
**Feasibility study
for the preparatory action
“ERASMUS for journalists”**

ANNEX A

**RESEARCH INFORMING
THE FEASIBILITY STUDY**

February 2011

Feasibility study for the preparatory action “ERASMUS for journalists”

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Annex A – Research informing the feasibility study

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ANNEX A1: DETAILED INFORMATION ON SIMILAR PROGRAMMES

1. Leonardo da Vinci

Broad areas	Issues	Information
A. Background	1. Name of programme	Leonardo da Vinci programme
	2. Years running	Since 1995
	3. Context / motive	The programme came about just when the Commission's White Paper on 'Growth, Competitiveness and Employment' was emphasising the importance of vocational training as a key factor in combating unemployment and strengthening European competitiveness. The programme was meant to promote transnational partnerships while responding to the demand for new skills. It also rationalised a clutch of Community programmes in the area of vocational training, aiming to take them forward.
B. Objectives	4. Global objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To support participants in training and further training activities in the acquisition and the use of knowledge, skills and qualifications to facilitate personal development, employability and participation in the European labour market - To support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices - To enhance the attractiveness of vocational education and training and mobility for employers and individuals and to facilitate the mobility of working trainees.
	5. Specific objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To improve the quality and to increase the volume of mobility throughout Europe of people involved in initial vocational education and training and in continuing training, so as to increase placements in enterprises to at least 80,000 per year by the end of the LLP - To improve the quality and to increase the volume of cooperation between institutions or organisations providing learning opportunities, enterprises, social partners and other relevant bodies throughout Europe - To facilitate the development of innovative practices in the field of vocational education and training other than at the tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others - To improve the transparency and recognition of qualifications and competences, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning - To encourage the learning of modern foreign languages - To support the development of innovative ICT-based content services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning
C. Inputs	6. Financial inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total yearly funding of about €260m p.a. This is divided into a set budget for each MS/ national agency according to a formula based on several factors including size of the Member State, likely number of applications for grants etc. - Ca €160m is disbursed in grants covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Subsistence for participant o Travel costs to a certain limit depending on the country in question o Contribution to preparation (cultural, language), which varies depending on nature and length of the stay abroad o Contribution to organisation costs for the host organisation - About €100m p.a. is used for multilateral actions, while 4-5% of the total budget covers the admin costs of the national agencies

		contracted to administer the programme.
	7. Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6 FTUs within DG EAC - Staff within the 33 national agencies (intermediary organisations) charged with implementing the programme
	8. Other inputs (trainings, meeting space, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DG EAC holds regular meetings with national agencies - Working groups on specific topics - Manages central website - Yearly conference on LL
D. Activities	9. Types of exchange/ mobility offered	<p>Mobility of individuals. In arranging for or supporting the organisation of such mobility, the necessary preparatory measures, including language preparation, shall be adopted and care shall be taken to ensure that adequate supervision and support is available for individuals in mobility. Such mobility may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Transnational placements in enterprises or training institutions o Placements and exchanges aimed at the further professional development of trainers and guidance counsellors, and at those responsible for training establishments and for training planning and career guidance within enterprises - Partnerships focusing on themes of mutual interest to the participating organisations - Multilateral projects, in particular those aimed at improving training systems by focusing on the transfer of innovation involving the linguistic, cultural and legal adaptation to national needs of innovative products and processes developed in different contexts - Multilateral projects aimed at improving training systems by focusing on the development of innovation and good practice - Thematic networks of experts and organisations working on specific issues related to vocational education and training - Other initiatives aimed at promoting the objectives of the Leonardo da Vinci programme (accompanying measures) <p>N.B. Leonardo only finances transnational 'learning mobility', not working internships. The focus is on learning and always involves placements in enterprises.</p>
	10. Target audience	<p>The main target audience is made up of the following two groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People learning in all forms of vocational education and training except at tertiary level - People on the labour market (i.e. people who have just finished training/ university and are starting to look for a job) - Institutions or organisations providing learning opportunities in the fields covered by the Leonardo da Vinci programme <p>And the stated target audiences of the programme also include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers, trainers and other staff within those institutions or organisations - Associations and representatives of those involved in vocational education and training, including trainees;, parents' and teachers' associations - Enterprises, social partners and other representatives of working life, including chambers of commerce and other trade organisations - Bodies providing guidance, counselling and information services relating to any aspect of lifelong learning - Persons and bodies responsible for systems and policies concerning any aspect of vocational education and training at local, regional and national level - Research centres and bodies concerned with lifelong learning issues - Higher education institutions

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-profit organisations, voluntary bodies, NGOs <p>According to interviewees, Leonardo does not have specific sectoral approaches, but is open to everyone (though in future it could be considered to have funding earmarked for certain groups)</p> <p>Individuals are not direct targets of the programme. Instead, an organisation (school, training institution, etc) decides its clientele would be interested in mobility, then looks for partners.</p>
	11. Target number of participants	About 80,000 mobility exchanges per year
	12. Duration of visits / exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For people in vocational training: between 2 weeks and 9 months (average 5-6 weeks) - For people on the labour market: between 2 weeks and 6 months (average about 12 weeks)
	13. Management arrangements	<p>The programme is jointly managed by the EC, national agencies (of which there are 33) and other intermediaries.</p> <p>DG EAC: sets general rules, application forms, assessment forms, general eligibility guidance, general programme content and maximum subsistence rates, monitors national agencies and holds regular meetings with them.</p> <p>National agencies (funded partly by the EC and partly by national authorities) play the primary management role. There is normally one per country, not normally a private company, though there are exceptions (e.g. Ecotec in the UK). The national agencies disseminate information about the programme, select projects (based on criteria defined by the EC) and disburse grants.</p>
	14. Eligibility criteria – participants	Eligible participants consist of all people falling into the target audience. Those who find suitable partners and apply to the relevant national agencies then have their proposal assessed by the national agencies.
	15. Eligibility criteria – hosting organisations	Relevant hosting organisations falling into the target audiences outlined above are eligible for the programme, and must form part of the application process, which is then assessed by the national agency of the sending organisation.
	16. Communication activities	<p>DG EAC manages the website, a yearly lifelong learning conference and some awards for especially successful projects, but it is unlikely much of this reaches a wide audience.</p> <p>Since the target groups are in the MS, the national agencies are responsible for the bulk of I&C activities, which is in the relevant languages and tailored for each individual country. According to DG EAC, this varies heavily by country, but generally is thought to work well. However, it was also noted that a major problem the programme faces is having enough funding for grants. Since demand is always higher than supply, it is not seen as necessary to communicate to heavily.</p>
E. Outputs/ results	17. Evaluation/ monitoring arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NAs have to demonstrate that there is an evaluation and control system in place. - DG EAC carries out monitoring visits. - There are intermittent evaluations covering the entire programme. The last one was published in 2008.
	18. Types of exchange carried out	<p>A typical exchange starts with an organisation (school, training institution) thinking their clientele would be interested in mobility. Then they develop the idea and look for partners. The main player is the sending organisation, which is responsible for applying to the national agency for funding and looking for partners elsewhere. (This is a kind of QA mechanism, since sending institutions are interested in providing a high quality product for their students.)</p> <p>National agencies select best proposals each year, provides grants.</p> <p>In a training agreement, learning objectives are defined for work-based learning</p> <p>For people in vocational training, exchanges typically last between 2 weeks and 9 months (average 5-6 weeks).</p>

		<p>For people on the labour market, exchanges last between 2 weeks and 6 months (average about 12 weeks)</p> <p>For people on the labour market, they apply and participate through labour offices, semi-public institutions, sometimes even universities for their graduates. There is a lot of variation on this aspect.</p> <p>The scope of the projects also varies – sometimes only 1 or 2 people are involved in a proposal, but normally an application involves a larger number of people, though they do not necessarily all move at the same time or to the same place.</p> <p>People in training usually go in small groups, while people on the labour market go as individuals.</p>
	19. Number of participants	There are about 80,000 mobilities per year.
	20. Supporting organisations/ partners	Supporting organisations include the national agencies described above. There are currently 33 and they receive their funding partially from the Commission and partially from national authorities.
	21. Funding disbursed	- 25% of the LLP budget, or about €250m per year. €160m is for the mobility actions and €100m for multilateral actions.
	22. Achievement of objectives	- According the latest evaluation, the programme has broadly succeeded in achieving its objectives.
F. Lessons learned	23. Risks/ challenges	<p>Main risk: quality of the intermediary organisations – sending organisations and hosts. This can be a problem when setting up a database. Leonardo had a simple partner search database, but those who signed up were only the ones most interested in getting money; real high quality institutions already have their networks of partners. It was therefore important to set up a good network of intermediaries in the apprentices sector. A database with one-to-one matching is difficult.</p> <p>There is risk is that people are abused as cheap labour, and don't learn that much. DG EAC doesn't get many complaints, but some say they were exploited.</p> <p>Language is a problem that cannot easily be solved. In VET it is usually less complicated than in journalism, since the work is more practical, but it is still an issue.</p> <p>In Leonardo, sending organisations decide whether language screening is necessary. There has been a clear trend of more placements in MS with big languages: UK, IE, DE, FR, ES.</p> <p>The problem of participants being missed by home orgs only applies to the VET professionals. When teachers are gone for 2 weeks, sometimes there are complaints. There is no solution to that – DG EAC cannot afford to pay the sending organisation since funds are already scarce.</p>
	24. Best practices	<p>Good organisation needed – too much of the organisation cannot be left to participants.</p> <p>For a small scale programme, it doesn't make sense to have a national agency in each MS. Existing networks and organisations can be used.</p>
	25. Notes	No significant potential overlaps were identified

2. ERASMUS for young entrepreneurs

Broad areas	Issues	Information
A. Background	1. Name of programme	Erasmus for young entrepreneurs
	2. Years running	2 years (Preparatory action started in 2007, and the pilot project started in 2008. Most recently there was a call for proposals in late 2009 for projects starting in 2010.)
	3. Context / motive	In 2007 the European Parliament introduced a budget line for the programme in the context of the globalised economy, the rise of the knowledge economy and, perhaps most importantly, that companies are increasingly finding it necessary to turn to markets abroad. The lack of appropriate skills and difficulty in establishing business contacts were seen to be particularly acute for SMEs. The legal basis for the programme is in the Small Business Act 2007 (Communication from the Commission: Think Small First, a Small Business Act for Europe)
B. Objectives	4. Global objective	Facilitate exchanges of experience, learning and networking for new EU entrepreneurs by means of working with an experienced entrepreneur in another EU country.
	5. Specific objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On-the-job-training for new entrepreneurs in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) elsewhere in the EU in order to facilitate a successful start and development of their business ideas. - Exchanges of experience and information between entrepreneurs on obstacles and challenges to starting up and developing their businesses. - To enhance market access and identification of potential partners for new and established businesses in other EU countries. - Networking by building on knowledge and experience from other European countries.
C. Inputs	6. Financial inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Commission provides, through intermediary organisations in each MS, grants of up to €10k per participant, which covers subsistence during the mobility and travel costs. The amount per grant is determined by the proposed length of the stay abroad (in accordance with a recommended amount per month that varies per MS) and any travel costs. Overall, €4.3m was available for the 2009 funding period.
	7. Human resources	About 2.25 full time equivalents (one policy officer at DG ENTR, a legal officer preparing the legal base, a financial officer working with grants and an assistant)
	8. Other inputs (trainings, meeting space, etc)	<p>The Commission also developed and maintains a database which prospective NEs and HEs register for and use to identify each other. The Support Office assists in this role.</p> <p>In addition, the Commission runs training activities for the IOs called 'Networking meetings' about twice a year. This has been perceived as successful and will likely increase.</p> <p>A conference has been organised to present results and gather input for the legal base, with a subsequent conference in 2011.</p>
D. Activities	9. Types of exchange/ mobility offered	<p>The programme consists of providing practical and financial assistance for new entrepreneurs by facilitating a stay for them with experienced host entrepreneurs in another EU country. It involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matching a NE with a HE. - Facilitating contact between them with the help of intermediary organisations commissioned to implement the programme.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement of the parties involved (i.e. NE, HE and IOs) on conditions for the stay abroad. - Stay abroad between 1 and 6 months, with a possibility to divide the time into slots with minimum stays of 1 week, spread over 1 year. <p>While the NE is abroad, activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shadowing the HE - Market research and developing new business opportunities - Project development, innovation and R&D - Taking a fresh look at existing business operations - Understanding SME finance - Branding, sales and marketing of the HE's company - Work on concrete projects from one or more of the above mentioned areas.
	10. Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New entrepreneurs - Host entrepreneurs
	11. Target number of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 870 stays abroad during 2009 and 2010.
	12. Duration of visits / exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visits can last anywhere between 1 and 6 months spent full time with the HE. This can be spread out over up to 1 year of stays of at least 1 week.
	13. Management arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Commission is responsible for the high level organisation of the programme, including design of the programme, publication of calls for proposals and monitoring. Overall political and financial responsibility, including managing the grant agreements/ making sure funds are available, raising awareness of the programme, giving guidance, giving final approval to exchanges, evaluation and adapting the project from a pilot into a continuous programme. - The Support Office carries out day-to-day management of the programme. Tasks include marketing and promotion of the initiative, guidance and support to IOs, quality control, development of training material and networking of IOs. - Intermediary organisations (over 100 throughout the EU made up of Chambers of Commerce, incubators, start up centres etc) provide information, assess applications, seek placements for eligible NEs, disburse grants, act as a local contact assisting with practicalities, request activity reports from participants and promote the establishment of an alumni network.
	14. Eligibility criteria – participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New entrepreneurs are defined as entrepreneurs in the early stages (i.e. both nascent, would-be entrepreneurs with a viable business plan and entrepreneurs who have started their own business in the last 3 years). The programme is open to all sectors, but educational and/ or vocational competence, and a sound business idea must be demonstrated.
	15. Eligibility criteria – hosting organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host entrepreneurs are defined as successful and experienced owners of a micro or small enterprise, or persons directly involved at SME board level. HEs should demonstrate their desire to share their entrepreneurial experience and to benefit from the concrete contribution which the NE will make to their business.
	16. Communication activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Support Office has developed posters, brochures and a user's guide, with the Commission's input. A promotional video is being produced, in addition to content for social/professional networks such as linkedin and facebook.
	17. Evaluation/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Towards the end of the pilot project, an external evaluation is required with the purpose of assessing the results and impact of the

	monitoring arrangements	<p>programme and making recommendations for a future continuous programme. The evaluation is focusing on several areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevance, utility, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the programme - Results achieved to date in relation to framework - Drawing conclusions and making recommendations in relation to the improvement of the programme as well as setting up a legal base for an eventual pilot programme.
E. Outputs/ results	18. Types of exchange carried out	<p>The activities actually carried out have been of the type described in Row 9. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most exchanges have lasted between 2 and 3 months. - Most popular fields have been advertising/ promotion, IT, education, consultancy and tourism - Italy, Spain, France, Romania and Germany have been most popular suppliers of NE - Italy, Spain, UK, France and Germany have been most popular hosts.
	19. Number of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1328 applications approved (1838 from NE and 490 from HE). - 105 exchanges carried out as of April 2010, with 120 ongoing and about 100 in preparation.
	20. Supporting organisations/ partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See row 13. In addition to Eurochambres, which is the central Support Office for the programme, there are over 100 intermediary organisations around Europe charged with organising aspects of the programme.
	21. Funding disbursed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not all funding has been disbursed, since less exchanges have taken place than targets called for.
	22. Achievement of objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to interim evaluation and interview with Commission official, the exchanges are well received but the number of exchanges is not in line with pilot programme targets. A strong limiting factor cited by IOs has been human resource constraints.
F. Lessons learned	23. Risks/ challenges	-
	24. Best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simplify procedures for participants as much as possible, through for example using lump-sum financing. - Use clear guidelines on application criteria. - Clear definition of the conditions for participation and expected outcome of the activity to help assess impacts later on.
	25. Notes	-

3. International Journalism Exchange

Broad areas	Issues	Information
A. Background	1. Name of programme	The International Journalism Exchange (IJE) Program
	2. Years running	Since 1984
	3. Context / motive	The IJE was initiated in 1984 by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) as an effort by American print media professionals to enhance professional skills and share knowledge with their overseas colleagues. The programme is conceived to "train international journalists in newsroom management, editing and leadership". Since 2009, it emphasises digital journalism skills, to help participants "keep their news outlets on the front lines of media trends that can bring information to citizens even in countries where government controls traditional media."
B. Objectives	4. Global objective	Contribute to freedom of the press and real investigative journalism in developing countries; expose participants to how a modern and free press works.
	5. Specific objectives	The focus is on building skills in specific areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigative journalism techniques • Media management • Digital media • Starting up websites
C. Inputs	6. Financial inputs	The cost per participating journalist is approx. USD 15,000. About 75% of this covers the direct costs (including those below), the remaining 25% is for programme management (incl. Staff time, overheads etc.) The program covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All international and domestic travel costs • Emergency medical insurance • Accommodation (hotels in Washington and New York; usually home stays with a newspaper professional during the newsroom attachment) • A stipend for meals and other incidental expenses. Host organisations do not receive funding. IJE used to be funded by a number of US media organisations and foundations, but this funding is becoming harder to obtain. The ICFJ is therefore seeking funding from US Embassies around the world.
	7. Human resources	At the ICFJ, an estimated 0.5 FTEs are spent on managing and running the programme.
	8. Other inputs (trainings, meeting space, etc)	N/A

D. Activities	9. Types of exchange/ mobility offered	The programme brings journalists from developing countries to the US. It is not an exchange as such – no US journalists are sent abroad. During their stay in the US, participants focus on training. Many do end up contributing to their host organisations by writing a column or similar, but that is not the main objective, and they are not usually under pressure to write for their home newspapers while in the US.
	10. Target audience	Journalists from the developing world: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1984-2008: Editors with at least eight years of professional experience • Since 2009: Mid-level journalists with a least five years of experience
	11. Target number of participants	About ten journalists per year
	12. Duration of visits / exchanges	Typically about four weeks, consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A one-week orientation at ICFJ’s headquarters in Washington, DC (including seminars and workshops, and visits to major news outlets) • About two weeks at a newsroom of a size comparable to their home publication, in different parts of the US • A one-week debriefing, goal-setting and evaluation session in New York City
	13. Management arrangements	The IJE was originally funded by several private media foundations and organisations in the United States. The International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) has administered the programme since 1990. The ICFJ “does everything”: recruiting, organising selection process, making logistical arrangements, organising the DC and NYC phases, finding and making arrangements with hosts, developing guidance materials, follow-up
	14. Eligibility criteria – participants	Principal editors of newspapers or online news outlets from any nation outside Western Europe and North America are eligible. Priority is given to senior editors from countries in the developing world. Participants are selected competitively. The criteria include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of newsroom responsibility • Proficiency in English • Demonstrated goals for participation in the program • Journalistic experience (at least five years) • Current employment at a newspaper, wire or online news service • Age (between 21 and 55 years)
	15. Eligibility criteria – hosting organisations	The host organisations are recruited directly by the ICFJ, which tries to find newspapers that are similar to those the participating journalists work for in their home countries. The ICFJ relies on its network to find and approach appropriate candidates. 180 newspapers in the United States have participated. The newspapers vary in size from the largest U.S. dailies such as The Boston Globe and USA Today to community newspapers.
	16. Communication activities	The main communication channel is the website “International Journalist Network” (http://www.ijn.net.org), which provides information on training opportunities, including from the ICFJ’s competitors, and draws about 40,000 visitors a month, plus a bulletin that is sent to almost 20,000 people.

		Information is also sent directly to partner organisations in third countries.
	17. Evaluation/ monitoring arrangements	<p>ICFJ "monitors and evaluates the programme to gauge its effectiveness and impact". They generally survey journalists after each phase, asking for concrete examples of what they actually learned. There is also regular communication afterwards (after 1 month and after 6 months).</p> <p>A recent survey of IJE alumni showed inter alia that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43% received promotions • 36% received professional awards • 71% developed new media platforms or products • 93% continue to benefit from the concepts and skills learned during the programme • Main benefits cited by participants were: understanding new trends, acquiring skills and making contacts
E. Outputs/ results	18. Types of exchange carried out	See above – 4 week stays with a focus on training
	19. Number of participants	240 since the programme's inception in 1984
	20. Supporting organisations/ partners	Funding used to come from media organisations and foundations. Because these are facing difficulties, there are now attempts to obtain funding from US Embassies.
	21. Funding disbursed	Approx. USD 15,000 per participant
	22. Achievement of objectives	<p>According to the programme manager, the IJE has been highly successful: "Not every participant is able to make a huge change after they return to their home countries, but many have."</p> <p>Quote from a participating journalist:</p> <p>"I did pretty much everything. The most valuable aspect of the newsroom attachment is to get first-hand experience. It was the correct organisation selected for me. Very close to what we are planning to do in Azerbaijan... The whole programme was very useful."</p> <p>Quote from a hosting newspaper:</p> <p>"It helps our diversity efforts overall to be influenced in the newsroom by different people of different cultural backgrounds. It always heightens awareness and appreciation. The visiting editor's insight into more exciting journalism even influenced our own plans. We gained certainly as much as we gave."</p>
F. Lessons learned	23. Risks/ challenges	<p>Language is an important issue; when there are problems, it is usually because the level of spoken English of participants is not sufficient. To avoid this, the ICFJ conducts a telephone interview with short-listed applicants.</p> <p>The current media environment is a key challenge: budgets are tight, and it is becoming more difficult to find host organisations.</p>
	24. Best practices	<p>Since the programme focuses on training and skills (and not primarily on raising cultural awareness), the seminars in Washington DC and NYC at the beginning and end are crucial; without them, the value of the programme would be much lower.</p> <p>The placement of only 2 weeks at a newspaper is sufficient for this programme, as participants tend to be experienced editors. But for less experienced reporters, 4 weeks would probably be the minimum to make it worthwhile.</p>

		(An exchange programme of German and US journalists has a duration of 2 months.)
	25. Notes	The programme focuses on skills, not cultural awareness, and therefore has an important training element. This is provided through a combination of seminars / workshops and hands-on exposure to a specific newspaper of similar characteristics to participants employers in their home countries. This requires a considerable effort to organise and is probably only feasible for a relatively small scale programme targeting one (or a few) host countries.

4. Trilateral Exchange Programme

Broad areas	Issues	Information
A. Background	1. Name of programme	- Tri-Lateral Exchange Programme
	2. Years running	- Roughly five years, from 1993.
	3. Context / motive	<p>NAFTA had just passed, which led to a renewed interest in cultural exchange between the US, Mexico and Canada. There was also a perception that, though Mexico was often in the press in the US and Canada, coverage was focused on drugs and illegal immigration. Canada did not receive much coverage in the other two countries apart for local issues. The primary reasons for setting up the programme was to expose journalists to the cultures and politics of their neighbouring countries so that they could give more and better coverage to these places when they returned to their home countries, as well as teaching host country contacts about where they came from. In addition, involving Mexican journalists in the programme was motivated by a desire to help increase press freedom and pluralism, and the overall quality of journalism in Mexico.</p> <p>The IEE (a non-profit organisation implementing exchange for students up through professional development in the US and abroad) runs many exchanges of students and scholars (e.g. the Fulbright Programme), which is why the Freedom Forum (foundation run by the Hearst media family) approached the organisation to implement the Tri-Lateral Exchange.</p> <p>The programme also grew out of an earlier exchange between the US and Mexico, funded by the Ford Foundation but also implemented by the IEE.</p>
B. Objectives	4. Global objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance understanding and coverage of other two countries in each respective home country. - Improve understanding of the free press in Mexico. - (more colloquially, objectives are to 'bring an international perspective to the newsroom and 'get journalists – primarily American ones – out of their shell')
	5. Specific objectives	- Implement a once-per-year exchange programme for established journalists employed by newspapers in the US, Canada and Mexico (though some freelancers and 'stringers' also took part in the programme)
C. Inputs	6. Financial inputs	- The programme was funded by an annual grant from the Freedom Forum of about \$175k per year (circa 1993 dollars). This was channelled through an intermediary organisation (the IEE) which disbursed grants of about \$10k per participant. The grant was meant to be used for subsistence during the exchange and travel costs.
	7. Human resources	- The remaining \$55k each year was used for salary costs at the intermediary organisation for recruitment, selection of participants, relations with sending and hosting organisations and matching participants with appropriate hosts.
	8. Other inputs (trainings, meeting space, etc)	- The exchange started and ended with a week where all participants gathered in New York, first for an introduction and last for a debriefing.
D. Activities	9. Types of exchange/ mobility offered	<p>Journalists took part in a three-part exchange programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first week consisted of an orientation for all participants during which they became acquainted with the journalism culture in their host country. - They then spent about ten weeks acting as a working member of the host newspapers' news team. While at the host newspaper

		<p>participants were expected to file stories for publication. In addition, and in order to make journalists' absence easier for home newspapers, they continued to file stories where they were employed.</p> <p>- The final week for all participants was a debrief in New York where pooled experiences and offered feedback on their period abroad. In order to provide the most relevant exchange, participants were usually placed with newspapers of similar scope to their home organisations, e.g. national or local, urban or rural, in addition to working on the same topics.</p> <p>During the exchange, participants were not paid by the host organisation, but instead were meant to keep drawing a salary from their home newspaper while benefiting from the programme grant for living expenses and travel costs.</p>
	10. Target audience	- Established journalists working on staff at newspapers in the US, Canada and Mexico. However, freelance and 'stringers' were also able to apply.
	11. Target number of participants	- 9-12 participants per year (i.e. 3-4 from each country)
	12. Duration of visits / exchanges	- 3 months in total, of which 10 weeks was spent within the host organisation. The other 2 weeks were used for orientation and debriefing/ evaluation.
	13. Management arrangements	<p>The Freedom Forum (a foundation started by the Hearst media family) funded the programme, but outsourced management to the IEE, which was approached because of its role in administering other exchanges for a variety of educational and professional organisations, including a journalists' exchange between Mexico and the US.</p> <p>The programme was managed from the IEE's offices in New York (mostly) and Mexico City (partially). As an organisation carrying out other exchanges, IEE possessed the infrastructure needed to streamline several processes, such as vetting applicants, visa sponsorship, travel arrangements and international payments, that would have been difficult for a foundation to manage on its own.</p> <p>Overall, the IEE's responsibilities as the implementing body (analogous to intermediary organisations for European programmes) consisted of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Signing on and maintaining relations with host organisations. ○ Producing and disseminating information and communication material about the programme. ○ Managing the application procedure. ○ Matching participants with host newspapers. ○ Financial management of grants from Freedom Forum (including making payments to participants) ○ Visa sponsorship ○ Running debriefing week at the end of the exchange ○ Monitoring and evaluation activities. <p>The application procedure worked as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Once finding out about the programme (see below for information on information and communication), applicants sent an application directly to the IEE. ○ Staff at the IEE vetted applications (selection was described as 'very competitive'. ○ After choosing participants, the IEE matched them with host newspapers (i.e. participants themselves did not play a role in making this selection, and did not apply to specific placements in their application form).

	14. Eligibility criteria – participants	- Participants were required to be working journalists at newspapers in the US, Canada or Mexico, preferably as permanent staff, with 3-5 years experience. Geographic diversity (i.e. not just from capital cities in the three countries) and linguistic diversity (i.e. a mix of French and English speakers from Canada) were sought. In addition, applications had to produce written confirmation from their home newspapers that they would be taken back at the end of the exchange.
	15. Eligibility criteria – hosting organisations	- To qualify, prospective hosting organisations had to ensure the IEE that it would allow programme participants to file stories during the exchange.
	16. Communication activities	- Mailings to editors in all three countries - Outreach through offices around the US - Advertising through the ASNE (American Society of News Editors), through the wire service and in relevant publications
	17. Evaluation/ monitoring arrangements	- Written evaluation forms (i.e. feedback forms) were filled out by both home and host newspapers - Extensive feedback from participants was provided during the final week-long debriefing - The IEE collected articles participants wrote for their host papers while on exchange (to judge the level of output) - Participants were asked to send articles they wrote, once they returned home, that resulted from their exchange (e.g. articles about the host country). - IEE prepared an annual evaluation report for the Freedom Forum - Success was also measured according to how the careers of participants advanced. This appears to have been done in a qualitative way. For example, it was explained by interviewees that a Mexican journalist soon after the exchange was appointed Washington bureau chief, while another became an editor in Mexico of news about the US.
E. Outputs/ results	18. Types of exchange carried out	- Journalist exchange with placement at a host paper where the participant would be embedded for about ten weeks in the news team and expected to file stories. (see more detail in column 9)
	19. Number of participants	- 9-12 participants per year (3-4 per country)
	20. Supporting organisations/ partners	- Funded by the Freedom Forum and managed/ implemented by the IEE
	21. Funding disbursed	- About \$175,000 per year in mid-1990s dollars. (factoring in inflation, this is equal to about \$240,000 in 2009)
	22. Achievement of objectives	- Interviewees rated high levels of success in proportion to the size of the programme. Judgement criteria included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Advancement of careers of participants: including advancements within home newspapers and future postings at more important publications o Coverage by newspapers involved in the programme of other countries involved o Self-assessments
F. Lessons learned	23. Risks/ challenges	- Biggest challenge was described as getting the home newspaper to allow the journalist to leave for the period of time needed for the exchange. While interviewees found that in general the longer an exchange the better, they considered three months to be about the maximum that could be expected. This was compounded by the fact that some papers would 'allow' their journalists to participate in

		<p>the exchange, but without informing the IEE they would not continue to pay them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language difficulties played a role. While it was described as easy to find Mexican and Canadian journalists that spoke the required Spanish, French or English, and to identify them during the application process, it was not easy to find Americans with such language capabilities. This made it difficult to choose and assign participants in a balanced fashion. - Finding host papers that would allow participants to file stories during the exchange. - Finding home papers that would allow their journalists to file during the exchange. When journalists didn't file much for their home papers during the exchange, the home papers sometimes 'learned to do without' the journalist in question. Though this programme was carried out in the 1990s, interviewees noted that it would most likely be easier to have journalists file with their home papers given today's technology.
	24. Best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 month exchanges were seen as the best middle ground between having enough time for participants to get embedded in the host newsroom while not putting too much strain on the home organisation. - To help host newspapers best deal with the incoming journalist, they were required to assign a mentor for the visiting journalist. Eventually, instructions for the mentor were developed into a handbook for host institutions detailing how participating journalists should be incorporated into the host news team. - In depth briefing/ introduction at the beginning of the programme and debriefing at the end were seen as very important aspects of the programme that helped set up meaningful exchanges and consolidate the experience.
	25. Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The programme was seen as very successful but was brought to a halt after five years because the Freedom Forum, which funded the programme, ceased to provide funding for international activities. - The IEE has an office in Budapest which runs programmes in Europe. This could be a possible candidate for running a future Erasmus for Journalists programme.

