



2022 – the year of the big leap

ARENA FOR JOURNALISM IN EUROPE – ANNUAL REPORT

Taking the leap from a start-up to an established organisation in cross-border, investigative, data and entrepreneurial journalism in Europe

By the end of 2022, Arena for Journalism in Europe is almost four years old. Clearly on its own two feet now, 2022 was Arena's year to take the big leap from start-up to established mode. This transition is always a big step, and by the end of 2022 we can report about the year when we did it: A new managing structure ensures stability, and editorial successes emphasise that we have found our niche. A few highlights:

- In late May, the [Cities For Rent investigation](#) about corporate landlords and affordable housing, initiated by Arena and coordinated by Arena's Jose Calatayud, won the European Press Prize in the innovation category.
- Also in May, the first post-corona [Dataharvest 2022](#) conference turned into the largest ever with 550 participants.
- Arena Networks, where we facilitate professional contacts between journalists, is evolving successfully with a variety of activities on our now four topics: Housing, Climate, Food & Water and Labour.
- In April, our new managing director, Sanne Schim van der Loeff, joined the team. Over the year, the former overall director Brigitte Alfter and Sanne have developed a two-tier shared management structure, where Brigitte focuses on the editorial and Sanne on the managerial side.
- Over the year, we managed to secure full funding for 2023 and initial funding beyond.

So: welcome to a report of that special year, where Arena moved from the enthusiastic but exhausting start-up phase to a more stable stadium. Do keep reading!

In this narrative report we look back and take stock of our activities 2022 in order to include the lessons learnt in the development of our work in 2023 and beyond.

The Arena team and board, January 2023

Annual report - content

Organisation	4
Background: Incorporation, mission, key activities.....	4
Board	4
The team and the new organigram.....	5
Work routines and digital strategy.....	7
Finances	7
Funders.....	7
Income through activities.....	8
Arena's Growth	9
Arena activities in 2022	10
Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference	11
Dataharvest 2022 in numbers.....	12
A varied programme	12
Arena Networks.....	13
The Arena Housing Project.....	14
The Arena Climate Network	15
The Arena Labour Network	17
Reference, the European Independent Media Circle.....	17
The Arena Collaborative Desk	18
Arena Academy	18
The European Collaborative Journalism Programme	19
The Crossborder Journalism Campus.....	19
Partnerships	20
Overview of Arena's three fields of activity	20

Organisation

BACKGROUND: 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 is also recognised by supporting foundations outside of the Netherlands. In 2022, we obtained recognition as a Certified Public Charity under US legislation in order to enable us to reach out to US funders more easily. 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 work 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

While the core of our work remains unchanged, 2022 has been a year dedicated to strengthening the structures of the organisation and focusing our work. More thorough strategy reviews – on fundraising, activities and so forth – are scheduled for 2023.

BOARD

The board members in 2022 were the same as in the founding year:

- Nils Hanson, chairman of the board. Former editor-in-chief of the weekly investigative programme Mission Investigate (Updrag Granskning) at Swedish public service broadcaster SVT
- Elisabetta Tola, secretary of the board. Science, tech and data journalist. CEO of Italian science communication agency Formicablu and co-founder of the Italian non-profit Facta.
- Daniel Simons, treasurer of the board. Senior legal counsel at Greenpeace International, specialised in international media law.

The board held two online and one in-person meeting in 2022 in March, May and December.

The Arena board has generously donated its time and competences to get Arena from the starting block and to its present stage. Beyond inspiring and supporting the management of Arena, stepping in with the planning and for legal and financial considerations, all board members actively took part in various activities such as presentations at Dataharvest 2022, development of the Reference Network or contributions to get the day-to-day administrative work done.

With the new management structure established, for 2023 we also look towards strategic work with the board. The current board consists of two journalists/editors and one media lawyer. We wish to maintain a strong presence of journalists and journalism-related competences such as media law on the board. However, with the organisation growing, we also wish to bring in further competencies, such as finance management and strategy development expertise. We also expect to enlarge the board to spread the workload among our board members.

THE TEAM AND THE NEW ORGANIGRAM

The changes in the Arena team are a perfect expression of the changes, the organisation is undergoing. Not only did the team grow from 8 team members, whose pay in sum equaled just above four FTE, at the beginning of the year to 13 team members, together equaling 6,5 FTE at the end of 2022. For the start-up years until and including 2022 the de facto work time and the amount we could pay team members did not correspond, and all team members worked much more than they were paid for. This effort made it possible for Arena to get to its current level but is obviously viable long term. Most of our team members work on part time basis with Arena, combining – for example – with work in an investigative team. We appreciate that, because it secures close contacts to the sector.

With Sanne Schim van der Loeff coming in as new managing director, we moved from Brigitte Alfter as the founding director to a two-tier shared management structure. Brigitte and Sanne had three work retreats in April, June and December.

The new structure is continuously evaluated and readjusted. At the December board meeting, the following division of tasks and responsibilities was presented and confirmed:

Roles and responsibilities 2022 (2nd ed.)

