



2018-03-29

**Project Plan for the CEN Workshop on  
Journalism Trust Indicators  
WS number or WS Acronym: WS JTI**

**Workshop  
(approved during the kick-off meeting on 2018-05-23)**

**1. Status of the Project Plan**

The project plan has been developed in three stages:

- a) Initial draft Project Plan, which was further developed prior to submission for approval;
- b) Draft Project Plan approved at the Kick-off meeting of the Workshop;
- c) Approved Project Plan.

The current status of this document is: c) Approved Project Plan.

## **2. Background of the Workshop**

### **2.1. The Origin of the “Journalism Trust Initiative” by Reporters without Borders**

In our digital age, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish information shaped by vested interests from that produced by independent and fair news professionals. An open and honest public debate, aimed at informing the general public, is more and more difficult to sustain, especially when propaganda and ‘fake news’ seem on the rise and trust in institutions and the media is declining.

To face those challenges, in line with the fight for freedom of information, Reporters Without Borders – also known under its French name Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), wants to concretely enhance and safeguard journalism worthy of this name, complying with ethical rules, approved journalistic methods, and guarantees of independence. In a context of growing distrust towards the media, we consider it important to set up a transparent framework to promote journalistic standards, both to provide guidance to the public and to encourage news providers to raise their professional norms and practices.

We put the term “trust” at the center of our initiative because it signifies the level of credibility that journalism enjoys – or the lack thereof. This trust has of course to be earned. Journalists work in the public interest only if they act as “trusted third parties,” spreading information that enables people to be aware of, and fully comprehend, the challenges they face in their environment, and to form their own opinion.

Trust is deeply intertwined with transparency, responsibility, and accountability.

We believe in self-regulation; however, non-binding ethical guidelines have not always proven successful without meaningful mechanisms of compliance. These would require agreed standards that function as verifiable sets of rules and benchmarks and that define the best practice of our profession.

It also means implementation through tangible incentives.

### **2.2. The transnational and national legislation and regulatory environment**

In 2008 UNESCO defined a list of indicators (e.g., governance, national laws, media ownership, and ethics) aimed at strengthening media independence, which might be used to establish criteria.

In 2013, a resolution passed by the European Parliament established norms for press freedom within the EU. The Union’s “High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism” and “High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation” (2018) also published recommendations.

All of these initiatives are non-binding.

The Council of Europe (CoE) has established a “Committee of Experts on Media Pluralism and Transparency of Media Ownership” (MSI-MED) to prepare standard-setting proposals on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership, which were adopted by the Committee of Ministers in early 2018.

Although CoE recommendations are, in theory, legally binding once adopted and ratified by Members States, the latter step very rarely happens.

At the national level, some laws or regulatory mechanisms have been articulated to strengthen media independence, for example, in France (the “*Loi Bloche*”). In Ukraine, a law on media ownership transparency was passed in 2016, but enforcement has proven difficult. Concentration of media ownership is regulated in many countries through competition law, and, due to broadcast spectrum scarcity, other laws regulate TV and radio. The JTI confronts a digital environment with not only potentially infinite bandwidth, but also an array of media entities, ranging from tiny start-ups, one-person blogs, to major corporate players. Some of those corporations argue that the rise of online platforms negates the need for rules on concentration of ownership.

Other ethical guidelines and professional norms as well as other initiatives can be found in [Annex A](#).

### 3. Workshop Proposers and Workshop participants

- Original Proposer of the Workshop:
  - \_ Reporters Sans Frontières - Reporters Without Borders (RSF).
- Co-Proposers of the Workshop:
  - \_ Global Editors Network (GEN);
  - \_ European Broadcasting Union (EBU);
  - \_ Agence France Presse (AFP).

More information about the Proposer and Co-Proposers can be found in [Annex B](#).

- AFNOR and DIN, as CEN national members, are jointly hosting the workshop.
- The secretariat is being performed by AFNOR.

