



**3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, 21-22 March 2019, Strasbourg**

**MSI-JOQ(2019)11  
1 April 2019**

<b>MEETING REPORT</b>
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### **Opening and agenda**

1. The Committee of experts on quality journalism in the digital age (MSI-JOQ) met in Strasbourg on 21-22 March 2019. The meeting was chaired by Ms Katharine Sarikakis, she and Ms Alexandra Borchardt having been re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair for another year of the Committee's mandate. The Committee 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 26 participants, there were 13 women (50%) and 13 men (50%).
2. The meeting was addressed by Mr Jan Kleijssen, Director of the Information Society – Action against Crime Directorate. He welcomed the participants and especially Áine Kerr, a new member of the MSI-JOQ, and thanked the group for their work on the Declaration on the financial sustainability of quality journalism in the digital age. He furthermore evoked the importance of a healthy media sector and independent media for creating a pluralist society. In this connection, Mr Kleijssen provided a few conclusions from the Conference "Media freedom – how can we deliver?" which has offered new insights into digital threats for pluralism and explored new avenues of action in terms of ownership control, transparency, finances and media literacy. It transpired from the discussions, *inter alia*, that media and information literacy programmes need to be placed in a normative context, and regulatory authorities should be given adequate competences and funding – especially funding which is lacking – to adopt MIL policies and measures adapted to a variety of age and social groups. Concluding with a finding that while many traditional threats to pluralism remain, they are amplified by new, digital developments, Mr Kleijssen encouraged the group to also consult the conclusions of the Helsinki Conference on AI impacts on human rights, democracy and the rule of law that is to lead to a number of sector-specific recommendations and an assessment of need for a binding legal instrument on the issue.

**MSI-JOQ deliverables*****Draft Recommendation on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age***

3. The members and participants discussed the second draft of the recommendation as prepared and presented by the rapporteur, Nadia Bellardi. They agreed to make a few textual amendments to the preamble, to integrate in the text the importance of access to information, and to clearly distinguish, in terms of accessibility of quality journalism, between successful business models of commercial media and the specific roles of public service media and community media. Regarding the operative part the group agreed to include a commitment on the part of the states to translate the recommendation in their respective languages, as well as to include the idea of maintaining the relevance of the recommendation in practice through promotion at the national and international levels.
4. The group provided a number of suggestions to reinforce the text as a whole, such as prominently featuring the importance of independent journalism and media regulators. Furthermore, the recommendation could explore the changing metrics of journalism and moving from the "time spent" to measuring real engagement through how content is consumed. Another avenue of further research could be to identify ways of rewarding original reporting and of amplifying original sources of quality content.
5. The guidelines are structured in three chapters. In this connection the group discussed possible changes to the title of the last chapter on MIL, and made suggestions for some subsections (especially in the first chapter on financial sustainability) to be amended to better fit the guidelines and, at the same time, reflect the chapter titles. Furthermore, some guidelines should be moved under different titles for the text to have a more solid overall structure. The members also discussed the possibility of underpinning the text with specific highlights on MIL. Further reinforcements can be made to demonstrate a clear correlation between critical thinking skills, creating a demand for quality content and its supply. However, it is equally important to retain clear focuses of individual guidelines; additional highlights should be integrated strategically, for maximum impact.
6. In the chapter on the financial sustainability of quality journalism, the members and participants emphasised the need to ensure that any direct or indirect state support is accompanied by safeguards for transparency and independence. Also, in terms of conditions for granting support, inspiration can be found in some existing national regulations and practices that can be integrated in the guidelines. Support guidelines should furthermore be better articulated in terms of distinguishing between objectives, means and bodies that can be employed to that effect and vested with different powers (research, managing, monitoring, oversight).
7. Guidelines on the redistribution mechanisms between media organisations and online platforms should highlight the principle that, if quality journalism is recognised as a public good, there should be appropriate regulatory structures in place to support a fairer distribution of gains generated from its monetisation. In this regard, the relationship between state-mandated or otherwise regulated measures and voluntary contributions should be clarified and means of incentivising the platforms developed. Also, the idea of the media capture by the platforms should be articulated in more detail. Moreover, regarding the data sharing principle, the text should convey the idea that online platforms are to remove obstacles for media organisations to access their audience by providing them sufficient access to the data of the users of their content. Access should be accompanied by tools allowing media organisations, including smaller outlets, to fully benefit from those data.