Editorial Director ED

Editorial tasks

- Dataharvest
 - Project lead conference
 - Program manager data journalism
 - Coordinator location and volunteers
- Arena Networks
 - Topical coordinator(s)
 - IT and Digital Security
- Arena Academy
 - Trainers
- Editorial strategy

Managing Director MD

Managerial tasks

- Finance
 - External accountant => finance assistant
- Administration
- Organisational IT & digital security
- Insurances, contracts etc

Shared tasks

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational strategy, development • External representation • Fundraising & income generation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR • Communication • Event management |
|--|---|



From now on, editorial team members refer to Brigitte, the incoming team members for managerial tasks, for example the finance assistant – will refer to Sanne, while maintaining the close cooperation across the organisation.

Arena has a highly committed team. It is deliberately European in itself - from east, west, south, and north of Europe. We take into consideration the geographical representation, aiming to avoid concentrations of few nationalities as well as concentration in one place where possible. Six of 13 team members live in another country than the one they were born in. Among us, we speak German, French, Spanish, Italian, Slovak, Dutch, Croatian, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Turkish. And of course English, which is our working language. The team consists of (in alphabetical order):

1. **Brigitte Alfter, founding director of Arena, now editorial director of Arena**, Danish/German journalist based Copenhagen, Denmark. Tireless organizer, involved in most activities, with a special eye on European affairs, on cross-border collaborations and on the meta-level of journalism.
2. **Ruben Brugnera, project manager Dataharvest**, Belgian award winning investigative journalist, based in Brussels, part time teacher at Thomas More Hogeschool Mechelen, the usual venue of the Dataharvest conference.
3. **Jose M. Calatayud, project director at Arena networks** until June 2022, Spanish journalist, based in Berlin, Germany. Coordinator of the Arena Housing Project and lead author of the Arena report on labour journalism in Europe (forthcoming in 2023).
4. **Benedikt Hebeisen, IT, tech and digital security manager**, German, based in Berlin, long experience in advising cross-border collaboration teams, responsible for organisational IT and for the Arena Collaborative Desk.
5. **Adriana Homolova, data skills coordinator**, Slovak/Dutch journalist based in Utrecht, the Netherlands. She coordinates and moderates all data skills sessions at the Dataharvest-conference, while also contributing to our Erasmus+ partnership Crossborder Journalism Campus.
6. **Lorenz Matzat, Arena Climate Network coordinator**, German journalist and tech expert based in Zurich, Switzerland. Joined the Arena Climate Network at the end of the year to develop the networking among climate journalists across Europe and with a particular focus on civic tech.
7. **Maike Olij, coordinator of the Reference Circle**, Dutch media consultant based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, co-founder and facilitator for Reference, the European Independent Media Circle.
8. **Sarah Pilz, Arena Food & Water Network coordinator**, German investigative journalist based near Munich.
9. **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. She was chosen as a Bertha Challenge fellow 2022, and will now increasingly work with the Dataharvest planning.
10. **Sanne Schim van der Loeff, managing director**, Dutch project leader with experience in fundraising and strategy development. Focusing on the non-editorial development of the organisation.
11. **Zeynep Sentek, Arena Climate Network editor**, Turkish journalist, producer and project leader living in Portugal, joined Arena at the end of the year to develop the Climate Network.
12. **Trine Smistrup, program director for Dataharvest**, Danish journalist, manages communication, registration and the overall program for the Dataharvest conference, also involved in the general management of Arena.
13. **Jonathan Stoneman, Arena Climate Network training lead**, British journalism trainer and coach living in England, joined Arena at the end of the year.

The Arena team has worked remotely from the very beginning, connected through a well-crafted combination of digital set-ups, online and offline work routines. In 2022, the team gathered for multiple-

day team meetings in January in Berlin, in August in Amsterdam and in November in Copenhagen. A shorter in-person team meeting was held in Perugia in April as most of the team visited the Perugia Journalism Festival. And we of course met for the Dataharvest conference!

WORK ROUTINES AND DIGITAL STRATEGY

Our daily work reflects our distributed team, located in ten European cities (five last year) in seven countries (four last year). We have actively decided to *not* have a main office in order to avoid imbalances in the distributed team. With the growth of the organisation we thus follow our ambition and nurture a genuinely European team. This annual overview shows where we experience concentrations of team members and where our representation can be improved, and we strive to balance the need for team members with the right qualifications with our wish to have a European team.

To manage this way of working, we have developed routines with regular in-person team meetings and weekly video calls. Further, we stay in touch via a chat system for individuals and groups, video meetings and a shared documents system. This set-up reflects our strategy to focus on secure but straightforward collaboration tools.

We maintain and develop our ambition to ‘walk the talk’: We use open-source software where possible and reasonable to stay in control of our data and try to develop the set-up according to the needs of the team. In 2022, 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 Big Blue Button as our video and conference software.

We also launched a concept for sharing this way of working with other organisations and investigative teams. More on this can be found under Collaborative Desk under Arena Networks.

Finances

The initial budget for 2022 was set at just under €480 000. As a result of additional funding commitments received throughout the year, our budget increased to around €600 000. Much of this additional funding is earmarked for specific projects focused predominantly on 2023.

While most of Arena’s funding was received through foundation grants and donations, about 15 per cent of Arena’s income was generated through conference tickets, training, mentorships, consulting and partnerships. We aim to increase the income generation of Arena’s own activities in 2023 and beyond and have set a modest target for Arena Academy activities to take the first steps towards a new strategy over the next three years.

