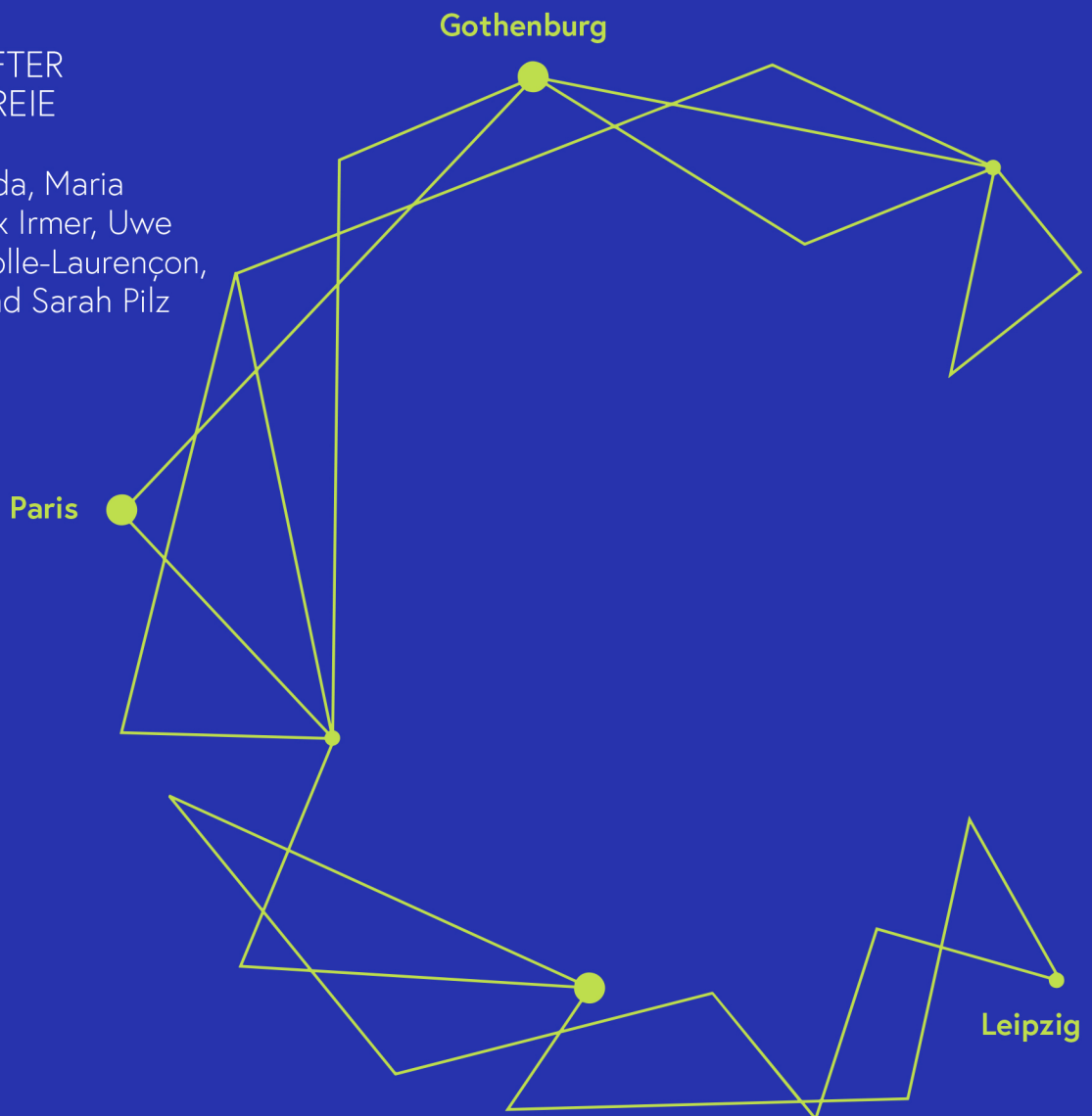


Crossborder Journalism Campus

Guidebook

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Summarised by Brigitte Alfter and Ulla Sättereie on behalf of the entire CJC team of lecturers: Brigitte Alfter, Ulla Sättereie, Maria Hendrichske, Uwe Krüger, Felix Irmer, Édouard Perrin, Cédric Molle-Laurençon, Adrian Breda and Sarah Pilz.

This guidebook summarises actionable experiences for practice oriented journalism educations at masters' level based upon experiences from a 2022-2024 collaboration supported by the Erasmus+ programme.

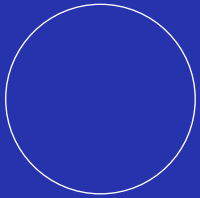
For this guidebook as well as the connected sample lectures, reading lists and so forth, Creative Commons BY NC SA applies.

Summary:

In the academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, students of journalism from Leipzig University, Centre de Formation des Journalistes (Paris/Lyon) and Gothenburg University met for a working week in Brussels in October 2022 and November 2023 respectively. The task was to set up cross-border journalism teams and develop a work plan for a journalistic investigation. Over several months, students worked remotely under the guidance of their lecturers and they published in major media in the early summer of 2023 and 2024 respectively.

See all the publications on <https://crossborderjournalismcampus.eu/>.

The CJC Guidebook offers a step-by-step description of the process including experiences and learnings from the first two pilot years. It also offers sample lectures and other material for inspiration.



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Introduction to this guidebook

Cross-border collaborative journalism is a comparably new way of doing journalism that in the late 2010s boldly entered mainstream journalism. Thus, journalism educations need to find ways of offering students the skills, competences, practice and deeper understanding of this way of working. But how to go beyond merely talking about a new method, how to realistically simulate a cross-border setting in practice-oriented programmes? This was the starting question.

In the Crossborder Journalism Campus project, three journalism educations enriched existing master programmes with cross-border journalism and European aspects. Two consecutive cohorts of journalism students from Sweden, Germany and France were gathered in Brussels for a cross-border introduction seminar. There, they prepared an investigative project to be pursued applying collaborative practice under the guidance of their lecturers and for publication in national and transnational media adapted to different audiences with a synchronized publication date. In total, about 150 students of journalism published more than 40 articles in major media such as French newspaper *Le Monde* and news site *Mediapart*, German broadcasters *ARD* and *MDR*, Swedish newspapers *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Göteborgs-Posten* and European news site *EUobserver*. The three journalism educations were accompanied on data journalism and networking infrastructure aspects by the journalism network organisation *Arena for Journalism in Europe* and for academic discussions by the Universities of Amsterdam and OsloMet.

While the path to these journalism publications was hard work for lecturers and students alike (particularly with the first cohort of students), we believe that this networked model of practice-oriented journalism educations is a workable approach for three purposes:

- CJC allows students to practice the method of cross-border collaborative journalism. This happens in the safe context of their journalism education and is accompanied by their lecturers.
- CJC allows to enrich existing educations with insights about the functioning of a transnational body. In our case the functioning of the EU on European, national and local level.
- The CJC model provides opportunities to enrich journalism educations with transnational aspects through networking of existing educations. This appears to be significantly more flexible than embarking on the cumbersome process of developing and obtaining recognition for new curricula.

This guidebook is indeed meant as a guidebook. Journalism programmes in the field will find actionable lessons learnt based upon the experiences of the Crossborder Journalism Campus Erasmus+ Project 2022-2024. The guidebook thus starts with key facts and features of the project.

The Crossborder Journalism Campus Erasmus+ 2022-2024 team of lecturers hopes that the experiences we and our students gathered can inspire others to pick up the idea, adapt it to their respective contexts and carry out networked, practice-oriented journalism educations. It is meant as inspiration well aware of the need to adapt to any given setting. This team of lecturers is composed of journalists, journalism lecturers and academics, all based in the North and the West of Europe in comparably safe positions. This, obviously, is the setting for which we have developed this programme. We are aware of this bias and thus aware of the need to rethink and adapt any model to the relevant context. Beyond merely being inspired and adapting, we hope journalism educations will pick up the model, develop it further and share their experiences for others to pick up, so we jointly develop the professional education in this field over the coming years.

We first present the key facts and features of the Crossborder Journalism Campus Erasmus+ 2022-24 experience. For those journalism lecturers with little or no experience teaching collaborative journalism, we then offer an introduction to the field of cross-border collaborative journalism with a history, key features of the method and mindset and an updated literature overview.

The main part of the book is the guide itself. Structured along work processes and timelines for project leaders, journalism lecturers, students of journalism and partner publications' editors. By focusing on processes, we also touch upon learning progression, tasks (and to-do lists) and on roles. As any schematic division, it will never fully fit reality. In the case of CJC, journalism lecturers had tasks beyond lecturing such as fundraising and project coordination, for example. However, with this schematic division of the tasks at hand we hope to clarify and demystify what at first sight might seem like a complex set-up: The networked practice-oriented university education.

Finally, we offer two annotated annexes. In the first we share teaching material (slides etc), in the second relevant reading material and inspiring practice examples useful for lecturers and students alike.

Structure of the guidebook

The Crossborder JournalismCampus project /Erasmus+ 2022-2024

The Crossborder Journalism Campus Erasmus+ 2022-2024 at a quick glance:

Purposes

- Allowing students of journalism to practice the method of cross-border collaborative journalism from idea to publication while accompanied by their lecturers
- Enriching existing educations with insights about the functioning of the EU on European, national and local level
- Providing a journalism education with the above two features through networked educations rather than embarking on the cumbersome process of developing and obtaining recognition for new curricula
- Building networks between journalism educators in different countries

Key features

- Journalism educations from different countries
- Agree to let their students collaborate on a journalistic investigation of mutual interest
- Students get shared material and lectures, they meet several days for an in-person work seminar to prepare a research plan for their investigation, afterwards students work in teams from all participating universities/journalism schools under the guidance of their lecturers
- Students adapt their shared findings to publication in multiple countries and media adapted to target groups in each their countries plus possibly transnational target groups

Partners

Partner educations were selected along the features of their respective educations.

