



20 February 2018

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

A. Short outline

The purpose of the future recommendation is to reclaim the essential role that journalism plays in providing timely, accurate and relevant information, free from undue interference. The recommendation should clarify why, more than ever, we need journalism in this day and age, when plethora of information is available online at only a few clicks. It should emphasise the importance of trustworthy, fact-checked sources for responding to the informational (and other) needs of different societal groups, and promote their value in the face of the cacophonous interactive world where anyone can share their views with large audiences. It should explain the importance of maintaining and protecting media freedom and freedom of expression in the digital environment, while specifying what is it that we aim to protect.

The recommendation should address the main policy issues which impact on the exercise of journalistic activities. It should provide some guidelines for the involved stakeholders (member states, media, intermediaries, journalists, citizen-journalists, bloggers and other media actors, academics, self-regulation bodies, civil society, etc.) on their respective roles, rights and responsibilities aimed at ensuring favourable environment for quality journalism.

The recommendation will adopt the functional approach to journalism, giving recognition to both established and new actors in the media environment, be it citizen-journalists or intermediaries which increasingly edit, curate and create media content. It should include guidelines for all actors who contribute to public debate through their journalistic activities and who fulfil the public watchdog function.

The following list, which includes examples of issues that could be addressed in the recommendation, is purely indicative. The Committee of experts on quality journalism in the digital age (MSI-JOQ) may decide to focus on only a few issues crucial to enabling quality journalism and examine them in depth, or it may

choose a more comprehensive manner of addressing the topic. The guidelines may touch upon the legal, social, ethical, technological, financial and educational aspects related to quality journalism, depending on the delineation of the recommendation's scope during the first meeting's discussions.

1. The role of journalism in the face of technological and societal changes – what constitutes journalism today and what, if any, new functions should it assume

- Journalism as an essential force of news production and consumption – guidelines on how to retain and enhance this role in the digital environment, how to maintain journalistic independence and prevent that news are instrumentalised by partisan forces
- Importance of preservation of journalism as a public good
- Importance of accuracy for building trust (fact checking and promoting trusted sources);
- Journalism as antidote for information disorder, countering the informational chaos with reliable information
- The role of local, community and minority media in rebuilding engagement with the audience

2. Adaptation of traditional media outlets to the digital environment vs. digital-native outlets – how to have the best of both worlds

- New forms of online journalism (collaborative forms of journalism, citizen journalism, user-generated content, etc.); opportunities for a more direct communication between journalists and their audiences and the implications of such communication
- Digital products used by media outlets providing improved opportunities for storytelling and reaching audiences
- Relevance of and support for legacy media outlets, including measures for a better online presence
- Support for initiatives for not-for-profit/alternative business models based on subscription, donations, charitable foundations and participatory financing

3. Ethics in the digital environment

- Applicability of standards of journalistic ethics to other media actors such as citizen journalists
- Adherence to ethical codes as a “stamp” of reliability and accuracy
- Ethical standards for new media in the digital age
 - Media responsibilities in curbing the phenomenon of mis- and disinformation
 - Relationship with users: privacy policy, terms of use of user generated content
 - Importance of pre-publication verification of content and suitable alternatives in the fast-paced world of online journalism,

possibilities of requesting post-publication correction, caution when using anonymous sources

- Objectivity vs. opinion
- Self-regulatory and regulatory initiatives aimed at a better control of creators and publishers over the content published on platforms they don't control (Facebook, Twitter, etc.),
- Responsibilities of internet intermediaries as regards the availability and visibility of trusted news websites; effectiveness of filtering/removal of misinformation/disinformation and other "low quality" links from social media news feeds; danger of over removal and possibilities of restoring legitimate content

4. Media literacy and education

- Rights and responsibilities of online users, citizen-journalists, bloggers, etc.
- Support for initiatives teaching users how to recognise reliable, credible news sources, and how to tell the difference between news and mis- or disinformation
- Support for initiatives promoting active use of media and content creation across a variety of platforms
- Initiatives supporting users to become aware of the implications of potentially false or harmful content and to flag it to the responsible bodies

B. Relevant documents

1. Council of Europe instruments

(a) Committee of Ministers

- [Draft Recommendation CM/Rec\(201x\)xx \(provisional version as of 7th December 2017\)](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on Media Pluralism and Transparency of Media Ownership
- [Draft Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)xxx \(provisional version as of 6th December 2017\)](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2016\)4](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2014\)6](#) and explanatory memorandum of the Committee of Ministers to member states on a Guide to Human Rights for Internet Users
- Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society, "Freedom of Expression and democracy in the digital age: opportunities, rights, responsibilities", [Resolution No 2 "Preserving the essential role of media in the digital age"](#), Belgrade, 7-8 November 2013

- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2011\)7](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on a new notion of media
- [Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on the protection and promotion of investigative journalism, adopted on 26-09-2007;](#)
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2007\)3](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the remit of public service media in the information society

(b) Parliamentary Assembly

- PACE, Resolution 2179 (2017), "[Political influence over independent media and journalists](#)"
- PACE, Recommendation 2111 (2017), "[Political influence over independent media and journalists](#)"
- PACE, Resolution 2143 (2017), "[Online media and journalism: challenges and accountability](#)"
- PACE, Resolution 2066 (2015), "[Media responsibility and ethics in a changing media environment](#)"