8. The section on the working conditions of journalists should be complemented by guidelines addressing specific issues such as (i) mental health of journalists exposed to burnout and trauma, (ii) protection against hate speech and cyberbullying experienced by many reporters, (iii) protective measures in case of legal action against journalists, (iv) reintegration after maternity leave, etc.
9. In the second chapter on ethics and quality the experts and participants confirmed the main lines proposed and added a number of considerations to be integrated into the text. Regarding fact-checking it was emphasised that while eyewitness media can make a considerable contribution to the journalistic work, the use of such content needs to be given voice through the editorial process and made conditional upon creators' consent. Secondly, transparency of editorial policies and processes needs to be accompanied by compliance mechanisms, and exceptions for content creators in cases of various risks should be joined to the guideline in question. Regarding self-regulatory mechanisms, account must be taken of the various roles of such mechanisms, which do not necessarily have monitoring function. In terms of improved representation and participation in the media, it was suggested to expand guidance to other underrepresented groups that may encounter difficulties in accessing media content and/or or attracting coverage of their issues and interests. The relationship between data protection and quality journalism was revisited and confirmed as one of the preconditions for building trust and engagement of the public; however, certain data protection principles should be further developed and media companies should not be held accountable for third-party platform data processing in cases where they are using online platforms to disseminate their content.
10. Considerable attention was given to the section on the dissemination of quality journalistic content, and especially to the (a) sensitive balance between assuring a basic neutrality of viewpoints on online platforms and prioritisation of public interest content, and (b) challenges related to ensuring universal availability of public interest content on online platforms, lessons learnt in the audiovisual sector and possibilities of transposing audiovisual-specific provisions to the digital environment. There seems to be a growing awareness that public interest content should be made available on the platforms. In terms of technical possibilities, the British Ofcom is conducting research on the issue of due prominence on the platforms and a study is to be published in June. However, there are several substantive questions as to what content should be prioritised on the platforms. In this connection, self-regulatory initiatives aimed at standardisation or labelling legitimate news sources hold considerable promise; it needs to be borne in mind, though, that they are institutional and not individual-article based. Secondly, regarding measures/campaigns countering unreliable, false, manipulative content and disinformation, it was evoked that online platforms must be fully engaged if we are to know what the public is reading and sharing online. The problem of spreading disinformation can be even more acute where people engage with one another in closed networks (such as WhatsApp), and this should be appropriately addressed in the text. Moreover, in addition to manipulative and false information, separate challenges are posed by information that is true but may be unethical to publish (for example regarding sensitive events such as mass shootings).
11. The members and participants made a number of suggestions with regard to the use of AI tools in content creation ranging from the need to accentuate their positive side including for smaller newsrooms, taking a proactive approach to MIL and AI, or ensuring that states facilitate the development of new technologies for newsrooms, under appropriate safeguards to prevent any abuse of power. Generally it was considered that the technical dimensions should be explored in more detail, as regards innovative technologies that can be used to the benefit of newsrooms and users, but also in terms of raising awareness about their manipulative capabilities (e.g. deepfakes).

12. The third chapter on education and training will be supported and further developed based on the findings of the Study on developing skills to recognise and value quality journalism in the digital environment. The members discussed the possibility of moving certain guidelines on building the audience engagement (labels, trust) to other chapters or to retain only the content that is specific to MIL.
13. As regards the training opportunities for journalists, it was suggested to restructure the section so as to start with the initial training, journalism courses and schools, and continue with day-to-day issues encountered by journalists, their continuous education and end with specific MIL programmes for newsrooms. Also, these programmes should benefit not only newsrooms, but a wider circle of people that contribute to content creation, including AI developers and technicians involved in the application of automated processes. Also ethical codes should be updated in the light of the technologies that today impact the production of journalistic content. A number of suggestions were made on how to incentivise careers in journalism and improve journalism education, also through grants and providing the necessary equipment to journalism schools.

***Draft study on developing skills for recognising and valuing quality journalism in the digital environment.***

14. Rapporteurs Martina Chapman and Markus Oermann presented the high-level findings of the online survey that was developed to collect data on MIL projects aimed at developing any of the skills required for recognising and valuing quality journalism. The survey was circulated to public service media, media regulators, internet intermediaries and media literacy experts across Europe, and 69 complete responses were identified as being in scope. Promising practices from 32 countries were identified, including 14 trans-national projects.
15. The survey proposed 12 core skills to empower users to recognise and value quality journalism. "Understanding how content is created and edited" was identified as the skill most frequently promoted by MIL projects (82%); the least frequently promoted skills are those related to the understanding of how media is regulated, by whom media outlets are owned, how they are funded, and how media content is distributed online (under 50%). In terms of groups targeted by the MIL projects, the highest percentage had target audience of between 16 and 18 years of age. People over 65 are the least targeted group by MIL projects, yet research shows that this group increasingly consumes media content online and is also most likely to (unknowingly) spread disinformation.
16. The rapporteurs will analyse the findings in detail and on that basis offer a critical look at the definition of MIL. Furthermore, the rapporteurs will develop a typology of activities and projects according to types of activities, their aims and objectives, target groups, organisational features and the significance of evaluation and feedback. On that basis, they are also identifying some models of MIL projects and activities and map the MIL skills most likely to be promoted within each model. Such models could act as framework for the development of future projects and activities. The study will include recommendations likely to focus on (i) "missing" MIL skills for recognising quality journalism and the need for continued mapping of MIL projects and activities to monitor their development; (ii) a need for a policy map of MIL projects and initiatives and of funding opportunities, and (iii) a potential pan-European campaign to raise public awareness of the value of quality journalism.