- Practice oriented journalism educations
- Focus on investigative journalism, data journalism
- Master level
- Interest in cross-border collaborative journalism
- English language at working level

Göteborg University since the academic year 2016/17 offered a one-year English language Master in Investigative Journalism, MIJ (Säterie, 2024). Crossborder Journalism Campus was initiated and coordinated by the team behind the MIJ and thus particularly well-suited to consider a model such as the CJC but – obviously – also influenced by the way of thinking and organising an education. Running from September to June, the MIJ annually brings together some 35 students from all over the world. The elements of the curriculum is structured in four blocks of 10 weeks each, including investigative method, data journalism, cross-border collaborative journalism and as the fourth block either a journalistic investigation ready for publication or an academic thesis. Over the years, a vast majority students have opted for the journalistic investigation.

Centre de Formation des Journalistes (CFJ) is a French grande école for journalism, founded in 1946 and located in Paris and Lyon. The participation in the in the Crossborder Journalism Campus partnership was initially open to students on the 'Investigation and Data' course with Sciences Po Lyon, later it was extended to students and apprentices on the 'Newsroom' major of the historical course as well as the 'Correspondence in France and Abroad' course.

Leipzig University (LU) was founded in 1409 and is one of the oldest universities in Europe. LU is a modern and cosmopolitan comprehensive university that strives to be one of the top-ranking German universities. Here, the Innovation Project joined the collaboration lead by Dr. Uwe Krüger (Dipl.-Journ.) within the master's program M.Sc. Journalism. Since 2012, he is a research associate in the Journalism department of the Institute of Communication and Media Studies and a trainer especially for journalistic research and data journalism.

In sum, albeit with some varieties, all three educations fulfilled the starting point criteria: They offered practice-oriented teaching where students as part of their curricula had to produce journalism, they all focused on investigative and/or data journalism, they all were at master level, they all had an interest in cross-border collaboration in Europe and English could be used as working language. A good starting point, but – as Krüger, Hendrichs & Irmer (2024) stated, there were obvious challenges and obvious advantages:

Challenges:

- Timeline coordination in different semester and module rhythm
- Coordination between different requirements for the graded examinations

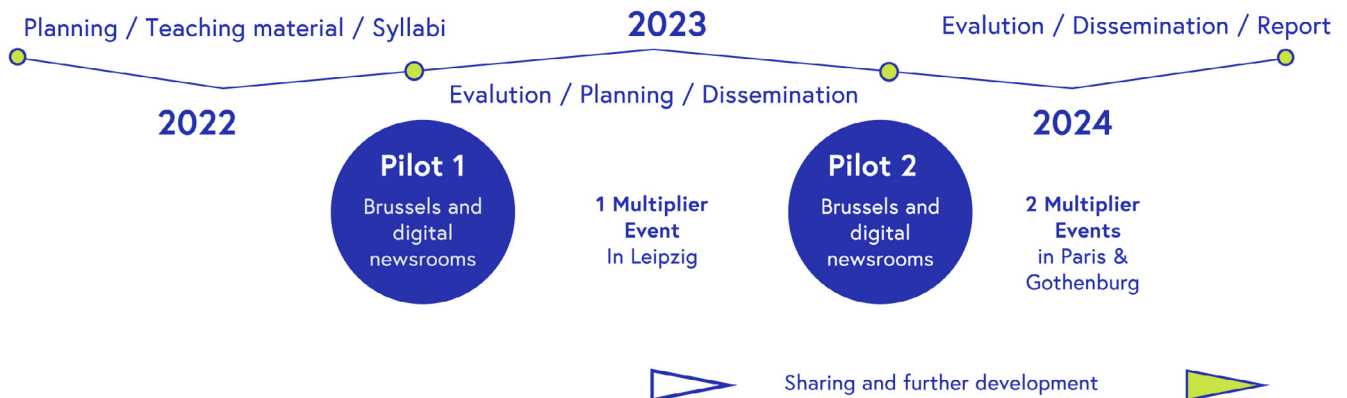
Advantages:

- Different competences adding value to all students, for example
 - o senior journalist from the prestigious ICIJ network
 - o a specialised data journalism and python trainer
 - o a lecturer with insights into project management practices

	 GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET	 UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG	
Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master of Science• Investigative Journalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master of Science Journalismus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diplôme Journaliste
Specialisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investigative journalism• Datajournalism & visualisations• Crossborder Collaborative Journalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Datajournalism, digital journalism• Format development• Project management• Social sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investigative journalism• Data journalism• TV• Radio
Students per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25-35	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 20-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17-19
Length	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 years (2 at the University, 1 as an intern)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 years (including internship)

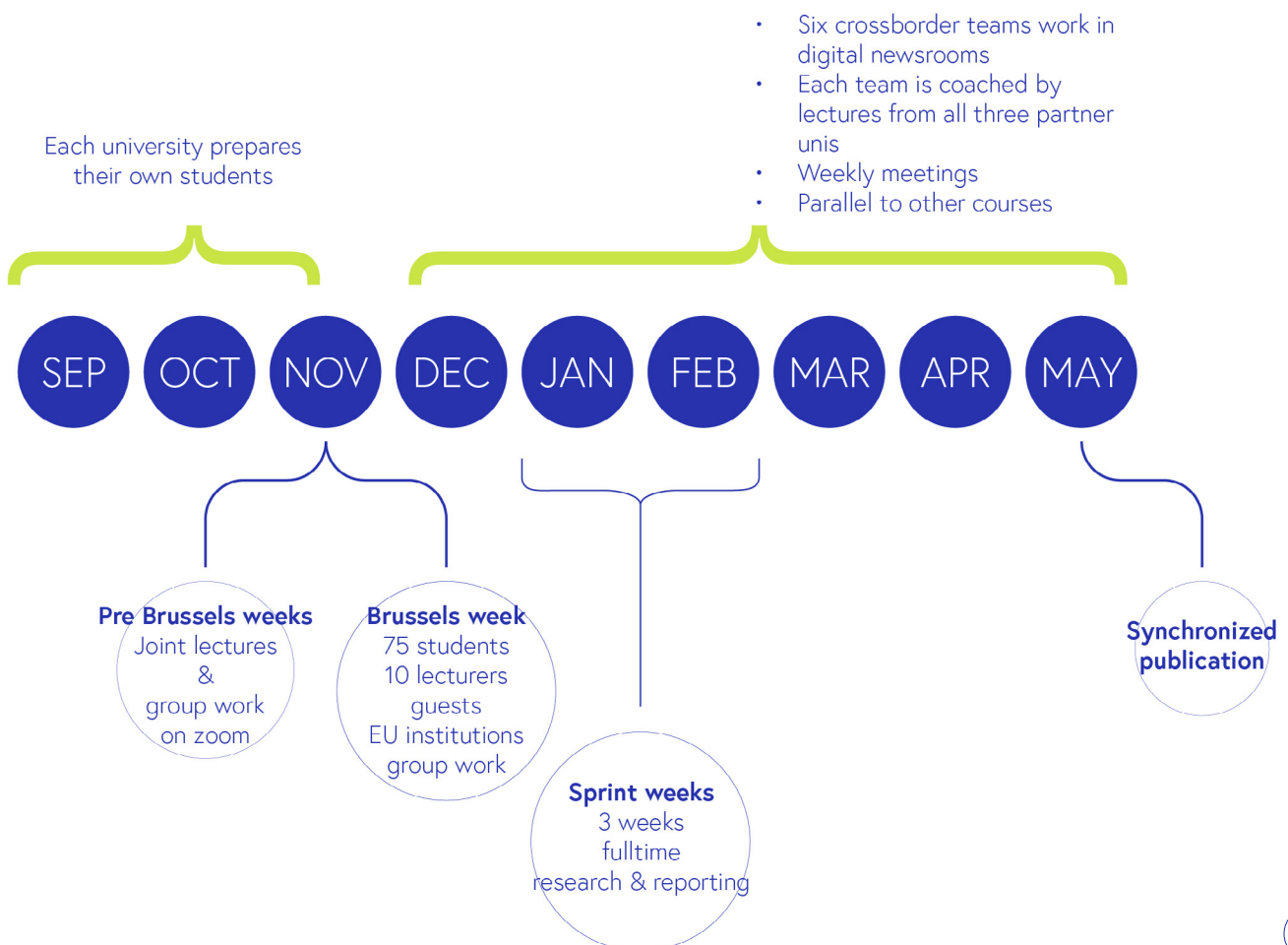
Timeline

The Crossborder Journalism Campus Erasmus+ 2022-24 project followed a three year timeline with two pilot cohorts to develop the model (Sättereie, Alfter, 2024).



The timeline for the students followed the academic year starting in the autumn and ending in the summer. It is worth mentioning that an adaptation of the timeline is not as easy as it may sound, as some countries have the semester start in late August and some only in October – just to take one example.

Here is a visualisation of the timeline adapted for the 2nd pilot cohort after the experiences from the first run-through. Read further below on the considerations for the students' timeline.



Funding —

Networking and thus enriching the quality of existing journalism educations implies the usual added costs to networking:

- Travel and accommodation for 75 students plus their lecturers for 5 days in the same place – in the case of CJC we met in Brussels.
- Added work load for lecturers, coordinator(s), project management.

For the Crossborder Journalism Campus 2022-2024, the consortium of partners obtained some 330 000 Euro (Erasmus+ 2021). Erasmus+ funds allow full editorial and pedagogical independence.

