



(Last) call for quality journalism

International Conference

Ljubljana, 28-29 November 2019



Organised by the Council of Europe in partnership
with the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia

DRAFT BROCHURE

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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE



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CONCEPT NOTE

Lately journalism has once again become a “hot” topic, subject of research, media reporting, often divisive public discussions, and – mostly disgruntled – online comments, as well as an issue deserving serious consideration by the policy makers.

Questions are increasingly asked about the quality of information we consume, doubts raised about its provenance, and fingers pointed at the dark corners of the internet. Indeed, social media platforms, manipulative websites, and the proliferation of online content engineered to ignite anger or fear, have all impacted on human information and communication practices. Instead of generating a community of informed people, they have rather amplified the differences and polarisation. And while emotional messages easily occupy our attention and travel far through the maze of likes and shares, it appears that the more rational elements of our communication, such as regard for truth and accuracy, have taken a backseat.

We need quality information. We need it to form and express our opinions, to make informed choices about our life and society, to hold powers to account, and to have a meaningful public debate. Informed and active citizens sustain democracies, and quality journalism sustains informed citizenry. We need journalism that is committed to the pursuit of truth, fairness and accuracy, such that serves the public interest and promotes accountability in public life.

However, digital transformation and the “post-truth” era have brought a profound change to the media sector. Once privileged gatekeepers of news and information, media acquired numerous competitors for public attention in a democratised online world, where news and other journalistic content often appear next to content that is not subject to the same regulatory or ethical frameworks. Many media organisations responded to the

competitive pressures by cutting production costs, decimating the ranks of professional journalists while reducing the diversity of sources and viewpoints. Some made good use of the potential offered by the digital technologies to engage directly with their audiences and find new sources of information, but that is not sufficient to sustain the entire sector.

Also media consumption habits changed, with people going online for their news, accessing them through social media, news aggregators and increasingly through closed messaging apps. In this complex and fragmented environment, people often chose their information sources based on pre-existing beliefs. Many are not able to distinguish between fact and opinion, between reliable and unreliable sources. Just as many are not aware of how social and search services operate and how technology can influence their media choices. As a result, the gap between the highly informed and the lesser informed is growing, requiring a decisive multi-stakeholder commitment to strengthen media and information literacy.

Perhaps the most far-reaching impact of the shift to a digital and social media environment has been on the financial sustainability of the media sector. Social media and other major online platforms have thoroughly disrupted the traditional, advertising-based media business model, and separated news production from distribution. Platforms now dictate what media content is displayed on their sites, and how prominently it is displayed. Just as importantly, they collect large amount of user data and use it for personalised recommendations and advertising, thereby generating unprecedented advertising profits.

Paradoxically, as social media use increases, there is evidence of a decline of trust in all media, but especially social media. However, there is as yet no evidence that media users are migrating to media they trust more.

Why is that so, and how are media to respond in a constructive way to get their audience back? How can self-regulation help sustain professional ethics and restore public confidence in journalism? What responsibilities should be borne by the major online platforms, now in many ways acting as publishers? How can people be empowered through media and information literacy to engage more actively with their information sources, to be selective and to trust – and pay for – their media sources? How are States to encourage and strengthen independent and quality journalism through their regulatory and institutional frameworks?

The Conference will explore these and similar questions in a critical and inclusive discussion. It aims to bring together journalists, editors, representatives of the media, self-regulatory bodies and regulators, academics and media lawyers, policymakers and civil society representatives to provide their views on what is our collective responsibility towards creating a favourable environment for quality journalism.

PROGRAMME

Venue: **National Gallery** / Narodna galerija

Entrance from Narodni dom Ljubljana,
Cankarjeva 20, Ljubljana

THURSDAY 28 November 2019

8h30-9h30 Registration of participants

9h30-10h00 Opening of the conference

- **Zoran Poznič**, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia
- **Christos Giakoumopoulos**, Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law, Council of Europe

10h00-11h20 First panel: Setting the scene

Quality journalism – what do we talk about when we talk about it?

Journalism – a commercial enterprise, public good or both? – Why quality matters – What constitutes quality and how to measure it – Who can be the arbiter of quality, and why (not) – Pursuit of quality: turning the trends around

Moderator: **Borut Mekina**, Journalist, Mladina

- **Nadia Bellardi**, Transcultural Media Consultant
- **Richard Burnley**, Director of Legal and Policy at the European Broadcasting Union
- **Christophe Israël**, Executive Editorial Director, Libération, France
- **Renate Schroeder**, Director of the European Federation of Journalists

11h20-11h40 Coffee break

11h40-13h00 Second panel

Enabling quality – a shared responsibility

What conditions for quality journalism to thrive – Key actors responsible for creating an enabling environment for quality journalism – Coalition for quality – (What) role for the State and regulators?