5. Nahaufnahme

Broad areas	Issues	Information
A. Background	1. Name of programme	Journalistenaustausch „Nahaufnahme“ [EN: Journalists' exchange "Close-up"]
	2. Years running	Since 2008, annual 1 st edition: October – December 2008 2 nd edition: October 2009 – January 2010
	3. Context / motive	The idea of such an initiative was generated by the work of the Goethe Institute in the area of literature. German novelists were invited to spend some time abroad (Egypt) and to 'report' the city life. They found it very attractive to 'discover' a new town and write about their experience and little adventures. This inspired the Goethe Institute to engage another group of people, as the journalists address a different type of audience and they look at things from a different slant. They concentrate on the daily or weekly pace of life, topics interesting for them and the general public.
B. Objectives	4. Global objective	There are two main objectives of the programme and they remained unchanged over time: 1. Improving the visibility of the Goethe Institute in the third countries (this is a way of marketing - there is a clause in every article that gets published in a newspaper that it takes part in the Goethe Institute journalists' exchange). 2. Support a cultural dialogue (it allows the foreign journalists to learn more about Germany and vice versa). This experience helps to change a perspective of the people.
	5. Specific objectives	Journalists are expected to report on their impressions of the new place from a foreign perspective and with journalistic curiosity. They should identify the differences of those places but also their similarities, and to report those to the readers. This is not aimed to analyse host countries from a political perspective, but to look at daily life and the neighbourhood from a new perspective, to 'close-up' aspects interesting for the 'home' readers. In addition, the programme aims to facilitate networking and exchange of professional contacts across various countries.
C. Inputs	6. Financial inputs	The programme covers the following costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International flights for participants; - Hotel accommodation; - Scholarship/ expenses; - Translations of articles; - Costs for Visa/ International Health Insurance; - Staff costs: coordination of project (2 people).
	7. Human resources	In total 2 people are responsible for day to day implementation of the programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme manager; - programme coordinator. There are also 2 colleagues working at the Goethe Institute and they offer their advice on the programme but they do not work on it on a

		daily basis.
	8. Other inputs (trainings, meeting space, etc)	<p>Language courses are offered for the foreign journalists, if they do not speak German.</p> <p>Translation services are offered by the Goethe Institute, if needed.</p> <p>There is a service line (a part of responsibilities of the programme coordinator) offering help or advice for the participating journalists.</p> <p>A meeting for all participants was organised in Germany at the end of the programme by the Goethe Institute.</p> <p>A great support is offered by the Goethe Institute Network: their offices all around the world offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - translation services; - contacts to media and journalists; - contact points for the participants; - publicity.
D. Activities	9. Types of exchange/ mobility offered	<p>One-to-one exchange programme</p> <p>Journalists from Germany exchange their job desk and a place of living with their counterparts from third countries. They report to the local section of their host newspaper. The journalists write in their own languages, and then the articles are translated into official languages of the host countries.</p> <p>Not every text is published – the host newspapers decide on this and the only criterion is the quality of an article: whether it provides interesting insights for the local readers, and if it can attract their attention.</p> <p>The home newspapers can also publish some of the articles of their 'correspondents'.</p> <p>A complete list of articles (in all available languages) is published on the Goethe Institute Website.</p>
	10. Target audience	<p>Journalists working for local newspapers from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Germany 2. Third countries (1st edition: Islamic countries; 2nd edition: Africa, Middle East and Italy)
	11. Target number of participants	<p>Target number is 8 journalists per year (4 from Germany and 4 from abroad):</p> <p>1st edition: 6 journalists (because instability in the region prevented German journalists from travelling to the Middle East).</p> <p>2nd edition: 8 journalists</p>
	12. Duration of visits / exchanges	<p>Approximately 1 month</p> <p>The Goethe Institute believes this is an optimum time. However, the length of the exchange is not fixed and it can take from 3 up to 6 weeks.</p>
	13. Management arrangements	The programme is entirely managed by the Goethe Institute. There are no subcontractors or partners at the moment.
	14. Eligibility criteria – participants	<p>Only journalists with fixed employment contracts with a newspaper / TV programme / radio station are eligible to participate in the programme. They do not necessary have to speak the language of the host country (it is good if they speak the language but it is not a formal requirement to participate in the programme).</p> <p>The programme would not work for free-lancers, as it relies heavily on the work environment (local department of a newspaper) and the placement of a journalist in the professional network.</p>

	15. Eligibility criteria – hosting organisations	There are no specific criteria for hosting organisations. Ideally, it is a local newspaper (or a national newspaper / TV programme / radio station with a local department).
	16. Communication activities	<p>Communication activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - website of the Goethe Institute (where a notification about the programmes was published 2-3 times) - newsletter (included information about the programme) - articles in the press. <p>In addition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each of the articles published in host newspapers includes a note informing about the programme. 2. Articles are published on the programme's blog: http://blog.goethe.de/nahaufnahme/ 3. A complete list of articles (in all available languages) is published on the Goethe Institute Website to attract journalists to participate in the programme (http://www.goethe.de/prj/nah/enindex.htm).
	17. Evaluation/ monitoring arrangements	Evaluation of the Programmes is currently carried out by the Evaluation Department in the Goethe Institute. It employs questionnaires and interviews with the participants, however, the results are not available yet.
E. Outputs/ results	18. Types of exchange carried out	One-to-one exchange (see section 9 above).
	19. Number of participants	<p>1st edition: 6 journalists</p> <p>2nd edition: 8 journalists</p> <p>In total: 14</p>
	20. Supporting organisations/ partners	<p>At the moment there are no partners except the Goethe Institute Network.</p> <p>The 1st edition of the programme was supported by the Foreign Office (Unit for a dialog with Islamic countries). After the scope of the programme was extended beyond the Islamic countries, the support of the Foreign Office was withdrawn.</p> <p>Media are not regarded as partners, as they do not take part in the programme implementation. However, participating media included:</p> <p>1st edition:</p> <p>In Germany: die Berliner Zeitung, die Süddeutsche Zeitung, die Frankfurter Rundschau.</p> <p>Abroad: This Day (Nigeria), Le Patriote (Côte d'Ivoire), Al Hayat (Lebanon).</p> <p>2nd edition:</p> <p>In Germany: die Badische Zeitung, die Frankfurter Rundschau, der Tagesspiegel, der SWR (TV channel) and Radio Stuttgart.</p> <p>Abroad: Daily Graphic (Ghana), Radio Kol Israel (Israel), La Repubblica Palermo (Italy) and Daily Nation (Kenya).</p>
	21. Funding disbursed	No data
	22. Achievement of objectives	The scope of the programme is small and it is too early to decide if it achieved its objectives. It supports the cultural dialog and makes the Goethe Institute more visible. The programme is currently evaluated and the results will be available soon.
F. Lessons	23. Risks/ challenges	It was difficult to find foreign journalists who speak German and the language barrier poses a problem for the success of the programme.

learned		<p>Journalists who do not speak the language of a country find it difficult to benefit from the programme (they cannot fully participate in the journalist work):</p> <p><i>"At the editorial office (...) where I work as a temporary staff, I am not able to seat at editorial conferences to review and discuss stories to be used neither am I able to read copies of the daily Newspaper to know its contents for the day."</i></p> <p>German newspapers and journalists participating in the programme find it more attractive to go to exotic countries (they were not very thrilled about going to Italy).</p>
	24. Best practices	The support from the Goethe Institute Network was extremely valuable in terms of sharing contacts with newspapers / journalists, marketing of the programme and offering the support and advice for the participants.
	25. Notes	Positive feedback about the programme was received from the journalists and the readers, which is encouraging for the future.

6. Asian Fellowships

Broad areas	Issues	Information
A. Background	1. Name of programme	EJC Asian fellowships
	2. Years running	The fellowship with Japan started in 2006, while the one with Korea began in 2008.
	3. Context / motive	The main goal was to broaden the EJC's horizons outside the EU, as a part of working towards its mission statement of promoting international understanding and friendship through co-operation with journalists of other nationalities and create an intellectual dialogue that will enrich and complement participants' knowledge of the field.
B. Objectives	4. Global objective	To provide a unique opportunity to gain a deeper cultural, political and economic understanding of the EU on the one side and Korea and Japan on the other.
	5. Specific objectives	Provide a reportage opportunity for the EJC's distinguished fellows.
C. Inputs	6. Financial inputs	The EJC provides Asian fellows with a grant of about €4,000 of (3-month programme), which includes accommodation in Brussels and partial travel reimbursement, welcome dinners upon arrival and organised trips. For European fellows travelling to Korea and Japan, the programme has about the same cost per participant, but last only 2 weeks. This includes all costs, including flights, hotels, meals and visits.
	7. Human resources	There are two staff taking care of the fellows at the EJC, but they do not work on the programme full time.
	8. Other inputs (trainings, meeting space, etc)	For the fellowships in Brussels, EJC takes care of providing fellows with EU press accreditation, provides office space and internet access and organises visits of the EU institutions. In addition, the EJC takes time at the beginning of the fellowship to explain the EU structure and European media landscape, in addition to providing contacts and organising meetings with other correspondents to help fellows develop their network.
D. Activities	9. Types of exchange/ mobility offered	The Asian fellowship in Brussels consists of a 3-month long programme for established journalists from Asian newspapers. While in Brussels, the fellows attend EU institution meetings (such as the daily press briefing), visit EU institutions and cover any other topics of interest to their publications. This includes trips to other European cities, though participating fellows sometimes have to such travel at their own expense. The focus is not exclusively on the EU, but on any European areas of interest. For European journalists travelling to Japan and Korea, the programme is a 2-week study visit involving visits to key institutions and newspapers in the host country in addition to seminars and talks from relevant people.
	10. Target audience	Established journalists from major national newspapers/ press agencies in Japan and Korea.
	11. Target number of participants	6-9 fellows per year from Asia (1 each from Korea and Japan participating in a fellowship at all times). 10 participants per year from Europe (4 to Japan and 6 to Korea).
	12. Duration of visits / exchanges	3 months for Asian fellows in Brussels, 2 weeks for European fellows in Asia.
	13. Management arrangements	EJC manages the programme, developing relationships with newspapers / news agencies in Japan and Korea, organising a trip to Luxembourg (EIB, ECJ, Eurostat), providing office space and internet access and a staff member who offers practical assistance, advice

		and information about Brussels, journalism in Europe etc.
	14. Eligibility criteria – participants	EJC maintains relationships not with the prospective fellows themselves, but with their newspapers (Japan) and the Korean Press Foundation (Korea), who then put forth a name for each respective fellowship. In Korea this involves competitive applications made to the abovementioned organisation, while in Japan fellowships are rotated among the major newspapers.
	15. Eligibility criteria – hosting organisations	n/a (not an exchange)
	16. Communication activities	EJC's partners in Korea and Japan manage communication/ promotion of the programme through advertising on their websites and sending out press releases and information about upcoming selection processes. For the European fellows travelling to Japan and Korea, the EJC advertises on its website and sends a press release through its mailing lists, newsletters and social community (EJC facebook and twitter sites).
	17. Evaluation/ monitoring arrangements	Constant evaluation is carried out throughout and after the fellowship for the Asia fellows in Brussels. During the fellowship, they write reports to their tutors mentioning any problems or concerns. EJC staff members also have regular meetings with fellows to make sure everything is running smoothly and whether anything needs to be improved from a practical/ logistical or intellectual point of view. At the end of the fellowship, participants provide feedback. However, it is difficult to track how experience from the fellowship filters back into media coverage in Asia, since articles are written in Korean and Japanese. Instead the EJC receives feedback from the journalists themselves.
E. Outputs/ results	18. Types of exchange carried out	See Row 9.
	19. Number of participants	6-9 per year.
	20. Supporting organisations/ partners	EJC maintains partnerships with the Korean Press Foundation and Japanese Press Foundation. In addition to facilitating the selection of participants and guaranteeing their availability, this helps arrange reciprocal visits to Japan and Korea for European journalists.
	21. Funding disbursed	No information available
	22. Achievement of objectives	<p>The participating Asian fellows interviewed were very pleased with the programme (they did not encounter many challenges aside from jealousy of colleagues at home), finding that it offered several benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning how to work independently - Opportunity to improve English language skills - Experience of living in a foreign country - Learning about European cultures - Learning about different approaches to specific issues - Learning about the EU system and institutions <p>The EJC coordinator noted that for the Asian fellowships the objectives are definitely being achieved, noting that the fellows are considered EU experts when they return to their home newspapers. However, the European fellowships in Asia, which last only 2 weeks, have been perceived as less successful. This is mostly related to the fact that two weeks is not enough time to get acquainted with a</p>

		multifaceted country such as Japan or Korea.
F. Lessons learned	23. Risks/ challenges	Language is a difficulty, but not many challenges were encountered by fellows interviewed.
	24. Best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fellows interviewed noted that participating journalists in any such programme should have a certain amount of experience in order to ensure they know how to take advantage of the opportunities available in the host country, but that younger than late 30s (as they were) would be ideal. - Select journalists possessing a good knowledge of the host country so that they can communicate with the hosting team, but it is best if they can continue to report in their mother tongue for their own media during the exchange.
	25. Notes	<p>Reciprocal visits of European journalists to Japan (4 journalists) and Korea (6 journalists) also take place. The programme lasts 2 weeks and involves visits to numerous institutions and news organisations. Since all expenses (hotel etc) are covered during these trips, the necessary funding is similar to the investment in the Asian fellowships.</p> <p>When asked about an Erasmus for journalists programme, interviewees were positive. However, they noted that overcoming the language barrier would be difficult. It was also mentioned that any exchange would need require at least several weeks for participants to acclimatise themselves to a foreign culture.</p> <p>EJC remarked that national EJC equivalents could play a role in managing the programme.</p> <p>EJC identified a few challenges and opportunities in an Erasmus for journalists programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - difficult to have a direct exchange because it would require finding good candidates from both newspapers simultaneously. - it would be important to take into account the size of participating media outlets – smaller ones would have a lot of trouble losing a journalist for a month or so. - Language could pose a difficulty

7. EJC seminars

Broad areas	Issues	Information
A. Background	1. Name of programme	EJC information briefings
	2. Years running	The EJC has worked with the European Commission for the last 14 years, having been awarded a Framework Contract three consecutive times. The present FwC will officially expire at the end of November 2010, though activities can be implemented until May 2011.
	3. Context / motive	The contract is a response to concern that European politics and policies are often under-reported, with a communication gap between the EU's base in Brussels and other countries. As the EU grows in importance, people within its Member States and the rest of the world, need to increasingly understand its policies and actions. The starting point is a well-informed media at all levels: national, regional and local. To this end, the EJC's activities under this framework – seminars, website eu4journalists.eu – all provide journalists from outside Brussels the information, tools and contacts they need to report the EU as it pertains to their local audiences.
B. Objectives	4. Global objective	Encourage a better and more objective reporting on EU affairs.
	5. Specific objectives	Provide journalists with professional advice and reportage opportunities on EU affairs.
C. Inputs	6. Financial inputs	This is very difficult to say as the EC is paying for the accommodation and flight costs of the participants. The EJC contract covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda's preparation and intellectual input for the content; • Fees for course leader, speakers and experts; • Coffee-break, one or two lunches, one dinner/social event; • Meeting rooms with technical facilities; • Interpretation (when needed); • General assistance and smooth running. Also, depending on the briefings' length (one, two...five days), costs clearly change. For a two-day briefing, costs are roughly around 1,200 € per participant (without hotel and flight).
	7. Human resources	Approx. 10 staff members in full time equivalents (FTEs)
	8. Other inputs (trainings, meeting space, etc)	In order to diversify the programmes and to have more interactive briefings, the EJC tries to avoid holding sessions in the same building and meeting room. Depending on the topic of the briefing, group of journalists and days available, options include having some reportages opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For a DG TRADE briefing, journalists were brought to visit the Antwerp port and presented case studies; • For DG RELEX press visits for third countries, round-tables and visits to communities of immigrants based in Brussels were organised; • For DG Environment, briefings during the Green Week as well as a visit to the Renewable Energy House were organised;

D. Activities	9. Types of exchange/ mobility offered	<p>The briefings cannot be considered exchange projects as such. These intellectual activities are mainly aimed at bringing journalists to Brussels – or other EU Members States, Candidate or ENP countries - and learn about a specific policy or action taken at a European level.</p> <p>During their stay in the capital of Europe and/or abroad, participants normally meet with other colleagues who give tips and suggestions on how to find sources. Many of them take the opportunity to cover – if the briefing coincides with a summit, conference or an exclusive meeting with a Commissioner – such events for their own media.</p>
	10. Target audience	Some seminars include journalists from all over the EU or world; others are specific to certain countries or regions. Though rare, on occasion the EJC also organises briefings for journalism students.
	11. Target number of participants	<p>It is not up to the EJC to decide what the target of journalists is. This varies from year to year according to how many requests are made from the different DGs. To give an idea:</p> <p>The EJC delivered 66 briefings in 2008. The 1,012 participants represented national, regional and local media from all EU Member States and an additional 61 other countries, including 21 African countries and 22 Asian countries.</p> <p>The EJC delivered 72 informational briefings and a conference on “Interfacing Innovation” in 2009. The 1,286 participants represented national, regional and local media from all EU Member States, plus 56 other countries, including 15 African countries and 14 Asian countries.</p> <p>The seminars continue in 2010, providing pertinent information for journalists on a variety of topics. 50 seminars are currently scheduled, though more may be added. With a typical attendance of 15 journalists per seminar, an estimated 750 participants will attend the EJC's seminars in 2010.</p>
	12. Duration of visits / exchanges	From 2 to 5 days maximum, depending on the topic and whether the briefing entails one part in another country (i.e. for the ENP briefing, the programme is held two days in Brussels and three days in an EU border country).
	13. Management arrangements	<p>The EJC is responsible for the participants' selection which should take care of the quotas per nationality as well as of a democratic criterion which always allows new journalists to partake.</p> <p>As mentioned above, aside from the recruitment, the EJC is also in charge of making logistical arrangements (except for the hotel and flights booking), organising the content of the programme (including the best speakers/experts according to the topic), ensuring the smooth running of the briefing, providing assistance and professional guidance.</p>
	14. Eligibility criteria – participants	<p>Professional journalists from any kind of media (newspapers or online news outlets, radio and TV) from any EU Member State as well as third countries.</p> <p>Priority is given to journalists who have never attended an EJC briefing before in order to offer a training opportunity to as many media as possible. By ensuring a variety of participants, the EJC also wants to guarantee a trustful public service for the Institutions (which invest tax-payers' money on these activities).</p> <p>The criteria for participation therefore includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationality; • Being a professional working journalists or freelance; • Proficiency in English; • Motivation for participation.
	15. Eligibility criteria –	Not applicable

	hosting organisations	
	16. Communication activities	The main communication channels are the EJC websites (www.ejc.net – www.ejcseminars.eu). The EJC announces on its websites the launch of the call for applications and sends out the press release through its mailing lists (Brussels-based correspondents, past participants, local partner organisations/journalists trade unions all over the EU), newsletters and journalists social community (EJC own social network, Facebook and Twitter).
	17. Evaluation/ monitoring arrangements	An assessment is always carried out at the end of each briefing. The evaluation form is detailed enough to provide information about whether or not the information gathered will be useful for the future coverage of the EU. The EJC also asks journalists to rate and leave comments both for each session/lecture/panel discussion and speakers. As for the coverage, most journalists start writing already during the briefing's days (this particularly happens if the briefings coincide with any major EU events). When they go back to their countries they usually keep on writing and sending the EJC their stories. All these material is gathered by the EJC staff members and an impact assessment is produced and included in the final report for the Commission.
E. Outputs/ results	18. Types of exchange carried out	See above point 9.
	19. Number of participants	See above point 11.
	20. Supporting organisations/ partners	The EJC relies on several partner media organisations both in the EU as well as in candidate and ENP countries. Thanks to its reliable partners, the EJC has support when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising its activities; • Recruiting professional journalists; • Implementing events outside of Brussels. Most importantly, thanks to its network, the EJC has managed to create a comprehensive network of journalists who are now part of its own social community.
	21. Funding disbursed	See point 6 above.
	22. Achievement of objectives	If one considers the achievement of objectives in terms of “ <i>having succeeded to create a network of journalists with a deeper understanding and interest for EU Affairs</i> ” the answer would definitely be positive. If on the other hand, one considers the objectives to be achieved by only considering “ <i>the number of articles produced further the participation of the journalists to the briefings</i> ” (as the Institutions normally do) then the answer would have to be negative. This way of thinking might, in the EJC's opinion, present an incomplete picture. This is mainly because the information provided is a solid background which may be used a significant time after having attended a briefing. The EJC is aware that journalists think in a different way from the Institutions; the following comment from a Slovak journalist illustrates this: “ <i>As a follow up to our magnificent trip to Syria in February, I was in Damascus again for an exclusive interview with the President Bashar Assad who afterwards came to Slovakia for a visit and together with him the very nice vice PM Dardari whom we met and also the deputy FM Amoura. Thanks to our stay in Syria with the EJC I was able to bond with Dardari in Bratislava and manage another interview. So this is the impact of your activities which helped me a lot</i> ”.

F. Lessons learned	23. Risks/challenges	<p>Amongst the risks there is certainly the fear of becoming repetitive (especially when it comes to series) and to start losing the journalistic perspective. This is more and more visible since, despite the fact that a great deal of general information is being circulated and provided to the press, the EU Institutions are becoming less and less transparent and less willing to answer questions on key issues and/or data to the media.</p> <p>Though EJC partners with the European Commission in these activities, its constant challenge is to strictly maintain its independence. The seminars and briefings are – as judged by past participants - intentionally fair and unbiased, balancing the voice of the Commission with others from outside.</p>
	24. Best practices	<p>Any major story today has local, regional, national, European, and more and more often, global aspects and angles. It is only by embedding any European institution based policy dissemination into these other perspectives and debates that “Brussels” will be heard, seem, and be seen to be credible, in the long run.</p> <p>The EJC believes the starting point for relevant communicators (in the DGs) should be a better understanding of the changing needs of the media, and of its new tools and rules. Involving citizens will not only be a matter of lip service, or of offering them as much (Power Point-based) information as possible. Rather, the core issue will be one of credibility, of openness to debate and iteration, of integrating relevant policies within the wider (global/local) debates going on.</p> <p>The “capital of Europe”, and the policies formulated in its offices and corridors, will be of relevance only if and when these policies succeed in incorporating local/global approaches, and if they open their development and their iterations to true stakeholder discussions.</p> <p>Thus, a genuine understanding of what interests citizens the most, and a deep understanding of communication “channel” specifics, be that newspapers, radio, multimedia websites, blogs, social networks, twitter platforms etc, remain a challenge for communicators and multipliers alike.</p> <p>It is the EJC’s opinion that any activities targeting journalists need to deepen and widen their professional backgrounds, and should be based on a constructive and honest debate over the issues facing the EU and its institutions today and tomorrow.</p>
	25. Notes	

ANNEX A2: FOCUS GROUP REPORTS AND MATERIALS

1.0 BELGIUM

1. Introduction

Focus groups were organised in Brussels with journalists from both Dutch- and French-language Belgian media. The groups were organised over two dates, 18 June and 10 September, allowing journalists to choose the time most convenient for them.

In all, nine journalists (five French-speaking, four Dutch-speaking) were able to attend¹. As shown in the table below, participants consisted mostly of early- and mid-career journalists from and represented a mix of print, TV and radio media outlets, in addition to permanently employed and freelance journalists.

	Type of media	Status	Experience ²
Dutch language media	Print media – business newspaper	Permanently employed	Early career
	Print media – newspaper	Permanently employed	Early career
	Print media – weekly magazine	Permanently employed	Early career
	Print media – newspaper / online	Freelance	Mid-career
French language media	Print media – newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – free newspaper	Freelance	Early career
	Print media – sports newspaper	Freelance	Early career
	Broadcast media – TV news	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Broadcast media – radio news	Permanently employed	Mid-career

2. Objectives

Participants did **not express much enthusiasm for the first objective** (further journalists’ understanding of the EU). As representatives of Belgian media based in or close to Brussels, they felt that knowledge of the EU was already widespread in their media. In addition, the participants did not see the logic in travelling to learn more about the EU – they could most easily follow policy or institutional developments at European level without leaving home. While one participant did acknowledge that ‘even Belgian journalists do not know enough about the EU’, there was not much interest in this objective.

The second two objectives (further journalists’ understanding of other Member States and enhance journalists’ professional skills and abilities, respectively) attracted much more attention from participants across both groups. Some participants recalled favourable experiences of their participation in the ERASMUS programme for university students, pointing out that they learned much about another Member State during this time. It was therefore easy for participants to imagine an exchange / mobility programme for journalists contributing to this objective. Most participants agreed that **spending time in another Member State would improve their knowledge and understanding of that country**.

¹ Flemish journalists in particular proved difficult to recruit. Despite making use of the EJC’s extensive list of contacts and providing two potential dates to journalists, and despite a larger group of journalists who confirmed that they would attend, it was regrettably not possible to draw on the experiences of more than four journalists from Flemish media.

² The study team divided journalists into three segments based on years of experience. Journalists with less than five years experience are classified as ‘early career’; those with between five and 20 years experience are classified as ‘mid-career’; and those with over twenty years experience are classified as ‘advanced’.

Thus, while all participants felt that the programme would contribute to the second objective, they did not reach a consensus as to the objective's relevance. This dissonance was especially pronounced among Flemish journalists. One stated matter-of-factly that ‘according to our editors, what happens in other Member States does not interest us in Belgium’. Another pointed not to a lack of interest in other Member States, but to the economic difficulties media outlets are currently facing. In his opinion, travel and foreign news coverage has been cut back because it is relatively expensive to produce in comparison with domestic issues. In this case a new exchange / mobility programme for journalists could have a real impact on the level of coverage dedicated to other Member States. Another print journalist was of the view that the programme would help improve coverage of Member States that would anyway get covered in the Belgian media, rather than increasing coverage for less well known Member States.

Journalists participating in both groups considered that **enhancing their professional skills and abilities would be most important**, though they noted that within the context of an exchange / mobility programme it heavily overlapped with the second objective. Building a network of contacts in another Member State (a key component of the programme for most participants), for example, was seen to work towards both objectives. However, one journalist from a weekly political magazine noted that it would also be useful to spend some time with a similar, but larger and more advanced publication such as *Der Spiegel*. There, he would be able to study their fact checking practices and online journalism methods. This journalist would place the focus on the third objective; an increased ability to cover, say, German politics would be welcome as an extra benefit.

3. Scenarios

3.1 Scenario 1: Exchange

Immediate reactions to the **Exchange scenario were very positive**, with most participants expressing favourable views regarding the proposed length (four weeks) and tasks (file reports mostly for the home organisation). Flemish journalists in particular were reminded of similar exchanges that already take place between Flemish and Dutch media, which were seen to work well.

The **four-week duration of the scenario was regarded favourably** by most participants across the focus groups. One Flemish journalist remarked that it ‘sounded ideal’, while another noted that it ‘looked practical’. Most of the French-speaking journalists also thought it would be possible to get away from their desks for one month as long as the visit was planned far enough in advance. Due to pressure on costs, most journalists doubted that editors would tolerate any longer absences. One radio journalist highlighted, in addition, that the length of time spent abroad should vary according to individual circumstances. As an example, he noted that it would be easy to produce stories from the UK for a month, whereas his newspaper only has the scope to publish one or two stories from Slovenia over the course of a year. This journalist felt therefore that the programme should be more flexible in terms of length, allowing for shorter or longer visits depending on the amount of interest in a given country.

The stipulation that visiting journalists would work primarily for home organisations alleviated some participants’ concerns relating to language issues. In their opinion, it would for the vast majority of journalists be **impossible to write publishable material in a foreign language**; communicating with colleagues at host organisations and with potential interviewees and sources in destination countries was seen as less problematic. In some cases, for visits to smaller Member States with less widely spoken languages, focus group participants felt it would suffice to use a lingua franca, such as English, French or German. Others were less optimistic. One print journalist remarked that it would be impossible to follow meetings and observe journalistic practices in another Member State without extensive language skills. He used his own newspaper

as an example, claiming that while all his colleagues speak English, it would be ‘useless’ for a person who does not speak Dutch to spend time with them.

This led participants to discuss another potential limitation relating to the selection of host media and participants. Most focus group participants expressed concerns that there would be a **disproportionate amount of interest in larger Member States with well known and advanced media organisations**. One French-speaking TV journalist remarked that ‘it would be extremely interesting for me to spend a month at the BBC, but I cannot see why a journalist from the BBC would want to come to my media organisation’. Since the scenario was defined as a one-to-one exchange, encouraging advanced media outlets to participate in the programme was seen as a challenge.

Matching participants and host media was in general viewed as a logistical hurdle that the programme organisers would need to overcome, especially given that the reciprocal nature of this scenario would require the interests of each ‘pair’ of journalists to be closely aligned.

Participants could also not agree whether the exchange should be simultaneous (as stipulated in the scenario) or staged (with the visits taking place at different times). About half of the journalists present felt that, in the interests of efficiency the programme would function best if the exchange were simultaneous; others felt that for the purposes of providing sufficient guidance and mentoring the exchanges should be staged. In this model, first both participants would spend one month with one organisation, then the other, continuously helping each other adjust and providing ad hoc support, such as arranging interviews, explaining political procedures etc.

3.2 Scenario 2: Mobility

The Mobility scenario was extremely attractive to most focus group participants at a theoretical level, but was seen as **very difficult to put into practice**. On the positive side, journalists were enamoured with the idea of truly immersing themselves within a host media organisation. Over the course of two to three months, journalists were confident that they would vastly increase their knowledge and understand of another Member State and, depending on media visited, enhance their skills as journalists.

In the eyes of nearly all focus group participants, the practical obstacles of taking a long absence (up to three months) and working primarily for a host organisation would be difficult to overcome.

In terms of programme duration, several participants **described an absence of longer than one month as ‘impossible’**. Others agreed. On the one hand, permanently employed journalists would endanger their positions, while freelance journalists would risk losing their client usual client base. Journalists noted only a couple exceptions to this: firstly, several participants felt that a long stay at a very advanced media organisation, such as the BBC or *the Guardian*, would be tolerated, or even encouraged, by editors. In these cases editors might perceive the potential benefits in terms of improved skills to be great enough to merit the lost productivity. Secondly, very early career journalists, would face a lower opportunity cost than others to participating in such a programme, especially if they were not in regular employment.

Because this scenario did not involve any reciprocity between host and sending organisations, most focus group participants felt that it would be **difficult to identify willing host organisations** on a sufficiently large scale to make the programme successful. The longer duration was seen to exacerbate this problem, since a considerable proportion of participants were of the opinion that incentives would need to be offered to host organisations in order to encourage them to take part in the programme. Smaller organisations in particular were singled out as potentially lacking the time necessary to sufficiently integrate a visiting journalist.

Due to perceived language barriers and a lack of local knowledge, no participants in any of the focus groups thought it would be plausible to work as a ‘normal’ journalist for a host organisation in another Member State. The idea of translating a large number of journalistic contributions was seen as improbable, while focus group participants felt that working as a journalist in a country would require an unrealistically deep knowledge of a country’s politics and culture, in addition to an understanding of a media organisation’s audience. Most focus group participants agreed that visiting journalists would be able to contribute in some way to the host organisation, potentially through stories making use of their ‘outsider’s’ perspective. One print journalist also mentioned that a host organisation could also make use of the visitor’s mother tongue and experience to improve or increase the breadth of its own reporting. However, this was expected to be of limited scope, leading most participants to recommend a more even split between work for the host organisation and contributions to a journalist’s usual media.

3.3 Scenario 3: Twinning

Nearly all journalists representing French- and Dutch-language media agreed that **this scenario was the ‘most practical and easiest to put into place’**. The combination of a short time frame and a direct link to work for the home organisation was perceived to strongly contribute to the scenario’s feasibility. In addition, most participants thought that language issues would not be burdensome as long as the ‘twins’ shared a common language: they would be expected to assist each other in setting up and carrying out interviews and other aspects of research for the story. Because this would not necessarily need to be the language of either participating journalist, the scenario would retain a high level of flexibility in terms of who could take part.

Because the output of this scenario would for each journalist be a contribution to his or her home organisation, all participants thought that, if a suitable story was identified, editors would allow them to take part. However, this highlighted difficulties that might arise around finding the right stories. Focus group participants recommended a promotional campaign aimed at editors and journalists, in addition to the creation of a network (described by one participant as a ‘dating site’) where prospective participants could locate each other. But it was acknowledged that such a network would take time to reach a critical mass. In the meantime, success of the programme would rely on interested journalists seeking out potential ‘twins’ in other Member States.

Although this scenario was perceived as the most feasible overall, several participants did note a few **limitations in terms of fulfilling the programme objectives**. Due to the short stays abroad and intense focus on a single story (rather than on integration into a host organisation), some participants remarked that the second objective would only be fulfilled to a limited extent. In addition, the third objective, seen by most participants in the focus groups as the most important, would also not be as well served as with the scenarios described above: while participants would build a network of contacts in another country, they would not learn much about new journalistic techniques and working methods from the host organisation.

3.4 Scenario 4: Co-operation

Several focus group participants found the Co-operation scenario promising, while most considered it **impractical**. About half of the French-speaking participants, for example, did not understand the programme’s *raison d’être*, with one journalist stating ‘this loses the idea of an ERASMUS for journalists programme. Instead, it just facilitates co-operation between journalists’.

While fostering co-operation between journalists was perceived as a worthwhile aim, it was largely seen to fall short of working towards the objectives set out at the beginning of the discussion. The

lack of a clear host organisation was crucial to several participants’ perceptions of the scenario. Indeed, one participant even questioned why a face-to-face meeting between co-operating journalists would be necessary. After conducting research and sharing it with the others over email, she did not understand what would be gained by travelling to another Member State. Given the short stay abroad, it was clear to nearly all participants that journalists would not further their understanding of another Member State.

About half of focus group participants were also wary of logistical obstacles that might arise. Selecting topics, for example, would be even more difficult than under the Twinning scenario. There were also concerns that the Commission would play too large a role in identifying the content of research to be carried out. Several participants highlighted journalistic codes of conduct and presumed that they would not be able to accept money from the Commission for such a project.

Nonetheless, a considerable minority of participants in the focus groups did consider this scenario interesting, pointing to the enticing prospect of interacting with journalists from around Europe and retaining contact with them for later work.

3.5 Scenario 5: Seminars

Seminars were seen as worthwhile but **outside the scope of an ERASMUS for journalists programme**, unless they were included as an introduction to one of the other scenarios. Several Flemish journalists pointed to common misconceptions about the EU among journalists that the seminars could attempt to address. However, there were concerns that the seminars would be ‘too slanted towards the EU’s point of view’. In addition, many journalists felt it would be difficult to find subjects that were interesting to a large number of individuals. Unlike the other scenarios, this would not be easy to tailor to the needs of individual journalists. While most journalists agreed that they would travel to attend seminars given a sufficiently interesting programme and well reputed speakers, it would not be likely to address the second objective of the programme at all.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Preferred scenarios

Most of the participants across the focus groups preferred a programme that would incorporate **elements of the Exchange and Twinning scenarios**. This would involve **reciprocal, staged visits** of up to one month that allowed for, but did not require, the **possibility of work on a joint story**.

This was seen as the most feasible option for several reasons. Firstly, it would involve work primarily for the **home organisation**. As described above, most participants did not consider themselves capable of working as ‘normal’ journalists for media organisations in other Member States, due to language and other issues. Secondly, the **reciprocal element would provide an incentive** for host organisations to offer mentoring and guidance to participants. Indeed, participants themselves would be able to act as mentors for their counterparts and vice versa. Thirdly, the prospect of contributing directly to work for the home organisation would encourage editors to allow their journalists to participate in the programme.

A minority of participants also preferred the Mobility scenario, but conceded that, due to the length of time involved, it would not be feasible to gain approval from editors.

4.2 Challenges

Focus group participants identified numerous challenges. A **language barrier** between journalists participating in the programme and host media was seen as problematic. Indeed, most participants felt it would prevent journalists from contributing heavily to host organisations. **Time**

was also a concern. While many focus group participants favoured longer scenarios in theory, it was considered impossible for most of them to convince editors of the value of absences of longer than one month.

Related to this, **costs issues** were also raised. Travel and subsistence expenses were not seen as sufficient to fund participation in the programme for established journalists. It was explained that they would likely have expenses at home that they would not be able to escape during their time abroad. Focus group participants therefore felt it would be necessary to continue drawing a salary during the programme, while at the same time admitting that in order to do so journalists would need to both contribute to the home organisation while away and keep any absence to a minimum.

Lastly, **identifying suitable matches** for reciprocal visits (and suitable topics for joint work) was considered a challenge. Setting up an online network for journalists to enter their areas of expertise and interests was perceived as a potential solution but would take time to set up and populate.

4.3 Potential improvements and solutions

In order to best address language issues, focus group participants recommended setting up a programme that **combined reciprocal visits with work primarily for the home organisation**. As explained above, this would facilitate guidance between participants, helping them navigate each other's countries and media environments. In addition, it would allow journalists to continue making journalistic contributions in their mother tongue only.

To address concerns relating to costs, it was recommended that the programme is flexible enough to stay attuned to journalists' individual circumstances: for journalists that need to keep drawing a salary from their home organisation, the programme could involve a short visit linked to a concrete journalistic output. For others, a longer programme, whereby journalists might take an unpaid sabbatical, was suggested.