Journalistic publications —

Students of both cohorts published journalistic articles, some with partner media of the respective universities, some on a one-off freelance agreement. During the work with the first cohort, the accompanying journalism lecturers realised different traditions in terms of working with media partners. Leipzig University had an established relation with a regional media partner that published students' work, CFJ lecturers reached out to one media partner and coordinated centrally a pitching and editing collaboration, in neither case the students were remunerated. In Gothenburg, on the other hand, students were encouraged and guided to sell their pieces at freelance rates to media for whom their particular angle would be interesting. For the second cohort, contacts with partner media were cultivated in a structured way with media partners in all three countries as well as one transnational medium.

In total, 47 articles or broadcasts were published in four different languages in four countries. (CJC Publications, 2024).

Evaluations —

The evaluation of the two cohorts was carried out at multiple levels.

- Students of the first and second cohort evaluated their experiences in (anonymous) surveys as well as in classroom discussions.
- Lecturers met and evaluated details and overall experiences on an ongoing basis as well as retrospectively after the first and second cohort respectively.

For this short summary, the main lessons learnt are cited.

- Prepare for the very different work rhythms at the different universities: The full schedule of the students needs to be taken into consideration to avoid work overload and agenda clashes with other courses, internships, exams and so forth.
- Shorten the work period from 9 months to a significantly shorter period of maximum 3-4 months. If coordination is possible so all students can focus on the collaboration simultaneously, even a work phase of 6 weeks is imaginable. This is to avoid students' enthusiasm losing momentum particularly after the in-person meeting.

- Never underestimate the resources and time necessary to coordinate the project, the pedagogical processes and the editorial processes.
- Follow closely the professional development of the tasks and roles connected to editorial coordination adapted to newsrooms, particularly cross-border collaborative teams (see for example guideline Perrin & Alfter 2023, Sheffield 2025 and Cerantola 2025).

First academic & practice-oriented publications

Two chapters based on the CJC Erasmus+ 2022-2024 project have been published or submitted for publication in relevant publications addressing academic and journalism education practioners' target groups.

The first is an article based on the first pilot year. Maria Hendrischke, Felix Irmer and Uwe Krüger (2024), published an overview of the first evaluations of the Crossborder Journalism Campus-project in a book about innovation in journalism.

In the more general context of teaching cross-border and other collaborative journalism, Brigitte Alfter and Ulla Sättereie (forthcoming) contributed a chapter to The Routledge Companion to Journalism Education suggesting a level of intensity analysis when it comes to teaching collaborative journalism with lectures about collaboration as the lowest intensity level and collaboration in practice CJC style as the highest level of intensity of the educational collaboration.

Why cross-border collaboration?

Some background & a short history

Let's start with a case story known as the Lux Leaks investigation. It was November 2011, French investigative journalist Édouard Perrin and a British tax expert turned journalist were travelling Luxembourg and filming interviews with sources for a tax avoidance story. The plan was to broadcast in France. After concluding the filming, they pondered the option of not just publishing in France but also in the United Kingdom as they had so much valuable material. A major story about tax avoidance aired on France 2 and the BBC in May 2012. The public reaction? Negligible. Perrin's story was based on a document trove he had obtained from a source who worked at one of the global Big Four auditing companies, Price Waterhouse Coopers. The anonymous source risked his job and reputation by talking with the journalist, so beside his own work efforts, Perrin on behalf of his source had hoped for a public reaction to fix the loopholes, they had unveiled. That public reaction came later. Come the autumn of 2014, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists had gotten hold of the document trove and published in 26 countries simultaneously. This time, politicians did not stay silent about the Duchy of Luxembourg offering favourable tax agreements to corporations thus allowing those multinationals to legally avoid taxes in Luxembourg's fellow EU member states (Alfter, 2019, p. 10).

Bringing a major societal problem to the attention of the public is indeed one of the reasons, why journalists would embark on the process of collaboration. Other reasons given in a series of some 40 interviews (Alfter, 2019) are improved quality of the journalism thanks to more human resources, division of labour in large research projects including a variety of skills, experiences and source contacts, indeed – as in the Lux Leaks case – greater public impact. In some countries and some contexts, security is cited as a reason to collaborate in larger teams.

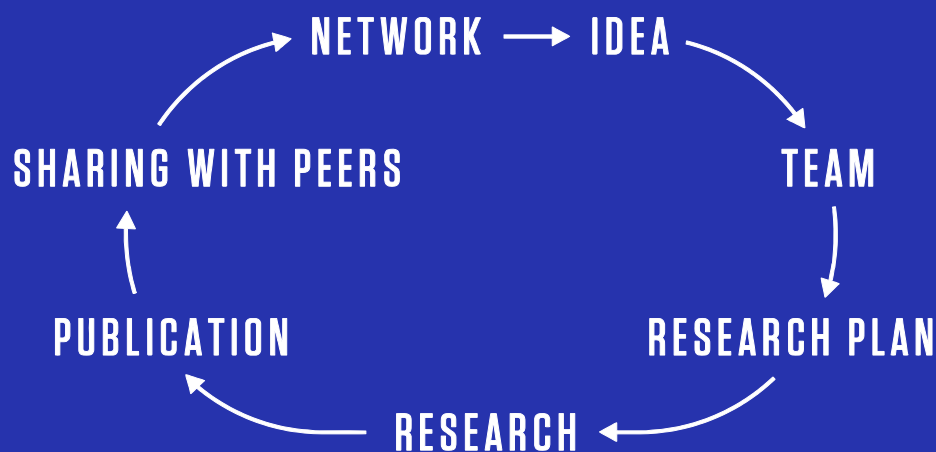
While media collaborations across borders can be documented centuries ago, the distinct model of journalist-driven collaboration in research teams is connected to the era of the internet (Konow-Lund, Berglez, Gearing, 2019). Since 2000, major and smaller cross-border collaborative journalism publications have surfaced including the ICIJ's Big Tobacco Smuggling (2000), the ICIJ's Lux Leaks (2014) or the Farmsubsidy (2013) network set up in 2005 to unveil EU's subsidies to the agricultural sector. Support structures such as conferences and work grant programmes have been developed.

In the following, the process of cross-border collaborative journalism will shortly be sketched.

In *Cross-Border Collaborative Journalism – A Step-by-Step Guide*, Alfter (2019, p. 18) presents a process-oriented description of the collaborative journalism with four characteristics and a process wheel including seven steps. The four characteristics, she found in her interviews, include a set-up where:

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

By subdividing the work process into steps, journalism practitioners who wish to apply this way of working as journalism lecturers supporting their students are able to dive into the aspects of each of these steps to get a deeper understanding and pick up necessary skills for all aspects during the process.



The cross-border journalism process in seven steps (Alfter, 2019).

In the Crossborder Journalism Campus, we followed this process wheel description as a shared terminology for the students to understand the process from idea to publication and beyond. It has proven very useful to provide the students with such a shared terminology and understanding of the work processes. The details of the process are described in Alfter (2019, p. 35-150).

The journalistic work is driven and coordinated by journalists, an international editorial team typically composed along interests and competences and thus consisting of a mix of staffers and freelancers. While research teams in a classic setting would find the necessary support structures within the walls of their publishing house, cross-border teams face new challenges. In a chapter about collaboration as a journalistic answer to networked societies, Alfter (2024, p. 120) argues, that new roles such a dedicated editorial coordinator with project management skills becomes necessary, and that a comparative approach to journalism ethics should be developed. As do support structures on financial, legal, and technical as well as a meeting infrastructure for peers such as conferences and other in-person or online spaces to meet and stay in touch with colleagues.

Cross-border journalism an emerging academic field

Literature on cross-border journalism is emerging. Observations of the developments in the profession are prevalent, as is the conceptualisation discussion. The academic concept discussion started in the late 2010s, for example at a conference in 2018 at the Technische Universität Ilmenau, several of personalities behind that conference also were behind the Palgrave Handbook of Cross-Border Journalism (Rothenberger, Löffelholz & Weaver, 2023).

On the practice side, cross-border collaborative journalism evolved in a larger movement of developing new types of journalism (Meyer, 2019), not least investigative and data journalism and – oftentimes – connected to entrepreneurial efforts to make these new developments happen, sometimes also labelled as pioneer journalism (Hepp & Loosen, 2019). Academic work in the field has looked at aspects as varied as Europeanisation (Heft, Pfetsch, Alfter, 2017), well-being in teams (de Jong & Kotišová, 2024) and on cross-border journalism as a challenge to Hallin & Mancini's media systems (Romero-Domínguez, 2024). First attempts to map the field were carried out by a team of scholars at Leipzig University, one of the Crossborder Journalism Campus partners (Krüger et al. 2019).

The three universities participating in the Crossborder Journalism Campus 2022-2024 all combined journalism practice with some elements of academic analysis. However, given the very different structures of the three educations, only practice was at the focus of the collaboration. Literature about cross-border collaborative journalism thus was adapted to the individual programmes.

Arena for Journalism in Europe, a cross-border journalism infrastructure organization active in Europe and a sector partner in the Crossborder Journalism Campus team, maintains a reading list with literature relevant for practitioners (Arena, 2024).

Literature about & practice of cross-border journalism education

In 2019, ahead of designing a model curriculum for an investigative journalism master for the Balkans and Turkey, the authors of that model curriculum did a comparison of curricula for masters in investigative journalism at three US and two European universities. At that stage, only two offered cross-border collaborative journalism, one of which was an integrated course at the university of Gothenburg, the other an elective course at Columbia University in New York (Coronel, Boros, 2019, p. 10). Indeed, the Master in Investigative Journalism at Gothenburg University developed a programme integrating investigative, data and cross-border collaborative journalism already in 2016. MIJ was also the initiating partner in the Crossborder Journalism Campus and is described in more detail by one of its co-founders, Jenny Wiik (Alfter, Wiik & Deuze, 2019).

