



**Arena**  
for  
journalism  
in Europe

## How to write a great grant application

IJ4EU Master Class, October 31, 2022

Trine Smistrup & Brigitte Alfter

European Journalism Centre ECPMF International Press Institute IPI

www.journalismarena.eu

1

## Purpose of this day

"...masterclasses designed to help journalists craft work plans for cross-border investigations, forge collaborations and write stronger applications for grant funding..."

2

## Today's programme

13:00 Hello, intros  
13:20 The cross-border work process  
13:40 Getting ready to apply for a work grant  
Break  
14:00 Developing the project through the research plan  
Break  
15:00 Questions, open discussion  
15:30 Writing the application, the jury process - and the answer

3

## Who are we?

- **Brigitte Alfter**, founder and editorial director of Arena for Journalism in Europe, author of "Cross-Border Collaborative Journalism - A Step-By-Step Guide"
- **Trine Smistrup**, co-founder of Arena, director of Dataharvest - the European Investigative Journalism Conference.
- We both have year-long experience as grant distributors and coordinators for grant juries.

4

## Arena for Journalism in Europe

- **Arena for Journalism in Europe** supports and facilitates collaborative journalism – journalists working with other journalists across geographical borders, and journalists working across professional borders with scholars, scientists, or civil society.
- Arena organises **Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference**, taking place each year in Mechelen, Belgium. Next is June 1-4, 2023!

5

## The IJ4EU grant

- IJ4EU will disburse a total of €1.23 million:
  - **Investigation Support Scheme**, which offers grants of between €5,000 and €50,000 to investigative teams of all varieties.
    - Managed by IPI, the Investigation Support Scheme will disburse around €900,000 in 2022/23.
  - **Freelancer Support Scheme**, offering grants of up to €20,000 to journalists working outside of newsrooms. The freelancers will also get tailored assistance including mentoring throughout the lifecycle of their projects.
    - Managed by EIC, will allocate around €330,000 in 2022/23.

6

## The IJ4EU grant

- Next call January 2023 with deadline 6 weeks later
- Other grants and fellowships:  
<https://helpdesk.gijn.org/support/solutions/articles/14000036514-fellowships>

7

## What is "cross-border investigative journalism"?

- What are the first words that come to your mind when you hear "cross-border investigative journalism"?
- Please write in the chat

8

## What is "cross-border collaborative investigative journalism"?

- Big leaks!
- Terabytes of data!
- Whistleblowers!
- Billions of £, \$ or €!
- Global!
- Political leaders and celebrities!

9

## No need for a whistleblower or a big leak



### Follow the money:

2 journalists in 2 countries, big EU money, investigative skills and curiosity

10

## No need for a whistleblower or a big leak



### Follow the money:

2 journalists in 2 countries, big EU money, investigative skills and curiosity

The team went through 300 public procurements and filed FOI request to more than 40 public authorities – only possible in your own country

11

## No need for a whistleblower or a big leak

- You need the right idea
- You need the right people
  - with the right skills
  - in the right countries
- You need to convince the jury that your team can do it

12

Who are you?

- And why are you here today?

13

What is cross-border journalism?

1. journalists from different countries

14

What is cross-border journalism?

1. journalists from different countries
2. decide on an idea of mutual interest

15

What is cross-border journalism?

1. journalists from different countries
2. decide on an idea of mutual interest
3. gather and share material

16

What is cross-border journalism?

1. journalists from different countries
2. decide on an idea of mutual interest
3. gather and share material
4. publish to their own audiences

17

Why cross-border collaboration?

- To get important information otherwise hard to get
  - To share the work load
  - To bring in special competences
- Research**
- To bring the topic to wider public attention with potential for solution
  - To serve audiences
- Publications**
- Security of the journalists / sources / media
- Other**

18

19

### Why cross-border collaboration?

- To get important information otherwise hard to get Research
- To share the work load Research
- To bring in special competences Research
- To bring the topic to wider public attention with potential for solution Publications
- To serve audiences Publications
- Security of the journalists / sources / media Other

