

Executive Summary

MediaAcT (Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe) has been a comparative research effort examining media accountability instruments in EU member states as indicators for media pluralism in Europe. The project analyzed the development and impact of established media accountability instruments (e.g. press councils, codes of ethics) as well as new media accountability instruments emerging in the Internet (e.g. media criticism in blogs). The main objectives of this research project were to:

- Investigate the quantity and quality of media accountability instruments as prerequisites for pluralistic debates about media independence in times of growing media concentration.
- Compare the impact of established and innovative media accountability instruments online on different media systems and journalism cultures in Europe and beyond.
- Develop policy recommendations for EU media policy makers, as well as incentives for media professionals and media users alike to actively engage in media accountability instruments.

This project was a joint interdisciplinary effort involving 14 partners from Eastern and Western Europe as well as the Arab world. The teams used a multi-method approach.

- Firstly, all partners collected information on the state-of-the-art of media accountability in each respective country.
- Secondly, the MediaAcT team conducted a series of around 100 interviews with international experts on media accountability from Europe, the Arab world and the United States.
- Thirdly, a survey among 1,762 journalists in 12 EU member states as well as in two Arab countries, Tunisia and Jordan, was carried out.

The study has also added empirical data to the current debate about the future of media self-regulation in Europe, ignited by the Leveson Inquiry in the UK as well as the European Commission's *High-Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism*. Several additional dissemination tools (e.g. online training tool, media managers' guidebook, index for media policy makers, citizens' online platform) were developed to involve the different stakeholders of the news media into the debate.

Summary description of project context and objectives

Press freedom is a pillar of the constitution in democratic societies, but in most countries only low levels of legal regulation exist for journalism in order to enable the media to fulfil their watchdog function as the 'fourth estate'. However, precisely because journalism fulfils a public function, and because it can also be considered as a 'public good' many authors emphasize that the media need to be responsible to society for the consequences of the journalistic practices employed and their journalistic output. But how can we ensure a free and responsible press? While the field of media self-regulation and media accountability is in general understudied, almost no data exist so far on the impact of these instruments on media practitioners.

The international research project "Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe and Beyond" has studied both media accountability infrastructures and journalists' attitudes towards media self-regulation in 14 countries. Within a 3 ¹/₂ year research process a distinguished team of academics from across Europe has conducted a representative survey among 1762 journalists in European countries as well as two exemplary Arab countries (Tunisia and Jordan). The international research project has received funding from the European Union Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013.

MediaAcT has been a comparative European research project on media accountability and transparency in EU member states. The purpose of the project has been to map and compare existing forms of media accountability in the news media (e.g. regulatory bodies, press councils, codes of ethics, etc.), and to examine the impact that innovative uses of digital media (blogs, social media etc.) are now having on journalistic products, across Europe and in two selected Arab states. The main goal has been to provide evidence-based analysis for all stakeholders in the news media with a view to enhance press freedom and journalistic standards and to assist the European Union in the development of policies that encourage self-regulation.

Since quantity and quality of a given media accountability infrastructure are closely related with the media system and journalistic culture of a state, MediaAcT has been a genuinely comparative project. The research consortium drew on the concept of journalism cultures that explain differences and similarities in journalism cultures by

referring to system-related dimensions like the nature of media markets and journalistic professionalism, or the degree and nature of state intervention into media markets. The table below gives an overview over the 14 countries involved in the MediaAcT project:



The study had three core stages. In a first stage, national desk studies were conducted to investigate the status quo of media self-regulation and media accountability structures in the participating countries.

In a second stage, qualitative interviews with around 90 U.S., European and Arab experts in the field of online media accountability were conducted in order to assess the impact of the Internet and the Social Web on self-regulation and accountability structures and practices.

In a third stage, 1,762 journalists in 14 European and Arab countries were surveyed online on their attitudes towards and experiences with media self-regulation and media accountability, making this study the first comparative journalists' survey on media self-regulation and media accountability ever. Media scholars, media professionals, and media policy-makers alike may use the data provided in the disseminated processes in order to finally assess the impact of different Media Accountability Instruments on media professionals – and which restrictions weaken their influence – on a sound empirical

basis.

A core aim of the MediaAct project was to disseminate the results widely to stakeholders and encourage a debate about the status quo and future of media self-regulation and media accountability in Europe and beyond. Thus, the research consortium not only actively addressed the international scientific community with conference presentations, journal articles, and book publications – see the enclosed dissemination list – , but also developed a variety of communication tools to involve media professionals, policy-makers, journalism educators, and the media audience:

- Media Managers: “Best Practice Guidebook: Media Accountability and Transparency across Europe.” www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Guidebook/guidebook.pdf; “Media Managers’ Guidelines to Quality Management and Accountability” www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Guidebook/guidelines.pdf
- Media Policy-Makers: “Media Accountability Index.” www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/D18_MAS_Index.pdf
- Journalism Educators: “Online Training Tool” www.mediaact.eu
- Media Users: Citizen’s platform “Mediaspeak”: www.mediaspeak.eu as well as the final report “How fragile is media credibility? Accountability and transparency: research, debates, perspectives. Online: <http://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/15922335/mediaact>

Main results

How can we ensure a free *and* responsible press across Europe? This question is currently debated heatedly, even aggressively, by journalists, industry representatives, media policy makers and scholars across Europe. In late 2012, Lord Justice Leveson recommended a fundamental reform of the traditional model of media self-regulation in Britain – which has dominated other Western European journalism cultures since the 1950s. As a consequence of the *News of the World* scandal, Leveson suggests a new, statutory supported regulatory system. Obviously, the current self-regulation system was not able to restrict the unethical and unlawful methods of the Murdoch-owned tabloid.

Leveson has prompted an outcry among British news outlets. Many of them consider such a form of state intervention to be the end of press freedom. A similar fierce response was given by industry representatives and lobbyists across Europe to the 2013 report of the EU *High-Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism*. The committee was set up by EU commissioner, Neelie Kroes, in 2011; at that time the European Parliament was concerned about a tightening of media law in Hungary under the Orbán government. Among other recommendations, the *High-Level Group* suggests drastically expanding the sanctioning potential of existing press councils. They also demand mandatory media councils in EU states which, like France and Romania, do not have a press council yet.

The key question behind both the Leveson recommendations and the *High-Level Group* report is obvious: does the traditional model of media self-regulation dating back to the 1950s, with press councils as its core institution, still suffice for today's converging media world – which is so much more competitive? Can new accountability instruments emerging online – like newsroom blogs, online ombudsmen and media criticism via the Web – successfully support, or even replace these traditional instruments of media self-regulation? Aren't participative models of media accountability a more promising and "healthy" option than co-regulation models which foresee a greater role for the state? These were also the key questions of the research project *Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe* (MediaAcT), which has studied both media accountability infrastructures and journalists' attitudes about media self-regulation in 14 countries.

