

# Transparence: a lovely word

FOR THE full flavour of the best bit of the EU's proposed changes to copyright law, say it in French. In Brussels *transparence* means more than being able to see through things: it has connotations of measures against corruption and abuse of power.

The proposal is to oblige publishers and broadcasters to be *transparent* about uses of creators' work. Each time we think about it we find new ways this would help writers, illustrators and photographers dealing with unscrupulous clients. We're not going to list these, to avoid frightening publishers and broadcasters who are sure they are scrupulous but oppose regulation on principle.

But what does this planned EU regulation mean for the UK? Good question. Answers on a postcard to HM Government, London SW1.

The Creators' Rights Alliance – of which the NUJ is a member – therefore followed up an idea from the Society of Authors and drafted amendments to put those best bits of the EU proposal into UK law re-

gardless. On 6 February the House of Lords committee on the Digital Economy Bill briefly debated inserting *transparence* for creators into that law. It didn't go to a vote: the point was to gauge the response.

Baroness Buscombe, for the government, was moderately encouraging. "The principle of transparency is an important element of well-functioning markets," she said: "I am aware that some creators and their representatives find it difficult to access information on the use of their works owing, for example, to difficulties in negotiating suitable contractual terms... the UK will actively engage in these debates while we remain a member of the EU." She hoped we "will understand the Government's wish to allow this process to develop before considering the case for domestic intervention."

## Internet not broken again

In other news, the bit of the EU proposal that's generating most heat is the idea that internet companies should pay newspapers for using ex-

tracts of journalism. This has led to the Friends of Google shouting that we must "Save the Link!!" and stop the EU "Breaking the Internet". This campaign appears to be based on the most paranoid reading of how a future court might misinterpret the future law.

Certainly, search engines and social networks that eke out their fortunes by quoting other people's creative work and selling ads alongside it; these should pay for their vital raw material. The objection of the European Federation of Journalists is different to Google's.

The EFJ objects that the current proposals say nothing about making sure that a fair share of any money goes to actual journalists. And anyway, when Germany and Spain tried roughly similar proposals, Google simply said it would stop indexing any newspaper that wanted payment, and to make the point shut down **news.google.es**. Its monopoly power meant there was no money to share anyway.

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## Journalism in a field in June

THE BYLINE FESTIVAL will be a heady mix of new journalism, skills workshops and impassioned debates, infused with Glastonbury vibes, promises organiser Peter Jukes. It is to be held in a Sussex country park over the weekend of 2-4 June: Jukes plans to attract up to 6000 journalists, movie makers and artists to share ideas, engage in conversations and enjoy live performances.

Byline Festival has partnered with the NUJ to offer union members admission to the event at £75 – half the usual price of £150 – for the weekend (including camping). For the discount enter the offer code

NUJBYPFEST at [www.bylinefestival.com](http://www.bylinefestival.com)

"For all that ails the media today, there is more journalism being produced than at any other time", says Jukes, who achieved fame live-tweeting the News International hacking trial (see the July 2015 *Freelance*). "We want to bring together as many practitioners as possible to swap initiatives and learn from each other".

An impressive line-up is confirmed, including Heather Brooke, Bea Campbell, John Cleese, Laurie Flynn, Bonnie Greer, David Henke, Lenny Henry, A L Kennedy, Hardeep Singh Kohli, Catherine Mayer, Jack



Monroe, Rowan Pelling and Tom Watson MP. There will be immersive theatre, CV workshops...

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## The trouble with Brexit was a lack of debate

IN THE DECEMBER *Freelance* you have pieces titled "Post-truth ethical pressures" and "Concerned about Brexit? We aim to help?" The trouble with Brexit was not the ethics of reporting, but that there was no proper argument.

The media entirely failed to conduct a debate – especially about the effects on real people (rather than institutions, on economic indicators and so on). Really it comes down to who is going to win and who is going to lose.

I have a list of essential points that the media did not want to discuss. I barely heard anyone whisper that the right answer was to "remain and

reform" for the good of Europe.

Another point is that most of the people doing the talking are in Britain and almost all of those in London. From abroad, Britain looks a remarkably insular place. Even the intelligentsia have no sense of the international. I'm afraid that even the NUJ doesn't have much sense of political geography.

Ironically, some of the people who most needed a voice in the Brexit debate were deprived of a say: expats like me living in EU states (and EU expats in Britain).

I just scraped inside the rule that held that people who had been out of the UK for less than 15 years

could vote – but I am soon to become disenfranchised. From here in France, the whole debate looked as if it were about immigration in Sunderland as miscomprehended by people living within the M25.

To compound the problem of the non-debate (which is continuing) we have the further problem that we cannot even discuss the problem because where else do you have such a discussion but the media and why would the media (that is, us) want to discuss its own failure?

There are numerous issues here concerning the ethics of journalism which are being ignored.

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