



Arena for Journalism in Europe – annual report 2019

Summarised by Brigitte Alfter, director, brigitte@journalismarena.eu

Welcome

2019 – the founding year of Arena!

This narrative report summarises our activities in the start-up year, 2019. It describes the practicalities around setting up the organisation, the new team, the first Dataharvest conference run by Arena, the development of the Arena Housing Project and the considerations on what Arena for Journalism in Europe should focus on in the years to come.

The team and board of Arena are deeply grateful to the community of journalists and organisations supporting journalism throughout Europe who have generously donated time and competence to ensure the survival of the Dataharvest conference. We are also deeply grateful to our funders for the support given to Arena at comparably short notice. Without you all, the conference might not have survived. Now it is thriving and ready to humbly but firmly provide the networking infrastructure that is indispensable for journalism in our era.

Warm regards

Brigitte Alfter and Nils Hanson

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Setting up a new organisation

INCORPORATION

Arena for Journalism in Europe was founded as a 'Stichting', a foundation under Dutch law on January 22nd 2019 and registered in the official registry, KvK, on January 24th.

The mission of Arena is the following:

The foundation has as its purpose to stimulate and support cross-border collaborative and investigative journalism in Europe, including collaboration with other professions, proceeding from the belief that such journalism contributes to information exchange, critical thought, mutual understanding and democracy in Europe.

The foundation fulfils its goal by organising, supporting or financing anything related or conducive to it, such as online and offline meetings and fora, presentations, publications and advisory services.

Details about our purpose and statutes are in these links: <http://journalismarena.eu/>, <http://journalismarena.eu/sample-page/contact/the-statutes/>.

The founding board members were:

- Nils Hanson, Sweden
- Elisabetta Tola, Italy
- Daniel Simons, Netherlands/Denmark

The founding team members were:

- Brigitte Alfter, Germany/Denmark
- Trine Smistrup, Denmark

WHY A DUTCH FOUNDATION?

Arena is set to be a European organisation! Our board members come from Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands, our founding team members from Denmark. We thus wanted a legal entity in one of the founding members' countries, with a suitable legal solution and without a too burdensome bureaucracy.

As a non-profit, we could either go for a membership-based organisation or for a foundation. While a membership model has the advantage of an obliged community, its administration is burdensome, and it has a North Western European bias: The traditions of setting up and participating in membership organisations simply vary over Europe. A foundation is an easier and more straightforward choice, and in the Netherlands, no start-up capital is required.

We are registered with the Dutch Chamber of Commerce: RSIN 859662949

TAX REGISTRATION

Arena is a non-profit organisation serving the public good, and we hold the Dutch ANBI-status. In 2019, we are VAT registered in our two main countries of activity: The Netherlands, our country of registration, and Belgium, where the annual conference takes place.

BANK

We use the ABN Amro bank in Amsterdam.

BOOKKEEPING, ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING

Our accounting and auditing partner in 2019 is Van Tunen en Partner in Amsterdam.

TRANSFER FROM JOURNALISMFUND.EU AND START-UP SUPPORT

Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference was hosted by [Journalismfund.eu](https://journalismfund.eu) from 2011 to 2018. As Journalismfund.eu in 2018 decided to discontinue or spin off the conference, in 2019 Arena took over. The transfer of names, domains, websites, contracts with hotels, previous' years presentations and so forth was agreed upon in a contract between Arena and Journalismfund.eu.

The German NGO Hostwriter.org provided start-up support by letting us funnel participation fees for the 2019 conference through their account and also provided input for the conference program.

A number of volunteers stepped in with time and competence to set up the conference 2019. We'd like to mention Kim Brice from [Grace & Grit](#), Benedikt Hebeisen from [Virtualworx](#), Adriana Homolova and Viktor Nitu from [TendersExposed](#), and Anne-Lise Bouyer from Correctiv.

TEAM MEMBERS AND CO-WORKERS

The founding team consisted of [Brigitte Alfter](#) and [Trine Smistrup](#). Brigitte has worked with the Dataharvest since the Farmsubsidy.org days in 2009 and 2010 and been programme responsible since 2011 under the wings of Journalismfund.eu, where Trine joined in 2014. Since the autumn of 2018, Brigitte and Trine worked on preparing the new organisation and on getting ready for the Dataharvest 2019, now under the wings of Arena.