20

21

22

23

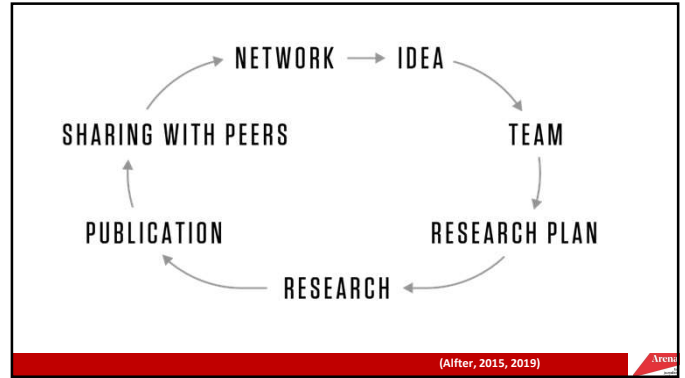
### Why cross-border collaboration?

- To get important information otherwise hard to get Research
- To share the work load Research
- To bring in special competences Research
- To bring the topic to wider public attention with potential for solution Publications
- To serve audiences Publications
- Security of the journalists / sources / media Other

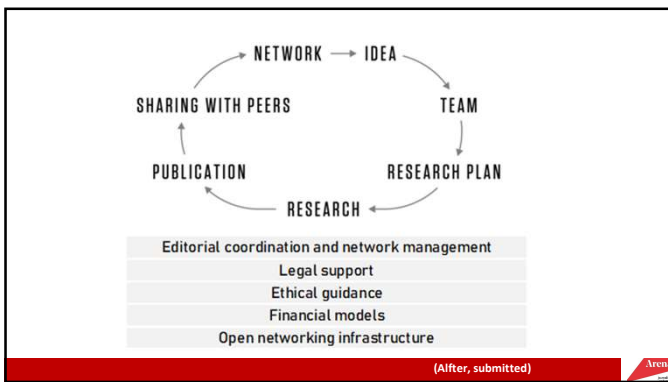
24



25



26



27

Looking for cross-border ideas → IDEA

- **Actuality** – think across borders when relevant
- **Organisation stories** – stories relate to bodies like the EU, WTO, NATO, UN and UN bodies, WHO, World Bank, EIB...
- **Chain stories** – story covers something happening in a chain of countries – for example trade, trafficking...
- **Comparative stories** – similar stories occurring in several countries such as public transport, school reforms, tax avoidance, whitewashing and corruption...

28

TEAM

### What to consider for a good team


- Hard competences**  
Language, country, experience with subject, important medium, network of sources, experience with institution
- Soft competences**  
Trust, sympathy, wish and capability to cooperate
- Inspiration from other disciplines**  
Intercultural communication / communication techniques from psychology / negotiation techniques from law and business
- Win-win**

29

Enriching each other in the team

- Journalism traditions**  
Hidden camera / How to deal with quotes, cross checking with sources? / Views on funding
- Use the differences**  
Different traditions for access to data, FOI / different political interests / overcoming bias
- Working rhythm and timing**
- Overview and focus**
- Fact checking / legal checks / ethics**


30



**PUBLICATION** The big moment...

- Often the most difficult moment of the cooperation, remember to coordinate early in the planning
- Story telling
- Agenda setting
- Reaching different target groups
- Security before and after publication
- You are responsible to your audience!!!

31




**SHARING WITH PEERS** **NETWORK** Sharing, networking

- Sharing with peers means professional development
- You share both your experience *and* your findings (pitching)
- Consider sharing already while working (log)
- When you share with peers, you position yourself in the (open) network (networking)

32

Story idea and pre-research




**So you have this great idea...**

Is it the right grant for this idea?  
or  
What is a good idea for this particular grant?

33

Story idea and pre-research



**So you have this great idea...**

You will invest a lot of time in it

Do your homework, don't waste time on applying for the wrong grant.

34

Grant formalities: Check the criteria

IJ4EU Investigation Support Scheme:

- Story of public interest
- Story of EU relevance
- Story must reveal something new
- Story must have cross-border relevance

- Special attention to
  - underreported issues
  - stories/teams from countries where journalism is under pressure

35

Grant formalities: Check the criteria

IJ4EU Investigation Support Scheme:

- Team members from minimum 2 EU member states
- OR 1 EU member state, 1 EU candidate country

36

## Grant formalities: Check the criteria

IJ4EU Investigation Support Scheme:

- Team members from minimum 2 EU member states
- OR 1 EU member state, 1 EU candidate country

=> If you are a team of 3 Germans wanting to report in Italy, this is not the grant for you.

