



Presentation of the Stars4Media Initiative

EURAGORA





Team's presentation



EURAGORA is an exclusive project of EFE (Spanish news agency) and LUSA (Portuguese news agency).

The operational team was constituted by three people from each agency (one editorial, one commercial&marketing, and one multimedia), supported by another 10 mentors, including the directors and the national correspondents in both countries.

Both agencies decided to choose young or relatively junior professionals, with different backgrounds and skills, to lead the three mini-teams. Gender equality was taken into account – in fact, there were more women than men on the lead.

The multidisciplinary approach was the added value of this common project. Both agencies decided to subdivide the team in three smaller groups – one for editorial aspects, another for commercial&marketing, and a third for technical aspects.

Initiative's summary

EURAGORA is a project of Iberian nature with European scope, that designed a model of cross-border virtual debates on topics of broader interest.

The subject chosen for the pilot debate was “Tourism in times of covid-19”, subdivided in two topics: "Security, what do consumers expect, how do industry, governments, the European Union respond?" and "Reinvention and opportunities: sun and beach / urban and cultural / rural tourism". This choice resulted from the huge impact this pandemic is having in Tourism globally, but especially in both Spain and Portugal, as countries much dependent on that economic sector. The Spanish and Portuguese government responsible for Tourism, the European commissioner with responsibility for the Internal Market (and Tourism), Thierry Breton and the European commissioner Elisa Ferreira were speakers in the debates, among almost 20 participants, representing international organizations, European institutions, national governments, regional and local authorities, enterprises, and civil society.

A joint code of conduct for sponsored initiatives and debates was adopted.

Initiative's results

EFE and LUSA have proposed a different way of presenting relevant content, with a multi-sectoral and multilingual approach for topics of European interest.

The EURAGORA debate was broadcasted in two languages, Spanish and Portuguese, with English subtitles. Each participant spoke in their native language, subtitled in English, the most evident proof of the Iberian nature of the project and confirmed its European pretensions.

The platform used resulted in a combination of recorded videos, false directs and intensive post-production, while feeding social media with highlights and sentences. The new tools used forced both agencies to develop their knowledge and working methods.

Both EFE and LUSA have widely covered the debates, publishing all the material produced in both newsfeeds, and significantly increasing presence in social media, enlarging their international outreach and new audiences.

A code of conduct on sponsored debates and initiatives marks a unique initiative among news agencies.

Challenges

Every collaboration experience is challenging, especially when it involves different work environments and multicultural aspects, but both teams were able to overcome constraints in the name of a common goal.

The multidisciplinary team forced the agencies to develop new skills and knowledge – in what relates both countries, both agencies and even internal departments.

Both EFE and LUSA were able to produce original content and venture innovative technological resources – that afterwards were included in both professional profiles and reused in other circumstances.

Both agencies were confident that they could get sponsors for EURAGORA, but due to the economic situation caused by the covid-19 pandemic, all efforts were in vain.

Lessons learnt

EFE and LUSA have learned from each other, always respecting both ways of working. It was a unique opportunity to learn and improve the working methods.

Communication was sometimes not easy, but we always found a way to advance.

Working by videoconference allowed the teams to be much more numerous and diverse, but a personal exchange between the teams, in Madrid and Lisbon, would have been beneficial for the development of the initiative.

At a time when traditional media revenues are declining, it is very important to capture other sources of revenue. Both agencies will continue working together looking for potential sponsors and the support of European institutions.

Although 'only' six professionals were officially included in the project, in reality, EFE's and LUSA's staff involvement was much bigger. Therefore, salary costs were much higher than the coverage contemplated by the Stars4Media program. However, given the result, it has been worth spending so much time, talent and effort on this project.