



2nd meeting, 24–25 October 2018, Strasbourg

**MSI-JOQ(2018)11
16 October 2018**

MEETING REPORT

Opening and agenda

1. The Committee of experts on quality journalism in the digital age (MSI-JOQ) met in Strasbourg on 24-25 September 2018. The meeting was chaired by Ms Alexandra Borchardt (24 September) and Ms Katharine Sarikakis (25 September). The Committee first adopted the agenda (see Appendix I) without any changes. The draft annotated agenda and the list of participants appear in Appendix II and in Appendix III, respectively. Of the 29 participants, there were 14 women (48%) and 15 men (52%).
2. The meeting was addressed by Mr Jan Kleijssen, Director of the Information Society – Action against Crime Directorate. He provided the MSI-JOQ with information on points of interest related to the mandate of the committee, underlining that a favourable environment for quality journalism is a vital element of a functioning democracy and therefore a keen interest for the Council of Europe, especially in today's media environment challenged by competitive pressures of the digital evolution, a growing distrust in all democratic institutions, proliferation of disinformation and increasing threats to journalists' safety, freedom and working conditions. Mr Kleijssen emphasised the importance of expert committees' expertise and reflection on the current challenges for the development of the organisation's standards and activities, and briefed the group on the recent freedom of expression related activities including a comprehensive approach to human rights-oriented development of artificial intelligence.

MSI-JOQ deliverables

Draft Recommendation on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age

3. The members and participants discussed the first draft of the recommendation as prepared and presented by the rapporteurs, Nadia Bellardi and Darian Pavli. In terms of the structure, the text includes a preamble, an operative part and an appendix with specific guidelines divided into three parts: financial sustainability, quality and ethics and media and information literacy, following an outline that had been approved by the expert committee and taken note of by the CDMSI. The

members and participants welcomed the draft, its direction and goals. The discussion first focused on the very notion of what the draft recommendation aims to protect, namely the concept of “quality journalism”, which was by some members considered to pose definitional problems and by others to potentially exclude all news production that occupies the space between the high-and low-quality journalism. In this context, the group agreed that it was necessary to accentuate that the right to freedom of expression is enjoyed by everyone and protects all types of media, before focusing on quality journalism which warrants special promotion including financial support. Furthermore, it was also pointed out that the object of protection should be formulated with regard to the methods and processes of reporting, as well as the principles, values and purposes involved in the news production, the elements which constitute prerequisites for quality journalism. The members agreed that many such elements were already identifiable from the preamble (in particular from paras. 1 and 2) and should be further fleshed out. In addition, they agreed that the preamble would be somewhat restructured for more clarity, and certain paragraphs could be merged.

4. The recommendation’s essential goal is to identify the preconditions for a favourable environment for quality journalism, in other words, to identify the ways that journalists can be supported to act ethically while seeking “the best obtainable version of the truth” (in the words of Carl Bernstein) in order to serve the public interest. In this connection, the group discussed how to future-proof the text in order to retain its relevance against future changes in the media environment, and a number of terminological and textual amendments were suggested to that end.
5. Financial sustainability was judged to be an issue that member states could really act upon, so as to support not only quality reporting but also democracy. The group discussed a number of possibilities for strengthening the financial sustainability of media outlets, with a focus on enabling regulatory frameworks, financial support of journalist education and training, and redistribution of revenues arising from monetisation of media content between the online platforms and media companies. In this regard, it appears that some MS are considering redistribution mechanisms, but it is unclear whether and when any concrete steps would be made in this direction. A number of experts, however, expressed support for such mechanisms to be put in place. As for the state financial support schemes, they should not be at the expense of the funding of PSM and should be administered and overseen at arm's-length from the State.
6. The remaining two chapters on quality and ethics and media education towards recognition and appreciation of quality journalism are as yet less developed, and the members and participants provided further ideas on issues that could be developed into guidelines. Further contributions were invited by the Secretariat, as well as any valuable practices that could be showcased on the CoE Freedom of expression website for the purposes of implementation of the future recommendation.