In March 2019, [Jose Miguel Calatayud](#) joined the team to set up the Local journalism & Housing track for the Dataharvest 2019. Jose has extensive experience in international reporting and a particular interest in housing. After the conference he continued to work with Arena to develop the Arena Housing Network.

Also in March, [Ruben Brugnera](#) joined the team. He is a Belgian freelance journalist and journalism teacher at the Thomas More journalism school in Mechelen. He took responsibility for parts of the event management of the Dataharvest 2019, for the practicalities on the ground and for the coordination of volunteers.

[Crina Boros](#), a Romanian-British data journalist, took upon her the huge task of preparing three parallel hands-on Computer Assisted Reporting training tracks as she had done in the previous years. These training tracks are a key element of the conference.

A EUROPEAN TEAM: INFRASTRUCTURE AND SOUND CROSS-BORDER ROUTINES

Journalismarena.eu has no office – and that's fine. We want to be a European team, and we have the cross-border coordination competence among our team members. Coordinating a team without an office is every day in crossborder teams generally, yet needs some consideration.

We apply an agile project management approach and include a bundle of cooperation software in the open source NextCloud software on our own server. The software includes document sharing tools, a shared calendar and a shared project management software among other things. We further use a shared chat-software for in-between messages.

A work rhythm of weekly telephone conference meetings between Trine, Jose and Brigitte sets the weekly pace, for larger and more in-depth discussions, we meet in person a few times per year. In 2019 we had team meetings in May in Mechelen, in July in Berlin and in September in Hamburg. Further, Trine and Brigitte had a series of in-person meetings in Copenhagen when preparing the conference programme.

LOGO AND GRAPHIC EXPRESSION

The name – Arena for Journalism in Europe – supports the idea of a meeting place for journalists. Arena apart from its classical Latin meaning is used in networking theory and describes the infrastructure for network members to meet.

For the visual expression, we asked a graphic designer [Bjørn Ortmann](#) to help, and he came up with a distinctive red wing carrying the word Arena in a serif type. The red background can also be seen as a speech balloon.

For the conference we maintain name, logo and visual expression of the website for the time being. We want the recognisability, particularly in a year of change to signalise stability of the conference. For the conference, our graphic designer developed a variation of the old Dataharvest vignette.

We set up two websites, where particularly Trine did an eminent job with countless hours, well assisted by Benedikt.

We launched the websites in the beginning of February 2019.

- www.dataharvest.eu is the website of the conference and networking universe.
- www.journalismarena.eu is the background page. In 2019, this was a static page with little activity but all necessary information.



Fundraising & budget

INCOME SUMMARY

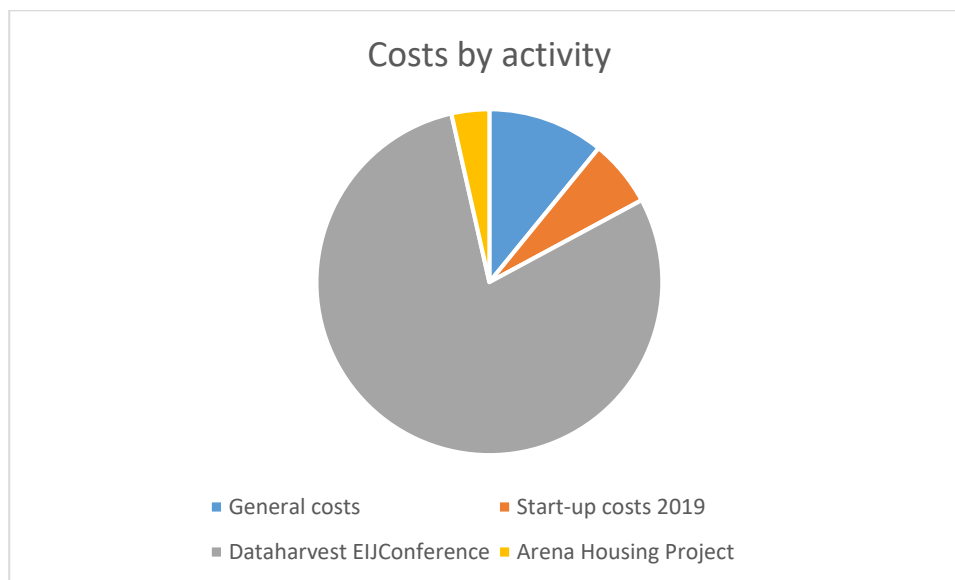
The total income of 2019 was €188.477, of which about 20 percent was own income from participation fees, while the rest was provided by foundations. We consider this satisfactory for year one.

