



The Rencontre
Eduardo Hernáiz, Secretary General, RNE



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The EBU's premier forum for professionals

The Rencontre, the EBU's premier discussion forum for radio professionals, was founded in 1973 in Tenerife (Canary Islands, Spain). That year Spanish Radio was celebrating its first fifty years of existence. The theme of that first meeting was 'First International Week on Radio Broadcasting Studies'. History shows that upon its inception, the Rencontre boasted an attendance of 83 distinguished radio professionals, auguring not only a successful conference, but one that would make a name for itself over time.

The Rencontre has become an important venue for those of us working in radio. Since 1973 a host of distinguished figures from the world of communication in general, and of radio in particular, have attended.

As I was saying, the Rencontre is indeed a fine opportunity for us radio professionals to discuss freely whatever matters we feel are necessary. That spirit has developed over time in a climate of relaxation

and fellowship, hard work and first-rate presentations.

In 1989, John Thompson, former radio director of the IBA, said: "What an extraordinary phenomenon this is! I can think of no other similar meeting that is held within the radio world anywhere in Europe. The mixture of the formal and the informal, of the vague and the precise, is unrivalled by any other regular encounter."

RNE-EBU

In short, the Rencontre is a series of workshops organized by RNE every two years with the invaluable help of the EBU Radio Department management and the support and effective cooperation of an ad hoc working group. This year's working group for the Rencontre is composed of Bernd-Peter Arnold, Vlado Senica, Christian Maillard, Ann Sandelin, Raina Konstantinova and myself. They were all members of the EBU family at the time the working group was set up, although Bernd-Peter has now left radio to join the private sector.

I would also like to give my special thanks to two people who carry out key responsibilities in the organization and coordination of the event: Chantal Portalès in Geneva and Concha Ema in Madrid.

This year's Rencontre will be held in Palma de Mallorca on 12 and 13 May. The main theme of the discussion will be the 'Global Impact of Public Radio', including all content. As stated in the Rencontre programme description, we will enter these discussions in a spirit of reflection and explore those human concerns which have a potential for radio content.

In other words, we will focus on the impact of radio that in itself offers the best, most varied content qualitatively and quantitatively. That offer should meet the expectations of immigrants and minorities, provide national and international information, contribute decisively to a person's overall development and promote civic and democratic values, pluralism and tolerance; in short, it should cover the entire spectrum of the individual.

Our hallmarks

By studying facts and figures, we also aim to explore the degree of acceptance of this global radio offer, which includes a wide range of

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quantity and quality, and universal social goals, with special emphasis on radio's offer from a qualitative standpoint. In essence, the quality of our offer sets us apart as a public service and as a radio broadcaster at our fellow citizens' service.

We are also contemplating a public radio model through which a creative process of constant value is developed, i.e. a project of the future. This project calls for innovations not only in the technological arena, but also in those relating to ideas, styles and formats. The rationale for a greater global impact can only be sustained by the quality and impact of message and content.

A key item to be discussed at our meeting in Mallorca refers to the qualitative assessment and image our radio stations project on society. In this regard, I would like to bring to your attention the conclusion reached in a qualitative analysis and assessment commissioned by Spanish National Radio from a specialized firm. The 'new digital radio scenario' has emerged as part of the global impact of information, which in addition to offering new qualities, paves the way for new thematic content and services.

This impact would be characterized by the following features: high degree

of listener loyalty, enhanced corporate brand image and corporate culture, contents that foster community spirit and social cohesion while promoting culture in its full dimension, breadth and pluralism and taking the lead in the cultural arena, as opposed to what commercial radio stations can offer.

A rendezvous

'Global Impact of Public Radio' will serve as a basis for six workshops: Commitment to Public Service Values; Evaluation of Public Radio (Parts I and II); Public Radio: Variety and Quality for all. The Offer of Variety; Variety and Quality for all. The Offer of Quality; and Radio meets Multimedia. These are the main items on the programme with which we are already familiar two weeks prior to the Rencontre. I will spare you the details, but let me just add that the daily sessions and debates promise to be just as exciting as they have been for the past 32 years.

I would like to repeat that the Rencontre is the exclusive heritage of those who have taken part in the event since 1973, i.e. all of you, friends and colleagues, who have generously contributed your time, dedication and talent to make the Rencontre what it is today: a venue marked by outstanding participants. If I'm

repeating myself, I do so without the slightest hesitation: it is thanks to those who have taken part in the event over the years that the Rencontre has won unequivocal international renown.

Its success and prestige is your success and prestige, from the pioneer members of 1973 (Paolo Valmarana, R. Gressmann, Hugh Pierce, Maurice Hankard, Peter Meggs and others) to the panellists and moderators of 2005 (Ove Joanson, Eduardo G. Matilla, Nicholas Kenyon, Leif Lonsmann, Sergei Kurokhtin and others). The Rencontre is what it is thanks to you: a top-notch biennial meeting and the premier discussion forum for professionals of the EBU world.

As you all surely know, in 2001 the Rencontre left its permanent headquarters in Torremolinos and became an itinerant event. It was held in Valencia in 2003, and for 2005 we have chosen one of Spain's most beautiful places: Palma de Mallorca. To paraphrase John Thompson, the Rencontre will aim to mix the formal and the informal, business and pleasure, as we discover an island that the World Tourism Organization has called the "world's best known destination for seekers of sun, sand and nature".

2005 Rencontre

Allow me to present the agenda briefly: on Wednesday 11 May, the mayor of Palma de Mallorca, who works closely with Spanish National Radio, will treat us to a welcoming cocktail reception in Bellver Castle, one of those rare round castles left in the world today affording, in addition, a spectacular view of Palma Bay.

The working sessions on Thursday and Friday will take place in the Bit Technological Park, an ultra modern complex of multifunctional buildings that are headquarters to domestic and foreign companies working in data transmission technology and communication. We will replenish our strength with lunch at the Bit Technological Park catered by the Balearic Islands' famous hotel management school. The gala dinner on Friday 13 May will take place at the Bahía Mediterráneo Restaurant, a contemporary building, the scene of historic events and at whose tables the world's highest dignitaries, including those from the EBU, have savoured Balearic Island cuisine.

I do not wish to reveal any wonders of the excursion marking the end of the Rencontre. Suffice it to say that in the Cartuja de Valldemosa the ghost of the immortal Chopin might appear with his nocturnes and polonaises, or the ghost of Robert Graves as he wrote *I, Claudius*, or perhaps that of George Sand, Nobel prize-winning author Camilo José Cela, or of the great Joan Miró.

The island of Mallorca that will host us is not only a quality tourist destination; it is also a quantity destination because it receives 11 million visitors yearly. Although it has the second highest income per capita in Spain after Madrid, it is also a curious phenomenon, even unique, I would say: one fifth of its 600,000 inhabitants are foreigners hailing from 120 countries. The polyglots among



Bellver Castle

us will be in for a wonderful treat: 68 different languages can be heard throughout the streets of Mallorca – and we might even understand each other!

See you all in Palma, then. Judging from the work agenda, other scheduled activities and the framework within which they will be carried out, I think we can safely say that all the conditions are gathered to produce a fruitful Rencontre in the professional arena and a pleasant one in all others. It is not a coincidence that Palma de Mallorca is the Spanish city that hosts the most national and international conferences and conventions each year. The only one missing was the Rencontre.

See you in Palma. It will be a memorable Rencontre – I am sure of it.