

Arena for Journalism in Europe 2021 and onwards: our priorities

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.

THE ORGANISATION

Arena is a non-profit founded in 2019 and registered in the Netherlands. Most of our activities are made possible through kind contributions from several foundations, while a smaller part of our income comes from participation fees for the annual Dataharvest conference. We adhere to the Dutch ANBI-rules for non-profit organizations working in the public interest.

WHAT WE DO AND WHY – OUR VISION AND VALUES

Arena has three main foci, all with the purpose of supporting and developing collaborations and knowledge-sharing among journalists in Europe. The interest in our activities indicates a genuine need for professional collaboration fora. Providing this highly specialized editorial infrastructure is a niche activity, but a niche activity where multipliers meet, thus with a realistic aim for a wide effect.

Throughout, we have a strong interest in data journalism, digital decision making, digital security and innovation. Thus, we follow ethical ideals such as transparency, accessibility, open-source software etc in all our work.

Journalistic collaboration can help to 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 inclusive – journalists working in teams towards a shared goal must embrace differences. This has a qualitative element beyond the functional purpose of doing better and more powerful journalism together.

OUR THREE AREAS OF ACTIVITIES

DATAHARVEST - THE EUROPEAN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM CONFERENCE	<p>Annual conference for investigative, data, (cross-border) collaborative and entrepreneurial journalism, attracting 4-600 participants</p> <p>We offer an open meeting space for professional exchange, development and networking in the following fields of journalism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigative • Crossborder and collaborative • Data • Entrepreneurial
ARENA NETWORKS	<p>We provide opportunities for journalists and other experts across Europe to meet by subject. We also provide dedicated collaborative journalism infrastructure and we pick up stories, where we coordinate investigations. Currently we offer networks with the following topics, further networks are under preparation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Arena Housing Project</u> – on affordable housing across Europe. Founded 2019. First investigation published 2021. • <u>Arena Climate Network</u> – investigating climate policies. Founded 2020. Strong focus on training. • <u>The Algorithmwatch Network</u> – on automated decision making in societies: Dataharvest focus 2018 and founded the same year by Algorithmwatch and collaborating with Arena.
ARENA ACADEMY	<p>Teaching, training, knowledge sharing and mentoring.</p> <p>We provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminars and trainings • Mentoring • Research and analysis <p>We provide these services to universities, operative foundations, organisations and others. We also contribute to national and international journals and books.</p>

OUR FLAGSHIP ACTIVITY: DATAHARVEST – THE EUROPEAN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM CONFERENCE

Our flagship activity is the annual Dataharvest - the European Investigative Journalism Conference.

Founded in 2009 and opened to all journalists in 2011 with 35 participants. By 2018, the conference had grown to almost 500 participants, and the online version in 2020 attracted almost 600. Their – and thus our – motivation is of course, that if journalism wants to match power structures, we need to collaborate in the interest of the public. In order to meet suitable collaboration partners, an open-access networking opportunity is indispensable for inspiration and recruitment.



The conference today has more than 100 sessions over four days, including a strong focus on data skills training and other investigative methods. A working conference, Dataharvest – EIJC also has become an important hub for developing new collaborations and gathering network meetings. Numerous crossborder 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.

Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference in ten points:

1. Opened to all journalists in 2011 with 35 participants, grown to almost 600 participants by 2020.
2. 100+ sessions of panels, workshops, trainings, network round tables over 3 days, typically in May.
3. Pre-conference day with hack-day, masterclasses and seminars.
4. Journalism keywords: Investigative, data, crossborder, collaborative, entrepreneurial.
5. A working conference, this means a meeting place where new stories are prepared.
6. Since 2018, annual focus topic, for example algorithms in society or the housing crisis.
7. In collaboration with the Thomas More journalism school in the charming Flemish town Mechelen.
8. In collaboration with journalism initiatives and media from all over Europe.
9. Diverse and committed community of professional journalists, from newcomer to editor level, staffers as well as freelancers.
10. Diverse and committed community from all parts of Europe.

Next development steps:

For the years to come, we have two objectives: Inclusiveness and sustainability.

