



Looking back at 2021

ARENA FOR JOURNALISM IN EUROPE – ANNUAL REPORT

Primo February 2022 / bri

Working along – while growing and growing up

2021 was the third year of Arena and the second year with the corona virus. The end of this year is a good moment to have a proud look back at the past three years and an optimistic glance into the future.

- In 2021, we ran another online conference and a long series of online trainings, meetings, peer-exchanges, pop-up seminars and master classes.
- In 2021, we had our first big publication with one of our topical networks: the Arena Housing Network published the Cities For Rent investigation with its 25+ journalists in 16 cities mapping corporate landlords. Within the first month, some 960 000 people across Europe – from Athens to Dublin – had read one of the team's stories.
- We continued our work to craft formal and informal relationships with a number of important organisations in the field.
- Also in 2021, we secured funding to strengthen Arena as an organisation.
- From 2019 to 2022, we more than doubled our overall budget, our work is supported by funders and by a large community of journalism professionals.

These are, of course, just a few highlights. For more about all the activities of 2021, just read on and join us for the 2021 annual report.

The purpose with this report is to look back and learn from all our activities in 2021. It is also the moment to look ahead to integrate these learnings into our planning for 2022 and beyond.

The Arena team and board, February 2022

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Organisation

INCORPORATION, MISSION, KEY ACTIVITIES

Arena for Journalism in Europe is a 'Stichting', a foundation under Dutch law founded in January 2019. We have the ANBI-non-profit status under the Dutch tax regime, which also has been recognised by supporting foundations outside of the Netherlands. Our mission is unchanged:

"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."

We carry out our networking in the three clusters of activities:

- Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference
The annual meeting place for in-depth journalism in Europe
- Arena Networks
Initiating, running, facilitating specialised networks for journalists in Europe
- Arena Academy
Teaching, training, mentoring, consulting, writing and analysis

BOARD

The board members in 2021 were the same as in the founding year:

- Nils Hanson, chairman
- Elisabetta Tola, secretary
- Daniel Simons, treasurer

The board held three formal meetings in March, June and October 2021. Further, towards the end of the year, our chairman Nils Hanson stepped in to assist in the process of recruiting and appointing the new director.

Our board members are actively involved in our activities such as the Dataharvest programme planning, legal and financial considerations.

We envisage more intense work with a board strategy towards 2023, when the new management team will be well established.

THE TEAM

Arena has a highly committed team. It is quite European in itself - from east, west, south, and north in Europe. Four of eight team members are living in another country than the one in which they were born. Among us, we speak German, French, Spanish, Italian, Slovakian, Dutch, Croatian, Danish, Swedish,

Norwegian - and English, which is our working language, even though it is not the mother tongue of either of us. The team consists of (in alphabetical order):

- **Brigitte Alfter**, director of Arena, Danish/German journalist based in Denmark. Tireless organizer, involved in most activities, with a special eye on European affairs, on algorithms and on the meta-level of journalism.
- **Ruben Brugnera**, project manager, Belgian investigative journalist and teacher at Thomas More Hogeschool Mechelen, the usual venue of the Dataharvest conference.
- **Jose M. Calatayud**, project director, Spanish journalist, based in Berlin. Coordinator of the Arena Housing Project, also has a special eye on the network of independent media in Europe, entrepreneurship and digital security.
- **Benedikt Hebeisen**, IT, tech and digital security manager, German, based in Berlin, long experience in advising cross-border collaboration teams, has a focus on improving online collaboration with secure tools.
- **Adriana Homolova**, Slovak/Dutch journalist based in the Netherlands, coordinated and moderated all data skills sessions at the online Dataharvest conferences in 2020 and 2021, while also crunching the data in the “Cities for Rent” investigation.
- **Maike Olij**, media consultant based in the Netherlands, co-founder and facilitator for Reference, the European Independent Media Circle.
- **Jelena Prtoric**, project director, Croatian journalist, based in Berlin. She joined the team to coordinate the Arena Climate Project, worked on Dataharvest program in 2020 and 2021, and was chosen as a Bertha Challenge fellow 2022, which will give valuable input to our 2022 focus on food and water in Europe.
- **Trine Smistrup**, program director for Dataharvest, Danish journalist, managed communication, registration and the overall program for the Dataharvest conference, also involved in the general management of Arena.

From the beginning (also before Corona), the team has worked remotely, connected through a well-crafted combination of digital set-up and work routines. The corona years were tough, but we got through them without major problems – though we were all relieved and enthusiastic to meet for our first in-person team meeting in Berlin in September 2021.

