DIGITAL JOURNALISM NETWORK

July, 2025

Mission, Vision, Objectives, and Activities

PLATTFORM CHRISTDEMOKRATIE
DECIDE PROJECT

Co-funded by the European Union

Mission



The mission of the Digital Journalism Network is to unite media professionals, journalists, and actors from civil society and NGOs under a common ethical framework that promotes responsible journalism in the digital age. By creating a supportive space for collaboration, we aim to build a resilient journalistic community equipped to face modern challenges.

Our mission includes increasing awareness of disinformation, resisting censorship, and defending the right to free expression as a cornerstone of democratic societies. The network emphasizes the importance of ethical journalism guided by the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. These principles serve as the foundation for navigating complex issues in media and society.

In an age of increasing digital manipulation and information overload, we aim to empower journalists to act independently, ethically, and with integrity—restoring trust in the media and informing the public with accuracy and transparency.

As journalism continues to evolve in the digital realm, our mission is to nurture a culture of accountability, where journalists hold power to account while also examining their own biases and assumptions. In doing so, we create a more transparent and responsible media landscape that serves the public good.

We believe that ethical journalism should not only reflect society but also shape it positively. By building an international network of professionals dedicated to the public interest, we offer a unified response to growing concerns over misinformation, media manipulation, and declining trust in institutions.

Through dialogue, shared resources, and mentorship, the Network will equip journalists to practice their profession with courage and care—serving as a moral compass in fast-paced digital environments where information spreads rapidly, but truth must be carefully pursued.

For example, consider a local journalist covering a controversial development project in their town. Without a support network, they might face political pressure, smear campaigns, or even legal threats. Through the Digital Journalism Network, they gain access to peer advice, legal toolkits, and moral support, enabling them to report with greater security and clarity.

Another key aspect of our mission is addressing the isolation many independent or freelance journalists face. By connecting them to a European-wide peer group, we ensure that even the smallest voices are empowered and heard in the larger conversation about media integrity and public service journalism.

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Vision



Our vision is a future in which journalism in Europe thrives through interdependence, ethical responsibility, and professional integrity. The Digital Journalism Network envisions a media landscape where public trust is rebuilt through transparency, factual reporting, and respectful dialogue.

We aim for a European public sphere in which journalists, fact-checkers, and civil society actors work side-by-side to uphold the freedom of information, ensure accountability, and resist disinformation and propaganda campaigns.

By fostering a community committed to ethical standards, we envision a ripple effect where media professionals inspire a wider culture of truthfulness, openness, and civic responsibility.

We envision a professional ecosystem where journalists, regardless of location or institutional affiliation, have access to shared tools, ethical guidelines, and collaborative opportunities. This vision includes transnational cooperation to investigate issues that cross borders, such as organized disinformation campaigns, corruption, and violations of media freedom.

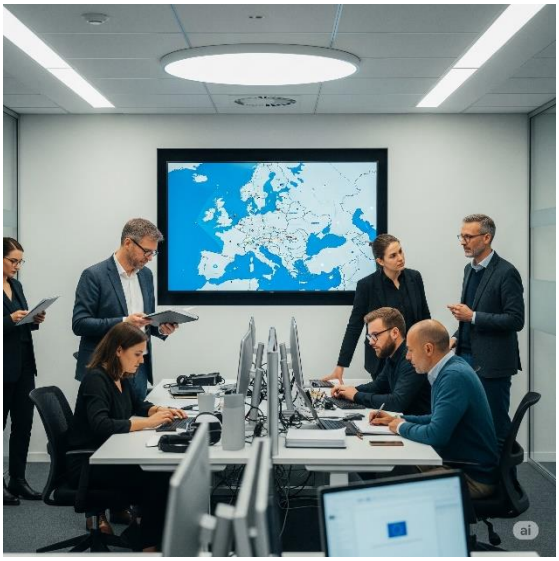
In this future media environment, journalism is valued not only as a career but as a public service. Our vision is to create a generation of media professionals who are both critically aware and ethically grounded, inspired to elevate the standards of the industry while staying resilient in the face of economic, political, and technological pressure.