FUNDERS

13 foundations and partnerships from seven different countries contributed to both core and earmarked funding in 2022, allowing the organisation to stabilise financially and develop new strategic projects. We systematically approached our fundraising in a more strategic manner: reaching out to specific funders for core funding and to funders with specific expertises across our fields of interest for earmarked funding. This

is an approach we plan to develop further in 2023. The following overview shows that we are in line with our fundraising objective to work with a diverse group of funders from different countries.

We are grateful for the support from:

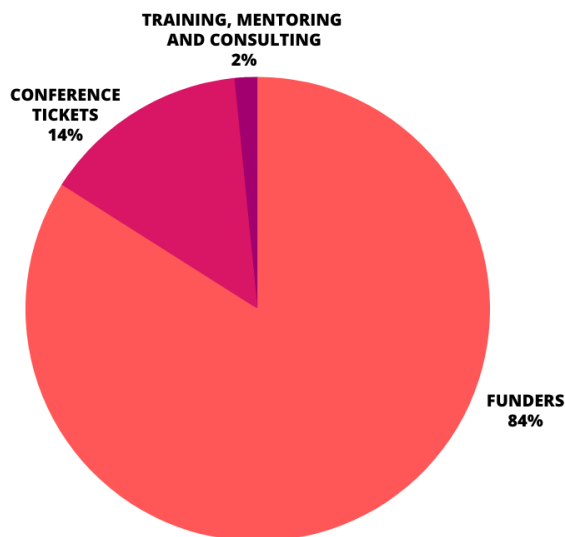
Funders	Country	Amount (€)	Type of Funding
Adessium Foundation	The Netherlands	€ 25 000	Funder
Augstein Stiftung	Germany	€ 20 000	Funder
Bertha Foundation	Switzerland	€ 62 268	Funder
European Climate Foundation	The Netherlands France	€ 30 179	Funder
Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le progrès de l'homme	Switzerland France	€ 20 000	Funder
Gothenburg University	Sweden	€ 13 295	EU Partnerships
IJ4EU / IPI	Austria	€ 25 650	EU Partnerships
Limelight Foundation	The Netherlands	€ 28 700	Funder
OAK Foundation	Switzerland	€ 25 000	Funder
Open Society Foundation	USA	€ 23 000	Funder
Stichting Democratie en Media	The Netherlands	€ 20 000	Funder
Schöpflin Stiftung	Germany	€ 75 000	Funder
Töpfer Stiftung	Germany	€ 5 000	Funder

In May 2022 we were happy to organise our first Funders & Friends event, as part of the Dataharvest - EIJC. This event was aimed at bringing together our funders, potential funders, the management and our board, to present the current status of the organisation and discuss strategy steps. Eight of our funders and potential funders participated. The meeting itself was exceptionally fruitful, followed by a reception including the members of our Reference Circle and a networking dinner. The first steps of our new Arena Networks strategy were developed during this day. More information on that can be found in the chapter on Arena Networks.

INCOME THROUGH ACTIVITIES

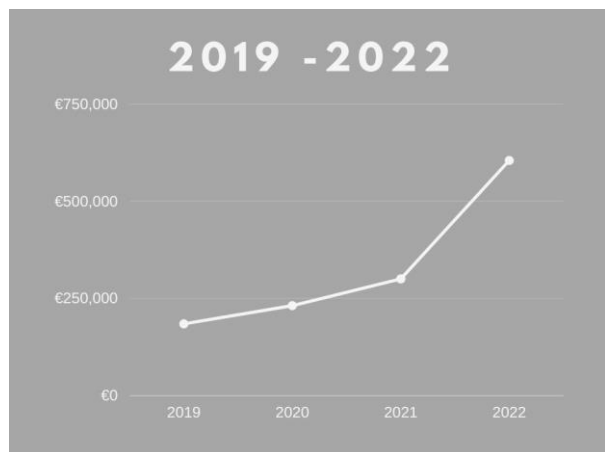
In 2022, around 15 per cent of Arena's income was generated through own activities. Just over 14 per cent was generated through the entrance tickets of Dataharvest – EIJC. The remaining income was generated through training, workshops and other external services. Online training was facilitated, among others, in partnership with IPI and Transitions Online, while in-person workshops were organised with, among others, the Töpfer Foundation and iMedD. This work is part of the Arena Academy and has until now been performed on an ad hoc basis.

During 2023 we will develop a strategy for Arena Academy. We already offer consulting and will consider to do so on a more regular basis, in addition to workshops, training and mentoring opportunities. We also expect more conference ticketing income as we launch a conference for our Climate Network, we will include the income generation aspects in our strategy work with for Arena Academy in 2023 and the conferences including the opportunities for sponsorships, partnerships with host cities and other opportunities.



DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME 2022

ARENA'S GROWTH



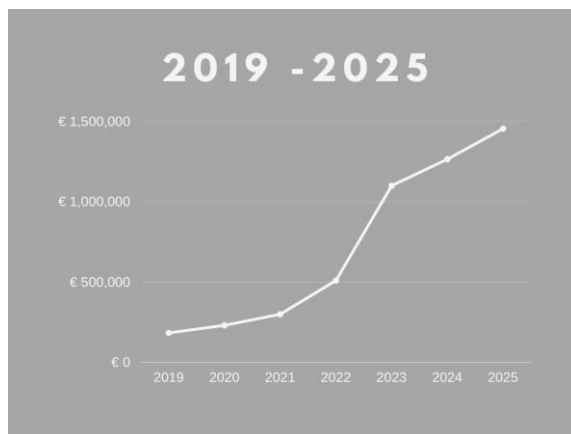
Since Arena's foundation, the organisation has experienced continuous growth despite difficult circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Between 2021 and 2022, Arena's budget as mentioned grew beyond our initial expectations of €480 000 to just over €600 000 as the year progressed. The difference between 2021 and 2022, as well as the increase throughout 2022 can be attributed to three factors:

- With our new managing director we could allocate significantly more manpower to fundraising and follow a clear focus on more active core fundraising combined with outreach to new funders for earmarked funds for specific topics;
- Commitment to longer-term funding for the organisation itself as well as earmarked funding for projects that span multiple years;
- A higher turnover of income generated through Arena's own activities.

Arena we benefited tremendously of the additional core and earmarked funding, through which we were able to work towards a more structured and financially stable organisation. The budget increase from 2022 to 2023 is significant as it moves from €600K to just over €1 million. To ensure that we keep up to date with our financial responsibilities both internally and externally we will add a finance assistant to the team at the beginning of Q2 2023 to support the managing director.

The recent growth of the organisation's budget confirms that Arena is developing a niche in the journalism community that is both welcome and necessary. We are very conscious of the challenges that come with such fast growth, though. Our priority is to ensure that we have enough team members to carry out the work and add team members to support the organisation and ensure the organisation remains stable. While we have welcomed the growth of 2022 and 2023 (expected) we aim to pace ourselves as we develop our strategy for the next three years. We aim to limit growth until 2025 to 15 per cent per year, which will allow us the time to manage the development and to respond to new opportunities if they arrive.



2022 was a successful financial year for Arena from a fundraising and income generation perspective. It has set us up solidly for 2023 and beyond. Our main focus for 2023 will be to ensure the appropriate spending for the earmarked and core funding that we have received and try to increase the percentage of our own income generation.

Arena activities in 2022

Arena's main focus and 'raison d'être' is to develop and facilitate an open networking infrastructure for investigative collaborative journalism in Europe. We do this across three connected activities – all in the field of collaborative, investigative and data journalism. These fields of activities have been developed but the overall direction and priorities were not changed in 2022 compared to previous years:

- 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

In 2022, Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference took place in Mechelen, Belgium, on May 19-22, 2022. It was a relief to meet in person after two years of online conferences due to the coronavirus crisis.

And we dare to declare it a success! 550 journalists of 51 nationalities gathered to learn, share, and network during the 3,5 days in Mechelen and we got enthusiastic feedback. We are very grateful for the support from the Dataharvest community, both during the COVID19 pandemic and now, when we were able to meet in-person again. We are very grateful to our funders as well, who helped us get through these difficult years.

The theme for 2022 was “Food & Water”. This topic was planned well in advance, but became more critical as a result of the war in Ukraine, affecting Europe and the rest of the world, resulted in fears of a global food crisis and increased pollution of our waters due to pesticides and fertilizers.

The planning of the 2022 conference was well on the way, when on February 24th 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine and we had to stop and rethink. We decided to continue with the planning but to keep several time slots open to bring in relevant sessions concerning the new situation: A major war in Europe. We were able to bring in speakers addressing the war as well as – in the Dataharvest tradition – try to stimulate research on the topic, such as the [Open Sanctions](#) database.

The collaboration with the Thomas More Hoogeschool journalism department continued and will continue also in 2023, when the conference will be held in the school from June 1-4. We are very happy to have a host that shares not only rooms but also our vision of journalism!

The conference would not be possible if not all our speakers generously would donate their competence and time to the community. Some of the most prominent investigative journalists from across the continent appreciate Dataharvest - the European Investigative Journalism Conference so much that they allocate time and commitment for all the days of the conference. This is the essence of the vibrant professional community around Arena.

In the following the basics of the conference summed up in few points.

Dataharvest 2022 in numbers

- There were around 550 participants in the conference.
- Participants came from 51 nationalities and lived in 45 countries.
- 23 per cent lived in a country other than their nationality.
- 50 per cent were male, 48.5 percent female, 1.5 per cent selected “other” as their gender.
- Of the 550, 172 contributed as speakers, panellists, or moderators.
- Of the speakers, 40 percent were female (below our normal 50-50 distribution).

A varied programme

The conference opened on Friday 20 of May 2022 at 10am and closed on Sunday 22 of May 2022 at 1pm. The conference itself was preceded on Thursday May 19 by a day of master classes, HackDay and meetings of different networks and organisations.

Some figures on the programme:

- More than 70 pitches with excellent ideas from our community – and they came on top of the ones by the Arena Dataharvest team and by close collaboration partners. We are happy about this and see the number of pitches as an expression of the interest in the conference.
- 115 sessions in a number of tracks:



Data skills training	27
Investigative journalism methods	26
Crossborder collaborative journalism	13
Data journalism	9
Digital security	8
Food & water network	8
Entrepreneurial journalism	6
Kickstart	5
Data buffet	4
Freedom of information	4
Networking moments	3
Key note	2

The sessions offer a wide variety of exchange of experience, inspiration and actual hands-on training. Throughout, we strive to maintain the working and networking character of the conference, hence we have decided to cap the number of participants at a maximum of 500. By “working conference”, we mean the creation of a space where journalists meet, find shared topics or data and get started with a work plan to carry out once they return to their desk on the Monday after their conference - now with European peers and a European perspective.