All team members are currently paid on a part-time and time-limited basis adjusted to funds available, though several team members do work full time or even more than 40 hours per week. Luckily, as of 2022 we will be able to bring an additional managing director, and one her tasks will be to develop the HR aspects of our work.

FINANCES

The total income of 2021 was €300.000, mostly from foundations, smaller amounts from participation fees, project partnerships and lecturing or mentoring. Nine foundations and re-granters from six different countries contributed core as well as earmarked funding and were wonderfully supportive in the year 2 of corona.

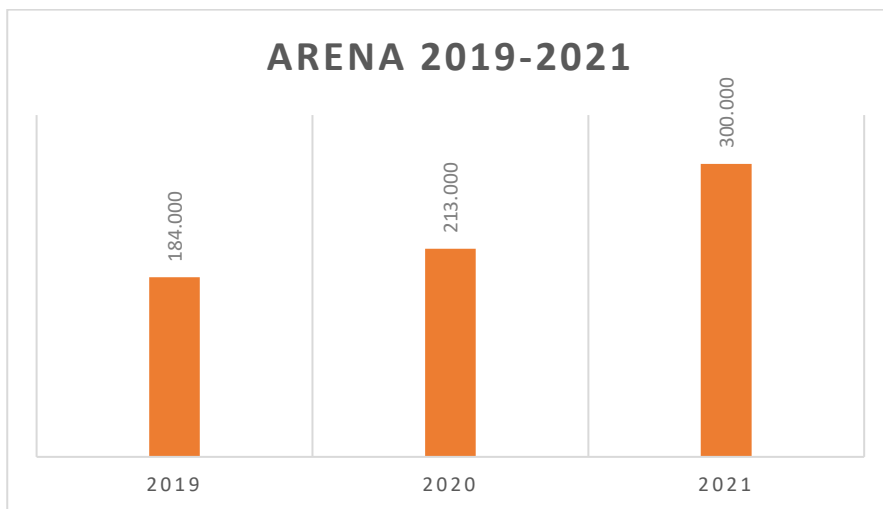
We are grateful for the support from:

- Adessium Foundation - Netherlands
- Augstein Stiftung - Germany
- European Climate Foundataion - Netherlands
- Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le progrès de l’homme - Switzerland/France

- Fritt Ord – Norway
- IJ4EU / IPI – Austria (European Commission re-granting)
- OSIFE - US/Spain
- Stichting Democratie en Media – Netherlands
- Töpfer Stiftung - Germany

We had looked forward to bringing all our funders together in Mechelen for the 2020 conference. In-person meetings are now postponed to 2022, and we look forward to meeting all our funders again.

A minor part of our income comes directly from our community, predominantly in the shape of participation fees for the conference and fees for teaching, training, mentoring.



The overall income development is satisfactory. Future tasks will be to stabilise the multiple year income and the balance between income streams, so that core and project funding, own generated income and foundation support find sustainable balances.

Given the circumstances of the corona-year, we are utterly grateful to our funders, partners and community for the ongoing support.

WORK ROUTINES AND DIGITAL STRATEGY

Our daily work reflects our distributed team, located in five European cities in four countries. We've developed routines with weekly video calls and contact each other by phone, messenger and a team chat, and we use our own digital infrastructure.

We continued to use our secure and mostly open-source software work environment based on Nextcloud with an integrated online office for file sharing and editing, shared calendar, project management tools etc and an own video conferencing server.

This setup reflects our strategy to focus on secure but straightforward collaboration tools. We try to use open-source software where possible and reasonable to keep the full control on our data and try to evolve the setup according to the needs of the team.

We have actively decided to *not* have a main office in order to avoid imbalances in the distributed team.

Arena activities in 2021

Arena's main focus and 'raison d'être' is to develop and facilitate a networking infrastructure for investigative collaborative journalism in Europe. We do this in three interconnected activities – all in the field of collaborative, investigative and data journalism:

- Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference
The annual meeting place for in-depth journalism in Europe
- Arena Networks
Initiating, running, facilitating specialised networks for journalists in Europe
- Arena Academy
Teaching, training, mentoring, consulting, writing and analysis

DATAHARVEST

– THE EUROPEAN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM CONFERENCE

Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference is Arena's flagship activity and pre-corona gathered 4-500 journalists in Mechelen, Belgium.