Results from project phase 1: Desk study on media accountability in Europe and beyond - the state of media accountability in the 14 MediaAcT countries

Key book publication: Tobias Eberwein/Susanne Fengler/Epp Lauk/Tanja Leppik-Bork (eds.) (2011): Mapping Media Accountability - in Europe and Beyond. Cologne: Herbert von Halem Verlag

After reading the first publication of the MediaAcT research project “Mapping media Accountability – in Europe and Beyond”, an Estonian journalism student attending a seminar about the future of journalism in Estonia commented: “It was enlightening to read such a cross-national study. Previously, I had the feeling that we have so many problems with media accountability and self-regulation here, but now I can see that some countries have an even worse situation, and in some countries the system functions much better.”

This is certainly one way to think about media accountability: comparison enables one to better evaluate the known environment. Estonia is a small country with a very liberal media policy. Unlike several of the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, media policy does not suffer under political parallelism, because market forces play the dominant role.

Comparison at the same time enables a broader perspective on a topic that is hard to pin down easily. The cross-national view helps us to see the complexity of self-regulatory instruments and at the same time realize how tightly accountability is linked to each particular journalism culture, the maturity of civic culture and the state of the economy. The broader perspective also enables us to get a clearer understanding about the fact that accountability instruments exist in most European countries but differ from each other with regard to their structure and daily practices. Therefore, the practical hands-on knowledge that is limited to media accountability practices in each researcher or journalist's country only provides a limited understanding of the overall context of accountability and the range and typology of instruments that could support transparency and responsiveness - in summary: the quality of journalism as a whole.

Hidden aspects of media accountability

The cross-country analysis, with its transnational view, brings to light, for example, a hidden aspect of media accountability: that the differences in the evaluation of accountability instruments and journalistic values are determined by the type of media

organization. Hence, journalists who work for public broadcasting companies in different countries have, in some regards, more common values than journalists who work, for example, for a public broadcasting company and a tabloid publication in the same country.

Another way to look at the existing media accountability system is to focus on the changes that have been taking place as online media have developed.

Many traditional media accountability instruments in Europe are universal: press and media councils, codes of ethics, ombudsmen. These instruments have been more or less adapted to the online world. However, in addition to the traditional instruments an increasing number of European countries are using innovative accountability instruments, which are tailor-made for the digital world, for example, mediacritical blogs, correction buttons and interactive complaint systems. These responsive online-instruments have the potential to increase the dialogue between journalists and lay members of the public, information sources and active citizens.

The collapse of the business models of professional journalism have brought an important question for the future of quality journalism to the fore: if professional journalism is increasingly of a poorer quality, who is in charge of the watchdog role in society? Although the media should be free and autonomous it is necessary to balance the media industry's powerful corporate interests with the public interest.

The corporate interest— from a rational point of view — is to produce news content as cheaply as possible. Information overload challenges journalists' information selection and interpretation abilities; strong public relations sectors provide new pressures for journalistic autonomy. At the same time, society demands responsible media.

However, societal and technological changes in the global political economy have made balancing these contradicting interests increasingly difficult. A simple question is this: what makes a news organisation strong and motivated enough to keep an eye on its own actions, particularly when the economic interests of the media industry and other business sectors are inter-related? The answer is a professional ideology and a developed accountability system. What is the state of media accountability across Europe and in some Arab countries at present?

Code of ethics: easy to recognise

The most visible traditional accountability instruments across countries are codes of ethics and codes of good conduct (codes of practice). While ethical standards mostly apply at the national level, in-house codes or media organizational codes are directed more towards certain occupations or jobs (e.g. managing editors' code of ethics). However, all the codes declare values and principles that aim to regulate daily practices and protect the interests of democratic and civic society. As an example, one can have a look at the principle of "objectivity", which is present in most of the codes of ethics. The principle of "objectivity" and truth-telling is often expressed as practical guidance, for example, "In the case of a conflicting story a journalist should take all different opinions into consideration," or "A journalist should carefully check the facts from various sources...". In different countries the number of such codes of standards varies. In Poland, for example, the four professional organizations have different nationally applicable codes: *The Charter of Media Ethics*; *The Journalistic Code of Conduct*; *The Code of Journalistic Ethics of The Association of Polish Journalists (SDP)* and *The Code of Ethics of The Association of Journalists of the Republic of Poland (SDRP)*. In contrast, Estonia and Finland only have one national code of ethics for journalists and journalism.

In addition to the national differences, many media organizations across the countries surveyed have their own mission statements and editorial statutes, and newsroom internal ethics codes aimed at managing employees' professional values as well as their behaviour on social media like *Twitter* or *Facebook* (for example, in the Netherlands). In Jordan the government adopted its own code of ethics and many journalists perceived this as another means of controlling the press. *Al-Ghad* (which is privately owned and Jordan's second largest daily newspaper) uses its own code of ethics but only uses it for newsroom decisions for those cases that need justifying. These few examples illustrate the problem: the code of ethics seems to be a clear and "basic" instrument for ensuring media responsibility. However, our cross-national survey shows that there is such a variety of codes and these differ so much in importance, that one should always ask the critical question: how and by whom are these codes interpreted?

Press councils: differences in authority and status

Self-regulated press councils, which are groups of representatives from the media and society, who judge media behaviour on the basis of complaints that are brought to the council, exist in 7 of the 14 countries surveyed (Austria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, the

Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK). Their authority and status are very different. The status of the press councils in Finland and the Netherlands seems to be higher than in other countries. The *Press Complaints Commission* (PCC) in the UK seems to have the widest influence on general media literacy: in addition to dealing with people's complaints, the PCC holds public meetings and hearings, provides in-house training for journalists and advises on how to make complaints etc.

In addition to these "classical" Press Councils, some countries have other types of bodies which interpret codes of conduct and ethics. The efficiency of these bodies varies. For example, the *Romanian Press Club* is one of the most prominent media federations and it should observe and enforce the code of ethics. However, members of this club have violated the code and the Council of Honor did not penalise them. In Germany, in addition to the Press Council, several other organizations take care of the interpretation of quality and ethical principles. For example, the *Voluntary Self-regulation Authority of Cinematic Industry*, The *German Advertising Standards Council* and *The German Council for Public Relations*.

Existing accountability instruments as catalysts for the accountability dialogue?

