

The Journalism Trust Initiative to combat disinformation is launched

Reporters Without Borders (RSF), and its partners Agence France Presse (AFP), the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the Global Editors Network (GEN) have just launched an innovative media self-regulatory initiative designed to combat disinformation online - called the Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI).



© [European Broadcasting Union](#). (L-R) Jean-François Legendre, AFNOR, Olaf Steenfadt JTI Project Director, Bertrand Pecquerie CEO Global Editor Network, Christophe Deloire Sec Gen RSF, Michèle Leridon AFP Global News Director, Claudio Cappon Sec Gen COPEAM, EBU DG Noel Curran.

The Journalism Trust Initiative was unveiled at a joint press conference by RSF's secretary general Christophe Deloire, AFP global news director Michèle Léridon, EBU director general Noel Curran and GEN president Peter Bale (who participated by video).

Transparency of media ownership

JTI is designed to promote journalism by adherence to an agreed set of trust and transparency standards to be developed and implemented. This will happen by means of the so-called Workshop Agreement of the European Centre of Standardisation (CEN), which was open on 3 April 2018 for participation of interested stakeholders, for example media outlets, professional associations and unions, self-regulatory entities like press councils and regulatory bodies, as well as digital platforms, advertisers and consumer interest representatives.

"In the new public arena system, in which false information circulate faster than real news, the defence of journalism requires reversing this trend by giving a real advantage to all those who reliably produce news and information, whatever their status," Deloire said.

The resulting standards are expected to reflect transparency of media ownership and sources of revenues, as well as journalistic methods and the compliance with ethical norms and independence. They are intended to become a voluntary, leading benchmark of media self-regulation and good practices for all those who produce journalistic content, ranging from individual bloggers to international media groups. Adopting the standards will pave the way towards a certification process.

Guaranteeing the broadest pluralism and independence

"We have devised a self-regulatory mechanism based on a global analysis of the news and information domain, one that

makes it possible to combine ethical with economic concerns. We are convinced that our initiative will help to foster integrity in the public debate while guaranteeing the broadest pluralism and independence”, Deloire added.

Benefits can be attached to the quality and independence of journalism through preferential distribution and treatment by algorithms of search engines and social media platforms, leading to better visibility, reach and advertising sales. Media outlets “white-listing” may also be of interest to representatives of advisers to help them decide where to channel their spending.

In addition, this mechanism could also serve as a transparent instrument for the allocation of public funding for the media, as a tool for self-regulatory bodies, such as press councils, and regulatory authorities, as well as the basis of a trusted media label.

The battle against the proliferation of misinformation

“For AFP, a global news agency whose mission is to provide news that is “accurate, impartial and trustworthy”, the battle against the proliferation of misinformation and false news goes to the very heart of our mission, says Léridon.

As a leading partner in the CrossCheck project which brought together over a dozen media to fight against disinformation during the French presidential election, a key partner in a range of projects tackling the problem of so-called “fake news” and a member of the European Union’s group of experts on the issue of disinformation, AFP is delighted to participate in the Journalism Trust Initiative in support of the combat for quality and accurate news.”

“As the upcoming GDPR [European General Data Protection Regulation] is set to show the world how Europeans are united in dealing with privacy, this new initiative from RSF is more than welcome”, expanded Bertrand Pecquerie, chief executive officer of the Global Editors Network.

“We definitely need more transparency about content providers, and we agree that a self-regulatory and voluntary benchmark for all sources of journalistic content is part of the solution. The Global Editors Network is ready to participate – with other press organisations – in the discussion opened by the Journalism Trust Initiative.”

Curran added: “The EBU believes that the online presence of public service media organisations is vital to support informed citizenship and represents an essential tool to fight the propagation of fake news. Reliable, quality journalism is the hallmark of public service media and the EBU fully supports this initiative which will aid our Members’ audiences to identify reliable sources and help sustain quality journalism.”

The CEN Workshop Agreement

The CEN Workshop Agreement (CWA) will be chaired by Claudio Cappon, the former director general of the Italian public broadcaster Rai, while Olaf Steenfadt, a former journalist with German media outlets ARD and ZDF, will represent RSF. The

project plan published today on the [CEN website](#) is now up for comments and approval by all groups concerned. Those in favour of the document will then collaborate over a time-span of 12 to 18 months to develop the actual indicators. Hosted by the French Standardisation Association (Afnor) and co-hosted by its German equivalent the German Institute for Standardisation (Din).

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), associated with reflections, made proposals that were taken into account. As of September 2017, RSF organised a preparatory consultation in Brussels with, beyond JTI partners, the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN), the European Federation of Journalists, (EFJ), Netherlands Public Broadcasters (NPO/KRO-NCRV), the German channel ARD, the European Magazine Media Association, RTL Group, the Association of Commercial Television in Europe (ACTE), the European Newspaper Publishers' Association (EMMA/ENPA).

News Media Europe (NME), the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), the European Association of Communication Agencies, the Center for Media, Data and Society (CMD5) at the Central European University (CEU) of Budapest, the Observatoire de la Déontologie de l'Information (ODI), the World Economic Forum, the Office of the Representative for Freedom of Media of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In February 2017, a consultation meeting was also organised in Oxford on the initiative of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

"We fully support and encourage initiatives which provide brands with safe and trustworthy online environments. We welcome initiatives like this one which strive to deliver more transparency, and we look forward to following its progress", said Stephan Loerke, the CEO of the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) in a statement to RSF.

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