In the first Covid-19 defined year, we substituted the in-person conference with a 13-week online conference. Even if it was a success, we admit that it drained us and the organisation (and participants!).

In the winter 2020/21, we realised that there would be no responsible way to have an in-person conference in 2021 either. Based on our 2020 experience, we decided to substitute the conference with online activities but not in the same way as in 2020:

The main conference in May 2021 was three weeks long, each week with program Tuesday-Friday. Each week had a theme that would be a traditional Dataharvest track: 1) Investigative methods, 2) Data journalism and 3) Crossborder journalism. There were daily hands-on trainings in data journalism skills, and Fridays had a special focus on climate and energy topics. Overall, we organised 10 sessions focusing on climate issues. We looked into investigative methodologies behind some of the recent European investigations on the topic, hosted data analysts from the European Environmental Agency who shared their datasets with us, and offered to Dataharvest participants the opportunity to get guidance and mentoring support from two data and one OSINT trainer after the main conference program.

The remaining traditional tracks were changed to full-day masterclasses that would run once a month over the whole autumn season, leaving participants more flexibility. We arranged two of the master classes in cooperation with partner organisations: "Digital security" with Tactical Tech and "Dealing with digital harassment" with the International Press Institute.

293 journalists registered for the conference - not as many as in 2020, but in our opinion quite satisfactory in a year with increasing "online fatigue" where many had had enough of online meetings and activities.

[See the full program for the 2021 conference and masterclasses here](#)

Additionally, we started a new initiative, called "Dataharvest Pop-Ups" where we once a month presented a recently published investigation. This was of course made possible by the open sharing in the investigative community, and Arena's Jelena Prtoric – the coordinator of the Dataharvest pop-up program –

was usually met with a 'yes' when asking the journalists behind an investigation to share their methods and findings with the colleagues online.

268 journalists registered for the pop-ups – some to participate in a particular session, others to attend several over the year.

[See the program for the Pop-Up sessions here](#)

The master classes and pop-ups gave us an online presence during the whole year, while in normal years we would have been rather invisible in the months before the conference. We are now considering ways of maintaining this presence in post-covid times.

We entered the 2021 online conference with a lot more confidence than the 2020 version. We were now used to the online format, and so were the speakers and participants. While we are all looking forward to meeting in person again, there is no doubt that we have learned some useful lessons and will make use of this experience in future training and networking.

ARENA NETWORKS

Finding good partners for the next journalism collaboration is – basically – a big matchmaking fair. But how to find the sharpest colleague for this particular collaborative project in the jumble of excellent people around? With years of experience organising the Dataharvest, we have realised that focused networks on topics of editorial interest at a given moment are attractive as meeting places.

Since 2018, we have thus selected a topical focus that we observed in the field, a topic that was relevant across Europe. Typically, journalists covered such topics in several countries without connecting among each other or without covering the transnational aspects of a story.

These networks do not follow a one-size-fits-all approach. Each community has different needs and developments. The Arena Housing Project – launched in 2019 – has the necessary open-access approach, based upon that we were able to select an investigative team for a major journalism publication. The Arena Climate Network – launched in 2020 – has a different character and currently supplements the open-access approach with the development of innovative training-by-doing concepts.

The Arena Housing Project

The [Arena Housing Project](#) was launched in September 2019 by following up on [that year's Dataharvest focus topic](#), it is lead by Jose Miguel Calatayud. The Housing Project was consolidated during 2020 and Arena stopped having dedicated funding for it after June 2021 and kept the project going with own means and a journalism research grant.

During the second part of 2020, the Housing Project launched its most ambitious activity, the [Cities for Rent cross-border investigation](#), of which the publication phase started in late April 2021 and which is still active as of now. Currently, Jose and Arena are working on making the Housing Project part of a cross-border research hub on housing, which should ideally be maintained by a collective made of journalists and academic researchers. Additionally, Brigitte and Jose are working on a chapter about collaborative journalism, with the Housing Project as a case study, for an upcoming academic book about journalism.

Development of a by-topic open-access journalism network

Since work on Dataharvest 2019 started, Brigitte and Jose conceived the Housing Project as a way to explore the possibilities and challenges of open-access networks to promote collaborative journalism across Europe around a pre-defined topic of interest. In that respect, the Housing Project was both a pilot with the aim of experimenting with different collaborative infrastructures and practices, and also an end in itself with the aim of generating actual collaborations between journalists across borders.

