

# **CEN WORKSHOP AGREEMENT**

**CWA 17493**

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English version

## **Journalism Trust Initiative**

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## Foreword

CWA 17493:2019 Journalism Trust Initiative was developed in accordance with CEN-CENELEC Guide 29 “CEN/CENELEC Workshop Agreements – The way to rapid agreement” and with the relevant provisions of CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations - Part 2. It was agreed on 2019-11-22 in a Workshop by representatives of interested parties, approved and supported by CEN following a public call for participation made on 2018-04-26. It does not necessarily reflect the views of all stakeholders that might have an interest in its subject matter.

The final text of CWA 17493 was submitted to CEN for publication on 2019-12-10, following its adoption on 2019-11-22 at the 4<sup>th</sup> and final workshop plenary meeting. The following organizations and experts registered as participants and contributed to the development of this document.

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## I. Introduction

*Quoted from the approved JTI Project Plan:*

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

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, this Initiative aims at concretely enhancing and safeguarding 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 principles of ethical journalism, 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 centre of JTI 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 of journalism, which requires agreed norms, standards or equivalents that function as a verifiable set of rules and benchmarks, and that define the best practice of our profession. This is what JTI aims to provide.

It also means implementation through tangible benefits to incentivise compliance.

## II. Preamble

*This introductory declaration reflects the spirit and philosophy upon which the document was drafted by the consensus of a broad coalition of media companies, professional bodies and media development organisations. In this preamble the authors and stakeholders of the process wish to express their mutual understanding of the ethical dimension of journalistic activity as follows in this preamble.*

*Acknowledging the fact that values are not always objectively measurable, it is considered even more important to state them clearly.*

*Wherever possible, these principles are further detailed and translated into verifiable criteria in [The Standard](#) found in Chapter V.*

*Compliance with this CEN Workshop Agreement requires a pledge and an explicit commitment to both the principles outlined in the following preamble and to the Standard that implements them.*

### Declaration on Ethical and Professional Journalism

We define Journalism as the gathering, production and dissemination of information in a framework of ethical values. Its purpose is to provide citizens with information that empowers them to fully participate in society.

Acts of journalism may be performed by individuals or collectively organised through news media.

We commit ourselves to four primary indicators of ethical quality in journalistic work: ethical practice in editorial activity; good governance in the ownership and management of news media; respect for principles of self-regulation and active engagement with the public.

#### A. Ethical Practice

We practice journalism according to the following key principles:

- **Accuracy** and fact-based communication;
- **Independence** from political, corporate or other centres of power;
- **Due impartiality** in a systematic approach to reporting and editing;
- **Fairness, respect** and consideration of the impact of journalism on the lives of others;
- **Transparency** to facilitate **accountability** and responsibility to the public.

We implement these principles through a code of conduct or mission statement, enhanced through Editorial Guidelines, which provide practical guidance on ethical challenges that might arise.

#### B. Good Governance

We strive to reflect high levels of good governance that protect editorial independence by showing transparency of ownership and management, whether public or private.

We demonstrate commitment to recognised and essential principles of internal transparency and accountability to the public.

We agree that good governance, which includes respect for recognised norms of human rights, equality, and contractual obligations, may be identified and monitored through periodic reflection and auditing of internal systems and rules designed to strengthen ethics and management of Media Outlets.

**C. Self-regulation**

We work to develop systems to strengthen awareness of core values of editorial practice through codes of conduct and editorial ethical guidelines. We also work to provide mechanisms for internal self-regulation, including dealing with complaints and comments from the public through the appointment of readers' editors or ombudspersons or a designated editorial manager. We further demonstrate respect for self-regulation through attachment to industry-wide or national bodies, for example press councils or press associations, established to promote ethical journalism and to deal with complaints from the public.

**D. Engagement with the Public**

Building public trust in journalism requires active engagement with the public at large. We provide opportunities for our audience to comment, to respond, and to suggest improvements to the editorial process. We implement accessible and transparent systems to deal with complaints from the public and, where appropriate, to provide remedies.

### III. The Scope

*The JTI Standard that begin below in Chapter V have two main sections: “Identity and Transparency” [Section A] and “Professionalism and Accountability” [Section B].*

*This chapter describes those two sections.*

#### A. Identity and Transparency

The first section (A) has been drafted to define standards of “Identity and Transparency”.

The JTI promotes the disclosure of information regarding:

- The persons or organisations involved in the activity of the media (“Identity”);
- Owners who control the media and the sources of revenue (“Transparency”).

It could be understood as “Tell us who you are”. The more transparent news Media Outlets are about their direct and/or indirect ownership, the more trustworthy they are likely to be in the eyes of the public.

Faced with the proliferation of online information sources, the public needs access to trustworthy information revealing basic identity data (name, activity, contact details, etc.) as well as all relevant information on ownership and sources of revenue of news media organisations.

Such information can reduce levels of scepticism among readers and viewers caused by potential media concentration and conflicts of interests, and can reinforce public attachment to and respect for high-quality news media that are characterized by, if not financial, at least editorial, independence.

All news providers, old or new, print or digital, big or small, including individual media, should be interested in engaging in this process: the traditional media will take a better look at themselves, and new media players will be encouraged to be clear about their business models. In both cases, it will help increase their credibility.

This section contains relevant indicators about the identity and transparency status of a content provider, and requires Media Outlets to list information such as names, contact details, founding date, activity, location, ownership, sources of revenue, means of distribution, etc.

#### B. Professionalism and Accountability

The second section (B) has been drafted to define standards of “Accountability and Professionalism”.

This section could be understood as “Tell us how you work”. It focuses on the professional and enabling environment of editorial work and journalistic production at the organisational level. It consists of agreed criteria and organisational benchmarks to secure best practice in professional working methods, as well as upholding principles of ethical journalism and promoting public accountability. These include, in particular, the existence and functioning of complaints and correction mechanisms, the presence and implementation of Editorial Guidelines as well as the organisation of management and newsroom structures.

This section contains indicators on accountability and professionalism in the activities of a Media Outlet that facilitate the provision of trusted and pluralistic journalism. They are meant to ensure that news media operate according to criteria that promote transparency and accountability and are thereby deserving of public trust.