



506301

**AIM**

Adequate Information Management in Europe

## **D4: Standardized Instruments for 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Study**

Due date of deliverable: November 2005  
Actual submission date: April 2006

Start date of project: 01.05.2004

Duration: 36 months

Erich-Brost-Institute for Journalism in Europe

Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006)	
Dissemination Level	
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)

## **1. Description**

The main goals of the 2<sup>nd</sup> field study are to examine the structures and processes of the work at the news site in Brussels, to analyse how an EU topic is selected and at what point during the news management process, and to reveal the particular influence the European institutions may have on this EU news management.

To obtain reliable and valid data that allows drawing conclusions for an all-European news management system, the field study must be conducted under standardized conditions. Thus, all researchers will make use of the same instruments within the same timeframe: interviews and observations.

The researchers will interview correspondents in Brussels and optionally also observe some of these correspondents during their usual daily work routines. The interviews will enable the researchers to assess and compare the work processes of the various national correspondents at the news site in Brussels.

Besides, the researchers will put up various research teams to analyse the communication strategies of the European institutions. One of these research teams will interview the spokespersons of the Commission, while another team will attend the Midday Briefings of the Commission and observe the daily routine of interaction between the spokespersons and the correspondents. This will enable the researchers to study how the European Commission can and does influence EU coverage. Additionally, the researchers will also interview spokespersons of the representations of the Commission in the individual member states.

To investigate moreover whether there is a specific national influence on EU coverage, the researchers will also interview the spokespersons of the permanent representations of the member states in Brussels.

In addition, there will be a case study of the European Council meeting in Brussels (March 23 & 24, 2006). A research team will observe the press rooms and the national press briefings during the Summit, to study the specific information and news flows during a regular EU-Summit.

## **2. Semi-structured qualitative interviews ...**

As the main goal is to map the correspondents' and the spokespersons' personal views on EU news management processes and the information of the European institutions and also their experience with EU coverage, qualitative interviews seem to be the best approach. As Silverman (2001: 13) points out: "Authenticity" rather than reliability is often the issue in qualitative research. The aim is usually to gather an authentic understanding of people's experiences and it is believed that open-ended questions are the most effective route towards this end". This is also underlined by Warren (2002: 83) who states that the "purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondent talk". For a differentiation of informative and analytical interviews see Lamnek (2005: 333).

Neuman/Kreuger (2003: 382) emphasise that the "field interview is a joint production of a researcher and a member. Members are active participants whose insights, feelings, and cooperation are essential parts of a discussion process that reveals subjective meanings". Thus, in order to obtain reliable and comparable data across the participating countries, these interviews will be semi-structured (cp Flick 2002: 144). For this reason, a common interview guide for the interviews with the various national correspondents and the spokespersons of the European Commission has been developed. These manuals are explicitly qualitative semi-structured interview manuals, i.e. interviewers may decide to skip certain questions and add others, change the wording or the sequence of the questions. Nevertheless, we want certain question complexes to be addressed in order to be able to comparatively answer certain research questions. For this reason, each interviewer is also provided with research topics and points of reflection (so called memos) to be able to put his/her questions into the larger context of the project. Each interview will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes.

The work plan schedules these interviews within the same time slot for all participating institutes. This allows exchange between all participating researchers.

### **2.1. ... with correspondents (Annex 1: Correspondents)**

With regard to the structures and processes of the work at the news site in Brussels, the main research questions to be answered are the following: How do the correspondents organise their work in Brussels? What are their daily work routines? Why are certain EU issues selected and others not? What are the major sources for the correspondents in the coverage of EU-issues? How do the correspondents evaluate the information policy of the EU institutions?

To answer these questions, correspondents from all countries participating in the AIM project based in Brussels will be interviewed. Every participating country in the project will

interview correspondents working for the media which have already been analysed in the first field study. This will allow comparisons between the statements of the correspondents and the statements of the respective EU-journalists in the home offices and their responsible editors-in-chief interviewed during the first field study. Furthermore, additional EU correspondents will be interviewed. It is planned that countries with a smaller Brussels press corps like the Baltic countries or Norway will interview all correspondents based in Brussels. Countries with a larger Brussels press corps, like Germany, Great Britain, and France will have to make a reasonable selection of the correspondents to be interviewed. The interview guide for these interviews is in the appendix.

The data resulting from the interviews will be evaluated first on the basis of country reports and later in a transnational summary report.

## **2.2. ... with spokespersons of the Commission (Annex 2: Spokespersons)**

The main research questions with regard to the possible influence of the Commission on EU coverage are the following: How does the Commission organise its communication? Who is responsible for communication? What is the role of the Spokespersons Service? How do the spokespersons organise and evaluate working with journalists? To answer these questions, we are trying to interview all 25 spokespersons of the individual Commissioners (Spokespersons Service). The Belgium, Estonian, and Lithuanian researchers have agreed to conduct these interviews and develop the interview guide, because the number of EU correspondents to be interviewed from these countries is rather small.

## **2.3. ... with the spokespersons of the representations of the Commission in the member states (optional) (Annex 3: Commission's representations)**

The representations of the Commission belong to the DG Communication and seem to be part of the communication flow between the Commission and the (national) journalists. Thus, interviews with the spokespersons of these representations will be included in the field study. The main research questions will be the following: What is the role of these representations? How do the spokespersons organise and evaluate working with journalists in the various member states? Are there differences between member states? Which role do they play in agenda setting? An interview guide has been developed to ensure the comparability of data gathered by the participating researchers.

## **2.4. ... with the spokespersons of the national representation to the EU (Annex 4: Permanent representations of the member states)**

The permanent representations of the member states in Brussels play an important role in European policy-making, as they represent the national interests in various committees, and may thus also influence the information flow at the European level. Thus, it is interesting to research the following questions: What is the main task of these representations? How do the spokespersons organise and evaluate working with journalists? Which topics do they focus on? Is there a specific national perspective? How do they evaluate the information policy of the Commission? To answer all these questions, every participating country will interview one or two persons of their national representation in Brussels. A common interview guide for these interviews has been developed.

### **3. Observation ...**

#### **3.1. ... of the editorial work / newsroom organization / correspondents (optional) (Annex 5a: Correspondents)**

The basic idea of this optional observation of correspondents is to be able, in the end, to give an account of the correspondent's work routines and the news processing within the correspondent's working environment. For our purpose a systematic, partly structured (focused on research questions), open (without pre-established categories) and passively participating observation seems to be the best approach. The main research questions are: What are the newsroom structures? How is the cooperation with the home office working? What events structure a correspondent's work day? When does an event become "news"?