(c) European Court of Human Rights (case-law)

- [Factsheet on hate speech, apology of violence, promoting negationism and condoning terrorism: the limits to the freedom of expression](#)
- [Factsheet on freedom of expression, Internet and new technologies](#)
- [Factsheet on freedom of expression and the broadcasting media](#)
- [Factsheet on the freedom of the press and the protection of one's reputation](#)
- [Factsheet on the freedom to impart confidential information and its limits](#)
- [Factsheet on other acts having chilling effects on media freedom](#)
- [Factsheet on the positive obligations of member states to protect journalists and the freedom of expression](#)

2. Council of Europe reports, studies and articles published in CoE books

- Council of Europe (2017), "[State of Democracy, human rights and the rule of law – Populism – How strong is Europe's checks and balances](#)", report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, p.p. 33-56, Council of Europe, Strasbourg
- Wardle Cl. and Derakhshan H., Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09, "[Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making](#)", Council of Europe, Strasbourg
- Council of Europe and the European Union for Georgia (2017), Programme of Partnership for Good Governance Programme, "[Guidelines on safeguarding privacy in media](#)"
- Nielsen R., Cornia A. and Kalogeropoulos A. (2016), Council of Europe report DGI (2016)18 prepared by the Reuters Institute for the study of

journalism on "[Challenges and opportunities for news media and journalism in an increasingly digital, mobile and social media environment](#)", Council of Europe, Strasbourg

- White A. (2015), "[Ethical journalism: an inspiration for responsible communications in Europe](#)", Chapter 7, p.p. 195-222 at "[Journalism at risk – Threats, challenges and perspectives](#)", Council of Europe, Strasbourg
- Siapera, E. (2015), "[Journalism's dilemmas: internet challenges for professional journalism and media sustainability](#)", Chapter 8, p.p. 223 – 259 at "[Journalism at risk – Threats, challenges and perspectives](#)", Council of Europe, Strasbourg
- PACE, Report ([doc. 14339](#)) of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on "Political influence over independent media and journalists", Rapporteur: Mr Stefan Schennach, 09-06-2017
- PACE, Report ([doc. 14228](#)) of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on "Online media and journalism: challenges and accountability", Rapporteur: Ms Adele Gambaro, 09-01-2017
- Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2011), [Issue paper on Ethical Journalism and Human Rights](#), Strasbourg,

3. European Union

- [Outcomes](#) of the 2016 Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights on "Media Pluralism and Democracy", organised by the European Commission and held in Brussels on 17-18 November 2016

4. Other reports and studies

- Fletcher R., Cornia A., Graves L. and Nielsen R. (2018), "[Measuring the reach of "fake news" and on-line disinformation in Europe](#)", Reuters Institute for the study of journalism – Oxford University
- Sambrook R. (2018), "[Global Teamwork: The rise of collaboration in investigative journalism](#)", Reuters Institute for the study of journalism – Oxford University
- EJN Report on Challenges for Journalism in the Post-truth Era (2017), [Ethics in the News](#), edited by Aidan White, Ethical Journalism Network
- Nicholls T. and Nielsen R. (2017), "[The Global Expansion of Digital – Born News Media](#)", Reuters Institute for the study of journalism – Oxford University
- Newman N. and Fletcher R. (2017), "[Bias, Bullshit and Lies: Audience Perspectives on Low Trust in the Media](#)", Reuters Institute for the study of journalism – Oxford University
- Nielsen R. and Graves L. (2017), "[News you don't believe": Audience perspectives on fake news](#)", Reuters Institute for the study of journalism – Oxford University

- Cherubini F. and Graves L. (2016), "[The rise of fact-checking sites in Europe](#)", Reuters Institute for the study of journalism – Oxford University
- Blöbaum B. (2014), "[Trust and Journalism in a Digital Environment](#)" (working paper), Reuters Institute for the study of journalism – Oxford University
- Jenkins B. (2012), "[Better journalism in the Digital Age](#)", Carnegie UK Trust
- Johanna Vehkoo (2010), "[What is Quality Journalism: and how can it be saved](#)", Reuters Institute for the study of journalism – Oxford University

5. Articles

- McGonagle T. (2017), "[Fake news: False fears or real concerns?](#)", Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights 2017, Vol. 35(4) 203-209
- Fletcher R., (2017), "[The impact of Trust in the News Media on Online News Consumption and Participation](#)", Digital Journalism, Volume 5, Issue 10
- White A. (2016), "[Journalism Ethics: What they are and where they come from](#)", Ethical Journalism Network
- Sarikakis, K. (2016), [Europe's many crises and the confinement of democracy-driven free speech](#), in M. Edström, A.T. Kenyon & E.-M. Svensson (Eds.), *Blurring the lines. Market-driven and democracy-driven freedom of expression* (pp. 69-78), Gothenburg: Nordicom
- Alexandra Borchardt (2018), "[Making Journalism Great Again](#)" in Project Syndicate – The World's Opinion Page (09-01-2018)
- Alexandra Borchardt (2018), "[Free Speech in the Filter Age](#)" in Project Syndicate – The World's Opinion Page (16-02-2018)