#### Workshop Participants

The Workshop process is open to any interested party or entity that supports the project plan and that welcomes engagement with other organizations from the following backgrounds and areas of expertise:

- Journalist’s associations and unions;
- Media outlets (audiovisual, print, pure-player/online, cross-media);

- Self-regulatory entities, such as press councils;
- Regulatory bodies and governments;
- Consumer and reader/audience representatives, media literacy initiatives;
- Platforms, information intermediaries, software and algorithms specialists,
- Advertisers, advertising agencies,
- Professional and industry associations covering the above sectors.

#### 4. Workshop scope and objectives

The ultimate goal of the “Journalism Trust Initiative” (JTI) of RSF is to support the universal, individual freedom of opinion through access to information and independent, pluralistic media. By safeguarding professional standards, a more healthy digital media landscape should emerge, from which each citizen and media worker, but also societies at large, could benefit.

The scope of this plan is to outline the operational details to meet that objective and is based on:

- The original JTI presentation document, Version 2.4. ([Annex D](#))
- A first consultation Workshop on 29 September, 2017, in Brussels
- The CEN Workshop Agreement Guidelines 29

[Annex C](#) will provide more background information on the objective of the Workshop, notably the outcome level, output level and input level, as well as more details on the scope of different Workshop Agreements.

#### 5. Workshop program

As an (initial) work program for CEN WS JTI,<sup>1</sup> we propose developing the following CEN Workshop Agreements (CWA):

- > Work Package/CWA I: Identity and Transparency (Tell us who you are.)
- > Work Package/CWA II: Accountability and Professionalism (Tell us how you work.)
- > Work Package/CWA III: Independence and Ethics (Tell us what your values are.)

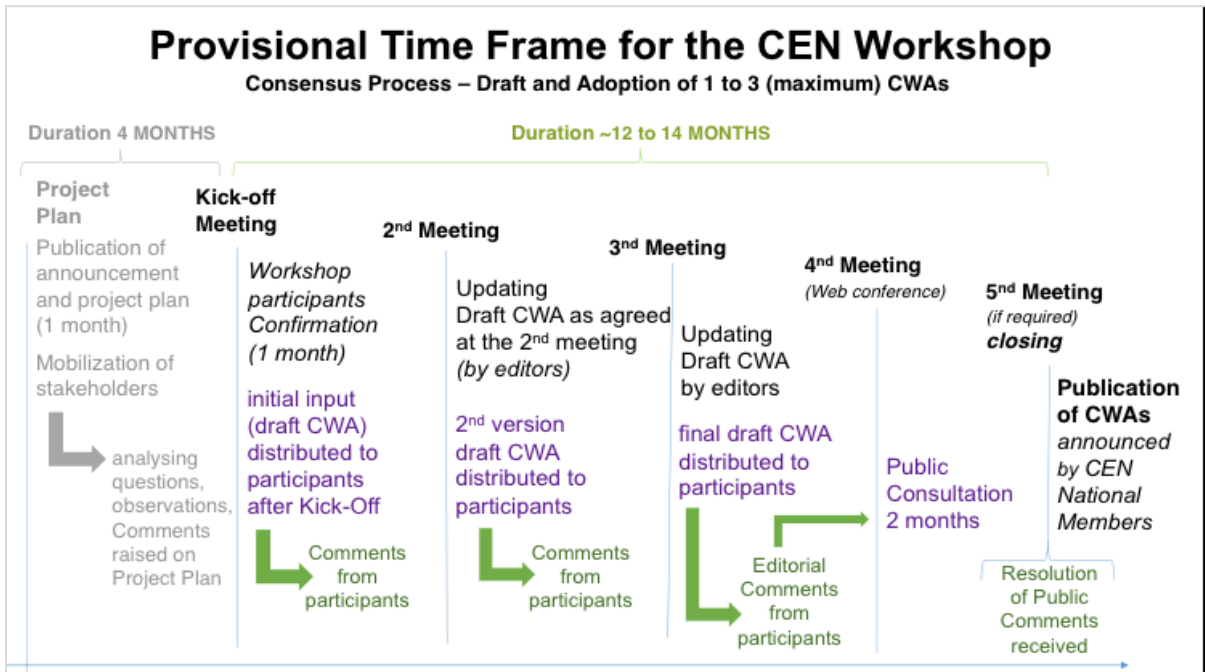
*Note:* this Workshop will concentrate on development of CWAs that consist of requirements, methods, and best practices, but it is not suitable for nor focused on developing any other downstream activities such as certification schemes, algorithms or software, labels, training, etc.