In the Newsreel 1 Erasmus+ programme by the Technische Universität Dortmund in Germany along with universities in Hungary, Romania and Portugal, a stocktaking of journalism education needs and practices was carried out (Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018) and later followed up with actual teaching including remote collaboration, which is described in

more detail in the 2023 Palgrave Handbook of Cross-Border Journalism (Bettels-Schwabbauer, Grzeszyk, Leihs & Khan, 2023). Here, the authors emphasise the need to focus on intercultural communication, an aspect that is integrated carefully into the Crossborder Journalism Campus programme.

In 2024, the Leipzig University team of lecturers at the Crossborder Journalism Campus published an interim status of the CJC with first evaluations and suggestions (Hendrichke, Irmer & Krüger, 2024). Here, they provide a thorough description of the preparation and first cohort of the Crossborder Journalism Campus including the phases of the project with a particular focus on the students. Also, the authors describe the roles of the lecturers, coordinators (and in some cases the media partners' editors) throughout the process. Finally, they point at three areas of the work that were particularly difficult during the first year, this includes the harmonization (or lack thereof) when it comes to the scheduling, the technical infrastructure for the collaboration and the project management within each of the student teams. For all three points, the chapter suggests solutions, and as much as possible was incorporated for the second cohort of the Crossborder Journalism Campus 2022-2024 project.

Based upon these experiences and publications, Alfter & Sättereie (forthcoming) suggest four levels of intensity in the education of cross-border journalism practice:

1. Teaching cross-border collaboration practice in theory
2. Teaching and practicing cross-border collaboration in one (multinational) class but without the remote aspect
3. Teaching and practicing cross-border collaboration including remote collaboration with several classes of students from different countries, online only
4. Teaching and practicing cross-border collaboration including remote collaboration with several classes of students from different countries online and with an initial in-person gathering

In sum, we see cross-border journalism including cross-border collaborative journalism as emerging fields in academia and in journalism education. This guidebook and the experiences of the Crossborder Journalism Campus 2022-2024 hopefully can become a contribution particularly when it comes to the journalism education aspects.

Running a networked, practice-oriented journalism education:

Tasks, roles and timeline

In this section, we dive deeper into the actual process of running the networked journalism education. From the conceptualisation phase over the actual work and until evaluation.

Students, lecturers, editors & coordinators:

Four groups & their tasks

- Allowing students of journalism to practice the method of cross-border collaborative journalism from idea to publication while accompanied by their lecturers
- Enriching existing educations with insights about the functioning of the EU on European, national and local level
- Providing a journalism education with the above two features through networking educations rather than embarking on the cumbersome process of developing and obtaining recognition for new curricula
- Building networks between journalism educators in different countries

Key features

The very purpose and thus central element of the Crossborder Journalism Campus is the learning process of the students. This section of the guidebook is structured around that process: Who are the actors and what are their roles, who does what at which point of the timeline, what are necessary tools and what are relevant materials along the process.

This section is structured along work processes and timelines for four groups:

- students of journalism
- project coordinators & project administration
- journalism lecturers
- media partners' editors

Centered around the learning progression of the students, the tasks and roles of these four groups will be described. In the Crossborder Journalism Campus project, there were, of course, blurred areas when it comes to division of tasks, particularly between coordinators and lecturers, and between lecturers and media partner editors. For the presentation in this guidebook, we chose the clear division to illustrate the tasks and potential overlaps in task divisions. Our purpose is to clarify and demystify what at first sight might seem like a complex set-up: A networked practice-oriented university education.

Overall timeline & role division

As an introduction, an overall description is presented along the phases for each of the actor groups, followed by a detailed description of the tasks in each phase for each group.

The actor groups and their overall roles and tasks are the following:

- Students – learning cross-border journalism skills including collaboration in practice, intercultural communication and project management, being inspired, passing their exams and ready to carry the profession forward.
- Project coordinators and administration – likely one or several of the lecturers, responsible for overall project coordination. Coordinators also ensure the connection to administrators at their respective universities/organisations.
- Lecturers – representing each of the participating journalism educations and collectively responsible for the learning, journalistic/editorial guidance, evaluation/examination as well as coordination with editors.
- Media partners' editors – editors at our partner media are the connection to real life publication at news industry standards. They are involved in the early stages of the planning and again later, when publication is nearing. While not formally part of the education, we put an emphasis on working with publishing partners.

For a more detailed description of the roles, see Hendrichske, Irmer & Krüger (2024, p. 91-94).

Students' timeline

The students' timeline is the essence of the programme, all other tasks are adjusted to that. Hence, we present the "student view" first. As described above, the CJC students were involved in the project over 7-8 months, but lessons learnt indicate that this phase should be significantly shorter, for example 6 weeks to 4 months.



- **Introduction phase:**

Students from all participating journalism schools should have the same level of knowledge relevant for the collaboration, and students should get to know each other. Online lectures are given, work groups set up for the cross-border investigative teams. These work groups should always consist of at least two, ideally three students from each partner university.

- **Students' in-person gathering:**

Students from all three journalism educations meet in person and develop their story ideas and work plans in their respective work groups. In the case of the CJC, we gathered in Brussels and visits of EU-institutions and meetings with interest representatives, were included. Here, students get inspiring lectures from senior cross-border journalists and relevant media editors for potential publication. And there is free time built into the programme for cross-border groups to socialise.

- **Research and production phase:**

All transnational student groups carry out their research under the guidance of lecturers from all three participating journalism educations. They use the digitally shared desk with online collaborative tools.

- **Assignments and assessments:**

The exams and/or evaluations of the students are integrated into the process at the time and in the format that fits the participating journalism educations.

- **Publication phase:**

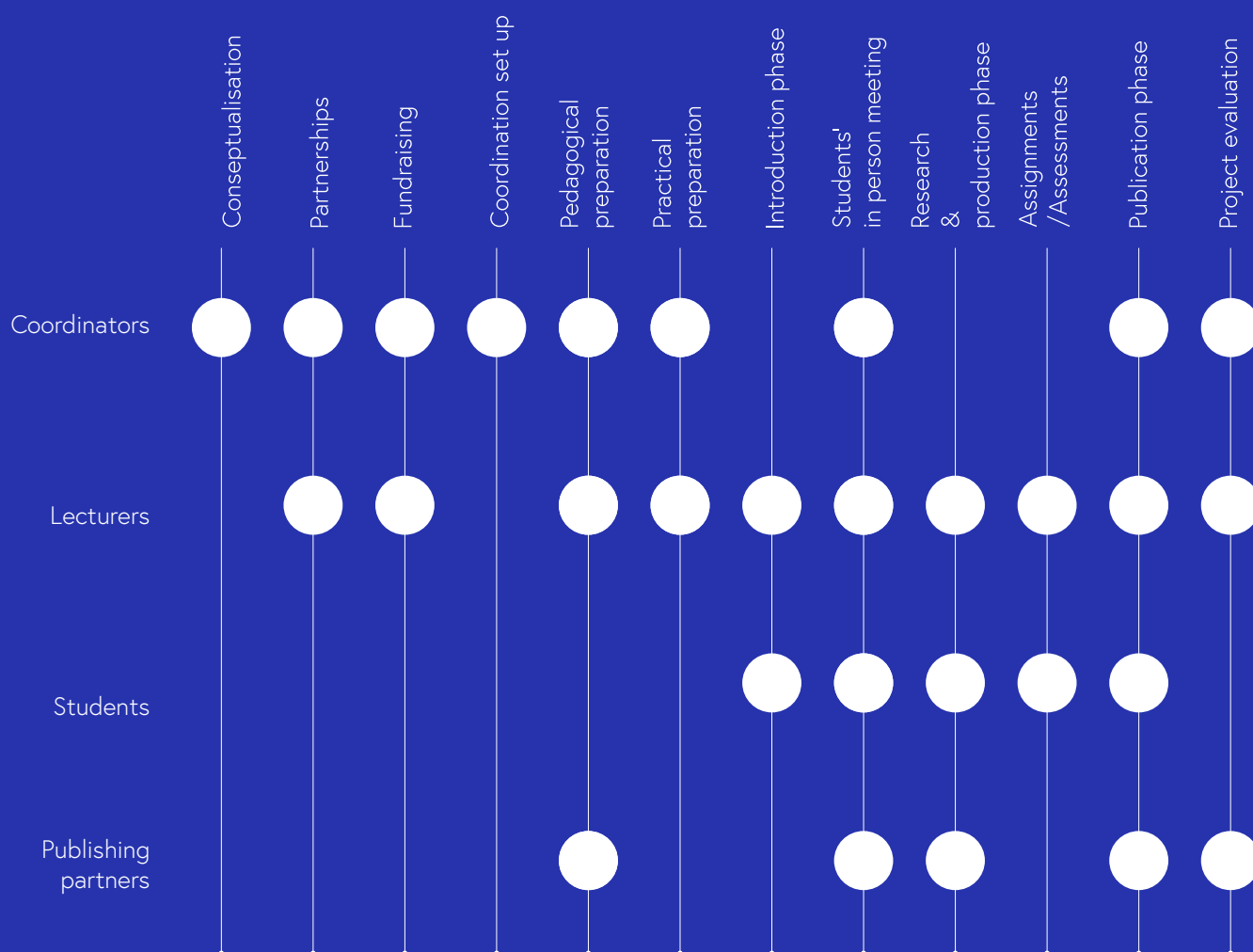
Students move to publishing their work with the media partners. The students are still under the guidance of their journalism lecturers, who now guide them on adapting the stories to the media partners' outlets, this is thus likely to happen on national level. From the beginning, a fixed date is agreed and no one publishes before that date.

The length of time spent on the various tasks within the academic year for the CJC Erasmus+ 2022-24 pilot was agreed beforehand and lasted 8-9 months: the students first met online in October, in person in Brussels in November, worked remotely from November to April and published in May and June. While this seemed to fit with the CJC partners at the time, the evaluation clearly indicates that the research and production phase was far too long for students to keep up the enthusiasm they had after the Brussels in-person meeting.