In 2019, the Housing Project in received seed-funding from the [Nicolas Puëch Foundation](#), and in 2020 it received project funding from [OSIFE](#). Since the end of June 2021, the Housing Project as such did not have dedicated funding.

During late 2019 and the first half of 2020, Jose coordinated Arena's efforts to consolidate the Housing Project infrastructure and networking, and since the second quarter of 2020, Jelena supported this work as community coordinator. By the end of June 2021, when the Housing Project stopped having dedicated funding, its infrastructure consisted of:

- the [Arena Housing Mailing list](#), the main communications forum, which as of now has 259 subscribers, most of them journalists and also a significant number of academic researchers and other housing experts from the policy and advocacy fields, and has received almost 800 messages in over 550 email threads,
- the ["Follow the Housing" newsletter](#), which reached over 220 subscribers and was sent out roughly twice a month, each issue focusing on one particular housing question and aiming at inspiring other journalists and researchers to carry out their own work,
- the [Arena Housing Twitter account](#), which as of now has 443 followers,
- the [Arena Housing Knowledge Base](#), which compiles and makes searchable different kinds of informative resources (news articles, datasets, policy reports...) divided into several housing topics: Access to housing, Big landlords, Empty homes, Homelessness, Land ownership, Short-term rentals, and Social and public housing,
- and a fully-fledged online collaborative environment, made up of [Nextcloud and OnlyOffice](#) for folder and file sharing and collaborative work, a [DokuWiki](#) instance for creating shared informative resources, and a [Rocket.Chat](#) instance for private conversations.

While the public resources are in principle open to any journalist or other professionals working on or interested in housing, the online collaborative environment is designed as a secure set of communication and information-storing and -sharing tools to which members are given access via a chain of trust. The functionality and security provided by the Housing Project online collaborative environment has allowed Arena to let external teams to use it for their own investigations. Arena is currently exploring ways to expand this service and make it into one of Arena's regular offerings.

In September 2020, Arena and the Housing Project started hosting [Cities for Rent](#), a cross-border investigation into the role of corporate landlords in cities across 16 European countries. Brigitte and Jose started thinking of and planning such investigation in May 2020, and then Jose went on to launch it and take on the role of editorial and overall coordinator, and the whole team used the Arena Housing online collaborative environment to carry out the work. The investigation was co-funded by an [IJ4EU](#) grant managed by Arena, some freelance team members were supported by other grants not managed by us.

The publication phase of Cities for Rent started on 28 April 2021, and in the end, 13 media outlets published the results of the investigation into 12 cities. During the first weeks, the stories published online by all the media partners received a total of almost one million unique visitors (later, our hosting service

stopped providing such metrics, and we don't know the current total of online visitors). Cities for Rent shed light on the amount of homes owned by corporate landlords across Europe, and in some cities it also revealed where exactly those homes were. The investigation produced a comprehensive account of some of the malpractices those companies engage in and of the impact that has on people's homes and lives.

Our coverage also had a clear public impact: in Norway, the Finance Minister had to answer a question in Parliament about issues raised in the stories published by our media partner there. MPs and other elected representatives also echoed our work in Belgium and in Spain, and different kinds of housing experts reached out to team members to inquire about our methodology and the data the investigation had found. Later on, team members collaborated with local media outlets to investigate the cities of [Basel](#) (Switzerland) and [Strasbourg](#) (France) by replicating our methodology. Along with Adriana Homolova (data journalist and trainer and Cities for Rent data coordinator) and Hendrik Lehmann (head of the Tagesspiegel Innovation Lab and Cities for Rent data visualisation coordinator), Jose has participated in different conferences and other events to talk about the investigation.

In October 2021, Arena launched a revamped [Cities for Rent website](#), which until then had simply compiled the published stories and that now included several new webpages detailing our [methodology](#) and its [limitations](#), our [approach to data visualisation](#), and a [data catalogue](#) based on the datasets we had found as well as those we've been building from scratch ourselves. After launching the website, we received interest from journalists and academic researchers, and Jose is currently involved in talks with researchers and media interested in replicating our methodology in Amsterdam and Barcelona. We have shared data and methodology with our partners in [EJTA](#), the association of journalism educations in Europe, particularly the data journalism lecturers. And indeed, we be happy if the Cities for Rent site became a model to other collaborative investigations, and that sharing one's methodology and data became standard practice.

THE FUTURE OF THE HOUSING PROJECT

After the Housing Project stopped having dedicated funding by the end of June 2021, Jelena started scaling down her direct involvement as community manager, the latest "Follow the Housing" newsletter issue was sent on 28 October 2021, and the Twitter account is now much less active than it used to be.