The correspondents whom we would like to accompany should belong to the sample of correspondents interviewed in Brussels. If possible, two or three correspondents should be observed (e.g. one working for broadcast media and one working for print media). But this kind of observation obviously depends on the willingness of media to allow researchers to enter their newsroom, to attend their editorial meetings, and to accompany one of their journalists.

To obtain comparable data, a common observation manual has been developed.

#### **3.2. ... of the Midday Briefing (Annex 5b: Midday Briefing)**

A regular interaction between correspondents and spokespersons of the Commission takes place at the daily midday briefings. The midday briefings usually see Commission spokespeople presenting the latest proposals or decisions adopted by the Commission and then fielding questions on them (at the Berlaymont Building at 12:00). Commissioners themselves will make an appearance when they have a major proposal to announce. The main research questions with regard to these midday briefings are the following: How are these press briefings structured? What are the agendas? What issues and countries are in the centre of attention? What kind of responses from journalists are generated during briefings? How does informal communication take place?

The best approach to answer these questions seems to be a systematic (with a focus on general research questions), partly structured (focused on specific research questions) and passively participating observation. Thus, a research team will attend and observe the midday briefing for two weeks. To ensure the comparability of gathered data, a common observation manual is provided.

## **4. Summit Case Study (Annex 6: Summit Case Study)**

The overall goal of the Brussels field study is to examine the structures and processes of the work at the news site in Brussels. Thus, a case study will be included that is focused on information and news flows during the summit as a regular recurring event in EU communication. The main research questions of this case study are the following:

- What kind of transnational information and communication processes happen? Are there countries which are always in the centre of attention (centre – periphery)? What kind of responses from journalists to the representative's communication is generated during the briefings? How does informal communication take place?
- What are the agendas of the national press briefings? In which way do they differ? Are there different topic hierarchies? How will the narrative presented by representatives of states frame the ongoing summit?
- What are the main EU strategies concerning summit coverage? (How) does the Commission steer its communication during the summit? What kind of spinning / lobbying on the side of the Commission can be observed?

To answer these questions, a systematic (with a focus on general research questions), partly structured (focused on specific research questions), and passively participating observation will be used.

The Summit Case Study will be based on four different kinds of observations:

1. Observation of the presidency's press briefing at the summit ( $\rightarrow$  *Estonian team and all others*)
2. Observation of the scheduled national press briefings at the summit and short ad-hoc interviews with journalists at the summit ( $\rightarrow$  *individual researchers, see table in research manual, Annex 6*)
3. Observation of the commission's midday briefing at the Berlaymont building ( $\rightarrow$  *German team*)
4. Observations of "informal" gatherings of journalists and ad-hoc press briefings during the summit ( $\rightarrow$  *everybody present at the summit*)

To ensure the comparability of gathered data and to enable the research team to write a common observation report based on their individual reports, a common observation manual will be provided.

## **5. Literature**

- Flick, Uwe (2002): *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung*. Hamburg: Rowohlt.
- Lamnek, Siegfried (2005): *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Lehrbuch*. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz.
- Neuman, W. Lawrence / Kreuger, Larry W. (2003): *Social work research methods. Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Silverman, David (2001): *Interpreting Qualitative Data. Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage.
- Warren, Carol A. B. (2002): "Qualitative Interviewing". Gubrium, Jaber F./ Holstein, James A. (ed) (2002): *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*. Thousands Oaks/London/New Delhi: Sage. 83-101.

## **Annex 1: Interview Guide / Matrix for semi-structured interviews with correspondents**

### **Personal background**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Media the interviewee is currently working at: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contractual status:  salaried     freelancer

\_\_\_\_\_      Freelancers: main customer? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Qualifications and professional experience**

- (Journalistic) Education?
- Former professional positions and working places?
- Working years as a journalist?
- As a foreign correspondent?
- As a correspondent in Brussels?
- How was the correspondent recruited? Does he/she know why he/she was selected?
- Why did he/she ask for the Brussels correspondence? What was the motivation?

How many correspondents does your newsroom have in Brussels? \_\_\_\_\_

For which department(s) of your medium are you working? \_\_\_\_\_

Who (in each department) is in charge to assign stories you? \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person in the newsroom? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your most important task as an EU correspondent? \_\_\_\_\_

***Note: The following interview questions solely refer to the coverage of the EU***

Main topics/ concerns	Interview questions (indicative)	Points of reflection
<b>The news site Brussels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What were your first impressions when starting to work in Brussels? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What surprised you in the way Brussels as a news site works?</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ How is it different from what you've known?</li> <li>➤ How much time did it take for you to feel at ease with EU matters? How did you accomplish that?</li> <li>➤ Who among the Brussels correspondents appears to you as the most influential? Why? Who among your colleagues seems to do the best job in covering the EU? Why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In what ways does the approach to topics differ among correspondents in Brussels?</li> <li>○ Do you think that your colleagues in Brussels are sufficiently informed about the EU?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	How does the interviewee describe Brussels as a news environment (main actors, modes of interaction, and rules of the game...)? How would he/she describe the process of cultural adaptation to Brussels and EU matters (role of education, obstacles, influential events, valuable persons and communities...)?
<b>Relationship with the newsroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Who or what initiates an EU story? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Could you describe how the last news story you reported about evolved? How did you decide to report about that? What were the sources? What were the problems?</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Who takes the editorial decision whether an EU story is published or not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do you and your newsroom interact?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>A topic could be initiated either by the interviewee himself or by the home editorial office. Also possible: news agency or reference media reporting, information from EU officials or institutions... Does a topic "sell" more easily once a news agency or reference medium have reported about it? And who initiates the topics in the respective newsrooms? Are the correspondents or home editorial offices in constant contact with EU officials / institutions that give them hints for possible topics?</p> <p>This question refers to the hierarchy and organisational processes within the newsroom. Is there a consensus between the interviewee and the responsible editor or newsroom staff about what EU matters should be reported about? Who decides the day/time and format of publication?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ According to which criteria do you choose the stories that you offer to your news organization(s)?</li> <li>➤ According to which criteria do you think the decision maker in your newsroom chooses the topics that will be published?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What specific problems do you encounter when it comes to arousing interest in EU news in your newsroom?</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Which news media would you consider as reference points for "good EU journalism"?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are the most influent news organisations when it comes to reporting the EU (in Brussels on a general level / for the interviewee and his/her national peers / for the home editorial office)?</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Please describe the typical day of an EU correspondent.</li> <li>➤ What are the main constraints in reporting the EU? What are the major professional challenges?</li> <li>➤ How important are EU matters for your news organisation compared to other international or national news?</li> <li>➤ Does your news organisation have a policy connected to reporting the EU?</li> </ul>	<p>This question and the following one address news values (like proximity, conflict/controversy, prominence/big names, oddity/surprise...). Are certain news values specific to EU topics? Or is the possibility e.g. for national framing decisive?</p> <p>The insight into what topics the interviewees are able to "sell" best to their home editorial offices allows conclusions to be drawn about the EU news values. Are there differences between what the newsroom expects and what EU news are made of?</p> <p>It might also be interesting to hear which national / international media are used on a regular basis. Besides informing the correspondents, they might also occasionally initiate further investigation concerning EU topics (reference media).</p> <p>The often cited complexity of EU topics could be such a constraint/challenge in reporting, as well as the lack of possible visualisation/personalisation, the expert jargon of EU officials...</p> <p>Has the importance of EU news compared to other news changed in the course of the past years? Compared to other newsbeats the interviewee has known, does he/she feel like the newsroom / editorial decision makers are interested in the current affairs he/she covers? How does the interviewee see the future of EU journalism in his news organisation (and in general)?</p>
--	---	---

