

### 1.2.1 Methodology and approach

Professional development opportunities, from the perspective of skills development, ideas exchange and exposure to other ways of working are limited for Russian journalists. Additionally, connections and access to international experts and sources, enabling journalists to develop rounded and comprehensive views on issues of global significance, are lacking. These prospects and networks are taken for granted in the UK and other Western countries, and contribute towards vibrant and respected news environments, leading to well informed populations active in the democratic process.

The 'study press tours' proposed by the FCO are well positioned to increase the amount of balanced news reaching the Russian population. Thomson Reuters Foundation (TRF) has been delivering workshops and study tours for journalists for over 30 years and has successfully worked with the British Embassy in Moscow to deliver 10 tours across a range of themes for 80 Russian journalists already. TRF believes it is well placed to build on this experience, developing and fine-tuning its approach to deliver maximum impact for the FCO.

TRF proposes, through a series of eight study press tours, working with a total of 64 journalists from across Russia, to:

1. Help Russian journalists produce balanced, fact based and ethical journalism
2. Build understanding of UK media standards and approaches
3. Contribute to a greater appreciation of UK cultural and political values
4. Create a network of journalists across Russia who share similar ethics, standards and interest in British affairs

TRF has wide-ranging experience working with journalists and media organisations that will influence its approach to this programme:

- Extensive global experience in journalism and media training: Our first-hand experience of training journalists and media professionals around the world gives us a deep understanding of how to work with different ethnic, cultural, gender and age groups. We know what works and what doesn't. We are experienced in working in conflict and high-pressure environments and our focus on journalism ethics, investigative reporting and media business accountability is invaluable. Reuters global network of bureaus and stringers allows our consultants to quickly understand issues affecting journalists and their profession in any part of the world. TRF's significant experience in Russia and the Russian dominated landscapes of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including long-term newsroom consultancies, has enabled us to witness first-hand the changes in the media landscape in this part of the world.
- Robust capacity building methodology: We manage and implement around 200 training workshops every year. We have over 16,000 alumni journalists from over 170 countries reporting in text, pictures and video on issues ranging from International Affairs, to Climate Change, Health, and Modern-Day Slavery. Our innovative training methods have proven time and time again that hands-on workshops, study visits, trainer-led discussions, shared knowledge, practical exercises and continual feedback are most useful to journalists.
- Ability to manage study tours: We have considerable experience in supporting content creators attending study trips, conferences and press tours. Notably, on behalf of the FCO we have run 10 bespoke study tours for journalists from Russia, on themes ranging from Sport and Society to Gender and Equality, Democracy, International Affairs, and The Green Economy. We have worked with numerous UN agencies assisting journalists to find stories at conferences including Annual General Meetings, the Paris Climate Change Summit and UN Habitat conferences and we have brought journalists together from around the world to undertake live reporting on the UK's elections in 2015 and 2017, improving their understanding of democracy and policy dialogue. Additionally, we run in depth, immersive five-week tours for senior editors from Korea each year and fund the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University, leading the world's research on digital trends and helping editors make the correct strategic decisions.

#### Approach to study press tours

To achieve the aims outlined above, the programme would address two key strands: Journalism skills development and improved knowledge and coverage of specified themes. These will involve a mixture

of interactive classroom sessions, visits by key speakers and analysts and wider field visits, including out of London and into UK regional centres.

TRF proposes a flexible and varied approach to the individual workshops, within a defined structure. Each workshop will have in common:

- eight participating journalists and one TRF journalism consultant and mentor;
- a timeframe of five full days in the UK;
- a press tour theme, agreed in consultation with the Embassy in Moscow, on a subject that is newsworthy at the time, around which journalists will create stories for publication

**Classroom sessions** will have two main purposes:

- i. Improving balanced, fact-based reporting. Dedicated, practical, Reuters journalism sessions would focus on the fundamentals of journalism, reviewing: ethics, sourcing, accuracy, objectivity, opinion, and effective interviews, among others. Working journalists are often unwilling to engage in sessions such as these, believing that they already practice the profession in an appropriate way. To that end, these sessions will be pitched as the way in which Reuters approaches journalism, skills that have allowed the company to thrive for over 150 years commercially and as a beacon of trusted information.
- ii. Provide participants with the necessary skills and tools to understand, identify, assess and access data and material that produce the basis of stories relevant to the reporting tour's theme; undertake story preparation/research/interviews with a view to producing a news piece from or soon after the training workshop.