Jose has continued devoting time to the Housing Project, in a big part through the work on and promotion of the Cities for Rent investigation, and is also currently, following up on a survey about the Knowledge Base of selected Housing Project users and is moving content from the old version to a new one based on [Airtable](#) (very recently, Arena started testing [Baserow](#) as a possible open-source alternative to Airtable).

With the aim of ensuring that the Housing Project becomes part of an established cross-border hub for journalistic and other research on housing in Europe, Jose held discussions throughout 2021 with potential media partners who at some point have expressed interest in such an idea. Namely, these were the [Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#) (UK), [Correctiv](#) (Germany) and [Reporters United](#) (Greece). At some point, Jose worked on an application to the [Stars4Media.eu call](#) to receive support to establish a cross-border newsroom dedicated to housing, which was short-listed but finally wasn't selected. In the end, due to lack of funding and of availability by the directors of those media partners, talks about establishing some kind of housing journalistic hub fizzled out.

Still with the aim of making the Housing Project part of a wider research hub, Jose is now involved in talks with the [European Network for Housing Research](#), whose coordination team expressed keenness to create and host an interdisciplinary working group for academic researchers and journalists. Jose is also in talks with [Sebastian Kohl](#), head of the Sociology Department at Freie Universität in Berlin, who is working with granular data on the evolution of rental prices in some cities and would like to team up with Jose and Arena to follow up on the Cities for Rent investigation by carrying out data-based cross-border research.

As a final note, it's worth mentioning that Brigitte and Jose are working on a chapter about how collaborative journalistic practices have been changing over the last years through structured networking, with the Housing Project as the case study, for an upcoming academic anthology about journalism.

The Arena Climate Network

On November 12th 2020 and as the culmination of two full weeks of climate- and energy related conference activities, we launched the Arena Climate Network. It is currently growing to be a community of investigative journalists and researchers covering climate change at the local, national and EU level. Climate change and the energy sector's role in the climate crisis was the thematic focus of Dataharvest Digital 2020.

In May 2021, thanks to the support of the European Climate Foundation, we were able to include "Fridays for Climate" - sessions running every Friday for three weeks - to the main program of the Dataharvest conference. Overall, we've organised 10 sessions focusing on climate issues, spread over three Fridays (May 21, May 28 and June 4). We looked into investigative methodologies behind some of the recent European investigations into different aspects of climate change, energy efficiency or environmental wrongdoing (i.e. the cross-border investigation '[Money to Burn](#)'; an investigation into the shipping sector, '[Black Trail](#)'; a data investigation into the [UK's biggest emitters](#)).

We also hosted data analysts from the European Environmental Agency who shared their datasets with us, and experimented with a new "Ask me anything" session format during which experts from the European Climate Foundation presented us with some of the [pressing issues](#) at the EU level important for 2021. Moreover, we offered to Dataharvest participants (and later on, opened it to other members of the Arena Climate Network) the opportunity to get guidance and mentoring support from two data and one OSINT trainer after the main conference program. The participants had the opportunity to book our trainers for "office hours," and get some one-on-one time with them to delve into the data and hone their climate data journalism and OSINT skills.

As of September 2021, we set up a pilot 'Learning by doing' training programme with the ambition to offer to a small group of journalists desiring to work on a climate topic of their choice the possibility to develop investigative and data skills that would help them in the research.

Our very first cohort of 14 participants was a healthy mix of freelancers and staffers (or part-time staffers); experienced journalists and entry-level journalists. We kicked off the training with a meeting focusing on general challenges and possibilities that a cross-border collaboration offers, and the journalists were given practical tips and access to online tools (file sharing and online management tool on Arena's Nextcloud server) developed and used by Arena in cross border investigations.

After the initial training sessions and the pitching meetings, the following four topic-focused groups were formed in the cohort:

- Floods and health: A group interested in exploring the links between health (and in particular mental health) and climate change, focusing on the topic of floods;
- Meat lobbying sponsored by the EU: a group interested in the topic of meat lobbying and promotion of the meat products, particularly in relation to the meat promotion policy;
- Energy poverty: a group focusing on energy poverty and the questions of how different countries of their interest tackle energy poverty (from renovation wave to subsidies for low-income households)

- CDM: a group focusing on the clean development mechanism projects, investigating what kind of projects were continued and discontinued due to the Glasgow decision.