Focus group participants did not produce a simple solution to the challenge of identifying suitable matches between journalists and host organisations. However, an intense promotional campaign, aimed at journalists, editors and other stakeholders was seen as useful for kicking off the programme and creating interest.

2.0 DENMARK

1. Introduction

The Danish focus groups took place in central Copenhagen on Friday 20th of August 2010. The morning session ran from 9:30-11:30 followed by the afternoon session which took place over lunch from 12:00-14:00. In all, 11 journalists participated in the two focus groups. Most worked for print media, with radio and online media also represented. The majority of participants were mid career journalists. The representation of freelance and permanent journalists was almost even.

	Type of media	Status	Experience ³
Group 1	Multimedia / Radio	Retired, formerly permanent	Advanced
	Print / Radio	Permanent	Advanced
	Online	Freelance	Mid-career
	Print	Freelance	Mid-career
	Print / Radio	Freelance	Early career
Group 2	Print	Freelance	Early career
	Print	Permanent	Mid-career
	Print	Freelance	Mid-career
	Radio	Freelance	Mid-career
	Print	Permanent	Mid-career
	Print	Permanent	Advanced

2. Objectives

All three objectives that had been defined for the programme were seen as valid by both groups. However, while objectives 1 (further journalists' knowledge of the EU) and 2 (further journalists' understanding of other MS) were perceived to be crucial objectives of a potential ERASMUS for journalists programme, **objective 3** (enhance journalists' professional skills and abilities) was more or less seen as an outcome ideally *resulting* from the first two objectives: an increased knowledge of other Member States, insight into the processes of another media organisation abroad and a better understanding of the EU were all seen to enhance the professional skills and abilities of the participant. While none of the focus group members disagreed with objective 3, only one member of the first group, an experienced print and radio journalist in a permanent position, felt that it should be a stand-alone objective in itself.

Instead, several members of the second group agreed that **networking** should be added as an objective in its own right (although networking was also seen as a desirable outcome of a programme based on objective 2, as a result of working with other journalists in a host organisation in another EU Member State).

A member of the first group held the view that the level of knowledge of EU institutions in Nordic countries is not high. He suggested that most journalists generally have a good knowledge of what is going on in their neighbouring countries, but lack insight into what is happening at the EU level, which could be addressed through **objective 1**. The other members of the group seemed to largely agree with this and it was generally acknowledged that being informed about the EU is crucial for journalists. In addition, raising awareness of EU policies was seen as important, as the *“link between EU policies and domestic ones is often being missed”*.

³ The study team divided journalists into three segments based on years of experience. Journalists with less than five years experience are classified as 'early career'; those with between five and 20 years experience are classified as 'mid-career'; and those with over twenty years experience are classified as 'advanced'.

However, a programme solely focussing on the first objective was not seen to be attractive for potential programme participants, as information about the EU was considered to be useful, but not interesting enough by the majority of the members of both groups. In addition, a member of the first group made the following point, questioning the usefulness of aiming to meet the first objective:

“The end goal should be to create more debate and exchange amongst journalists in the EU. This can’t be done through more information on EU institutions.”

Objective 2 was considered to be important by a number of journalists in both groups, and getting to know another Member State was seen a good way to broaden ones’ horizon, which in turn would help journalists to produce interesting stories. As one participant captured it:

“The image of the Danish health system is very good, but when you get insight into another MS you might start seeing things differently and start considering examples of best practice. These would be good stories, and this is what editors want. Human interest and learning from other MS”.

The networking aspect of a programme relating to objective 2 through working with journalists in another Member State was also seen positively by the majority of journalists in both groups. An experienced print journalist from one of Denmark’s most popular daily newspapers stated that *“You need a network with journalists from other MS and know how their press and politics function”*.

Objectives 1 and 2 were seen to be interdependent by the majority of journalists in both groups, and the programme should therefore be developed with both objectives in mind. A better knowledge of EU Member States was seen to potentially increase interest in (and understanding of) the EU and vice versa: *“People think EU institutions are boring, but if you enhance their knowledge of Member States they will be more interested in EU as well”*.

Another journalist added: *“Without knowing the individual MS it’s difficult to follow EU politics. You need knowledge of MS to understand what is going on, as you don’t know why MS are behaving the way they are. The EC’s behaviour also reflects partly what is going on in the representatives’ home countries”*.

A young freelance journalist stated that another reason to aim at equally meeting objectives 1 and 2 would be to increase the programme appeal and saleability to editors, suggesting that an initiative aimed at both objectives would represent a higher value to editors as an increased knowledge of the EU would be a more tangible outcome than simply getting to know another Member State and organisation: *“I think 1 and 2 should be combined. That way you could get editors more interested.”*

Overall, all participants from both groups stated to be open to participating in a programme relating to the above objectives.

3. Scenarios

3.1 Scenario 1: Exchange

Participants in both groups viewed this scenario critically, suggesting that the **rigid structure** of the approach would not be appropriate for the broad range of conditions (e.g. freelance) journalists work under.

Although one of the younger journalists in the first group stated that **four weeks** would not be long enough to benefit from the programme, the majority of members of the second group voiced general concern that four weeks would be too long for a journalist to leave their place of employment at home. In addition, several members from both groups were of the opinion that the “swap” would not have to happen at the same time, as **exchange partners would most likely not be able to fully replace each other**. Instead, it was suggested to have a gap of several

weeks between the visits, to give participants time *“to take things in”* and enable exchange partners to get to know rather than to replace each other. Most participants in both groups agreed with this.

The effective integration of the visiting journalist was seen as a major issue by most participants in both groups. While many agreed that the opportunity to network and broaden one’s horizon are merits of exchange programmes in general, they also felt that **integration could be a problem** specifically for this scenario, as participants would be expected to file reports primarily for the home organisation and have less opportunity to integrate themselves into the working procedures of the host organisation as a result of this. Additional resources would have to be freed up as the exchange partner would be available to facilitate this:

“I am not sure how much help you would get. Someone would have to be designated to help you. Journalists are busy!”

“This runs the risk that the guys will sit around on their own where everyone is busy. We have a Swedish journalist working at our office and the cooperation with him is very limited.”

In addition, **language** in particular was seen as a barrier for successful integration by the vast majority of the participants in the first group, as the ability to contribute to the host organisations’ work largely depends on being able to work in the language of the country visited. This view was also supported by an experienced print journalist in the second group, who stated that contribution to the host organisations work would be limited, mainly due to the language barrier:

“I don’t think it would be feasible to contribute for real to the other organisation. For someone to really contribute who does not come from Denmark would be very tough.”

However, the other members of this group only partially agreed, suggesting that many journalists have some level of foreign language skills in at least the more obvious languages like English, French and Spanish. Two journalists in the second group were of the opinion that good English skills would be sufficient for working in Denmark in particular. Overall, language was perceived as an issue that could be overcome by the majority of journalists in the second group, providing reasonable language skills were in place and help and integration would be provided by the host.

In terms of contributing to the host organisation’s work, one journalist in the second group suggested that *“you could let the person write a limited number of stories by someone giving an outside perspective”*.

Similarly, another member of this group agreed, stating that *“it would be a possibility to have someone foreign report on Danish issues and give a different perspective on national affairs. A third possibility could be to cooperate on stories with a European perspective with contributions from the partner country.”*

Possible **stories with a European perspective** that would be suitable for cooperation could for example include “illegal motorcycle gangs in Europe”, or the “eviction of Roma population across Europe”, as cited by members of the second group.

The benefit of an exchange programme in general was questioned by two participants of the first group, who stated that an exchange with countries that are less advanced in the field of journalism (e.g. the newer Member States, as cited by the participants) would be less beneficial for someone from the old EU Member States than vice versa. The other members in the group didn’t seem to agree with this, and a young freelance journalist stated that her experience of working in Poland was beneficial for her professional development:

“I gained insight into the way it worked in Poland. If I would have been able to work from a Polish office, I might have benefited from their help and insight and knowledge of how to do things”.

The focus group participants had **mixed views regarding the content of the work**. An experienced print journalist from the second group working permanently for a major Danish newspaper suggested that continuing to file reports for your home organisation while taking part in

the programme would be appropriate. This might help to convince editors to let their staff participate as they would then not have to worry about losing members of staff during their time on the programme:

“It’s realistic to say you would have to provide your own newspaper with stories so they are not losing a member of staff.”

The majority of journalists in this group agreed with this statement.

Integrating freelancers into this scenario was seen to be difficult by the majority of members of both groups, as freelance journalists wouldn’t be able to provide a place of work within an organisation for their exchange partner. In addition, the continuity of work was seen to be a problem by several members of both groups, as freelancers might run the risk of being substituted while being on the programme:

“If you are freelance there might be a lot of people not seeing the point of you going away. You risk losing your work.”

In terms of costs, the first group agreed that there should be **some form of bursary or per diem** to cover some costs. In this context, one journalist from the first group stated her concern about the expectations from the EC when funding a journalist to take part in the programme, as participants might not have enough freedom and independence in the production of their work. The rest of the group agreed that this would possibly be a reason for concern.

The second group agreed that if permanently employed journalists were to keep on receiving a salary when participating in the programme, it would also have to be clear what their company would gain from this to justify the extra expenditure of paying a member of staff who is not currently present. A journalist from this group also suggested that the home organisations should ideally be involved in finding a suitable host organisation for their staff, to give them more control over the content of the programme their staff is participating in. The majority of the other participants agreed with this.

3.2 Scenario 2: Mobility

Although the **flexible approach** of this scenario was preferred by several journalists in both groups (in comparison with the strict one-to-one exchange approach of the Exchange scenario), the Mobility scenario was seen to be **impractical** by the majority of focus group participants.

Again, members of the first group largely agreed that language, and the meaningful contribution to the host organisations’ work, would be an issue even more aggravated by the longer **duration** of this scenario, as several months of not producing any meaningful input could be seen as a waste of time by the participants as well as the host organisation. Resulting from this, the prevailing view in the first group was that in the Mobility scenario, exchange journalists should mainly continue to file reports for their home organisation and contribute to their host organisation only to a limited extent.

Integration of the exchange journalist was also seen as a major issue, and most members of the first group expected **host organisations not being able to free up sufficient resources** (i.e. a designated member of staff to drive integration of the visiting journalist) for a period of 2-3 months.

In addition, the second group in particular viewed the proposed duration of 2-3 months very negatively and totally impractical in terms of fitting in with the personal and professional circumstances of the potential participants. The long duration was also seen to be an issue in particular with regard to the home organisation’s funding of the exchange journalist:

“2-3 months would be a lot of time away. Maybe a low salary in the region of DKK 10-12k [equivalent to approx. EUR 1,500] would help. Otherwise it’s only for freelance or unemployed.”

“We would only be able to pay people their salary if it was short and they kept contributing to us.”

The above comments suggest that a Mobility scenario might be more suitable for younger journalists in junior positions, which was underlined by one group member:

“I don’t think the employer would accept this for anyone who gets paid a full salary, but it might work for journalism trainees that have been working for only 1-1.5 years. But even then it should be 1-2 months maximum. It’s really for the younger ones.”

This view was supported by all of the members of the second group.

In terms of work content, a mid-career freelance online journalist in the first group suggested that there should be **some demands regarding the work delivered** by the participating journalists, to prevent participants taking advantage of the programme by using it as a “free holiday”. The majority of journalists in this group seemed to agree with this.

Several participants stated that considering the length of the programme, the **benefits** for both the home and the host organisation, as well as the participant and the EC as the funder, wouldn’t reflect the effort and resources invested. The home organisation would have to continue paying a salary for a member of staff abroad for several months, and the host organisation would not be able to fully use this additional resource due to the language barrier. The benefits for the participant, being able to contribute only marginally to the host organisation’s work, would also be limited. Journalists in the second group in particular also thought that a longer programme would not necessarily increase the benefit of working abroad. In the words of one participant, an experienced print journalist in under a permanent contract:

“It would be useful for increasing skills but the programme has to adapt to reality.”

“Someone would come back with a lot of crazy ideas and not much else.”

3.3 Scenario 3: Twinning

This scenario was **strongly preferred** by the majority of focus group participants in both groups. The second group in particular favoured this scenario due to its innovative character, and stated that this type of programme is currently not offered anywhere else.

The opportunity to establish a **long-lasting professional contact** in a foreign country through intensely working together on the programme was liked by all members of the first group, who felt that networking with journalists in other countries needs to be supported:

“The contact that you can establish through this is one of the main benefits. It would be a lasting contact.”

“There is a need to establish networks, especially with journalists in other countries.”

In addition, both groups felt that the “**built-in mentor function**” through closely working with a member of staff from the home organisation would achieve a good level of integration of the participants, which was seen to be a crucial aspect for the success of the programme.

The length of the Twinning scenario was also preferred to the much longer previous Mobility scenario, although several members of the first group agreed that a **duration** of one week per country might be almost too short. An alternative length of two weeks per country was suggested. In addition, several members of the second group agreed that it might be a sensible approach to have a gap between the two visits, to leave “*time for reflection*”.

The shorter duration of the scenario was also seen to be making the programme more accessible for freelance journalists, who wouldn’t risk losing their contacts while abroad.

The first group discussed **marketing possibilities** for this scenario, suggesting promoting the programme as a European rather than an EU initiative. Comments included “*Dressing it as a European initiative rather than a EU initiative would work better*” and “*European is popular, EU is not.*”

All members of the first group agreed with the above statements.

In terms of matching partners, a journalist in the second group suggested that there could be a twinning of organisations rather than individual journalists; however, one of the freelance journalists in this group disagreed, pointing out that this would exclude freelance journalists with no attachment to a particular organisation. The other group members agreed with this. They also agreed that freelancers would have to work in some type of office to be able to participate in this programme, to ensure that their twinning partner can be provided with a professional working environment. In this case, the majority of journalists from the second group felt that a **collaboration between freelance and permanent journalists** could be beneficial for both partners, as they would be able to gain insight into very different working environments (as well as different countries), which might help them to make informed choices about their future careers.

Members of the second group suggested setting up a network where journalists can search for others with a common interest. Alternatively it was suggested to promote the programme through a seminar run by an organisation such as the European Journalism Centre (EJC), where journalists could meet and apply for the twinning programme together:

“The EJC could have a seminar on a given topic and people interested in that issue would then meet each other and could set up a team.”

Jumpstarting the network from an existing network, e.g. an association of Brussels-based foreign correspondents, which could then be broadened to include journalists based elsewhere with a similar interest, was also mentioned.

3.4 Scenario 4: Co-operation

This scenario was also relatively well received in both groups.

The majority of members of both groups thought that a story developed in collaboration with journalists from other countries with **insight from different angles** could be of a high quality.

All members of the first group agreed that the Twinning scenario could be combined with the Cooperation scenario, by starting with twinning two journalists initially and increasing the number of individuals collaborating together if the programme proves to be successful. Cooperation could also be combined well with a seminar element, with a view to meeting objective 1 by including EU-related information into the seminar content.

Similarly, several members of the second group suggested that it would be beneficial for the joint meetings of the teams to take place in **Brussels** to help meet objective 1. However, a strong involvement of the EC was not seen to be desirable:

“The less we see EU officials, the better. Every journalist is so worried about his or her independence.”

Instead, it was suggested to appoint an intermediary organisation to run the programme on behalf of the EC:

“Having an intermediary is a good idea. And they really do have to be in charge, deciding who is there etc. not just doing the Commission’s job.”

Competitiveness amongst the journalists working together in teams was not perceived to be a strong problem, especially as stories would be sold in the different respective countries (and languages) of the participants.

3.5 Scenario 5: Seminars

Although members in both groups acknowledged that this service is already being offered, the majority was nevertheless in favour of seminars in general, especially due to the **good networking opportunities** they represent. Seminars were liked both as an introduction to one of the other scenarios and on their own, and several participants agreed that seminars should be included in an ERASMUS programme for journalists:

“Seminars are essential for networking and useful if focused on an interesting issue. The programme should build on them rather than replace.”

In terms of meeting the objectives, a journalist in the second group stated that objective 1 would be difficult to meet through a journalist exchange programme, as someone visiting another organisation in a different Member State wouldn't necessarily be exposed to information about the EU. The participants mostly agreed with this.

Therefore, participants (especially in the first focus group) saw combining seminars with another scenario as an effective way to potentially meet all three objectives: knowledge of the EU could be achieved through the seminar element while insight into another Member State would be a result from the adjacent programme. Objective 3 would be met, as discussed in the beginning of this report, as a result of meeting objectives 1 and 2.

The second group further agreed that it would be sensible to consider linking the seminar element of an ERASMUS programme for journalists to the already existing, well-known and popular seminars by the European Journalism Centre. In this context, several journalists from the second group suggested that attending seminars held in Brussels as part of the programme would help to increase the participants' insight into the EU so that they can *“get rid of their fears and see that the system is not closed and that there are people open to answering questions”*.

Regarding the seminar content, participants felt that the seminars should be **as practical and broad as possible**, covering a range of Europe-related topics and using relevant speakers who can provide insight from different Member States:

“Topic-wise it should be as broad as possible, and cover issues like milk production, climate change, social issues. The seminars should involve journalists not specialised in EU or international affairs but people who cover these issues on a daily basis, making it possible to draw on other Member States' perspectives.”

Speakers from industry, academia, think tanks and other organisations were also suggested to make the seminars as relevant and educational as possible.

One experienced print journalist in the second group also suggested that the seminars could be organised in a **“bottom up” way**, where journalists develop the seminar content themselves. This would ensure that the information needs of journalists are met in a better way.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Preferred scenarios

Twinning was the preferred scenario of both groups. The short duration, as well as the “built-in mentor function” and the opportunity to establish a solid and long-lasting professional contact were convincing aspects for most focus group participants. Its accessibility for freelance journalists was questioned, but participants in the second group agreed that freelance journalists could be included as long as they are able to provide a professional working environment (i.e. a functional office) for their twinning partner, even if they are not working exclusively in a media organisation. The Twinning scenario was also expected by several participants to work well in combination with a seminar element.

The Cooperation scenario was not specifically criticised for any of its elements, and the team aspect was seen to aid networking and contribute to high quality outcomes. However, although it was well-received in the focus group discussions, especially in combination with the seminar element, the participants didn't feel that it was as convincing and exciting as the Twinning approach.

The Mobility programme was also seen positively by some participants, mainly due to its more flexible structure without the need to be matched with another individual (as is the case in the Exchange and Twinning scenarios). However, the lack of built-in help to achieve integration of the visiting journalist resulting from this was seen as a concern. Further to this, most of the journalists in the second group felt that the long duration of this scenario was impractical in terms of the time spent away from professional and personal responsibilities, and in terms of the funding involved. The language barrier was also seen to be a problem, and since many of the journalists were of the opinion that without very high level language skills visiting journalists would only be able to contribute to the host organisations' work in a limited way, the resources in terms of time and money that would have to be spent were seen to **outweigh the benefits** resulting from this scenario.

The Exchange programme was highly criticised for its **rigid structures**, and a one-to-one exchange taking place at the same time was not seen to be practical, as participants wouldn't be able to fully replace each other. Participants questioned the level of integration that would be achieved considering the limited resources of media organisations and the fact that exchange partners would not be able to mentor each other.

Seminars were generally seen as useful, but since this provision is already offered, they were mainly considered in combination with another scenario, e.g. Twinning, where seminars could also be used to facilitate finding Twinning partners.

When asked for a potential name for the programme, members of the second group suggested naming the programme “**Reporting Europe**”.

4.2 Challenges

Achieving sufficient **flexibility** in the programme was named as another challenge, as the individual professional and personal circumstances of potential programme participants might mean that a strict programme setting, especially regarding duration, timing, and funding might turn into an exclusive, inaccessible initiative only attractive to a limited number of individuals:

“I think all the scenarios could be good for certain kinds of people. Leaving it flexible could let it be adapted to individual circumstances.”

“If it's boxed in too much people will never participate.”

All members of the second group agreed with this.

Several participants felt that it would be a challenge to **convince home organisations** of the benefit of sending a member of their staff on an ERASMUS programme for journalists. If the benefit was not clear to organisations, the programme's appeal could be seriously limited.

Funding was also seen as a challenge, especially with regard to the length of the programme, as a longer duration would decrease the likelihood of the organisations' ability to continue paying their staff's salary, especially in the case of more experienced, better paid journalists. This, in turn,

would make the programme only suitable for trainees and inexperienced journalists at the beginning of their careers.

An experienced print journalist in the second group felt that it will most likely be a challenge not to **duplicate already existing provisions**, when designing a new programme.

Finally, creating a **brand** appealing enough for journalists to attract motivated individuals who will treat the programme as an opportunity for professional development and networking rather than a “free holiday” was also named as a challenge for the programme.

4.3 Potential improvements and solutions

To ensure that home organisations feel that they also gain something from allowing their staff to participate in the programme, it was suggested to **integrate** them in the matching process so that they have input into the type of organisations visited. This might appeal to editors, who could then send their staff to organisations they perceive to be particularly professional, technically advanced and successful. The resulting networking opportunities with these organisations would also be a benefit for the home organisations.

In terms of funding, all participants of the second group agreed that the programme should be kept short in duration to minimise the financial burden for the home organisations. In addition, the EC should at least cover some expenses such as travel and accommodation costs, while the home organisation should ideally continue to pay the journalist’s salary to ensure a certain degree of independence from the EC is kept:

“We don’t accept payment generally as a part of our journalistic independence.”⁴

To avoid duplication of existing provisions, ensure relevance of the programme and help to meet the journalists’ needs and interests, it was suggested to develop the programme in collaboration with journalists in a bottom-up approach. Journalists could also be consulted regarding the content of seminars, or asked to suggest seminar topics themselves.

To make the programme as appealing as possible for professional journalists, it was suggested in both groups that the branding of the programme should not be too EC-oriented, but headed by an alternative organisation such as the European Journalism Centre. The prevailing view was that the EC should act as an administrator and funder more or less **behind the scenes**, while the programme content should be managed by a respected organisation associated with the journalistic profession.

⁴“Payments” referred to the subsidy of salary in this context.

3.0 ESTONIA

1. Introduction

The focus groups in Estonia were organised in Tallinn, on Friday 10th September 2010. The first session ran from 9:30-11:30 while the second session took place from 12:00-14:00. In total, the sixteen journalists who participated in the focus groups were all working for different types of print media and in most cases held permanent positions. Only two participants were acting as freelancers, which seemed to reflect the overall market situation in Estonia. The participants also represented a wide range of ages, as shown in the table below:

	Type of media	Status	Experience ⁵
Group 1	Print media – daily newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – business newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – magazine	Freelancer	Early-career
	Print media – weekly newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – daily newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media	Freelancer	Early-career
	Print media – daily newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
Group 2	Print media – newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – public broadcast agency	Permanently employed	Advanced
	Print media – monthly magazine	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – weekly newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – weekly newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – pan-regional news agency	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – daily local newspaper	Permanently employed	Advanced
	Print media – daily newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career

2. Objectives

The **first objective** (further journalists’ knowledge of the EU) generated a limited interest among the participants, especially in the first group. There was a feeling that with Estonia joining the eurozone the EU institutions are widely covered by media. This creates a momentum to inform the general public about the EU matters. However, the general public still shows only superficial understanding of these areas. The main reason for this is the EU jargon: “*Reports from Brussels are often too concentrated on bureaucratic matters*”. Also, one participant noted that many journalists dealing with issues such as social policy or health at the national level do not realise their links with EU matters and impact that decisions in Brussels have on EU Member States. According to focus group participants, it was important for journalists (in particularly those in the beginning of their career and with the EU focus) to be trained in the EU matters and teach them how to ‘translate’ the EU jargon into a language which will be understood by common people.

“People see news about the European Parliament or the Commission and they say: ‘Oh, this is not for me.’ We have to show them some live examples, so that people can relate. Otherwise, they simply will not understand what the EU is about”.

⁵ The study team divided journalists into three segments based on years of experience. Journalists with less than five years experience are classified as ‘early career’; those with between five and 20 years experience are classified as ‘mid-career’; and those with over twenty years experience are classified as ‘advanced’.

Participants were much keener to further their understanding of other Member States (the **second objective**) than of the EU. There was a general consensus among the participants that the lack of foreign correspondents is a significant problem in Estonia. As a result, other Member States are not widely covered, which is well illustrated by the following opinion: *“We know what happens in Strasbourg, and in Brussels but nothing about other Member States. We hear little about our neighbours”*. According to the participants, the language barrier contributes to this situation: when there is no original coverage (for example from Portugal or Slovenia) journalists in Estonia usually use available American or British sources.

It is important for the participants to learn about new places and meet new people. One participant explained: *“I would like to go abroad and ask my own questions there, instead of simply taking what foreign news agencies provide.”* Participants agreed that by visiting another country one can get different information, personal contacts, pictures, etc. The main challenge remains to link these to Estonia and the general public at home.

While the participants felt there is a potential to file good quality reports from abroad, there was no agreement as to whether journalists would always be able to find interesting topics about other Member States. One participant asked, *“What could I write about Luxembourg that people here would find interesting? [I can’t] unless there is a crime committed by an Estonian there.”* According to a number of participants, some countries (in particular the new Member States) seemed to be more attractive to their readers than others.

In general, most participants felt that an ERASMUS-like programme could lay a foundation for future co-operation by establishing contacts among journalists across the EU. *“For us it is important to have personal contacts in other Member States. It is difficult to understand cultural differences and it is easier to go to a country where you know someone.”* Participants also believed that by knowing other Member States, one learns more about the EU. A few participants were interested in comparing various themes across the EU. For example, topics could cover how EU law is implemented in other countries, what European Structural Funds are used for in different regions, etc.

All participants felt the **third objective** (enhance journalists’ professional skills and abilities) was the most important. This objective was relevant for participants from all age groups, with one journalist emphasising that *“while younger people are more eager to take part in such a programme, it is particularly important that more experienced people who have been journalists for long time also have an opportunity to upgrade their knowledge”*. While participants felt that an ERASMUS-like programme would attract young journalists with no family obligations, they thought that in terms of **target group** the programme should seek to accommodate people of all ages and all types of media.

All participants were open for such a programme that would be funded by the EC.

3. Scenarios

3.1 Scenario 1: Exchange

While participants were interested in the exchange scenario and they were **keen to take part** in it, they immediately identified major challenges, such as the **language problem**: journalists participating in such a programme would not always speak the language of the host country and this would have a number of implications.

Firstly, participants expected that most journalists would be interested in visiting countries where English or French are widely spoken. This would result in a **geographical imbalance** as some Member States would attract fewer journalists. While most participants hoped that there would be some journalists willing to visit Estonia, some suggested introducing a quota system to manage the geographical coverage of the programme. It is also important to note that editors and journalists might differ in their preferences for other Member States: while many participants were

curious to learn about less well known countries, such as Slovenia, they admitted that big and news-generating countries (e.g. Germany, Spain, or France) would be more attractive for their editors.

Secondly, participants agreed that because of the language barrier journalists would be **filing reports primarily for their home organisations**. The scope and frequency of filing reports should be agreed between a journalist and his/her employer in advance. However, with some additional budget for translations, journalists could also provide a limited number of articles for the host organisation.

Finally, participants felt that without language proficiency a journalist would most likely need **support of a mentor** from the host organisation. A few participants in both groups suggested without prompting from the moderators that the exchange does not have to be simultaneous. All participants felt that the scenario would be improved if two journalists could take care of each other while visiting their respective countries. Otherwise, it was felt that taking care of a participating journalist would create an additional burden for the host: *“For the first two weeks you are a guardian angel of this person, as for a student doing his/her apprenticeship”*.

Participants presented **mixed reactions** regarding the duration of the scenario. While four weeks seemed to be acceptable to most participants, there were several journalists who felt this is too long. In principle, participants dealing with general news and working for daily press presented more enthusiastic attitudes than those featuring a specific theme or investigating a particular subject: *“You cannot spend so much time on one topic. Media interests change too fast”*. However, all participants agreed that four weeks would be sufficient to learn more about another country and one participant noted that this scenario would be ideal for travel journalists.

According to the participants, one month absence would also be **acceptable to most editors**. This opinion was supported by the fact that a journalist going abroad would continue contributing to the home organisation: *“Employers might be open to this idea, if they get material to publish”*. However, a few participants in the second group (including some who were editors) felt that a four-week absence is too long. In terms of practical arrangements, most participants would have to take an unpaid leave to be able to take part in such a programme but there were also a few journalists who believed that their editors would be willing to continue to paying their salaries. However, this would depend on the destination and individual objectives agreed between a journalist and his/her employer.

Participants noted that the length of stay in another country might depend on **personal circumstances** and those with family obligations would find it difficult to be away for long time.

With a view to programme’s objectives participants felt that the exchange scenario would contribute more to improving their understanding of other Member States than to the other objectives.

3.2 Scenario 2: Mobility

Participants were **less enthusiastic** about the mobility scenario, mostly due to the parameter specifying that journalists would work primarily for host organisation. While the long stay abroad (a few months) was tempting, most participants deemed it to be impractical and simply impossible for several reasons.

According to the participants, the **language barrier would present a major problem** for a journalist who stays in another country for months and is expected to file reports for the host organisation. While a few participants were more optimistic, the majority of journalists felt that *“one cannot express him/herself in a foreign language”*. Apart from language skills, participants thought that it will be very difficult to be of use for the host organisation without **local knowledge**. It would be a challenge for a foreigner to get to local communities, meet people and conduct interviews and file reports. This is well illustrated by the opinion below:

“Even if you speak the language, you are a novice in the environment. You lack contacts and knowledge on how journalism works in the other country: who you can quote and who you cannot, who you can phone up, how to arrange meetings etc. You would try to learn these tricks locally and as soon as you have started to learn them it is time to go home.”

Taking into account additional obligations for a host to arrange guidance and support for a visiting journalist, there were **few incentives for editors** to host programme participants. In addition, focus group participants were not sure if the hosting editors would be interested to publish material produced during the course of the programme. Therefore, many participants feared that a visiting journalist might end up performing some perfunctory tasks.

In terms of the duration of the mobility scenario, participants felt that for their **home organisations could not afford sending them** for a few months abroad. There was a general feeling that this would be too long to receive a salary from the home organisation, as there were no benefits for employers. Only a few participants would attempt to take an unpaid leave. In addition, taking into account the current economic situation, this would entail a serious risk of losing one’s job. Thus, one participant suggested that this scenario would work best for very early career journalists or those currently unemployed who would like to improve their chances on the labour market.

Most participants agreed that the mobility scenario would help to better understand other EU Member States and improve professional skills (**the second and third objectives**). However, it was concluded that in comparison to the first scenario, the mobility scheme would be less practical and thus more difficult to implement.

3.3 Scenario 3: Twinning

While the twinning scenario **generated a lot more interest** amongst the participants, some parameters were identified as weaknesses by some by focus group participants. Subsequently, they suggested a number of improvements.

A significant number of participants felt that it would be difficult to implement this scenario. In particular, some participants noted that **matching journalists** might be a problem: *“You would have to find a journalist who is interested in the same topic at the same time – this is not an easy task”*. In order to facilitate this process, a few journalists in the first group suggested using social media, such as Facebook, to promote an ERASMUS-like programme among journalists and help them find suitable partners. It was also noted that a **flexible and fast access** to the scenario should be ensured: *“If I identify a story I cannot wait for an administrative decision for half a year. I would need an answer in a matter of days”*. Most participants agreed that it would be ideal if decisions were made and funding was available within one month.

Participants felt that the twinning scenario should be made **more flexible in terms of the length of stay in another country**. Some suggested extending the duration to two weeks in each country or making it a subject of a bilateral agreement between twinning journalists: it could be one week in one country and two weeks in another. According to focus group participants, even such a short stay abroad would help to get new contacts and *“such an experience would put this country on your radar”*.

Some participants argued that some Member States would be probably more popular among Estonian journalists because they **share similar problems** or due to their **geographic and cultural proximity** (e.g. Nordic countries). One participant thought that big and news-generating countries would generate more interest: *“There is no need to go to a less important country even if it holds political elections”*. However, there were also several participants who were interested in twinning with journalists from small Member States (such as Slovenia). These participants felt that the scenario would increase the mobility of journalists across all countries, especially since travel budgets are currently facing cuts.

This scenario was perceived as more realistic because participating **journalists would be able to help each other**. *“I know Sweden well enough (...) but when I go to cover the Greek economic situation it is very different. I have never been there and without a counterpart in Greece it would take me some time to see how things work there”*. This particular parameter was pointed as the strongest advantage of the twinning scheme over the scenarios discussed previously.

It was also noted that the twinning scenario would be **more suitable for feature stories** rather than news front page news: *“we get news from all over the world very quickly but this scenario would be good for more in depth reportage”*. One participant also remarked that a story would not have to be the same for both journalists: *“I can help someone who comes to research a topic from my area that is different from the one I would work on”*.

According to the participants, editors would be more interested in such a programme if the stay abroad was short. Also, the more newsworthy a story to be published was, the higher the chances of winning editors’ support. However, all participants agreed that in principle this scenario would be **more acceptable to their editors** than the schemes discussed earlier.

On the other hand a few participants **questioned the added value** of this scenario, unless it is limited to topics where local knowledge is essential: *“If the EC provides additional means to cover political elections in a Member State, this is nice but if everything is available online nowadays there is no added value. The scenario would make sense where you really need local help.”*

The majority of participants concluded that the twinning scenario **contributes best to the third objective**: *“You learn a lot by working with another journalist from another country”*. Only one participant did not share this view, expressing the opinion that the duration of this scheme is too short to gain understanding of anything but a story to be covered.

3.4 Scenario 4: Co-operation

Focus group participants were **less positive towards the co-operation scenario**. In particular one participant was very critical: *“I find this scenario of little use. Getting larger groups of journalists together does not make sense. Journalists are neither researchers nor politicians looking for solutions. Journalists want to show what the problems are but they do not solve them.”*

It was also noted that the scheme would best suit **investigative journalists** who research stories on human and drug trafficking, crime, etc. In addition, a number of participants noted that some journalists might be too competitive to share results of their work, although this was perceived as a personal issue that would not affect all journalists.

Most participants felt it would be **difficult to find and match journalists** and there would be too many actors involved. Therefore, the scenario would be very complicated to organise and implement. The majority of focus group participants thought that this scenario should not be a standalone scheme. Instead, some suggested combining it with one of the scenarios discussed previously.