<b>Sources and communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Do you think that the journalists in your home news room are sufficiently informed about the EU?</li> <li>➤ What are your major sources concerning EU issues?</li> <li>➤ How would you assess the communication of the EU Commission in general? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ...in comparison to other EU institutions? In what respects do the Council's / the EP's communication differ from the Commission's?</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ How would you assess the quality of the official EU Commission sources?</li> <li>➤ Are EU spokespersons able to communicate EU news in an adequate way?</li> <li>➤ What are your sources when reporting about Council meetings?</li> </ul>	<p>Several possible questions are linked to this one: How much information do the correspondents retrieve from official communication or interaction with EU officials, politicians and other EU sources? Do they rely on official (PR) information or are there alternative information sources? Where do they get their background information? Are there informal contacts with people in the institutions? The answers could also allow an insight into the diversity of sources: Does the interviewee have a certain number of "regulars" that he permanently stays in contact with? Or do the sources vary depending on the subject?</p> <p>What do the interviewees think of the new EU communication strategy? – If there are critical remarks: What are the main constraints for successfully communicating the EU? What could/should be improved?</p> <p>Midday briefing, press conferences, website, personal contacts to officials. There are certainly different possible dimensions of the quality of sources: Some of these may for example not be the most productive but nonetheless important to attend or use.</p> <p>In the interviewee's opinion, do the spokespeople communicate the relevant information in a way that is comprehensible (also to the recipients) and coherent?</p>
<b>Audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In your opinion, which EU topics are of interest to your readers/viewers?</li> <li>➤ What level of pre-knowledge about EU topics of your readers/viewers do you assume?</li> </ul>	<p>This question and the following one solely ask for the assessment of the (assumed) interest and knowledge of the respective medium's recipients – not for an assessment concerning the general public. The assumed interest can be a criterion to choose what EU topics will be reported about.</p> <p>In case there is a general lack of interest: Is that a problem? Why?</p> <p>What does that imply in terms of reporting? Like the recipients' interest, their assumed knowledge can influence the way EU matters are reported about.</p>

<b>The future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Do you see a need for training about reporting the EU?</li> <li>➤ Do you believe in the development of a common EU journalism? Is this development desirable at all?</li> <li>➤ Of what elements does a European identity consist, according to your understanding?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do you believe in the existence of a European identity, or in a future emergence?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>This question refers to journalistic training for students and trainees (j-schools...) as well as to further education for more experienced journalists. Are there specific skills needed for EU journalism?</p> <p>With the development of e.g. trans-national investigative reporting, there may be a "European" journalism culture evolving among EU correspondents – or differences may remain. The answer to these questions allows an insight into whether the EU correspondents have been observing such a development and how they assess this.</p>
-------------------	--	--

## **Annex 2: Interview Guide for semi-structured interviews with spokespersons of the Commission**

### **Identification; introduction**

- **Name** of the spokesperson
- **DG** the spokesperson works for
- Name of the **Commissioner**
- **Number of staff** of the spokesperson's unit
- Number of staff of the **DG's press unit**

### **Socio demographic**

- Nationality
- Age
- M/F
- Education/Diplomas
- Specific communication training
- Former Professions
- EU-Spokesperson since?
- Selection procedure
- Political affiliations

### **Organisation of work**

Describe the different tasks of the DG COMM and the spokespersons' unit. Labour division: degree of team work, division of different responsibilities.

### **Midday Briefings**

- Do you attend the briefings daily?
- If you are abroad, who is attending the briefings?
- Who decides whether an announcement will be made: spokesperson, commissioner, cabinet .....
- Who writes the text of the announcements?
- What is the role at the briefings of the commissioner, of the cabinet?
- Frequency of the announcements
- How are the midday briefings organised?
- How often do journalists ask questions about announcements?
- How often are journalists contacting you for questions not in relation to announcements?
- Describe the commonly used way for journalists to ask informal question outside the midday-briefing-frame
- How is the cooperation between you and DG COMM for the midday briefings?
- Who decides and why that the announcements will be in English or French?

### **Press releases**

- The press releases are sent out before the midday briefings (before 12 am) and put on the website
- Do spokespersons distribute press releases after the midday briefings?
- Sources: cabinet, commissioner or DG COMM
- Who initiates press releases?
- To whom are they sent: national vs local media, print vs av media, which national media?

- The definite version: to what degree teamwork of spokesperson, DG experts and DG COMM?

### **Videoconferencing with the national representative abroad (not in Brussels) (before 12 am)**

- Do all spokespersons attend the videoconferencing?
- What is communicated: announcements, press releases...?
- How does the national representative office disseminate the information?
- Do national journalists attend these video conferences?
- Can we conclude that the national media get towards 12 am the same information as the Brussels correspondents?

### **Press conference**

- Press conferences take place after the midday briefings?
- For which occasions will there be a press conference?
- Who addresses the journalists: commissioner or spokesperson?

### **Informal contacts and networking**

- With EU correspondents: informal talks in order to get a scoop, more inside info
- With specific media? More print, more quality, more national....
- With politicians of EU Parliament
- With their local, national representative offices
- With particular national journalists
- With lobby and pressure groups

### **Personal role perception**

- Your boss is the commissioner but you belong to DG COMM. Does this create tensions?
- You are the public face of the Commission. Are you presenting a single face?
- How do you coordinate your activities with other spokespersons?
- Can you set the news agenda?

