



As agreed by board 11th of March 2020

# Arena for Journalism in Europe 2020 and onwards – our focus

## THE PURPOSE OF ARENA FOR JOURNALISM IN EUROPE

Arena for Journalism in Europe supports cross-border collaborative and investigative journalism in Europe. Collaborative journalism involves journalists working with other journalists across geographical borders, and journalists working across professional borders with scholars or scientists as well as with civil society and other communities. We believe that collaborative and investigative journalism is crucial to knowledge sharing, critical thinking and democratic political life in European societies.

All activities of Arena for Journalism in Europe have the overall purpose of strengthening democracy and mutual understanding in Europe.

## BACKGROUND

Founded in January 2019 to ensure the continuation of the highly appreciated *Dataharvest - the European Investigative Journalism Conference*, Arena for Journalism in Europe focuses on developing and facilitating the crucially necessary networking infrastructure for collaborative journalism in Europe.

Arena is non-profit and relies on external support. It is governed by a voluntary board of senior personalities from the field; a group of paid and volunteer team members carries out its activities. As a registered foundation in the Netherlands, Arena adheres to the Dutch ANBI rules for non-profit organisations working in the public interest. For more information about Arena go to [www.journalismarena.eu](http://www.journalismarena.eu).

## WHAT WE DO AND WHY

Arena focuses on three areas of activities. All have the purpose of supporting and developing collaborations and knowledge sharing among journalists in Europe. We believe that there is a genuine need to collaborate among journalists in a societal context where politicians and business people make their decisions far away from the citizens affected by them, and where major developments such as financial, climate or migration crisis can only be understood and dealt with in international fora. Collaboration can help journalists bridge the distance between groups of citizens in different countries, and between citizens and those holding power. Contrary to centralised structures, collaboration has the advantage of being respectful and including – journalists in such teams depend one on each other to do our work, hence we must embrace differences. This has a qualitative element way beyond the functional purpose of doing better and more powerful journalism together.

## OUR THREE AREAS OF ACTIVITIES

<b>DATAHARVEST - THE EUROPEAN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM CONFERENCE</b>	<p>Annual conference for investigative, data, cross-border collaborative and entrepreneurial journalism attracting 4-500 participants.</p> <p>We offer an open meeting space for professional exchange, development, training and networking in the following fields of journalism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Investigative</li><li>• Cross-border collaborative</li><li>• Data</li><li>• Entrepreneurial</li></ul> <p>Since 2018, we have selected a focus topic every year.</p>
<b>CREATING OPEN ACCESS JOURNALIST NETWORKS IN EUROPE</b>	<p>We create open access networks for journalists working on a particular topic. The topics are selected by the editorial team of the conference. Typically developed in partnership with other organisations, we spin-off most of these networks to specialised groups or media partners in the field.</p> <p>By 2020, we have co-developed a European network for Algorithmwatch.org and the Arena Housing Project. A new network for investigative journalists covering energy and the climate is under development.</p>
<b>ARENA ACADEMY</b>	<p>Arena gathers and shares knowledge and experience in the field of collaborative, investigative, data and entrepreneurial journalism.</p> <p>We work in advising and contributing roles, for example with journalism schools wishing to integrate collaboration in their education, foundations or others happy to share collaborative and cross-border competences with their communities, media partners wishing to integrate collaboration in their production or individual journalists wishing to set up network groups in their countries or connect with international networks.</p>

## OUR FLAGSHIP ACTIVITY: THE DATAHARVEST CONFERENCE

Our flagship activity is the annual [Dataharvest - the European Investigative Journalism Conference](#), which over 10 years has grown to gather 4-500 data and investigative journalists and editors from most European countries. The conference today has around 110 sessions, including three full tracks of data skills training. The conference is a space for learning and sharing experiences and has also become an important hub for developing new collaborations and gathering network meetings.

