

Preparatory meeting for the launch of the Div-A (Diversity Accelerator for Media) project

Paris, Council of Europe's premises

10-11 May 2016

Div-A is pilot mentoring programme aimed at testing a new approach to render the media landscape in Europe more inclusive with regard to population diversity and more balanced in relation to diversity issues. The programme will do this by helping selected media professionals who are already committed to diversity inclusiveness to use the tools offered by “new media” to create their own independent business models.

By leaning on the Council of Europe's MEDIANE network, Div-A has created a core group of media professionals who have already established their own business models using transmedia / multimedia / crossmedia journalism in their daily practice and involving crowdfunding / sponsoring in building up their businesses. The core group will develop and deliver a mentoring programme for aspiring multimedia journalists who wish to launch their own start-ups.

Birth of a project

The encounter in the Council of Europe's Paris office was the actual birth of the Div-A mentoring programme: on 10-11 May the core group, composed of five media professionals, including individual journalists and teams that have created their own multimedia platforms based on crowdfunding and sponsoring, planned the steps for the launch of the Div-A project with the project's coordinator .

The participants were: the Council of Europe's representatives, Ms **Irena Guidikova** and Ms **Ivana D'Alessandro**; the project coordinator, Ms **Anna Frenyo**, the originator of the project (www.anna-frenyo.de); Mr **Sebastian Esser**, Germany, from **Krautreporter** (www.krautreporter.de and www.writethatdown.de); Mr **Gergő Sáling** (www.direkt36.hu), Hungary, from **Direkt 36**; Mr **Arnaud Daviré**, France, from **Sport et Handicaps** (www.sportethandicaps.com and www.sporthandicapsproduction.com); Mr **Tassos Morfis**, Greece, from **Athens Live** (www.athenslive.gr); Mr **Francesco Conte**, Italy, **Termini TV** (www.termini.tv). A filming team composed by Ms **Marina Lalovic** and Mr **Francesco Adolini**, was also present, to prepare a documentary move that will contribute to multiply the impact of the methodology that will result from the Div-A project.

Ms Guidikova summarised the objectives of this preparatory meeting: shaping a pilot initiative which will help **emerging multimedia startups** to develop **sustainable business models**. The new media startups will provide **multimedia content, reflecting the diversity in society**, and providing in depth analysis investigation topics, stories and angles of courage, which are missing in mainstream media. The ultimate goal of the Div-A project is to support independent journalism which engages citizens as partners and represents their committed voices in the public debate in diverse societies.

Challenges of creating one's media startup

The core group members presented their media startups and reflected about the challenges they had faced or are facing at the actual level of implementation of their business idea. They seemed to share the notion that crowdfunding can only be successful if it is well prepared while it is possible not to have a business model as a starting point, as this is something that can be developed in the course of the first two years of a crowdfunded startup. The main issues to be addressed during the first phase are 1.) who the target audience is; 2.) if there is the willingness to develop a mid- or long-term business plan; and 3.) who the team members are, in case the project is intended to be a multi-person enterprise. It also appeared that there is no necessary need to have a website for creating an own multimedia surface, since posting YouTube or Vimeo's videos on Facebook can be equally efficient to reach audiences.

Legacy media versus new media – the genesis of Div-A

Ms Irena Guidikova explained why and how the Council of Europe (CoE) works with media as a watchdog for core European values. She referred to the fact that with previous programmes such as MARS and MEDIANE, the CoE has been focusing on **legacy media**, and on how it could become more inclusive, reflect diversity better, **create an inclusive attitude in the readership and make sure that diversity was presented to the wider public**. The management of diversity in Europe is again a priority for the next two years. Clearly, media still portrays refugees and immigrants and migrants as a problem, without highlighting how they contribute to society. This is why the idea of working with different generations of media had seemed appealing, in order to anticipate the systematic change happening in a certain media landscape. She underlined how the CoE was spending crucial resources on the Div-A pilot initiative that is expected to evolve into a methodology, a structure which can be applied to new media outlets that work for the inclusion of diversity. The media outlets launched by the core group members represent initiatives that are likely to multiply and change the media world significantly. Ms Guidikova closed her introduction by hoping that Div-A would be a successful experience during the following one and a half years.

Ms Ivana D'Alessandro recalled that the CoE has promoted legislations and standards which have changed the lives of European citizens, by provoking a shift in mentalities regarding diversity vs prejudices. In particular, she mentioned a Roma awareness campaign on which she had worked before, that gave Roma a voice, and encouraged intercultural mixing.