### **Causes and remedies for the communication deficit. Open questions**

- What do they perceive as the major elements and causes of the communication deficit
- How is their role and job definition relevant for the communication deficit
- Their perception of news flow deficit in relation to EU enlargement
- Their perception of news flow deficit in relation to EU constitution
- Their frustrations
- Their remedies

### **White paper and the commission's action plan. Open questioning**

- How do the spokespersons perceive their role in this new communication plan?
- Which are the better suggestions, which are the contested ones?
- What will work and what will not?
- How to avoid difficult language and explain the complexity of EU issues?
- How to realise the 'going local' advice?
- How to cope with negative stereotypes?
- How to cope with the journalists' idea that the communication flow is 'spinned'?
- How is the idea of binging 'story based news' in contradiction with the journalists job description and professional standards?
- More human interest?

## **Annex 3: Interview Guide for semi-structured interviews with people from the representations of the Commission in the member states**

### **Identification, introduction**

- Name
- Function
- Number of staff

### **Qualification and professional experience**

- Education
- Specific communication training?
- Former professional positions and working places
- At the representation of the Commission in the respective member state since?
- How was the interviewee recruited/selected? Does he/she know why he/she was selected?

### **Organisation of work**

- Describe the main organisational structure of the representation and other representations in the same country.
- Describe the main tasks of the representation of the Commission in the respective member state (in the case of several regional offices in the country, what are the specific tasks of these?)
  - e.g. informing the DG COMM about the needs and attitudes of the respective national audience?
  - e.g. acting as spokespersons of the Commission in the member states?

### **Relationship between the representation and DG COMM**

- Division of labour within DG COMM?
- Form of cooperation with Spokesperson Service?  
Videoconference with Spokesperson Service at 10 am:
  - Who attends this videoconference?
  - What is communicated?
  - How are topics selected?
- Form of cooperation with other directorates of the DG COMM?

### **Relationship between the representation and national media**

- How much emphasis is given to the information / cooperation with the national media compared to the other tasks of the representation?
- Are there specific target media?
  - e.g. national, regional or local media?
  - e.g. print or tv?
- Which service do you offer to national journalists? / How/ by which means do you inform journalists in your home country?
  - Written press materials
  - Press Briefings
  - e-mail lists
- What are cases, when you take the initiative and contact a journalist personally, i.e. not waiting for a journalist's request?

- How would you describe your relationship with the journalists? Would you describe the EU representation as first contact point for EU news to journalists in your home country or do you believe that journalists directly contact informants in Brussels?
- With which journalists / media do you keep informal contacts?
  - With specific media? More print, more quality, more national....

### **Problems**

- If there are any, what are the biggest problems in communicating the EU to journalists in your home country?
- Do you provide any measures of crisis communication (damage control)?
- How do you react to false claims?

### **White Paper and the Commission's Action Plan**

- How do you evaluate the Action Plan and the White Paper regarding the EU institutions communication initiated by Margot Wallström?
- Since then, do you observe any changes in the work of your representation?
  - e.g. new staff? New working routines?
- In your personal opinion, which measures will work and which won't?
- How do you try to accomplish the goal to "go local"?
- How much importance is attributed to informing the press compared to informing the general public in the new communication plan?
- How do you evaluate your role in this new communication strategy?
- Do you regard yourself mainly as a representative of the Commission or of the member states?

## **Annex 4: Interview Guide for semi-structured interviews with spokespersons of the permanent representations of the member states in Brussels**

### **Identification; introduction**

- Name
- Function
- Number of staff

### **Qualifications and professional experience**

- Education
- Specific communication training?
- Former professional positions and working places?
- At the permanent representation since?
- How was the interviewee recruited/selected? Does he/she know why he/she was selected?

### **Organisation of work**

- Describe the main tasks of the permanent representations of the respective member state in Brussels.
  - e.g. keeping the national government informed about current EU affairs
  - e.g. representing the interest of the respective member state at EU level (in various committees...)
  - e.g. informing the press and public about their governments' positions on various EU topics
- Do they have a specific press section? If yes, how many people are working there?

### **Relationship between the permanent representation and the national government**

- Form of cooperation with head of government, e.g. prime minister
- Form of cooperation with national Foreign Office
- Form of cooperation with other national offices

### **Relationship between the permanent representation and journalists**

- How much emphasis is given to the information / cooperation with the national media compared to the other tasks of the representation?
- Are there specific target groups?
  - e.g. national journalists in Brussels or also those in home country?
  - e.g. national or regional media?
  - e.g. print or tv?
- Do journalists register with the specific permanent representation?
- Which service do you offer to the journalists? How/ by which means do you inform them?
  - Written press material, e.g. press releases
    - Do they write press releases?
    - How regularly?
    - Main sources?
    - On what topics?
    - To whom are they sent? National, local media, national journalists in Brussels?

- Press briefings
  - o On which occasion will there be a press briefing: e.g. before council meetings?
  - o Who plans and prepares these press briefings: spokesperson, ambassador, government?
  - o Frequency of such press briefings (how many a week, a year)?
  - o Kind of information: e.g. on the record, off the record, background?
  - o How often do journalists ask questions?
  - o How many journalists usually attend such briefings?

- What are cases, when you take the initiative and contact a journalist in person, i.e. not waiting for a journalist's request?
- How would you describe your relationship with the journalists? Would you describe your national representation as "first contact point" for journalists looking for information about Brussels from a national view point?
- Do you keep informal contacts with the following...
  - with EU correspondents in Brussels?
  - with specific media? More print, more quality, more national ...

### **Problems**

- If there are any, what are the biggest problems communicating the EU / your work to journalists?
- How do you react to false claims?
- What do you perceive as major elements and causes of the perceived communication deficit of the EU institutions?

### **White Paper and the Commission's Action Plan**

- How do you evaluate the new communication plan?
- How do you assess which measures will work and what will not?
- How do you try to accomplish the goal to "go local"?

### **Personal role perception**

- How would you describe your main role / task / function?

## **Annex 5a: Research Manual: Observing Correspondents**

### **Research design:**

The correspondents whom we would like to accompany should belong to the sample of correspondents interviewed in Brussels. As far as possible, two or three correspondents should be observed (e. g. one working for broadcast media and one working for print media). The observation period should last from two to four days. For our purpose a systematic, partly structured (focused on research questions), open (without pre-established categories) and passively participating observation seems to be the best approach.

The basic idea is to be able, in the end, to give an account of the correspondent's work routines and the news processing within the correspondent's working environment.

### **Main research questions:**

- What are the newsroom structures (internal negotiations in the newsroom; influence of the editorial hierarchy)?
- How is the cooperation with the home news room working? How are the general relationships with the home office?
- What events structure a correspondent's work day? To what does he react/not react? (When does an event become "news") In how far is the official "midday briefing" influencing the correspondent's agenda?