Seven foundations supported us with smaller and larger amounts. We aimed for funders from different countries, and we reached that target.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN 2019

Adessium Foundation	Netherlands	25.000
Augstein Stiftung	Germany	8.000
Fondation Charles Leopold Meyer	Switzerland/France	40.000
Fondation Puëch	Switzerland	45.000
Fritt Ord	Norway	3.116
Open Society Foundations	US/UK	22.170
Schöpflin Stiftung	Germany	5.000

EXPENSES SUMMARY



Activities 2019

The initial 'raison d'être' of Arena was the mission to save the Dataharvest conference. This was accomplished. Arena's clear focus on facilitating a networking infrastructure allowed us to develop a strategy with three interconnected activities:

- 1) The Dataharvest as the annual meeting place,
- 2) by-topic networks of journalists developed based upon the focus of the conference in a given year
- 3) knowledge sharing in the field of collaborative, investigative journalism.

Dataharvest – the European investigative Journalism Conference

IN SHORT

- The 9th EIJC (Dataharvest) gathered in Mechelen/Belgium from May 16th to May 19th 2019
- It was organised for the first time by Arena for Journalism in Europe
- A total of 380 journalists, data developers and others of 41 nationalities living in 29 countries participated
- 100+ sessions in nine tracks. All speakers and trainers donated their time and competence to the community
- Networking was facilitated through a new digital fora for conference participants, through free class rooms for participants to self-organise, and through networking stimulation during the conference
- 16 partnerships with journalism networks, centres, organisations and schools were established for a variety of purposes

PROGRAMME

Pre-conference day

This year's pre-conference day – the Thursday before the conference – offered two master classes, one introduction seminar and the traditional Dataharvest Hackday.

- Master Class "Follow the Money": Full day master class provided by Miranda Patrucic, investigative reporter and regional editor at OCCRP.
- Master Class "Freedom of Information Law as journalistic tool": Full day master class with several speakers including the European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly, several senior journalists and senior legal experts.
- Seminar "Getting started with data journalism": Full day seminar provided by co-author of 'Getting started with data journalism' Crina Boros, freelance data and investigative journalist.
- Dataharvest Hackday: The traditional pre-conference Hackday bringing together coders and data journalists to prepare data sets or document collections for journalists to work with. This year the topics of health and of housing had been prepared by data journalist Adriana Homolova and EIJC19 team member Jose Miguel Calatayud. The findings were presented during the conference.

The tracks of the conference

- **Focus local & housing: 14 sessions** on local journalism, how to interact with readers/users and on the housing situation in Europe. Organised by Jose Miguel Calatayud. More on the local & housing track below.
- **Focus FOI – freedom of information laws as research tool – 5 sessions** on how to gain access to information from EU institutions and others and the aforementioned master class with amongst others the European Ombudsman.
- **Focus crossborder: 12 sessions** on cross-border investigations, how to organize them, how to solve problems – and which results you can get
- **Focus investigative methods: 17 sessions** covering different aspects of investigative methods plus the aforementioned master class “Follow the Money” by Miranda Patrucic.
- **Focus data journalism: 8 sessions** on how to organize, do and teach data journalism and the aforementioned “Get started with data journalism” seminar by Crina Boros.
- **Hands-on CAR training: 32 sessions.** We had three full tracks of hands-on training, meaning no less than 32 sessions of learning, listening and trying, all curated and coordinated in a massive effort by Crina Boros and training offered by a large team of volunteer trainers. All trainers are or have been also journalists and combine this experience with experience in sharing with trainees, as we have a practical approach on how to integrate CAR skills into everyday reporting. We ask all trainers to have a step-by-step approach to teaching and include their training in a story-telling context. For example, we do not simply teach Excel functions, we teach how Excel functions are written, can be used to ask and answer journalistic questions and how to report the results in plain language for any audience. The CAR hands-on strands feature classes for beginners, intermediate and advance. Although 60% of the classes are focused on analysis, we also offer data visualisation training, as well as scraping for all levels. Some of the classes are repeated every year, as they are fundamental for data journalism. However, we also offer a variety of new classes in order to stay relevant and attractive for participants.
- **Data buffet:** Data sets are always presented and explained as part of the conference, so participants can bring them home and start using them for their own stories. Some of the data sets are prepared on the pre-conference Hackday, which this year concentrated on two subjects: Housing and Health&Care.
- **Entrepreneurial: 5 sessions** of inspiration and experiences. Where are the new business models, and how can we fund our journalism?
- **Security: 6 sessions** on digital security such as passwords, encryption, safe collaboration tools and safety when crossing borders, combined with a lunch with individual safety advice

DIGITAL MEETING SPACES AND SELF-ORGANISATION

For this 9th Dataharvest conference, in 2019 for the first time we offered a [digital meeting space for all registered participants](#). The purpose is to offer a space where participants can prepare, coordinate and follow up. We also offered the opportunity to self-organise sessions or network gatherings in one of our spare rooms.