37

## Grant formalities: Check previous projects

- What has been supported before?
- With how big amounts?
- Is your idea really new and innovative?

38

## Pre-research for the story

• Getting ready to write the grant application:

- Formulate your main hypothesis
- Substantiate your main hypothesis. On which information/sources is it based? Make the jury trust that you will be able to prove it!

39

## Pre-research for the story

- Where will you go for information? Show the jury that you know where to find sources and data.
  - Which organisations/institutions to go to in relevant countries
  - Which individuals to interview
  - Where do you find relevant data
  - Need for FOI requests (maybe costs)

40

## Pre-research for the story

- Analyse the needed team qualifications:
  - Countries (+maybe Brussels insight)
  - Languages
  - Experience with investigative methods
  - Experience with data analysis/digital tools
  - Knowledge of subject
  - Network of sources
  - Access to relevant media

41

10 minutes break

42

## Crafting and discussing the research plan

Anticipating what needs to be done – the loooong checklist:

- Team – roles and decision making
- Story idea
- Team composition
- Pre-planning checklist – mixed list to discuss
- Planning publication
- Planning post-publication

43

## Research plan – team decision making

- Role of initiator, coordinator
- Who coordinates the team (often also lead applicant)
- Who decides in the team and how

44

## Research plan – story idea

- What's your assumed headline? (Hypothesis)
- What's the WOW effect / how do you convince your editor (and the jury)?
- What's the minimum & maximum outcome at this stage?
- How much do you have, what do you need
- What has been published on the topic in given countries, what is the added value of your story
- Special for collaborations: Build upon each other, learn from publications and spread them widely, take them to the next (administrative, political) level. What is common in one country, may be underreported in another

45

## Research plan – team composition

- What's the added value of collaboration for each of the team members?
- What's the contribution from each of the team members to the project?
- Do the journalists in the team have backing from their editors/publishers or a relevant outlet to publish with – and does this connection help the project?

46

## Research plan – discussing the checklist

- Timeline - who does what when (Gantt chart or the like)
- Work load – how much time do you need for the expected tasks
- Funding – make a budget
- Publication plan – get backing from editors
- Risks, security – make a risk assessment for your story
- Work environment – based on the risk assessment, how will you communicate and share material
- Ethical & legal considerations for publication
- ...other things!
- Consider a project log for the "postmortem" analysis.

47

## Research plan – planning publication

- Whom do you want to reach with this story? And how do you make sure your story reaches the audiences, you want to reach?
  - Local and/or national level
  - Which countries are relevant for publication
  - EU or other international level
- When to publish – simultaneous or over time? Why one or the other?

48



## Research plan – planning post-publication

- Who owns the information, who owns the data / author's rights and intellectual property.
- What will you do with the material you gathered after the publication?
- Who has access to the material for follow ups, and how do you decide about that?
- How will you market your project upon publication?
- Branding, applying for awards, presenting at conferences?
- Will you follow up with further reporting together? When?
- Will you follow up individually?
- Make sure to agree on a "post mortem" to analyse what went well during your collaboration and what was difficult!

49

10 minutes break

50

## Questions, open discussion:

- Looking for financing, for team members? Have doubts or questions? Or maybe advice to share with other participants?
- Remember:
  - You don't have to share the content of your project/idea
  - You can indicate the wider topic you plan to look into and reach out to colleagues after the seminar

51

## IJ4EU application form

- Let's look at the questions you will have to answer, if you apply for the IJ4EU grant

52

## IJ4EU application form

- Lead applicant personal information and CV
- Team description (tentative)
- Project description (tentative)
- What **new** information will your proposed project reveal?
- Project relevance: Please indicate why this story (if proved and publishable) would be a contribution to the public interest in the countries involved and/or in the EU more broadly.