### **Preliminary work:**

When setting up interviews with Brussels correspondents each national team should ask two or three correspondents for permission to accompany them for at least two days. Since we are interested in finding out how the EU commission's press communication is influencing correspondents' work, we recommend to choose a correspondent who attends the regular "midday briefing" at the Berlaymont building. (Of course, you should be able to accompany the journalist during the "midday briefing".)

It is helpful to give enough background information on the AIM project before the observation starts. The observee must not feel as if he or she was being used for some obscure goals never clearly stated. So make it clear that the collected data will be treated confidentially and no quotation from what is said during meetings, phone conversations or informal talks will be published without the person's consent.

Before starting the observation the visitor should also have gathered the most relevant facts about the correspondent and his/her news organization (e. g. bureau chief, number of employees etc.).

## **Some general remarks on observations:**

- Observe ongoing work processes without upsetting, disrupting, or imposing an outside point of view.
- Observe ordinary events and everyday activities, but also pay attention to any occurrences that seem unusual to you.
- Try to see events in their context (as a whole) as well as individually in their social context.
- Notice both explicit and implicit aspects of the journalism culture you are observing (also the things you usually take for granted!).
- Openness is one of the main observation principles: You are not approaching the field with an explicit hypothesis to test. Especially at the beginning try to keep your focus as wide as possible. Once socialized to the setting, you can focus the inquiry a bit more and try to assert control over the data.
- You must be aware that your presence will influence field relations to some degree. To minimize reactive effects, try to avoid disturbing the course of events by operating as anonymously and unobtrusively as a scene permits. This does not mean that you are not allowed to ask questions. We assume that a friendly and open attitude will help you to get information better than if you remain mute. You can of course ask for information if you don't understand something. Obviously if someone starts talking to you, you should let the interaction go on (and note it afterwards).

## **Observation strategies for the beginning of the observation:**

Entering a scene, you have already developed a number of conceptual interests (see above). Nonetheless, you should resist applying any categories or "checklists" to what you observe. Instead, you first might want to

1. Identify the place, the main actors in the scene and their status:
  - a. What are the physical surroundings of the people working at the office?
  - b. What is the observee's job (in contrast to the tasks of other people in the newsroom)?
  - c. What are the understandings about each other's roles?
2. Identify styles and strategies of communication and inter-action
  - a. Where and when do actors interact?
  - b. How do initial interactions occur?
3. Recognize significant events
  - a. What are the events that determine the further course of the action?
  - b. Where did they occur, when and under what circumstances?

## **What to observe during the “midday briefings”:**

- It is important to observe the exact course of events ***from the perspective of the correspondent***: what is happening and when is it happening in chronological order (there is the German team which will observe the occurrences of the midday-briefing from the view of a neutral observer; your role is mainly to observe “your correspondent”)
- How is the journalist you observe reacting to what is going on? When is he taking notes, when is not interested at all? (questions and comments, attitudes expressed verbally or via body language and emotional atmosphere)
- Is there any interaction between “your journalist” and others? (national/international?)
- What are the statements/events that determine the further course of the action?
- If any, what are the questions that “your journalist” asks?
- What are the general reactions of the other journalists? (Are the comments of the journalists after the briefing different from what “your correspondent” says?)

## **Taking notes & writing memos:**

Writing notes is the most important tool for a successful observation. Although taking notes can be tedious and requires self-discipline, their importance cannot be overstated. Without notes it is impossible to write a valid observation report.

Neuman and Krueger<sup>1</sup> suggest to take five different types of field notes:

### ***1. Jotted Notes (written in the field)***

Jotted Notes, also called Scratch Notes, are short, temporary memory triggers such as words, phrases or drawings, which are incorporated into direct observation notes later. It is recommended not to take too many notes while others are around. Taking notes frequently might make others feel uncomfortable or “spied on”.

### ***2. Direct Observations Notes***

Direct Observation Notes are the notes a researcher writes immediately after leaving the field, which he or she can add on later. Direct observation notes are bare, detailed observations without interpretations, without applying analytical categories. The notes should be ordered chronologically with the date, time, and place on each entry. They serve as detailed descriptions of what the researcher heard and saw. To the extent possible, they are exact recordings of the particular words, phrases or actions. Nonverbal communication such as gestures, tone, speed and volume of the communication can be recorded as well (if it is of importance). You might also want to use spatial or social maps to record your observations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Neuman, Lawrence / Krueger, Larry W. (2003): Social Work Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Boston: Pearson Education.

### **3. Researcher Inference Notes**

Researcher Inference Notes are your interpretations of the observed (inter)actions. They are written in a separate section that is linked to the direct observations. For example, you do not **see** anger or frustration, but only specific actions and draw inferences from them. A researcher keeps inferred meaning separate from direct observation because the meaning of actions is not always self-evident and sometimes can only be fully understood at a later stage of the observation. The separation of inference allows multiple meanings to arise when rereading direct observation notes.

### **4. Analytic Notes**

Analytic Notes are your ideas about correlations, links, hypotheses and conjectures of the events. They are an account of the researchers attempt to give meaning to the field.

### **5. Personal Notes:**

Personal Notes are notes about your personal feelings and reactions during the observation. For example you can record whether you felt welcome or if anyone was hostile towards you. These kind of can be of help when evaluating direct observation and inference notes.

(Simplified) Example:

<b>Direct Observation</b>	<b>Inference</b>	<b>Analytic</b>	<b>Personal</b>
Monday, March 8, correspondent X's office, 3 pm: X is talking to his editor at home about the article he wrote in the morning. He says he does not have time to shorten it and asks the editor to do it. His voice is tense. ... (and so on)	Correspondent seems nervous, perhaps because he has only half an hour left before he has to meet with spokesperson X.	Equal power relationship between correspondent and editor.	I was not sure whether my presence was bothering him. He did not pay much attention to me. I was uncertain how to react to this situation.

### **Recommendation for Taking Field Notes:**

1. Record notes as soon as possible after each period in the field and do not talk with others until your observations are recorded. Otherwise your observations might become either diluted or distorted.
2. Use wide margins to make it easy to add to notes at any time.
3. Record events in the order in which they occurred, and note how long they last.
4. Make notes as concrete, complete, and comprehensive as possible. It helps to break down events into their relevant components. Avoid clichéd or glossy terms.

5. Also record routines that do not appear to be significant at the time; they may become important later.
6. Do not jump to conclusions at once, record first what was going on. First start with asking yourself "who?, when?, where?, how?". "Why?" interpretations can wait until later.

### **Observations reports:**

The observation reports are written reports based on your notes. They should be about 5-6 pages long and provide an answer to the main research questions. You will receive a guide indicating how the observations report is supposed to be structured after the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> field study (after April 7<sup>th</sup>).