Ms Anna Frenyo, the originator of the Div-A project, a Hungarian journalist working between Berlin-Budapest and Paris and having worked as a consultant on previous CoE projects on media and diversity inclusion, i.e. MARS and MEDIANE, talked about the genesis of Div-A and quoted Henry Jenkins who first talked about the basics of multimedia, transmedia and crossmedia in his book *Convergence Culture* in 2006. According to his definition:

“Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story” (http://henryjenkins.org/2011/08/defining_transmedia_further_re.html).

Mr Tassos Morfis and Mr Sebastian Esser pointed out that the idea of Div-A had captured the spirit of the time as it reflects upon the new media trends that had been growing in the European media landscape in the recent years. The experience of the core group members represents these newest trends and Mr Esser welcomed the possibility to exchange with fellow-experts and create a methodology together.

What makes crowdfunding work in Greece

Mr Morfis and his team had recently launched a crowdfunding campaign in Greece and was positively surprised by the amount of emotional and intellectual support they had received. The most of the money donated had come from Greece, despite the economic situation of the country. Mr Tassos believes that this is probably due to the widespread perception that media landscape in Greece is plagued by low ethical standards and poverty, and to the wish of the public to improve the quality of journalism.

Mr Tassos believes that the numerous donations coming from

Old structures do not work in the digital era

While working with print media, Mr Esser noticed that this business model was not working anymore, the relationship with readers was missing, as if the industry had lost scope of its consumers. It became clear to Mr Esser that the economic and promotional mindset was missing of most journalist businesses and that this needed to be reformed. **“Structures from the 20th century, from a different era – before the digital era”**, were doomed to not work any further, as the industrial logic behind it rooted in different needs of communication. In Mr Esser’s views, **journalists need to become entrepreneurs and businessmen themselves and not just be focused on their journalism**. They need to be their own publishing houses: in their brain one side needs to be a businessman, the other side a journalist.

Crowdfunding – tricks and tips

The crowdfunding and building up of a network of supporters showed that people are ready to pay for journalism in the first place. The publishing house, the middle man between readers and journalists has lost its function, as the transaction has changed. By asking readers/ **consumers to support a specific project, money becomes a form of communication**. Crowdfunding, thus, is about funding and communication, about the relationship between journalists and readers. Passive consumers become active partners in dialogue and management; this changes the kind of journalism that is being produced.

The stance of urgency is an important aspect of crowdfunding, as three of the core group members (Mr Sáling, Mr Esser and Mr Morfis) whose teams started by crowdfunding, explained. It is about all or nothing, which is where the emotions come in the game.

A reason for which multimedia startups have become popular is that online journalism is losing support, explained Mr Esser. It needs advertising, people to click on things they are not really looking for. **We need to save meaningful online journalism**. This can imply either doing investigative journalism or involving the supporters in the editorial process, asking them what is the content they are interested in. Engaging audience in their own journalism has worked out fruitfully for

Krautreporter. Their supporters pointed them to the relevant forums to find out the real news. **Communicating with the community members turned out to be a great way to get to good sources.**

Parallel to this, Krautreporter's journalism also remained very personal – their authors are people with their own voices. There is transparency regarding the sources of information, as well as on the journalists themselves and their opinions.

After the first year of a crowdfunding project only a fraction of members would stay on board. Crowdfunding cannot be a business model, just a kick to start. For Krautreporter the business model that worked two years after launching their project turned out to be that of a **membership**.

Mr Gergő Sáling from the Hungarian Direkt 36 pointed out that the quality of journalism in general has deteriorated, which is why many people are eager to support a journalistic project that would restore sensible journalism with profound and balanced investigations.

Direkt 36 understood that legacy media were too dependent on the pressure advertising, which can distort the content. Direkt 36 is about data-driven investigation: they publish one piece every 2 weeks. Their financial sources have been **crowdfunding and institutional supporters**: Open Society Institute, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and **micro-donors** from crowdfunding.

Mr Sáling believes the market is huge and that it is easy to find a specific target audience, which is good for the diversity of journalism. He underlined the importance of the relationship with one's readers and of enabling **participative journalism**.

Promotion by being

Mr Francesco Conte and Mr Arnaud Daviré both participated in the MARS and MEDIANE projects, and have implemented the vision of diversity inclusiveness in their daily media productions as media entrepreneurs. Finding sponsors and business partners has been the biggest challenge of their endeavours. Mr Conte has created a freely accessible website (www.termini.tv), depicting stories at Termini Train Station in Rome. His multimedia platform works as a showroom for his work and the work of his small team of independent journalists. Although they produce for free for the web TV most of the time, Termini TV allowed them to showcase their work. Consequently, they now receive commands by other clients who appreciated their work through Termini TV. This is what Mr Conte labels "promotion by being", i.e. doing publicity by being. After one and a half years of running Termini TV, Mr Conte is able to sustain himself through his media outlet, and manages to produce videos for clients who get to know him through Termini TV. Still, he thinks that crowdfunding in Italy would not really work for journalism.