Accountability comprises media responsibility to society as well as "responsiveness". The latter refers to an ongoing dialogue and debate between the media professionals and their audiences as well as to their willingness to explain the principles and motives behind editorial decisions. A variety of forms of responsiveness can be simultaneously observed in the countries with a high level of journalistic professionalism. Ombudsmen (for the press, broadcasting or both) exist in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. There are Reader's Advisory Boards or Councils in Austria and Switzerland, and correction corners or correction boxes in the newspapers in Germany and the Netherlands. Regular media-critical pages appear mostly in quality newspapers (in the UK, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands). Nordic countries also have a strong professional journalism tradition. Finland is a particular case where one rather strong "instrument" dominates: *The National Press Council*, with the powerful professional Union of Journalists, strongly adheres to the "responsiveness ideology".

In the countries where freedom of speech and the development of the journalism culture has been interrupted (Estonia, Poland, Romania, Jordan and Tunisia) responsiveness is weaker. One of the reasons for this is that criticism of the media is only occasionally

discussed. Critical scrutiny is often taken as an attack from a competitor, and admitting and excusing errors is considered to damage an organization's reputation. Another reason is a weaker professional culture and the dominance of commercial values.

As the internet has generated many new possibilities for implementing interactive instruments to strengthen the medias' responsiveness, it is important to ask: how intensive is the use of these instruments in various countries? One can find some fine examples from different countries: journalists blogs - written by journalists as individual authors; media blogs – written by journalists as representatives of a media organization; citizen blogs and audience blogs; various interactive debates arranged by media organizations (“readers’ or listeners’ clubs”); and media observatories (e.g. <http://www.media.cat>). In spite of the wide range of responsive instruments media organizations generally prefer traditional instruments. “Responsiveness” based on dialogue and communication with audiences is currently more of an exception than a rule. Maybe the media managers just need to be encouraged to use these innovative instruments to foster transparency, even if their organizations have not developed specific accountability mechanisms

Responsiveness and transparency as journalistic characteristics?

How is it possible to be trusted and trustworthy in an environment where pressures from the public relations sector, as well as from other interest groups and business interests, are increasing? Responsiveness and transparency as journalistic values need mechanisms in order for them to be rooted in daily practices. It would be the worst solution if the media declared that these values are not built into their day to day activities.

Results from project phase 2: Qualitative interviews with appr. 100 international experts on online innovations in the field of media accountability

Key book publication: Heikki Heikkilä, David Domingo, Judith Pies, Michal Glowacki, Michal Kus and Olivier Baisnée

Media accountability goes online - A transnational study of emerging practices and innovations. MediaAcT Working Paper Nr. 14/ 2012

URL: http://www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/WP4_Outcomes/WP4_Report.pdf

In recent years, there have not been many innovations in newspaper, radio or television journalism to report. However, a number of new phenomena in journalism and public

communication have emerged on the internet: blogging and microblogging, citizen journalism and user-generated content, data journalism and data leaks, for example.

Some observers argue that online communication can be instrumental in democratizing societies in some parts of the world - for instance, in Arab countries - while in Western countries it is assumed that the internet is key in pulling the news industry out of its economic difficulties. In the USA, a recent report on *Post-Industrial Journalism* predicts that “journalism in this country will get worse before it gets better”. It will get better, the report maintains, if news producers and users are able to “take use of tools and techniques that were not possible ten years ago”. While some of this optimism may be unwarranted, it is convincingly pointed out that the online news environment is much more dynamic than the offline environment.

One of the challenges for media organizations in the future is to strengthen the public trust in news institutions and the legitimacy of journalism. Two principles of media accountability are important in this respect: transparency and responsiveness. *Transparency* refers to practices that aim to shed light on the background to news production by describing who the producers are and explaining what they are doing. *Responsiveness*, in turn, refers to practices whereby media organizations encourage users to give feedback and find ways to take users’ concerns into account.

Digital technologies seem to be well-suited for both purposes. On the internet, news organizations can break out from the scarcity of publishing space and inform the audience at length about their ethical standards and editorial policies. In addition, the internet enables direct interaction between producers and recipients of news. Thus, it is easier for anyone to participate in the dialogue about the ethics and quality of news.

In the *MediaAcT* project an explorative study was launched for mapping the development of media accountability on the internet in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, the USA, and two Arab countries. The analysis demonstrates that while the internet tools and instruments have spread to different parts of the world their prominence and efficacy vary a great deal. These differences do not merely relate to the varying standards of the internet infrastructures. Even more importantly, the differences suggest that transparency and responsiveness are not among the top priorities in newsrooms.

Transparency: “unless you have something to hide”

When politicians refuse to give a statement, a normative argument for transparency is often voiced by journalists: “If you have nothing to hide, transparency is for your own good”. Our analysis suggests that journalists do not always apply the same argument to themselves. This is demonstrated by the fact that only a few practices promoting transparency are widespread among online news organisations. Where such practices are introduced, the news organizations’ motive to implement them is often commercial rather than ethical.

The simplest model of so called “actor transparency” is to tag news items with the by-line and the e-mail address of the responsible author. This is a widespread practice in the USA, Western Europe and Poland, but it is far less common in Bulgaria, Serbia or Arab countries. Even less common is that online news services provide more detailed profiles of journalists’ specific expertise on the themes they are reporting.

At the level of the media organization, actor transparency can mean shedding light on the ownership structures of media companies. Such information is generally made available in Western Europe and the USA, but the financial reports and business strategies are separated from the online news services. A similar separation can be found between news websites and ethical guidelines. In news cultures where the codes of ethics are approved collectively by journalists’ unions, the ethical guidelines, as well as tools for filing a complaint to the press council, exist outside online news platforms. In news cultures where the emphasis on ethical conduct is on in-house guidelines, these codes are not always easily accessible. These examples suggest that transparency is for some reason toned down by news organizations, which undermines its efficacy.

While actor transparency casts light on practices *before* the act of publication, transparency may also be enacted *during* it. News organizations may allow users to compare the news items to the original sources of information by attaching external hyperlinks to the news story. This practice, however, is far from systematically applied. Instead of this, online news organizations prefer publishing the hyperlinks only to their previously published news stories. This means that the hyperlinks do not aim to help users to evaluate the veracity of the news item in front of them, but rather they are treated as an implicit persuasion for users to stay a bit longer on the given news website.

Another form of production transparency can be introduced by allowing users to witness editorial meetings or submit their ideas for editorial decision-making. Production transparency may also be pursued by running newsroom blogs to explain editorial decisions or comment on questions arising from the reporting. At the moment, only a

few news organizations are providing video streams from their editorial meetings or providing newsroom blogs which systematically consult users about the items they are covering. Even if some news organizations have run newsroom blogs for a number of years, the practice in general seems to be losing prominence.

Newsroom blogs may be regarded as outdated, as online news organizations are interested in getting a foothold on social networking sites. While *Facebook* users, groups and networks may be harnessed in gathering sources and information, for online newsrooms *Facebook* is predominantly a tool for promoting news stories and a promising strategy for maximizing incoming web traffic to their news service. While this objective is legitimate, it is based on economic interests rather than ethical principles.

