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Press release

UK winners of the inaugural European Parliament Prize for Journalism go forward

The four UK winners for the European Parliament Prize for Journalism have been selected and will now go forward to compete for the overall €5,000 prizes against entries from other EU Member States. The winner in the TV category was BBC Record Europe; for radio, BBC Radio 4's Crossing Continents; for the internet, an online news service for business - Chemical Watch; and in the written press category, Aimee Turner of Flight International magazine for her articles on aviation and climate change.

The European Parliament Prize for Journalism was launched in March 2008. Entries in this first year of operation had to have been published or broadcast between May 2007 and May 2008. The overall winner in each of the four categories (TV, radio, internet, written press) has to have made an outstanding contribution to clarifying major issues at European level or have promoted a better understanding of EU institutions or policies. Over 280 entries were received across the EU.

Television

In the TV category, the UK winner was BBC Record Europe. This half-hour weekly programme is broadcast on the BBC News Channel (formerly News 24) and on BBC World. It is presented by Shirin Wheeler and produced by Lucy Thomas, both based in the BBC's Brussels bureau.

The UK judging panel nominated Record Europe for its authoritative, but accessible way of presenting a wide range of major issues at EU level. Over the period May 2007 to May 2008, the programme dealt with issues as diverse as the Lisbon Treaty, aviation emissions, gay rights and CIA rendition flights.

It also ensures a balanced presentation of the arguments and interviews experts from the UK and beyond. Its programme from 16 March 2008, for example, featured in-depth interviews with UK, Dutch, German, Danish and Swedish MEPs on the EU accounts, on MEP allowances and assistants, and on the issue of Turkey's application to join the EU. It also ran in-brief news items on the Galileo satellite-navigation system, organ donations, visa-free travel to the USA and the European Ombudsman.

Radio

BBC Radio 4's Crossing Continents programme was nominated for the radio prize. Its 'Pills for Profit' programme dealt with the parallel drugs trade in the EU - it was a co-production with the consumer programme 'You & Yours' and is presented by Melanie Abbott.

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Interviews with major drug companies, UK campaigners against parallel drug imports and with a parallel drug trader from Greece gave the listener various perspectives on the issue. A European Commission spokesperson gave the institutional angle on the problem. Overall, the programme was commended for its clarity and its lively presentation of an issue affecting people's lives on a daily basis.

Internet

The UK nomination for the internet section is an online news service for businesses focusing specifically on the REACH chemicals safety legislation. REACH was passed by the European Parliament in December 2006 and came into effect across the EU in June 2007. Chemical Watch has been set up as a micro-enterprise by two journalists whose aim is to publicise how cutting-edge companies are handling the REACH rules.

A series of articles from December 2007 to April 2008 takes case studies of how individual companies are dealing with REACH in the UK and the Netherlands or how a whole sector in the USA (cosmetics industry) is reacting to the new legislation.

Chemical Watch fills a practical need for large parts of industry trying to find the best ways of implementing complex legislation; it shows the global impact of the new regime as well as its impact on very specific companies.

Written

Aimee Turner of Flight International magazine won the UK nomination for the written press category, beating off entries from national, local and other specialist trade publications. Her series of articles looked in particular at the impact of the aviation industry on climate change and at how proposed new EU legislation would in turn impact on aviation.

Flight International is a weekly magazine for the aviation sector. However, Aimee Turner's articles managed to combine authoritative, thorough information with a writing style which is accessible for non-aviation experts. European, international and industry acronyms are all clearly explained and very little knowledge is assumed from the reader even though the magazine's main target audience will be experts in their field.

Aimee Turner also manages to look at the global implications (International Civil Aviation Organisation conference in Montreal), the European proposals, especially on aviation emissions trading, and the effects on individual airlines in the UK and beyond.

The UK judging panel

There were three members of the UK judging panel, from BBC Radio, the Association of European Journalists, and the Reuters Institute for Journalism.

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