According to the participants, **editors would prefer the co-operation scenario** above other schemes, because of the short absence from work and interesting story received in return. However, it was also noted that this scenario would not allow for immersion in another culture.

Taking into account that the stay abroad was limited to a few days, participants felt that the co-operation scenario would **contribute little to meeting any of the programme’s objectives**: *“For me it is more important to go and stay in another country. With this scenario the trip is only about the story”*. Also, a short stay abroad was not seen to provide enough opportunities to interact with participating journalists and build a sustainable network of contacts.

3.5 Scenario 5: Seminars

Most participants felt that this scenario is **too rigid and therefore not very attractive**: “*While other scenarios could be tailored to needs of individual journalists, here you are told what you will be doing*”. Unless the seminars included some practical element allowing journalists to participate more actively, this scenario would not generate much interest.

As with the co-operation scenario, participants felt that the seminars would be more feasible if it **was incorporated into other schemes**. Some participants suggested that the key parameter of the co-operation scenario, i.e. a plenary meeting, could provide an orientation forum for participating journalists. On the other hand, several participants noted that it is easier for a journalist to go abroad once rather than leaving his/her desk a few times within a short period of time.

It was also noted that similar initiatives already take place (e.g. EJC seminars) and that the seminars would duplicate them rather than adding value or fulfilling a demonstrable need.

With a view to **networking opportunities**, opinions varied significantly between the two groups. While the participants from the first group felt that such a scenario offers sufficient opportunities for networking, journalists from the second group thought that two or three days would be too short to make useful contacts.

Overall, participants agreed that the seminars would contribute little to programme’s objectives.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Preferred scenarios

In general, participants’ views on the preferred scenario differed depending on individual preferences towards the length of stay abroad, types of media they worked for and topics they dealt with.

Most participants, in particular from the second group, were in favour of **the twinning scenario** but it was suggested that it borrows some parameters from **the exchange scenario**: “*combine the first and the third scenarios with their best elements, allow some flexibility and this could turn into something very useful*”.

The **co-operation scenario** generated some interest among a few participants in the first group. One participant pointed that this scenario would work for events that are planned well in advance, such as national elections. However, it was also noted that journalism is based on news: there are many elements that one cannot plan. In this context, the usefulness of the co-operation scenario was limited. Only one participant was interested in **the seminars**, providing that they last at least three days and provide many opportunities for networking and active participation. The **mobility scenario** was seen as the least interesting, unless it complemented a wider programme or adjusted in terms of the length of stay abroad or its requirement to work primarily for the host organisation.

4.2 Challenges

Participants identified several challenges that an ERASMUS-like programme would likely face:

- geographical imbalance – big and news-generating countries were expected to attract more participating journalists;
- editors’ attitudes towards absence from work – participants feared that the current economic situation has had a negative impact on employers, making them less willing to

send their journalists on such a programme. participation might therefore entail a risk of redundancy for some journalists;

- bureaucracy – participants pointed to this as an inherent element of any EU intervention and they feared that the length of the application process and lack of flexibility could have a negative effect on interest in the programme;
- interest among journalists – it was noted that many journalists would need to be actively encouraged to apply for such a programme.

4.3 Potential improvements and solutions

Focus group participants suggested that:

- a forum (website or Facebook profile) should be created to facilitate networking and help in matching participating journalists;
- a plan for a participating journalist should be set in advance in order to define tasks during his/her stay abroad;
- any application process should be limited to a month;
- stays abroad should be flexible (ideally 3-6 weeks);
- a journalist should be filing reports mainly for the home organisation;

in cases when individual objectives of a visit abroad were not met, consequences should be made clear in advance and they should allow for some flexibility.

4.0 EU CORRESPONDENTS

1. Introduction

A single focus group for Brussels-based journalists was organised in Brussels on Friday 17th September 2010. The session ran from 9:30-11:30 and brought together eight journalists working mainly for the print media (though online and TV media were also represented). Five of the eight participants worked on a regular basis but under freelance status, while the other three were permanently employed.

As shown in the table, nearly all of the participants are classified as mid-career. This reflects the experience required to gain a Brussels-level posting. Although most of the participants would not be likely candidates for an ERASMUS for journalists programme, they all provided valuable insight based on experience as journalists outside their home countries and mobility / exchange programmes for journalists.

Type of media	Status	Experience ⁶	Member State
TV	Permanently employed	Mid-career	HU
Print	Freelance	Mid-career	IT
TV / online	Permanently employed	Mid-career	Brussels-based media
Print	Freelance	Mid-career	UK
Print	Freelance	Mid-career	UK
Print	Permanently employed	Early-career	AT
Print	Freelance	Mid-career	IT
Print	Freelance	Mid-career	PT

2. Objectives

Nearly all participants felt that the **second objective (further journalists’ understanding of other Member States) would be most readily served** by a new exchange / mobility programme for journalists. As one participant explained ‘If I got to know Sweden better, and made some contacts there, I’d be more likely to start proposing stories with a Swedish angle’. To a certain extent, most participants also felt that a new programme would serve the **third objective (enhance journalists professional skills and abilities), which was seen as the most important** of the three objectives presented to focus group participants. Both of these objectives were also considered relevant.

One participant saw an inherent synergy between the first objective (further journalists’ understanding of the EU) and the second two, stating that ‘there is no contradiction between the three. Anything that helps me to understand the EU and other Member States will enhance my skills’. Others were less certain that this objective would be served by helping journalists spend some time with media in another Member State. According to one such participant, ‘I don’t see how spending some time in Malta would help me understand how the EU works’. The majority of participants also noted a limited interest in the first objective. While as Brussels correspondents all participants report extensively on the EU, none of them sensed a desire within their respective media to devote more coverage to EU affairs. Thus they felt that editors would be reluctant to devote journalists’ time to a programme with this a main objective.

⁶ The study team divided journalists into three segments based on years of experience. Journalists with less than five years experience are classified as ‘early career’; those with between five and 20 years experience are classified as ‘mid-career’; and those with over twenty years experience are classified as ‘advanced’.

3. Scenarios

3.1 Scenario 1: Exchange

Only a **minority of focus group participants found the Exchange scenario to be feasible**, with even these journalists conceding that the programme would be much more applicable to permanently employed journalists than freelancers. Given that most participants in the focus group were freelancers, this was perceived as a major obstacle.

For those journalists in permanent employment, getting agreement from editors to participate in such a programme was described as ‘potentially difficult’. Participants explained that, because editors would not expect visiting journalists to be productive, they would be reluctant to allow them to participate in the programme unless a particularly interesting Member State or media outlet was identified. Others agreed that editors would need to see concrete outcomes from the programme, such as an improved network of contacts in a newsworthy Member State.

Because finding a suitable mentor was perceived as a potential hurdle to successful implementation of the programme, one focus group participant suggested, to the agreement of his peers, that the ‘exchange’ should be staged. In other words, first journalist A should spend a month with journalist B, under his / her guidance, then they should switch. This would provide a direct incentive for each journalist to act as a mentor for his / her counterpart, while preventing any undue burden on other colleagues.

Although language was also seen as an issue to consider, most focus group participants agreed that, given the focus of the scenario on work for the home organisation, it would be unlikely to present a big problem.

3.2 Scenario 2: Mobility

First **reactions to the Mobility scenario were much more positive**, especially with regard to freelancers. Because any journalist would be eligible to apply, none of the participants felt this scenario would exclude freelancers. Moreover, matching journalists and host organisations was perceived to be simpler with this scenario: journalists would identify media outlets and Member States that they would like to learn more about, and then apply with the agreement of the host organisation. As long as the interests of journalists, editors from the home organisations and host organisations were aligned, this programme would be feasible and would serve the second two objectives.

However, participants also identified several challenges that would need to be overcome. Firstly, there was a consensus that **two to three months would be too long for most journalists**. Participants were of the opinion that the possibilities for lengthy absences decreased for journalists as they gained experience. Thus, while a programme of three months might be feasible for recent graduates and / or unemployed journalists attempting to boost their CV, the established journalists at whom this programme is aimed would be likely to participate in a programme lasting about one month.

Focus group participants were also incredulous with regard to the idea that visiting journalists would work primarily for host organisations. In the words of one print journalist, ‘a similar programme exists in the US, but participants are not expected to be productive while at the host media’. Taking into account problems that would likely arise due to lacking language skills as well, this element of the scenario design was seen as completely unfeasible. As one Dutch journalist working in the UK print media explained, ‘When I first started working in the UK, I already had a high level of English. Nonetheless, it took me six months to write articles on my own, and this was

only possible because a colleague was able to teach me how to write. I doubt a mentor in this programme would have so much time’.

This does not imply that focus group participants did not think that visiting journalists would be able to make any meaningful contributions to host organisations. On the contrary, most participants were confident that programme participants could be useful for host organisations. However, this usefulness was perceived outside the role of a normal staff journalist for the host organisation. Instead, the participant could carry out ‘softer’ tasks, such as occasional contributions (that could be proofread) with an outsider’s perspective, assistance with research and sharing expertise and / or contacts (especially relating to the participant’s own Member State).

There was also a concern that a disproportionate amount of prospective participants would apply to visit either advanced media organisations in **large Member States or neighbouring countries**. While the latter would not adversely affect the feasibility of the programme, focus group participants did feel that it would limit its ability to fulfil the second objective. In the case of the former, there were concerns that these organisations would be oversubscribed, while there would be little interest in smaller Member States.

3.3 Scenario 3: Twinning

Descriptions of the Twinning scenario led to nods and enthusiastic chatter among focus group participants, with one exclaiming ‘Now that’s what I call a synergy’. While this was positively perceived by all participants, journalists working in TV news were especially impressed. One participant explained that the programme could lead to organisations around Europe sharing more footage. He explained that the combination of downward pressure on expenditure and high production costs resulted in less pan-European TV coverage. Both TV journalists in the focus group hoped that a Twinning-type programme would encourage greater co-operation between national TV media across Member States. Language was also not perceived to present a major issue for this scenario, since participants would provide translation and guidance to each other, provided they shared a lingua franca.

Most other participants also expressed positive views. It was agreed that stories produced under the Twinning scenario would not function as breaking news, but as **investigative features with a pan-European dimension**. Comparative stories about how EU or other public policy affect two Member States were mentioned as potential products of the programme. In order to help journalists find each other, participants recommended that the Commission, or an intermediary organisation, set up a Facebook- or Couchsurfing-like database where interests and skills could be listed. However, it was acknowledged that, at least at the outset, such a database would lack the critical mass needed to match potential participants adequately. While the programme would therefore have to rely on personal networks at first, participants disagreed as to whether it would generate the attention necessary to become successful. Upon reflection, about half of participants were also of the opinion that journalists might create such a database better on their own, without help from the Commission.

While participants agreed that attaching a journalistic output to participation in the programme increased its feasibility, they voiced **concerns about the EU’s involvement in choosing which kinds of stories to support**. This concern led to a broad agreement among focus group participants that the European Commission would need to ensure journalists (and especially their editors) that journalistic integrity would not be comprised. For most participants this would be partially ameliorated if the Commission set eligibility criteria that strictly avoided passing judgment on the content of a story. In addition, using an intermediary to administer the programme, rather than the Commission carrying out this role, was perceived positively.

There were also some concerns relating to the time frame of the scenario. Most focus group participants took issue with the short time limit of one week in each country. While this would be feasible if the two journalists extensively engaged with each other before and after their trips, more flexibility was recommended. A slightly longer duration was also perceived to better address the second and third programme objectives. More time in another Member State, with a host organisation, would allow participants to learn more and build more durable contacts. In addition, although most participants felt that in most cases participants would come from the same media type, they did consider it necessary to place a restriction: if a TV and print journalist did decide to team up, it would be equally conducive to fulfilling the programme objectives as two TV or two print journalists.

3.4 Scenario 4: Co-operation

Although most focus group participants found this scenario interesting on a theoretical level, **practical obstacles were considered insurmountable**. Namely, participants doubted that journalists with common interests would be able to successfully identify each other quickly enough to produce a story. Involving the Commission for funding was seen to exacerbate this difficulty, given its reputation for erecting bureaucratic hurdles. One participant commented ‘This would be feasible and to a certain extent already happens, but these contacts need to happen informally without the Commission’.

While all focus group participants doubted that permanently or regularly employed journalists would take advantage of the Co-operation scenario, several did mention its potential utility for marginally employed or unemployed journalists. For them, funding from the Commission could be seen as a motivator. However, even in this case nearly all participants were of the view that this scenario fell short. In addition to the practical issues raised above, it was not seen to address the programme objectives, especially given that hardly any time would be spent in another Member State.

3.5 Scenario 5: Seminars

Participants disagreed as to the potential usefulness of the Seminars scenario. Given their status as Brussels-based correspondents, it was seen as especially irrelevant to them. However, seminars taking place outside of Brussels (one participant gave an example of EJC seminars in Georgia) received more enthusiasm. Inviting speakers from outside the Commission, such as experts from advanced media organisations, was also seen as a way to improve the scenario.

That seminars were in some situations attractive did not distract participants from their deeply felt opinion that such a scenario would in no way represent an ERASMUS for journalists programme. An experience with a host organisation would not be present, while experience of another Member State would be limited to a few days. Instead, most participants claimed they would ‘tolerate’ seminars as an introduction to a broader exchange / mobility programme. This model was seen as potentially useful for helping participants in the programme to build contacts and share experiences. Nonetheless, journalists at the focus group continued to view such seminars as a uninteresting addendum to an otherwise exciting programme.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Preferred scenarios

Looking back at the five scenarios discussed in the focus group, journalists could not agree on a single model that should be chosen. One journalist preferred Exchange, while another preferred Twinning, but the majority recommended a **flexible approach that would incorporate elements of both the Mobility and Twinning scenarios**. In the eyes of most journalists present, this would allow participants to identify a suitable host media and time frame without having to grapple with stringent administrative hurdles.

4.2 Challenges

Over the course of the discussion participants identified many challenges to the successful implementation of an ERASMUS for journalists programme. Convincing editors to allow journalists time away from their desks was perceived as difficult. Fundamental challenges included dealing with lacking language skills and incorporating freelancers, while participants worried that the Commission’s bureaucracy and influence would stifle interest in the programme.

Cost issues were also raised, especially with regard to incorporating freelance journalists; though permanently employed journalists might be able to draw a salary during their participation in the programme, freelancers might lose important sources of income or regular clients.

4.3 Potential improvements and solutions

In order to deal with the challenges presented above, focus group participants presented several potential solutions. Most of these involved incorporating some **flexibility** into the programme. Thus, editors could be more easily coaxed into allowing journalists time away from their desks if they were able to compromise over the amount of time needed. Similarly, encouraging freelancers to participate in a Mobility-type scenario should not preclude the Commission from funding a Twinning-type visit between two permanently employed journalists.

Participants in the focus group did not identify easy solutions to language issues, but stressed that sufficient mentoring and guidance, in addition to suitable matches between participants and host organisations would help. It was also stressed by most participants that the Commission should not require participants to produce stories directly for host organisations. While this might occur to a limited extent, including it as a programme requirement would restrict participation to a small proportion of journalists and encourage mostly visits between countries sharing a language.

Finally, all participants emphasised that the Commission should refrain from any interference in the stories that would be produced as an outcome to the programme. For any Twinning-type matches, participants recommended that an intermediary choose journalists according to criteria limited to journalistic qualifications rather than content.

5.0 GERMANY

1. Introduction

The German focus groups took place in central Munich on Friday 9th of July 2010. The morning session ran from 9:30-11:30 followed by the afternoon session which took place over lunch from 12:00-14:00. In all, 17 journalists participated in the two focus groups representing a good mix of print, TV, radio and online journalists. The majority of participants were early and mid career journalists who worked on a freelance basis:

	Type of media	Status	Experience ⁷
Group 1	TV	Freelance	Mid - career
	Public relations	Freelance	Advanced
	TV	Freelance	Early career
	TV / Radio / Online	Freelance	Mid - career
	TV / Online	Freelance	Mid - career
	Print	Retired (previously in permanent position)	Advanced
	Radio / TV / Print	Freelance	Early career
	Print / Online	Freelance	Early career
Group 2	Radio	Freelance (previously in permanent position)	Mid - career
	Print / TV	Freelance	Early career
	TV	Freelance	Mid - career
	Online	Permanent position	Early career
	Online	Freelance	Early career
	Print / Online	Permanent position	Early career
	Print	Freelance	Mid - career
	TV	Freelance	Mid - career
	TV / Radio	Freelance	Early career

2. Objectives

The majority of participants agreed that **Objective 1** (further journalists’ knowledge of the EU) **was the least important objective** with regard to their taking part in an Erasmus programme for journalists. Information limited to the European Union was seen as “*not exciting*”, and the stated level of interest in the EU and its institutions was relatively low among the members of the focus groups:

“Learning about the EU is tedious. The only thing there is to learn is that it is complicated. There is not a high level of interest.”

It was also suggested that this objective was already being addressed through other mechanisms, such as EU-related seminars and a wealth of online information and communication materials available on the official EU website. The majority of participants agreed with this, although one participant also stated that EU information material is often not user-friendly enough and that the EU presents itself as “*faceless and unapproachable*”.

Objectives 2 and 3 were both considered to be important, but for different reasons. **Objective 2** (further journalists’ understanding of other MS) attracted a fair amount of support, as several participants felt that their knowledge of other Member States was lacking. They stated that they

⁷ The study team divided journalists into three segments based on years of experience. Journalists with less than five years experience are classified as ‘early career’; those with between five and 20 years experience are classified as ‘mid-career’; and those with over twenty years experience are classified as ‘advanced’.

would be interested in learning about how the media works in other countries and felt that this insight would “*enrich their careers and broaden their horizons*” more than the first objective would. Most members of the second focus group agreed with this. Several participants in this group also felt that improved knowledge of other Member States would contribute to the third objective.

Objective 3 (enhance journalists’ professional skills and abilities) was seen as important in particular due to the lack of practical experience gained through a traditional journalism degree. One participant stated that “*young journalists are not well prepared for the future*”, and suggested that insight into a different organisation could help young journalists to gain skills valuable to their future careers. Overall, objective 3 was seen to be the most important objective by a majority of the participants in both groups.

Other, additional objectives mentioned by individual participants included improvement of language skills, making new contacts and broadening networks in general.

When asked about their openness toward an EU programme seeking to fulfil the above objectives, all participants stated a keen interest in doing so. However, a number of freelance journalists added that their **ability to participate would depend to a very large degree on the funding** of the programme: unlike journalists with permanent positions, freelancers would not be able to draw on regular salary during the programme and would therefore need a substitute for their usual sources of income. In addition, they expressed considerable anxiety not have the security of returning to guaranteed employment after the programme ends, risking that their established sources of income might have dried up by the time they have returned from their visit abroad. This means that an Erasmus programme for journalists would have to ensure that the issue of funding is adequately resolved, especially with the situation of freelance journalists in mind, to counterbalance their loss of income during, and potentially after, their participation in the programme.

3. Scenarios

3.1 Scenario 1: Exchange

The **majority of participants viewed this scenario critically**, claiming that a number of parameters would be unsuitable in terms of effective implementation and usefulness regarding the fulfilment of the three objectives discussed above.

Participants in both groups pointed out that the scenario was only suited to journalists in permanent employment and is **not practical for freelance journalists**. Apart from the overarching problem that freelance journalists do not have the financial backing of a permanent employer to “*tide them over*” during a period of time spent abroad, they would also in most cases not be sufficiently attached to one single organisation to provide a placement for their exchange partner, making a one-to-one exchange logistically unworkable. The majority of journalists in both groups agreed with this.

Further to this, the prevailing view in both groups was that the duration of **four weeks would be too short**, as it would not leave enough time “*to learn the basics of a foreign country and find your feet in a new organisation*”. In this context, one of the main criticisms was that the exchange journalists would not be able to **integrate themselves** into the host organisation within a time span of four weeks, especially if participating journalists were expected to keep on contributing to their home organisation rather than principally filing for the host organisation. Although it was agreed on by the majority of journalists in both groups that most media organisations would readily take on an “*extra pair of hands*”, most participants in the first group highlighted the substantial risk that exchange journalists would “*end up as glorified interns, only shadowing someone in the host organisation rather than gaining practical work experience*”. This would result in a scenario substantially benefiting neither individual participants nor the home organisation very

much. In particular, there was concern that the participant would not return with any relevant new skills.

The availability of a “**mentor**” (i.e. someone who would look after the exchange journalist and drive his or her integration into the host organisation) was seen as extremely important by the majority of journalists in the first focus group. In addition, a freelance journalist from this group suggested that a set of mandatory tasks and activities should be developed to provide guidelines for both the exchange journalist and the host organisation, with a view to ensuring effective integration. A number of others agreed, although it was also acknowledged that this would result in an additional and possibly unwelcome workload for the host organisation. Smaller, local organisations in particular might lack the resources for mentoring an exchange journalist, as a freelance journalist with experience in such media suggested. To increase the incentive for host organisations to turn this into a successful programme, one freelance print journalist suggested that host organisations should be able to **choose their exchange journalist from a pool of potential candidates**, giving them the chance to select participants with an appropriate set of skills. This would also be likely to contribute to better integration of the participant.

The majority of participants from the first group did not seem to think that the time spent away from the home organisation, especially in the case of younger journalists at the beginning of their career, would cause major problems, even if the duration of the Exchange scenario were increased as suggested above. In the words of two freelance TV journalists in the first group:

“Time spent abroad would not be a big problem for most organisations. Employers often support activities like this.”

Successful integration was also seen to depend at least partially on the type of media, and focus group participants had mixed views on this. A freelance TV journalist stated that effective integration of an exchange journalist over a short period of time would be virtually impossible, while another participant, working as an online journalist in a permanent position for a national newspaper, suspected that integration would be easier in TV than in print journalism due to the more diverse tasks and activities in the field of TV journalism. A radio journalist (now working on a freelance basis but previously in a permanent position) also claimed that it would be difficult to integrate an exchange journalist in his field of work, especially in smaller organisations. Instead, he suggested that organisations publishing, for example, a quarterly magazine, might have more scope to participate in the programme as they don’t have to constantly work towards tight, daily deadlines.

Another issue mentioned by two of the participants in the first group is a possible **conflict with the work of foreign correspondents** that make a living from covering news abroad. It was therefore suggested that in a successful Exchange scenario, the focus would have to be on countries and topics that are not already covered by international correspondents. The other group members supported this view.

Both groups discussed the issue of **language skills** for the success of this scenario. Since it is likely that foreign correspondents would already be covering larger countries, a lack of language skills was seen as particularly problematic for work in smaller, less covered countries. A “mentor” in the host organisation, responsible for integrating the exchange journalist as discussed above, could help to overcome language barriers by effectively acting as a kind of translator or proof reader of the work delivered by the visiting journalist. Others thought that English is widely spoken and generally accepted as a working language in the field of journalism and several participants agreed that many journalists will have already been able to gain foreign language skills through studying and working abroad. In addition, one participant stated that the programme should ideally help journalists to improve their language skills as well. Although the views regarding the importance of language skills were very mixed, language was generally not seen as a main obstacle for a successful Erasmus for journalists programme.

Summing up, the structure of the Exchange scenario was perceived as too rigid, especially with regard to the exclusion of freelance journalists and the short, inflexible length of four weeks, but also due to the fact that it was limited to journalists working in the same type of media. A freelance participant working across TV, print and radio also pointed out that many journalists work across different types of media, and that the programme should use this diversity to facilitate **cross-media exchanges**. All members of the first focus group agreed with this. Independently of this, the process of matching exchange partners was expected by the majority to be bureaucratic, time-consuming and ultimately pointless, as “*exchange journalists would never be able to replace each other on a one-to-one basis*”.

3.2 Scenario 2: Mobility

Overall, participants in both groups clearly **favoured the Mobility scenario** over the previous (Exchange) scenario, mainly due to its more **flexible structure and improved accessibility** for freelance journalists. The longer duration (2-3 months) was seen as positive by the majority of participants in both groups especially with regard to maximising the gain for the visiting journalist. However, the difficulties of leaving their desks for several months to work elsewhere were considered to be substantial for both permanently employed and freelance journalists. Participants in the first group stated that even though some employers would agree for members of their staff to take part in a Mobility scenario type programme, the issue of funding would still have to be resolved, since according to several participants, organisations would be unlikely to continue paying a salary for someone working elsewhere during an extended period of time. Most members of the first group agreed with this.

While the more flexible structure of this scenario **would allow freelance journalists to take part**, funding would also be an issue for them and might seriously limit their ability to participate, as suggested by journalists in the second group. A freelance radio journalist stated that freelance journalists would be keen to have a guaranteed buyer for the stories produced during their time abroad, so that there would be at least some degree of financial security for them.

The discussion around **funding** revealed that nearly all participants felt that at the very least, the costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence should be covered by the EU. Several participants held the view that the EU would have to go beyond this, given that employers might be willing to grant journalists unpaid leave, but would hardly be willing to continue to pay their salary during an extended stay abroad, while freelancers would not be able to generate sufficient income during their participation. Thus, it was suggested that the EU should also cover at least part of the participants' lost earnings (especially if a duration of the visits of more than a few weeks is envisaged). Views as to the appropriate amounts varied: while a few participants held that they “*were no longer students*” and expected to maintain a certain lifestyle while abroad, others acknowledged that journalists could be expected to make a financial sacrifice if they wanted to benefit from the experience the programme would offer. The majority of participants seemed to think that a subsidy in the region of EUR 1,000 per month would be acceptable. .

One participant stated that organisations should receive a limited amount of funding for hosting visiting journalists, but other members of the group did not necessarily agree, since they felt this could result in “*organisations agreeing to host journalists for the wrong (i.e. financial) reasons*”. Another suggestion made by two members of the second group in terms of funding was to group participants together (i.e. placing several journalists at a given host organisation at the same time) to help them “*to find a way in*”, and to reduce administrative and accommodation costs, although this could, as one person pointed out, hinder integration:

“Groups make sense, but the risk is that participants end up integrating only with other participants rather than their host colleagues.”

Grouping participants together was also seen as a potential obstacle to **including smaller, less well covered countries** in the programme. Focus group participants expected journalists to flock towards large organisations in the bigger EU Member States with widely spoken languages (e.g. France, Germany, UK and Spain) in any case. Creating a programme structure favouring participation in such organisations could reinforce this trend if the administrative effort required to place individual journalists in smaller, less popular countries was perceived as too high.

On the other hand, one member of the second group did not agree that larger countries and organisations would be disproportionately favoured. He expected programme participants to realise the importance of finding a host organisation where one can gain in-depth experience, rather than a *“reference from a big name that looks good on paper”*. He added that the perceptions of which host organisations provided the best experiences for visiting journalists would also spread by word-of-mouth. The other group members mainly agreed with this.

In this context, and despite the longer duration of this scenario, the prevailing view was that **integration would still be a major issue**. In particular, the willingness of the host organisation to integrate the visiting journalist was seen as crucial by one member of the second group:

“Success depends on the host organisation. Will someone look after me? If not, one should be able to change to another organisation.”

Similarly, another participant of the group was of the opinion that host organisations should be able to choose the journalists visiting their organisation, and added: *“The host organisation has to decide where and how I would fit in best”*.

The majority of the group members agreed with the above two statements on the **crucial role of the host organisation**, although one member suggested that from the point of view of the visiting journalist it would also be important to have some input into where he or she will be placed: *“If participants are able to choose their host organisations themselves, they can make sure that they will work somewhere they are really interested in”*. The above statements suggest that it could be beneficial to consider input from both participants and host organisations during the matching process.

The ability and motivation of the visiting journalist was also seen as an important factor for the success of the programme, and several participants in both groups agreed that visiting journalists should be required to have a **certain level of experience** to ensure that they can contribute to the host organisation’s work in a meaningful way and with concrete tasks rather than *“ending up as interns”*. All participants agreed that they were not interested in another internship, but in opportunities to not only broaden their own horizon, but also to contribute their skills and knowledge to an organisation where this can add value. This implies that this programme might not be suitable for very young and inexperienced journalists.

Although recognising the long-term aims of the programme (such as an improved EU-related knowledge amongst journalists and increased and better EU-related media coverage across the EU Member States), an effective contribution to the host organisation’s day-to-day activities was seen as an important short-term objective by one member of the second group. The other participants of the group agreed that this would be a good selling point with regard to making the programme attractive for potential host organisations, where help with everyday tasks would be welcome.

An interesting point was made by a member of the second focus group with regard to ensuring the participants’ time is well spent and their journalistic work is rewarded and appreciated. It was suggested that a **pool of content** could be created, in which articles or other journalistic outputs produced by all participating journalists during or as a result of their time abroad could be uploaded. This content could be made available free of charge to all media that host a journalist. Thus, it could provide an added incentive for potential host organisations to participate, as well as promote participants’ work more widely and facilitate its use and/or publication by other media

across Europe. Several other focus group participants were supportive of this idea, one stating that *“journalists have a big ego and love to see their stories published, especially in foreign countries”*. However, concerns were also raised, both of a practical nature (*“would media really take the time to sift through a large pool of articles written in different languages about random topics?”*) and regarding legal issues (such as the rights to the articles).

In terms of **language**, it was again suggested that the programme would tend to focus on larger member states such as the UK or France due to the fact that more people would have relevant language skills for these countries in comparison with smaller countries. This was perceived as a potential limiting factor. A member of the second focus group also pointed out that if a participant already has the necessary language skills, he or she will most likely have already spent an extended period of time in the relevant country and would therefore not experience anything new from a cultural perspective.

3.3 Scenario 3: Twinning

Participants expressed mainly **mixed views about the Twinning scenario**, but generally responded with less enthusiasm than for the Mobility scenario discussed above. Although it was seen as easier to implement, participants in particular questioned the usefulness of the scenario in terms of its likely outputs and outcomes, and their relevance regarding the three objectives above.

The actual idea of working together with a partner who would help the visiting journalist to access sources of information on-site was perceived as positive by the majority of focus group participants in both groups. However, the **duration of the scenario was thought to be too short**: while organisation and implementation would be less difficult for a shorter programme, and the financial burden for participants would be lower, the time spent in the host organisation would not be sufficient to substantially increase one’s knowledge or gain relevant new skills; immersion in the new environment would simply not be for long enough. A duration of two weeks per country was suggested (one month in total).

One of the more experienced journalists asserted that the Twinning scenario could work for both permanently employed and freelance journalists working in specific global subject areas such as science and technology, but would **not be appropriate for local or regional organisations** and topics. For these organisations it would be difficult for twinning partners to find stories of a common interest that they could work on together.

Matching twinning partners with a common interest was seen as a challenge in general, and a lengthy administrative process was expected by the majority of journalists. Members of the first focus group assumed that **potential participants would likely prefer to find a ‘twin’ through their own networks** beforehand and apply to the programme together. According to the group, this could have the added benefit of strengthening cooperation among media organisations overall.

In terms of experience, a radio and TV journalist in a permanent position from the first group claimed that the twinning partners would both have to have a certain level of experience to gain something from working together:

“One problem is that younger journalists might be quite inexperienced and therefore unable to learn much from each other. The previously discussed “mentor” idea wouldn’t work anymore. Participants should have to have at least three to four years of professional journalism experience to be eligible”.

The group generally agreed with this statement. The success of the programme was also seen to depend too much on the compatibility between the twinning partners:

“This scenario really depends on how well the partners get on as it is so short. It’s much more risky than working somewhere for a longer period of time”.

Several participants from the second group felt that this programme was somewhat like a “*consolation prize*”: although the programme itself was perceived as interesting, it was seen to be much less rewarding than the longer Mobility programme discussed in the previous section, because the short amount of time available was seen as too short to “*really find your feet and benefit from the programme*”.

3.4 Scenario 4: Co-operation

The participants of both groups were generally open to this scenario, but not convinced that it would provide any significant added value in comparison with existing programmes such as study visits arranged through the EU.

The scenario was liked for its **compact schedule and good accessibility for freelance journalists**, and perceived as feasible in terms of its organisation. The issue of funding was also discussed, and the first group more or less agreed that if at least funding to cover travel and accommodation costs was provided, this scenario could be a welcome opportunity especially for freelance journalists between projects, as the time spent abroad would be limited to a few days and the self-built professional networks that freelance journalists rely on would not be jeopardised.

The strong element of **teamwork** was also considered to be positive, but participants had mixed views on how well this would work in reality. The prevailing view in the first focus group was that selection of participants for the teams was crucial for the success of the scenario, as the journalists would need similar levels of experience both to effectively contribute to the group and to gain something from it. In this context, one member of the first group claimed that competitiveness among the participants could be an issue, as journalists might be reluctant to share the results of their research.

Several participants in both groups working in TV journalism stated that this scenario would be less feasible in their field, as TV programmes are researched and planned far in advance, without enough slack in their production processes for the joint development of any new aspects. A freelance TV journalist stated that TV programmes also have to be produced in the most cost-effective way due to the involvement of specialist equipment, meaning that the remote cooperation of several team members would most likely be seen as a “*waste of time and money*” by editors. The cooperation element could, if at all, only be useful for the research phase of the development of a new programme, but not its production. Several other members of the first group mainly agreed with this.

Members of the second focus group suggested that the framework of this scenario is **not structured enough**, and could result in participants abusing this opportunity as a “*free trip*”, as one member stated. Another journalist agreed, suggesting that the scenario could “*turn into a student project that will not find any takers afterwards*”. This point was also made by a participant in the first group, and several others agreed that ensuring that the work produced is **sellable**, especially in the case of freelance journalists who are under particular pressure to find buyers for their work, is a considerable challenge in this scenario.

In response to this, one of the more experienced journalists suggested that this programme might result more in **long-term benefits** (such as improved background knowledge and international networking opportunities gained through the intense cooperation with a number of other journalists), rather than tangible short-term outputs.

One member in the second group suggested that the EU could develop the topics themselves and offer funding to groups willing to cover these subjects. Topics could be EU-related, but the **EU would have to refrain from censoring any of the produced material** to ensure the programme’s independence, as this could otherwise strongly limit the appeal and credibility of the programme.

3.5 Scenario 5: Seminars

Again, although views were mixed regarding this scenario, the prevailing opinion of members from both groups was that it **lacked an innovative dimension**. A number of participants stated that a range of seminars with EU-related content is already being offered on an ongoing basis, suggesting that there was no need to offer further provisions in this area. EU-related content in particular was also seen by several participants as “*boring*” and “*not interesting and unnecessary*”, especially as information on the EU is accessible on the internet.

