

## **HOW TO SPEAK FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY' AGENDA – THE JOURNALISTIC EXAMPLE OF L'ÉCHO DES COLLINES**

by **Pauline COMPAN** (France) / **Valentin TODOROV** (Bulgaria)

### **Summary**



*The area of eastern part of city of Bordeaux – this is the right bank of Garonne river, cumulates economic and social disadvantages. This part of the city, as well as other ghettos in Europe, such a huge Bulgarian mega Roma ghetto in Sofia, is suffering of a bad image, both from media and in the public attitude. In Bordeaux, a monthly magazine - L'Echo des Collines - tries to beat the cliché and to reveal the many faces of diversity. Every single month the new edition highlights economic, cultural and social initiatives and ideas from the neighbourhood to make more strong links between the different ethnic communities living there. But what does the population think about the media product? Is the magazine really include in the daily life of the*

*neighbourhood and how does L'Echo des Collines contribute to build a strong community in the area and to do a better image and adequate media coverage of the area?*

### **Article**

In Bordeaux, the UNESCO protected old city center lies on the left side of the Garonne river. Passing the famous Bordeaux' Pont de Pierre bridge you are in the District of La Bastide - the most eastern part of Bordeaux, located on the right side of the river. Only suburb in the other side of the Garonne, the area has started a big mutation for the last ten years. With 50 percent young population (under 40 years), this is a really dynamic and ethnically diverse area with a multicultural face.

Jean is a native-born citizen who is living in La Bastide since 2002. He is the owner of a tobacco shop next to the Stalingrad square in this district. In his shop, he sells the only local monthly magazine called "L'Echo des Collines". This media aspires to propose to the inhabitants of La Bastide and to the residents of the nearest town of Cenon which is a part of the Bordeaux' metropolitan agglomeration, exclusive news about the real community matters and problems in the area. From economic initiatives to cultural agenda, this associative magazine tries to fill the gap in the information given by the biggest mainstream media in this region - the based in Bordeaux daily newspaper "Sud Ouest" with more or less success.

"A local magazine should reflect the personality and individuality of our diverse area", explains Jean, "but this area is like a teenager, it has started a big mutation and "L'Echo des Collines" is not always reflecting that". Despite of this critics, Jean reads the magazine, mostly to know about the local agenda.

Just beside to La Bastide is located Cenon - a small town with 22 000 people, which is sticks to Bordeaux. The town merges with La Bastide, especially since the tramline A connect these two areas.

Four stops after La Bastide, there is the La Morlette – a part of Cenon. At the opposite of the tram's stop, is a commercial center surrounding by social buildings. In the local bakery, they sell sandwiches, coffee and "L'Echo des Collines". "Many people are interested with the magazine because they see, it talks about the area, explains the saleswoman from the bakery, but they are disappointed when they see that the magazine's price is 2,50 Euro". A price that Véronique – other local reader, is willing to pay every month "since the beginning of the magazine, especially because they propose articles I can't find in Sud Ouest", she declares. In the Bordeaux's most disadvantageous neighborhood La Bastide and in attached to it a small town of Cenon, the locals have different backgrounds and many ethnic diversity come from former French colonies.

The both areas have predominantly youth population and face unemployment problems, the areas has a high crime index compared with other areas of Bordeaux. Forgotten by the mainstream media in the region, La Bastide and Cenon highly need from their community media to stand up for their interests. This defines the future of the magazine - despite media crisis in France, L'Echo des collines has a place in the diverse urban landscape in Bordeaux.

In the far south-eastern corner of Europe - in Bulgaria's capital city, Sofia, there is also a disadvantageous neighborhood, for which the mainstream media in this 1,5-million city speak rarely and mainly if it's linked with cases of criminal news items. Definitely this is the most disadvantageous part of the Bulgarian capital, named "Faculteta" (the Faculty). This poorest region of Sofia is located only 4 km from the capital's center and there living more than 45 000 people, almost all of them are Bulgarian Roma, so " Faculteta " is known as the Roma mega ghetto of the Bulgarian capital. Unemployment among the Roma in the neighborhood is almost 100%, but among the main reasons for it is mainly the lack of education and closure of industrial enterprises around. Nowadays this people have not yet their local print media that reflects their real problems. This gap is partially filled, but very selective, from the mainstream Sofia's media, but it's excessively inadequately.

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**COMPAN Pauline** is a freelance journalist. I worked for *Saphir Media* as full time journalist for two years and there are still my most important employers. I completed my studies in journalism (and English and in French) in 2009 at the Paris Sorbonne and I have work in different structures such as radio (Radio France), press magazine (Salam News, Bayard Presse), internet (saphinews.com) and local daily press (*Midi Libre*).

**TODOROV Valentin** is journalist for over 15 years with professional practice related to intensive media work in different spheres. My travelling experience as a professional journalist has increased my knowledge of European legislation, institutions and their initiatives - I have explored in detail various European matters and I'm constantly focused on keeping up-to-date with the latest European issues and campaign on our continent as Council of Europe's diversity and anti-discrimination campaigns for the past years. My rich experience in the journalism have shaped a rather flexible and varied professional profile. I have background with multiple areas of work such as journalistic writing in print media and Internet-based news matters. Among some of my strong points, I can list serious experience as Internet Editor at online based media, as well as excellent interpersonal skills to establish and maintain effective working relations in a multicultural environment. Currently I'm working as a Managing Editor in one popular in Bulgarian capital city of Sofia community media.