We also envision a media landscape where cross-border investigative journalism is normalized and well-supported. For example, if a disinformation campaign originates in one country and targets another, members of the Network can rapidly coordinate coverage, verify sources, and expose the architecture of manipulation in real time.

The Network aims to become a recognized resource for institutions and citizens alike — a place where people turn for credible information, ethical journalism practices, and thought leadership on digital media's future.

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Objectives of the Digital Journalism Network



Objective 1: Embed the Cardinal Virtues in Journalism Practice

The Network promotes four cardinal virtues—prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance—as ethical pillars of modern journalism. We aim to embed these values into reporting practices, editorial decisions, and newsroom culture. Training modules, case discussions, and ethical workshops will help internalize these values among members.

Objective 2: Strengthen Freedom of Expression and Discourse

In times of political polarization and legislative uncertainty, freedom of the press faces increasing threats. The Network will develop defense strategies for journalists against SLAPPs (strategic lawsuits against public participation), censorship, and manipulation of hate speech laws. Resources will support members in upholding free expression responsibly.

Objective 3: Build Resilience Against Disinformation

By providing tools for advanced fact-checking, data validation, and recognizing manipulation tactics, the Network empowers journalists to critically assess sources and stories. This is essential to countering both genuine misinformation and the misuse of 'fake news' accusations against legitimate journalism.

Objective 4: Promote Ethical Use of Technology

The Network encourages media professionals to harness digital tools such as AI, data analytics, and automation—ethically and productively. Workshops and guidelines will help members adopt technology without compromising editorial independence or data protection standards.

Objective 5: Facilitate Intersectoral Collaboration

Cross-sectoral collaboration fosters innovation and strengthens media resilience. The Network will build bridges between journalists, academia, NGOs, and policy makers to facilitate exchanges of ideas, resources, and mutual learning. This collaboration will result in joint publications, reports, and advocacy tools.

The Digital Journalism Network also seeks to align its objectives with broader European and global standards on press freedom, human rights, and democratic participation. We recognize that promoting ethical journalism is a collective endeavor that requires structured training, peer accountability, and cultural change.

In pursuing these objectives, the Network will offer both short-term interventions—such as webinars and toolkits—and long-term strategies like certification paths, partnerships with journalism schools, and annual forums for policy dialogue. Our objectives are ambitious but necessary to counter the systemic erosion of press freedom across various contexts in Europe and beyond.

Consider Objective 3 in action: A journalist in an EU border region discovers a viral video that appears to show a public official involved in misconduct. With the help of AI-based forensic tools provided through the Network, they detect that the video has been subtly edited and taken out of context. This not only prevents the spread of misinformation but also protects the integrity of their reporting.

Regarding Objective 5, a concrete example could include a joint initiative between journalists and NGOs to track and report on election-related disinformation across several countries. By pooling resources and perspectives, the coverage is not only more accurate but more relevant to a European audience that shares common digital threats.

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Activities of the Digital Journalism Network



Activity 1: Online Meetings and Webinars

The Network will host regular online sessions led by industry experts and academics. These will address legal protections, ethical reporting, and AI in media. Sessions will also allow for peer discussions and skill-sharing. Participants will leave with practical strategies and new perspectives.

Activity 2: Internal Knowledge Base

An online member-only platform will store resources such as templates, case studies, legal guides, and multimedia tutorials. This knowledge base will be curated by members and continuously updated, creating a living repository for media integrity practices.

Activity 3: Peer Support and Ethical Case Clinics

Members will be able to bring forward real-life ethical challenges from their reporting experiences. These sessions will provide collective reflection, debate, and advice, reducing isolation and increasing shared responsibility for media ethics.

Activity 4: Collaborative Projects

Joint investigative projects will be launched among Network members and civil society partners. These projects will address cross-border issues such as corruption, disinformation campaigns, and human rights abuses. Results will be published and disseminated broadly.