Numerous cross-border investigations and projects have been hatched at Dataharvest, as well as larger and permanent networks such as European Investigative Collaborations – a media network – and Investigate Europe – a cooperative of journalists. The title of the conference – Dataharvest, the European Investigative Journalism Conference – tells something about the roots of the project. Initially the Dataharvest was the annual meeting place for the investigative journalists and data developers of the Farmsubsidy.org project fighting for transparency in the EU agricultural policy. In 2011 the gathering came under the wings of Belgian non-profit Fonds Pascal Decroos and integrated the FPD's Wobbing.eu network, a European network of journalists using freedom of information legislation for their work. Over the coming years the conference grew significantly and the Belgian host organisation, now renamed Journalismfund.eu, decided to spin it off. In 2019, Arena for Journalism in Europe was founded to ensure the future of the conference.

Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference in points:

- Opened to all journalists in 2011 with 35 participants, grown to almost 500 participants by 2018.
- 100+ sessions of panels, workshops, trainings, network round tables over 2½ days, typically in May.
- Pre-conference day with hack-day, master classes and seminars.
- Keywords: Investigative, data, cross-border, collaborative, entrepreneurial.
- More than a conference: A meeting place where new stories are prepared.
- Since 2018 with an annual focus topic, for example algorithm watching or the housing crisis.
- In collaboration with the Thomas More journalism school in the charming Flemish town Mechelen.
- In collaboration with journalism initiatives and media from all over Europe.

Motivation:

We observe a need for open networking spaces and spaces for professional exchange among journalists. This is particularly the case among journalists working with the newer methods such as investigative, data, collaborative and entrepreneurial journalism, as they often have to find likeminded peers outside their own news rooms. Meeting in person and cultivating networks with colleagues across borders is a precondition for journalism in Europe, if we want to fulfil the duty of telling the whole story to our audiences.

## CREATING OPEN ACCESS JOURNALIST NETWORKS IN EUROPE

Journalists need and wish to collaborate across borders, both in carefully selected investigative teams and in open networks as part of the daily news flow. In many cases it is absolutely necessary to strive for cross-border coverage if a topic should come on the political agenda, however journalists struggle to find the right competences among colleagues in other countries.

Creating open access journalists networks by topic where already published material is shared along with knowledge and methodologies, offers a solution to this problem.

Since 2018, at Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference we have chosen an annual focus topic for the conference. Preparing and running a dedicated track has provided us with rich overviews of just how much excellent journalism is published across Europe on a given topic – including an insight just how much time and effort it takes to gain such an overview across language borders and without well-functioning networks. The overview gained in the preparation of the focus topic track for a conference and the community of journalists gathered are excellent starting points to create by-topic networks. We have done this – with partner organisations and on our own – and the following have been achieved so far:

### **ESTABLISHED: The Automated Decision Network of 2018:**

A network of journalists and academics has been created and is now coordinated and run by Algorithmwatch.org, a German civil society and journalism organisation. The early stages of the network included an [Algorithm Accountability track at the Dataharvest 2018](#), prepared by key figures of Algorithmwatch and the Dataharvest programme team. Over the autumn 2018 and winter 2019, Brigitte from Arena coordinated the first network activity. The goal was to produce an overview report on automated decision making in Europe, and this was published in January 2019 and presented at the European Parliament and several dedicated conferences.

As of 2019, Algorithmwatch has been able to fund a coordinator for a follow-up report as well as a journalist to follow up on stories and coordinate journalism produced on national level. For the 2020 Dataharvest, Algorithmwatch and Arena collaborate on several sessions about algorithm accountability as gathered by the network. The competence and knowledge in this network is extensive and cross-pollinates work on the topic on national level.

### **WELL ON THE WAY: The Arena Housing Project of 2019:**

An open-access network was created of predominantly journalists but also academics and civil society team members, all working with various aspects of the housing crisis currently harrowing Europe. Following the highly appreciated [Local Journalism and Housing Track at the Dataharvest 2019](#), we launched the Arena Housing Project, an open access network for journalists covering anything related to housing.

The Arena Housing Project offers [an interactive mailing list to exchange already published information](#). In the course of 2020, a coordinated knowledge base and the publication of curated articles and coordination of investigations will follow. For the time being and for the purpose of developing a genuine open access network, Arena runs this project within the

organisation. The future perspective is to document the process of setting up such a network and to spin off the Arena Housing Project to a suitable partner.