ARENA NETWORKS

The very purpose of Arena is to help journalists connect and to facilitate collaboration. We have previously called this process of finding competent colleagues with whom to collaborate a ‘matchmaking’ process. But the infrastructure and the competencies needed for editorial collaboration are so much more than matchmaking: there is a need for adapted digital work spaces, for insights into how project management competencies can be integrated with the editorial process, for a constant overview over developments in a given field and much more. After years of experience organising Dataharvest, particularly the topical focus of the conferences since 2018, we have learned that focused networks on topics of editorial interest at a given moment are attractive as meeting places.

We continued this work in 2022 and - also here - took a big step forward. When preparing for the Arena Funders & Friends meeting in May, we made a list of activities in our topical networks. Here, some clear patterns emerged, which led to the decision of developing the Arena Networks as one of our main activities. At Arena, we know how to develop, nurture and share competencies and infrastructures for journalism networks in general. This means that we can set up editorial networks ad-hoc or planned, at Arena’s own initiative or to assist others, with a topical or other focus. The work to present this new strategic approach began in the late autumn 2022, and a strategy will be developed in the spring of 2023.

In 2022, Arena had the following European journalists' networks:

Our topical networks

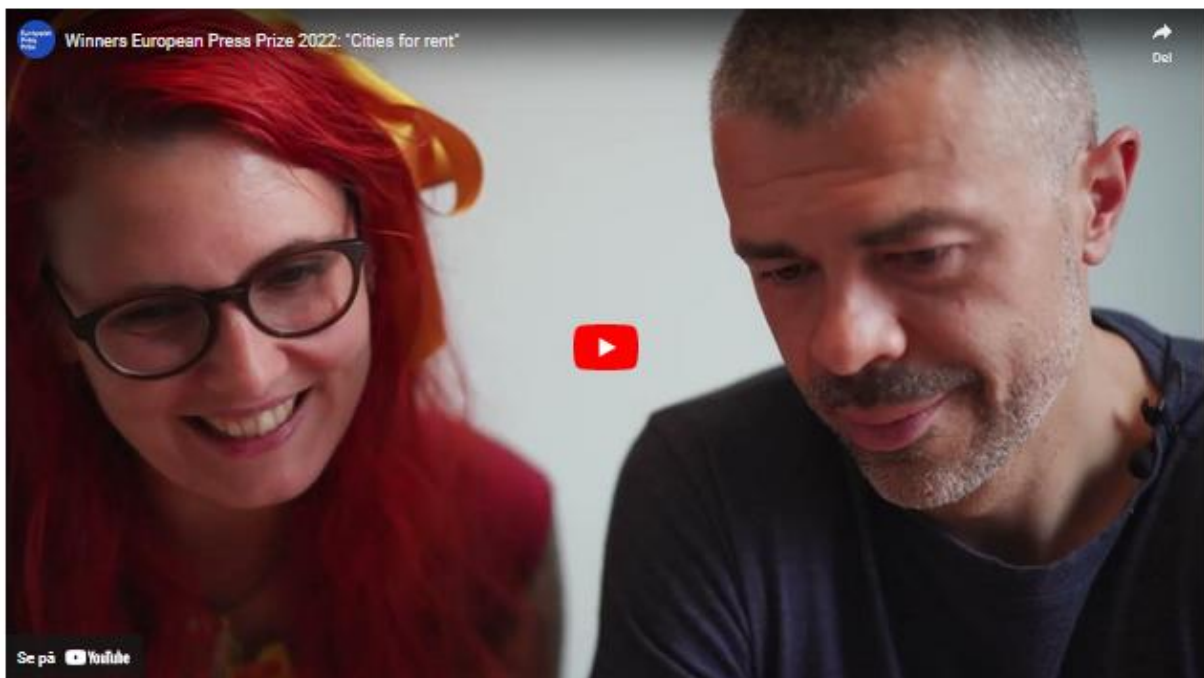
- The Arena Housing Project - initiated in 2019 as a [track in the programme at the Dataharvest 2019](#).
- The Arena Climate Network - initiated in 2020 as a [track during the Dataharvest Digital 2020](#).
- The Arena Food & Water Network - [initiated in 2022 as a track for the Dataharvest 2022](#).
- The Arena Labour Network - under preparation in 2022, to be launched at the Dataharvest 2023.

Our resource networks

- Arena Collaborative Desk - initiated 2022 as part of Arena Networks, to be launched in 2023.
- Reference, the European Independent Media Circle - [initiated 2021 at the Siggen seminar centre](#).

The Arena Housing Project

In June 2022, the [Cities for Rent investigation](#) by the Arena Housing Project was awarded the [European Press Prize in the Innovation category](#). Coordinated by Arena's Jose Miguel Calatayud in close cooperation with Arena's datajournalist Adriana Homolova and Hendrik Lehmann, Innovation Lab lead at daily newspaper Tagesspiegel, a team of some 25 journalists from 16 cities across Europe had mapped corporate landlords and embedded local stories in the European context.



