



PREPARED TO DELIVER

In June 2008 **Euronews** rebranded with the focus on 'pure news'. MD **Michael Peters** says many people disliked the TV news channel's revamp initially – it is only now that they understand the message behind it. Has the rebranding made it easier to market the channel in a very competitive environment?

I think so. Everything on the channel, on the web, is in accordance with the message, we are consistent everywhere. We are not saying that we are the best, we are saying that we are different. On Euronews we just give you the news and we are not commenting it, and that's it.

Talk us through your audience figures.

It is an amazing and interesting story – to have such good audience results and nobody knows about it. Through an external company called Peaktime we are measuring real audiences based on all the national audience studies. This model gives

us more than 6m people watching Euronews every day, as compared to less than 2m for CNN and less than 1m for BBC World.

Is this because of the local terrestrial relays by the shareholders of Euronews?

It's part of the explanation. But the other part is of course the multi-lingualism - we are very strong in markets where people don't speak much English. A lot of our competitors choose to put all their money in reporters, permanent correspondents around the world, big studios, etc – we are making the strategic choice to put the very small amount of money that we have in multi-lingualism. Ours is a modest

model where we play the same video all the time and it is just a question of audio. At Euronews we have a news team, an economics team, a sport team, cultural team etc – each team has one journalist for each of the 8 languages.

So when we talk for example about German elections, the story is the same for all the different languages and everyone in the team benefits from the expertise of the German member. This cross-expertise within the teams give us a competitive advantage. We also work with eight different press agencies.

You have moved further East – how difficult has it been to establish Euronews in Russia?

We want to be more central in Europe. It has been relatively easy because in Russia we are working with RTR, the national public broadcaster of Russia, through a local partner called EVK – it is probably our first local joint venture. EVK is the representative of Euronews in Russia, they have the exclusive distribution rights for the channel in Russia and for selling local advertising. One Moscovite out of two watches Euronews at least once a week, and one Russian out of three watches Euronews at least once a week. That's a pretty impressive statistic.

Are you going to add other languages?

We are in discussions with a lot of partners. But business is business, and maybe the next language will not be in this region. To launch a language, we need a partner.

One of your partners is the European Commission which has funded the launch of Arabic. How easy was it to work with the EC over this?

It's very easy and interesting to work with the Commission. They have a very intelligent strategy of communication for Europe. They want us to be independent, so Euronews has an Editorial Charter

that guarantees our full editorial independence.

Take us through the Arabic launch and what happened in the last six months...

Things are going well. It's a totally new story for us because for the first time a language is not linked to a particular nationality but it is linked with a number of countries with different cultures. On the external side the returns are very good – many in the Arabic audience have discovered a channel which is totally different from what they had until now. The Arabic audience is very sensitive as to whether the news is balanced. This is where our impact is quite impressive – Euronews is neutral, and they are not used to hearing news without a particular perspective. Well, we launched in July, and it's only the beginning. We have plans to establish a permanent correspondent in the Middle East – at the moment we only have one permanent correspondent in Brussels.

Are you looking to broaden your editorial agenda – instead of it being mostly news about Europe – with news from the Middle East?

This is the question that everybody is asking us. Of course if we have a correspondent there we will focus more on stories happening in this part of the world. But we have only one feed everywhere in the world, and we don't want to make local stories for local people. We don't think that a channel like Euronews can speak better on Arabic issues to the Arabic people than the other broadcasters. We are very honest on that. So the idea is really to put much more Arabic content within our worldwide feed as we think the Arabic people have a lot to learn about Europe, and probably Europe has a lot to learn about Arabic countries. And this is why the European Commission retained us.

Where do you see Euronews in five years' time?

In five years' time it will not be the

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Euronews is the biggest video-on-demand platform in the world”

same world. I think Euronews will be multiple platforms of content. We need to make a big revolution internally first – changes in the newsroom, journalists working for several media, etc. Two things are important. In five years' time the question will not be how we broadcast – what will matter is what you watch when. Sitting on your sofa, you'll want to watch long stories like movies or in-depth reports, but if you are watching on your computer at work or on your mobile on the move, you'll watch very short stories, maybe just texts. We need to be prepared to deliver to the consumer different things for different places and different times. If you look at Euronews today, Euronews is the biggest video-on-demand platform in the world. Euronews today is a succession of VODs. Let's take an example: take the first news item of our news bulletin, duration 1.5 minutes – put it on the web, mobile, etc – it's a perfect VOD. You'll tell me that CNN, BBC, CNBC can do the same – but it's not the same because in Euronews the introduction of the subject is within the video and on the other channels the introduction is made by the presenter. We don't have presenters. Going even further, the maximum duration for our magazine format is 8 minutes - take whatever magazine you like – for example we have one about space produced in partnership with the European Space Agency -, in any of our 8 languages, put it on a multi-platform and it is a VOD in itself. It's very easy and it works. I always say that the people who created the Euronews model back in 1993 never imagined that they were creating a multi-media channel.

Michael Peters, thank you. ■