Mr Daviré created the first Paralympic Sports website in France in 2008 <http://www.sportethandicaps.com/fr/>, working with sponsors first, later having to change his business model due to the economic crisis. He started selling articles to sports federations and created an agency to produce photos and videos, selling them to companies interested in Paralympic Sports for CSR (corporate social responsibility). This kind of activity can pay for his website on Paralympic Sports, as the advertisements there would not be enough to maintain it financially.

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The second day of the Div-A core group meeting continued with talking about **tips and tricks of crowdfunding as a tool to start realising one's multimedia idea, including** platforms that could be used for the mentoring programme.

E.g. "[Write that Down](#)" is a German crowdfunding website, created by Krautreporter as a crowdfunding platform for journalists. Running the website does not entail any business interest for Krautreporter. Mr Esser proposed it could be a potential tool for the mentoring programme, mentioning that there were other possible platforms to use as well. "Write that Down" could be implemented in other countries in different language versions. However, depending on where one runs the campaign, legal issues of the respective country related to crowdfunding should be taken into account. Krautreporter would be open for a partnership, e.g. they could offer their platform to France to have it developed here too.

Mr Esser emphasised that it is crucial for the mentors to gain a deep understanding of the applicants' project plans before starting the mentoring programme, so as to be able to tailor the training programme according to their exact needs. It would make sense to plan the first encounter based on the specific requests of the participants: **Who their potential supporters are, their number, how they can get to them. In order to have a realistic goal to work with, one has to prepare a rigorous plan.**

This was a turning point in the discussion: as opposed to the original idea of having a training encounter for a wide group of journalists during which ten projects would have been selected for mentoring,, the new approach implies selecting the mentorees beforehand, and inviting them to the encounters with an existing project plan.

Mr Sáling added an additional argument to support this approach: This would allow mentorees **to build up their communities during the mentoring phase, in order to reach many people on the first day of their subsequent crowdfunding campaign. This is based on Mr Sáling's experience that by the time an actual crowdfunding campaign starts, potential donors need to know beforehand the project's idea and its originator(s).**

He reminded of the continuous footwork Direkt 36 had to do during and after their crowdfunding campaign and in preparation of a subsequent one. They relied on their **huge database of supporters** in their **multi-level community**, in which donors give them money, and they need to stay in touch with them during donation. Followers can be mobilised easily, as well as the invisible community surrounding their project, which can be mobilised very easily too.

Ms Guidikova pointed out that applicants need to be people who want to create a business model for their media project on the long run and that they have some understanding of the market already. Mr Sáling came up with a potential slogan: **If you have a great idea, we can help you realise it.**

Ms D'Alessandro underlined that selected applicants must wish to create objective stories about diversity, about the **diversity advantage – focusing on the positive side of diversity and giving voice to voices unheard by traditional journalism.**

Mr Esser warned that it is necessary to select applicants who really want to create a business model and not just participate in a European project. That is why the group decided to aim at a broad range of applications, so that the most committed ones can be selected for the mentoring project.

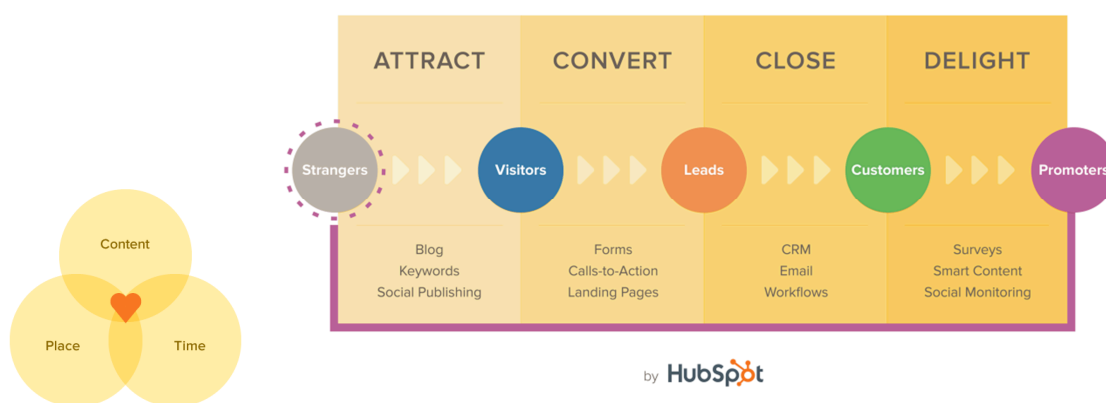
As for the encounters, participants agreed to organise two encounters, one in November 2016 in Lisbon and one in April 2017 in Perugia. The November event would be an intimate meeting with the selected applicants (individuals and / or teams of journalists), during which they would receive training on their specific needs. Leaning on the timing of the [Web Summit](#) in Lisbon in November would allow the Div-A core group to invite experts from there too. The Council of Europe North-South Centre could provide an adequate venue.