“This new collaboration in journalism is so interesting because (...). You can't tell and share this story unless you tell it in this particular way, across borders. — Alan Rusbridger”

In the second half of 2022, parts of the team of the Cities for Rent project lead by Arena and Innovation Lab at Tagesspiegel, moved forward to develop a Europe-wide Urban Journalism Network. This work continues into 2023, and a multiple-year perspective is envisaged with Arena in the role of coordinator and/or incubator.

The open-access parts of the original Arena Housing Network - such as gatherings, knowledge base, digital meeting places and so forth will be revisited in 2023.

The Arena Climate Network

In the course of 2022, the Arena Climate Network was developed to step into a higher level of activity, which we kicked off at the end of a year. We continued our work with one dedicated topic-focused funder, the European Climate Foundation, and were able to win a second one, the Laudes Foundation, to lift this network from the first phase to a full-fledged network with multiple team members, the first three of which started in December 2022.

But let's start by looking at what we build upon to explain why we chose this path. In 2020, [Climate & Energy was the the focus topic of the Dataharvest conference](#), with at least 19 sessions dedicated to this focus. Towards the end of the Dataharvest Digital 2020 (fully online due to Covid19), in November 2020 we launched the Arena Climate Network and set up several channels to meet digitally, and at [the Dataharvest Online 2021, we offered a dedicated Fridays For Climate track](#).

We also developed and in September 2021 launched the Arena Climate Learning-by-Doing model to support journalists wishing to do cross-border collaborative journalism on climate subjects. Arena invited journalists wishing to join, assisted in the matchmaking process of creating crossborder teams and provided training and mentoring on the way towards publication.

The Arena Climate Network will be a full fledged network. Contrary to the Arena Housing Network, which addressed an underreported field, there are plenty of journalists focusing on climate questions. However, our purpose is to connect journalists, and particularly journalists within our field of experience with investigative and data journalism, we thus work under the headline of climate and society.

We managed to attract three excellent team members in 2022, Zeynep Sentek, Lorenz Matzat and Jonathan Stoneman who started in December 2022, further team members will join in 2023.

The activities include

- to provide a network environment for journalists from across Europe interested in reporting about climate and society. This includes digital meeting spaces, seminars and an overview over what is going on in the field across Europe. The purpose is to lower the entry level for newcomers to the topic and to connect journalists already in the field
- learning by doing, a junior to mid-career training concept, leading to small scale investigations & data journalism projects with European collaborative teams publishing simultaneously in their respective national media.
- an annual practice-oriented working conference connecting about 100-200 journalists, scientists and civic tech actors with the purpose to develop and initiate journalism projects
- lining up for collaborative journalism investigations, facilitating them and carrying them out when the necessary funding is obtained.

A prototype conference is planned for April 2023, while the first larger conference is envisaged for November 2023.

The Arena Food & Water Network

In 2023, the focus topic of the Dataharvest was Food & Water. Again, we selected a topic that is close to all people and has clear European and cross-border aspects. Our activities included facilitation of meetings, a digital meeting infrastructure and in this case also facilitating access to data and finally journalism production and in-depth research. We are happy to have attracted Sarah Pilz as our Food & Water Network coordinator in a part time position. In 2022-23, Sarah also works in a major crossborder collaboration focusing on chemicals and water.

Open access networking

The Arena Food & Water Network was launched at the [Dataharvest 2022 with a dedicated track](#). Further, we used the traditional Dataharvest Hackday to [making data about the EU's farm subsidies](#) easily available for journalists. This hackday thus was going back to the roots of the Dataharvest, which initially was developed by a team of journalists collaborating to unveil exactly these spending data and meet annually to harvest data from 2009 and onwards. The preparation of the conference track provided the first overview over journalists working on food and water topics across Europe and what topics had journalistic focus. The network meeting provided the starting point to our [network infrastructure](#), which includes an interactive mailinglist with currently 105 members and a Signal group with currently 74 members. These are open groups and typically used to share interesting publications, ask for quick pieces of information or look for potential partners. The two formats (mailinglist and chat) cater to the same community of journalists interested in the field but to different age groups and/or communication habits.

In the 2nd half of 2022 and over the winter, Sarah developed the [Food & Water Network online meeting series](#), bringing in experts, experienced journalists or providers of interesting datasets to share knowledge and inspire. These meetings typically gather some 15-30 participants and thus are a good size for sharing and connecting.

Journalism and supporting journalism production

The Arena Food & Water Network was able to craft a partnership with German civic tech group Frag Den Staat that hosts the [Farmsubsidy.org database](#). Initiated in 2005 by journalists fighting for transparency about the beneficiaries of the EU's 50 billion annual agricultural sector subsidies, the database is now run by Frag Den Staat and provides unified access to beneficiary data. The added value is the work done at the Dataharvest Hackday and the Frag den Staat expert team to obtain the data that are published in various formats (or in some cases not at all) by the national authorities.

The revamped website with updated data and new search functions went online in early December 2022. In addition, Frag den Staat had crafted a collaboration with a number of journalists across Europe who were interested in using the data for stories.

The [publications using the fresh farmsubsidy data](#) were released in Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Italy and Greece at the same time as the relaunch of the website. Aspects covered were diverse, in Germany, for example, Süddeutsche Zeitung focused on the notion of subsidies to farmers and mistreatment of animals, in Poland Gazeta Wyborcza documented money flows to the Catholic church and

in Greece, Reporters United documented money flows to commercial and institutional actors rather than to farmers.

