



Rahul Venkit

All-round multimedia journalist Rahul Venkit has been reporting for the Chinese Xinhua news agency in Brussels for the past three years. Originally from India, Venkit has previously worked in China, the UK, Singapore and India

Describe a typical day reporting from Brussels, if there is such a thing?

You said it – there's no such thing. Most of the reporting tends to centre on the European institutions, economy and foreign affairs. Back in 2011, the EU story was more exciting – at least as far as journalists were concerned – with the euro crisis at its peak. These days, the worst of the crisis is over and EU summits don't tend to run into the wee hours. In the quieter summer months, we tend to pitch feature stories ... mostly to visit breweries and music festivals!

What stories interest the Chinese and what is the image of Brussels in China?

I would say the average Chinese reader is more interested in European culture and travel than its politics and economy. Many of them feel the West is picturesque but boring and back home it's chaotic but interesting. As for the image of Brussels in China, it's the usual beer, chocolate and famous landmarks such as the Manneken Pis.

How has the work of a foreign correspondent changed in recent years?

The digital and social media revolution has made our roles far more dynamic and demanding. It has also given us more direct access to readers and newsmakers than ever before. In the Chinese context, however, different platforms such as Weibo and Renren are used since others like Facebook and Twitter are banned in China.

You met your French wife while reporting from the Olympics in Beijing and she now works for the same news agency. What do you both appreciate about living and working in Brussels?

We both love that Brussels is one of the smallest, truly international cities of the world. We don't spend hours every day on public transport like in other big cities since we live near work. In fact, the older we get, the more we appreciate the Brussels lifestyle over what London or Beijing offers.

What are your career plans?

I've always gone where opportunity has taken me. As long as I'm building on my multimedia skills and taking part in the global conversation on improving the state of the world, I'm happy.



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Céline Fion

Originally from Tournai, journalist Céline Fion is now based in Paris where she reports for the Belgian francophone newspaper *L'Avenir* and various tourism magazines

Where are you from and where did you study?

I grew up in Tournai and studied first at the Free University of Brussels (ULB) before going to journalism school at the University of Louvain.

Why did you move to Paris?

At first it was for an internship, but I always had it in mind to stay. I think I had the impression that I would encounter more professional opportunities as well as enjoy the stimulating and exciting surroundings.

What is a typical day reporting from Paris?

One of the best things about my job is that there is no typical day, even if it does revolve around certain set tasks, such as preparing interviews, writing articles, prospecting and researching future topics etc. I also spend some time abroad.

Do you think France is still a cultural beacon for francophone Belgians?

The French are frequently criticised for being arrogant, and it's true that this can appear irritating. But from my viewpoint here, I find that Belgians can sometimes be too humble, constrained by this continual feeling of inferiority. France undeniably has great artists and talents, and the concentration in Paris makes my work very enjoyable.

Do you return here, and what do you miss about your home country?

Yes, I return frequently. It's mainly people that I miss, and steak tartare and chips!

What are your career plans?

I will not live eternally in Paris, but I think that I will remain abroad. In parallel to the written press, I would very much like to develop documentaries, so I'm working on that.



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CÉLINE FION