In previous tours the timing of these sessions has been fitted into gaps in the agenda when reporting trips or speakers could not attend. We believe that re-focusing on some key classroom sessions would be beneficial in 1) ensuring the publication of stories relevant to the tour's theme and 2) raising the standards of the journalism output from an accuracy and ethical viewpoint.

**Field and speaker visits** will also have a dual purpose:

- i. Meeting key UK decision makers, including policy and business leaders, government, cultural and sporting organisations. These sources will give an insight into how the UK approaches key policy areas and highlight differences between British and Russian practices.
- ii. Exposure to UK opinion influencers, such as academics, news organisations and journalists. These sources will allow visiting journalists to understand the UK's position on a number of political and cultural issues, wider context, and the role of civil society and the media in holding decision makers to account.

On previous tours, TRF has leveraged its network and brand to arrange private meetings and access to media houses such as the Guardian and BBC, and university departments at Cambridge, Oxford, Kings, Liverpool, Nottingham, Goldsmiths and Cardiff. Reuters journalists and consultants have enabled access to Old Trafford and the Olympic Stadium, meetings with the UK Anti-slavery commissioner, safe houses for vulnerable women, and NGOs and businesses ranging from music venues, advertising companies and LGBTQ+ advocacy groups.

The themes of the eight study press tours would be arranged in partnership with the Embassy in Moscow. They would be decided on factors including their resonance for Russian audience; the ability to generate interesting and newsworthy content; their timeliness; and the ability of the UK to provide expertise and thought leadership in the thematic area. Purely as an example, these could include:

- Education systems: the UK, host of four of the world's top ten universities, numerous world leading research and development organisations, and prestigious colleges, is poised to take a leading role in this global industry.
- Climate change and resilience: new technologies emerging across the UK such as wind and wave technology; we have run programmes with IFAD, UN Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation.
- Health: UK has a 10-year higher life expectancy compared to Russia. The NHS, pharma industry and leading researchers would generate strong stories for journalists; workshops with the WHO or UNICEF have given us much experience.

- Tech sector: London and increasingly other UK cities continue to attract global investment, and the Silicon Roundabout district, wedged between trendy Shoreditch and the City makes for huge story potential. With YouTube we have already worked with journalists from around the world touching on these issues.
- UK Culture: from the latest fashions to the ancient artefacts of the British museum, culture continues to drive society and shape attitudes and opinions (for instance, at London Fashion Week).
- Governance: A constitutional monarchy, the UK has a vastly different system of government to Russia, from the role of cabinet to the devolved administrations and councils, and, the House of Commons. We have run programmes on democracy around the world with organisations such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy with FCO funding.
- International commerce: the UK was built on connections to the world, and London remains one of the most important hubs for banking, insurance and a plethora of supporting industries.

### **Selection of journalists and on-line influencers**

TRF has a well-established system for attracting journalists to its programmes. It publicises opportunities for journalists and online influencers through TRF and partners' platforms and through its alumni networks. It would also use the networks of the Reuters bureau in Moscow and stringer network throughout Russia. Additionally, TRF has a staff member in St Petersburg who has worked in the media sector for a number of years, working closely with groups of journalists from across the country.

Our experience working with the British Embassy previously would put us in a good position to build on momentum gained. For the first workshop we ran in 2017 we received around 15 applicants. For the final workshop in 2019 we received 85 complete applications from across the country, demonstrating the growth in our potential reach and the popularity of the programme. We developed our approach over time, starting the application process sooner, leveraging the Reuters brand name and the credibility of the opportunity, and working more effectively with our alumni.

The participants would be selected according to established criteria, previously agreed with the FCO. This would likely consider geographic locations within Russia, work experience, current employment or activities, interest and knowledge of specified sectors, gender balance of the group and commitment and capacity to report on the issues post-workshop. Based on experience implementing projects with Russian journalists, applicants will be required to provide managerial approval where relevant to attend and continue to cover the issues from the tour.

The application process involves participants submitting letters of motivation, explaining why they would benefit from their attendance and how they would use updated skills and experiences in the future. They are also required to submit samples of work that show their commitment to the tour's theme, and a CV to summarise their career and experience.