**The overall provisional timetable is as follows:**

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<sup>1</sup> Other deliverables may be developed if the Workshop is extended after completion of the initial work program subject to further negotiation and agreement between AFNOR and the workshop Proposers.

Workshop announcement: 3 April 2018  
 Workshop kick-off meeting: 23 May 2018 – Paris, AFNOR premises  
 Workshop closure: end of 2019 (workshop duration: 14-18 months)  
 The process for developing these CWAs is described on the following schema:



## 6. Workshop structure

The CEN JIT Workshop will be constituted by the Signatories, i.e., registered participants, after the first kick-off meeting.

As technical groups or drafting teams may be set up on a case-by-case basis if needed for the drafting of CWA contents, this Workshop is expected to liaise with the following additional, non-statutory entities:

- A “Stakeholders Group” of both of signatories and non-signatories of the CWA in order to ensure interoperability and usability of the results with regulatory, technical, and economic demands of groups of potential users (citizens/consumers and the general public, Media and Information Literacy Initiatives, advertisers, platforms and distributors, (self-) regulatory bodies, etc.), plus facilitate their input and the dissemination of the results. Membership for signatories of the Workshop will be on voluntary basis, validated by the Secretariat. Membership for selected, non-signatories of the Workshop will be by appointment of the Chairperson and validated by the Secretariat.
- A “Technical Group” as a taskforce within the CWA, consisting of IT experts in order to advise on and propose solutions as regards the machine-readability and algorithmic connectivity of the CWA results.





## 7. Contact points

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## *Annex A*

### **Self-regulation of Journalism and the Media: Ethical Guidelines and Professional Norms**

Most of the following initiatives are non-binding.

#### **1. Charters**

They appear at the beginning of the 20th Century. Some of the first ethical codes for journalists were adopted in France in 1918, in the US in 1926, and a code of conduct in the UK followed in 1938. Most of the still-existing documents have been published in the 1970s, amongst them the Munich Charter as the most well known one, which was adopted by journalist's unions in 1971. Nearly 50 years after its publication, many media outlets still rely on this charter. It lists 10 duties and five rights. One of the goals of the present "Journalism Trust Initiative" is to reinvent a similar type of charter and take it into the digital age.

#### **2. Press Councils**

A variety of press councils operate in around 110 countries (though not in France) to promote self-regulation within media industries, mostly by complaint mechanisms. However, researchers believe that only one out of three of these councils in the world meet their fundamental purpose to uphold their independence from governments.

#### **3. The Global Reporting Initiative, GRI**

GRI is a worldwide initiative aimed at strengthening corporate social responsibility. Between 2010 and 2012, the Ethical Journalism Network, EJN, compiled a 200-page report to adapt it to the requirements of the media industry. Major corporations have been involved in the consultation (Reuters, Bertelsmann, Guardian, etc.), along with international networks of unions (IFJ/ EFJ). The process and criteria developed through this work are quite similar to the present plan, except that it is non-binding.

#### **4. Other industry initiatives**





Norms have been developed and implemented in industries related to Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR. For example ISO26000 is an international standard applicable to different industries, in different countries, on this specific topic. RSF investigated this example and we came to believe that a self-assessment process as an entry-point to certification could be useful to consider for a media industry standard-setting process.

A second project launched in Switzerland about ten years ago adopted an existing, general standard on Quality Management Systems (ISO9001) and attempted to apply it to the media industry. A respective entity was created to sell certification, but ceased operations in 2016.