**Decisions on timelines and follow-up**

17. The MSI-JOQ will hold its next meeting in Strasbourg on 26-27 September 2019.

18. 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 THIRD MEETING**

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of Chairperson and Vice-chair person
3. Adoption of the agenda
4. Information by the Secretariat
5. Presentation and discussion of the Draft recommendation on promoting the favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age  
[Doc MSI-JOQ(2018)08 – under preparation]
6. Presentation and discussion of the Draft study on developing skills to recognise and value quality journalism in the digital environment  
[Doc MSI-JOQ(2018)10 – under preparation]
7. Dates of next meetings
8. Other business

## **APPENDIX II**

### **ANNOTATED AGENDA OF THE THIRD MEETING**

1. **Opening of the meeting**
2. **Address by Mr Jan Kleijssen, Director, Information Society - Action against Crime Directorate**
3. **Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chair person**
4. **Adoption of the agenda**
5. **Information by the Secretariat**  
Information on activities of the Council of Europe relevant to the work of MSI-JOQ, in particular on the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CDMSI (Steering Committee on Media and Information Society), held on 27-30 November, and Conference on "Media pluralism – how can we deliver?" held on 19-20 March 2019
6. **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 third draft of the document prepared by the rapporteur.
7. **Presentation and discussion of the preliminary results of the survey conducted as a basis for the Study on developing skills to recognise and value quality journalism in the digital environment**  
[[MSI-JOQ Terms of Reference](#)]  
  
The members of MSI-JOQ will be invited to discuss the report prepared by the rapporteurs.
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 MEMBERS / MEMBRES DU COMITE**

**Nadia BELLARDI**

Project Consultant and Media Expert specialising in Journalism, Community Media, Media Diversity, Transcultural Communication, Migration, Integration, Islam and Gender Issues  
*Consultante de projet et experte des médias spécialisée en journalisme, médias communautaires, diversité des médias, communication transculturelle, migration, intégration, islam et questions de genre*

**Zoran BOJAROVSKI**

Media Reforms Adviser to the Prime Minister - North Macedonia  
*Conseiller du Premier Ministre en matière de réforme des médias – Macédoine du Nord*

**Alexandra BORCHARDT, Vice-Chair of MSI-JOQ / *Vice-présidente du MSI-JOQ***

Director of Strategic Development – Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism  
*Directrice du développement stratégique - Institut Reuters pour l'étude du journalisme*

**Martina CHAPMAN**

Communications Professional specialising in Media Literacy and Digital Engagement  
*Professionnelle des communications spécialisée en éducation aux médias et en engagement numérique*

**Pierre-François DOCQUIR**

Senior Legal Officer – ARTICLE 19  
*Juriste principal - ARTICLE 19*

**Olha HERASYMIUK**

First Deputy Chair, National Council of Television and Broadcasting of Ukraine  
*Première vice-président, Conseil national de la télévision et de la radiodiffusion de l'Ukraine*

**Áine KERR**

COO and Co-Founder, Kinzen  
*DOP et co-fondatrice, Kinzen*

**Tom LAW**

Gender Equality rapporteur of MSI-JOQ, Director of Campaigns and Communications – Ethical Journalism Network  
*Rapporteur sur l'égalité de genre du MSI-JOQ, Directeur des campagnes et des communications Ethical Journalism Network*

**Helena MANDIĆ**

Director of Broadcasting, Communications Regulatory Agency - Bosnia and Herzegovina  
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**Tarlach McGONAGLE**

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**Markus OERMANN**

Policy Consultant, German Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Department for general issues of the media and media competency – Germany  
*Conseiller politique, Commissaire fédéral allemand à la Culture et aux Médias, Département des questions générales de la compétence médias et médias – Allemagne*

**Katharine SARIKAKIS** Chair of MSI-JOQ / Présidente du MSI-JOQ

Professor of Communication Science (Media Industries, Media Organisation, Media Governance), Jean Monnet Chair of European Media Governance and Integration; Director at Media Governance and Industries Research Lab, Department of Communication, Vienna - Greece  
*Professeur en Sciences de la communication (industries des médias, organisation des médias, gouvernance des médias), Chaire Jean Monnet de gouvernance et d'intégration des médias européens; Directeur du laboratoire de recherche sur les industries et la gouvernance des médias, Département de Communication, Vienne – Grèce*

**Inge WELBERGEN**

Senior Legal Officer Media, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science – The Netherlands - Apologised  
*Juriste principal Médias, Ministère de l'Education, de la Culture et de la Science - Pays-Bas - Excusée*

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**AUTRES PARTICIPANTS ETATS MEMBRES & NON MEMBRES DU CONSEIL DE**  
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Member of the new Higher Audio visual Council

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**Badia RADI**

Member of the new Higher audio visual Council

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**COUNCIL OF EUROPE SECRETARIAT / SECRETARIAT DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

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**INTERPRETERS / INTERPRETES**

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