Responsiveness: “Tell us where we went wrong”

News organizations depend on their audiences. This idea is very noticeable in the variety of ways that newsrooms open themselves up to users’ tip-offs and comments. *Facebook* and *Twitter* are clearly gaining importance over discussion boards, news comments and *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQ) sections. Despite the fact that social media enables more direct interaction with users, it seems that journalists continue to keep their audiences at arm’s length. At the end of 2010, only two editors-in-chief in Great Britain were tweeting regularly, and their mode of communication was mainly one-directional.

The area which online newsrooms have taken more seriously is error management. Not only are news desks better prepared to receive notification of errors; they are also proactively making error management more transparent. One of the online tools, which is gradually becoming more widespread, is the correction button. The efficacy of error management needs contributions from active and interested users. Some of this activity may not be directed back to the news organizations through correction buttons, but it may give rise to citizen-based media monitoring. These sorts of citizen blogs can be found in different types of media and political cultures, such as Germany, the USA and pre-revolutionary Tunisia.

New environment – new dynamics?

The development of online media accountability practices does not depend so much on technology but on economic and commercial interests within news organizations. At the

moment, transparency and responsiveness are not among the primary strategies in media companies; many newsrooms are still experimenting with the idea. Through experiments, new journalistic practices – and perhaps innovations in media accountability – may emerge.

The flow of ideas about new online practices does not spread in the same way as technologies. In journalism new influences traditionally flow top-down and from the centre to the periphery. This pattern highlights the role of Western news cultures and national flagship media corporations in each country.

While actors such as the *New York Times*, *BBC* and *the Guardian* continue to be influential in the online environment, new practices may emerge from elsewhere, too. Due to new online start-up organizations in the USA, media bloggers in Europe, and online activism in Arab countries, the news environment today is much more decentralized and transnational than it used to be ten years ago.

Results from project phase 3: Key findings from the representative online survey of 1,762 journalists in the 14 MediaAcT countries

Key book publication: Tobias Eberwein/Susanne Fengler/Epp Lauk/Tanja Leppik-Bork (eds.) (2011): Mapping Media Accountability - in Europe and Beyond. Cologne: Herbert von Halem Verlag

Our survey of 1,762 journalists in European, as well as two Arab countries (Tunisia and Jordan) reveals sharp contradictions: even though journalists across countries unanimously support the statement “Journalistic responsibility is a prerequisite for press freedom”, journalists’ actual support for the concept of media self-regulation is, at best, mediocre in most countries.

Obviously, European journalists in many countries question the effectiveness of the existing media self-regulation practices. The survey results also reveal another telling fact: journalists perceive those MAIs that have the potential to endanger their personal professional lives as much more powerful than all of the instruments at the professional level. In almost all of the 14 countries involved in the study, journalists see ethical guidelines given out by their newsroom and media laws as the most influential instruments of media accountability. In comparison, traditional instruments of media self-control, such as press councils and press codes, are perceived as considerably less influential. In most countries journalists also attribute rather little impact to ombudsmen, trade journals and media criticism in the mass media – let alone external critics, such as

media Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) or media scholars. Thus, from an empirical point of view, it seems understandable that the European Union raises the question of whether the current potential of sanctions that European press councils have at their disposal is sufficient.

Journalists observe more audience criticism online

In the past few years, many new MAIs have emerged online – like blogs run by journalists, online ombudsmen, media users' blogs, and media criticism via *Twitter* and *Facebook*. Obviously, these new instruments already have some impact on the journalists. Many media professionals across countries said in our study that they observe a notable increase of critical audience feedback online. Younger journalists especially, and those journalists who work for online media, are open-minded about these innovative instruments. Among the new digital possibilities, social media platforms are rated as the most important MAI: the surveyed journalists state that they have received an increasing amount of feedback and critique from their audiences via *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Especially for journalists in the two Arab countries - affected by their experiences with governmental censorship – the social media dialogue with their audience is important. However, while digital MAIs have obviously gained prominence, they still lag behind the - limited - relevance of the traditional media accountability instruments.

Criticism of colleagues is not common

In many countries there is hardly any culture of criticism within newsrooms: just a third of all surveyed journalists stated that they criticize their colleagues often or frequently. Only in a few countries, like Finland, where newsrooms are less hierarchically organized (see further down), are journalists criticized more often by their colleagues. External criticism by politicians, scientists or media users is even less appreciated – and often perceived as unfair by journalists. Does this attitude still fit in this day and age, where influential institutions call for more media transparency? When journalism fails to initiate a critical debate about its weaknesses and problems, it also misses the chance to point out its strengths and its essential role for an efficient democracy in the era of *Google & Co.*

Not very welcome: the audience as media critic

In the digital age, it has become much easier for media users to become media critics. They can get back to journalists and news outlets via *Facebook* and *Twitter*, or use social media to network with other citizen media critics. Many news websites offer comment functions and a few are already experimenting with correction buttons. Is the time ripe for a participatory approach towards media accountability? Are journalists ready to give the public a significant role in holding the media to account?

Not yet, according to our data. Journalists across countries observe increasing audience criticism online, but they still do not take their public as seriously as they should. Even though the future of quality journalism, at least, more than ever depends on a stable trust relationship with the audience, journalists seem to cling to their traditional gatekeeper role: they do not consider the impact of user comments – be they offline and online – on journalism as important. Less than half of the journalists across countries support the statement that journalists are concerned about audience criticism. While journalists strongly favour transparency about media ownership and also support the idea of publishing a journalistic code of ethics online, they are much less enthusiastic about explaining everyday news decisions in a newsroom blog. They also want to provide a contact for users' complaints – but support for ombudsmen, and the opportunity to communicate directly with journalists, is considerably less. Journalists are also quite sceptical about allowing users to participate in the production of stories online or provide links to original sources. Even though journalism is a public service, the public is held in rather low esteem by journalists.

Another item in our survey questionnaire may provide an explanation: when we asked journalists who they feel responsible to, journalists cited their own conscience and professional values in the first place. Moreover, the majority of journalists feel more responsible to their sources than to their target audience or the public. To sum up: even though the audience makes increasing use of online feedback mechanisms, journalists are still reluctant to acknowledge the public's role in holding the media to account. Thus, participatory accountability models cannot replace a strong organizational commitment and a sophisticated system of incentives at all levels to promote media accountability.