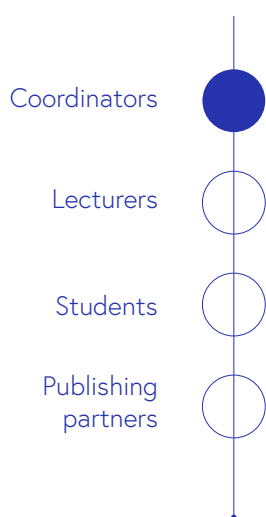
The recommendation would be to have an overall timeline of somewhere between 6 weeks and 4 months depending on the opportunity to find a time for shared work phases. This can and should be adjusted carefully to the participating journalism schools with two considerations: Length of collaboration programme, and when and how it is embedded in the participating universities' courses. It is utterly important to synchronize the schedules for the students, for them to have the possibility to meet and collaborate online.

- Concept development
- Partnership
- Fundraising
- Coordination set up
- Pedagogical preparation
- Introduction phase
- In person start-up meeting
- Research and production phase
- Publication phase
- Assignments and assessments
- Project evaluation and reporting

In the following, each of the steps from concept development to evaluation will be addressed in chronological order with an indication of how long time may need to be invested, which role each of the four groups play at a given moment, lessons learnt during the CJC Erasmus 2022-24 and recommendation on choices to consider at each particular step.



Concept Phase



The initiative to set up a collaboration can come from one or several journalism schools. In the case of the Crossborder Journalism Campus, it was part of a longterm strategy of internationalising the journalism education at Gothenburg University. In 2016 the Master of Investigative Journalism included not only investigative and data journalism but also cross-border collaborative journalism. Over the years, the question surfaced: Can we more than teach cross-border collaboration in theory and actually set up an environment for students to practice it? This question led to the development of the Crossborder Journalism Campus concept:

- Similar, practice-oriented educations with a shared vision on journalism in Europe
- Bringing students together for an in-person editorial meeting, to learn the basics of collaboration and prepare their collaborative research plan for a journalistic investigation
- Researching remotely under the guidance of experienced journalism lecturers
- Preparing for assignments and/or publication in each country and along the lines of the respective educations

In short: The concept suggests networked educations. Rather than developing new curricula, the work was integrated into existing courses, where only timeline and some details were adapted. Lecturers at the participating journalism schools decided, whether and how to integrate the European, collaborative elements into their respective existing courses. Each university has to be able to include the project into their existing curricula and syllabi. Creating a joint course would be too complicated and take too much time.

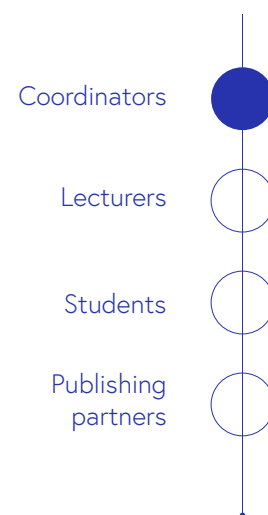
The big task for the initiators in Gothenburg thus was to find suitable partner educations.

This is the preparatory phase and thus not connected to any time pressure except the wish of the initiators to get the project going.

Selection of partner journalism schools

The Crossborder Journalism Campus Erasmus+ 2022-24 project was set up as a fixed network for a cross-border collaboration. By "fixed network" we mean this group of three partner journalism educations that were screened and pre-selected. Topics and processes were decided jointly and all students in the three selected classes participated in the project. Collaborative work tools were provided by the project. The opposite would have been ad-hoc collaborations without shared routines and shared digital infrastructure. We find analogies of fixed vs. ad-hoc networks in the journalism profession/media industry.

Fixed networks have a limited number of selected members, often these members would be vetted along a level of criteria – similar to an employment process (Alfter, 2018). Such networks would typically have clear work routines, shared digital infrastructure, task divisions – including editorial and non-editorial tasks, possibly some level of hierarchy or at least clear decision-making rules. Along comes a strong need for project management and more centralized coordination of the work processes, even though there can be decentral teams within the set-up. The purpose is production of journalism in a highly coordinated way. The ICIJ global network describes itself as a "network of trusted journalists, which has grown by invitation to more than 290 of the best investigative reporters from 105 countries and territories" (ICIJ, 2024). Another example of such an institutionalised network is the Investigate Europe cooperative of more than 20 journalist across Europe (Investigate Europe, 2024). Both do editorial work, provide work routines, digital work infrastructure, they produce journalism and publish their findings on own websites and with partner media. Both provide all the necessary support such as communication in terms of fundraising, organisational management, external communication and other operating needs.



On the other end of the scale, a wide range of ad-hoc networks are active in cross-border collaborative journalism. Smaller or larger teams meet to investigate one or few stories, once published they part again. Fundraising, tech infrastructure are selected ad hoc and dissolved after publication. Sometimes a website is set up to show the resulting publications in one space, sometimes not even that. Ad-hoc publications in recent years involve small-scale projects such as War & Labor - Exploitation Of Ukrainian Refugees in Europe (War and Labor 2024), mid-scale projects such as Cities For Rent about corporate landlords (Cities For Rent 2022) or large-scale projects such as Forever Pollution (Forever Pollution, 2025).

For the CJC project we chose a fixed structure with the purpose of making the project easier to plan and to secure the necessary infrastructure for the students. This meant the initiators at Gothenburg University had to carefully select partner journalism educations that were compatible.

For the how-to find suitable partner educations, we recommend to check all of the following boxes and carefully scrutinise the underlying structures:

- **Practice-oriented education**

The practice-orientation goes without saying when the purpose is to facilitate students embarking on an intense practice course. However many journalism educations do have a theoretical approach and thus do not allocate very much time to journalism practice. This varies from country to country and from university to university.

- **Education levels (BA, Master)**

It is helpful, when students are compatible in their education level. It may be possible to embrace some levels of diversity, however for a complex concept as the Crossborder Journalism Campus, things get easier, when students have some shared understanding. For the CJC Erasmus+ 2022-2024 project, we worked with three Master level educations, all in their last year of their studies. Assignments varied, for example

the students from Gothenburg handed in their investigation and reflection on the work as their final project, whereas students from Leipzig handed in interim versions and analysis, because their final thesis had more academic format.

- **Journalism study background**

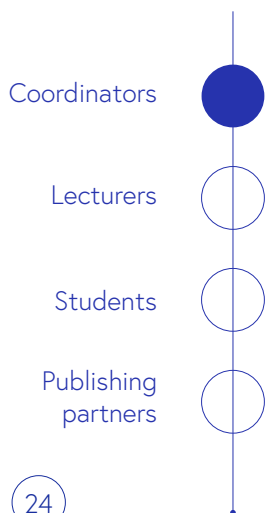
Students may but do not have to have the same journalism study background. The Leipzig classes, for example, consisted of students with background in journalism studies and others with background in IT studies, the French students had different media specialisations whereas the Gothenburg students had a variety of backgrounds including journalism studies but also studies in very different fields. In the CJC's systematic team work, such diversity proved to be a strength rather than a challenge.

- **Timing, timing, timing**

The very purpose of collaborating is to create time and space, where students can work together. For the CJC Erasmus+ 2022-2024 project, we had a general time overlap of suitable journalism educations. However, the teaching was structured very differently: While students in Leipzig had time for the CJC collaboration every Wednesday afternoon throughout the winter from October to February, students in Gothenburg had their education in blocks and here lecturers were free to integrate the CJC programme into their schedules from mid-January to their final exams in late May. The students in France had a block of three weeks in January full time, whereas for the rest they alternated between internships and education (Hendrichske, Irmer & Krüger, 2024). The timing question needs very serious and detailed attention in the planning phase. Semester rhythms do not overlap country to country, for example in Sweden the autumn semester runs from beginning of September to mid-January and the spring semester from mid-January to early June, whereas German universities operate with winter and summer semesters running from October to February and from April to August respectively. Further, in some countries universities work with terms of four rather than with semesters of six months.

At this stage, lecturers as well as project coordinators have to be involved in order to determine, whether a fixed collaboration will enrich an education and is viable

Fundraising



Connecting existing educations builds upon already funded educations and adds the necessary time and costs for the cross-border collaboration. This is, however, significant, not least due to travel costs. Funding needs include the following:

- **Travel, accomodation and venue costs**

→ Lecturers should meet to plan the programme – it simply makes collaboration easier. This will typically be travel and accomodation for one or two lecturers from each education institution with 1-2 nights abroad. For the venue, one of the partner instutions can provide a meeting room.

- Students meeting in person – in the case of CJC we met in Brussels – for lectures and group work. This includes travel for 3 classes and their lecturers and four nights abroad. In the case of the two CJC cohorts, about 75 students travelled accompanied by 5-6 lecturers. Students from Paris came by train, while students from Leipzig and Gothenburg travelled by bus. This meant an additional hotel room for one bus driver. Also, in order to have space for both lectures and group work for the group of 75 students, rooms were rented at a journalism school in Brussels.

- **Coordination**

- Educational coordination is central. Our experiences will be described step-by-step below. Tasks for coordination involve to make sure all partners are involved, difficulties addressed, meetings called and documented, speakers invited etc. Work hours need to be allocated to these tasks.
- Project coordination involves all the operational tasks supporting the educational process. This involves travel planning, fundraising, tech planning and the like. In the case of CJC this was handled by journalism educators. Work hours need to be allocated to these tasks.
- Administration of the project is an important aspect, particularly since funding needs to be administrated and reported. Here, it is a good idea to connect lead administrators from all participating journalism educations to determine good work routines. Work hours need to be allocated to these tasks.