53

## IJ4EU application form cntd.

- Research and publication plan. Please briefly describe the proposed research and activity timeline for the investigation and outline the broadcast, publication or dissemination plan for your material.
- Risk assessment
- Letters of intent
- Budget
- Budget justification

54

## Where can you go for help?

If you need help to find team members or info in specific countries, reach out to:

- Dataharvest mailing list and others <https://dataharvest.eu/in-the-arena/>
- Global Investigative Journalism Network email discussion list: <https://groups.io/g/GIJN-L>

55

## And now to the jury

- You are ready to file your application. Who will be the readers?
- Jury members are
  - Senior journalists in the field of investigative, crossborder, data journalism / media personalities / investigators / media lawyers / ...
  - Busy people
  - Have to read many applications (CVs, budgets etc)
  - Have to make tough decisions and clear priorities

56

## What juries may ask

- First questions:
  - How important is this to the general public?
  - How difficult is it to make?
  - Is cross-border work the right method for this story?
- Next questions:
  - Who has the most power, and how is this power administered?
  - Which problem is the biggest?
  - Which problem is the most outrageous?
  - Which problems have received the least attention?

*Thanks to Nils Hanson, SVT!*

57

## Juries are people too – or maybe dogs...

- With thanks to Timothy Large, International Press Institute

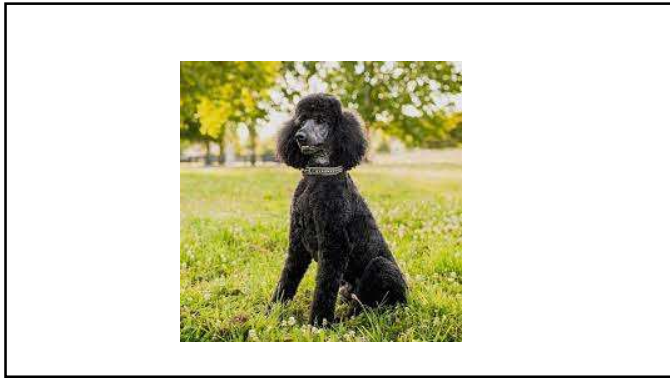
58



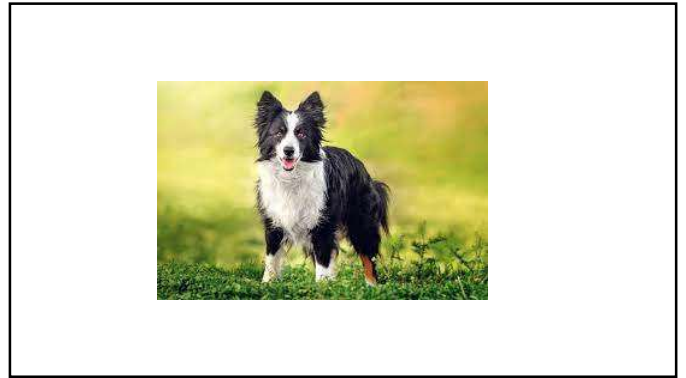
59



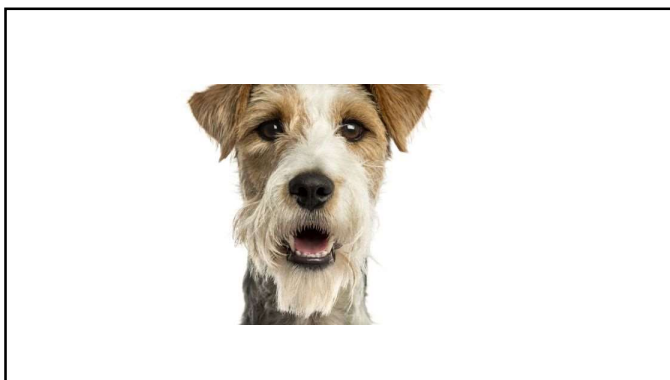
60



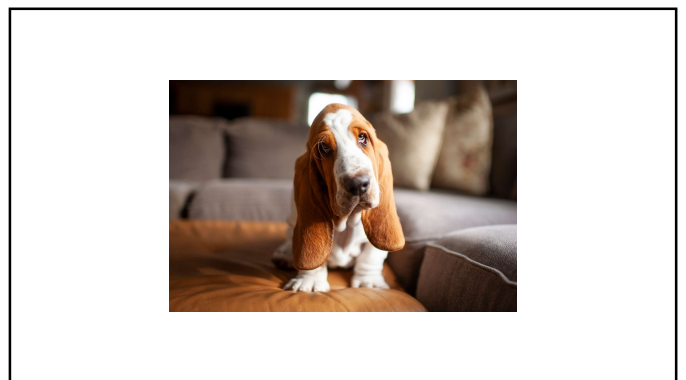
61



62



63



64



65

What to do if you get a 'no'

?

66

Questions?