The groups worked together with their data mentor, and had regular update calls and talks with the coordinator of the program. They were also encouraged to choose their own 'internal' coordinator, and use the online tools provided by Arena. Further, they received training on online safety and security in the context of cross-border investigations and on OSINT tools in environmental investigations, and were offered the possibility to book a personalised one-on-one consultation with an expert in the field. They were also given the option to get further personalised mentorings from OSINT trainers and experts in filing the freedom of information requests to the European institutions. The groups started publishing their stories in February 2022.

Arena has been approached from several actors to enter consortia connecting journalists and others across Europe on covering climate issues. Negotiations are ongoing in 2022.

Reference – the European Independent Media Circle

In the autumn of 2018, on the side of a meeting of non-profit journalism groups from all over Europe, some leaders including Rachel Oldroyd from the Bureau for Investigative Journalism in London, Eva Belmonte from Civio in Madrid and Brigitte Alfter from (a then nascent) Arena, pondered how helpful it would be to create a forum for exchange of experiences, mutual support and – possibly – representation of our shared interests. Other groups – among them for example Apache from Belgium or Atlatzso Erdley from Romania – were in touch with Arena team members with similar suggestions: a European network where independent media self-organise appeared an obvious solution for a variety of challenges.

Arena started to line up for a larger discussion about the question, for example by [setting it on the agenda of the Dataharvest 2020](#) and by preparing an overview over actors which our Jose Calatayud lined up.

In 2020, the Dutch Adessium Foundation kindly granted support to a stocktaking report, and in early 2021, Dutch media consultant Maike Olij stepped in to produce such a report based upon a survey and in-depth interviews. The findings were clear: Yes, there was a genuine interest in such a network, interviewees considered themselves a 'new sector' that needed to organise.

Around the same time, some of our close partners, in this case [Netzwerk Recherche](#), the German association for investigative journalism, also got active in the field, teaming up with two German universities researching [pioneer journalism](#). Arena supports Netzwerk Recherche's work with mapping the non-profit journalism sector in Europe under a headline that also surfaced in Arena's stocktaking work: This is a [new sector](#) in the field of journalism and media.

In the summer of 2021, we teamed up with Correctiv, the German non-profit, to apply for EU-funds to push the networking of non-profits across Europe. The focus of the application was a community based income stream for non-profits via Correctiv's open source [BeABee software](#) tool combined with Arena's European networks. In the end, this application was not succesful.

In November 2021, finally and thanks to loyal support from the Töpfer Foundation, Arena was able to bring together the first 20 organisations from across Europe, from Reporters United in the Southeast of Europe to Dublin Inquirer from the Northwest. During a three-day retreat at the Töpfer Foundation's Siggen seminar centre on the Baltic coast, we founded [Reference – the European Independent Media Circle](#). The

Reference Circle has the clear intention to self-organise these organisations. Decisions are made by a governing body of the members, Arena hosts the work for the time being, and there is a clear intention to create a separate organisation.

Lessons learnt and further planning of our networks

At the moment of writing this report in early 2022, we can look back at three years and three networks set up via Arena, two topical networks that are Arena's, and one self-organisation circle, where Arena is the host. Good moment to stop and consider the first lessons learnt. Here a particular look at the two topical networks, as the Reference Circle is simply hosted by Arena and likely to spin off within a foreseeable future.

The future of the Arena Housing Project and the Arena Climate Network are up for review at this stage and thus of interest for the two existing networks as well as for future planning.

The Housing and the Climate networks can be considered successful in that they do provide an excellent entry-point for several hundred journalists from across Europe wishing to collaborate with peers on these particular topics, and they are used as such. Further, the Housing Project has published an exemplary ground research with potential for further development, and in the framework of the Climate Project, exemplary training-by-doing concepts are being developed. Less successful were our efforts to secure funding for the longer term planning for these two networks.

Both networks share the history that they were initiated because we observed multiple journalists across Europe covering the topics without connecting their local or national reporting across borders. From an editorial point of view, it simply made sense to bring them together. So that's what we did in the context of the Dataharvest 2019 and 2020 respectively – and beyond. We used the time invested in preparing the European conference to establish network structures. What we did *not* do for these two conference was to secure funding beyond these initial efforts, we had to improvise and still do. For our future topical networks, we take a more forward-looking approach at earlier stages.