- **Website**

Setting up and running a project website can in some cases be done through the universities' own communication teams. However given the collaborative and multiple-partner structure, Crossborder Journalism Campus had to set up its own website to display the students' work. Besides giving a sense of belonging and pride, the added value of a project website displaying the publications, students can use the displayed articles for their portfolios. Costs for online presentation needs to be part of the budget.

- **Digital infrastructure**

- Students will need access to shared digital infrastructure. Given the often proprietary software systems at universities, only students enrolled at one university will be able to enter that workspace, while partner universities have different systems with similar limitations. For the Crossborder Journalism Campus we initially tried to set up a NextCloud software bundle via a server owned by the University of Gothenburg. However due to the obvious need of a support structure to address technical problems at short notice, the CJC team accepted an offer by partner organisation Arena that provides cross-border journalism infrastructure via its Collaborative Desk project. Costs for digital infrastructure need to be part of the budget.

- **Lecturers' additional working hours**

→ Even if we tried to include most of the work into existing courses, the lecturers' workload increased to run the CJC. Besides the coordination tasks for the project, each lecturer will need more time than usual for coaching and solving problems. Teaching in a crossborder project, in a transnational context and in English instead of your native language is more time consuming than normal teaching.

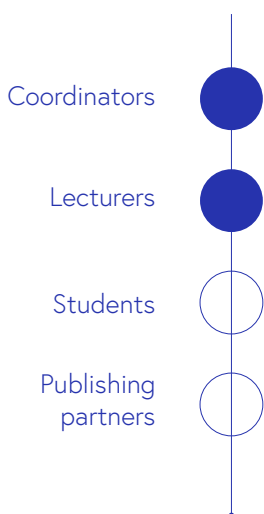
Funding opportunities

Realistically, funding the travel of some 75 students plus their lecturers needs to rely upon public funding but beyond the normal budgets of the universities. It appears unrealistic to obtain philanthropic or other funding in Europe at this stage. For the CJC project, we thus turned to the EU's Erasmus+ programme under the "Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices" programme, which in the early 2020s grants up to 400 000 Euro for up to three years of projects. Based upon our best bet, there are two way of funding a project of this type and scale:

- Erasmus programmes for all aspects of a CJC-style programme's costs
- The European Parliament and Commission offer a certain number of travel grants to universities. A concerted effort by partner universities could dip into such funds to make collaboration happen even if no larger project funding is obtained, but the means would likely be limited and not allow projects of the scale of the CJC.

For the fundraising tasks, usually the journalism lecturers, particularly the

Planning the project coordination



Like any other project planning, a collaboration of this scale needs coordination at several levels as well as administration. At this stage, the team of lecturers needs to agree on the following:

- Assigning one or two coordinators is helpful. Their role is not to be bosses but to line up, oversee and facilitate shared tasks. Assigning a lead and a deputy coordinator makes the project more robust in case one of them has to leave temporarily or permanently.
- Coordination meetings, ideally starting with an in-person meeting and followed by regular online meetings. For the CJC, an annual in-person meeting was held for the overall planning, online meetings were held with a weekly rhythm in the labour intensive phases ahead of the trip to Brussels and during intense research and monthly in phases with fewer tasks.

- A digital work space for the project management, including minutes from meetings, reporting, calendars etc. This can be done via software bundles along the lines of the software for the students' collaboration.

It is important to allocate time for lecturers to familiarise themselves with the selected software. And it is important to set up a folder structure in advance that all adhere to throughout the project.

- Digital work space for students.
- If decided: Webpage or website to display project results.
- Administration: make sure administrators connect across universities and partner organisations under the lead of the organisation that is main responsible for the project/grants, and make sure good work routines between project coordinator and lead administrator are lined up.

These tasks should be discussed and agreed on by journalism lecturers and coordinators.

Practical preparation

The practical preparation ahead of the trip to the students' in-person meeting needs to be closely interlinked with the educational planning. However, travel, hotel and venue constitute the frame of the meeting and there may be serious constraints in accessing them, if planning starts too late. For both CJC cohorts we included visits with the EU-institutions, where a minimum of 10 weeks planning is required for the European Commission's Visitors Service (2024), for example. Visits to other international institutions may have similar planning periods.

Checklist practical preparation:

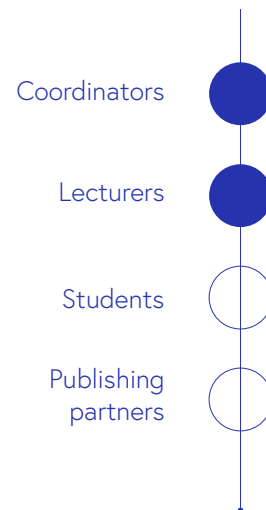
• Travel

All students need to go to the students' in-person kick-off meeting. For the CJC project, we opted for green travel, meaning that students from France travelled to Brussels by train, while students from Germany and Sweden travelled by chartered bus. The bus travel to Sweden lasted 20 hours each direction, on one occasion even 24 hours. To be discussed, agreed and booked in due time.

One advantage of travelling by chartered bus is that you are more flexible when it comes to the number of students travelling. The cost is the same whether you have 27 or 35 students on the bus.

• Accommodation

In Brussels, students and lecturers need accommodation. For the CJC project, we chose a hotel for the first cohort and for the second cohort an appart-hotel. Most students shared a double room while lecturers had single rooms. In the evaluations, students reacted very differently. Some considered a shared double room as very high standard and suggested hostels to save money and spend it on other opportunities, some indicated they would have preferred single hotel rooms.



In a city like Brussels it is important to check availability of hotels (of whichever standard is decided on) in due time as some weeks may be particularly expensive due to trade fairs or large political events.

The hotel should be in walking distance to the venue, where students will spend much time, and ideally close to a metro station to get to important institutions, in our case the EU-institutions.

- **Venue**

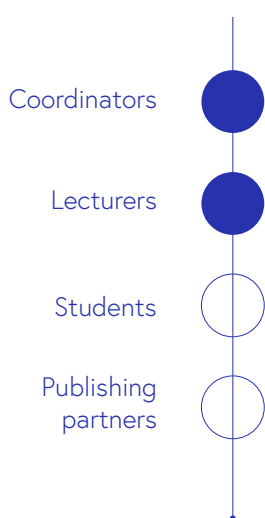
For the purpose of gathering 75 students plus lecturers, we had the pleasure to work with a journalism school in central Brussels. One auditorium and a large open space with several groups of seats was rented to accommodate shared lectures/presentations as well as group work.

- **Visit to institution and meeting with speakers**

Speakers relevant for the students can either be invited to the rented venue or met at one of the institutions, in the case of CJC the EU institutions. Both the European Parliament and the Commission offer support with visits to the institutions and with bringing in relevant speakers. Clear wishes as to which speakers would be good for the students to meet can help the institution's visitors' service to craft a suitable programme. For example, for students of data journalism it may be more helpful to have a presentation on data biographies then an introductory meeting with a spokesperson about the basic functioning of the EU.

These tasks should be discussed and agreed on by journalism lecturers and carried out by one or few colleagues sharing the tasks. Also, close connection with the admin team needs to be secured concerning payments

Pedagogical preparation



Agreeing on and planning the pedagogical process is crucial! Lecturers from all participating educations need to agree on timeline, content and practicalities.

The intense phase of the pedagogical preparation should ideally start with an in-person meeting. Here, the detailed timeline for the project should be agreed, closely connected and integrated with the proceedings at the individual educations. The timeline begins with the pre-Brussels lectures and ends with an agreed date of publication, where all partners oblige themselves to not publish prior to that.

Several questions should be addressed:

- **Reading list**

Which books, articles or other publications should be on the must-read list for the students, which are on the list of further recommended reading?

- **Basic lectures**

Which topics to address in shared lectures, so all students have the same frame of reference and shared terminology before their first in-person meeting?

The CJC offered shared online lectures about the functioning of the EU, about intercultural communication, about editorial coordination and project management, for example. More on that below.

- **Shared topic**

Should the programme indicate a field of interest. If so, what should this be? If no, how should the process of finding and selecting a story idea be organised?

The CJC lecturers opted for a shared topic in both cohorts. The purpose was to help students select their story ideas within the given time frame. Hence, the indicated topic should hold opportunities for news interest across Europe. Cohort 1 worked on the EUs Green Deal programme, Cohort 2 on labour and migration.

On the Green Deal, students covered aspects such as right-wing parties voting patterns on Green Deal legislation, shady practices in emission trading, or sustainable fisheries. On the labour and migration topic, they published stories as diverse as one on labour shortages and the race for migrant doctors as well as one on abuse and harassment in the cleaning industry.

The pre-selected topic areas thus worked well for both cohorts.

- **Group selection**

Should the lecturers assign groups of students early on to ensure the necessary representation of journalism schools, or should students be allowed to make their own selection? If the latter, when and how should that happen?

For the first cohort, we did not assign groups as we wanted the students to go through the cumbersome process of selecting a story idea and setting up a team. And indeed, the topic and group selection was cumbersome and time-consuming. Also, these self-selected groups did not all have the desired composition of minimum 3 students from each education with the purpose of building robust crossborder teams: In case team work felt tiring, there would still be peers in the same room to encourage each other, and in case a student dropped out, there would still be others left. For the second cohort, student groups were pre-assigned by the lecturers, taking into account gender balance etc. This allowed the students to meet online before the in-person gathering and secured a much more careful planning. Also, it allowed them to really focus on the work plan development during their days together in Brussels. This option is highly recommendable based upon the CJC experience.

- **External speakers**

Which external speakers to invite for the online preparation lectures and/or for the meeting in Brussels?

For the CJC, we invited stakeholders from the Brussels policy making (officials, MEPs, interest representatives, editors), which was useful for students. The major lesson learnt after the first pilot cohort was to avoid overloading the schedule:

It is utterly important to secure enough time for students to actually get to know each other and work in their teams, in some cases they may even manage to set up interview appointments with sources for their stories.