### **Literature:**

Lindlof, Thomas R.; Taylor, Bryan C. (2002): Qualitative Communication Research Methods. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: Sage.

Neuman,Lawrence; Krueger,Larry W. (2003): Social Work Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Boston: Pearson Education.

Rühl, Manfred (1970): Der Forscher als teilnehmender Beobachter der Arbeit und Organisation von Massenmedien. Probleme und Erfahrungen. In: Rundfunk und Fernsehen, Vol.18, No. 2, 156-168.

Tuchman, Gaye (1991): The production of news. In: Jensen, Klaus Bruhn (Hg.): A Handbook of Media and Communication Research. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies. London/New York: Routledge, 78-90.

Gehrau, Volker (2002): Die Beobachtung in der Kommunikationswissenschaft. Methodische Ansätze und Beispielstudien. Konstanz: UVK.

## **Annex 5b: Research Manual: Observation of the Midday Briefing**

The overall goal of the Brussels field study is to examine the structures and processes of the work at the news site in Brussels. One part of the field study is the observation of the commission's midday-briefing at the Berlaymont building<sup>2</sup>. For our purpose a systematic (with a focus on **general** research questions), partly structured (focused on **specific** research questions) and passively participating observation seems to be the best approach.

### **Main research questions:**

- *How are the press briefings structured?*
- *Who are the main actors?*
- *What are the agendas of the press briefings? Who determines the agenda?*
- *What issues and countries are in the centre of attention?*
- *What kind of responses from journalists are generated during the briefings? How does informal communication take place?*

### **What to observe during the official press briefings:**

- The exact course of events: what is happening and when is it happening in chronological order (if possible: tape the press briefing!!!)
- Duration of each action
- Physical surroundings
- Estimated number of journalists present
- Who is speaking
- What is being said (key statements, importance of specific points, national vs. EU perspective)
- The statements/events that determine the further course of the action
- Reactions to each speaker (questions and comments, attitudes expressed verbally or via body language and emotional atmosphere, conflictual or cooperative spirit, are people paying attention or are they leaving the room or talking to each other?)
- Questions that the journalists ask
- General reactions of journalists (comments of journalists after the briefing, satisfaction or critical remarks if noticeable, otherwise short ad-hoc interviews possible, asking whether expectations are fulfilled , which points of the official statements are found to be most meaningful, what is rejected or neglected or whether they learned anything that was surprising them)

---

<sup>2</sup> The midday briefing usually sees Commission spokespeople presenting the latest proposals or decisions adopted by the Commission and then fielding questions on them (at the Berlaymont Building at 12:00 ). Commissioners themselves will make an appearance when they have a major proposal to announce.

- Please collect all the material that is made available to the journalists (written statements, press releases)

### **Some general remarks on observations:**

- You must be aware that your presence will influence field relations to some degree. To minimize reactive effects, try to avoid disturbing the course of events by operating as anonymously and unobtrusively as a scene permits. This does not mean that you are not allowed to ask questions. We assume that a friendly and open attitude will help you to get information better than if you remain mute. You can of course ask for information if you don't understand something. Obviously if someone starts talking to you, you should let the interaction go on (and note it afterwards).
- Pay attention to any occurrences that seem unusual to you.
- Openness is one of the main observation principles: You are not approaching the field with explicit hypotheses to test. Especially at the beginning try to keep your focus as wide as possible. Once socialized to the setting, you can focus the inquiry a bit more on the research questions.

### **Taking notes & writing memos:**

Writing notes is the most important tool for a successful observation. Although taking notes can be tedious and requires self-discipline, their importance cannot be overstated. Without them it is impossible to write a valid observation report.

We suggest to take five different types of field notes<sup>3</sup>:

#### **1. Jotted Notes (*written in the field*)**

Jotted Notes, also called Scratch Notes, are short, temporary memory triggers such as words, phrases or drawings, which are incorporated into direct observation notes later.

#### **2. Direct Observations Notes**

Direct Observation Notes are the notes a researcher writes during "observations breaks" or immediately after leaving the field, which he or she can add on later. Direct observation notes are bare, detailed observations without interpretations, without applying analytical categories.

The notes should be ordered chronologically with the date, time, and place on each entry. They serve as detailed descriptions of what the researcher heard and saw. To the extent possible, they are exact recordings of the particular words, phrases or actions. Nonverbal communication such as gestures, tone, speed and volume of the communication can be recorded as well (if it is of importance). You might also want to use spatial or social maps to record your observations.

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Neuman, Lawrence / Krueger, Larry W. (2003): Social Work Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Boston: Pearson Education.

### **3. Researcher Inference Notes**

Researcher Inference Notes are your interpretations of the observed (inter)actions. They are written in a separate section that is linked to the direct observations. For example, you do not **see** anger or frustration, but only specific actions and draw inferences from them. A researcher keeps inferred meaning separate from direct observation because the meaning of actions is not always self-evident and sometimes can only be fully understood at a later stage of the observation. The separation of inference allows multiple meanings to arise when rereading direct observation notes.

### **4. Analytic Notes**

Analytic Notes are your ideas about correlations, links, hypotheses and conjectures of the events. They are an account of the researchers attempt to give meaning to the field.

### **5. Personal Notes:**

Personal Notes are notes about your personal feelings and reactions during the observation. For example you can record whether you felt welcome or if anyone was hostile towards you. These kind of can be of help when evaluating direct observation and inference notes.

(Simplified) Example:

<b>Direct Observation</b>	<b>Inference</b>	<b>Analytic</b>	<b>Personal</b>
Friday, March 24, 5 pm: XY speaking about a common EU strategy concerning issue xy.	Spokesperson XY and issue xy do not seem to be of great importance	German journalists pay far less attention to issue xy than Italian journalists.	I was not sure if I understood what the main point of the speaker was.
About 30 journalists are present, many journalists are talking to each other, some journalists are leaving the room			

### **Recommendations for taking field notes:**

1. Record notes as soon as possible after each period in the field and do not talk with others until observations are recorded. Otherwise your observations might become either diluted or distorted.
2. Use wide margins to make it easy to add to notes at any time.
3. Record events in the order in which they occurred, and note how long they last.
4. Make notes as concrete, complete, and comprehensive as possible. It helps to break down events into their relevant components. Avoid clichéd or glossy terms.

5. Also record routines that do not appear to be significant at the time; they may become important later.
6. Do not jump to conclusions at once, record first what was going on. First start with asking yourself "who?, when?, where?, how?". "Why?" interpretations can wait until later.

### **Observations reports:**

The notes are the material on which you base your observations report. The observation report should be about 5-6 pages long and provide an answer to the research questions stated above.