In the digital conference forum, we had set up three categories:

- Meet colleagues by topic
This category was the liveliest with 13 threads of discussion. Several of them concerned the housing topic, others concerned air quality, medicines, public spending for example.

- Meet colleagues by method

This category did not attract much attention. We will use it again in 2020 when there is more time to prepare, if it still does not attract attention, we will not offer it again in 2021.

- Self-organise a session

The self-organisation functioned well. Six threads of discussion lead to four self-organised sessions. Registered participants found others with similar interests and agreed to meet and set up a (public or limited) session. They contact the conference organisers and ask for a room. If it is a public session, they provide a text for the program and the session is then open for all – marked as self-organised session.

NETWORKING & PARTNERSHIPS

Following our purpose, we wish to collaborate with partners in our field.

Here a list of the organisational partnerships:

- **Thomas More Journalism School, Mechelen** is not only a host offering us a very generous agreement on the venue, it is also a genuine partner with whom we work to develop European crossborder journalism education.
- **Meet In Mechelen** is the Tourism Department by the City of Mechelen and hosted our reception in the beautiful town hall's Keldermanszal. A highly appreciated networking element!
- **Journalismfund.eu** was the host organisation of the EIJC (Dataharvest) for eight years and allowed us to take over the name, domain and so forth. Further Journalismfund.eu organised a meeting of its advisory board attended by senior investigative journalists from all over Europe on the pre-conference day in Brussels, thus indirectly subsidising this group to participate, as travel costs were covered except for the local train to Mechelen.
- **Hostwriter** literally hosted Arena during the start-up phase, further Hostwriter co-curated panels during the EIJC19.
- **EJC / Datajournalism.com** recently merged its various data journalism related activities – with a special focus on offering training and networking – and launched its new website Datajournalism.com. In that context, the EJC/Datajournalism.com co-curated two panels bringing in speakers, too. Further, the EJC/Datajournalism.com offered participation grants to four data journalism students from lower income-countries.
- **ICIJ** co-curated several panels on crossborder journalism and brought in several speakers and trainers.
- **OCCRP** brought in several speakers and trainers, we co-curated one master class and we got assistance in curating panels and the HackDay.
- **EIC-network** held one of its regular editorial meetings during the first day of the conference. This allowed us to use some of their senior journalists as speakers and we co-curated some panels.
- **Investigate Europe** brought in several of its journalists as speakers.
- **Reporters in the Field**, the research grant project, brought in some of their alumni as speakers. We are pondering a more systematic cooperation in that regard in the future.



Photo by Letizia Gambini on Twitter

- **Algorithmwatch** was our partner to co-curate the Algorithm track last year and again for the EICJ19 brought in speakers and co-curated one panel.
- **Ostro**, the rather young Slovenian investigative journalism centre, brought in several participants and its founder/director was a speaker and trainer.
- **CORRECTIV**, the German investigative journalism centre, brought in several speakers and co-curated several panels, not least in the local/housing track.
- **EUobserver.com**, the Brussels news site functioned as our media partner advertising for the conference ahead of it and bringing in speakers/moderators.
- **European Data Journalism Network**, an EU-funded curation service. They brought in several participants and held one of their meetings in the context of the EIJ19.
- **BIRN**, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network brought in four speakers/participants and helped us trace relevant speakers in their network during our preparation. For example a colleague covering housing problems in Albania.
- **TendersExposed** team members Adriana Homolova and Victor Nitu donated time and competence in choosing and preparing the digital meeting places for Arena and preparing and running the Hackday.

A few excerpts from the evaluations about what participants liked about the conference:

"The varied program with many exciting topics and an excellent organization"

"All the talks were excellent and informative. The schedule was clear from the app. The organisers, speakers and attendees were friendly and approachable."

"No bullshit - everyone's there because they actually do or want to do data/investigative journalism."