If combined with one of the previous four scenarios however, the seminar element was seen as substantially more useful as it could serve as a **short and possibly optional introduction** to one of the other scenarios, as agreed on by several members of the first group. Adding on a seminar element, possibly taking place in Brussels or at another relevant location, was seen to be particularly appropriate for the Exchange and Mobility scenarios by members of the first group. It would provide “*a good way in*” to a programme lasting several weeks or months and could introduce the programme in the context of the European Union and help to achieve Objectives 1 and 2 through relevant seminar content. The networking opportunities arising from a seminar were also mentioned as a benefit, and a member of the first group suggested that an introductory seminar at the beginning of an Exchange or Mobility programme would add value by helping participants to liaise with the other programme participants from the start. Similarly, seminars were also seen to add value by facilitating the development of networks if they took place at the end of the programme.

The most important determinant for the appeal of seminars in combination with one of the other scenarios was considered to be the seminar content. While participants in both groups stated once more that there is no need to cover EU procedures and institutions in additional seminars, other topics, such as new EU Member States or EU anti-trust law, were seen as more appealing.

In terms of meeting the three objectives discussed above, several participants in the second group agreed that seminars combining **networking opportunities** with specific areas of interests as well as a limited amount of basic information about the EU could help to meet objective one and raise general awareness and coverage of EU-related issues. It would also help participants to gain a better understanding of the context of their placement, and widen their horizon and knowledge of the EU from an otherwise bilateral viewpoint.

Overall, **networking opportunities were seen as the main benefit of the Seminars scenario** by the majority of focus group members, especially for younger journalists in need of support in this area.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Preferred scenarios

Although participants expressed mixed views on all scenarios discussed, the **Mobility scenario** was the most preferable form of the programme, due to its attractive combination of a flexible and open structure potentially accessible to freelance as well as permanently-employed journalists. The longer duration of this scenario of 2-3 months was also seen positively by a majority of the focus group participants, who felt that they could really immerse themselves into a host organisation if they stayed for this length of time, although the practical challenges in financial and logistical terms arising from this were also acknowledged. Finding the right match between the host organisation and visiting journalist, and the opportunity to contribute to the host organisation’s work, was seen as crucial for the success of a mobility-type programme, and effective integration of the visiting journalist would have to be ensured. Overall, the majority of the participants preferred the Mobility scenario, and its combination with the seminar element was also seen as desirable by most of the focus group participants.

The **Twinning scenario** was favoured by three participants, but generally perceived more as a “consolation prize” as the potential benefits from this programme were seen to be much smaller in comparison to the longer Mobility scenario. The Exchange scenario was only preferred by one of the journalists, and dismissed by the vast majority of focus group journalists due to its inflexible structure and inaccessibility for freelance journalists.

During the main discussion, the Co-operation scenario was also viewed positively, however, when asked about their preferred scenario at the end of the focus group, none of the participants made a comment in favour of it. The main point of criticism in the discussion was the element of remote cooperation, which was seen to be problematic for media formats such as TV, as the programme could run the risk of not being cost-effective and output-driven enough.

When asked about a potential name for the programme, most participants held the view “*the simpler the better*”. “European Exchange for Journalists” was suggested by one participant.

4.2 Challenges

Funding was seen as a challenge and would have to be covered as to not burden the participating journalists, as this would potentially limit the appeal and accessibility of the programme. This was seen as an especially salient issue not only for freelance journalists but also for journalists from countries that are less prosperous than Germany, where journalists might not have the resources to cover part of the expenses themselves. Possible sources of funding other than the EC were not suggested.

Integrating the visiting journalist into the host organisation to provide opportunities for making a real contribution to the organisation’s work was seen as another major challenge, on which the success of the programme in terms of maximising the gains for the participant largely depended.

One participant suggested that it would also be a challenge for the programme to **maintain its independence**, i.e. for the EU not to substantially influence or censor the content of work of the participating journalists but to assist with the organisational and financial aspects only.

Another challenge mentioned was the issue of making the programme attractive to participating organisations that “*have to be clear on what the **benefits** of sending or hosting a journalist are for them*”.

Establishing attractive topics with a **clear focus** was seen to be the main challenge for the seminar element.

Finally, creating a programme as **un-bureaucratic and flexible** as possible to correspond with the dynamic nature of the journalistic profession was seen as an overall challenge for an Erasmus programme for journalists.

4.3 Potential improvements and solutions

Suggested improvements included the idea of a designated “mentor” at the host organisation to ensure better **integration** of the visiting journalists, which was seen as crucial for the success of the programme. An **agreement** regarding the type of output the participant should be working towards between the host and sender organisations could also go some way towards ensuring a better integration. This could also help to make the programme attractive to potential host organisations, as it would give them a chance to influence the outputs agreed on and ensure that their expectations from the visiting journalists are met as well.

A way to **maintain the programme’s independence** would be to state in the contract between the EC and the participant that the content of any work produced by the participants on the programme will not be influenced by the programme funder.

With regard to the Seminar scenario, developing content focussing on topics relevant and interesting to the participants rather than reverting to content regarding procedures and institutions of the EU only would help to meet the challenge of providing attractive seminars.

6.0 POLAND

1. Introduction

The Polish focus groups were organised in Warsaw, on Thursday 19th and Friday 20th August 2010. The Thursday session ran from 12:00-14:00 while the Friday session took place from 9:30-11:30. In total, 16 journalists participated in the focus groups, representing a wide range of ages and media types, as shown in the table below:

	Type of media	Status	Experience ⁸
Group 1	Television	Freelance	Mid-career
	Print media – culture, music, art	Freelance	Early-career
	Radio – national coverage (music, art, sport)	Permanently employed	Mid-career
Group 2	Print media – city magazine (culture, music, art)	Freelance	Early-career
	Online only news outlet	Freelance	Early-career
	Print media – national newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Online website of a legacy media	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Radio – national coverage	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – city magazine (culture, music, art)	Freelance	Early-career
	Print media – economic newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print media – weekly magazine on political and social issues	Permanently employed	Early-career
	Print media – local magazine	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Radio – national coverage	Permanently employed	Early-career
	Online only news outlet – film, theatre, music	Freelance	Early-career
	Print media – monthly magazine	Freelance	Early-career
	Print media – city magazine (culture, music, art)	Freelance	Early-career

2. Objectives

Among the three specific objectives the participants believed that the **second objective** (further journalists' understanding of other Member States) and the **third objective** (enhance journalists' professional skills and abilities) were equally important

In relation to the second objective, it was noted that while Western European countries are widely covered in the Polish media, there is little information about smaller Member States, such as Estonia and the Czech Republic. One of the reasons behind it is that there are no Polish correspondents in these countries. Another reason is the language barrier. Focus group participants considered themselves and their colleagues more adept at using English, French and/or German than those in less spoken EU languages, such as Hungarian or Czech. In addition, to a personal interest in learning more about other Member States, the majority of participants felt that stories about their economies, social situations, cultural and sporting events etc. would be interesting for readers. Therefore, all participants thought that more information about other Member States, especially those less known, should be passed on to the general public.

⁸ The study team divided journalists into three segments based on years of experience. Journalists with less than five years experience are classified as 'early career'; those with between five and 20 years experience are classified as 'mid-career'; and those with over twenty years experience are classified as 'advanced'.

Participants would also welcome a programme aiming to upgrade journalists' skills (the **third objective**). In their profession it is particularly important to keep up with fast changing market trends and editors' expectations. Participants noted that they would be interested to learn new journalistic techniques and about how other media outlets are managed. This was particularly relevant for participants working for publicly owned media outlets. An ERASMUS-like programme that facilitates working in a media outlet abroad and learning alternative journalistic methods and techniques would answer the needs of the participants. Regarding this aspect, most participants felt that there would be a strong interest in those Member States where journalism is well developed and renowned. For example, participants felt that the UK, Germany or France would be the most popular destinations. Only individual participants believed that a stay in a country where the journalism is equally or less developed than in Poland could still be interesting for journalists who would participate primarily to advance their professional skills.

The participants were less certain if an exchange between journalists from professionally advanced media outlets and those from less developed and less known countries would lead to mutual benefit. However, individual participants noted that *“a journalist working for the BBC might be interested in going to Romania, because it is exotic and there is not much known about this country”*.

The **first objective** (further journalists' knowledge of the EU) generated much less interest among the participants, especially in the first of the two groups. EU matters were often covered in the media around the time of Polish accession to the EU in 2004, and most journalists felt that information about the EU is easily accessible. A few participants in the second group noted that knowledge about the EU is relevant for them personally, as EU citizens. They felt that it is also important that journalists should inform the general public about the EU in an accurate manner. Therefore, a basic level of knowledge about the EU would be beneficial for all journalists. However, it was generally agreed that this knowledge would be more relevant for some journalists (e.g. those specialising in social issues) than others (dealing with art, culture, etc.).

While all participants reported to be **interested in taking part** in an ERASMUS-like programme, those having previous international experience with similar programmes were more optimistic with a view to practical implementation of the programme. This was especially the case in the first group, where participants had more prior international experience and could see how such a programme would work in practice.

In terms of the **target group** for the future programme, participants from both groups felt that it should be open to people of all ages. One journalist from the second group in particular stressed that limiting the programme to young journalists (or those in their early career) cannot be justified: in fact, this would be counterproductive, as future 'exchange participants' could benefit and learn more from their elder (and more experienced) partners. Also, there was a general consensus that the programme should not be limited to any specific media or types of journalism. The more flexible and open the programme was designed, the better, participants thought it would be. However, participants acknowledged that any programme of this type would probably be most suitable for journalists working **for print media**. Also, the participants expected TV journalists and freelancers to face a number of challenges to taking part because of the particular arrangements and requirements of their work (see more in Section 3).

The participants identified some **other objectives** that such a programme could potentially meet. It was generally believed that the programme would help to improve language skills. One of the participants suggested adding a language course as another element of the programme. Most of the participants also felt that the programme would facilitate **networking opportunities and provide much needed contacts** in other Member States. Finally, individual participants noted that a journalists' exchange programme could lead to long-term co-operation between different media outlets in Europe, resulting in joint research and publications.

3. Scenarios

3.1 Scenario 1: Exchange

While the scenario seemed attractive for the participants, its parameters (such as timing, types of media, etc.) generated some controversy among the participants.

The proposed **duration of the exchange (four weeks) was attractive** to the majority of participants. From their personal point of view, however, they would prefer to stay abroad even longer. One participant was of the opinion that a month abroad is insufficient to get to know a country. However, all participants agreed that the longer the absence at work, the higher the risk of losing one's job. The participants felt that in most cases a four-week absence would still be acceptable to their editors. For the freelancers a long absence had similar implications in terms of losing their contacts at home and subsequently their sources of income. The length of stays abroad that freelancers would be willing to invest varied within the group from a few weeks to several months.

The scenario received different feedback depending on the **types of media** the participants worked for. For example, it was noted by individual participants that the format of their home publications / programmes provided limited space for covering a single country. *“My editor would not accept material from me about Estonia every day for four weeks. Our daily news programme consists of 20 stories out of which only 3-4 are from abroad.”* For those participants the stay abroad seemed too long to be efficient in terms filing reports for their home organisations.

Most participants felt that this scenario best suited journalists working for the written press and radio, as they could work as foreign correspondents. On the other hand, the exchange scenario was very unlikely to be effective for TV journalists, especially if they were expected to produce material for their home organisations. Those working for TV media noted that it is much more expensive to produce high quality TV material than to write an article for a newspaper. Therefore, the participants feared that the host organisation would be less willing to invest its time and equipment in producing material for another media outlet.

Another obstacle identified by the participants in this scenario was its limited use for freelancers. It should be noted that the particular arrangements of their work differed significantly within the groups. Nonetheless, most of the freelancers would find it difficult to swap their job with another journalist: they all work for more than one media outlet and none of them could be considered as a host organisation for a journalist from abroad. More importantly, all freelancers feared that such a long stay abroad would put their incomes at risk. Therefore, without financial backing it would be difficult for them to participate in the programme.

Although the scenario envisaged that a journalist would be filing reports mainly for the home organisation, the participants felt that benefits of the programme would be more direct for the journalists themselves rather than for their media outlets. Thus, the majority of participants were unsure about the **reaction of their editors**. In particular, there were concerns if the editors would think about such a programme as an investment. There was a predominant feeling that sending an employee abroad for a month would be considered as holiday rather than in terms of future benefits for the home organisation. It was believed that future programme participants would have to convince editors about the positive outcomes of the exchange for their company. Individual journalists feared that their editors would think that in the age of the Internet and ICT most reports can be filed from home; subsequently, any longer stay abroad is not necessary.

Most of the participants agreed that in the exchange scenario journalists should be **filing reports for home organisations**. As mentioned above, such an arrangement would be more helpful to convince editors that the programme does not mean holiday from work. Also, it would make it more likely that editors would keep paying their salaries, although this was not certain. The language barrier made it fairly impossible for the participants to imagine that a journalist would be

able to produce ‘ready to use’ material for the host organisation, as illustrated by the opinion below:

“It is an illusion that a journalist from one country would be able to fully take over the duties of another journalist from a different country”.

This is particularly relevant for the written press, where the text to be published in a foreign language must be flawless. While the participants acknowledged the possibility of using professional translation, this option would require additional financing. Apart from inadequate language skills, participants indicated a lack of knowledge about the country and insufficient journalistic expertise as barriers for filing reports for the host organisation. In order to ameliorate these problems, participants felt that support from a mentor from the host organisation would be necessary.

Asked about the extent to which this scenario would contribute to **meeting the objectives** of the programme, the participants agreed that it answers best the third objective (enhance journalists’ professional skills and abilities).

Participants noted that matching two media outlets would be the main difficulty for such a scenario. Also, individual participants reported that bureaucracy in publicly owned media might prevent them from participating in such a programme.

3.2 Scenario 2: Mobility

The mobility scenario generated a **keen interest** among the journalists. In particular, the freelancers appreciated this scheme as it was more attractive and feasible for them than the exchange scenario. However, some characteristics of the mobility scenario were debated and contested by the participants.

Most participants felt that the **duration of the stay abroad** allowed for immersion in the foreign culture. It also, provided an opportunity to build a sustainable network of contacts. On the other hand, the duration of the scenario was seen as too long in terms of taking time off from their current job.

Because the stay abroad was much longer than in the first scenario, language became more of an issue. Participants agreed that the usefulness of their stay abroad would depend on a country of destination. As one of the participants said *“there is nothing to do for a journalist in Portugal unless he/she speaks the language”*. However, a few participants were of the opinion that if their stay abroad was planned ahead and well (in order to ensure that a participating journalist performs more than perfunctory tasks), it can be very beneficial. However, even in this case an ability to speak the language of the country would still be crucial.

To address this fundamental problem **additional language courses** were suggested by the participants as a form of support and preparation. While English was perceived by journalists as a global *lingua franca* (knowledge of it would be sufficient to interact with a mentor from nearly any host organisation), this would not be enough to participate in editorial meetings or filing reports on the spot in any non-English speaking country: *‘It does not make sense to go to Estonia and search for material in English.’*

Another important obstacle identified by the participants in the mobility scenario was the fact that from the editors’ point of view there were no benefits from ‘sending’ an employee on such a programme. The majority of participants agreed that the benefits seemed to accrue only to individual journalists taking part in the mobility programme. Thus, the participants believed that the scenario is much **less attractive to their editors**. There was a general concern among participants about losing credibility in the eyes of their editors.

To offset the shortcomings of the mobility scenario for host organisations (involving a mentor) and home organisations (a loss of an employee for a several months) the participants suggested **financial compensation** for both media outlets.

For almost all participants an interesting feature of this scenario was that it offered a possibility to work for **different media types** and to gain meaningful experience. This was perceived as very relevant from the participants’ personal perspective, but it was also noted by several participants that the new skills could be applied in their home organisations upon their return. Taking this into account, the participants concluded that the mobility scenario contributes best to the third objective.

3.3 Scenario 3: Twinning

This scenario generated a lot more interest and some **positive reactions** among the participants. The main reason for this was the direct co-operation with another journalist, who would be personally interested in taking care of the visitor. A chance to produce stories on a common theme was perceived as particularly interesting feature, and the exchange of ideas and contacts was identified as an additional benefit.

Participants thought that in this model small and less well known countries would be relatively more interesting for journalists to visit than for the previously discussed schemes. This was mainly because **a short stay abroad** would involve lower costs for a journalist (in terms of taking time off and putting their job / income at stake). This is well illustrated by an opinion below:

“If I had three months, I would consider going to the UK or France. For Latvia I could invest one or two weeks.”

Also for this reason, the twinning scenario would be very attractive for editors: *“The duration of a stay abroad is acceptable to them and they have a chance to receive some attractive material”*.

However, some participants compared this scenario to a standard media practice of exchanging correspondents except that it would be funded by the European Union [*evaluator’s note: if this is the case the scenario would show little added value for the European Commission*]. Moreover, participants noted that twinning would help journalists to learn more about themes and issues to be filed rather than about other Member States. This is mainly because the duration of the stay abroad was considered by all participants as too short to allow for getting to know another country. In particular, the participants from the first group felt that in order to verify initial beliefs and opinions about any country and to better understand it one needs more time:

“It is impossible to improve your knowledge about another country within a week.”

Moreover, participants thought that it would be almost impossible to build a broad and sustainable network of contacts during such a short time. The duration of the stay abroad was also believed to be insufficient to improve vocational skills. Therefore, none of the **programme’s objectives would be fulfilled** if the parameters were to remain unchanged.

The participants suggested a number of improvements to current settings the scenario:

- the duration of a stay abroad should be extended to minimum of two weeks,
- in order to make the best use of time some initial research and preparations should precede the twinning visits,
- an external mechanism supporting the matching process between the twinning media outlets (and journalists) would be needed,
- instead of two journalists and one (reciprocal) visit, there should be a series of four to six visits among twinning journalists from different countries – if the journalists were conducting research on a common story, it would help to better understand a problem and

build a more sustainable network of contacts (this suggestion captures some parameters from the co-operation scenario where a number of journalists carry out research on a topic relevant in several Member States – see more below),

- a seminar for participating journalists would enable partners to get to know each other and ‘pair’ with others.

3.4 Scenario 4: Co-operation

Participants’ reactions to this scenario **were mixed and sometimes even sceptical**. Similar to the twinning scenario with its original settings, some participants indicated low added value of such a scheme. Many of the participants thought that material for a topic can be found on Internet. According to participants, journalists have many opportunities for such a co-operation in their daily work and an additional programme, which would support this activity, was not deemed necessary.

Participants did agree that this scenario would be attractive for editors because it does not require a long absence from work and provides a chance for interesting and international material. However, the impact of taking part in the scenario on the overall work of the media outlets would be limited, according to the participants.

Although a plenary meeting planned as the key element of the co-operation scenario would help to meet other journalists dealing with the same issues, discuss them and network, this scheme was perceived as relatively weak in terms of developing journalistic skills and competences. Also, this scenario did not appear to enhance journalists’ knowledge of another country as the stay abroad was limited to a few days. Participants agreed, though, that the scenario could be useful to improve journalists’ understanding about a story they are covering.

Overall, the co-operation scenario was considered attractive as **an additional element** of the programme rather than a standalone scheme. According to some participants, “*it could be a follow-up for the mobility or twinning scenario*”. Such an additional component would help to sustain the results of the programme, such as contacts, knowledge share, etc.

The participants noted that this scenario would work best for journalists who specialise in a given topic rather than those who deal with more general issues. However, one of the participants claimed that the mobility or twinning scheme would still be more interesting, because it offers an opportunity to meet not only journalists, but also policy makers, experts, and practitioners.

Participants also pointed that the co-operation scenario favours journalists engaged with **written press**, while their TV and radio colleagues would find this formula less suitable. According to the participants, the actual value of the scheme would depend on practical arrangements: who is organising the meeting, moderating co-operation and the meeting itself. Similar to the exchange and twinning scenarios, in the co-operation scheme matching the journalists would also present a challenge.

3.5 Scenario 5: Seminars

This scenario generated **mixed reactions** among the participants and opinions varied significantly between the two groups.

The opinions from the first group, gathering more experienced journalists, were very negative. The participants agreed that the seminars would be extremely boring and not very helpful in terms of developing knowledge and upgrading their skills. They expected that the seminars would be full of European jargon, provide **little content** and issues would be presented only on a very general level. The participants feared that at the seminars only EU official positions would be presented, while they were interested to familiarise themselves with broader perspectives and alternative views.

Furthermore, participants noted that information and messages from such events would be very **difficult to use in their daily work**. Individual participants were of the opinion that a good website of any EU programme or institution would be much more efficient.

The journalists from the first group also felt that the **duration of the seminars** would be too short to build a real network of contacts which may be useful for their future work. In general, it was noted that the shorter the stay abroad, the more difficult it is to meet the objectives of the programme that are the most important for participants (i.e. the second and third objectives).

Participants from the second group expressed more positive attitudes towards the seminars. In particular, those who had participated in similar events were very much in favour of this scenario. They argued that such seminars offer a possibility to acquire new information and upgrade their knowledge and understanding about the EU. The seminars would also offer an international element and give journalists an opportunity to familiarise themselves with experiences in other European countries, to collect interesting material and make contacts which may be used in the future. One participant strongly emphasised that journalists often show limited knowledge and understanding of European issues; seminars could make some headway in changing this.

[Evaluator's note: it should be noted that personal experience strongly influenced journalists' opinions. The journalists from the first group participated in boring seminars which triggered their negative reactions in comparison to those who participated in well organised and interesting seminars (i.e. journalists from the second group).

Also personal preferences with regard to the type of information received during the seminars may have influenced individual reactions. Those journalists, who were interested in more general information and understanding the European context, were much more interested in participating in the seminars than those who presented more practical and task oriented attitudes.]

The participants agreed that in organising seminars it is very important to invite interesting speakers, ensure an appropriate **mix of official and practical perspectives**, provide opportunities to actively participate and network with other participants. The participants also discussed an idea of combining the EU seminars with workshops dedicated to developing professional skills. Such an approach was certainly more attractive for the participants. However, it would also mean that the EU seminars would be of a more general character and more senior journalists and editors would be likely to participate. Otherwise, the seminars would not present an interesting opportunity for editors and participants noted that most big media outlets already have correspondents in Brussels.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Preferred scenarios

Overall, the majority of participants found the **first (exchange) and the third (twinning) scenario most attractive**. In particular, the participants felt that the duration of the stay abroad is the most appropriate in the exchange scenario. According to most participants, a four-week stay abroad would be sufficient to learn more about another Member State. Also, participants felt that the 'twinning' element in the third scenario is its strongest point. It ensures that the twinning partner has an incentive in helping another journalist during their stay in the host country.

However, as outlined above, both scenarios present a number of weaknesses identified by the participants. Therefore, they suggested that it would be best to combine the scenarios' strengths by modifying the twinning scenario. At the same time all participants thought that the programme should be as flexible as possible, ideally combining different elements which suit diverse types of journalists.

4.2 Challenges

The participants identified a number of challenges that an ERASMUS-like programme for journalists would face. The challenges are briefly outlined below:

a) Timing:

- In order to get to know another country longer visits would be necessary (two months would be most appropriate). While such a long absence from work was feasible for some journalists, others would find it unacceptable to their editors. Therefore, it was recommended to leave as much flexibility in terms of the duration of the stay abroad as possible.
- The length of stay abroad depends on the character of work. For freelancers it would be very difficult to travel for two months: it would involve the risk of losing contacts with current editors and subsequent loss of sources of income.

b) Finance

- Participants felt the programme should at least cover the costs of travel and accommodation. In addition, some financial backing should be considered to cover living expenses abroad, taking into account differences in the costs of living among different EU Members States. It was particularly important for the freelancers, who were putting at risk their income by going abroad for a long time.
- The programme should resolve or give principles on how to deal with the remuneration for material published in the host country or for the joint piece of work resulting from the co-operation between journalists from different media outlets.

c) Matching mechanism

- A matching mechanism was identified as the key issue. Without such a mechanism for early-career journalists (without networks of contacts in other countries) it would be difficult to find an appropriate partner, whether it be a hosting media outlet or ‘twin’. Therefore, it was suggested that a dedicated website should be set up in order to facilitate this process. Journalists could express their interest in programme and editors could declare their commitment to the programme.
- Ideally, administration of the programme should be decentralised, i.e. in each country an intermediary organisation for managing the matching process should be established or appointed. For participants it was important to have such an intermediary that would facilitate the matching process between journalists and media outlets abroad. The participants felt that some institution(s) should take ownership of the programme by encouraging media outlets in different Member States and promoting the programme among journalists and editors.

d) Attitude of editors

- There was a general concern that editors are not interested in the development of their journalists’ professional skills (with some exceptions). Therefore, their commitment to (or at least consent to) the programme was uncertain.
- The participants felt that it is important that editors make a commitment to publish a number of reports filed by their journalists due to their participation in the programme.

4.3 Potential improvements and solutions

According to participants, the ideal option would be a modified twinning scenario, including the following parameters:

- summary: pairs of journalists work together to produce stories for their home organisations on a common theme that is relevant to both countries,
- duration: 2-4 weeks,
- hosting organisation: any media type,
- tasks during visits: carry out research on a common story with help from the host ‘twin’.

7.0 ROMANIA

1. Introduction

Two focus groups were organised in Bucharest on 15 July and 20 July 2010, bringing together a total 20 journalists from local and national media organisations. Participants represented a range of levels of experience and media types, including the regional and national press. Both sessions took place in the evening, from 19:30 to 22:00. As shown in the table below, focus group participants represented a range of media types, with most of them either early or midway into their careers. Nearly all participants were permanently employed, while three of them worked on a freelance basis.

	Type of media	Status	Experience ⁹
Group 1	TV	Permanently employed	Early career
	TV	Permanently employed	Early career
	TV	Permanently employed	Advanced
	Radio	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Radio	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Print	Permanently employed	Advanced
	Print	Permanently employed	Early career
	Print	Permanently employed	Advanced
	Print / radio	Freelance	Mid-career
Group 2	Print	Permanently employed	Early career
	Print	Permanently employed	Early career
	Print	Permanently employed	Early career
	Print	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Television	Permanently employed	Early career
	Television	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Radio	Permanently employed	Early career
	Radio	Permanently employed	Early career
	Online	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Online	Freelance	Early career
	TV / Radio	Freelance	Early career

2. Objectives

The majority of participants from the first group agreed that **the third objective** (enhance journalists' professional skills and abilities) is the most important one, since it offers them the possibility of professional growth as well as (further) specialisation, "an extremely-important aspect when one has to accomplish all the tasks related to being a journalist", one participant said.

The second group took a slightly different approach, considering all three objectives could be equally important in such an initiative.

Journalists from the local press felt that the third objective would be very relevant for them, given their professed lack of specialised studies. In addition, some underlined that, though important in themselves, the first two objectives (further journalists' understanding of the EU and further understanding of other Member States) are harder to fulfil in their regular work of local journalists.

⁹ The study team divided journalists into three segments based on years of experience. Journalists with less than five years experience are classified as 'early career'; those with between five and 20 years experience are classified as 'mid-career'; and those with over twenty years experience are classified as 'advanced'.

One reason for this included the lack of scope at the local level to report on EU issues, apart from rare events such as European elections.

Nevertheless, all participants agreed that the first two objectives are also important, since Romania is a full member of the EU and journalists, and through them the audience, should have "a good understanding of the European Union".

The general consensus was that objective number three was most important, but that it does not exclude the first two objectives. All three objectives were well-chosen, relevant and "generous", according to the majority of focus group participants. The first two objectives were considered to be complementary to the third.

The importance of the second and third objectives is directly dependant on the professional choices of the journalists themselves and on the media they are working for. The supporters of the first objective (further journalists' understanding of the EU) thought that the future of Romania connects more and more to the European Union, since EU practices should be applied almost everywhere. Therefore, journalists need to be one step ahead the society; they need to be well-informed and well-trained when it comes to EU affairs. "As a journalist, it is not sufficient to be well-informed on the European practices; you also have to foresee things, to think one step in advance and to inform your readers in time". In addition, it was noted by some participants that EU-related subjects are "extremely-superficially treated by the Romanian media", they are badly documented and researched, lacking "any informational relevance" when present in the news.

When asked if they would be open to a European Commission programme addressing all three objectives, they unanimously answered: "Yes", explaining that they all lived in a European country and that it would be logical for such an initiative to include all three objectives.

3. Scenarios

3.1 Scenario 1: Exchange

When confronted with the "Exchange" scenario, the first reaction of the participants was that such an exchange would be a very good idea. It would take the journalists out of their daily routine and would get them acquainted with the working methods of other media organisations. But participants immediately asked: "Will I be able to finish all the tasks and projects that have to go on at home?"

Next remark was that the four weeks represent a rather short period of time for such an exchange. When the journalist arrives in a foreign media organisation and has to make reports for home, the interaction with the new colleagues was not seen as sufficient.

The following unanimous assertion might give an answer to the question above: everybody would like to join such a scenario and would find it useful especially for their own development. Many participants thought that the exchange would contribute to their professional experience as well as to the improvement of their journalistic practices, both for the participants and for the two media institutions involved. By exchanging points of view, the two journalists will better know the other member state as well as the European Union in general, thus touching upon all the objectives of the programme.

Some would be interested to participate only depending on the country and media they would visit and the subjects they would be expected to cover.

Others would find their participation to such a scenario useful only if, during the four weeks, they could make some additional reporting to a subject they are already busy with at home. "Otherwise, four weeks spent in a new country and new media organisation are not sufficient for full reporting", one TV journalist said.

Advantages participants saw in the scenario included:

- would be interesting to see how a media institution from another country is organised;
- interesting to experience directly how the foreign press sees Romania;
- the journalist will have total freedom in reporting, and the editors will not interfere with the subjects;
- the scenario will offer a comparative image on how the journalist is perceived at local, national or international level, and what is the attitude of the people towards him/her;
- more time to focus on subjects for "at home";
- the scenario would mainly be useful for the two participants, as a personal experience rather than as a "journalistic mission";

The **disadvantages** of the scenario:

- it is hard to believe that a journalist taken out of his own environment and posted in a totally new reality in another country (be it the same media type) will be functioning at a high level. He will be totally cut off the reality he knows, and will take some time to get to know the new reality and to connect to it;
- for local press journalists especially, it will be rather difficult to get to know the local atmosphere in the other country;
- four weeks are too short for integrating into the other media organisation and getting to know the way around;

The exchange was seen by some participants as a big challenge for the institution that receives the journalist: will he/she be allowed to freely express his/her points of view - positive or negative - at the new media institution? The risk here might be a tendency of focusing on a positive reporting, as a repayment service for being given the opportunity of participating in such a programme.

Among the **key-factors** that would determine their selection to participate into the project, the journalists mentioned:

- shown interest for European affairs;
- knowledge of foreign languages;
- the extent to which the exchange is organised in advance;
- the existence of well-defined selection criteria established both by the sponsors of the programme and by the two media institutions involved;
- the criteria should be made known to the whole organisation and everybody should be given the chance to enlist, participants should not be chosen by the bosses;
- a good estimation of the potential of the entire personnel, so that the chosen one is sent also for the advantages of the media organisation, not only for his/her own experience;
- good to know in advance how everything is financed;
- there should be flexibility for journalists in choosing the partner-country;

- possibility of establishing contacts in advance;
- knowing in advance the subjects that have to be covered and doing appropriate research.

Hardly anybody saw **barriers** to their own participation in such an exchange. Especially in the case of the local media organisations, where the teams are rather small and everybody knows the potentials of all the other colleagues, the selection is easily made. For national media, or bigger media organisations, the selection procedure could be more complicated.

Journalists also mentioned some **changes** that could be brought to the scenario to make it more attractive and to increase the chances for participation:

- in the case of bigger media teams, there could be more than one journalist exchanging places at the same time, that would make the reporting easier and would contribute to a better understating of the new working environment;
- one could form teams of two journalists from two different countries, who should not swap jobs simultaneously, but in turns. This way, the same journalist will first be the host, and then the guest. The two journalists will get to know each other and each other's countries and media institutions better, they will build more bridges for co-operation and will have a better understanding of the other organisation. In the long run, this will increase the quality of the reporting as well;
- the swap between the same type of media was not seen as “necessary” for good implementation of the programme, journalists could also come from different media types;
- the possibility to stay longer with the other media institution (up to six months);
- the possibility of choosing the other Member State and media type where to go.

Some of the **limits** for this scenario would be, according to the participants:

- the practical difficulty in contributing to the work of the host organisation (that also depends to a big extent on the person that takes care of the guest journalist and what he/she expects from the visiting colleague);
- one should remember that the guest is there under limited circumstances: possibly not speaking the language, not familiar with the atmosphere, the general line of the organisation etc. It would already make a big difference if the foreign journalists will be assigned in advance to a certain person, who should make a common strategy together with the colleague visiting. “It would be one thing if I am asked to write my impressions on the new country/ media organisation or the first five things that shocked me when I arrived, and it would be a totally different task to go and report about the last meeting of the local council at the municipality, for instance”. Some said this will not work in practice, as everybody is already very busy with their own tasks and hardly anybody is looking forward to assuming extra-responsibility and take care of a new person not knowing too much around him/her. “It would resemble a situation in which you have to teach to a baby how to walk and talk”;
- the language problem: ideal situation will be when the participants can speak both languages of the countries involved, or should come from a country that speaks the same language. In the case of Romania, only journalists from Moldova would fit, but Moldova is not an EU member. From this point, some people suggested the programme should allow also journalists from other European countries, which are not EU members, to participate;

As far as editors' attitudes are concerned:

- “my boss would find my participation to the exchange useful, but he would definitely be concerned about the decrease in productivity once I am away, since it would be impossible

for the foreign journalist replacing me to do my job - be it only because he cannot speak Romanian”;

- would be useful for the managers as long as they do not have to pay anything and they have enough people to take over the work (not a very realistic situation);
- most of the editors-in-chief do not consider any exchange as “useful” for their (small) teams;

Though the level of interest to participate was high, in practice the scenario cannot be easily applied: this was the general conclusion. It would be impossible to find somebody from a foreign country to do the same sort of work, and also to know in advance the nature of the work. Only the sports journalist did not see any big problems in making such a scenario functional. The rest was also questioning the real benefits of such an exchange for the two organisations.