Throughout 2022, Jelena Prtoric was a Bertha fellow focusing on water. Together with Luisa Izuzquiza from Frag den Staat – same partner by serendipity – she investigated the functioning (or lack of functioning) of the EU's legislation on water quality. The first visible result was a multimedia publication launched in December 2022, featuring on-the-ground reporting from multiple countries as well as background information and, not least, documents obtained through FOI requests on infringement cases by the EU concerning water. The [Troubled Waters](#) website will in 2023 be shared with peers via various channels as there is further potential in this material.

Finally, a forthcoming 2023 publication was lined up, where a team of journalists from five countries lined up to a European project and in autumn 2022 reached out to Arena as they had plenty of material for further countries. Arena stepped in and worked to find suitable partners, which now leads to a collaboration with further eight partners, so the publication will be with 13 partners rather than with the initial five. Publication is expected in February 2023.

The Arena Labour Network

In 2022, we took a new step in the development of our topical networks. Arena's editorial team had selected Labour as our next topic focus: another topic with high relevance to all audiences, a clearly European focus and national as well as European regulation. Contrary to previous years, we prepared a report about the field to be launched in English and German for Dataharvest 2023 and the German Netzwerk Recherche Konferenz 2023, both in June.

The report is a discussion paper based upon interviews with journalists across Europe. It aims to map the conditions for labour in the various countries but not least to discuss the situation of journalism: *How* do we cover labour if at all? The results are rather discouraging: Generally, the topic of labour seems to have a low status in many newsrooms, and systematic reporting about labour has been replaced by occasional reporting about labour-related news carried out by different desks such as business or social. The report was drafted by Jose Miguel Calatayud, Adriana Homolova and Brigitte Alfter and is set to be published by German Otto-Brenner-Foundation as discussion paper. It also founds the basis for Arena's forthcoming Labour network.

During the Dataharvest 2022, we offered one [networking session](#) where participants introduced themselves and presented their work focus, publications and in some cases interest to collaborate. We know of at least one large team that was composed during the conference. An initial Signal networking group has been established and brings together some 35 journalists from across Europe.

For Dataharvest 2023, a track on labour is under preparation and – if funding is obtained – the Arena Labour Network will be developed from 2023 onwards.

Reference, the European Independent Media Circle

Reference, the European Independent Media Circle - or Reference in short - had its first anniversary in November 2022 with its second retreat. Reference was founded i to bring together independent media and facilitate non-editorial exchange and mutual support as well as representation of interests of these media

with roots in the investigative and data journalism community. Since the foundation, the number of paying members had risen from 16 to almost 24.

Reference is an Arena-founded network but it is not going to stay with Arena. It is in an incubation phase until the spring of 2025, when the membership group will spin off and be set up as an independent legal entity. To prepare that, the decision-making structure consists of a full group of members and an appointed so-called Group of 5 acting as a quasi board. The Reference Circle is supported by its members with fees, however this does not cover the costs for coordination and activities fully. In 2022, we managed to secure funding for the coordination and some activities of reference for 2023 and until the spin-off in 2025.

The Arena Collaborative Desk

In the winter of 2020, a team of journalists crafted an investigation for a classic consequence story: Western European countries labelled wood as "green energy" and subsidised the use of it, thus causing severe deforestation in Eastern Europe to produce wood pellets for heating. The idea was conceived during a retreat co-organised by Arena, and the story would be published by 16 reporters from 11 newsrooms in 8 countries the following winter under the title [Money to Burn](#). Arena also stepped in with mentoring support to the editorial coordinator of the team, Hazel Sheffield, and indeed with the set-up of a secure work environment on Arena's Nextcloud server.

Because all teams are different in size, work rhythm, hierarchy and other such structural features, adapting the digital work environment is important for the smooth functioning of the teams. For the Money to Burn team, it worked out well: They published and eventually were [nominated for a European Press Prize](#).

Collaborative teams often need a secure digital work space. In 2022, we thus obtained funding to develop Arena Collaborative Desk, which offers exactly this combination: An easily accessible, secure, digital work space and guidance in using it, so the crossborder journalism teams can collaborate smoothly.

The digital work space will be tailor-made for journalists who want to collaborate across borders. The Collaborative Desk includes three elements:

- the secure tech structure for file sharing, secure communication, information/knowledge management, networking and
- the accompanying advice/mentoring/training to the journalists, and finally
- the necessary management structure including legal set-up, external communication, selection process, income generation, administration and further development of the structure.

The Collaborative Desk is offered to journalism teams without own capacities to build an infrastructure, small and medium size, ad-hoc crossborder collaborations and Arena's own networks.

Benedikt Hebeisen is the lead on the Collaborative Desk and thus continues his work to support crossborder teams with secure digital work environments preferably on open source platforms. The timeline of the Collaborative includes a pilotphase starting in the autumn of 2022 and a launch in 2023.

ARENA ACADEMY

The Arena team and the members of our community are highly specialised in new journalism methods such as crossborder collaborative journalism, various aspects of data journalism and various aspects of

investigative journalism. Also, we have experience in the field of entrepreneurial journalism, and we have team members with extensive practice in teaching and training and educational planning.

In 2022 – as in earlier years – Arena has offered teaching, training, mentoring and consulting, however – also as in earlier years – we did so largely upon request only and not as new initiatives. Knowledge sharing is an important part of our work, hence teaching, training, mentoring and consulting come naturally. Also connecting potential trainers or mentors from our network to colleagues wishing to work with them makes sense. And we get a lot of requests on a regular basis.