Activity 5: Public Dialogue and Media Literacy Promotion

The Network will run campaigns and organize community events that promote critical thinking and media literacy. Topics will include recognizing disinformation, protecting democratic values, and engaging constructively in digital dialogue.

These activities are designed to be scalable and sustainable. For example, recorded webinars will be archived and accessible, allowing future members to benefit. The Network will also explore producing thematic newsletters, podcasts, and public events that highlight successful projects and key insights from members.

Additionally, the Network will include a mentoring program pairing experienced journalists with early-career professionals. This will strengthen intergenerational solidarity within the field and help newcomers navigate ethical challenges and career development with support and insight.

To broaden its impact, the Network plans to collaborate with universities, media development NGOs, and investigative journalism centers across Europe, jointly hosting workshops and amplifying the voices of journalists working under duress or in underrepresented regions.

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Imagine a scenario where a journalist faces a SLAPP lawsuit after exposing environmental violations by a powerful corporation. Through the Network's knowledge base, they find similar case precedents, receive peer input on legal strategy, and join a webinar with a legal expert who has successfully defended similar cases. This empowers them to continue their work with confidence and awareness.

The mentorship component could include pairing a young journalist covering refugee communities with an experienced foreign correspondent. The mentor provides not only narrative techniques but also cultural sensitivity tools, helping ensure accurate and respectful reporting of marginalized voices.

Each activity is structured to create tangible, lasting impact. We anticipate that within the first year, the Network will host at least 10 webinars, publish three toolkits, and facilitate five cross-border media collaborations — with measurable effects on participants' work and public engagement.

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Strategic Rationale and Long-Term Impact



The Digital Journalism Network is not just a temporary initiative, but a long-term structure designed to support journalism and democratic discourse well beyond the lifespan of the founding project. It aims to bring together at least 50 professionals from journalism and media literacy backgrounds, including 25 recruited through events and outreach to colleagues across Europe.

This permanent community will act as a 'partner network' complementing existing youth and professional networks in Europe. Its structure and values will allow agile responses to emerging challenges, while also producing systemic improvements in journalistic quality and resilience.

The goal is a ripple effect—where well-trained journalists and informed young citizens help elevate the standards of media and public dialogue. These professionals will become multipliers, influencing newsrooms, civil society, and ultimately, democratic life across Europe.

By promoting collaboration, training, and mutual support, the Digital Journalism Network will help ensure that journalism remains a cornerstone of democratic societies—independent, ethical, and resilient in the face of change.

A key component of the Network's sustainability is its decentralized approach. Rather than depending solely on a central leadership structure, the Network will encourage local nodes or working groups to initiate their own projects and initiatives, contributing to a stronger, more responsive community.

Furthermore, the Network will seek partnerships with existing media watchdog organizations, legal aid networks, and technology developers. This will allow members to benefit from legal protections, rapid response mechanisms in cases of attack, and access to cutting-edge verification tools.

By creating spaces for reflection, dialogue, and collaboration, the Network is not only addressing immediate challenges facing digital journalism but is also building the foundation for a more informed, engaged, and democratic society. Our long-term goal is to see our members become reference points in their regions—journalists who lead by example and raise the standards of the profession.

Consider a post-project scenario: a journalist in Hungary connects with peers in Spain and Germany to investigate digital surveillance practices affecting civil society. With prior connections made through the Network, they're able to co-author a transnational report that garners attention at the EU level, influencing policy discussions on data privacy and media freedom.

Similarly, a civil society organization might use the Network to locate ethical media partners for a campaign against xenophobia, ensuring that stories are told in ways that humanize affected communities and resist sensationalism.

This ripple effect goes beyond journalism itself. By strengthening journalists, the Network also reinforces public institutions, civic trust, and the resilience of democratic systems. In times of crisis—be it a pandemic, war, or political upheaval—an agile, ethical, and collaborative media network becomes not just helpful but essential.

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