"Very well organized conference. I particularly appreciated the masterclasses and intros to specific applications / tools."

"Organisation. Also that it was paper-free - the phone schedule worked very well! Diverse audience. Lots of choice for seminars."

“

No bullshit – everyone is there because they actually do or want to do data/investigative journalism.

Quote from anonymous feedback survey

EVENT MANAGEMENT

We developed the digital tools to handle the conference routines, and we fared well with three interconnected software programs:

- [Pretix](#) for ticket sale and registration, a system, that automatically generates confirmations, invoices, name tags and – if desired – certificates of participation.
- [Discourse](#) for the internal discussion among conference goers. It is integrated into the registration software so all registered are immediately invited.
- [Sched](#) for the programme and conference networking.

CONFERENCE VENUE – COOPERATION WITH THE THOMAS MORE JOURNALISM SCHOOL

Since 2016 the EIJC & Dataharvest has been hosted by the Thomas More Journalism School in Mechelen just north of Brussels. This is most welcome for multiple reasons. The practical reasons are obvious: We get the venue at favourable conditions, it has the facilities we need in terms of rooms of varying size including rooms with computers installed for training. Also the venue is conveniently close to the airport with a direct train connection. Luckily, the cooperation entails more than just the rent of a conference venue. The journalism department with leaders such as Herman Duponchel and Iris De Roover are very interested in opening to their students the world of investigative, international, data and crossborder journalism. For the 2019 conference, a group of students studying for a BA in journalism participated in the conference and wrote articles about it. Brigitte went to Mechelen in mid-March 2019 for half a day with lectures and preparations of the students.

EVENT MANAGEMENT – CONTRACT HOTELS

We were able to get a suitable number of hotel rooms in Holiday Inn Mechelen and (our favourite) Mercure Vé. The reservations for the 2020 conference are contracted at Mercure Vé and the neighbouring Novotel with favourable conditions on the pre-payments.

EVENT MANAGEMENT –TRAVEL AGENCY

Initially, we decided to try working with a travel agency rather than hiring a student or freelancer to do so. However, after some test orders, we realised that they were not able to access the more advantageous fares, so we did the travel reservations in the team.

Initiating networks

Since 2018, we have – based upon journalistic editorial considerations – selected a topic to focus on, which we perceived as relevant for journalists in different countries. In 2018, this was algorithm accountability, in 2019 the housing crisis and for 2020 it will be energy and climate.

Based upon these topics, we attempt to initiate networks of journalists from all over Europe to continue working in-depth on a topic. The first such network was set up by the German NGO Algorithmwatch; the housing topic lead to the Arena Housing Network hosted by ourselves for the time being; for the energy climate network of investigative journalists, we are collaborating with partners already at the early stages of the preparation for the 2020 conference.

“

Dataharvest 2019's housing focus made the conference one of great collaboration and impact. The aim of collaboration was at the heart and it was designed to benefit attendees in specific and meaningful ways. I found it hugely valuable and distinct from any other journalism conference I've been to.

Megan Lucero, Director of the Bureau Local at The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, London

THE ARENA HOUSING NETWORK – INITIATED 2019

Based upon the vast preparatory work towards the [Dataharvest 2019 Local Journalism and Housing Track](#), and [the enthusiastic welcome during a round table discussion with some 30+ participants of setting up a network to stay in touch over the year](#), we opened an [interactive mailing list in September 2019](#), which towards the end of the year was used by some 150 members. They share information on topics such as European court cases brought by short time rental platforms or discussions on the cap on rental prices as introduced in Berlin and elsewhere. Jose moderates and stimulates these discussions and prepares for a knowledge base and curated articles based upon the publications and knowledge of the network and to connect the dots across not least intra-European borders.

Further we developed a model and began fundraising for a more permanent structure to be set up, likely in the course of 2020.

THE ALGORITHMWATCH NETWORK – INITIATED 2018

For the Dataharvest 2018, the programme team (Brigitte and Trine, then working for Journalismfund.eu) teamed up with German data journalist Matthias Spielkamp, who recently had funded the NGO Algorithmwatch.org. The Algorithmwatch team significantly contributed to the preparation of the [Algorithm Accountability track of the 2018 conference](#), and in the autumn of 2018, Brigitte was asked to help set up and coordinate a European team of researchers, predominantly journalists, to look into the use of automated decision making. This resulted in the report [Automating Society – Taking Stock of Automated Decision-Making in the EU](#). It was presented in the European Parliament in late January as well as at two events in connection with the international conference on privacy CPDP. In 2019, Algorithmwatch itself took over not only the editing but also the coordination and further development of the network. For the Dataharvest 2020, we are cooperating to bring experts from that now well-functioning network as speakers to Mechelen.

