
ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Working Together Across Borders

Arena for Journalism in Europe

ARENA FOR JOURNALISM IN EUROPE — ANNUAL REPORT 2025



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

A year of strong delivery, in a harder funding climate

2025 was an especially successful year for carrying out activities, while also making great progress in strengthening the non-editorial functioning of Arena as an organisation. We concluded some larger projects and secured renewal of several multi-year grants. However, 2025 proved to be a difficult funding environment, and from 2025 to 2026 we see a decrease in Arena's working budget.

Fortunately, we have a strong and competent team and our flat hierarchy allows us a high level of shared efforts within our supportive team. While 2025 was a difficult year for fundraising, on so many other parameters it was an exemplary year to be used for reference.

Overall, **a particularly successful year with major conferences, important publications and a uniquely competent and committed team.**



— Brigitte Alfter, Director

Collaborative journalism, without borders

Arena for Journalism in Europe supports collaborative journalism — both journalists working with other journalists across geographical borders, and journalists working across professional borders with scholars, scientists and civil society. We believe that collaborative journalism is crucial to knowledge sharing, critical thinking and political life in European societies.

"I genuinely feel that your role as educators and mentors was more than fundamental in shaping the way I work today."

— Gianluca Liva, in an email to Arena.



A live illustration from the Dataharvest Security Café, 2005

Europe's biggest investigative journalism gathering

The annual European Investigative Journalism Conference — Dataharvest 2025 — was a success both from a planning perspective and based on attendee feedback. As in the past two editions, it sold out, this time four months in advance, with over 200 people on the waiting list. Programme curation drew over 200 pitches for 120 available slots, and 2025 introduced new formats: expertise cafés, a live journalism performance, an OSINT quest and a Nerd Jam for coders.

521

Participants

58

Nationalities

52%

Women attendees



The collaboration board, Dataharvest 2025

IN THEIR WORDS

“Robert Gebeloff from the New York Times opened his [Dataharvest] panel by saying that this is the best conference in the world... I can only agree.”

— Maximilian Hatzl, data journalist at Wiener Zeitung

Climate Arena Conference

The Arena Climate Conference took place in Budapest, Hungary, in October 2025, gathering journalists, scientists and researchers from across Europe. The sessions covered topics ranging from investigating multinational corporations to hacking AirTags, and from analysing satellite data to investigating false climate solutions.

160

Participants

63%

Women attendees

27

Sessions

“Climate Arena played a pivotal role in helping me break into investigative journalism this year. Through their network, I connected with a team [...] The fellowship and conference then helped me become an active part of a community where I can both contribute and learn from others. Now, I have three investigations underway.”

— Steffie Banatvala, freelance, Climate Arena Fellow 2025



Climate Arena, 2025, Budapest

The All of Europe programme

With the support of two foundations, Arena launched the All of Europe programme to counterbalance economic inequality in our networks. Not all journalists can afford to join network activities — conferences, trainings, fellowships — due to financial constraints. Therefore, during 2025, Arena developed relations with three funders, so that in 2026 we will provide participation grants to 10% of Dataharvest participants, covering travel, accommodation, per diems, participation fees and, where necessary, visa costs for journalists from **lower-income countries and journalists in exile in Europe**.

10%

of Dataharvest participants to receive
All of Europe participation grants in 2026

"I've long heard great things about the Dataharvest conference. Thanks to the support, I finally made it to beautiful Mechelen — reconnecting with old friends, meeting new ones, and exploring the latest trends in European media."