The target for selection will be young (over two years experience) to middle-career journalists. This bracket has proved to be responsive to new perspectives, attitudes and ways of working, and to wider collaboration with new journalists and sources.

Participants will be expected to include a story proposal with their application on which to work during the programme. Online influencers who don't produce conventional 'stories', will be required to propose angles or detailed ideas for content production. This will allow TRF consultants to analyse the potential and commitment of applicants as part of the selection process, whilst ensuring a minimum level of understanding of the study tour topic.

Participants (and their editors) will be asked to agree to the production of stories with their news organisations (knowing that this in itself is not enough to guarantee publication).

The guiding principles of selection include:

- Timeliness: strict deadlines will be determined and monitored to respond to applicants;
- Fairness: each participant applying for the workshop will be treated with respect;
- Transparency: all steps in the proposal review process will be conducted in a transparent manner;
- Objectivity: proposal review is through an Application Review team, led by the Foundation's Director of Journalism and Media Programmes.

Due diligence is a key element of the application process. TRF uses the Thomson Reuters World Check tool, a risk assessment and due diligence product that delivers high-quality risk intelligence, including over three million continuously updated profiles of high-risk individuals and organisations worldwide—including 100 percent of sanctioned entities—and detailed information on politically exposed persons and those who present fraud, terrorism, organised crime, and money-laundering risk. This helps to ensure against reputational damage for TRF and for the FCO.

### **Programme Implementation**

TRF shall be directly responsible for the implementation of the programme, coordinating all logistics, communications and oversight activities. This will be coordinated by the TRF Head of Journalism Programmes, Will Church. Overall responsibility will lie with the Media Development Director, Nicolas Bellet. Having worked with the British Embassy in Moscow previously, the TRF team, including coordinators and consultants, understand the project requirements and how these fit in with FCO processes and expectations, and will ensure a flexible implementation approach and an effective collaboration.

All tours will be led by an experienced TRF international trainer, all of whom have attended TRF's Training-the-Trainers programme and will be supported by experienced TRF project staff. The workshops are envisaged to take place in Russian, English, or both. The five-day workshops will be timed to coincide with appropriate events or access to sources, and therefore will not necessarily run Monday to Friday.

Workshop material and agendas will be developed for each event and will be designed to ensure the content is relevant to the occasion and to those attending. This will include background information on all visits, speakers and other attending journalists. Likewise, TRF will be responsible for all logistics associated with the workshops. These include:

- Arranging visas for journalists and trainers where necessary;
- Arranging flights and accommodation for travelling journalists;
- Arranging workshop venue, equipment;
- Field trip logistics (transport, itinerary, incidentals)

If successful, TRF would arrange for the journalists to stay near Reuters in Canary Wharf and use TRF as a base. Workshop sessions would take place in TRF's purpose-built training room. Depending on the theme and the agreed agenda, we anticipate field visits could leave London for one, two or three days at a time, and expose the participants to other parts of the UK. Whilst in London, visits to relevant partners and sources would be balanced by speakers based at or visiting Reuters.

Based on the success of other programmes we will set up individual tour WhatsApp or Telegram threads. These will be used to share information, links, tips, ideas and stories during the five days together. This automatically creates a network of journalists from disparate parts of Russia but focusing on the same issues. These regularly become invaluable journalism tools after the official end of projects, allowing collaboration and social connections to thrive.

Following the visits, TRF will also invite all participants to join their alumni network, including English and Russian language Facebook pages to keep them up-to-date with the latest developments in the journalism industry and offer a chance to share their stories amongst a wider group of peers.

### **Lesson learned**

Thomson Reuters Foundation has worked on a similar programme with the British Embassy before and successfully adapted the workflows and delivery over the project period. If selected, some key lessons include:

- Systematic follow-up with participants post-course was found to result in an increase in the output of stories: We would, therefore, formalise follow-up to ensure an increase in the output of stories.
- Providing detailed agendas, speaker biographies and potential story angles before the tour and ask journalists to join the workshop ready with story ideas. This proved to help engagement.
- Working with the British Embassy to ensure the Call for Applications is launched 10 – 12 weeks before the scheduled press tour. This enabled a far higher application rate for the last two tours.