Following the Lisbon training, mentors would work individually with their selected applicants and prepare a crowdfunding campaign / help take the first steps towards creating a multimedia startup / running a crowdfunding that should be launched after the end of the mentoring phase in April 2017. A good networking opportunity would be the International Journalism Festival in Perugia: having a second, evaluating encounter there would allow the project's coordinator and CoE to present the Div-A methodology at a panel of the festival.

A final event might be planned for September 2017 to round up the process and present the documentary film the filming team will have made by then.

Experts invited to the training in November could include not only journalists, but people with a promotional mentality: **someone who makes subscriptions on the internet**, like dating portals or **spotify, netflix, who are good at email marketing**, at getting people inside the **funnel** and converting them at the bottom of it.

E.g. <http://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing> The proven methodology for the digital age:



The group decided that it would invite a Facebook expert to the November training. Mr Sáling and Ms D'Alessandro might have relevant contacts who could be invited.

Another interesting expert to be invited at one of the mentoring events is Mr Jermain Kaminsky who carries out research on how crowdfunding can attract venture capital (<https://re->

publica.de/member/3509 Using Crowdfunding Data to Predict Venture Capital Investments and City Innovation <http://jermainkaminski.com/>). Mr Paul Mason, a former Channel 4 and guardian journalist who created a web documentary “This Is a Coup” with Mr Tassos Morfis and the photo journalists of Athens Live, could also be invited to join at some stage.

Web tools, web documentaries, crossmedia

The core group discussed how to use web tools and whether web documentaries are a feasible option for applicants to generate revenue. A few web tool suggestions were made: The [Atavist Publishing & Storytelling Platform](#) (a content management system for storytelling with a plug-in for credit cards), but also <https://www.squarespace.com/>, and <https://medium.com/>.

Mr Daviré referred to the fact that a web documentary can be a first step towards a TV documentary, because one can explain their story first and then find a TV interested in the subject. He mentioned *L'Equipe* which has a multimedia group, developing a crossmedia web documentary. Some of what they produce is published on the television channel *L'Equipe 21*. The idea is to start a project and have several products for several channels. A piece for television, an interview for a newspaper – sell it on many different platforms. This option would certainly work in France.

Media regulators

The group decided that it would not be necessary to involve media law regulators, since media landscape is different in each Council of Europe member state and professionals should know how to juggle around these constraints.

Next steps

The group agreed that the next steps would involve setting up a slackchat channel for the core group and their coordinator; creating a Facebook page for Div-A; creating a short presentation video calling for applications and an easy survey-based application form. The venue of the first encounter would be Lisbon November 10-11; the project's coordinator will establish contacts with the Perugia International Journalism Festival. This second encounter will be a marketing / networking event as well as an occasion for the participants to meet companies such as Facebook and other potential sponsors (Google, legacy media which works with new media forms, such as Arte TV with web documentaries). The Perugia encounter will be a four-day media-university and an opportunity to introduce the Div-A mentoring programme at the Perugia Festival, as well as to present the documentary movie about Div-A, “The Creation of a Methodology”, which will probably have been finished by then.

The experts to be invited to the encounters, as well as the next steps of promotion shall be discussed via email exchange. The call for applications will be launched by end May/ mid June, the application period would last until 31 August, leaving time for a second round in September with the pre-selected applicants. For the second round, preselected applicants will be asked to send a one-minute presentation video about themselves and their project ideas and invited to join a Skype call. Strong focus will be given to their business plans and their commitment to creating a mid- or long-term business model in the end for a project that enhances diversity in media. A maximum of ten projects

will be selected, including both from individuals and/ or teams. The Council of Europe might give a small contribution to each project that has successfully developed during the mentoring phase.

The main promotional channels of the Div-A project will be Facebook and the web. Some participants will probably attend some journalist conferences to network and talk about Div-A. For instance, the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum in Bonn 13-15 June 2016 could be a networking opportunity to enhance the multiplying effect. Core team members should also involve journalism schools, business schools, potential sponsors, teaming up with media outlets and leaning on the CoE's media committee and network too.

Core group members have no doubts they'll be able to mentor someone from another country than theirs. It will be like co-working, the aim is to fertilise the proposed ideas and push them through to implementation. The cornerstones are the same in each country and the specifics can be learned on the way.