— Nino Macharashvili, 2025 All of Europe recipient from Georgia

THE ACADEMY

Training the next generation of collaborative journalists

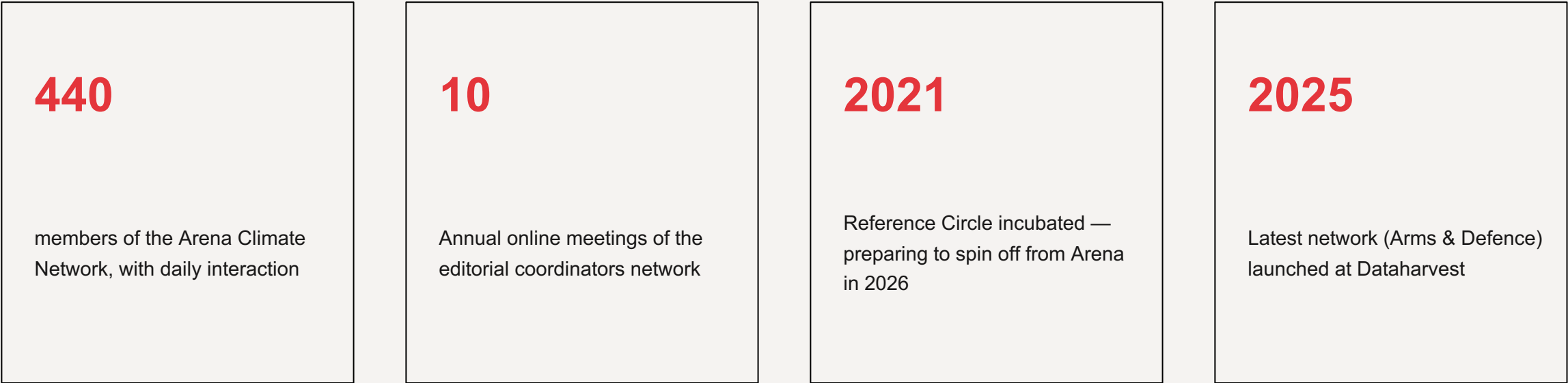


2025 Climate Arena Fellows meeting for the first time to start their collaborative, cross-border climate and environmental investigations. September 2025, Bratislava, Slovakia.

Arena is among the leaders in training and education in cross-border collaborative journalism, as well as investigative, data and entrepreneurial journalism. In 2025, we concluded the Erasmus-funded Crossborder Journalism Campus, and continued training through Dataharvest, Climate Arena, the European Collaborative Journalism Programme, IJ4EU, the PULSE project, and the Fonds Bijzondere Journalistieke Projecten — alongside in-house mentoring such as the Arena Climate fellowship.

Where journalists find each other

Arena provides online meeting spaces for journalists specialising in particular topics — lightly vetted chats, online meetings and groups — currently hosting thematic networks on **Climate, Food & Water, Labour and Arms Trade**.



PUBLICATIONS & ARENA DATA

Green to Grey

In 2025, the Climate Network, with the support of Arena Data, led and coordinated Green to Grey, an innovative cross-border collaborative data project about Europe's disappearing nature. The project received a Sigma Award in 2026, after Arena and its partners published 51 stories in 11 languages, reaching more than three million people within a month of publication.

51

Stories published

11

Languages

3M+

People reached in first month



“Two Sigma Awards in two years! What better proof that we need more Arena-coordinated investigations?”

— Raphaëlle Aubert, Le Monde.

The Forever Lobbying Project

In January 2025, the PFAS Forever Lobbying Project was published as a cross-border interdisciplinary investigation led and coordinated by an expert journalist at Le Monde. The project has won significant recognition from the scientist, journalist and policy communities, tracking its impact in the open.



Arena Data took part in the Forever Lobbying project and contributed with data expertise when compiling and sorting the Forever Pollution Project Collection — **the largest document collection to date on PFAS "forever chemicals"**. Arena Data also keeps ensuring transparency on European Farmsubsidy data in collaboration with Open Knowledge Foundation Germany, also supporting journalists and other researchers with individual data support on farm subsidies and other topics.

Secure spaces to collaborate

Collaborative Desk, the bespoke open-source digital space Arena offers for private and secure collaborations, developed further in 2025 — especially around training, standard procedures, legal questions, and lessons learned from hosting IJ4EU grantees and other groups.

Digital Security Assessment



We begin with conducting a need & threat analysis with your team as the basis for your customised Collaborative Desk set up.

Secure Tech Infrastructure



We set you up with a secure digital workspace, tailor-made for the cross-border journalism projects, using open source tools for communication & knowledge management.

Support & Mentorship



Your team will receive ongoing support throughout your project, including technical, and mentorship in digital security, cross-border collaboration and coordination.

Arena Networks



Through our extensive Arena journalism networks, we can help connect you with team members and partners across Europe.

PEOPLE

Team & Board

In 2025, Arena was governed by a three-member board, with changes during the year: Elisabetta Tola stepped down as Secretary, and Daniel Simons took up this role. Frank Gander, who had joined the board in 2024, took up the role of chairman. In 2025, Arena also welcomed a new Board member, Roelof Gunnink, who joined as Treasurer. Arena continues to work towards broadening, diversifying and strengthening its board so it can play a more active role in promoting and supporting the organisation.

