

PROJECT PLAN TEMPLATE - Cross-border investigation

Title

Headline for your project: This is a working title

Reporter/team

Your name(s), team members' competences for this investigation, which role should the team members play?

Timeframe: Start date & expected publication date

Discuss start date, availability of team members etc

Discuss expected publication date (only the date, more details below)

Background/story in short

What made you curious? Why is it important? What do you know right now?

Exploration & hypothesis

Do you take an explorative approach or do you follow a clear hypothesis?

If hypothesis, what is your main hypothesis, what are related or sub-hypotheses?

Minimum level

The story you are more or less sure you can deliver by deadline.

Maximum level

Very best case outcome

Already published (by others)

Has anyone done any reporting on the topic before? Angles? What can you add to the already told stories? Which aspects are worth following or developing further and why?

Countries

Which countries are involved? Is this reflected in your team and how?

Publication plan

In which countries do you want to publish? Why is it important to have these countries involved? In which media would it be best to publish? Is this reflected in your team?

Timeline and publication date

How long time will you need for this investigation? Develop a to-do list and a timeline: How much time for each task, how is the division of work between team members? Can you agree on a date with the media you selected?

Method

How are you going to map your exploration and/or prove your hypothesis? Design of the investigation.

Weakest link

What's the weakest link in your story? In your project? What could go wrong?

Mitigating factors

Possible explanations that would kill, or at least hurt, your story.

Ethical dilemmas

Are there any? Reflections? Solutions?

Security issues

Are there any? Reflections? Solutions?

Legal issues

Are there potential legal issues? In general? In one of the countries, you are reporting about? In one of the countries, you plan to publish in?

Accountability

Who is accountable? Can you access the right person? How? When?

"Devil's advocate"

Involve a classmate/colleague to play the role of the devil's advocate at the pitching/start meeting. Send (at least a draft of) this start meeting protocol to the devil's advocate a day or two beforehand to give them time to prepare. The role of the devil's advocate is to provide constructive criticism at an early stage and thus to help you find weak points in your plan. The purpose is to strengthen your plan.

Budget

Based upon the tasks, the timeline and your team members, develop a budget for project. Will participating media cover all costs, or will you need to fundraise? If you fundraise, where will you turn?

Following up

How should the story be followed up? Within the newsrooms where it's published? With other media? Is there material from your research that you could publish online for others to use for further research and analysis?

Anything we forgot? Any further considerations? Perspective of the story?

Anything excluded? If yes, why? Would it merit another investigation or a smaller story at a later stage or with another colleague/in another country?