Teaching, training, knowledge sharing

One of Arena's activities is to gather and share knowledge in our particular field of journalism. We do that in collaboration with journalism educations, mid-career training providers, foundations and others. There is an intense interest in these new ways of doing journalism, and we have tried to answer at least some of the speaking assignments, we got. This has meant a lot of travelling but has helped raise awareness of Arena.

We aim to provide input to the development of crossborder and collaborative journalism, both on a theoretical and practical level. In 2019, this entailed many speaking and outreach assignments, both for the political level and for fellow journalists and editors. We also made an extensive resource list available on our website.

Further, 2019 was the year of two academic publications, none of them by Arena but both relevant for the organisation. One was Brigitte's book on [cross-border collaborative journalism](#) which is already on the reading list of our partner Gothenburg University, the other a special issue on cross-border collaborative journalism for an academic journal, where Brigitte was leading co-editor on a whole series of articles about the subject.

ARENA HAS SPOKEN AT:

- [Hearing in the Danish parliament](#) (March 2019): Why is there not more news on the EU in Danish media?
- Conference by the European Commission about [Media Literacy in Europe](#) praising the emerging interactive journalism (March 2019)
- The International Journalism Festival (Perugia) on [surmounting bias by practicing crossborder journalism](#) and about the [need to experiment in order to develop new digital tools. \(April 2019\)](#)
- SKUP – the Norwegian Conference for Investigative Journalism. Brigitte Alfter was also a jury member at the conference.
- [Difference Day](#) – the Brussels Universities' honouring of the World Press Freedom Day (May 2019)
- European Press Prize – master class on networked journalism ahead of the [European Press Prize](#)
- Global Investigative Journalism Conference, presentation of an academic conference paper "Taking stock of cross-border journalism education in times of cross-border collaboration" (with Jenny Wijk, Gothenburg University) and presentation of Hostwriter's book "Unbias the News" (September 2019)
- [M100 Sanssouci Potsdam](#) meeting, an annual gathering bringing together editors, publishers and senior journalists, on innovative journalism (September 2019)
- European Journalism Training Association annual meeting – keynote on bringing crossborder journalism into journalism training.

ARENA HAS WRITTEN OR CONTRIBUTED TO:

- ["Crossborder Collaborative Journalism – A Step-By-Step Guide"](#) by Brigitte Alfter published on Routledge April 2019.
- Applied Journalism and Media Studies (academic journal, published by the University of Jönköping in Sweden and publisher Ingenta Connect), [special issue on crossborder collaborative journalism co-edited by Brigitte Alfter.](#)

ARENA HAS TRAINED OR ADVISED AT:

- Center for Investigative Journalism (CIJ) Summer School London on cross-border method
- Danish School of Journalism, teaching international class on cross-border collaborative journalism, followed by a presentation during a [mini-festival for all students](#).
- Central European University - EU-supported crossborder training project for journalists in the Western Balkans
- "Reporters United", recently formed Greek group. Advising on a series of seminars including potential formats, frequency, speakers and trainers on the topics.

ARENA'S OTHER OUTREACH AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES IN 2019:

- Interview with Brigitte Alfter in the North-Rhine-Westphalian [magazine of the journalism association DJV](#)
- Brigitte Alfter awarded one of the finest Danish awards for journalists, the Carsten Nielsen Prize, for her work for crossborder collaborative journalism
- Participation in the 5-year birthday of [Hostwriter](#)
- Book on cross-border collaborative journalism [reviewed in the European Journalism Observatory](#).
- Various academic articles and book, written by Brigitte Alfter, on cross-border collaborative journalism quoted in [Oxford Encyclopedia of Communication's article on Transnational Cooperation in Journalism](#).
- [Interview with Brigitte Alfter](#) by International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ)
- Meet-up on housing at the Global Investigative Journalism Conference
- Brainstorm gathering about journalism in Europe, at German Bosch Foundation called by [Richard Weizsäcker Fellow Natalie Nougayrède](#).
- [Sharing Cities Action 2019](#), presenting the Arena housing project
- Speaking about the Arena Housing Project at a panel discussion on "Airbnb VS the Right to Housing" in Barcelona in November 2019