The day-to-day management is coordinated by a small team: Brigitte Alfter (director, appointed 2019), Mikala Rasmussen (operations manager), Cora Moyano (finance manager), and Benedikt Hebeisen (technology manager).

The year also marked the departure of Trine Smistrup, co-founder of Arena, who left in mid-2025 to retire — a significant moment for the organisation.

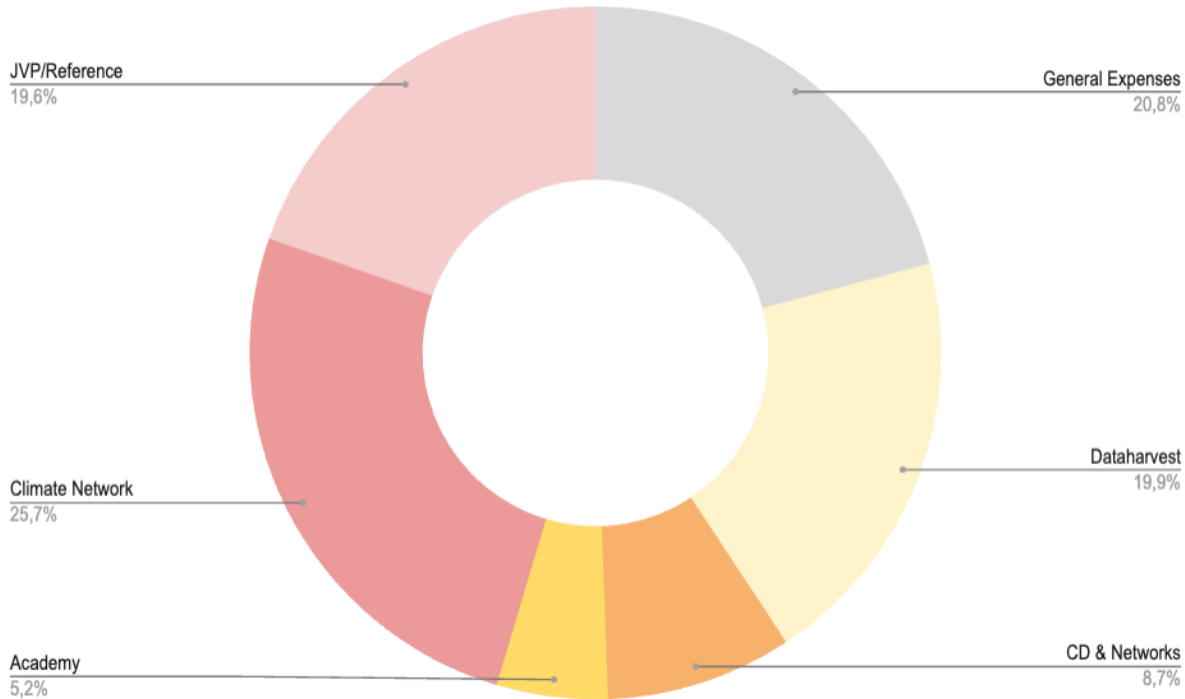
In 2025, Arena consisted of 17 team members from more than 10 nationalities. The majority have part-time contracts, and the total is around 10 FTE.

Arena's full team and board can be found [here](#).

Financials

2025 was a challenging year for the independent media sector in Europe, with major funding cuts affecting the entire ecosystem. Arena made substantial budget savings and intensified its fundraising efforts, but still needed to draw on its reserves.

Total income for 2025 was € 1.029.996, while total expenses were € 1.145.406 distributed across the following projects. Arena’s financial statements can be found [here](#).



SUPPORT

Funders

Arena's income streams are diverse, drawing predominantly from philanthropic organisations and EU project funding, with additional revenue from conference tickets, strategic partnerships, training and consultancies.

We work with over a dozen foundations and partners across Europe, in line with our goal of diversifying revenue in quantitative, geographic, and thematic terms. **We are grateful for the support from them all.**

Adessium Foundation	Fondation Charles Leopold Meyer	Stichting Benevolentia
Augstein Stiftung	Fred Foundation	Stichting Democratie en Media
Civitates	Limelight Foundation	Stiftung Mercator Schweiz
EC Creative Europe	Reva and David Logan Foundation	The Fritt Ord Foundation
European Climate Foundation	Schöpflin Stiftung	The Laudes Foundation
		Zeit Stiftung Bucerius

Thank you

Arena for Journalism in Europe
supports collaborative journalism
across geographical and professional borders.

journalismarena.eu