3.2 Scenario 2: Mobility

The main opinion was that such a scenario would offer a “more profound” possibility of learning and training and a more significant exposure to the day-to-day life and visions of another member state.

A large majority of the participants agreed that such a scenario will be hard to sell to the editor-in-chief: “He will always be sceptic about the person that is going to replace me. Not having the possibility to choose the replacement, it would be almost sure that he will not allow me or anybody else from the organisation to be away for 2-3 months”. Somebody else came with a helpful idea: the host organisation should be able to choose from a pool of journalists that were already qualified for the programme.

One advantage of the scenario is that it does not make a separation between media types, like in the case of the first scenario, but some thought it might be useful to balance the work that should be done for the host organisation with the work that has to be done for home.

Participants noticed many similarities between the first two scenarios, and therefore many answers to the questions could be the same (like those referring to the language, the subjects that have to be covered, the sort of jobs that have to be done for the host organisation and the possibility of doing some research in advance).

Nobody from the two focus groups chose this scenario as their preferred scenario, though most agreed that such a programme would contribute to the objectives of the project.

Asked whether it would be **useful** for them personally to participate in such a scenario, many expressed the interest to join, but at the same time they thought the formula has too many **limits**:

- hard to believe that somebody could leave work for such a long period of time;
- “the efficiency of the project will be low, since your own people will mainly work for somebody else”
- as already agreed in the discussions on the first scenario, it is hard to make real journalism in another language, if you do not have the necessary skills;
- participation to this scenario involves lots of training in advance, and nobody has time for that;
- the scenario is very exclusivist, could only include very highly-trained, competent journalists, with strong professional backgrounds, able to move easily from one field of activity to the other and capable to express themselves in at least two languages; such people, when they

exist in reality, will never afford leaving their media organisations for such a long time as they are usually in leading positions;

- “simply a waste of time for the activity of the newcomer, such a scenario”, a participant said. He explained his statement through the fact that nobody will take the role of the foreign journalist seriously enough, he/she will have many frustrations about not being able to do a good job, neither for the host not for the home organisation; he will remain an **outsider** on both sides.

Despite the many critics, scenario “Mobility” was also credited with some **advantages**:

- “would be a good formula for the technical team”, a TV journalist said;
- “would be suitable for somebody still training, who comes to learn more, not to actively work”, somebody else thought;
- would be good from the duration perspective, as it offers a reasonable accommodation/integration period;
- it is more permissive than the “Exchange” scenario, since the journalists could choose the media type and consequently the field of activity and “that could offer them more security”;

Among the **changes** suggested in order to make the programme more attractive or to increase the chances of participation:

- a merging between the first two scenarios, “Exchange” and “Mobility” was supported by many journalists.
- some thought it would be ideal to have the opportunity to get to know the new team first, to have the time to observe and understand the policy of the host organisation, and only afterwards to start working;
- knowing the destination some time in advance would be useful;
- being told in advance what the hosts expect from you and in which area you could work;
- the ideal duration for such a scenario would be six months, according to some focus group participants.
- there should be a mentor, known in advance, who should be directly responsible for the guest and have time for discussions and planning on a daily basis.

As also mentioned above, **editors** would not embrace such a scenario, unless they are extremely flexible and diplomatic.

Participants also questioned the time left for filing reports at home, as well as their quality. Some said that participants abroad would only be able to write for online editions, while biggest majority saw it as a complicated, almost impossible task: “It is difficult to stay active for those at home under the given circumstances, next to that you run the risk that the items you send are not interesting at all for your own media organisation”.

In the case of Romania, it would be very difficult to receive participants, from the language perspective. It is not very hard to find Romanian journalists who could speak English, French, German or Italian and send them to countries where these languages are spoken. It will be much harder to find English, French, German or Italian journalists that can speak Romanian and could come to work in this language.

Though the scenario was not seen as a very realistic one, many journalists would be interested to participate. The participation would be useful because it would stimulate the interaction with the

host organisation and its environment, would offer further understanding of the way the other society is functioning (objective number two) and this interaction would be better realised than in the case of the first scenario (“Exchange”).

3.3 Scenario 3: Twinning

The third scenario was seen as the most feasible one. It can easily get ‘ten points’ from the very beginning and it was credited with the biggest chances of success. A “journalistic jewel”, if it can be named like that, somebody said as a first comment. “It is the type of project that would attract me most”, was another reaction, “but instead of one week, we should be given one month in each country”, another participant continued. Many journalists agreed that one week is much too short for understanding and covering an important, wide subject.

Participants found the scenario easy to be implemented, also from the point of view of editors. However, such short twinning formulas, with a duration of one week, could only work in practice when they are organised around fixed events, like sport events for instance, was the general opinion.

A big majority of the participants agreed that an online co-operation and communication in advance between the two journalists would save the scenario, from its duration’s perspective. “The two should be in touch and prepare the story for at least a month before the time of departure”.

The fact that the two journalists should come from the same media type was seen as a good point by almost everybody. On the other hand, the second group came up with the idea that it might be more useful to have journalists from different media types. Such a situation brings in the possibility of synergies. Every journalist has his individual style of work, and a better result of the scenario would be a TV report and a feature for the website, for instance.

Among the **advantages** of the scenario were mentioned:

- the opportunity of working together with a foreign colleague on the same subject;
- it is most useful scenario for both media organisations involved, since the news can be transmitted in both countries;
- it reaches all the objectives of the project;
- it is the best exchange formula, by incorporating the mentor/ guidance element;
- involves team work;
- provides real exchange of information, manners of work and editing;

Many agreed that, for an editor, one week will be the maximum period of time he would allow somebody to leave. “And he will accept this only if he knows that I will come back with enough interesting items for the target-group readers”, a national journalist said. “For instance, I could make a team with a Bulgarian colleague and make a report about the nuclear energy. There is a hot news item in both countries, and there are fears on both sides. To make my boss happy, I will have to report something every day, to make a series of articles. For that, I will need the help of my Bulgarian colleague, on the other side of the border. This way, I could report about the general atmosphere in the two cities, their economy, how does that move around the nuclear energy project, the safety of the project, sources of energy etc – so many subjects connected to the same theme, that would justify my absence for one week and would make my boss happy, at the same time giving me the opportunity to participate in the twinning programme”, the journalist explained.

Everybody agreed that the example fits in with reality, at least in the case of the national press. For a newspaper, TV or radio station, it would be hard to imagine that the bosses can miss a person for one week.

In the case of the local press, there is more flexibility and it is easier to arrange the departure. There is also more interest and motivation to do that, since hardly any local media could afford sending people abroad, be it only for a short period of time.

Not very many participants identified **limits or barriers** of this scenario. The only limits depend on the chosen subject, in their opinion. The Twinning could only be less attractive because of its short duration, was the general opinion.

In their turn, **editors** would be most happy with this scenario:

- the final product comes back to them as a concrete journalistic output, and can be released;
- the journalist is not divided between two media organisations, as in the case of the first two scenarios;
- the finality of the scenario is known from the very beginning;
- the period of time during which the journalist is away is “bearable”, especially knowing that he will come back with something interesting;

Everybody agreed participation into such a scenario would be **very useful**, both for the personal development and for the media organisations involved. “Anybody would like to take part in such a programme”, somebody concluded. “It gives us the possibility of establishing a long-term partnership and we get familiar with the way journalists approach the same subjects in other countries”.

Another useful aspect of this scenario could be the possibility to show to foreign colleagues that “Romania is not only the country presented mainly through negative news in the international press, it also has good sides”.

The only **change** they would bring is a longer duration: at least two weeks in each country was the most preferred option, both for the first and the second focus group. “It is the most attractive scenario, and it will be successful the way it is proposed”, participants agreed.

Everybody would prefer to be able to choose the country, the subject and the twin – that would make the programme even **more attractive**.

When it came to the limits the scenario could have, the second group raised some questions on the way the pair-journalist is found. It would be more useful if the two participants get to know each other in advance, test common interests and test if they could work together. “If they do not match well with each other, the entire initiative turns into a mess on both sides”, was the general conclusion.

The working language could also be a **barrier**. Preferably, both journalists should work in the same language, which already limits the possibilities from start. If not, they should be at least able to speak an international language, like English or French. This way, the language skills are not a big problem in this scenario, compared to the previous ones, as the twin will help his colleague with the translations in their respective countries. “The language could be a barrier in some cases, if for instance you would like to undertake an interview yourself”, was one of the opinions. There were also questions related to the succession of the two weeks: are they planned on a longer time stretch, or one after the other? A consecutive timing would give better results, was the general feeling.

3.4 Scenario 4: Co-operation

Of all five, this scenario generated the most varied reactions from journalists. Some had serious doubts that the final product would be a journalistic one. “I think it will rather look like an

informative paper, where all four journalists will put in different information about a unique subject”.

Others saw it as a perfect example of **online co-operation** between journalists from different European countries. “If they will be properly stimulated, a group of journalists who might know each other or not, could work very well together from a distance. As a journalist working for a multinational network, I have experienced such situations many times, and with successful results”, a participant contradicted his colleague from national media.

There was another group of journalists, most of them from national organisations, who agreed that meeting and spending time together for a few days with other journalists, trying to find subjects of common interest, is destined for failure.

Even if, theoretically, such a scenario would provide quality editorial material for all those involved, the practice has shown that agendas, interests and approaches of certain subjects in different member states do not result in a successful publication of the same final item. “Italy, Germany and Romania will never find a common approach on the Roma issue for instance, so it is hard to imagine that three journalists from the three countries will ever be able to produce a common story, no matter how much they research the subject. Their findings will be different and it will be hard for one to accept as such the findings of the other. Instead of **co-operation**, as the title of the scenario suggests, that will most probably turn into **contradiction**”, one journalist pleaded.

Another argument against the efficiency of the scenario was the fact that not all journalists are prepared to work in teams. The scenario would better fit a team of researchers than a team of journalists, was another point of view.

Though the objections were dominant, participants also identified several **advantages** of such a formula:

- offers proper time for research and documentation;
- provides good possibilities for exchanging information;
- stimulates team work;
- helps journalists get the view from the local people.

A large majority of participants came to the conclusion that such a scenario would only fit very big, important themes or events at international level. It could for instance be connected to a meeting of chiefs of state. The subjects that could be researched would be limited and very few, and it would only suit the national media organisations.

Even in that case, very few will go for it, as it is a rather complicated and time-consuming initiative. Such a formula was only considered **useful** to national journalists, to those highly specialised, mainly focusing on inquiry, analyses, research, study projects etc.

Local journalists from the first group did not find the scenario relevant for their media organisations. “It can not be applied in the local press”, was the general opinion.

The second group contradicted the idea with a meaningful example: four local media organisations from four different countries could co-operate within such a scenario researching how each mayor in the four cities is getting rid of various wastes. “That could become a very interesting item for all four partners, and it will also mean a useful exchange of information”.

The general conclusion was that the scenario is interesting, practical, but not very attractive. It is practical because the journalists do not have to miss work for a long period of time (which will make chiefs happy), but it is not attractive because “it does not offer you the possibility to come in contact with new people on a daily basis”. A journalist cannot be active in a reality which is not nearby.

3.5 Scenario 5: Seminars

This scenario could not contribute in a realistic manner to accomplishing the objectives defined by the programme, was one of the main opinions expressed by participants. It has a rather formal, educational approach and it will only be a platform “bombarded” by a huge amount of theoretical information, out of which only a small amount will be remembered at the end.

In addition, the coverage of events taking place in parallel with the seminar will be superficial, because journalists will not have enough time to participate in the seminar and to do some work at the same time.

Another opinion was that the scenario will have bigger chances of success if it will function as a **complementary** one for some of the other scenarios brought into discussion (such as Twinning or Co-operation). This way, it might have some advantages:

- would offer the possibility of fixing various theories acquired in a practical way;
- would offer the opportunity of a clear presentation of the programme;
- could function as a stimulus for future activities and as a meeting point for journalists that are going to co-operate in the future.

If the above criteria are not met, it will stay a boring event, without a practical application, without concrete outputs, and will have “zero” gain for everybody. It could be the most interesting scenario for the editors instead, as they could see it as “a small holiday” for the employee.

The scenario would attract more interest among the national media journalists, especially those dealing with European affairs on a daily bases. Since it looks more like a nice, short holiday, it will not bring any immediate advantages for the media organisation, unless it is timed to coincide with an important event.

The results of the scenario depend to a big extent on the interests of the participants. Such a scenario would suit best the editorialists, the journalists that are more inclined to make analyses and studies, and not those dealing with practical, daily issues.

According to the great majority of participants, “Seminars” scenario will have more chances of success if it will take place at the end of an important media event, than as a introduction or debriefing. “It would be more important to help us draw conclusions, instead of announcing us on what is going to happen”. Usually, journalists make preparations alone, before joining EU events, therefore such a seminar would not make a big difference from this perspective, either, according to some participants.

“If it is not combined with another scenario, it will just mean throwing money away”, was one of the main conclusions of the first group.

The second group had a slightly different approach. They thought such a scenario would be very useful for getting to know the EU institutions, meeting European personalities, having the opportunity to meet colleagues from other European countries. It would also help participants get a better view on European Affairs. The main condition of success would be that journalists are selected on well-established criteria, based on their interests in the EU field as well as on the daily work responsibilities within the media organisation at home.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Preferred scenarios and challenges

Without exception, everybody would be interested to participate into an “**Erasmus for journalists**” project, which could be successful, especially after the fine-tuning. The more experienced journalists had various reservations related to their bosses’ attitude towards their potential departure, the financial arrangements in case the programme is not fully sponsored by the EU or the language barriers that might be faced. The younger participants instead showed full enthusiasm and openness toward such a project.

“In theory, the project could be successful, in practice, you never know until you try”, one participant remarked. The chances of success will also be enhanced if the management understands that the project can be useful for them as well, not only for those who want to participate. Editors should be convinced that a temporary reduction of human resources will be beneficial for the organisation, on long term.

Otherwise, it will be hard to find independent people who are prepared to take the risk and participate in the programme, even if editors would not agree. Freelance journalism is not widespread in Romania, though freelancers would better qualify from this perspective. The same goes for the **online journalism**, which finds itself in the incipient phase of development.

Many agreed that, in order to become successful, the project should be promoted among journalists, and not for the media organisations. The media market is very fluid in Romania, with journalists ready to take new, challenging steps or to restart their careers.

Participants thought that such a programme would complete the puzzle of their career developments, would give them the chance to see how the same subjects are treated by the international press and “would allow them to better see the whole forest by taking some distance from the trees”, as somebody put it.

They also thought that the limits of the project are more dependent on those directly involved, and less on the way the project is designed. “Those participating should produce concrete results, not take it superficially”, was a common point.

There were also less optimistic voices, which questioned the interest of readers for EU-subjects, especially in the local media. According to most local press journalists, not too many people want to read about such topics. “If the participating journalist is not able to translate his EU experience into that need of information at local level, then he only did the programme for his own interests”, a local journalist summed-up.

The most **preferred scenario**, credited with the best chances of success, was scenario number three, **Twinning**, also credited as “most original” and “appealing” for journalists. The scenario would also correspond to the greatest extent to the expectations journalists would have from a so-called “Erasmus for Journalists” project.

Participants reiterated the idea that the second scenario, **Mobility**, fits best the journalists who want to leave the country.

While Twinning was credited as most feasible by a large majority, Mobility was seen as “most interesting” by about a third of the participants. “It gives you the opportunity to do something else, you get in contact with lots of people from different environments”.

The **Co-operation** and **Seminars** scenarios were not received with too much interest.

Some of the **crucial elements** of Twinning above the other scenarios:

- the interest and the subject are common to both participants;

- they both relate to their readers at home, whom they know, but the “mirror” effect given by the twinning approach will enhance the success of the story and will also contribute to a better understanding of another Member State;
- it involves the exchange of experiences;
- the final product is useful for both participants;
- it also touches upon the objectives of the first two scenarios.

As to **the downsides** of an “Erasmus for Journalists” project, one of its weakest parts is that, in practice, very few important, capable journalists could participate. Many things turn around them within their own media organisations, and it is hard to believe that the bosses would let them go (in case they are not the bosses themselves). One solution would be making the duration (even) shorter, but that would decrease the efficiency of the initiative.

Participants agreed that the project proposal touches on all the objectives defined at the beginning of the discussions. The first objective, further understanding of the EU, could only be achieved by involving journalists specialised in certain areas. From this perspective, it would be useful to introduce a separation of the fields, such as EU affairs, economy and politics.

As far as addressing of the **objectives** is concerned, the general idea was that all three objectives could be touched through the scenarios. The only exception is made by the last scenario, Seminars, which was not seen to touch upon the third objective (enhance professional skills and abilities).

4.2 Potential improvements

The journalists also made some suggestions for **potential improvement** of the project:

- not excluding “any media type” would be a strong point to promote in all the scenarios;
- the themes should be chosen in advance, and should connect to subjects of high interest at European level: for instance the prices of carrots in different European countries, which could lead to an analysis of life quality in the countries involved;
- online co-operation should also be promoted in all the scenarios;
- the fifth scenario, “Seminars”, could function as an introduction or debriefing;
- journalists should be given the possibility to choose the scenario that suits them best;
- selection criteria should be strictly defined;
- the application procedure should be clear, simple and not time-consuming;
- the total financial costs as well as the covered costs should be made known in advance;

Most participants thought the current title of the project, “Erasmus for journalists” is a good choice, but some suggested also other **names** for the programme:

- “The European Journalist”
- “The way to victory”
- The programme could be named after a famous European journalist.

8.0 SPAIN

1. Introduction

The Spanish focus groups took place in the Press Association of Madrid (APM) on Friday 17th of September 2010. Both sessions took place in the morning, the first between 09:30-11:30 and the second one between 12:00-14:00. A total of 14 journalists participated in the focus groups: 6 of them in the first group and 8 in the second one, reaching a good representation of TV, print, radio, online and news agency journalism. All the journalists participating were in their mid – careers, except for one, who was in the early part of her career. With the exception of three freelancers, all participants were in full time employment. It is also worth pointing out that only one participant held the position of editor in chief, whilst all others held a standard journalists title.

	Type of media	Status	Experience ¹⁰
Group 1	Print	Permanent position	Mid - career
	TV	Permanent position	Mid - career
	TV/news agency	Freelance ²	Early career
	Online	Permanent position	Mid - career
	Online	Permanent position	Mid - career
	News agency	Permanent position	Mid - career
Group 2	Print	Freelance	Mid - career
	Online	Permanent position	Mid - career
	TV	Freelance	Mid - career
	News agency	Permanent position	Mid - career
	Print	Freelance	Mid - career
	TV	Permanent position	Mid - career
	Online	Permanent position	Mid - career
	Radio	Permanent position	Mid - career
	Radio/Print	Freelance	Mid - career

2. Objectives

In general, it was noted that the majority of the participants were more attracted to objectives 2 (further journalists understanding of other MS) and 3 (enhance journalists professional skills and abilities), rather than objective 1 (further journalists’ understanding of the EU).

All in all with just a few exceptions, information concerning the EU and its institutions was not very appealing for most of the journalists, it was even deemed to be “boring” and “too theoretical”. Although there was not a high level of interest in EU topics, it was stated that this objective would help journalists in their task to communicate EU-related matters in a country where, from their point of view, EU affairs are better covered than in other EU member States. One participant stated that objective 1 was part of objective 3, in the sense that learning about the EU is also part of a journalist’s skills and education in order to make them better professionals. It is also worth pointing out what one participant commented on at this point: “better informed journalists are important but one would also have to educate editors to give more importance to EU affairs”.

Objectives 2 and 3 were both highly appreciated but the reasons as to why varied.

¹⁰ The study team divided journalists into three segments based on years of experience. Journalists with less than five years experience are classified as ‘early career’; those with between five and 20 years experience are classified as ‘mid-career’; and those with over twenty years experience are classified as ‘advanced’.

² The freelancers participating in the programme may have been under full time employment in the past. This category refers to the current state.

Although mostly seen as enriching on a personal level, objective 2 was also regarded as a way of enhancing and motivating professional skills. On the other hand, it was expressed that this objective would not be crucial for the media companies themselves.

Most of the participants agreed there is a lack of knowledge of how media in other Member States work and that getting to know different ways of working would be “interesting” and a “key” issue for journalists.

Objective 3 was viewed as highly desirable on a professional level. This is mainly due to the fact that the majority of professionals do not have the chance of gaining this kind of experience, neither during their studies, nor during their career.

One journalist asserted that objectives 2 and 3 were entwined, meaning that one’s professional skills and abilities are indeed the result of actively integrating oneself in another culture and consolidating this experience with one’s existing knowledge.

Although the majority of the journalists participating in both groups were working in full time employment, concerns about freelance journalists were raised. How journalists working on a freelance basis without regular income could afford to participate in this programme was indeed a matter of discussion. Especially with freelancers in mind, issues concerning the most appropriate way of funding will have to be taken into high consideration in order for this programme to be feasible.

The importance of networking and the improvement of language skills were also deemed as crucial goals by the participants. This should come as no surprise as the level of foreign languages in Spain² is below average in comparison to its European neighbours.

For the fulfilment of these objectives, two more elements appealed to the journalists in both groups. On one hand, economic support for the media companies participating. This aspect was commonly seen as a way of triggering the media collaboration with this programme. On the other hand and, directly connected with the latter, the active collaboration of the host media company. In order for journalists not to be seen as hindering the work in the host organisation, media companies (through the work of a mentor) must involve themselves in the tasks and duties of the exchange journalist.

Despite their different visions towards the three objectives, none of them were openly disregarded by any of the journalists.

3. Scenarios

3.1 Scenario 1: Exchange

When comparing the downsides and the upsides of this scenario suggested by the participants, we come to the conclusion that it was not perceived as a scenario easy to implement.

The immediate shared reaction towards this possible scenario was scepticism as to whether it is a real exchange. The fact that journalists would not work for the host media, but for their home organisations triggered doubts among the majority of the participants.

The second point all journalists agreed upon was the short duration of the programme, foreseen to be four weeks long only. Participants did not think that one month was enough time to get accustomed to the new workplace and really learn about the host organisation, which would only be possible according to them “after the 2nd or the 3rd month”. The journalists identified frustration and lack of integration as the immediate consequences of such a short stay. Direct and close

³ Spain is a country with one of the lowest rates of adults speaking a foreign language behind Romania, Hungary and Portugal, according to a survey published by Eurostat.

contact with the senior editors of the host media would be unlikely to be carried out within a time space of four weeks. It was agreed upon that the previously mentioned aspect would be enhanced by the fact that journalists would principally work for their home organisations and not for their host media.

Opinions whether this scenario would be attractive for the media varied between the two focus groups. In the first group journalists thought that media organisations would support this scenario because their journalists would carry on working for them. “This scenario is more suited to media organisations than to the journalists themselves”, according to a news agency journalist. On the other hand, journalists in the second group expressed that this scenario could even be “counter-productive” for the home media and wondered if “media would look beyond the short-term problems of having one staff member less during that time”. On this point one participant stated this scenario would be more feasible if journalists were sent to other organisations to learn about concrete things. Another colleague working for a specialised print publication, who defended the exchange between journalists specialised in the same field, shared this opinion.

In order to achieve the integration of the journalists in the host organisation, participants from both groups defend the role of a mentor. This person would provide the journalist with the necessary tools and guidelines to fit in the host media. Therefore it was expressed that the direct involvement of the host organisation is crucial for this scenario to work. At the same time it was also acknowledged by participants working in small media organisations that the presence of a mentor would only be possible in larger organisations. They could not see how a small media company can dedicate a member of staff to properly host someone. With regards to this point and in the words of an editor in chief: “it would be a sacrifice, but benefits outweigh the costs”.

The participants positively perceived economic support for the media participating in this scenario. Journalists seemed to agree that if organisations would receive this help, their involvement in the programme would be stronger, even more “among organisations belonging to the same media group”.

The successful implementation of this scenario was not only seen to depend on the size of the media organisations, but also on the type of media. Participants in the first group expressed different opinions as to whether this programme would work for TV journalists. Whereas a print journalist did not see it feasible for TV journalists, a TV journalist did indeed.

The matter of language skills was discussed especially by the second group. As a general pattern, foreign languages were deemed as a potential problem in all scenarios. This is mainly due to the fact that among Spanish journalists English is not widely spoken.

In a nutshell, journalists from both groups did not find the Exchange scenario very applicable. Although many editors would be open to this initiative, limits imposed by the short duration of this programme were perceived to have negative implications and it was suggested that this programme would be suited neither to participants nor to their media companies.

3.2 Scenario 2: Mobility

Generally speaking, participants in both groups prefer the Mobility scenario over the Exchange scenario. Editors perceived its model as more “complete and attractive because of the longer duration and better integration”.

The length of this scenario (2-3 months) seemed to be the key factor for all the participants to favour it, as it would allow a better integration of the participant in the host media and the learning period would also increase. Also with regards to the duration of this scenario, one participant of the second group suggested the possibility of lengthening it, as long as both sides are satisfied with the result. The only editor in chief participating in the focus group defended the fact that the

duration of this scenario should be agreed in advance, as media need to know in advance how long they will have to do without one of its staff members.

Whereas the flexibility of this scenario was seen to suit all the professional necessities, journalists expressed that media would need to “change their mentality for a programme like this to work”, as expressed by a freelancer of the second group. Journalists appeared reluctant to believe that media organisations would want to do without one of their editors for such a long time. To this respect, the editor in chief expressed that this model would be more interesting if journalists were sent abroad to learn about concrete issues, such as editorial techniques. The acquisition of solid knowledge becomes the determining factor in this case.

Although the idea of working for a foreign media for 3 months appeared to be riveting for all the participants, a few challenges were openly perceived as potential hurdles to overcome. One of these challenges is the ability of the participant to contribute with to the host media in a foreign language. As mentioned in the previous scenario, Spanish journalists, in general terms do not have a high level of foreign language skills, unless they have already spent some time abroad.

Another major issue would be the information itself. On this point, one journalist of the second group claimed that this scenario would only be practical for more experienced journalists, as recent graduates would not have enough skills to really contribute to the host media. The level of journalistic skills of the participants were perceived as a key factor for the meaningful contribution to the host media and thus for the proper implementation of this scenario. This point was outlined by a vast majority of the participants. In addition, participants discussed the possibility of the visiting journalists to choose their host organisations. According to most expressed opinions, journalists given this chance would be more likely to succeed in their tasks.

A freelance journalist of the second focus group asserted that the Mobility programme would only be realistic as long as participants can choose to work for the same media type as their home organisations. Views on this matter were however not unanimous, not reaching a consensus towards the necessity of taking the media type into account or not.

There was a prevailing consensus around the long-term benefits of working for the host organisation. A more in depth EU-related knowledge and EU-media approach revealed itself as one of the main upsides of this programme among the journalists. However one participant of the first group also viewed his preference as to keeping his contribution to his home media and thus becoming a sort of “correspondent”. In this case, the visiting journalist would have to face the challenge of coming up with attractive and interesting stories for their home audience. At the same time, this aspect was deemed to be a good selling point for one’s home organisation.

The funding was agreed upon as being a big challenge to overcome. The Erasmus funding model, providing participants with a very small scholarship, is not considered to be transferable to this programme. Nearly all participants stated that the EU should cover the costs relating to travel and accommodation in the host country. Given the fact that some media organisations may not be willing to pay the journalists’ salary during the time spent abroad, a few journalists shared the opinion that EU funding should go beyond the basic costs and also compensate the lack of income. Although specific subsidy figures were not brought to the table, participants agreed that this quantity would differ depending on the host country.

A few journalists thought that media organisations should receive some economic support for hosting visiting journalists. In the words of a print media journalist “if media companies do not get anything in return, they will not show much interest”. The willingness of the host organisation for helping out the visiting journalist was perceived as a crucial element for the success of the programme. At the same time, it was suggested that this aspect is directly entwined with receiving economic support. A bigger concern involving funding would arise when it comes to freelancers. Focus groups participants saw a big limitation for freelancing journalists in particular to participate in the programme if no economic support to substitute their income was provided.

It was also expected that the larger countries and media groups (e.g. BBC, The Guardian, Spain) would be hugely favoured over small organisations, although whether it would become a problem for the feasibility of this scenario was not contemplated.

3.3 Scenario 3: Twinning

In none of the focus groups participants showed a consensus towards the Twinning scenario. Instead, there were mixed opinions as to the workability, benefits and outcomes of this programme. However, as a general trend, journalists of the second group shared a more unanimous critical reaction over the journalists of the first group, who appeared to be more optimistic as to the result of this scenario.

In general terms, journalists seemed to be keen on the concept of working together with a visiting journalist. They perceived that this professional relationship would allow the twinning partners easier access to other sources of information and would make them profit from their mutual professional support. It was also commonly highlighted how interesting it would be to get to know how journalists from other countries work and gain insight into the techniques and they use. It was noted that the twinning partners should have a certain level of experience in order to gain something from the one another's work.

Among some participants of the first focus group prevailed the idea that this programme could be deemed as a “climax” of the two other previously mentioned scenarios, and take place once professional and personal links had become stronger. A print journalist asserted that this scenario was in essence different to the Erasmus programme and that “it would be indeed necessary for journalists to participate in four or five scenarios of this kind” to match the essence of the Erasmus concept. The length of this programme (foreseen as one week per country) was perceived as too short, which consequently would not allow participants to totally immerse themselves in the new country and in the activity itself. Bound with the above-mentioned statements and due to the limited period of time, economic challenges imposed upon the involved organisations were not seen as a major concern.

One of the most experienced journalists of the second group claimed the Twinning scenario would not work, as the journalists participating would encounter problems of trust and egoism. He showed himself in favour of this programme if a relationship between the twinning partners already exists.

Concerns on legal problems relating to this collaborative scenario were also discussed in the second focus group. Journalists wondered if there would have to be a previous agreement between media organisations to implement this kind of programme. The attainable aspects of the Twinning scenario were seen as more challenging when it came to the collaboration of big international media groups who, on a daily basis, are direct competitors.

An editor in chief taking part in the second group expressed that, although workable, this scenario was already being implemented by several news organisations and that “the exchange of information is not new”. Despite the general scepticism shared by her colleagues, she was convinced that editors “would be willing to give it a try”.

This opinion conflicted against that of a colleague who foresaw that it would be difficult to convince editors to allow their staff to join this programme.

For the successful implementation of this scenario there was a consensus among journalists of both groups as to the topics of the research to be carried out. They were fond of the idea of having the freedom to choose a shared area of interest with their partner. On the other hand, finding a matching twin with the same interests was not regarded as an easy task. Some journalists would support this scenario more openly if they were allowed to choose their matching partners among their own contacts. Also with regards to the content of the research, they feared they may encounter many hurdles when dealing with a specific topic. They were rather in favour of

researching a broad topic. A freelance journalist came up with the idea of having the chance of tackling aspects such as journalistic techniques (i.e. best practice in TV).

One journalist suggested that the actual idea of working on a common story relevant for both countries might be highly desirable from the perspective of the EU, but would not necessarily be equally attractive to the media organisations or the journalists themselves implementing this programme.

3.4 Scenario 4: Co-operation

Although none of the journalists of either of the groups show an unreservedly negative response towards this scenario, they didn't welcome it with great enthusiasm either. Statements like “journalists already do this” were plainly expressed. An automotive freelance journalist stated that they already do these kinds of collaborations with other magazines of the same sector.

All in all, journalists agreed that collaborative patterns such as the one suggested in this scenario can emerge naturally when there is a shared interest and a relationship of trust between journalists from different countries, but that they did not see the need of an EU programme to facilitate them.

Since the co-operation scenario does not foresee counting on the participation of media organisations, it was recognized to be more feasible for journalists working on a freelance basis, rather than for full time employees. This was a point that on a whole everybody agreed upon. Members of the groups suggested that not having to depend on media organisations to participate could make this scenario more viable to implement. However it was commented that the immersion in a new environment would not take place at large, as contemplated in other scenarios. In addition, since working on a freelance basis is less financially rewarding than having a permanent contract, soon the financial question was brought into the discussion. Journalists acknowledged that this programme should be, if not totally, at least partially funded and thus covering the accommodation and travel fees for freelance journalists.

The prevailing opinion as to working in a team received positive feedback, however some journalists made a few assessments. Although positive towards this initiative, the editor in chief participating in one of the two focus groups identified the potential dispersion of the journalists integrating the team as the biggest problem: “any group of more than 4-5 people becomes unmanageable”, she asserted. Another journalist was reluctant to believe that journalists would so easily share both their information sources and the results of their research; a few focus group participants felt that there is a risk of journalists taking advantage of situations for individual and professional gain.

It was also commented on the importance for all the journalists to share the same level of experience and competitiveness in order for their contribution to be mutually valid. Remarks as to how to source the participants were not put forward, nor was the suitability of this programme specifically for print, TV, radio or online media.

The complexity surrounding this scenario came also from the fact that journalists expressed it would not be an easy task to find a theme of relevance in several Member States. EU-related matters were thought to be the ones best suited to this programme.

With concerns to the benefits of this programme, views expressed were rather mixed. Many of the members of both groups shared the opinion that media companies would result in profiting from this programme more than individuals and freelancers. On the other hand, other members remarked that the participants would not note the output of this scenario immediately, but rather they would benefit from them in the long-term. The outputs that were acknowledged by the vast majority of the journalists were networking and acquiring background information and a much better understanding of a certain topic.

The fact that these co-operations would be extended over a period of a couple of months was applauded by the journalists. An enriching co-operation carried out in the long term was seen as more beneficial than the immediate results of the research.

3.5 Scenario 5: Seminars

First reactions towards this last scenario were similar to the reactions towards the Co-operation programme. All the journalists claimed that the Seminars scenario did not bring anything new and therefore lacked creativity. The participants expressed to be already made aware of the EU-related seminars/briefings on offer by several institutions and foundations (i.e. the European Journalism Centre), and, in many cases, on a daily basis.

If not as a programme itself, journalists could see these seminars as part of any of the above described scenarios. To be more precise, they suggested these seminars to take place at an early stage of the Exchange and the Mobility scenarios. When added to the other programmes, this last scenario would result in a useful tool of information that journalists could profit from throughout their participation in other kind of programmes.

