials within the services constituted a serious weakness; how rivalries within the EU Parliament's press service impacted negatively on efficiency; how an over reliance on specific services provided by the Commission's press service impacted negatively on the effectiveness of the Parliament's press and information services; how ignorance and indifference to the weaknesses of their press and information service on the part of many MEPs was impeding its reform and leading directly to its under-resourcing. Further research was done and continues to be done on the UK news media's coverage of the EU and the effectiveness of the EU Parliament's attempts to communicate with the EU's citizens.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The underpinning research in this case study was completed with the assistance of funding provided by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (a research contract, which is available for scrutiny), the European Parliament (ad hoc funding to cover travel and accommodation costs) and the University of Central Lancashire. RAE 2008 QR funding has enabled us to continue work in this area, and we have been helped further by the preparedness of, for example ARENA at the University of Oslo, the University of Leiden and the EUROPUB project to fund Anderson for conferences and workshops at which his findings could be presented and discussed. **Key outputs that characterise the underpinning research include the following:**

1. Anderson, P.J. and Weymouth, A. (1999) ***Insulting the Public? The British Press and the European Union***, Harlow, Longman. ISBN: 0-582-31740-1.
2. Anderson, P.J and Price, J. (2008) "An evaluation of the press and communication reforms of the Prodi Commission of 1999-2004, with particular reference to UK Europhile and Eurosceptic journalists' perceptions of their impact", ***European Journal of Communication***, Vol.23, no.1, March 2008, pp.29-46.
3. Anderson, P.J. and McLeod, A. (2004) "The Great Non-Communicator: The Mass Communication Deficit of the European Parliament and its Press Directorate", ***Journal of Common Market Studies***, Vol.42, no.3, December, pp.897-917.
4. Anderson, P.J. (2004) "A Flag of Convenience? Discourse and Motivations of the London-based Eurosceptic Press", ***European Studies: An Interdisciplinary Series in European Culture, History and Politics****, Vol.20, Spring, pp.151-170.
5. Anderson, P.J. (2002) "Nationalism as Prime Mover or Mask? The mediation of the EU by Rupert Murdoch's Eurosceptic British newspapers," in Meyer-Dinkgrafe, D. (Ed.) ***European Culture in a Changing World: Between Nationalism and Globalism***, Aberystwyth, ISSEI

(International Society for the Study of European Ideas). ISBN: 0-9544363.

6. Anderson, P.J. (2000) ***Expert paper on how the European Parliament might be brought closer to the citizens of the UK via the media and other means of communication***, presented (by official invitation) at a Public Hearing of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture, Youth Education, the Media and Sport, Brussels, 5 December.

7. Anderson, P.J. and McLeod, A. (2001) ***21,000 words long confidential research and advisory report on the press and information service of the European Parliament and the role of the FCO's Public Diplomacy team in EU information communication***, commissioned, after competitive tender, in September 2001 and received by FCO officials in October 2001.

The Anderson and Weymouth book in particular is regarded as a foundational work in its field. For example, John Gaffney, the reviewer for the December 2000 issue of *Political Studies* stated that, 'It is a good appraisal of the press and thorough in its establishing a corpus for research on the single market, the single currency and integration as seen from the UK perspective.' Richard Rooke, the reviewer for the March 2000 issue of the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, concluded that, 'For those of us interested in how the public reacts to things European, let alone European integration, Anderson and Weymouth have performed a real service.' In his 2006 BISA conference paper, 'Speaking of Europe, where did it go?' Oliver Daddow called the book a 'classic' and 'ground-breaking.' The quality of the expert paper presented and distributed at the European Parliament was attested to by the fact that it led to the Parliament funding a research visit by the author and a PhD student to continue studies on the issues raised within it and to conduct a programme of semi-structured interviewing of the staff of the main press and information service and relevant MEPs. The quality of the report to the FCO is confirmed by the senior commissioning official's recent comment that it, 'had a real impact on our thinking...'

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of our work covers the period 2000-post 2008, with work completed prior to 2008 *continuing to have a significant impact afterwards* in the manner explained by Doris Gisela Pack below. Our research helped provide those MEPS who wanted reform in the media relations service of the Parliament with the information and analysis necessary to propose a set of priorities for change that was both essential and which would help change the attitudes of those many MEPS who were indifferent to, or blocking reform. That is an absolutely crucial type of impact that is often missed by those unfamiliar with the mechanics of politics – without *the necessary information and analysis* to establish priorities that will help create viable reform proposals and change attitudes, *nothing can happen*. Our most significant impact was in playing a key role in providing these crucial change-enablers. The evidence for that is provided by the one person with the long-term detailed knowledge and overview of how the Parliament's media relations work that is necessary to confirm our impact on the reform process. She is Doris Gisela Pack, the German chair of the Parliament's committee that investigates and oversees its media relations. In written evidence she has said the following about our research, **"The continuing impact of their work can be seen down to the present day, in, for example, the high priority that is now being given to the Parliament's audio visual service. Detailed interviews had been conducted throughout the then DGIII for their 2004 article and had highlighted particularly the failure to fund properly, staff adequately and use widely enough the highly skilled audio visual unit within the press and information service. That situation has been radically transformed since the publication of their study and its provision of MPs and officials with analysis that was helpful in identifying priorities for improvement. The impact of their work can still be seen in the continuing acceptance of the need to keep the audio visual service as a properly resourced and appropriately used part of the Parliament's means of presenting itself to the news media and the citizenry in general."** She has confirmed also the continuing impact of our work on the Parliament's website and said that, in general, the information provided by our research was **"important in helping identify the priorities for reform."**

Impact case study (REF3b)

It is from 2004-2005 onwards that significant reforms in the Parliament's press and information services finally started to occur. It is notable how many of those reforms, which are continuing down to the present, **correspond directly with needs identified within the detailed findings presented in our 2003 paper and our 2004 article (see section 2 above.** As key EU players such as Doris Pack can confirm, the European Union is very much a proverbial supertanker that takes some time to change direction after it has been decided that change is required and that is one of the reasons why the impact of our research continues to be felt significantly down to the present. To give just two from several examples, our findings on the audio-visual unit's service, for example, have been followed by a significant and still continuing upscaling of its resources and staffing and a considerable raising of its profile, to the extent that it is now advertised as one of the jewels in its crown by the press and information service website. Our criticism of the fact that too many people working for the press and information service lacked media training also has been addressed post-2008, as can be evidenced from the webpages of Pinnacle (www.pinnaclepr.net/), the communications and public relations company that provided subsequent training for the EU.

The '*significance*' of the impact of our work is that without it, some of the key reforms that have modernized and made more effective the Parliament's press and information offering would have struggled for both priority **and an adequate information base.** That is evidenced by the Parliament's media committee chair in her confirmation above of the importance of our work in this regard. *That in turn would seem to be the most effective measure of our work's significance, given her unique role in having a long-term, authoritative overview of the impact of our research within the relevant reform process.* She has further confirmed the work's importance by stating that, '**The size and nature of the European Parliament's electorate means that the 'reach' of Anderson et al.'s work has been, by definition, on a European scale as far as its impact on press and information policy is concerned.**'

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Contact 1 - Dr. Philip Budden, UK Consul General, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, (Philip Budden was the commissioning officer at the FCO for our UK government contract)

Contact 2 - Mrs. Doris Gisela Pack, MEP, Chair of the Culture and Education Committee of the European Parliament (which covers the Parliament's relations with the news media)