Media transparency: scepticism in Southern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)

In Central and Eastern as well as Southern Europe journalists are even more sceptical about the concept of media transparency: many Spanish and Italian journalists, as well as their colleagues from Romania and Poland, believe that publishing corrections or making newsrooms processes transparent online will damage the bond of trust between journalism and the audience. Journalists from these four countries as well as from Jordan and Tunisia told us with higher than average frequency that they worked for distinctly political orientated media, and therefore felt constrained to a specific political idea or pressured by the government.

Promoting media accountability – stick or carrot?

Given these rather sobering results - what can be done to promote media accountability? Our data clearly shows that journalists don't want state intervention – the statement “formal systems of media regulation are open to political abuse” was widely supported by the almost 1,700 journalists who responded to our survey. However, they view the existing instruments as insufficient as well – in sharp contrast to the industry representatives who, in reaction to the *High-Level Group* report, claimed that the existing systems of media self-regulation work properly and well. For example, while UK industry representatives were extremely against any form of co-regulation, journalists in the UK gave highest support to the statement “to be effective media self-regulation needs more sanctions.”

Towards a ‘culture of accountability’: newsrooms make the difference

Our survey shows that the newsroom makes the difference. Journalists from news outlets who report being praised when they uphold standards even under difficult circumstances, and who report that they would be called in by their supervisors when media users challenge the integrity of their work, value the impact of the different MAIs higher than their peers who work in newsrooms without such a “culture of accountability”. This means that the newsroom management plays a considerable role when it comes to the ethical awareness of journalists. A series of additional 100 interviews with international experts on media accountability conducted by MediaAcT has confirmed this: “Only enacting the instruments through practices, media

accountability actually exists. Instruments, therefore, cannot be taken for granted, and for them to become established practices depends on actors' attitudes and positions in the field" (Domingo & Heikkilä, 2011, p. 10).

We can also observe the strong influence of the organization on other issues: journalists from public broadcasting stations rate the impact of MAIs higher than their colleagues from commercial TV and radio. Across hierarchies, freelancers are most reluctant to support the MAIs. Media organizations which have pushed towards outsourcing in many European countries now carry a huge responsibility: for their own interest they have to make sure that they do not grow a 'journalistic underclass' without ethical awareness. There is a second lesson here: it takes a pro-active media management to establish a culture of accountability in the newsrooms – but it also requires a certain amount of financial stability, both on the individual and on the organizational level, to be able to 'afford' accountable behaviour. This is quite a challenge in a time where journalists from all MediaAcT survey countries consider economic pressure to be the greatest threat to standards in journalism.

However, in the digital age, it is no longer costly to install accountability and transparency mechanisms in the newsroom. Our survey data also show that web-based MAIs are gaining prominence: albeit at a low level of significance. Media blogs written by journalists are already considered more influential than the traditional journalistic trade magazines, and newsroom blogs – which can foster transparency about newsroom-internal discussions about journalistic standards – almost equal the significance of the 'classic' ombudsman.

The responsibility of media companies is even greater in Southern and Central Europe, where journalists' unions and federations are less influential than in Western and Northern Europe. Here, journalists rate the (potential) impact of a company code especially highly. If media managers actively implement accountability and transparency mechanisms, they clearly demonstrate that they care for media accountability, and thus make any form of state intervention superfluous. Should the *High-Level Group* – even though it is so sharply criticized – succeed in increasing the pressure on media organizations to pro-actively install MAIs, the report will already have served its purpose.

Lessons from Finland

While support for most MAIs is rather low across our survey countries, some countries stick out as positive examples. Finnish journalists, along with their colleagues from Switzerland, showed the highest support for almost all MAIs. They also show considerably more support for many other MAIs. These results contrast notably even with neighbouring countries like Germany. What is different in Finland, and also Switzerland, where the press council is held in very high esteem as compared to many other countries?

First of all, both are countries with a high level of education and a high degree of media literacy. Also, a vivid civic engagement fosters public surveillance of media institutions. We also find a clue when we take a look at the responses interviewees provided to the questions about how often they criticize colleagues, or how often they are criticized by their peers. In both instances, journalists from these two countries reported criticizing fellow journalists frequently, and being frequently criticized by other journalists or supervisors as well. The results stand in sharp contrast to countries like Germany, where peer criticism is the exception rather than the rule. Obviously, newsroom structures are an explanation, and they are rather flat and informal in Finland, allowing constructive criticism. However, Finland and Switzerland are also two countries which still have a relatively affluent media industry, receiving considerable state subsidies – and thus they might be in a better position to afford ‘accountability’, compared to countries with stiff media competition. Finally, both countries have small journalistic populations of 9,000 (Switzerland) respectively 8,000 (Finland). This might make peer surveillance and *naming-and-shaming* in the journalistic community more effective than in large media systems like Germany or the UK with journalistic populations of 50,000 to 70,000. Here, many more ethical dilemmas may occur, but simply vanish from the professional radar without debate.

Education matters

Finally, our survey data also points out the crucial role that journalism education plays in responsible journalism. Journalists across countries consider journalism education as more relevant for upholding standards in journalism than any MAI. Thus, investing in journalism education itself is an investment in a responsible press – this is also a message for industry representatives, who are rather unwilling these days to finance mid-career training. Our data shows that journalists in Central and Eastern Europe and the Arab

countries in particular lament the inadequate journalism education in their country. It would be a worthy investment to provide long-term support to modernize journalism curricula in these countries. The MediaAcT survey also shows that journalists who received training in media ethics during their journalism education display a somewhat greater sensitivity towards issues of media accountability. With our MediaAcT interactive online training tool, we hope to encourage journalism educators and their students to discuss journalistic responsibility – and at the same time to teach journalists to deal with criticism.

Media landscapes in transition: Jordan and Tunisia

In the two Arab countries involved in the MediaAcT project, the challenge was to answer some of the basic questions for journalism in Jordan, Tunisia, and other countries in transition: how can journalism become more independent of regimes? Can audience involvement make journalism more responsible towards the needs of society? How much transparency is needed to evaluate the quality and independence of journalists' work?

A big challenge is the remaining impact of the regime's various means for directing journalists to act in the regime's own interest. In Jordan, censorship was banned from print journalism in 1989, when martial law was also lifted. However, direct content control through radio and TV licensing procedures, and less explicit forms of control, so-called "soft containment", are still present. Politicians, businessmen, religious leaders and others, who want to influence journalists' reporting, threaten journalists with prison or offer them money. In a survey by the Jordanian *Al-Quds Research Center*, 43% of the Jordanian journalists surveyed said that they had been exposed to such attempts, mostly because they were reporting on security issues. So, journalists in Jordan use the expression "phone calls from the *mukhabarat*" almost interchangeably with "soft containment".