Several journalists shared the idea that editors would be more open to let their staff participate in this programme rather than in others. The only editor in chief present at the focus group seemed however to be more impressed by other scenarios.

A few journalists agreed that an important aspect for the seminars to be attractive was its duration, considering that between 2-3 days would be enough to address a certain topic and provide access to relevant sources. It was also acknowledged that these seminars or briefings should provide the journalists with an added value, and thus differentiating them from other seminars on offer. Real emphasis was also placed on the content itself. Since a lot of EU-related content can be accessed online on a daily basis, the seminars should seek to address the most complex part of this information.

Praised by the members of the focus group was the fact that this scenario foresees the coverage of events, either in Brussels or in other Member States, coinciding with the time of the seminar. This feature should be regarded as one of the added values previously highlighted.

As to the main benefits brought by this programme, journalists singled out two of them: the opportunities offered by networking; and background information for EU-related coverage.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Preferred scenarios

A consensus emerged from the focus groups that two out of the five described scenarios are not among the preferred options of any of the participants: these are the Co-operation scenario and the Seminars scenario. The three remaining: the Exchange scenario, the Mobility scenario and the Twinning scenario, were favoured, either as a combination of each other or on their own. A detailed explanation of these results reads as follows.

The Mobility scenario was the most preferred one, basically due to several factors. Above all, the duration of between 2-3 months was a very appealing feature for all journalists, as they would have the chance of integrating themselves in a completely new work environment and be part of another news organisation on a daily basis.

Immersing themselves in another country would also be beneficial to enhance their professional skills and abilities, which if not immediately, would give good results in the long-term. Aware of the limitations imposed by their skills in a foreign language and the knowledge of the host country, journalists would prefer to have a more balanced match between the work for the host and their home media organisation. Another determinant for the appeal of this scenario is its flexibility

towards journalists working on a freelance basis. As expressed by one of the participants, a longer-term visit in line with the Mobility scenario could be seen “as a personal initiative for the journalist” (i.e. during a sabbatical), but would be unlikely to meet a very positive response from employers. The possibility of organising this programme through a pool of journalists and hosts should be desirable. In order to fully succeed, journalists highlighted the importance of making the right match between the host organisation and the visiting journalist. Finding the right way of funding shared between the home organisation and the EU is also seen as crucial for the feasibility of this programme.

The Twinning scenario was second only to the Mobility one. All focus group members agreed that participants in this programme shall be required to have the same level of experience so that all of them can profit from one another. It would be ideal if the twinning partner was a person with whom one has had previously contact and not a complete stranger. This scenario was also preferred as a culmination of either the Mobility programme or the Exchange programme. As to the outputs of this scenario, it was considered to benefit both equally, the journalists and their media organisations.

In third place would be situated the Exchange scenario. The amount of allocated time is the main aspect criticised by the vast majority of the journalists, in the sense that they would not have enough time to fully soak up the whole experience. To this respect, journalists considered the possibility of combining this programme with the Twinning scenario. Other limits to its feasibility were not important enough to be taken into consideration.

With regards to the Co-operation and the Seminars scenarios, none of the journalists directly opposed them. However, in the conclusions neither of them were particularly selected as preferred scenarios in any of the possible combinations.

4.2 Challenges and potential improvements

The financial aspect appeared to be the main obstacle for any of these scenarios to be implemented. The funding was deemed as a potential hurdle to access the programme, not only for journalists working on a freelance basis, but also for those working in fulltime employment. The best funding scenario is the one mixing funds from the media organisation and funds from the EU. When it comes to distributing financial resources, it must be noted the cost of living in different member States.

The willingness of the media organisations to let their staff members take part in this programme was perceived as another main challenge. Journalists shared the view that unfortunately media are not willing to invest in further training of their journalists, if this implies a cost for them. Media companies prefer to receive immediate profits, whatever their format is, rather than invest in long terms outputs. Along the same lines, the readiness of the organisations to help integrate and support their visiting journalist was another major concern among the participants. Therefore the role of a mentor would be highly recommended.

Another issue of concern for the participants was the independence of the programme chosen to be implemented. Although fostered by the EU, the potential scenario must be primarily aimed at the further training of the journalists and not at the ultimate promotion of the EU. Content-wise, it was also seen as crucial that the programme remains free from latent EU influence.

Among the main challenges identified by the journalists it is the communication and promotion of the potential ERASMUS for journalists programme. This would require an effort not only by the European Institutions but also by the intermediary organisations. Most of the focus group members recognised that they are not aware of the vast majority of the programmes on offer. Therefore, the first obstacle to overcome is the communication.

9.0 UNITED KINGDOM

1. Introduction

The UK focus groups took place over two days at The Evaluation Partnership's offices in central London, on Thursday 1st and Friday 2nd July 2010. The Thursday session ran from 9:30-11:30 while the Friday session took place over lunch, from 12:00-14:00. In all, the eight journalists who participated in the focus groups represented a wide range of ages and media types, as shown in the table below:

	Type of media	Status	Experience ¹¹
Group 1	Television	Permanently employed	Early career
	Print media – tourism and travel magazines; radio	Freelance	Mid-career
	Print media – scientific magazines	Freelance	Early-career
	Print media – environmental magazine	Permanently employed	Advanced
Group 2	Print media – national newspaper	Permanently employed	Mid-career
	Online website of a legacy media; online-only news outlet	Freelance	Mid-career
	Print media – national newspapers	Freelance	Early-career
	Print media – financial newspaper	Freelance	Early-career

2. Objectives

When asked to comment on the three specific objectives that had been defined for the programme, the participants agreed that the **third objective** (enhance journalists' professional skills and abilities) was the most important objective for them personally with regard to their taking part in an Erasmus programme for journalists. Main reasons for this were the importance of gaining and/or developing specialist skills (including language skills) to further one's own career.

The **second objective** (further journalists' understanding of other Member States) was also seen as important, especially as a **majority of participants felt they lacked substantial knowledge about other Member States**. However, there was not widespread agreement about whether this lack of knowledge was a *cause* for low levels of coverage of other Member States, or an *effect* of readers and viewers uninterested in such coverage. Some participants, particularly experienced journalists, doubted whether enhanced language skills and contacts in other Member States would substantially increase coverage, with one mid-career print journalist stating that *'newspapers serve their markets – for coverage of foreign affairs one can look to the Guardian and Financial Times, while the Daily Mail sticks to domestic issues'*.

Others felt that lack of knowledge and language skills was a strong determinant of low levels of coverage of other Member States and that an EU-funded programme setting out to address this would result in greater number of stories about other European countries. These participants, concentrated among the less experienced focus group attendants, were keen on acquiring

¹¹ The study team divided journalists into three segments based on years of experience. Journalists with less than five years experience are classified as 'early career'; those with between five and 20 years experience are classified as 'mid-career'; and those with over twenty years experience are classified as 'advanced'.

specialist skills to distinguish themselves. They claimed that, given adequate grounding in the affairs of other Member States and cross-border issues, journalists would be better equipped to recognise stories that would interest their audiences. One journalist expanded on the range of obstacles, of language, sources and cultural understanding, preventing wider coverage of stories that would normally have no problem finding an audience. Though the example provided was unconventional, it was illustrative: French wine merchants, facing a poor vintage and unable to sell domestically, exported their supply to the UK. Although this was widely reported in the French press, it was not picked up by a single British media outlet. With deeper language and cultural skills, several focus group participants agreed the UK press would have been able to make use of such an event.

Participants expressed significantly **less enthusiasm about the first objective** (further journalists’ knowledge of the EU). This was for two main reasons. Firstly, most participants felt that the limited coverage of the EU in the UK was due to low levels of interest among UK audiences. Examples were provided to back this up from multiple angles: one participant, a freelance journalist working for national newspapers, recalled that, at journalism school, courses on EU policies were notorious for being tedious and often undersubscribed, while another pointed to seminars and courses already widely available to show that there was not a *need* to address the objective. However, no participants were openly hostile to a programme that included an EU-related objective *alongside others*, either indirectly or peripherally. Given that the journalists present knew an eventual exchange programme would be funded by the EU, they accepted that some connection to the EU would be necessary and did not think this fact would discourage participation.

The notion of **whether an Erasmus-like programme would contribute to the objectives** was also debated. Though the objectives themselves were seen to be somewhat complementary, several participants asked whether spending time in another Member State would actually increase coverage of that Member State in the home country: given the language skills needed to contribute meaningfully to a media organisation abroad, qualified participants might already have a high level of expertise of the country in question. This was, however, not seen to be the case for science journalism, where a participant who worked as a freelance print journalist in the science field, felt knowledge of English, the working language in many scientific organisations around Europe, would be sufficient to take part in an exchange. The rest of the group agreed with this.

Despite the reservations evident during discussion of the objectives, all participants expressed a **keen interest in taking part** in the eventual programme. Some participants were enthusiastic about the potential for an exchange programme to partially address recent cutbacks in foreign language departments at UK universities, though it was also lamented that, for some of the reasons mentioned above, British journalists might be less willing to participate than Europeans with better language skills and a stronger interest in foreign countries. In addition, hardly any focus group participants thought there would be much demand for visiting smaller Member States without widely studied languages.

The likely target audience of young journalists was met with broad approval: most participants expected young journalists at the beginning of their careers to be generally more open to this type of programme due to their flexibility, desire to stand out among their peers and widen their network of sources.

When asked if the programme should focus on **any other objectives**, several participants mentioned the importance of building and enhancing cross-country media relations (rather than only coverage) and the reduction of political conflict between countries as possible additional objectives.

3. Scenarios

3.1 Scenario 1: Exchange

The participants had mixed views on this scenario, but **overall the level of interest was relatively low** and a number of aspects were criticised. The scenario was generally seen as rigid and difficult to implement, both from an employer’s and a participant’s point of view.

The scenario was seen as **too inflexible**, in terms of finding suitable participants (pairs of individuals with comparable professional backgrounds and levels of expertise working for similar organisations and timing (participants would have to swap places for an equal amount of time). About half of participants agreed with the statement that *“finding an exact match could be time consuming and difficult”*. One participant noted that cultural differences between small organisations, which often have younger members of staff in relatively high positions, and large organisations with stronger hierarchies, where staff progress less quickly, would make it even more difficult to match potential participants:

“The bigger media do not have young journalists employed in senior positions – this will add the issue of trying to pair experienced and inexperienced participants.”

The **administrative effort** of matching exchange partners was expected to be considerable. In this context, however, all four participants in the second focus group suggested that if the matching of exchange partners was done well, e.g. if a journalist from a Spanish financial newspaper was matched with someone from a Dutch financial newspaper with a similar level of expertise, the scenario could work well and add value to both participating organisations.

All of the participants in both groups agreed that this scenario would have **severely limited access for freelance journalists**, as they would in most cases not be sufficiently attached to an organisation to provide a host organisation for their exchange partner. The majority of participants considered this to be one of the main shortfalls of the Exchange scenario.

In terms of the tasks participants would carry out, all four journalists in the first group felt that it would be counterproductive if participants were required to mainly keep on contributing to their home organisation’s work, rather than fully taking part in the host organisation’s day-to-day activities and tasks. The majority of the participants in the first group agreed that this would result in a *“missed opportunity to gain insight into how the host organisation really functions”*. It was therefore suggested to amend this aspect and **allow participants to contribute mostly to their host organisation** rather than their own. This, however, leads to the additional difficulty for the host organisation of integrating the new temporary member of staff to a high degree, and it was claimed that a journalist from the host organisation would have to be available to provide ongoing guidance and support to the exchange journalist. Moreover, this added to journalists’ calls, especially in the first group, to increase the length of the scenario – four weeks was seen as too short to integrate an exchange participant to the extent that he or she would be able to significantly contribute to the host organisation.

In terms of duration, it was suggested that the programme would have to be of a **minimum duration of three months**, possibly even extending to a whole year as favoured by one permanently employed television journalist, allowing participants to settle into the new organisations, get up to speed in terms of language and different styles of working, and widen their own networks in order to truly benefit from the experience and add value to their home organisation:

“Three to six months duration would be better, maybe even a year, like a sabbatical. Four weeks would be completely used up for training and getting to know the host organisation.”

Participants highlighted several challenges to the successful implementation of this scenario. Firstly, **sufficient language skills** were seen as an important pre-requisite, and it was suggested by a few participants that this scenario could be combined with an intensive language course. Even if the journalists would mainly work for their home organisation in their own language and contributions to the host paper’s work would be limited, attempts to produce even a small amount

of meaningful work for the host organisation could fail as several participants pointed out that “*no paper wants to publish a badly written article by a foreigner who does not speak the language of the host country*”. If the programme required participants to primarily contribute to the host (rather than home) organisation, as suggested above, the language issue would become even more of an obstacle.

Time and capacity constraints were also seen by all participants as a challenge for both sides: for the host organisation, which would have to ensure that the visiting journalist is properly integrated, as well as for the home organisation, which would have to make do without one of their staff members for an extended period of time. This was particularly emphasised by the majority of participants in the second group, who claimed that even the absence of a member of staff for one month, as the scenario suggests, would be a concern for the employer, even if it was a large organisation. One freelance journalist working for the website of a large media organisation highlighted that:

“Even large organisations work with a limited number of journalists and have little spare capacity, especially considering the 24-hour news cycle. A one-month gap would cause some problems.”

Another challenge discussed in both groups centred on the **limited use a participating journalist would be for the home organisation**. The majority of participants agreed that most larger organisations will already have a media correspondent in place who could report on the affairs of a given Member State. Even if no correspondent is in place, a so called *stringer* (freelance journalist maintaining long-term relations with given media organisations) would usually facilitate the gathering of information at local levels. This could detract from the interest of organisations such as the BBC or the Guardian in allowing their journalists to participate in the programme. Nearly all participants agreed on this. To deal with the problem, several participants, concentrated in the second group, suggested that the Exchange scenario be pitched at smaller media organisations without extensive resources and media correspondents and / or stringers in other Member States. This potential solution could also apply to smaller countries in general, where media organisations have relatively fewer resources at their disposal and would be more likely to benefit from a temporary foreign correspondent and a boost to their international network.

3.2 Scenario 2: Mobility

This scenario generated **a lot more interest** amongst the participants, especially as it seemed to have improved on some of the main areas criticised in the previously discussed Exchange scenario (i.e. duration, flexibility, level of contribution made to the work of the host organisation, and better capacity to include freelancers). The majority of participants in both groups favoured this scenario over the previous one.

However, although the longer duration of the scenario was seen positively by most participants, some of the participants in the second group, working on both a permanent and freelance basis, also stated that it would be problematic to leave their home organisation for a period of two to three months. One participant, working in a permanent position in TV journalism, suggested that the **duration should be flexible**, ranging between two and 12 months. Others in the group agreed that more flexibility in terms of duration would be helpful. This way, the **programme could be tailored individually** to suit the needs of the participating journalists and their organisations: in each case it could be decided how long the visit to the host organisation should be, reflecting the participant's needs, language skills and specific expertise as well as the amount of time the home organisation could manage without this member of staff. Freelancers in both groups echoed this point of view. Given their highly diverse working situations, they would have to consider numerous factors when deciding whether to participate in the programme and how long they could be away, including the impact working abroad for a number of months would have on their network at home.

In terms of covering the substantial cost, e.g. for travel, accommodation and general living expenses, of journalists visiting another Member State for longer periods of time, two participants, both in permanent positions, suggested that the **programme could be co-funded by the home organisation as well as the host organisation and the EC**. Again, the ability of freelancers to participate was highlighted as a major issue with regard to funding their stay in the host country as no home organisation would contribute to their expenses. If freelance participants were expected to contribute mostly to the host organisation, it would be difficult for them to keep up their income through working for their usual clients.

Some participants claimed that the interest would be heavily **skewed toward larger Member States**, especially due to the fact that existing language skills would direct participants to countries such as France, the UK and Spain as opposed to others such as Slovenia or the Czech Republic.

Another criticism was that the Mobility scenario would provide fewer incentives for participating journalists and organisations, **lacking the reciprocity of the direct exchange**. Journalists would be less inclined to contribute to the host organisation's work, while staff in host organisations might be less willing to look after the visiting journalist. One journalist working permanently for a national newspaper noted:

“Without the reciprocity this scheme loses a lot. There are fewer incentives to help the visiting journalist”.

A majority of participants felt that **flexibility in terms of timing would be crucial** to the success of this scenario. That would allow the programme to combine the general improvement of skills and knowledge of the participating journalist with enhanced coverage of specific national stories that would be covered in most Member States anyway, such as the British election, the economic crisis in Greece or a major sports event. Most participants agreed that, in such a situation, home organisations would then not mind sending someone abroad. In addition, a freelance radio and print journalist in the first focus group suggested that freelancers would be more likely to sell this type of story as well, since there will be a higher general interest in the subject. Several participants pointed out, however, that it would be difficult to plan the programme around breaking news, while host organisations might be particularly busy during elections or other important events. Participants could not agree as to whether this would make host organisations more likely to participate, since they would receive an extra journalist, or less likely to participate, because they would lack the capacity necessary to integrate the person.

3.3 Scenario 3: Twinning

This scenario generated **mostly positive feedback** from the majority of participants, although for different reasons than the Mobility scenario discussed above. The positive feedback mainly resulted from the **improved practicability of the scenario**, rather than its fulfilment of the objectives discussed at the beginning of the focus group. While a duration of two weeks (one week per country) was not considered to be long enough to effectively improve one's knowledge of the European Union and other EU Member States, or substantially enhance one's professional skills and abilities, it was nevertheless seen as a good networking opportunity and an effective (particularly cost-wise) way of contributing to the home organisation's work by covering a story “on site”. In terms of practicability, **freelance journalists were unanimously positive** and pointed out that journalists such as themselves would more easily be able to participate in this kind of programme than the others. Where freelance participants would actually be hosted (i.e. whether a ‘host’ freelancer would have office space to provide to his or her ‘twin’) was not discussed. Some freelance journalists also pointed out that the programme should be flexible as regards the media type. They saw no reason why the programme should be restricted to journalists from the same media type, especially as this aspect of the scenario could have negative implications for freelancers.

Though all participants saw this scenario as a pragmatic, manageable option, most seemed to feel that, that this scenario would be **best suited to local, smaller organisations**. These would be more likely than their larger counterparts to lack the funds to send staff abroad to cover a story and generally do not focus on international coverage:

“This would be suitable for local newspapers, as large organisations like the BBC do this type of on-site research anyway and don’t need any more funding”.

The shorter duration of this scenario was also seen as positive by the majority of journalists in both groups: **home organisations would be more likely to let their journalists participate**, both because they would only be absent for a short length of time and because home organisations would receive a tangible product from the participant. However, limiting the scenario to one week per country was thought only to be practical if extensive preparation, such as setting up interviews and carrying out background research, were to take place beforehand. A majority of participants in both groups agreed with this. To relieve some of the pressure of gathering all necessary data within the space of one week, a more flexible duration of up to two weeks per country was suggested and agreed by all other participants in the first group.

Despite the short duration of the scenario, **language** was nevertheless seen as a challenge by a minority of participants, who thought that working very closely with a partner would require both ‘twins’ to speak a common language equally well. A greater proportion of focus group participants agreed with a participant who suggested that even if language skills were not extensive, “twins” could help each other with the translation of interviews and other tasks to gather the necessary information, which would then be easily turned into a journalistic output for home organisations by each participant.

“This could sort out the language problem. The role of the partner as an interpreter is important. You report in your own language so this is much less of an issue than in any other scheme so far”.

It was furthermore agreed on by all participants that local partners are usually an invaluable source of information and would enable the visiting participant to gain insight and broaden his or her professional network in a much better and more efficient way than would be possible under the Exchange or Mobility scenarios. One participant suggested that this programme could somehow be linked with or take inspiration from existing town-twinning arrangements, especially on the level of local media.

3.4 Scenario 4: Co-operation

Participants gave **mixed reviews to this scenario**, but the majority of participants from both groups nevertheless rated the Co-operation scenario practicable and feasible. The problems perceived were mostly related to its ability to fulfil the programme objectives.

On the positive side, it was stated that it would be possible to learn about other Member States and widen individual networks through participating in this scenario. Most of the journalists in both groups agreed with this. In terms of content, participants of the first group agreed that *“big, international topics that no one covers”* arise regularly and that there would be no shortage of stories – and demand for them – with a common interest. Examples given included stories dealing with the recent crisis in the Euro-zone, in addition to taxation, welfare expenditure and budget cuts. The scenario was also seen as practical by the majority of members of the second focus group, **as editors would be more likely to let their staff participate in a programme lasting several days rather than weeks or months**, especially since there would be a tangible output for the home organisation.

However, one young freelance participant expressed concern that the programme would turn into *“a very expensive telephone conference”* rather than a programme that adds value to both individuals and their organisations. Another, substantially more experienced, participant, working in a permanent position in print journalism, disagreed, stating that visiting a region and meeting

with other journalists will always have a stronger impact in terms of familiarising oneself with a story, and cannot be substituted with phone calls and emails as his peer suggested:

“The dimensions of a story change substantially when it is covered on-site, e.g. the recent floods in France”.

The majority of members of both groups also shared the concern that **journalists work in a competitive way and might not be ready to share information gathered with others**. To counteract this, it was suggested to build an element into the programme that would set incentives for the participating journalists to work together and share information equally.

As with the Twinning scenario, it was pointed out that **smaller, local organisations would benefit from this in particular** due to the support the programme would provide to all staff to venture abroad. One journalist suggested that larger organisations might be worried about wasting time and ending up with overly complicated and lengthy processes, especially when having to coordinate remotely. Most focus group participants agreed that the administrative effort for this scenario was expected to be considerable, which was seen as a concern especially by the members of the first group.

3.5 Scenario 5: Seminars

Participants pointed out that seminars of this type are **already taking place**, but agreed that they could **add value if tied to one of the other four scenarios**, especially if employed as a type of introduction that would prepare participants for a longer programme (e.g. three months), providing some information on what participants will be working on during their time abroad. On the other hand it was also pointed out by one participant working in a permanent position in TV journalism that five days might be too long for members of staff of an organisation to leave and attend a seminar, which *“simply serves as a briefing or introduction to a wider programme with no tangible output”*.

A majority of participants thought that such seminars are often *“quite boring and a waste of money”* if they are not structured around topics directly useful for the participants. In addition, one participant stated that his / her organisation already has a correspondent in Brussels and that there would be no need to send another member of staff to a seminar there, even if the seminar coincided with a specific event, such as an EU summit. To make seminars more attractive, it was suggested to hold the seminars in other, less obvious areas than Brussels, and mainly focus on topics other than the EU institutions:

“The EU element would better be covered indirectly. The EU Parliament is not an interesting topic to cover”.

In terms of content, a participant in the second group suggested that this scenario could aim at meeting the third objective, with seminars teaching journalistic skills and providing information on, for example, new technologies, while a majority of participants envisaged linking the seminars to a specific event outside of Brussels where correspondents from their organisations would not normally be present.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Preferred scenarios

An overall suggestion, favoured by a majority of participants, was to **let different scenarios run alongside of each other** and to make the programme as flexible as possible. It was suggested that this would make the programme more accessible to both large and small organisations, freelancers and different age groups. This was mainly because each of the scenarios was seen as

feasible under certain circumstances and for certain groups. Allowing for some flexibility would broaden an eventual programme's appeal.

A number of the participants preferred the **Twinning scenario**, and suggested that this form of the programme would be easiest to implement. A majority of participants also claimed that this scenario would be especially appropriate for local organisations which could otherwise not afford to send members of their staff abroad to cover specific stories.

The **Mobility scenario** was also favoured by some of the participants. In this context it was also stated that this scenario would be more feasible for freelancers as the time spent in another organisation would be too long for permanent staff. As freelance working is becoming more widespread, it was suggested that the Mobility scenario could effectively support networking and knowledge sharing among journalists in the EU.

The **Co-operation scenario** generated a moderate amount of interest with mixed views regarding its feasibility, while on the whole the **Exchange scenario** was seen as too rigid and difficult to administer and implement. The Seminars scenario was seen as the least interesting, unless tailored to fit into a wider programme.

4.2 Potential improvements

For all scenarios, participants as a whole felt the scenarios would be improved through **more flexibility in the area of duration**. This included potentially lengthening the Exchange and Twinning scenarios, and adjusting the others in terms of participating journalists' and organisations' needs. For those that were able to spend the time, a longer Exchange or Mobility scenario would allow journalists to contribute heavily to the host organisation and go further towards accomplishing the second and third objectives.

To cover the costs of an extended programme, two participants suggested that the programme could be co-funded by the home organisation as well as the host organisation and the European Commission. It was acknowledged that the issue of funding would also have to be carefully considered in the case of freelance journalists, who would not be attached to a home organisation to co-funding their participation in the programme or pay salaries.

4.3 Challenges

Overall, the factors of **time and funding** were considered to be the main challenges for an Erasmus for Journalists programme, both from an employer's and participant's point of view. In this context, the difficulties (in terms of workload and funding) arising from permanent members of staff leaving their positions to participate in the programme have to be considered, as well as the situation of freelance journalists stepping out of their original network to experience another Member State. The issue of funding will be a particularly difficult challenge for those journalists working as freelancers. Though a co-funding mechanism could increase uptake among journalists with permanent positions, it would not be suited to supporting freelancers.

The issue of how to include freelancers in general was seen as another main challenge of the programme. It was pointed out that the Exchange scenario would not lend itself to including freelancers at all. As freelance working is becoming increasingly widespread, the participants underlined the importance of developing a programme accessible for this specific group.

Language barriers were also seen as a fundamental challenge, especially due to the nature of the journalist profession, where a thorough understanding of language and the ability to produce well written stories and reports are crucial tools.

In addition, although participants agreed that younger, less established journalists with smaller networks would benefit from an Erasmus for Journalists programme to a great extent, targeting journalists of a young age only was also perceived as a challenge. A significant minority of

participants felt the programme *“could potentially turn into something similar to the original Erasmus programme and attract participants for other than professional reasons”*.

Finally, administrative burden, inflexibility, long waiting times and a top-down, bureaucratic approach from the European Commission were also all seen as potential challenges to the programme. All participants agreed that the programme should be *“as un-bureaucratic and flexible for participating individuals and organisations as possible”*.

10.0 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE AND SLIDES

Objectives of the focus groups:

- Gauge level of demand there is likely to be for a potential ERASMUS for Journalists programme
- Provide indications of which approaches are most attractive to potential participants
- Give an idea of which parameters are most crucial for success of the potential programme

Participant Profile:

- 2 groups per country with groups of 8-10 journalists aged 25-35

Summary of Focus Group Guide:

Stage	Comments	Time (mins)
1. Introduction and warm-up	Warm up – explain the purpose of focus group, outline rules and practical information, have participants and moderators introduce themselves.	5-10 mins
2. Impressions of specific objectives	Lays out the potential programme’s three specific objectives for participants and elicits their views on them, namely whether the objectives correspond to participants’ needs and the extent to which these objectives are already being met in another way.	15 mins
3. Testing of the five scenarios	Explores in detail participants’ attitudes regarding the five scenarios (“Exchange”, “Twinning”, “Mobility”, “Co-operation” and “Seminars”). For each scenario, this includes first impressions, perceived interest in and ability to participate, perceptions of programme parameters and potential barriers.	1 hr 15 mins (15 mins per scenario)
4. Conclusions	Draw out the key learning points, including which of the scenarios is the preferred one and what the crucial parameters for success are.	15 mins

Detailed Focus Group Guide

Stage	Description of discussion	Comments
1. Introduction and warm up	<p>Moderator to welcome participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank participants for agreeing to take part; mention that the discussion should last about 2 hours, that tea and coffee are available throughout and that there will be a short break halfway through. • Stress that there are no right or wrong answers – we are just interested in finding out their views and opinions. Say that there will be a chance for each of them to shape the discussion • Reassure participants of confidentiality – we will not attribute comments to them directly. <p>Moderator to present the aim of the focus group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that the research has been commissioned by DG INFSO of the European Commission to help it determine the feasibility of a new programme for journalists. <p>Moderator to facilitate participant introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please tell us your name, age, which news organisation you work for and some icebreakers (e.g. why you got into journalism, what was the favourite story you have covered so far) 	This part is designed to welcome participants, explain the purpose and the format of the focus group and make them feel at ease in the group.
2. Impressions of specific objectives	<p>Moderator to present slide of the three specific objectives and explain that this part of the discussion will focus on the objectives of a potential European Commission mobility programme for journalists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Further journalists' understanding of the EU ○ Further journalists' understanding of other MS ○ Enhance journalists' professional skills and abilities <p>Moderator to focus discussion on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For each objective, is this relevant for you? Why or why not? Is the objective already being 	This part is designed to test journalists' perceived need for a programme that would work towards the specific objectives, which in turn will be an important indicator for testing the underlying demand for a new programme.

Stage	Description of discussion	Comments
	<p>met in other ways or by other programmes / trainings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are any of the objectives more important to you than others? Why? ○ Would you be open to a European Commission programme to address these objectives? Why or why not? 	
3. Testing of the five scenarios	<p>Moderator to explain that this part of the focus group will form the bulk of the discussion and will consist of testing five different scenarios for a specific European Commission mobility programme for journalists.</p> <p><i>NB: for each scenario, there will a PowerPoint slide showing an information box about each scenario (similar to those in section 4.1.1 of this report) and an illustrative diagram.</i></p> <p>Moderator to display the slide of the "Exchange" scenario and explain that this programme would entail two journalists working for similar media in different Member States (e.g. national newspapers or weekly political magazines) switching desks for one month. They would experience of how their own kind of work is done elsewhere and continue filing reports for their usual job but also contribute to the work of their host organisation.</p> <p>Discussion to centre on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are your first reactions to this programme? What about it do you find most interesting? Why? ○ Would you be interested in participating in this programme? Why or why not? ○ Would participating in this programme be useful? What do you think it could accomplish? Would it contribute to any of the objectives we talked about before? Some more than others? Why? ○ Would your editors see this programme as a useful way for you to spend some of your time? Why or why not? Are there any key factors that would determine whether you'd be allowed to participate? 	<p>This part will form a large part of the discussion and will explore to extent to which each of the five scenarios is feasible.</p>

Stage	Description of discussion	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (the following questions may be addressed through discussion of the others, but if not, moderator to probe further: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What would be the main barriers to you participating in such a programme? How could the scenario be changed in order to increase chances that you'd be able to participate? ▪ Of the parameters listed on the slide, are there any that you think are either particularly interesting or present particularly limitations? How could they be adjusted to make the programme more attractive?) <p>Moderator to display the slide of the "Mobility" scenario and explain that the programme would work in a way similar to the Erasmus programme for university students. Journalists would be matched to a media outlet in another Member State. This would not have to be the same kind of media they normally work in. They would spend 2-3 months with the host, and would be embedded in its news team, contributing reports mostly to the hosts, but continuing to do a limited amount of work for their usual employer.</p> <p>Discussion to centre on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are your first reactions to this programme? What about it do you find most interesting? Why? ○ Would you be interested in participating in this programme? Why or why not? ○ Would participating in this programme be useful? What do you think it could accomplish? Would it contribute to any of the objectives we talked about before? Some more than others? Why? ○ Would your editors see this programme as a useful way for you to spend some of your time? Why or why not? Are there any key factors that would determine whether you'd be allowed to participate? ○ (the following questions may be addressed through discussion of the others, but if not, 	

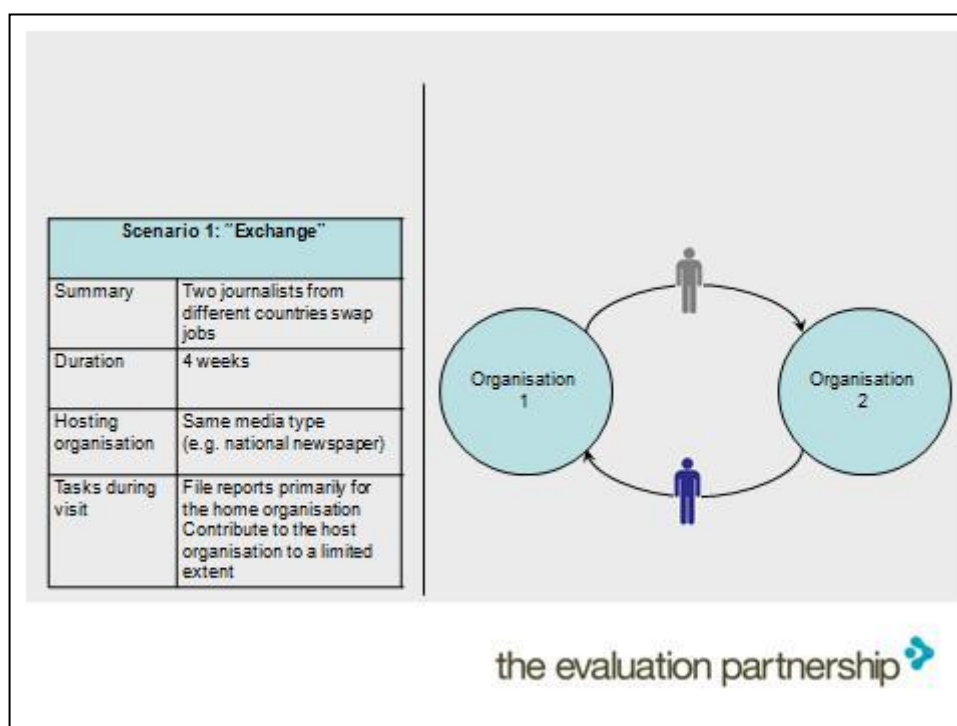
Stage	Description of discussion	Comments
	<p>moderator to probe further:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What would be the main barriers to you participating in such a programme? How could the scenario be changed in order to increase chances that you'd be able to participate? ▪ Of the parameters listed on the slide, are there any that you think are either particularly interesting or present particularly limitations? How could they be adjusted to make the programme more attractive?) <p>Moderator to display slide of the "Twinning" scenario and explain that the programme would pair up journalists from comparable media in two Member States with an interest in working jointly on a story linking their two Member States. "Twins" would spend a week in one Member State, than a week in the other, taking advantage of their partner's contacts and local knowledge and then produce a journalistic output for their usual employer.</p> <p>Discussion to centre on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are your first reactions to this programme? What about it do you find most interesting? Why? ○ Would you be interested in participating in this programme? Why or why not? ○ Would participating in this programme be useful? What do you think it could accomplish? Would it contribute to any of the objectives we talked about before? Some more than others? Why? ○ Would your editors see this programme as a useful way for you to spend some of your time? Why or why not? Are there any key factors that would determine whether you'd be allowed to participate? ○ (the following questions may be addressed through discussion of the others, but if not, moderator to probe further: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What would be the main barriers to you participating in such a programme? How could the scenario be changed in order to increase chances that you'd be able to 	