However, if to be done well, we not only need the right competences but also time and attention. Hence our reactive approach in 2022, where we chose to focus on the two other pillars of Arena's work and on the organisational development. We will revisit the overall direction of Arena Academy in 2023. In the following some highlights from our work under the Arena Academy heading in 2022.

The European Collaborative Journalism Programme

Since the autumn of 2019, the German Alfred Töpfer Foundation (an operative foundation based in Hamburg, Germany) has partnered with Arena to set up the European Collaborative Journalism Programme. Once a year, a cohort of 15-18 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. A team shaped at the first cohort's retreat went on to be nominated for a European Press Prize.

In 2022, a new cohort met in Siggen – a relief after the lockdown years. At least one major investigation was planned in Siggen and Mechelen and will be published in the spring of 2023.

The programme offers a matchmaking moment, where training, intercultural communication and actual production of journalism are combined. Over the years, the format has evolved well and is still adjusted carefully to answer the needs of the participants and strengthen the format. The 2023 cohort has been selected and will meet in March.

We are very happy to work with the Töpfer Foundation, the programme is a valuable contribution to the development of crossborder journalism in Europe. This work has been developed mainly by Brigitte, with Zeynep Sentek coming in.

The Crossborder Journalism Campus

In 2021, an initiative led by Gothenburg University and co-created by Arena obtained Erasmus+ funding. The purpose: to give students of journalism a real life crossborder collaboration experience while they are working in the protected framework of the university. This is a collaboration between the universities of Gothenburg, Leipzig, Amsterdam, Paris and OsloMet, the CFJ journalism school in Paris/Lyon and Arena.

In October, the first cohort of three classes of journalism students from Germany, France and Sweden, 72 in total, along with their respective lecturers, [gathered in Brussels](#) to get introduced to the EU and not least to sit down and create teams along topics of interest and draft the first work plans. These collaborative investigations are set to be their exam projects and to be published in the spring of 2023.

For Arena, Brigitte Alfter and Adriana Homolova contribute with crossborder and data journalism competences.

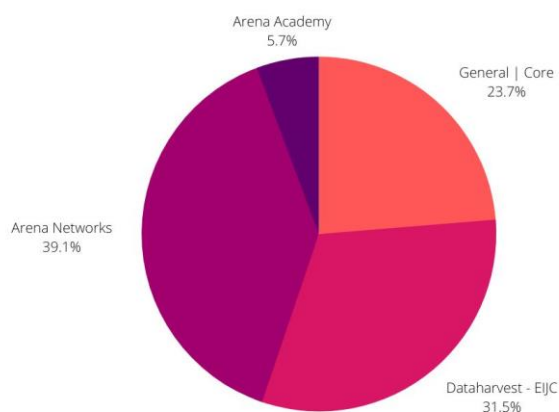
Partnerships

In the course of 2022, we crafted several partnership on trainings and mentoring. We thus continued our mentoring partnership with the European Journalism Centre for [grantees of the IJ4EU](#), and we crafted partnerships with [IPI](#) and [TOL](#) to do online trainings on crossborder collaborative journalism. Trine Smistrup and Brigitte Alfter dealt with this for Arena.

OVERVIEW OF ARENA'S THREE FIELDS OF ACTIVITY

Arena has three fields of activity: The Dataharvest-EIJC, Arena Networks and Arena Academy. A percentage of the budget is reserved for overhead costs, including fundraising, management, administration and other general expenses. In the early years most of the income and costs were connected to the Dataharvest – EIJC, but since then particularly the Arena Networks have evolved.

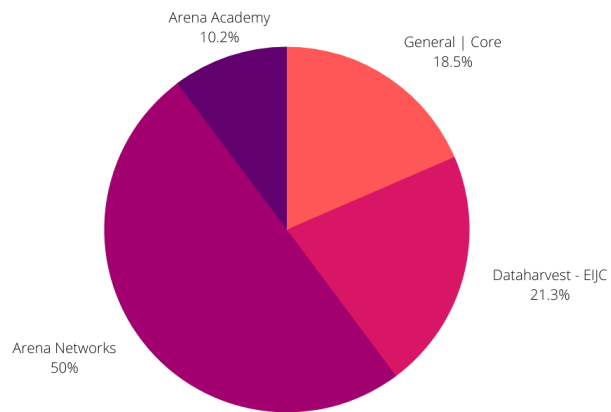
For 2022, the figures are indicative until the accounts are closed (see Annex 1: financial overview).



2022 | ARENA AND ITS AREAS OF ACTIVITY

As Arena continues to develop its niche as a network-building organisation, our income and costs are dedicated more and more to the Arena Networks. In part because of funding allowing us to develop the the Collaborative Desk as well as our networks more generally, but also because of earmarked funding for, especially, the Arena Climate Network. As we plan to develop an income generation strategy in 2023 and are already receiving many ad hoc requests for training, mentoring and consulting, we expect our own income from the Arena Academy and from Dataharvest related incomes to increase. While we have set a

modest target, we do hope to exceed our own expectations here, while remaining vigilant of our work load.



2023 | ARENA AND ITS AREAS OF ACTIVITY

3.2.2023 / bri / svdl / ts