In Tunisia, any criticism of the government or the president was subject to systematic censorship until the end of the Ben Ali regime in 2011. The *Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI)*, which was controlled by the government, imposed heavy content filtering. Oppositional and regime critical websites were blocked and even media outlets operating from abroad, like *Radio Kalima*, were hacked. Journalists were constantly in fear of being imprisoned. Even though a lot of reform initiatives have taken place since the revolution, pressure

from politicians, judges, media owners and security services remain. One example is the arrest of *Attounissia* newspaper journalists for publishing a photograph showing the German-Tunisian football player Sami Khedira hugging a naked top model.

Long standing practices of control and pressure do not change within a few years and journalists need to learn to live up to their new freedoms and growth in independence. In theory, journalists strongly reject “soft containment” and state interference, but how can they get rid of it in practice?

Arab journalists skeptical about traditional forms of journalistic self-regulation

Journalistic codes of ethics are the oldest form of journalistic self-regulation and have been adopted in countries all over the world. However, many authoritarian regimes have misused them, using them as another means of state control. In the case of Jordan, the code of ethics, issued by the *Jordanian Press Association* in 2003, became a legally binding part of the press and publications law, completely contradicting the idea of voluntary and independent journalistic self-regulation. This cynically explains why, in the MediaAcT-survey, Jordanian journalists consider codes of ethics as highly influential for their journalistic performance.

In many European countries, professional organizations have been playing an active role in fighting for journalists’ interests and their independence from the state. However, in Tunisia and Jordan, they have not been of great help over the last thirty years because the regimes had tightly controlled them. Only recently have they started to struggle for independence, as in the case of the *National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT)*, which has rejected plans to exclude journalists from the future regulatory body for radio and television (*HAICA*).

Independent press or media councils, which might also help to keep the state out of the profession, have not yet been established in Tunisia or Jordan. Journalists from these countries still hesitate to support initiatives to form press councils and other bodies regulating the media for fear of being co-opted by the regimes again. The majority of Jordanian and Tunisian journalists in the MediaAcT-survey say that such “formal systems of media regulation are open to abuse for political purposes.” Nevertheless, according to the same survey, they are convinced that “responsible media are a pre-condition for independent media”.

The audience has become a potential ally for more independence from the regime

The audience seems to agree with the journalists' conviction and has become active in holding the media to account. They criticize articles in their comments on news websites, upload their own content in special sections and contribute to news gathering via *Facebook* and the telephone. Some projects outside newsrooms encourage journalists and the public to produce their own news. Their aim is "to hold the media to account for what they don't cover" as expressed by Lina Ejeilat, co-founder of the Jordanian project, *7iber.com*. In Tunisia, the organization *Nawaat* has founded a news website, to which bloggers and journalists contribute in order to adjust the news agenda to the real needs of society. Due to the late liberation of a strictly censored online environment under Ben Ali, such practices are not yet as well established in Tunisia as in Jordan. However, journalists in both countries are equally willing to accept audience involvement, to a greater extent than most of their European colleagues, as the results of the MediaAcT-survey demonstrate. It seems that they have found support for their fight for independence in the audience: listeners and readers provide newsrooms with information that journalists would not otherwise get due to lack of access to official information; the audience addresses social problems better than the minister of development; criticism from the audience is not as threatening as from the secret service.

Transparency is still a controversial issue

Internet technology helps to strengthen the relationship between newsrooms and the audience, but it also helps politicians to spread their view points or false information more efficiently through *Facebook* accounts and comments. Therefore, it becomes even more important for journalists to be transparent about their work and their networks. A recent – yet unpublished – study by one of the authors on transparency in Tunisian news websites found that only 40% display their chief editor's name. Giving information on media owners is even less common. During the dictatorship journalists were forced by law to clearly publish their names on articles. Now, they have the freedom to refrain from that practice of transparency. Naming sources and giving clear references or links to information could have been dangerous for them and their sources: that is why they preferred to stay vague and still often stick to that habit today. Because of these authoritarian experiences Tunisian and Jordanian journalists are still hesitant about

transparency though this is changing. Today, the majority of Jordanian journalists support the disclosure of ownership of media organizations, the publication mission statements, the provision of links to sources and explanations about news decisions to the audience. For their part, Tunisian journalists do not agree amongst themselves about these practices because they have only recently started to consider and introduce more radical changes. In addition, a growing number of organizations and projects are trying to shed light behind the scenes of news production, by critically observing the media's performance. One of them is the *Arab Working Group for Media Monitoring (AWGMM)*. Its main activity is the monitoring of media coverage in order to determine whether fair and balanced reporting is taking place. Extended monitoring and greater transparency would not only give a clearer picture of the media's performance during important transitions, but might also improve the audience's ability to judge media quality and independence.

Potential impact and main dissemination activities/exploitation of results

European journalists don't want state intervention – the statement “formal systems of media regulation are open to political abuse” was strongly supported in our survey by journalists across countries (total average mean value 3.67). However, they obviously perceive both the traditional and the new online instruments (yet) as insufficient as well, as this paper has shown – in sharp contrast to the industry representatives who, in reaction to the *High-Level Group* report, claimed that the existing systems of media self-regulation work properly and well. Interestingly enough, while UK industry representatives were extremely against any form of co-regulation, journalists in the UK gave the highest support to the statement “to be effective media self-regulation must include some form of sanctions.”

To strengthen media accountability infrastructures, MediaAcT argues that media policy-makers should encourage industry activities by creating strong incentives for media companies – reminding journalists and media companies of their normative duties ‘to behave well’ may be less successful than offering concrete rewards for accountability activities. These rewards can be both material and immaterial, as the example of the *Irish press council* shows. Here, “courts may take [...] membership into account when considering public interest defences in defamation cases. The framework under which the *Irish Press Council* has been established thus identifies certain privileges accorded to the press and then recognises Press Council membership as a demonstration that a publication is worthy of those privileges.” (Fielden 2010, 17)

Creating incentives for media companies to invest in media accountability would be a strong political statement for a free and responsible press, while suggesting sanctions would probably inevitably result in protests by the industry. Policy-makers could make a visible statement for media accountability and set clear incentives if they ensured that public advertising spending only goes to those media which are – in one way or another – involved in media accountability activities. Of course it is not up to the state to intervene in the application and content of these MAIs in any way, but it would be a clear statement that governments do care about compliance in the media sector. Also, the EU could consider introducing an advertising policy that favours those news outlets that have a track record in media accountability. Many media outlets in the EU already

gladly accept financial subsidies from the state. Tying those subsidies to an ethical commitment could be another promising way of rewarding media accountability.

Media accountability initiatives at the organizational level could also be promoted when activities at the newsroom level are more closely interconnected with activities at the professional level. Such a network approach to media accountability could result in press councils acknowledging ombudsmen as the first port of call for media complainants, as recently suggested by the *German Ombudsman Initiative*. Thus, press councils would promote the establishment of ombudsmen as an MAI on the organizational level, and the ombudsmen would reduce the workload of press councils.