The Global Compact, mentioned by French Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a relevant initiative, is a worldwide project, initiated by the UN and gathering industries and civil society with the objective to promote the MDGs (Millennial Goals for Development, e.g., strengthening human rights). This initiative includes more than 12,000 participants from 170 countries.

## **Current initiatives around “Fake News”**

Several initiatives have been launched in the battle to fight disinformation. A thorough and independent attempt towards coordination and synchronization among the major projects in this domain is essential. This initiative sees itself as an umbrella activity to serve such a purpose, as opposed to duplicating achievements that have been accomplished already. Particular attention deserves to be given to all ongoing research activities in the academic field.

As proposers and co-proposers, we consider that the battle has to tackle the causes and not the symptoms, which means addressing the production process and intervening before the content is published – as opposed to checking or correcting it in retrospect. Nevertheless, we have looked at and benchmarked most existing initiatives aimed at “killing fake news”.

Facebook created the **Facebook Journalism Project** and supports, among other donors and contributors, the News Integrity Initiative, which is now being run as a collaboration among several entities, hosted by the City University of New York (CUNY);

Google created the **News Lab, Fact Check**, and sponsored **First Draft News** – one of the main initiatives, which launched First Draft Partner Network and a platform called CrossCheck, a collaborative effort between newsrooms led by AFP, to check rumors during the 2017 French election.

The **Trust Project** is an international consortium of news organizations collaborating to create standards of transparency in journalism with the goal of building a more trustworthy and trusted press. Led and founded by award-winning journalist Sally Lehrman, it is hosted by Santa Clara University’s Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. The “Trust Indicators” are standardized



disclosures about the news outlet, the journalist, and the commitments behind a story that make it easy for the public to identify trustworthy news. Digital platforms including Google, Facebook, Bing, and Twitter, and other parties have agreed to use the Trust Indicators and the machine-readable signals associated with them to surface trustworthy news to their users. Its 's large scale international survey of consumers<sup>2</sup> may give signals as to what the JTI can focus on without duplication in seeking to adopt indicators that consumers say improve their trust in media.

**Deepnews.ai**, a project developed by Frederic Filloux, member of RSF Board and Stanford Fellow, intends to make a contribution to the sustainability of the information ecosystem on the economic side and on the editorial side. The platform, aimed at assessing the quality of journalistic work, is based on deep learning techniques.

Other initiatives mainly focus on “fact checking”, for example the **Poynter Institute** for Media Studies that launched an international fact-checking network, aimed at promoting best practises to check facts. It includes 64 fact-checking organisations around the world and a mandatory code-of-practice.

Some legacy media outlets started their own fact checking units/labels with examples in France, Germany and the US, e.g., The Washington Post Fact Checker, FlipSide in the Huffington Post, Tagesschau, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Santa Clara University – The Trust Project: [User Interviews, Research and Reports](#)



## *Annex B*

### **Additional Information on Proposer and Co-sponsors**

Founded in 1985, **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)** became one of the world's leading NGOs in the defence and promotion of freedom of information. RSF is registered in France as a non-profit organization based in Paris, with consultative status at the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF). Our foreign sections, bureaux in ten cities, and a network of correspondents in 130 countries give us the ability to mobilize support, challenge governments and wield influence both on the ground and in the ministries and precincts where media and Internet standards and legislation are drafted. Every day, we issue press releases and reports in French, English, Spanish, Arabic, and Farsi (and often in other languages such as Chinese, Portuguese and Russian) about the state of freedom of information throughout the world and how it is being violated. These statements in the international media increase public awareness and influence leaders as regards both individual cases and general issues.

However when promoting the freedom of media and information worldwide, we cannot turn a blind eye on the misuse and blatant violations of these liberties. They need to be tackled, just as forcefully as any other attack, to protect the freedoms so dear to us. This is the time to look in the mirror. We believe that the current buzz around "Fake News" – as problematic in every sense this term seems, could and must be turned into an opportunity of constructive self-reflection of our profession, including a meaningful and visible response to it where needed. Therefore, our "Journalism Trust Initiative" is designed to launch a debate about accountability of the Fourth Estate. Freedom comes with responsibilities. Addressing them pro-actively and self-determined as a professional community will be much easier and more likely successful than regulatory action being superimposed on us.