### **Literature:**

Lindlof, Thomas R.; Taylor, Bryan C. (2002): Qualitative Communication Research Methods. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: Sage.

Neuman,Lawrence; Krueger,Larry W. (2003): Social Work Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Boston: Pearson Education.

Gehrau, Volker (2002): Die Beobachtung in der Kommunikationswissenschaft. Methodische Ansätze und Beispielstudien. Konstanz: UVK.

## **Annex 6: Research Manual: Summit Case Study**

The overall goal of the Brussels field study is to examine the structures and processes of the work at the news site in Brussels. One part of the field study focuses on information and news flows during the summit as a regular recurring event in EU communication. For our purpose a systematic (with a focus on **general** research questions), partly structured (focused on **specific** research questions), and passively participating observation seems to be the best approach.

The Summit Case Study is based on four different kinds of observations:

1. Observation of the presidency's press briefing at the summit ( $\rightarrow$  *Estonia and all others*)
2. Observation of the scheduled national press briefings at the summit and short ad-hoc interviews with journalists at the summit ( $\rightarrow$  *see table p. 3*)
3. Observation of the commission's midday-briefing at the Berlaymont building ( $\rightarrow$  *German team*)
4. Observations of "informal" gatherings of journalists and ad-hoc press briefings during the summit ( $\rightarrow$  *everybody present at the summit*)

### **Main research questions:**

- What kind of transnational information- and communication processes happen? Are there countries which are always in the centre of attention (centre – periphery)? What kind of responses from journalists to the representative's communication is generated during the briefings? How does informal communication take place?
- What are the agendas of the national press briefings? In which way do they differ? Are there different topic hierarchies? How will the narrative presented by representatives of states frame the ongoing summit?
- What are the main EU strategies concerning summit coverage? (How) does the Commission steer its communication during the summit? What kind of spinning / lobbying on the side of the Commission can be observed?

### **What to do *before* the summit starts:**

- It is recommended to study basic documents available before the summit.
- Find out the size of national press corps accredited to the summit and the main media outlets present.
- Try to contact a journalist in advance who can explain to you (during the summit) the "informal" flows of information between different (national) groups of journalists.

You also might want to find out

- ... what are the main ideas expressed in press releases delivered by national authorities? In most cases documents are available on public websites; most national representations to the EU have websites.
- ... what are the main expectations concerning the summit expressed by the authorities? What are the main comments on the presidency's proposals?

**Possible themes expected to be discussed during the summit – please try to follow your national media about this before our case study:**

As Europe's economic achievements are not remarkable, most journalists consider the issue of the Lisbon strategy as a formal ideology. Still, there could be some issues which could bring conflicts of different approaches (attitudes):

- Creation of a common energy market (there have been problems concerning energy supply from Russia, oil prices).
- Controversy regarding the Services Directive (it is however expected, that the final position will be discussed during the summit in June).
- The Presidency has brought up the idea of a common tax policy and the idea of a EU-tax.
- Ongoing conflict over the financial perspective: Although member states agreed to adopt the plan for the budget for the period of 2007-2013, the European Parliament would like to have a larger budget available. As the member states could not agree to increase the budget, political struggle continues, and as many experts predict – the parliament has finally adopted the plan, after some political manoeuvring.
- Current concerns: common actions to combat bird flu?

**Preliminary Time Schedule:**

Thursday, 23 March 2006

A meeting of the tripartite social summit for growth and employment (Presidency, Finland, Germany, Commission and social partners) will be held in the morning of 23 March with the following provisional programme:

11.00 – 12.30	Tripartite social summit for growth and employment Tour-de-table before the meeting
<b>12.30 – 13.00</b>	<b>Press Conference</b> <b>(Press room - Press Centre, level 00)</b>
16.45 – 17.30	Arrival of Members of the European Council and delegations at the Justus Lipsius building (not in protocol order) (VIP entrance, level 02, outside - photo/TV opportunity) Welcome by the President of the European Council and the Foreign Minister of Austria (VIP entrance, level 02, inside - host broadcaster + photo/TV - Group A)
17.30 – 18.00	Meeting with the President of the European Parliament Tour-de-table before the meeting (host broadcaster + photo/TV - Group B)

<b>18.15</b>	<b>Press Conference by the President of the European Parliament</b> <b>(Press room - Press Centre, level 00)</b>
18.00 – 20.00	First working session of the European Council
20.00 – 20.15	Visit to the "Austria in Europe" exhibition (host broadcaster only) followed by the Family photo (host broadcaster + photo/TV - Group C)
20.15	Separate Working Dinners: Heads of State/Government Ministers for Foreign Affairs Ministers of Finance
<b>22.00</b>	<b>Presidency Press Conference</b> <b>(Press Room - Press Centre, level 00)</b> <b>National briefings in the Press Centre</b>

Friday, 24 March 2006

09.30 – 10.00	Arrival of delegations at the Justus Lipsius building (not in protocol order) (VIP entrance, level 02, outside – photo/TV opportunity) (VIP entrance, level 02, inside - (host broadcaster + photo/TV - Group D)
10.00 – 13.00	Second working session of the European Council Tour-de-table before the meeting (host broadcaster + photo/TV - Group E)
<b>13.00</b>	<b>Presidency Press Conference</b> <b>(Press Room - Press Centre, level 00)</b> <b>National briefings in the Press Centre</b>

In general, national press events are organised simultaneously, which means that each observer should cover the member state assigned to her or him. The President of the Council (PM of Austria) and the President of the Commission normally have a joint press conference.

The Council has published a document called "information for the press" on [http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/mis/88370.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/mis/88370.pdf) where all the press facilities are listed.

## Participants in the Summit Case Study

Name	Country of origin	Observing national press briefing of country X
Alessio Cornia	Italy	Italy
Bleuenn Lechaux	France	France
Sigurd Allern	Norway	Sweden
Piia Tamppuu	Estonia	Great Britain
Evelin Pullerits	Estonia	Estonia
Heikki Heikkilä	Finland	Finland
Kristina Dvirnaite (PC)	Lithuania	Lithuania
Kristina Janušaitė	Lithuania	Great Britain
Deike Schmidt (PC)	Germany	Belgium
Pia Nitz (PC)	Germany	Germany
Oliver Hahn (PC)	Germany	Austria
Julia Lönnendonker (PC)	Germany	Ireland
Arno Olesen (PC)	Estonia	Austrian Presidency