Finally, the media industry should regularly monitor the quality of its media self-regulation systems. However, as the industry has failed to do so to date, the EU should start monitoring current self-regulation practices across EU member states, and also in candidate countries. Comparing infrastructures of media accountability across EU countries will allow a much more realistic assessment of a single country's strengths and weaknesses, and will ideally result in a national expert discussion about which MAIs could possibly be successfully imported to a country showing severe deficits.

The MediaAcT research consortium has actively disseminated its policy recommendations – and thus impacted industry representatives and media policy-makers – on several high-profile occasions:

- A final conference on the project results and policy recommendations was held in June 2013 in Brussels, involving the Chair of the EU *High-Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism*, Prof. Vike-Freiberga; Member of the European Parliament, Dr. Eva Lichtenberger; Director Media Standards Trust, Dr. Martin Moore; Deputy Press Ombudsman, Bernie Grogan; Executive Director, European Newspaper Publishers' Association; Director General, Francine Cunningham; European Broadcasting Union; Ingrid Deltenre; President, European Federation of Journalists, Manfred Protze; Director, Ethical Journalism Network, Aidan White; Professor, School of Journalism, University of Oregon (USA), Prof. Dr. Scott Maier and others.
- Similar conferences on the national level were organized by consortium members. For example, a high-level panel discussion on the German survey results was organized in Berlin in May 2013 and received wide press coverage. A similar event was organized by the Austrian team 2013, and the Swiss team published an article on the projects results in

the leading Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, which is widely read by decision-makers in Switzerland.

- Consortium leader Prof. Susanne Fengler also participated in the hearings of the EU *High-Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism* in 2012; project results were cited in the HLG's final report. Furthermore, Prof. Fengler discussed the MediaAcT policy recommendations with Lorena Boix-Alonso, cabinet chief of EU commissioner Neelie Kroes in 2013.

- Members of the MediaAcT research consortium addressed international media policy-makers on several other occasions, e.g. at the *OSCE* conference in Vienna; at a presentation for the *High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism, EUROPEAN COMMISSION - Directorate General Information Society and Media*; at a workshop for journalists organized by *aktion europa* (EU-commission, EU-parliament, Bundespresseamt); a seminar at the EU-funded *MEDIADEM* Research Project, a public seminar for the *Leveson Inquiry* in the UK among others.

In the context of the second project step, the MediaAcT research team has compiled a best practice guidebook for media managers which provides an overview over innovative applications of media accountability and transparency instruments in Europe and the United States. In addition, guidelines for media managers were developed to offer advice on how to implement a 'culture of accountability' in the newsroom.

The MediaAcT research consortium has actively disseminated its best practice guidebook and guidelines – along with its research results – and thus impacted media professionals. A key dissemination activity was the workshop “Innovative Media Accountability Practices” in Vienna (September 2012). The goal of the workshop was to bring together editors and newsroom managers whose news outlets have developed media accountability practices that can be considered as benchmark examples. Among them were Bjarne Schilling, the ombudsman of the Danish quality newspaper *Politiken*, Timo Keraenen from the Finnish public broadcaster *YLE2*, and Wim van Klaveren from the successful Dutch media journalism show “De Waan van de Dag” (public broadcasting station *VARA*). The workshop was attended by key industry representatives from across Europe, among them Robert Berza, manager, *Central European Media Enterprises Ltd* (private TV), *CME* (RUM); Tibor Kovacs, president of the *Hungarian Publishers Association*

(HUN); and Sara Cipriani, manager, Italian Association of Online Newspapers ANSO (ITA).

MediaAcT also reached out to address decision-makers in Arab countries by organizing two conferences on media accountability for newsroom managers and editors-in-chief in Cairo/Egypt and Tunis/Tunisia in 2012.

Of course, MediaAcT has made an effort to communicate its research results to interested journalists by pursuing an active and successful press work. Project results were widely covered in many countries involved in the project, both in the mass media and in trade journals.

It was a goal of the MediaAcT research consortium to involve the media audience into the debate about media accountability and media transparency and make its project ideas, research results, and policy recommendations available to a large number of interested citizens. A key element of the MediaAcT strategy to address citizens was a long-term press campaign to make project results available to a large audience. Furthermore, a *Final Research Report* was produced in the last phase of the project, providing a comprehensive overview over key research results in a non-academic language. Ever since the project start, the MediaAcT research team used *Twitter* and *Facebook* to connect with interested individuals online, and the UK team organised two well-received workshops for media bloggers to encourage media-critical activities by audience members and set up the platform www.mediaspeak.org. The MediaAcT online platform www.mediaspeak.org is designed to inform European citizens, interested in media and media ethic issues. Bloggers from across Europe and the academic partners in the MediaAcT project discussed what type of information would be useful to achieve this Media Speak is the result of those discussions. The platform offers a database of journalistic codes of conduct from across Europe, and details of regulatory or media standards bodies in each country. Furthermore it gives its readers a detailed list of links to academic research, watch-blogs, media blogs, journalist unions and associations, organizations dealing with ethics and accountability among others.

Bloggers contributed to the concept of the platform

The University of West of England (UWE) organised a two-day workshop for English-speaking bloggers which took place at the end of July 2012. They invited bloggers from

many different countries and with many different specialties – one person championing a bloggers code of conduct, online fact-checkers, watch-bloggers, the creators of crowd-sourced accountability tool *Corrigo* – among others. Mike Jempson, from *The MediaWise Trust* and Gary Herman, the Chair of the *National Union of Journalists' New Media Council*, prepared papers outlining options for the online platform. These were discussed throughout the second day and many other ideas emerged from the discussions about what should be included on the platform in order to engage the citizens of Europe in media accountability and transparency issues.

Bloggers who attended the two-day workshop submitted articles to the platform; mostly watch blog-types pieces, or articles about media issues. The site was presented during the final MediaAcT conference in Brussels. Links were tweeted to the site through July, the final MediaAcT report included the URL at the front page. Bloggers worked as mediators disseminating the platform on the internet.

One of the core goals of the MediaAcT project was to encourage journalism educators to lecture their students more systematically on media accountability and transparency, and provide them with material they can use for their seminars and courses. In the final project phase, a comprehensive online tool was developed, offering 14 full seminar sessions on media accountability, of course making wide use of the MediaAcT projects results. The tool also contains a glossary, *Q & As*, and multimedia elements and is available as a free online download. Journalism educators across Europe will receive a mailing highlighting this online tool (and the additional material provided by MediaAcT) prior to the start of the winter semester 2013. The online tool and key research results were also prominently presented at the 2013 *World Journalism Educators Conference* in Mechelen/Belgium.