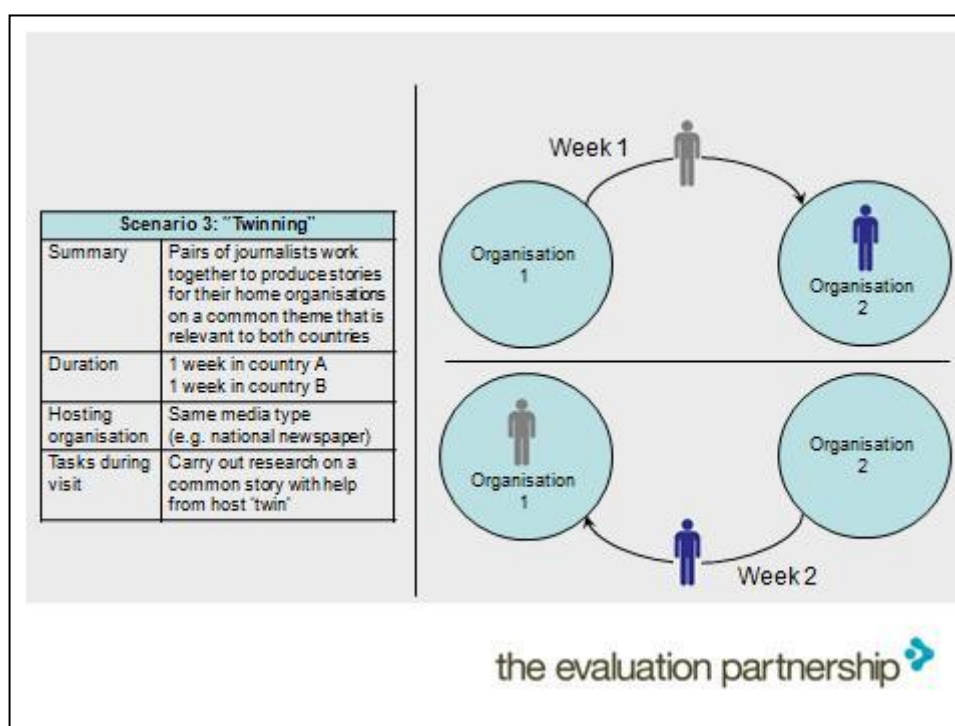
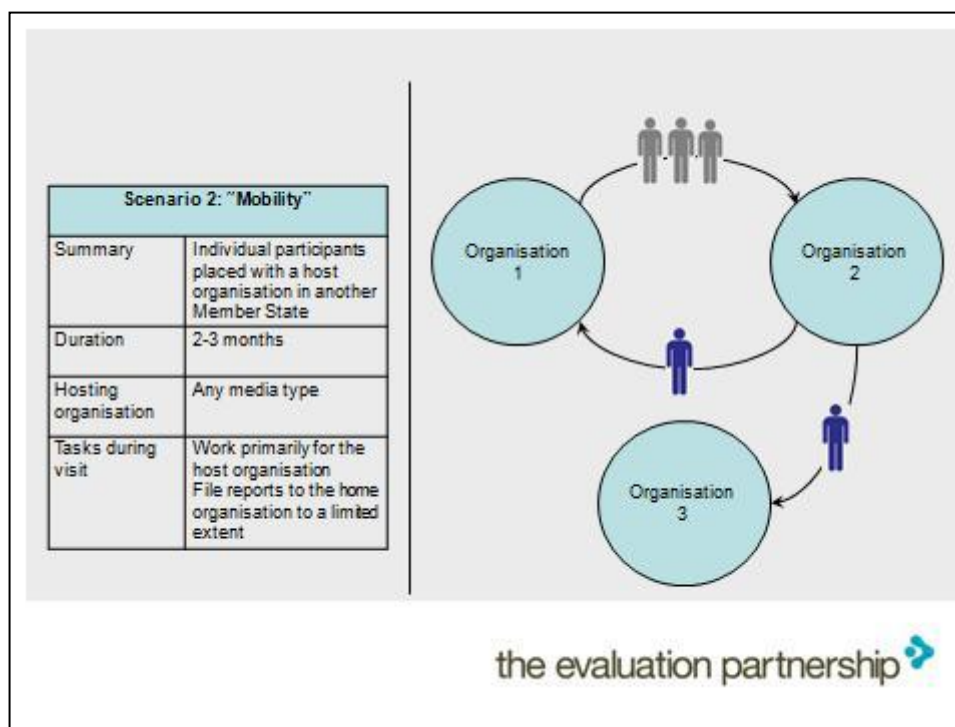
Stage	Description of discussion	Comments
	<p>participate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Of the parameters listed on the slide, are there any that you think are either particularly interesting or present particularly limitations? How could they be adjusted to make the programme more attractive?) <p>Moderator to announce a break of five minutes, then reconvene.</p> <p>Moderator to display slide on "Co-operation" scenario and explain that the programme would link groups of journalists from any media type and several Member States working on a common topic with links to all of their Member States. They conduct some research at home, meet to discuss findings, go back home for follow-up research and share the results. At the end of the co-operation, each participant would produce a story for their home organisation.</p> <p>Discussion to centre on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are your first reactions to this programme? What about it do you find most interesting? Why? ○ Would you be interested in participating in this programme? Why or why not? ○ Would participating in this programme be useful? What do you think it could accomplish? Would it contribute to any of the objectives we talked about before? Some more than others? Why? ○ Would your editors see this programme as a useful way for you to spend some of your time? Why or why not? Are there any key factors that would determine whether you'd be allowed to participate? ○ (the following questions may be addressed through discussion of the others, but if not, moderator to probe further: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What would be the main barriers to you participating in such a programme? How could the scenario be changed in order to increase chances that you'd be able to participate? ▪ Of the parameters listed on the slide, are there any that you think are either 	

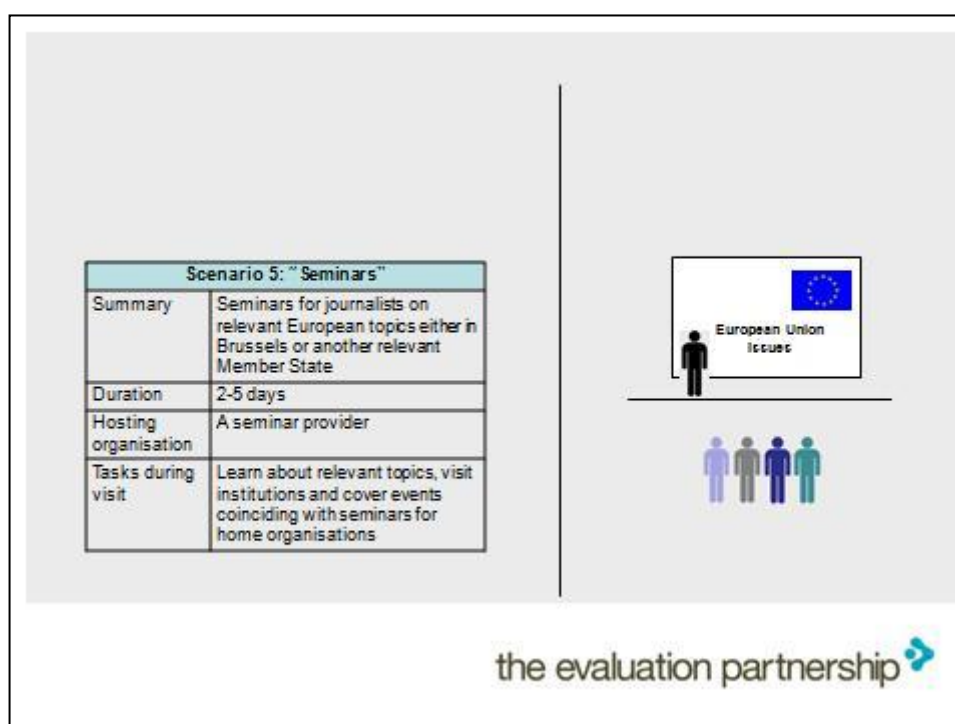
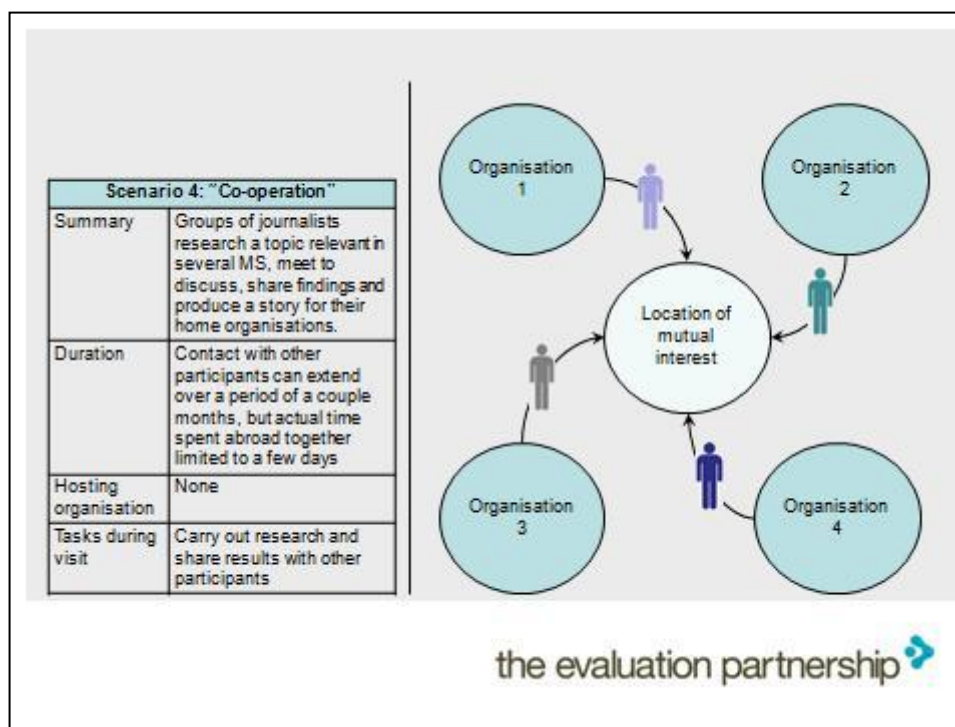
Stage	Description of discussion	Comments
	<p>particularly interesting or present particularly limitations? How could they be adjusted to make the programme more attractive?)</p> <p>Moderator to display slide on "Seminars" scenario and explain that the programme, unlike the others, will consist of seminars lasting from 2-5 days taking place in Brussels or other relevant locations, such as Member States holding the EU Presidency or hosting EU Agencies. Journalists would be invited from around Europe to learn about specific topics, visit relevant institutions and meet with speakers.</p> <p>Discussion to centre on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are your first reactions to this programme? What about it do you find most interesting? Why? ○ Would you be interested in participating in this programme? Why or why not? ○ Would participating in this programme be useful? What do you think it could accomplish? Would it contribute to any of the objectives we talked about before? Some more than others? Why? ○ Would your editors see this programme as a useful way for you to spend some of your time? Why or why not? Are there any key factors that would determine whether you'd be allowed to participate? ○ Do you think the seminars could be combined with any of the approaches we've already talked about? How about as part of an introduction or debriefing? ○ (the following questions may be addressed through discussion of the others, but if not, moderator to probe further: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What would be the main barriers to you participating in such a programme? How could the scenario be changed in order to increase chances that you'd be able to participate? ▪ Of the parameters listed on the slide, are there any that you think are either particularly interesting or present particularly limitations? How could they be adjusted to make the programme more attractive?) 	

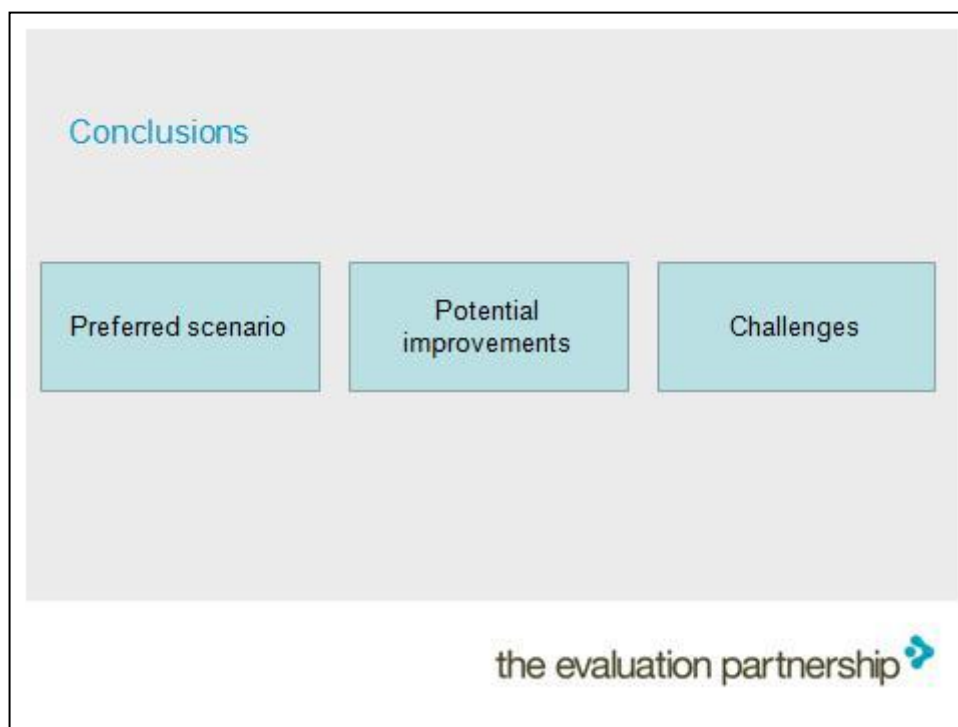
Stage	Description of discussion	Comments
4. Conclusions	<p>Moderator to explain that this is the last part of the focus group and that it is meant to draw out the key points discussed over the last 1.5 hours.</p> <p>Discussion to centre on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Now that we've talked about a potential programme in more detail, what are your impressions? Do you feel more or less positive about the ultimate result being a success? ○ Do you think any of the five scenarios discussed would be more appropriate than the rest? What are the crucial elements that make it better? ○ How could this option be improved so that it would fulfil your needs and encourage your editors to let you participate? ○ Could it borrow some of the parameters from other scenarios to increase the chances of success? Which ones? ○ Even if this is the best option, what are some of its downsides? Any way these could be addressed? ○ Do you think this programme would address our original objectives (moderator to display objectives again)? Which ones would it address most? ○ Are there any specific editorial practices (e.g. online journalism) that the programme should focus on? Or any specific kinds of journalistic themes that the programme should specifically address? ○ Any ideas for a name for the programme? <p>Moderator to thank participants and bring the discussion to a close.</p>	<p>This part of the discussion is meant to bring together the points discussed and delineate a preferred option.</p>

The following slides were shown to focus group participants to provide a visual aid to the discussion.









ANNEX A3: MATERIALS FOR INTERVIEWS WITH EDITORS

1.0 GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH POTENTIAL HOST ORGANISATIONS

Interviewee profile: Editors from media outlets across the EU

Method: Telephone interviews

Expected duration: 20-30 minutes

Name of interviewee:	
Media:	
Type (print / TV / etc.):	
Public / private:	
Size (no. of employees):	
Interview date:	

A. Introduction

1. Please briefly introduce yourself, including your role, time in office and main responsibilities.

B. Feasibility of a potential ERASMUS for Journalists programme

2. Would you consider an ERASMUS-like programme or exchange programme for journalists (whereby participants would spend a limited amount of time with a news organisation in another Member State) an interesting idea? Why or why not?
(study team member to explain more of the background)
3. Do you have any experience with similar initiatives? What was the outcome?

C. Willingness to host participants in the programme

4. Would you be willing to host a participant in the programme at your organisation?
5. What are some factors that would influence whether you were willing to host someone or not?
 - a. Availability of your staff to provide guidance/ manage the participant?
 - b. Potential for the participant to contribute directly to stories for you (including language proficiency)?

- c. Ability of the participant to provide your organisation with expertise on an area or theme of interest?
- d. Duration of the participant's stay?
- e. Possibility of sending a member of your staff on an exchange, either at the same time (as in a direct exchange) or at a later date (more like an ERASMUS mobility)?

D. Willingness to send journalists on the programme

- 6. Would you be willing to members of your staff spend time at a media outlet in another European country as part of such a programme?
- 7. What are some factors that would influence whether you were willing to let your staff participate or not?
 - a. Ability of the staff member to continue contributing to your organisation, at least partially, while participating in the programme?
 - b. Potential for the participant to improve his understanding of another Member State (or of Europe)? Would it matter which Member State?
 - c. Potential for the participant to learn about how another media organisation works, and/or to acquire new professional skills?
 - d. Potential for the participant to use the time spent in the programme to work concretely on a story for your organisation?
 - e. Duration of the participant's time away? What would be the maximum acceptable time?
- 8. Which costs of the programme would you expect the European Commission to cover (e.g. travel, accommodation, subsistence costs, anything else)?

E. Conclusions

Do you feel there is anything else you would add to the discussion that we haven't had the chance to talk about?

2.0 SUMMARY OF EDITORS INTERVIEWED

Country	Media type	Public / private	Size
Bulgaria	Radio	Public	Medium
Denmark	Print	Private	Large
Estonia	Print	Private	Small
France	TV	Public	Large
Germany	TV	Private	Small
Germany	TV	Public	Large
Germany	TV	Public	Large
Greece	Radio	Public	Large
Greece	Online	Private	Medium
Hungary	TV	Public	Large
Hungary	Print	Private	Medium
Italy	Print	Private	Large
Latvia	Radio	Public	Small
Luxembourg	Print	Private	Large
Netherlands	Print	Private	Large
Poland	Radio	Public	Small
Poland	Print	Private	Small
Portugal	Print	Private	Large
Portugal	Radio	Public	Large
Romania	Print	Private	Small
Slovakia	Print	Private	Large
Slovenia	TV	Public	Large
Slovenia	Radio	Public	Small
Spain	Radio	Public	Large
Spain	Print	Private	Large
Sweden	TV	Private	Large
Sweden	Print	Private	Small
UK	TV	Public	Large

ANNEX A4: STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP SUMMARY

1. Introduction

On 1 December 2010, a stakeholder workshop with interested organisations and individuals was held in Brussels. The purpose of the workshop was to present, discuss and seek input and feedback on the draft results of the feasibility study, including the proposed implementation scheme for the Erasmus for journalists preparatory action. The workshop was well attended, with participants representing journalism associations, EU media, universities and journalism schools, as well as individual journalists (both freelance and permanently employed) from a range of EU Member States (see section 4 for a list of workshop registrations).

The workshop presented an opportunity for representatives of the aforementioned groups to discuss and comment on the draft results of this study, which were made available to all participants prior to the event. Workshop participants were also invited to submit additional comments during the week following the workshop, and two written contributions were subsequently received (see section 4 for list of written contributions). The feedback and input received during and after the workshop was subsequently reviewed and considered in detail by the study team. Where appropriate, the results of the study and the proposed implementation scheme were revised to take into account relevant points raised by stakeholders.

In addition to facilitating a discussion of the preliminary study findings, the workshop also served as a promotion of the programme's existence and imminent launch.

The workshop was chaired by Mr Mark Rogerson on behalf of the study team. Mr Jean-Eric de Cockborne of DG INFSO gave an opening statement. Mr Martin Kühnemund then presented a summary of the main study findings and suggested implementation scheme for the Erasmus for journalists preparatory action. Following this, Mr Peter O'Donnell, Associate Editor of the European Voice, provided his thoughts on the proposed initiative from the perspective of a practitioner. Workshop participants were then divided into three groups and invited to discuss those issues relating to the main outcomes of the study and implementation scheme which they felt were most significant. Group discussions lasted one hour and were observed by members of the study team. Following on from the discussions, a rapporteur from each group was asked to feed back on the debates held, and share the main points raised with the rest of the workshop participants. A plenary-style discussion, with members of the study team as well as DG INFSO responding to the issues raised, formed the last part of the workshop.

The following section presents the central issues raised during the discussion groups and plenary session. A brief summary of how specific concerns raised during the workshop were taken into consideration for the present report is presented in section 3.

2. Reactions to the implementation scheme and central issues raised by workshop participants

Overall, the suggested implementation scheme for the Erasmus for journalists preparatory action was very well received, with reactions reflecting the strong support for the basic principle and objectives of the programme. Participants fully agreed with the prioritisation of “furthering journalists’ knowledge of other Member States” as the main objective of the programme. The idea

of putting an intermediary organisation in charge of managing the programme on behalf of the European Commission was also strongly supported.

A number of key issues were debated, generating significant insight relevant to finalising the implementation scheme:

The issue of **eligibility** was discussed in detail, with a number of participants voicing concern about what they felt were unnecessarily inflexible eligibility criteria. While most agreed that the programme should not be open to students of journalism, it was questioned why unemployed journalists should not be allowed to apply under the proposed implementation scheme. Several participants argued that journalists not in employment could substantially benefit from taking part in an Erasmus for journalists programme, using the experience as a „stepping stone“ to further their career. The chance to produce (and possibly sell/publish) high-quality articles based on insight into another MS gained through the programme was considered to be particularly advantageous for journalists struggling to find employment.

Further to this, the emphasis on (paid) occupation as an eligibility criterion was also expected to possibly exclude a number of journalists, e.g. those working on a voluntary or non- remunerated basis (e.g. for non-commercial community oriented organisations) and those only deriving a fraction of their income from journalistic activities. Several participants also criticised the explicit exclusion of “pure bloggers” under the suggested implementation scheme and pointed to the fact that for a growing number of journalists blogging is becoming a central platform of publishing credible journalistic output. In addition, it was also mentioned that the minimum requirement of two years relevant work experience should be interpreted flexibly, allowing applicants to add up their professional experience at different media outlets and spread over a reasonably long period of time (e.g. several years) to reflect the often intermittent working arrangements of journalists.

Funding was also discussed, with participants debating the question of whether or not media organisations will be able to afford letting members of their staff participate in the programme and continue to pay their salary in the meantime. In particular, concern was voiced that smaller, regional media outlets might be indirectly excluded from the programme on financial grounds: with limited resources that are often stretched already and no means to cover for absent staff, they might not be able to afford to let their staff take part in the programme even for short periods of time. To offset this problem, workshop attendees suggested for the programme to contribute to staff salaries, at least in cases where media outlets would otherwise not be in a position to let their staff participate. In the same context, it was suggested to investigate the possibility of establishing partnerships between the sending and hosting media outlets to share the costs of the salary of the programme participant.

Similarly, there was concern among workshop participants regarding the appropriate level of funding for freelance journalists, who would not be in a position to draw on a regular salary during their placement. According to several participants, this could make the programme less accessible and attractive to freelance journalists, although individual workshop attendees also noted that due to the benefits of the internet, freelance journalists might nevertheless be able to continue working on their regular, income-generating projects while abroad.

In conjunction with this, the issue of **insurance** was debated, and it was deemed important to create a mechanism to ensure that at least basic insurance (covering health as well as personal indemnity) is in place for all participants. The issue was seen to be particularly critical in the case of freelance journalists, who would not be covered under a regular employer’s insurance policy during their time on the programme, and there was concern that organisations initially willing to host someone might be discouraged from doing so if the need to deal with insurance for freelance visiting journalists would add an additional administrative (and possibly financial) burden to them.

Further to this, several participants voiced their concern about journalists receiving funding from a public authority, which could be seen as an attempt to influence the content of their journalistic work. In this context, the importance of ensuring **journalistic autonomy** was underlined several times by the workshop participants. Appointing an intermediary organisation to manage the programme on behalf of the EC was welcomed as a measure going somewhat towards preserving journalistic autonomy, as it would interrupt the direct connection between the funder and the participants. In addition, individual journalists put forward the idea of asking those organisations sending their staff onto the programme to contribute to the funding of the placements beyond the continuous payment of the participants' salary (in order to minimise the funding received from the EC), reflecting the fact that the home organisations would also benefit from their staff's increased knowledge and insight resulting from the placement. The increased financial burden this would represent for participating organisations was nevertheless acknowledged. Generating funding through other means (e.g. foundations) was also suggested in this context.

The suggested **duration** of visits of two to six weeks was seen to be appropriate by the majority of participants, although some felt that this duration would not provide sufficient exposure and opportunities for mutual learning through immersion, suggesting a length of up to ten weeks instead (depending on the individual circumstances and needs of participant and host). It was also acknowledged that for those media organisations who would look to replace the outgoing journalist with a freelancer or temporary employee during his or her absence, it might actually be easier and more practical to *find an appropriate external replacement* for a longer period of time (e.g. three months): covering the post for, say, three months could be a more attractive option for both the replacement journalist and the media organisation than doing the same for just a few weeks.

Adding a one-week visit to either Brussels or Strasbourg to the programme was proposed by one participant, pointing to the abundant opportunities for networking and mutual learning due to the presence of the numerous accredited media representatives from across the EU as well as representatives of other stakeholder groups in these locations, potentially giving programme participants insight into a number of different MS before starting their individual placements.

Participants largely felt that **language** would not necessarily have to present a strong impediment for the success of the programme. The prevailing view seemed to be that insufficient language skills can be compensated (e.g. through translation support provided by the host organisation) as long as participants are guaranteed to have a good level of journalistic skill. Especially larger media organisations able to draw on more resources were expected to be able to deal with visiting journalists not fully proficient in the host's working language, while smaller, regional media outlets were expected to struggle more with this challenge.

Concern was voiced that countries with less widely spoken languages (e.g. Finland, Bulgaria) might be at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting applications from journalists, whereas countries with “popular” national languages such as the UK or France might be heavily oversubscribed. While the 20% quota of a maximum number of visits to any one country was deemed to be a sensible mechanism to regulate oversubscription, the idea of actively encouraging reciprocal exchange visits (either in a staged or simultaneous format) was welcomed for its ability to partially offset the expected “natural skew” towards some countries, as this could help promoting return visits to countries with languages that are less commonly spoken. Furthermore, it was suggested to apply a quota at organisation level in order to avoid an oversubscription to popular media outlets such as the BBC. In return, regulating how many members of staff per organisation are allowed to participate would also prevent organisations from “dumping” journalists onto the programme, essentially abusing it as a cheap way to send staff abroad.

To ensure a far-reaching **promotion** of the programme, participants suggested channelling programme information via relevant existing networks, journalist schools, press clubs,

associations as well as direct contacts with individual organisations and editors. Involving a broad selection of less obvious stakeholders (e.g. foundations) in the promotion (and, possibly, funding) of the programme was also suggested. In addition, workshop participants agreed that establishing an **alumni** network of former programme participants would be beneficial, encouraging networking activities and exchange of experiences, while at the same time driving promotion by building a positive reputation of the programme as a credible, sustainable initiative.

In the context of raising awareness of the programme, many stakeholders felt that it would be crucial to highlight the programme’s **benefits** to potential participating organisations. It was noted that the benefits to participating individual journalists are quite obvious, but when it comes to the sending or receiving media outlets, the benefits are less clear-cut. These benefits would have to be defined very clearly in order to increase the likelihood of organisations being willing to participate in the programme (both in terms of hosting visiting journalists and letting their own staff participate). In particular, the benefits of participants returning to their regular employer with an in-depth knowledge of the country visited as well as valuable working contacts in the organisation that hosted them should be strongly promoted in the view of the workshop attendees. According to them, this would also help to avoid participants being “replaced” or losing their job during their time of absence, as employers would be keen for their staff to return and enrich their home organisation with the insight and experience gained while abroad. Benefits for the host organisation were primarily seen in the opportunity to learn from the visiting journalists, who would share their knowledge and experience and allow the staff of the host organisation to gain insight into a different culture.

Other issues raised included the challenge of effective **integration** of the visiting journalist into the host organisation (possibly through a designated mentor). One idea that was put forward was to encourage host organisations interested in hosting participants on an ongoing basis to set up a “visitors desk” to help visiting journalists to “find a way in”. The debate around integration also revealed that a minority of workshop attendees worried that programme participants could end up as “observers” rather than “contributors” during their placements, not being able to contribute to the host’s work in a meaningful way. The suggestion of leaving room for a flexible working arrangement between the participant and the host organisation, where journalists could split their working time between contributing to their regular employer and their host, was therefore welcomed by the majority of workshop attendees, who felt that this could help journalists to arrange their placements to be as productive as possible. Participants generally thought it to be quite plausible for visiting journalists to keep on contributing to their home organisation’s work to some extent during their time on the programme.

An individual workshop participant asked that specialist pan-European media organisations (alongside national media organisations) with offices in several MS should also be eligible to send or host journalists. It was also suggested that host organisations don’t necessarily have to be limited to the field of media, but could potentially include press and communication departments of relevant civil society organisations and government departments, as the central objective of furthering journalists’ understanding of other Member States would still be met this way.

Pointing to the fast-paced environment of news reporters (as opposed to feature writers) in particular, a representative from one stakeholder organisation underlined the need for a timely **application and selection process** and recommended a fast-track application process for urgent proposals to cover breaking news, allowing journalists to arrange flexible visits if and when topics of interest in another MS emerge.

Finally, several possible programme names were suggested during the course of the workshop:

- Plinius
- Herodotus

- Spinoza
- Mercur

3. Consideration of the issues raised

The issues raised during the workshop provided both confirmation of the appropriateness of the preliminary study findings and implementation scheme presented, as well as food for thought for fine tuning the preparatory action's parameters. The study team has considered all feedback provided carefully, revised the text of the final report in response to several of the issues that were raised, and adapted the proposed implementation scheme for the Erasmus for journalists preparatory action where this was deemed beneficial and appropriate, as set out below.

Following the workshop, the study team has refined the eligibility criteria for the Erasmus for journalists preparatory action, clarifying the definition of the requirements needed in order to be eligible to apply (in particular with a view to the requirement to have two years of work experience). Where, after a careful review of the arguments, the originally proposed eligibility criteria were maintained (e.g. in the case of the exclusion of unemployed journalists), this was justified in the report.

With regard to funding, the study team has investigated the practicability of a more differentiated financial support system, but concluded that such a system would have to be very complex in order to reflect the different professional and economic circumstances of journalists across Europe. The study team therefore decided that, for the sake of simplicity and coherence, the programme should not differentiate between different kinds of journalists when it comes to awarding funding. For similar reasons, the idea of compensating sending media outlets was discarded.

The issue of insurance was also discussed subsequent to the workshop and it has been recommended in the final report that all participants are informed that it is their responsibility to take out the necessary (health, accident, indemnity etc.) insurance, and provide their hosts with proof of this if requested.

Suggestions regarding an increase in the maximum duration of the visits have also undergone careful consideration. However, the proposed duration of two to six weeks has been deemed appropriate due to reasons relating to the purpose of the programme (and the type of visits it seeks to fund) as well as financial reasons, as set out in the report. Nonetheless, if the experience of the preparatory action were to show a high level of interest in (and significant additional benefits from) longer visits, it could be considered in the future whether the maximum duration of visits should be further extended.

The ideas put forward during the workshop regarding the promotion of the Erasmus for journalists preparatory action were appreciatively taken on board, and promotion via channels with a multiplier function such as existing networks and journalism schools as well as individual organisations and editors has been included in the suggested promotional strategy for the programme. Extensive promotion of the benefits of the programme for potential participating organisations through the programme's marketing material, setting out the immediate and wider benefits to be expected by organisations either hosting visiting journalists or agreeing for their own staff to take part has also been recommended. Likewise, the idea of facilitating an alumni network has been suggested as an activity worth investigating by the intermediary organisation if the programme is to continue beyond the pilot phase.

4. Workshop registration and written contributions

A complete list of individuals who registered to participate in the workshop is presented below:

Last name	First name	Affiliation
Aubron	Laurence	Eur@dioNantes
Carpentier	Nico	Community Media Forum Europe
Castelli	Daniela	Euronews / freelance journalist
Celot	Paolo	European Association for Viewers Interest
Chaves	Julio	Punto Radio and Euranet
Cobo	Silvia	Espai Català de Cultura i Comunicació (Escacc)
Collins	Hannah	European Association for Viewers Interest
Daea	Marius	Media Daea Com
Dersjant	Theo	Fontys Hogeschool Journalistiek (NL)
d'Hondt	Ina	ZDF
Domingo Monsonis	Marina	Fundación Comunidad Valenciana - Región Europea
Franciosi	Maria Laura	Journalists at Your Service, Brussels
Frenken	Raymond	EurActiv
Groot	Maria	De Nieuwe Reporter
Gruber	Marc	European Federation of Journalists
Henrard	Sophie	Institut des Hautes Etudes des Communications Sociales, Brussels
Kelleher	Rose	Freelance journalist
Llorca	Rosmar	Fundación Comunidad Valenciana - Región Europea
Lobao	Alexandra	European Journalism Centre
McMahon	Meabh	Euobserver, France24, Euranet
O'Grady	Aoife	European Youth Press
Oliver	Julian	Fondation EurActiv
Pavlakakis	Christoforos	Ta Nea
Puletti	Chiara	European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR)
Retfalvi	Gyorgi	Budapest College of Communication and Business
Ribes Leal	Laura	latinos.be and Radio Alma
Roka	Zsuzsanna	Hungarian Journalists' Association
Snelders	Francois	Journalism Department, Arteveldehogeschool, Ghent
Sonnewald	Jutta	ZDF
Terzis	Georgios	Vesalius College / Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Thea Singh	Natasha	University of Malta
Thibout	Hugues	BEUC - The European Consumers' Organisation

Written contributions were made by the following organisations:

- European Youth Press
- Fondation EurActiv