The 2022 Dataharvest – EIJC topic will be Food & Water. For this, we have obtained some funding from several sources, both time limited to 2022, but including the task of developing a forward looking network structure. Further, for the Food & Water network we partner with another organisation from the beginning, the partner is Frag Den Staat at the Open Knowledge Foundation Germany, also hosting the Farmsubsidy.org database.

For the 2023 Dataharvest – EIJC, the topic will be Labour. Here, we were able to take an even more thorough approach from the beginning. We have obtained funding for a stock-taking report on how journalists across Europe cover the subject given their very varied contexts, for example whether a country sends or receives labour, experiences brain drain, labour shortages etc. Based upon such thorough and early research, we hope to be able to shape a network for this important topic which not only answers the journalistic needs for networking across borders but also secures the start for a sound structure.

We are thus optimistic for a more robust set-up for our future networks. Also, of course, we hope to soon get beyond the phase of insecurity for our first two topical networks, the situation is not surprising, given that the topical approach for the open-access networking is a new one, as is Arena as an organisation.

ARENA ACADEMY

The main purpose of Arena for Journalism in Europe is to facilitate the networking, sharing of experience and cross-border collaboration for European journalists. An important part of this is our work to collect and systematize methods and lessons learned and to pass them to others in the form of teaching, training, mentoring, consulting, designing of activities in the field as well as articles, books etc.

The European Collaborative Journalism Programme

Since the autumn of 2019, the German Alfred Töpfer Foundation (an operative foundation) has partnered with Arena to set up the [European Collaborative Journalism Programme](#). Once a year, a cohort of 18 journalists from all over Europe are invited to the Foundation's seminar centre Siggen near the Baltic Sea coast to learn about cross-border collaborative journalism, connect and possibly develop story ideas and work plans. The entire group then participates in the Dataharvest conference and can get individual support from the Töpfer/Arena team.

In 2021, the second cohort was accompanied through the lockdown period with several online gatherings and finally able to gather by the Baltic Sea in October. Among the participants, several teams were created and immediately started to develop work plans. These investigations are now ongoing. The 2020 cohort kept publishing and particularly the Money to Burn investigation kept being nominated for relevant journalism awards. For 2022, a new cohort has been selected, the plan is to gather in Siggen in April and reunite at the Dataharvest in Mechelen in May 2022 to continue the work.

It is a great pleasure to work with the Töpfer Foundation and to co-create this very fruitful framework where journalists meet each other, meet some of the finest experienced cross-border journalism practitioners and end up planning their own collaborations.

The Gothenburg Master Investigative Journalism obtains Erasmus+ funds

How do we best educate the next generation of journalists to collaborate across borders? You can talk with students *about* how to do it. Brigitte, our director, works as a lecturer at the [University of Gothenburg at the Master Investigative Journalism](#), a one-year master lead by journalist and journalism educator Ulla Sättereie. Here, crossborder collaboration is an integrated element. But it is hard to actually *do* crossborder collaboration when sitting in the same classroom. So what about networked educations, where a crossborder collaboration can be simulated?

It is via the work at Gothenburg University that Brigitte along with Ulla obtained Erasmus+ funding for a three-year pilot project involving five universities and Arena for Journalism in Europe. The pilot project has been dubbed the [Crossborder Journalism Campus](#), it starts in 2022, runs two consecutive one-year pilots and is concluded by the end of 2024. Journalism students from three of the universities will gather in the autumn of 2022 in Amsterdam and Brussels to meet and get an introduction to the shared terminology and project planning. Over the rest of the master year, the students will collaborate remotely and then be examined and publish at each their university and to each their target group. What makes the Crossborder Journalism Campus idea particularly attractive is the fact that it is compatible with existing educations rather than embarking on the time consuming and cumbersome task to develop new curricula.

For Arena, Brigitte and data journalist Adriana Homolova will be involved in the project as of 2022.

Mentoring

Over the winter of 2021/22, our director Brigitte Alfter was invited to be a mentor for the freelancers at the IJ4EU journalism grants. Some six teams picked her as the mentor, and publication is expected in the first half of 2022.

Partnerships

We have actively developed our partnerships with other organisations in the European and international journalism landscape. This is obviously to benefit from their expertise and let them benefit from ours and our network, and also to ensure that we are not investing resources in work that is already done excellently by others. In several cases, such collaborations have resulted in highly specialised seminars for a target group where journalists are central.

“Digital dilemmas” – series of seminars in collaboration with Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa

Arena partnered with OBC to arrange a seminar row on “Digital dilemmas and how to handle them” as part of the [Panelfit](#) initiative (Participatory Approaches to a New Ethical and Legal Framework for ICT), an EU funded Horizon 2020 consortium. An objective for the initiative is to provide a link between academics and journalists in the field.