- Inclusiveness on the content/program side means developing a work routine where members of the community are included in the editorial decisions/curation of the conference. This requires new work processes, as we wish to actively include colleagues, while the Arena team must maintain the end-responsibility towards board and funders.
- Inclusiveness also means financial inclusiveness: securing affordable access to the conference for all journalists regardless their income level, so also freelancers and colleagues from lower income countries can afford participation.

- By 2021, the conference is well-established and popular, even viewed as a necessity by the community. It is time to develop the financial sustainability to secure both the future of the conference and the above mentioned financial inclusivity. In the years to come, we will work on income generation models.

ARENA NETWORKS – AN ACTIVITY IN DEVELOPMENT

Since 2018, the journalistic/program team preparing the Dataharvest has decided on an annual focus topic for the conference. The selection of the focus topic goes along classic journalistic decisions: The topic must be relevant in society, and relevant in and for Europe. Preparing such a focus track is a lot of work – which at the same time is the basic research necessary to bring together journalists working on or interested in a given topic: The beginning of a topical network. Once launched, members of the networks engage in knowledge exchange, investigations or dedicated trainings.

Similar to the open-access network provide by the conference, the topical networks answer a need by journalists to meet colleagues with a shared interest and specialisation. While day-to-day work in the newsroom may not allow this extra effort, our networks make it easier to integrate collaboration in a busy newsroom, because the topics are of interest.

The **Arena Housing Network**, launched at the Dataharvest 2019, offers a wide range of resources. In the spring of 2021, the first investigation coordinated by Arena was published, mapping corporate landlords from Athens to Dublin and in 14 other European cities. The shared data set is hosted by Arena and were accessed by 960.000 readers in the first month after publication.

The **Arena Climate Network** – launched at the Dataharvest 2020, offers collaborative resources and a secure document drop. In 2021, the activities focus on training and collaborative journalism, and an investigative project is under preparation.



Next development steps:

Arena is currently (September 2021) preparing three new networks to be launched in 2021-2023. With two pilot networks up and running and requests coming to Arena to set up further networks, it is time for an evaluation and strategy development for Arena Networks for the new networks to benefit of. This is due to happen in the course of 2021/22.

ARENA ACADEMY

Via Arena Academy, we share the competences of the Arena and Dataharvest EIJC team and community in various formats. Our competences are in the fields of investigative, crossborder collaborative and more generally collaborative journalism, as well as in the fields of data and entrepreneurial journalism.

We do:

- Seminars and trainings
- Mentoring
- Research and analysis, reflection on practice

Under this heading we offer seminars, trainings or mentorships alone or with partners. A few examples:

- **We cooperate with partners on education and training in crossborder collaborative journalism.** For example we co-organise an annual European Collaborative Journalism Programme with the German Alfred-Töpfer-Foundation and a three day seminar on Digital Dilemmas for the Horizon 2020 project Panelfit.
- **We provide individual mentorships to journalists and journalism organisations.** For example to the editorial coordinator of a cross-border collaboration MoneyToBurn and to a start-up medium Atlatzo.ro.
- **We write articles and contribute chapters** on topics dealing with our field of journalism.
- **We help develop a collaborative journalism education.** For example with a group of universities and journalism schools.

Next development steps:

In the first years of Arena's existence, the knowledge sharing aspects have largely followed requests from others wishing to include our competences. In the future, we will revisit this activity and integrate it more firmly in our overall strategy.

ARENA'S ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Arena for Journalism in Europe was founded in 2019 to secure "Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference". We succeeded in doing that. Along the way we developed our clear, three-tier strategy for activities. In 2021, we look ahead to develop Arena into a sustainable organisation.

Next development steps:

Financial sustainability and the organisational strategy will be the focus of the coming years.

HOW WE WORK

Community: Arena's activities are directed towards the community of journalists wishing to collaborate across borders in Europe. We serve this community while at the same time being part of it.

Networking and collaboration: We believe that collaboration is a precondition to answer today's challenges to journalism. And we believe that collaboration adds more to a journalism project than just pooling knowledge or resources: the very process of collaborating widens the team members' horizon, thus enriching their journalism.

Respect: Constructive networking and collaboration demands respect for differences. We strive to practice this approach in 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 strive for these qualities in our team and all aspects of our work.

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