Draft Declaration on financial sustainability of quality journalism in the digital age

7. The CDMSI entrusted the expert committee with the task of preparing the Draft declaration in order to address the increasing concerns regarding the financial viability of quality news production. The MSI-JOQ discussed the first draft of the document prepared by the Secretariat, welcoming the initiative and the elements contained in the document. The group contributed a number of ideas and suggestions with a view to tightening the structure of the document, fleshing out some of the points and eliminating possible controversies. A revised draft was prepared following the meeting, to which a few more comments were made and incorporated in the text, which is to be submitted to the CDMSI for further action.

Draft study on media and information literacy in the digital environment

8. The MSI-JOQ discussed the cluster of skills and knowledge necessary for recognising, critically analysing and valuing quality journalism, as well technical skills required for navigating the digital environment and participation skills for successful interaction via digital channels. The members welcomed the amended outline for the study and the questionnaire that will be used for collecting data on case-studies of valuable practices. The group made a number of suggestions regarding the content of the questionnaire (e.g. to include a question on data awareness and privacy), decided to include in the study also projects that did not yield expected results for the purpose of analysing which approaches work best, and emphasised the importance of including a broad enough country sample. The members further decided that some categories of questions in the questionnaire could be merged, and the language should be simplified to facilitate the replies. Once a revised version of the questionnaire will be approved by the group, it will be circulated to the journalists associations (EFJ, RSF), the EBU, EPRA, COMMIT, UNESCO partners, etc. At the next meeting the members will analyse the main findings of the survey.

Decisions on timelines and follow-up

9. The MSI-JOQ will hold its next meeting in Strasbourg on 21-22 March 2019.
10. The MSI-JOQ decided that the Secretariat would prepare a draft meeting report to be sent to the Chair and the Vice-Chair for consideration. Thereafter the Secretariat will send the draft report to the MSI-JOQ with a deadline of five full working days allowing for comments. In the absence of comments within the deadline, the report will be deemed adopted by the MSI-JOQ and will be transmitted to the CDMSI.

APPENDIX I

AGENDA OF THE SECOND MEETING

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Information by the Secretariat
4. Presentation and discussion of the Draft recommendation on promoting the favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age
5. Presentation and discussion of the Draft study on a possible standard-setting instrument on the promotion of media and information literacy in the digital environment
6. Dates of next meetings
7. Other business

APPENDIX II

ANNOTATED AGENDA OF THE SECOND MEETING

1. **Opening of the meeting**
2. **Address by Mr Jan Kleijssen, Director, Information Society - Action against Crime Directorate**
3. **Adoption of the agenda**
4. **Information by the Secretariat**

Information on activities of the Council of Europe relevant to the work of MSI-JOQ, in particular on the 14th meeting of the CDMSI (Steering Committee on Media and Information Society), 19-21 June 2018
5. **Presentation and discussion of the Draft recommendation by the Committee of Ministers to the member states on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age**

[MSI-JOQ [Terms of Reference](#)] *(doc MSI-JOQ(2018)08)*

The members of MSI-JOQ will be invited to examine and discuss the first version of the draft recommendation prepared by the rapporteurs.
6. **Presentation and discussion of the Draft outline and Draft questionnaire for the Study on the promotion of media and information literacy in the digital environment**

[MSI-JOQ [Terms of Reference](#)] *(doc MSI-JOQ(2018)04)*
(doc MSI-JOQ(2018)07)

The members of MSI-JOQ will be invited to examine and discuss the preparatory documents prepared by the rapporteurs.
7. **Presentation and discussion of the Draft declaration on the financial sustainability of quality journalism in the digital age**

[MSI-JOQ [Terms of Reference](#)] *(doc MSI-JOQ(2018)09)*

The members of MSI-JOQ will be invited to examine and discuss the first version of the draft declaration prepared by the secretariat.
8. **Dates of next meetings**

The members of the MSI-JOQ will be invited to agree on a timeframe for the continuation of their work.
9. **Other business**

APPENDIX III

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS / LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

**Committee of experts on quality journalism in the digital age
MSI-JOQ
Comité d'experts sur le journalisme de qualité dans l'ère du numérique
MSI-JOQ**

2nd meeting, 24-25 September 2018
Council of Europe, Strasbourg

2^{ème} réunion, 24-25 septembre 2018
Conseil de l'Europe, Strasbourg

www.coe.int/msi-jog

25/09/2018

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Media Reforms Adviser to the Prime Minister - "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" – Apologised

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