OBC thus came to Arena because we have a network of tech-savvy and critical journalists and we at that point had vast experience with making online seminars. We co-arranged 3 online seminars:

- 1) Cybersecurity in Europe
- 2) When data hurt the vulnerable
- 3) The Power of Big Tech

Each day consisted of 1) a discussion of how the issue could be or had been covered in journalism, and 2) an academic discussion of the legislation needed to make ICT use in Europe safe, humane and under democratic control. We were able to arrange panels with top-level participants, and the seminars attracted some 130 participants.

[See the full program for the seminars](#)

European journalism Training Association - Teachers’ conference on Data Journalism

A long informal relationship with [EJTA](#) is increasingly turning into a formal partnership. In 2021, we had hoped to host a pre-conference meeting for data journalism teachers from journalism schools all over Europe, but the coronavirus put an end to that plan.

Instead, EJTA turned to Arena to ask us to help plan, organise and execute a 2-day online seminar on “How to teach data journalism”. EJTA called in ideas and proposals for content from schools over Europe and received input from both schools with and without a data journalism curriculum. These ideas were sorted and developed by Alexandra Stark from the EJTA board and Trine Smistrup from Arena, which resulted in a program carried by the EJTA members themselves and moderated by Brigitte Alfter from Arena.

[See the full program here](#)

The conference was a success, both in the eyes of EJTA and Arena, and gathered 106 participants. Arena was supposed to participate in further development of a data journalism task force within EJTA, which was unfortunately postponed - again because of the coronavirus.

The collaboration continues, and we expect to form a more formal relationship with EJTA in the near future.

European Press Prize - collaboration on the annual EPP award ceremony

The European Press Prize organizers came to Arena in the early stages of conference planning, because they had noticed that their planned date for the 2021 award ceremony coincided with the final day of Arena's online Dataharvest.

We quickly agreed that it was a win-win situation to cooperate and make the final conference day a festive celebration of the best European journalism while giving the winners an audience for their celebration and presentation of their stories. Arena hosted the ceremony, again with Brigitte Alfter as the moderator. The chairman of the jury, ex-editor of the Guardian Alan Rusbridger, opened the ceremony after which all winners had 30 minutes to present their projects.

[See the program for the day](#)

The European Press Prize and Arena share the focus on investigative and innovative journalism, and we hope to continue the cooperation in the future, be it in the form of award ceremonies or by giving nominees or winners an opportunity to present their projects for the Dataharvest participants.

International Press Institute - collaboration on conference and mentoring

Our collaboration with the International Press Institute is not formalized, but characterized by plenty of good will from both sides and several examples of practical cooperations.

The IPI has made a substantial material on tackling online harassment which is of obvious interest to the Dataharvest participants. The IPI digital safety specialist Javier Luque Martínez organized a full-day master class to introduce this material and give different cases of how it can be used by individuals and in newsrooms.

We have also frequent contacts in connection with the IJ4EU working grants, which support cross-border collaborations in Europe. This project is managed by the IPI and the European Journalism Center in unison, and their projects produce good insights for the Dataharvest conference. Arena staff has also mentored and helped some teams in other ways in both 2020 and 2021.

The Töpfer Foundation - collaboration on cross-border investigative training and mentoring

Since the autumn of 2019, the German Alfred Töpfer Foundation (an operative foundation) has partnered with Arena to set up the [European Collaborative Journalism Programme](#). Read more above under Arena Academy about the programme.

The Töpfer Foundation also kindly stepped in and not only opened the Baltic Sea seminar centre in Siggen for the founding meeting for Reference - the Independent Media Circle, the Töpfer Foundation also supported the preparation of that meeting and thus took the role of godparents to the new circle. Read more about the Reference Circle above under Arena Networks.

OVERVIEW OF ARENA'S THREE FIELDS OF ACTIVITY

Arena has three fields of activity: The Dataharvest, Arena Networks and Arena Academy. Further, some money is allocated for general costs, including fundraising, management, administration and the like. For 2021, the figures are indicative until the accounts are closed.

The share of the pie the activities take shows Arena's development from initially focusing mostly on Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference to developing not least the Arena Networks. Further, the context of the Covid19 restrictions has to be taken into account and the connected limited options to organise the Dataharvest as an in-person conference in 2020 and 2021.