With a leading voice as a frontrunner in this debate and a background free of any partisan interests in it, we see our role as a convening power and a neutral provider of this platform of exchange.

The **Global Editors Network (GEN)** is an international association of over 6,000 editors-in-chief and media executives with the mission of fostering digital innovation in newsrooms all over the world. GEN has three main programs: Editors Lab, the Data Journalism Awards, Startups for News, as well as the Den, an upcoming hub for the international data journalism community. The organization's flagship event, the GEN Summit, gathers over 750 participants from 70 countries.

GEN is committed to media innovation and sustainable journalism, empowering newsrooms through a variety of programs designed to inspire, connect and share. Its online community allows media innovators from around the world to interact and collaborate on projects created



through our programs. GEN Board Members support this mission and have signed the GEN Manifesto.

GEN is driven by a journalistic imperative and a common goal: Content and Engagement First. To that end, GEN supports many types of organisations and media outlets, to define a vision for the future of journalism and enhance quality through innovation and cooperation. Freedom of information and independence of the news media are, and will remain, the main credo of the Global Editors Network and it will continue to back efforts to enhance press freedom worldwide.

The **European Broadcasting Union (EBU)** is the world's leading alliance of public service media (PSM). The EBU has 73 Members in 56 countries in Europe, and an additional 33 Associates in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Members operate almost 2,000 television, radio, and online channels and services, and offer a wealth of content across other platforms. Together they reach an audience of more than one billion people around the world, broadcasting in more than 120 languages. The EBU operates Eurovision and Euroradio services.

The EBU is devoted to making public service media indispensable. It supports and strengthens public service media, provides first-class media services, and offers our Members a centre for learning and sharing.

Founded in 1835, **Agence France-Presse (AFP)** is the third largest international news agency in the world delivering fast, accurate, in-depth coverage of the events shaping our world, from conflicts to politics, economics, sports, entertainment and the latest breakthroughs in health, science and technology. It is an autonomous entity created by the French parliament (Law N° 57-32 of 10 January 1957) whose operation is assured according to commercial rules. Its independence is at the heart of its fundamental obligations set out in its bylaws (article 2). Its Chairman represents the Agency and ensures its general management. AFP is administered by a board of eighteen directors composed of representatives of publishers, of broadcasting companies, of three government representatives as public services users, of members of its staff and of qualified individuals chosen by its higher counsel for their knowledge of media and digital technologies, economic and managerial skills. AFP has a duty to fulfill missions of general interest in the field of news and must, to the full extent of its resources, develop its activities with a view to providing users with accurate, impartial and trustworthy news services.

## Annex C

### Objective and Scope of the CWA

Reliable and balanced news and information, free from any hidden bias, have become rare in our era of increasingly non-verified information. This trend is gradually eroding open and honest debate aimed at informing the general public. Our aim is to concretely support journalism worthy of this name, complying with ethical rules, tried-and-true journalistic methods, and guarantees of independence.

It is increasingly difficult to distinguish information shaped by vested interests from that which emanates from independent and fair news producers. In this context of growing distrust towards the media, it is important to set up a concrete framework to promote journalistic standards, in order to give clues to the public, to encourage news providers to upgrade their work and provide tools to external stakeholders such as algorithmic companies, advertisers, and regulatory bodies.

For the implementation of this process, incentives will need to be defined. Instead of fighting the bad and trying to disclose lies on the Internet, this initiative will support the good and promote journalism that deserves the trust of its audience.

#### **Impact level**

The ultimate goal of this project is to support the universal, individual freedom of opinion through access to information and independent, pluralistic media. By safeguarding professional standards, a more healthy digital media landscape should emerge from which not only citizen and media workers benefit, but also societies at large.