**UNDER DEVELOPMENT: The Investigating Energy and Climate network of 2020:**

For the Dataharvest 2020, we prepare a focus track on energy and the climate: “Follow the pipeline”. Arena prepares the conference track within the data and investigative journalism community.

For the longer perspective we have reached out to potential partners from the very beginning. Thus, we wish to pave the way for this network to spin off swiftly, while staying in a close cooperation with Arena to bring together network members during future Dataharvest conferences.

**Motivation:**

The need to collaborate with journalists across borders is expressed by many in our communities, however it may be difficult to integrate into a busy day-to-day routine of a news room or an investigative centre to establish and coordinate a network. With networks focusing on particular topics, we create obvious groups to approach when a journalist comes across a certain topic. The competence of setting up and coordinating such networks is developed and shared as the network is spun off to another organisation or as we document (about the Arena Housing Project) and publish about the meta experiences.

## ARENA ACADEMY

In an era of change in journalism and in media, the need for knowledge exchange is particularly important. Arena and our team are firmly embedded in a community of journalists and editors in Europe working with new ways of doing and presenting journalism. We receive large numbers of requests to connect colleagues for individual researches and requests by groups of journalists to help them set up structures, we receive speaking, training and advice requests by journalism schools, training centres or conferences. Arena Academy takes time to understand the meta level of the new developments in journalism and to share that with our partners.

Arena Academy is a knowledge sharing, analysis and teaching/training structure in the following areas of journalism:

- investigative journalism and the focus on research methods
- collaboration across national borders, but also between journalists and academics, journalists and civil society and – importantly – journalists and audiences, while never forgetting the need for editorial responsibility and independence
- data journalism and the challenges and chances of digitalisation
- entrepreneurial journalism based upon the experience that journalists must take their profession seriously and make it happen, also in times where media may be struggling financially. Entrepreneurial covers the area from self-organisation to developing new business models.

### **What we do:**

- Advice to journalists and journalism organisations wishing to set up seminars, membership structures and participate in networks
- Advice to individual journalists seeking potential partners for journalism research
- Advice to universities on teaching collaborative journalism practice and analysis as well as guest lectures on collaborative journalism practice and analysis and development of teaching/training programmes
- Journalism training and advice on how to train in the fields of collaborative, investigative, entrepreneurial journalism practice
- Meta-practic and academic research into our fields of competence and publication with the purpose of strengthening the profession and analysis in our fields of expertise
- High level round table gatherings on cross-border, entrepreneurial, investigative, data journalism with reports or articles as output
- Knowledge base on cross-border and other collaborative journalism

### **Motivation:**

There is a genuine development driven by and via the investigative, collaborative, data and entrepreneurial journalists' community. Currently, we already carry out much of the work mentioned above, however it is scattered rather than focused, we can neither offer the competence nor market it towards actors in the field who would be capable of actually supporting these developments. With a described list of competences and activities carried out, this knowledge can be made available towards larger groups and it gets potential to ask contributions from funders or commercial partners.

## HOW WE WORK

**Community:** Arena's activities are for the community of journalists wishing to collaborate across borders in Europe, particularly in the fields of journalism mentioned above. Our most important task is to serve this community while at the same time being part of it.

**Networking and collaboration:** Arena follows the idea of networking. We believe that collaboration is a precondition to answer today's challenges to journalism, we believe that collaboration has a quality adding more to a given journalism project than just pooling knowledge or resources. The process of collaborating enriches the journalism done in such settings.

**Respect:** Constructive networking and collaboration demands respect as a precondition. We strive to practice that within our own team and in all aspects of our work.

**Pluralism and diversity:** We consider diversity as a given in Europe and pluralism an essential part of democratic societies. We consider both as a quality and strive for these qualities in our team and all aspects of our work.

**Need-driven:** Our work is need-driven. We provide services to our community based upon our best journalistic experience and analysis and we carefully listen to all our partners and participants to answer the needs at a given moment.