Moderator: **Tanja Kerševan-Smokvina**, State Secretary, Slovenian Ministry of Culture

- **Maria Donde**, Head of International Content Policy, Ofcom, United Kingdom
- **David Friggieri**, Policy and Legal Officer, DG CONNECT, European Commission
- **Iacob Gammeltoft**, Policy Advisor, News Media Europe
- **Jadranka Vojvodić**, Deputy Director / Head of Legal and Finance Department, Agency for Electronic Media, Montenegro

13h00-14h30 Lunch

14h30-16h00 Third panel

How to win back public trust: ethics, quality, accountability

Quality journalism: a guarantee of trust and engagement? – Fact-checking, trust criteria, codes of ethics – Journalism: an antidote for "fake news"? Overcoming the fragmentation of truths and societies – Innovation for improved public engagement: how to catch your audience? – Journalistic profession in crisis

Moderator: **Václav Štětka**, Lecturer in Communication and Media Studies, Loughborough University

- **Adeline Hulin**, Project Officer, UNESCO
- **Annika Sehl**, Professor of Digital Journalism, Bundeswehr University Munich & Research Associate, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford
- **Olaf Steenfadt**, Project Director, Journalism Trust Initiative, Reporters Without Borders
- **Taja Topolovec**, Director, "Pod črto", Independent media for investigative journalism, Slovenia

16h00-16h20 Coffee break

16h20-17h50 Fourth panel

Search for quality – through the use of AI tools

The use of AI and automation in the media production – Initiatives to improve the distribution of quality content on online platforms – Responsibilities of new media actors: blurring the differences between traditional and social media

Moderator: **Filip Muki Dobranić**, Director, Today is a new day

- **Gabriella Cseh**, Head of Public Policy for Central and Eastern Europe for Facebook
- **Marko Milosavljević**, Associate Professor, Chair of Journalism, Faculty of Social Sciences at the Ljubljana University, Slovenia
- **Simone Jost-Westendorf**, Head of Journalism Lab, State Media Authority of North Rhine-Westphalia
- **Davor Aničić**, CEO, Velebit Artificial Intelligence, Croatia



National Gallery, Slovenia

19h30-21h30 Evening reception

Addresses by:

- **Violeta Tomić**, Chair of the Committee on Culture of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia
- **Lord George Foulkes**, General Rapporteur on media freedom and the safety of journalists for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

FRIDAY 29 November 2019

9h00-10h30 Fifth panel

A media literate public: MIL is the key!

Empowering quality journalism through MIL – Challenges in changing behaviours: how to reach, how to teach – Support for independent MIL initiatives – Life-long training for journalists

Moderator: **Martina Chapman**, Independent Consultant in Media Information Literacy

- **Joe Hoban**, Head of Communications, RTE Ireland, Be Media Smart campaign (tbc)
- **Igor Kanižaj**, Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science of the Zagreb University, MIL initiative DjecaMedija
- **Pieter Knapen**, Secretary General of the Flemish Council for Journalism (RVDJ), Belgium
- **Carles López**, Head of Analysis Content Unit, Audiovisual Council of Catalonia, Spain

10h30-10h50 Coffee break

10h50-12h30 Conclusions

What future for quality journalism?

Tying it all together and adoption of the conference conclusions

Taking stock of the findings from the five panels – Exploring future opportunities for quality journalism – What have we learned and where can we go

- Reports by moderators from the five panels, discussion
- Presentation of the conference conclusions by the Conference rapporteur **Flutura Kusari**, Media lawyer and legal advisor at the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom

12h30-12h45 Closing remarks

- **Patrick Penninckx**, Head of the Information Society Department, Council of Europe

13h00-13h30 Press conference

15h00-17h00 Guided tour around Ljubljana city centre

The internet has brought the world to our fingertips, information and knowledge but a click away. The abundance of sources, however, does not guarantee a richer, more diverse information diet. In the flood of sensationalist and manipulative messages we need quality journalism more than ever. We need its commitment to accuracy and reliability to help us navigate the public debate and make informed choices. We need its pursuit of the public interest and accountability to hold powers to account. We need it to restore public confidence and trust in the media. Yet quality journalism has been hard hit by the economic changes in the media sector. How do we ensure sustainability of quality news and how do we highlight its benefits to the media-fatigued public? What responsibilities should be borne by individual media stakeholders including online platforms, by educators, regulators and self-regulators, by the civil society and academia?

The conference co-organised by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the Council of Europe provides an insight into the reality of news production, on the applicable standards and ways to operationalize them, and on ideas for future policies and support to strengthen independent and quality journalism.



The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



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