

*Natalia Gabor,
Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor,
Head of the Department of New Media*

EUROPEAN MODEL OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN UKRAINE IS DESTIN

This conference was long-awaited. The project DESTIN: Journalism Education for Democracy in Ukraine: Developing Standards, Integrity and Professionalism within the framework of the international EU ERASMUS+ KA2 programme was coming to an end. Its main goal was to revise and reform the curricula in order to remodel journalism education following European patterns. Each participant could choose their own way to achieve this goal, depending on their SWOT analysis results and the objectives set. The What? How? and Why? questions were to be answered by each DESTIN participant independently by analysing their educational programs, finding out their weaknesses and strengths, coming up with ways to overcome problems and predicting potential threats. The fact that the project brought together ten universities interested in change made it possible for us to help each other and jointly search for possible solutions rather than compete. At the final conference, all DESTIN participants were supposed to meet to discuss the outcomes, analyse achievements and mistakes, and think of the possible prospects. However, the coronavirus not only prevented it from happening, but also changed a lot in education. This state of uncertainty lasted longer than we would have liked but it also produced some good results. It turned out that one can effectively study online not only on Prometheus... And when at last the worst seemed to be over, war broke out.

Meanwhile, the project was underway and had to be properly completed. The participants could take their time to complete everything that, under other circumstances, would have to be done in a hurry. The first changes were introduced at the faculty very cautiously, so as not to cause early accreditation. It was decided to change the educational programme for masters just to the extent needed and not more than that. These changes were expected by students and employers alike; therefore they would help the faculty to remain attractive for bachelor and master students and compete effectively. Thus, if in the first years after the SWOT analysis held within DESTIN and the audit of our education programmes, it was proposed to introduce qualitative changes mainly to the content of the courses, their structure and outcomes, however at the conference we already presented a new concept of the master's

programme. Now it is not just an “advanced bachelor’s degree programme”, it has shifted its focus on training future leaders of media programmes or projects, offering not only university-level knowledge and journalistic skills, but also the ability to see the needs and problems of the editorial office, plan and control content based on platform-specific requirements, and be able to come up with anti-crisis ideas... We hope that the management courses offered to masters will help them to develop their leadership qualities and contribute to their successful career. As a result, the significant update of the traditional Master’s programme did bring about another round of accreditation, which is now awaited and hoped for.

However, these changes to the programme were just the beginning of our transformation. Together with our colleagues from the Department of Political Science and Social Communications of the Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznań, Poland), the IFNUL Faculty of Journalism has launched a completely new joint double-diploma Master’s Programme. Upon completion of this programme, students will be able to obtain diplomas from both universities. In fact, there is a huge amount of work behind these few sentences about the programme: we had to analyse baseline master’s programmes in both universities and disciplines taught, the number of credits was consolidated, the double-diploma curriculum and the educational master’s programme “New Media and Communication Technologies” has been created, the rules for admission to the programme and the way it is to be implemented in both universities have been developed, the educational program “New Media and Communication Technologies” was presented at the Education Quality Assurance Centre of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv and approved by the Academic Council of the University, contracts have been signed. The colleagues who worked on the programme from the Ukrainian and Polish sides described their experience and shared it with all DESTIN participants at the conference and on the project website.

The programme has already been through its first (rather complicated) admission campaign. It was complicated because the programme today cannot offer tuition-free studies, and some of those who originally planned to apply for the programme changed their decision because of the hostilities and the war-related restrictions. And yet, we have launched it. It was a new start not only for masters, but also for teachers, as everyone understands that the main difficulties are still to be dealt with. Many things will have to be done for the first time, changed and adapted to the current challenges.

We updated the existing Master’s programme and created a new double-diploma programme taking into account the qualifications framework developed by our colleagues from the Institute of Journalism (KNU) and the National Recommendations for Journalism Education in Bachelor’s and Master’s Programmes (ZNU). However, that is not all, since, in addition to the above-mentioned master’s

programmes, we have also launched programmes in “Economic Journalism” and “International Journalism”.

Another achievement is the journalism innovation laboratory CAT (Content and Technology) created at the IFNUL Faculty of Journalism using the equipment obtained within the framework of the DESTIN technical assistance with a focus on innovative technologies in communication and media. Currently, the CAT is working to attract grants to improve its technical base and establish cooperation with IT professionals for joint journalism innovation projects.

The IFNUL participants of the DESTIN working group completed their work on the creation of the Ukrainian Association of Media Researchers “Ukrainian Forum of Media and Journalism Teachers”. The goal is to promote the development of media education in Ukraine on the basis of universities that focus on the teaching of relevant disciplines and train professionals for the national market. Today, DESTIN participants have become full-fledged members in the European Journalism Training Association, which in the future will help us maintain an adequate level of education, as well as develop strong and sustainable relations with European journalism faculties and associations.

Within the framework of the DESTIN grant programme, two media literacy courses for journalists have been developed. The first course is “Media Literacy for Beginners”, and the second is “Political Manipulation” (intermediate level). The courses consist of instructional videos, text descriptions and quizzes. The courses were handed over to the DESTIN representatives responsible for this cluster –i.e. the Faculty of Journalism and Philology of SumSU.

All these changes and updated courses, new educational programmes, renewed concepts, a newly created innovation laboratory, the Association of Media Researchers, and media literacy courses are already producing an impact on journalism education, making the changes irreversible and improving the prospects of journalism education in general and in IFNUL in particular.

...If I were told to draw journalism, I would draw it as a tree where the roots are education, the trunk is practice, and the branches are various opportunities that journalism offers people (getting information, understanding the situation, showing how to learn about the world, entertainment...). Take away one of these components, and you will render the other ones useless. Today, one can often hear that education is not that important. Just work hard and you will know everything that a journalist needs. It is a good thing not everyone thinks that way. The DESTIN project brought together people who know and believe that education is the root that help the most powerful trunk withstand the strongest storm. Its main goal is to contribute to the development of the European model of journalistic education in Ukraine, because Ukraine is Europe.