Also, for the CJC, we brought in one senior cross-border journalist, co-founder of Investigate Europe Harald Schumann, who not only offered an inspiring opening talk but also acted as coach for the students during the in-person gathering days – and remained engaged in the different investigations also afterwards.

•Media partners

Working with media partners for publication was part of the CJC programme for both cohorts. Whether or not to work with external media partners and which role they should play is an important question to clarify at this point. Do partner universities have established media partnerships where students can publish? If yes, how – and when – are they best integrated, if no who would be a good partner and when and how can they be best integrated?

As described above, the three partnering journalism educations had three different approaches on media partners and students' publications. This is crucial to align beforehand in order to avoid misunderstandings and potential disagreement among the students: Does the university have a long-standing agreement with a publisher or agree on one for a given year or project, does the university teach freelance practice but leave students themselves take the pitches further, and what about honoraries for students' articles? Such questions arose during the work with the first CJC cohort. For the second cohort, we reached out to more media partners from the beginning. Typically, editors like to be involved at an early stage of the research process, thus the lecturers' team reached out to media partners early on, and we arranged online pitching sessions with the invited editors. Editors will play a minor role in the early stages of the project as counterpart to students' story pitches. Later, as stories approach publication, editors function as sparring partners for the students as the latter prepare their work for publication.

At this early stage of contact with media partners, it is important to agree on clear guidelines on a few points:

1. Roles and processes
2. Timeline (no publication before an agreed date, planned timing for editing phase)
3. Citation – the lead authors in the relevant language are in the byline but the other authors of the cross-border team must be mentioned, as well as the CJC-project and its Erasmus+ funding
4. Payments – in some countries, students' publications are treated like freelance material and paid for by publishers, in other countries this is not the case – lecturers must clarify and agree with publishing partners and among each other in advance how to deal with this question

Editors are not a formal part of the education, obviously, but working closely with them has proven an interesting element of the CJC project, as students get real life experience with newsroom publication – and once published they have first pieces in their portfolios for their job seeking.

ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

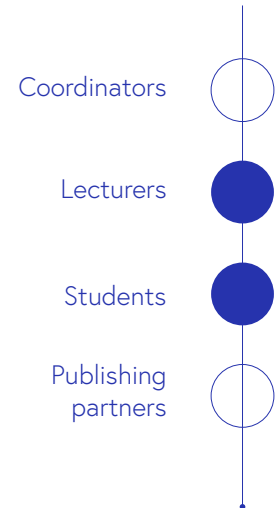
- Suggested reading list in Annex II
- Pre-Brussels schedule autumn 2023

The introduction phase for the students is crucial. Now, in the weeks ahead of their trip to actually meet in person, they are introduced to a shared terminology, to their teams, to the overall topic and in the case of the CJC also to the functioning of the EU. The checklist for this phase includes lectures and group work, template presentations for potential lectures used during the first and the second cohort are available and free to use (under Creative Commons CC BY NC SA). In the following, a list of tasks for this phase is indicated and shortly described. The tasks are subdivided into three groups: Lectures – where students are introduced to the terminology and theories of cross-border collaborative journalism, editorial coordination – where students are introduced to the editorial project planning elements connected to their forthcoming work and practicalities – concerning their travel to the meeting and the like.

• Lectures and group work

- Intercultural communication & non-violent communication (lecture)
- This lecture introduces students to the basic terminology of intercultural communication with a background in business sociology and culture studies. The purpose of the lecture is to raise students' awareness of intercultural communication opportunities and introduce them to the basic terminology.
- Intercultural communication (group work)
- This group work can be used to both allow students a first attempt of applying intercultural communication terminology and to get to know their peers from the other journalism schools. The groups should thus be mixed and could, for example, be the journalistic teams the students are assigned to.
- Cross-border collaborative journalism – the work process (lecture)
- Introduction to the cross-border collaborative journalism work process based upon Alfter (2019).
- Introduction to generating story ideas in a new topic (group work)
- Students are introduced to the process of pre-research and idea selection. This is followed by work in the assigned teams.
- How to prepare a cross-border journalism work plan (workshop)
- Introduction to the tasks of thinking ahead when planning a journalistic story based upon a template.
- Introduction to covering the EU institutions
- Since CJC happened in Europe with a focus on European politics and societies, we chose a generic lecture about the basics of covering European affairs with a particular focus on power structures connected to the EU institutions. This needs, obviously, to be applied to any given context.

Introduction Phase



- **Editorial coordination**

- From here to publication – the task at hand for this project
- A good briefing to the students on the timeline for the shared work ahead.
- All students are asked to sign a so-called Memorandum of Understanding with basic agreements on publication date, handling information, editorial responsibilities and so forth – a template is attached.
- Teams are introduced to each other
- The pre-assigned teams are introduced to each other and get the assignment to introduce themselves to each other, discuss story ideas etc. This can be combined with the above lectures/group work on intercultural communication and story idea development, pre-research and selection.
- Introduction to the digital work space including folder structure
- Providing students with a folder structure (attached template for inspiration) to give them a frame for information and document sharing structures and practices.
- Cross-border collaboration work routines (lecture)
- Introduction to the shared tasks, timeline, work rhythms. An internal guideline on editorial coordination was developed by Edouard Perrin & Brigitte Alfter for the first CJC cohort.

- **Practicalities**

- The trip to the in-person meeting: Travel, accomodation, venue and general guidelins
- What the class will do during the in-person meeting
- What the individual teams will do during the in-person meeting

ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

- Pre-Brussels schedules (as example)
- (online) lecture template: Intercultural communication
- (online) group work template: Intercultural communication
- (online) lecture template: Cross-border collaborative journalism – the work process
- (online) lecture template: How to prepare a cross-border journalism work plan
- (online) lecture template: Introduction to covering the EU institutions
- (online) lecture template: Introduction to generating story ideas in a new topic

- (online) lecture template: Cross-border collaboration work routines:

- Internal guideline on editorial coordination
by Edouard Perrin & Brigitte Alfter
- Folder structure template
- Research plan template
- MoU template

The Brussels gathering has its own programme. The overall purpose is to allow the students enough time to drive forward their team work, ideally the week will be concluded with a well-crafted research plan for each team.

In the CJC case, the programme was adapted to a European reality, and a central element thus was to give the students a first impression of the functioning of the EU-institutions in Brussels. The CJC experience shows that for many of the students, this was the first and thus impressive experience of the EU institutions, in Europe we suggest to allocate a full day to visiting either the European Commission or the European Parliament. For the programme, the institution needs to be included in the planning and speakers from EU-institutions and stake holders based in Brussels can be suggested.

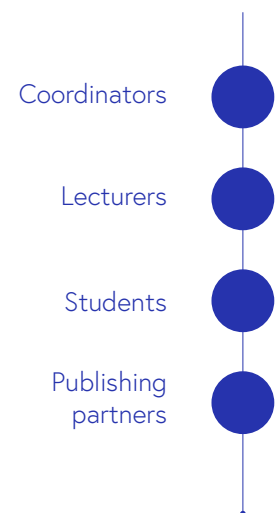
The outcome of the in-person meeting should be a workable research plan. The students in the teams thus need to get to know each other, to continue the research on their story ideas that was started during the on-line preparations. This can include group work at the venue, it can also– if prepared in advance – include first interviews with experts or stakeholders. For the CJC cohorts, we also brought in senior cross-border collaborative journalists to be around as special coaches for the students in their work to carve out a very clear story idea and towards a research plan.

In the first pilot year, the CJC students had four days together in Brussels with a tightly packed schedule, and where time was spent on setting up teams. This did not leave enough time to work on the actual research plan or even the first interviews. For the second pilot cohort, groups were set up before, so students could prepare better, we had five days in Brussels and the programme allocated more space to focus on the research for their stories.

Another improvement for the 2nd cohort was to bring in at least one editor from partner media. This had a double purpose: The students got a sense of which aspects of their topic media were interested in and why, and the editor(s) felt an early ownership of the stories under preparation.

Based upon the experience, we suggest the following structure for the programme of the in-person meeting, adapted to the CJC's focus on Brussels and EU-institutions:

In-person gathering of all students and their lecturers



Day 1 - Monday

- Morning: arrival and getting to know each other
- Afternoon: first story presentation round

Day 2 - Tuesday

- Visit to an EU institution including meetings with officials, MEPs, interest representatives
- Possibly a "lobby walk" through Brussels to get an impression of the various interest representations

Day 3 - Wednesday

- Editor(s) from partner media joins, talk about their take on the shared topic
- Pitching round with comments from the editor
- The teams work on their stories under guidance of lecturers

Day 4 - Thursday

- Inspirational talk by senior journalist in the field
- The teams work on their stories under guidance of lecturers and senior journalist guest
- Late afternoon/evening: Gathering on Place de Luxembourg for socialising

Day 5 - Friday

- Final team work
- Presentation of pitches
- Summing up by lecturers on the forthcoming work process
- Travel home

► **For more information about the in-person meetings, see the [documents](#) describing the Brussels weeks.**

In the time after the in-person gathering, students work remotely in their respective teams. After difficulties in aligning schedules the first CJC cohort, we adjusted schedules carefully for the second cohort, which resulted in three sprint weeks with intense collaboration about 1½ months after the in-person week. This allowed students to carry out some research and thus to prepare for the sprint weeks, also, it revitalised the motivation.

During the sprint weeks, we did our best to free as much time as possible for the students in all the participating journalism educations. In Sweden, the student groups were assigned separate rooms where they could set up their own newsrooms for three weeks. The lecturers were on stand-by to help when needed. In France and Germany they used a similar set up, with lecturers present in the classroom or stand-by. The main purpose of these weeks was to give all students a good start of the intense research phase, but also to enable the separate teams to set up some routines and roles among them, such as daily meetings led by the coordinator and documented by minutes, as well as a good structure in sharing material on the collaborative desk (NextCloud), their shared digital meeting space.