#### **Outcome level**

As a first, already emerging result, we expect to create a much needed platform of exchange between industry associations, unions, academia and civil society representatives. In a clearly defined context and framework (as outlined in the CWA packages below), common ground shall be established to contribute to the desired impact outlined above.

A set of standards, to be developed collaboratively, should increase the level of compliance with already existing ethical codes, thus increasing accountability of media outlets and subsequently (re-) establish trust of their audiences.

Furthermore, the interoperability of these standards with algorithms of search engines and social media should be considered, both strategically and technically. This also includes the incorporation of existing work in this field as well as new areas to develop, particularly looking at emerging artificial intelligence (AI) mechanisms, machine-learning, and automated content sourcing/production/distribution/delivery and engagement.



Perhaps, also a newly established entity could emerge from this process to foster sector transparency by promoting the implementation and monitoring of compliance with those standards.

#### □ **Output level**

The intended Workshop shall discuss and finally produce one or more agreements under CEN rules (CWA – CEN Workshop Agreement). Taking into account the feedback already received, we would propose – subject to approval by the Workshop participants – to develop a number of agreements that would reflect different levels of commitment, for example:

##### *Work Package/CWA I*

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#### **Identity and Transparency** (Tell us who you are.)

This Workshop Agreement contains relevant indicators about the identity and status of a content provider. Sorted by different classes per type of corporate entity (e.g., state media, public media, privately owned media, publicly listed media, corporate media, community media, blog, etc. – including hybrid options), it lists basic information any media outlet should provide if it intends to comply. These would include for instance, but not be limited to beneficial ownership, sources of revenue, means of distribution, statistics on reach/circulation, management, impact of algorithms, etc.

The idea behind this first level CWA is to facilitate transparency of the operating model, structures, people and interests behind a certain media outlet. It has the potential to be further developed into a European (EN) or international (ISO) standard.

##### *Work Package/CWA II*

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#### **Accountability and Professionalism** (Tell us how you work.)

At a second level, this Workshop Agreement focuses on the professional methods and the enabling environment of journalistic production at the organizational level. It builds on the first one and adds another layer to it. Participants agree on a set of related criteria and organizational benchmarks to secure the use of professional working methods, such as verification, use of bots/AI, and to promote accountability vis-a-vis the audiences. These would entail, in particular, the existence and functioning of complaints and correction mechanisms, but also the newsroom structure and management overall.

##### *Work Package/CWA III*

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### **Independence and Ethics** (Tell us what your values are.)

At a third and more advanced level, this Agreement encompasses the ethical dimension of independent journalism, enabling a group of stakeholders to codify a standard of conduct and safeguards against undue influence or conflicts of interest. It would not only call for an ethical code for media outlets, but also validate its enforcement.

The objective here is to preserve the “Munich Charter” and take it to the digital age.

In principle, the number, design and focus of the Workshop Agreement(s) to be produced is subject to the debate and decision-making within the group of stakeholders. The possibility of sorting the whole process into different levels and respective outputs will facilitate buy-in of as many contributors as possible, but also a clear distinction according to commitment. Thus, a danger of the lowest common denominator can be avoided, while still remaining totally inclusive.

Based on the current project design and funding agreements, a number of up to three CWAs is achievable. Additional Workshop Agreements would require a respective contractual extension.

#### **Input level**

As a means of reaching our objective, we intend to use:

- \_ The CEN Workshop Agreement protocol as a main framework;
- \_ The Trust Project as a pioneering reference, provided that it participates;
- \_ The RSF network of contacts and infrastructure to spread idea, build a consortium of participants, raise funds and implement;
- \_ The network of contacts and infrastructure of co-sponsors to support the dissemination;
- \_ Research and advocacy activities – also involving additional partners, like universities and think tanks – in the fields ranging from media economics and competition law to behavioral science, politics, regulation and self-regulation in order to understand, to be informed of and to actively the environment in which this project unfolds;
- \_ Press and public relations activities, such as events and conferences, press releases, web-campaigns and publications, which will be used to communicate pro-actively and also to draw on continuous external feedback and expertise throughout the project’s lifespan.