### What to observe during the official press briefings:

- The exact course of events: what is happening and when is it happening in chronological order (*→ take a watch with you, organize your notes in chronological order, if possible: tape the press briefing!!!*)
- Duration of each action
- Physical surroundings
- Estimated number of journalists present
- Who is speaking
- What is being said (key statements, importance of specific points, national vs. EU perspective)
- The statements/events that determine the further course of the action
- Reactions to each speaker (questions and comments, attitudes expressed verbally or via body language and emotional atmosphere, conflictual or cooperative spirit, are people paying attention or are they leaving the room or talking to each other?)
- Questions that the journalists ask
- General reactions of journalists (comments of journalists after the briefing, satisfaction or critical remarks if noticeable, otherwise short ad-hoc interviews if possible, asking whether expectations are fulfilled, which points of the official statements are found to be most meaningful, what is rejected or neglected or whether they learned anything that was surprising to them)
- If detectable: differences between different “groups” of journalists, e. g. between those who cover only EU topics and those who cover EU politics from a national perspective (can be found out through the kind of questions Journalists ask)

## **What to observe during the day:**

- Go through the press room of the country assigned to you early in the morning and try to find out where the journalists from different news organizations have their “work stations” or desks. (Usually the name of the news organization is marked.)
- Look for the tables where press statements and other information material is displayed. Take everything you can get and note the time when you took it.
- Observe the arrival of the delegations and how the journalists react/behave
- Observe informal gatherings (e. g. at the coffee bar): Perhaps you can hear what is being said when journalists discuss different issues? Since everything except the official briefings can be labelled as “informal gatherings” you evidently can not observe everything that is going on. Nevertheless it might be worthwhile to follow **some** discussions.
- When and how are the official briefings announced? Is it easy to find out when “your” national briefing is taking place?
- There are ad-hoc press briefings taking place spontaneously. You will notice when a large number of journalists groups around one spokesperson. Look out for these gatherings and try to find out what is being said and by whom. (EU-officials, politicians, commission members & spokespeople have red or blue badges with their names on it, whereas journalists have yellow badges)
- Can you detect anyone from the European Commission?  
(You might want to take a look at the names & pictures of the Commission members on [http://europa.eu.int/comm/commission\\_barroso/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/commission_barroso/index_en.htm) and their spokespeople on  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/communication/guide/index14\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/communication/guide/index14_en.htm) before the summit starts)
- If you notice journalists getting nervous or hectic, it could be that a news agency has published information that has not officially been released yet. Try to find out. Ask journalists what is going on.

## **Some general remarks on observations:**

- You must be aware that your presence will influence field relations to some degree. To minimize reactive effects, try to avoid disturbing the course of events by operating as anonymously and unobtrusively as a scene permits. This does not mean that you are not allowed to ask questions. We assume that a friendly and open attitude will help you to get information better than if you remain mute. You can of course ask for information if you don't understand something. Obviously if someone starts talking to you, you should let the interaction go on (and note it afterwards).
- Pay attention to any occurrences that seem unusual to you.
- Openness is one of the main observation principles: You are not approaching the field with an explicit hypotheses to test. Especially at the beginning try to keep your focus as wide as possible. Once socialized to the setting, you can focus the inquiry a bit more on the research questions.

## **Taking notes & writing memos:**

Writing notes is the most important tool for a successful observation. Although taking notes can be tedious and requires self-discipline, their importance cannot be overstated. Without them it is impossible to write a valid observation report.

We<sup>4</sup> suggest to take five different types of field notes:

### **1. Jotted Notes (*written in the field*)**

Jotted Notes, also called Scratch Notes, are short, temporary memory triggers such as words, phrases or drawings, which are incorporated into direct observation notes later.

### **2. Direct Observations Notes**

Direct Observation Notes are the notes a researcher writes during "observation breaks" or immediately after leaving the field, which he or she can add on later. Direct observation notes are bare, detailed observations without interpretations, without applying analytical categories.

The notes should be ordered chronologically with the date, time, and place on each entry. They serve as detailed descriptions of what the researcher heard and saw. To the extent possible, they are exact recordings of the particular words, phrases or actions. Nonverbal communication such as gestures, tone, speed and volume of the communication can be recorded as well (if it is of importance). You might also want to use spatial or social maps to record your observations.

### **3. Researcher Inference Notes**

Researcher Inference Notes are your interpretations of the observed (inter)actions. They are written in a separate section that is linked to the direct observations. For example, you do not *see* anger or frustration, but only specific actions and draw inferences from them. A researcher keeps inferred meaning separate from direct observation because the meaning of actions is not always self-evident and sometimes can only be fully understood at a later stage of the observation. The separation of inference allows multiple meanings to arise when rereading direct observation notes.

### **4. Analytic Notes**

Analytic Notes are your ideas about correlations, links, hypotheses and conjectures of the events. They are an account of the researchers attempt to give meaning to the field.

### **5. Personal Notes:**

Personal Notes are notes about your personal feelings and reactions during the observation. For example you can record whether you felt welcome or if anyone was hostile towards you. These kind of can be of help when evaluating direct observation and inference notes.

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Neuman, Lawrence / Krueger, Larry W. (2003): Social Work Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Boston: Pearson Education.

(Simplified) Example:

<b><i>Direct Observation</i></b>	<b><i>Inference</i></b>	<b><i>Analytic</i></b>	<b><i>Personal</i></b>
Friday, March 24, 5 pm: XY speaking about a common EU strategy concerning issue xy.	Spokesperson XY and issue xy do not seem to be of great importance	German journalists pay far less attention to issue xy than Italian journalists.	I was not sure if I understood what the main point of the speaker was.
About 30 journalists are present, many journalists are talking to each other, some journalists are leaving the room			

### **Recommendations for taking field notes:**

1. Record notes as soon as possible after each period in the field and do not talk with others until observations are recorded. Otherwise your observations might become either diluted or distorted.
2. Use wide margins to make it easy to add to notes at any time.
3. Record events in the order in which they occurred, and note how long they last.
4. Make notes as concrete, complete, and comprehensive as possible. It helps to break down events into their relevant components. Avoid clichéd or glossy terms.
5. Also record routines that do not appear to be significant at the time; they may become important later.
6. Do not jump to conclusions at once, record first what was going on. First start with asking yourself "who?, when?, where?, how?". "Why?" interpretations can wait until later.

### **Observations reports:**

The observation reports are written reports based on your notes. They should be about 5-6 pages long and provide an answer to the main research questions. You will receive a guide indicating how the observation report is supposed to be structured after the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> field study (after April 10<sup>th</sup>).

**Literature:**

Lindlof, Thomas R.; Taylor, Bryan C. (2002): Qualitative Communication Research Methods. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: Sage.

Neuman, Lawrence; Krueger, Larry W. (2003): Social Work Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Boston: Pearson Education.

Gehrau, Volker (2002): Die Beobachtung in der Kommunikationswissenschaft. Methodische Ansätze und Beispielstudien. Konstanz: UVK.