Euronews in Translation: Constructing
a European perspective for/of the world

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Abstract/ Résumé

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I. Introduction

In recent decades television and internet news channels have flourished (Allan 2004 & 2006), allowing international audiences immediate access to information about world events. For instance, the CNN and BBCWorld (the British Broadcasting Corporation) soon played a key role in the news arena, launching both television and internet news outlets. Together with other American and British media, such as CBSNews or Skynews, the information they provide often has a strong Anglophone bias.

Likewise non-Anglophone nations and companies started similar ventures, often using English as their vehicular language. Thus, Qatari-company Al Jazeera provides services in English, whereas France, which has traditionally epitomized the struggle against the invasion of English, also offers services in this language through the television and internet network France 24. Other companies, though, have opted for their national tongue, i.e. Spain’s state-owned RTVE, which has a 24-hour news
Service only in Spanish.

Euronews, a television channel created in 1993 emerged amidst this media mesh, aiming to cover international news from a European perspective. Euronews appeared at times of great political turmoil in the Old Continent, when, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Communist regimes, representations of individuals and groups of individuals were changing rapidly. It was a decade that witnessed the collapse of ideologies, as they were known in the previous decades. Perhaps this is how we should understand Cronin’s claim that “identity” has replaced “ideology” in the 21st century. Although it is hard to imagine how the concept of identity, its construction and representation can exist without a strong ideological content, in this paper we will accept it as a separate notion that has somehow replaced the ideologies of the previous decades. As with ideology itself, identity is an elusive term. Edensor has underlined that explorations on questions of identity have focused on the individual, superseding other concepts such as that of national identity (2002: 27). He seems to be proven right by theorists like Giddens (1991) or writers like Gautlett, who deals mostly with issues related to gender or sexual identity (2002).

In this paper, however, “identity” will be understood as a concept that goes beyond the individual, as “the interface between subjective positions and social and cultural situations (...) Identity gives us an idea of who we are and of how we relate to others and to the world in which we live. Identity marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position, and the ways in which we are different from those who do not” (Woodward 1997:1-2). National identity has been taken as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) or as a combination of features: a collective past, a collective present and future and a common culture (Wodak, de Cilia, Reisigl & Liebhart 1999: 26). Here national (or supranational) identity will be understood as a “multi-dimensional dynamic composite of networks” (Edensor 2002: 30). In this sense, Euronews emerges as one of those networks, one that attempts to bridge gaps in a multicultural, multilingual and politically-driven society and to promote the concept of a supranational identity. In Euronews this identity is constructed around those aspects that might be unique to Europe, as reflected in the structure of the television channel and its internet site, the selection of news items and their media (re)presentation.

Euronews boasts a number of important peculiarities vis-à-vis other news media.