Based upon experiences from the first cohort, for the second cohort we decided to make bigger, but fewer, project groups and assign one lecturer from each education to follow every group. The purpose was to make sure that all three journalism educations and education cultures were represented in case 'translation' was necessary. Apart from the "editorial meetings" with the lecturers, the student teams organised their work themselves along the lines of the editorial coordination guidelines.

The production of the stories went then towards publication and students pitched the outcome of their research to publishers. At this point, the lecturers remain close to the student teams, however gradually editors get more of a say when commenting and cross-checking the articles under preparation. This is visualised in Hendrichske, Irmer & Krüger (2024, illustration p. 93 and illustration p. 94).

Research & production

Coordinators

Lecturers

Students

Publishing partners

The publication phase will feel like the most intense phase – particularly to the students. Fact checking, legal checking, the presentation of the material and the actual writing of their articles will take a lot of time and attention. Students now work with the editors, and lecturers are around to support them in the background.

In this stage, it is important to have the website ready to display the published material. This is published proof of the project and important for students' portfolios.

- Collection of articles published by CJC cohort 2022-23:
<https://crossborderjournalismcampus.eu/category/2022-2023/>

- Collection of articles published by CJC cohort 2023-24:
<https://crossborderjournalismcampus.eu/category/2023-2024/>

The publication phase

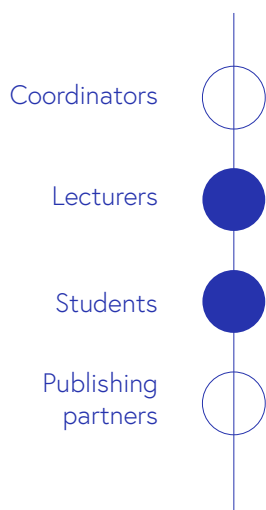
Coordinators

Lecturers

Students

Publishing partners

Assignments & assessments



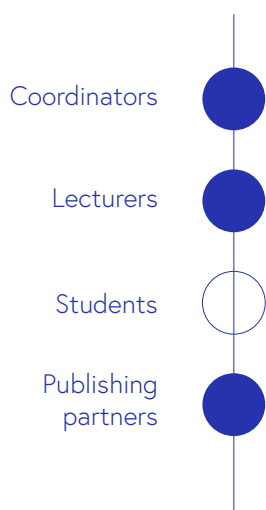
As production progresses, journalism lecturers also have to consider the assignments necessary for the students to prove their progress. This is individual to each of the participating journalism schools, as this networked model builds upon independent curricula.

Taking the CJC as an example, students in Leipzig were approaching their final exams in the shape of an academic thesis. The cross-border collaboration thus was a step on the way, their assignment was handed in as a description and analysis of the work process before they moved on to their final thesis. Students in Gothenburg, on the other hand, were examined in journalism practice, their CJC production constituted their final project in the shape of the articles ready for publication at industry standard combined with an individual report describing and analysing the work process.

In this phase, the students and lecturers are not collaborating across borders. Lecturers and students at the respective educations prepare the best they can along each participating education's rules for assignments and assessments.

Also in this phase, it is important to gather students' evaluations of the process in order to use lessons learnt for future projects of this kind. CJC evaluations mostly focused on practicalities, particularly during the first cohort, where the lacking alignment of schedules caused frustrations along the way. The analysis is included in Krüger, Hendrichske & Irmer (2024).

Project evaluation & reporting



After an intense effort, evaluation is useful to craft future activities. Given that funding from external partners may be involved, evaluation and reporting are likely to be necessary. While it is difficult to give general guidance on what and how to report, it is important to allocate time for evaluation and reporting. Some of this will be based on students' evaluation, but also post-publication feedback from publishing partners is valuable.

All such evaluation efforts are at the same time an investment in future activities.

Perspective for practice-oriented education

Universities, just as traditional news media, have long operated in a quite national context, teaching and reporting in our native languages, educating students to work in our own countries. In the beginning of the 2010's, about at the same time as the cross-border collaborative investigations started to move from purely experimental to rather visible major publications, academia also went through a process of internationalization.

Students were encouraged to take a semester or more abroad, thanks to mobility programmes funded by the EU and others. University educations counted incoming and outgoing students. But, quite often the incoming students were referred to a few courses given in English, where they mostly met other international students who had come to Sweden (or other non-English speaking countries).

What we, at the University of Gothenburg, wanted to do was to create a truly international classroom, with students from all over the world. That was the starting point of MIJ, the international master programme in investigative journalism, launched in 2016. The profile was, and still is, digital journalism, data journalism and cross-border collaborations. After teaching cross-border collaborations in theory for a couple of years, we saw the need of a more practical application.

The first idea was to create a joint course open to students from a variety of European universities with master level educations in journalism. The advantages of a joint course would be to have all involved students studying under the same conditions, with the same schedule, same assignments and criteria. It turned out to be more difficult than anticipated. First of all, the academic year looks quite different for the universities in various countries. When does the semester start/end? How many weeks is a semester? What kind of syllabus, assignments and criteria are required in order to follow the standards at each specific university? Secondly, most universities are not characterized by being agile, fast and flexible when it comes to syllabi and curricula matters. It can take years to create a new course and almost as long to make adjustments to the structure of a programme or a course.

That is why we chose a "plug-in model" for the Crossborder Journalism Campus, a networked education model for practice-oriented collaboration, rather than establishing a new joint course/programme. In the plug-in model each partner university is fully responsible for their own syllabi, curricula, assessment and grading of their students. At Leipzig University CJC became part of an existing course in innovations, at CFJ in Paris/Lyon it was included as part of the students' specialization and at University of Gothenburg it was integrated in three out of four vcourses included in the full Master of Investigative Journalism programme.

In such a way the CJC could enrich existing educations, rather than become a course or programme on its own.

This is a model we strongly recommend, as it makes it possible to start collaborating on quite a short notice, as long as you find partners who are able to adjust to the same time-frame as you.

Another challenge is to fund the cross-border collaboration. Bringing a cohort of students and lecturers to meet in Brussels, or elsewhere, for a proper start meeting is expensive. Most universities in Europe do not have that kind of money in their budgets.

The European Union offers grants for partnerships for cooperations within the Erasmus+ programme. Participating organisations have to be based in an EU member state or third country associated to the programme. Duration of a project is between 12 and 36 months and you can apply for a maximum of EUR 400 000.

One organisation applies on behalf of all the participating partners. As these applications are handled by the national agency in the country where the lead organization is based, it's a good advice to check how many applications are normally filed in each country before you decide on which university, or other organisation, will be the lead applicant.

We also recommend that you to strengthen and add value to your project by including at least one professional partner from outside the university world, as we did with Arena for Journalism in Europe. Being able to include an organisation well-rooted in and serving those groups within the profession and with vast experience of coordinating cross-border collaborations, their tech know-how and their international network has been invaluable for the CJC-project. It is also a way to make sure that the journalism produced within your project meets industry standard.

Writing an application is time consuming, the one we handed in for the Erasmus+ funding was about 160 pages long. It also takes time to gather all paper work and signatures needed from all the participating organisations. So: start planning well ahead of the application deadline.

Another challenge is that the maximum project duration is three years, and you can not apply for a continuation funded by the Erasmus+ programme, which means that if you want to continue the cross-border collaborations after the project period, you need to find funding elsewhere.

Still, we believe this is part of the future for journalism educations. In order to be relevant, we need to teach practise oriented cross-border collaborative journalism and create stronger networks of journalism educators interested in the field.

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Annex I: Teaching material

- [Recommended reading list for students](#)
- [Before the in-person meeting – template programme](#)
- [Package intercultural and team communication](#)
- [Lecture cross-border journalism work process](#)
- [The in-person meeting – template programme](#)
- [Lecture how to prepare a cross-border work plan](#)
- [Templates for cross-border work plans](#)
- [Lecture introduction to generate and select ideas for a new cross-border story](#)
- [Lecture cross-border collaboration work routines](#)
- [Internal guideline on editorial coordination \(Perrin & Alfter\)](#)
- [Team agreement template](#)
- [Folder structure template](#)

Annex II:

Reading list for the students

- **Alfter, Brigitte (2019). Cross-border Collaborative Journalism. A Step-By-Step Guide. Routledge.**

* This is a practice-oriented guidebook to cross-border collaborative journalism. Setting this way of doing journalism in context, it moves on to describing the seven steps of cross-border journalism providing a deeper understanding of each step. This book was considered a must-read for all participating students.

- **Obermaier, Frederik; Obermayer, Bastian (2016). The Panama Papers - Breaking the Story of How the Rich and Powerful Hide Their Money. One World Publications**

* A gripping research description about one of the largest leak-stories when it comes to the scale of the digital data trove and the size of the team. Probably the prominence of the Panama Papers contributed to the misperception that cross-border collaborative journalism is based on leaked material, but it's a good read anyway.

- **Rothenberger, Liane; Löffelholz, Martin; Weaver, David H. (2023). The Palgrave Handbook of Cross-Border Journalism. Palgrave Macmillan.**

* The big academic handbook about cross-border journalism. Not necessarily cross-border collaborative. An anthology, the book gives insights into the discussion about cross-border journalism as an emerging academic field.

- **Sambrook, R. (ed.) (2018). Global Teamwork: The rise of collaboration in investigative journalism. Anthology by academics and practitioners. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford.**

* An anthology about cross-border journalism by early practitioners. Including an article by Nicolas Kayser-Bril on cross-border collaboration as one method among others and by Brigitte Alfter on editorial coordination in collaborative teams.

- **Sheffield, Hazel (2025), forthcoming Arena Paper.**