Finally, MediaAcT has extremely successfully disseminated its research results to the international scientific community and thus placed the issue of media accountability and transparency prominently on the agenda of international communication scholars. Ever since the project start, MediaAcT research consortium members have presented interim as well as final research results at the most relevant international conferences (among them ICA, ECREA, IAMCR, DGPUK) and the leading national conferences on numerous occasions. MediaAcT researchers have given prominent individual and panel

presentations at these conference and many other high-profile conferences, among them at the *Reuters Institute/Oxford University*. MediaAcT has published one well-received book (*Tobias Eberwein/Susanne Fengler/Epp Lauk/Tanja Leppik-Bork (eds.) (2011): Mapping Media Accountability - in Europe and Beyond. Cologne: Herbert von Halem Verlag*) in 2011 and will publish its second volume *Journalists and Media Accountability. An International Study of News People in the Digital Age. New York etc.: Peter Lang 2013* in autumn 2013 in the Peter Lang series edited by Lee B. Becker. In addition, numerous articles in national and international journals have been published and stimulated an academic debate about the vast body of data assembled by MediaAcT.

Text by: Halliki Harro-Loit, Heikki Heikkilä, Susanne Fengler, Tobias Eberwein, Julia Lönnendonker, Laura Schneider-Mombaur, Judith Pies

Key book publications

Mapping Media Accountability - in Europe and Beyond

Tobias Eberwein/Susanne Fengler/Epp Lauk/Tanja Leppik-Bork (eds.) (2011): Mapping Media Accountability - in Europe and Beyond. Cologne: Herbert von Halem Verlag

The mMediaAcT project's first book publication carries the title "Mapping Media Accountability - in Europe and Beyond". Edited by the consortium members Tobias Eberwein, Susanne Fengler, Epp Lauk and Tanja Leppik-Bork, it provides pioneer work in analyzing the development of established and emerging media accountability instruments in 14 countries in Eastern and Western Europe as well as the Arab world. Besides separate country reports on the status quo of media accountability research in the journalism cultures that are covered by the MediaAcT consortium, the volume offers an introduction into the project's theoretical foundations and a first cross-cultural assessment of current trends in media self-regulation and accountability. Looked at from a comparative point of view, the reports hint at the formation of different cultures of media accountability within Europe and its adjacent countries. Learn more about the publication [here!](#)

An International Study of News People in the Digital Age

Tobias Eberwein, Susanne Fengler, Colin Porlezza, Stephan Russ-Mohl: Journalists and Media Accountability. An International Study of News People in the Digital Age. New York etc.: Peter Lang 2013 in autumn 2013 in the Peter Lang series edited by Lee B. Becker

Further publications

Media Accountability Practices on the Internet

The Internet offers new opportunities and challenges for the transparency of journalistic work and the responsiveness to audience criticism. A series of working papers, entitled "Media Accountability Practices on the Internet" and coordinated by the MediaAcT consortium members David Domingo and Heikki Heikkilä, analyse how newsrooms and citizens use the Internet for media accountability all around the globe. The series includes reports from European countries (Bulgaria, France, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, the United Kingdom), Arab countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia) and the USA. These country reports are the product of over 90 interviews with experts, media professionals and activists, and provide the empirical material for an international comparison of the role of digital technologies in media accountability. Results suggest that similar technological instruments may be used very differently in divergent media contexts. The comparative study and all country reports are available for download here:

<http://www.mediaact.eu/online.html?c&L=fkbnrbfnyidofv>

Media Accountability: Strategies and Examples for Media Managers

Efficient media accountability practices and internal media self-regulation instruments can help media companies to create and improve transparency as one of the main quality criteria in contemporary journalism. Such instruments can set professional journalism apart from copy-paste journalism, user-generated content or social media hypes. Furthermore, the inclusion of users, pro-active quality management during the production process combined with a transparent correction management can generate trust-based user loyalty and a sales boost, regardless of the specific media product. To support media managers in establishing such accountability practices, the MediaAcT project has developed guidelines and also collected several best-practice examples. You will find more information about these strategies and examples here:

"Best Practice Guidebook: Media Accountability and Transparency across Europe."
www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Guidebook/guidebook.pdf;

"Media Managers' Guidelines to Quality Management and Accountability"
www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Guidebook/guidelines.pdf

MediaAcT Policy Brief

The policy briefs contain information about first results and policy implications of the MediaAcT project and are available here:

http://www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/policy_brief.pdf

http://www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/policy_brief_2.pdf

http://www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/policy_brief3_01.pdf

Media Index for Media Accountability Instruments in the participating countries

The quality of media accountability in a country serves as one key indicator for media pluralism and media freedom. As part of its research, the MediaAcT consortium has developed a media accountability index as a tool to regularly monitor the status quo of media accountability in EU member states, and furthermore in candidate countries.

You will find the Media Index here:

http://www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/D18_MAS_Index.pdf

Online Training Tool on Media Accountability and Transparency

The Online Training Tool contains a full seminar of 14 [presentations](#) on media accountability and transparency in Europe and beyond (including Q&A, further reading assignments, and multimedia elements) as well as a [glossary](#) with the most important key terms and a broad sample of national [case studies](#) to compare ethical problems and dilemmas from an international perspective.

You will find the Online Training Tool here:

<http://www.mediaact.eu/training.html>

Final Research Report on Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe

The Final Research Report on Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe has been launched on the Final Conference in Brussels on June 6, 2013. The colourful and easy-to-read magazine offers a wide-angle view on the multifold results of the international MediaAcT-Project to citizens. Contributors from all participating countries present their survey findings in a comprehensible and appealing manner – starting from basic information on media accountability (Chapter: "Opening the toolbox") up to close-up views on media accountability in newsrooms and accountability cultures in Europe and the Arab World. (Chapters: Zoom-in on the newsrooms; Media landscapes). The magazines' aim is to deliver insights into today's important issue on media credibility and the question: "Who is watching the watchdogs?".

You will find the Final Report here:

<http://www.yumpu.com/document/view/15922335/mediaact>

Citizen's platform:

The MediaAcT online platform www.mediaspeak.org is designed to inform European citizens, interested in media and media ethic issues. Bloggers from across Europe and the academic partners in the MediaAcT Project discussed what type of information would be useful to achieve this - Media Speak is

the result of those discussions. The platform offers a database of journalistic codes of conduct from across Europe, and details of regulatory or media standards bodies in each country.

Furthermore it gives its readers a detailed list of links to academic research, watch-blogs, media blogs, journalist unions and associations, organizations dealing with ethics and accountability among others.

Find the online platform [here](#).

Citizen's platform "Mediaspeak": www.mediaspeak.eu