

Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe (MediaAct)

Best Practice Guidebook:

Media Accountability and Transparency across Europe



Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe (MediaAct): Best Practice Guidebook

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Further information about the project MediaAct is available at: <http://www.mediaact.eu/>

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About this guidebook

This guidebook collects best practice examples in the field of innovative, web-based media accountability from across Europe. Its aim is to provide media managers with a comprehensive, yet easy-to-use overview over the various formats which have been developed by leading media organizations across Europe in the past years. By doing so, the authors of the handbook hope to inspire dialogues about media accountability in international newsrooms, and convince decision-makers in journalistic organizations that quite often it does not take a huge effort to become engaged in media accountability – many of the instruments presented in this book are easy to install and cost-effective.

Therefore, we would like to encourage you to experiment with the instruments described in this guidebook. Especially the media accountability and transparency instruments located on the newsroom level can work across countries – and we are convinced that it pays to invest in accountability and transparency structures, as laid out in the following pages.

In order to foster a general culture of accountability and transparency in your newsroom, we recommend media managers to

- facilitate continuous internal reflection of personal work and those done by your employees,
- encourage your journalists to try new tools,
- open up your newsroom and production processes to your audience – be transparent,
- deal openly with critique and errors – be responsive,
- evaluate training for journalists; try to get reporters to comprehend that their careers would do well if they are morally sensible, and
- communicate internal guidelines how to deal with media accountability issues.

Accountability in the newsroom: New opportunities online

During the past year, media professionals across the globe have been discussing media responsibility and media accountability in the wake of the *News of the World* scandal in the UK. With economic principles in conflict with ethical values, this case also raised the issue of managerial responsibility for media content. News reporters who usually work under time and competition pressure might be tempted to use unethical and unlawful methods to get breaking news. Different journalists working for different news organizations also interpret the professional values and ethics differently: questions that seem to one reporter or editor to have obvious answers may have opposite answers in the eyes of other reporters or editors. Still, at the

end it is the responsibility of the managers to guarantee that the news organization would behave respectfully.

In the digital age both citizens and media professionals can be engaged in the debate about media ethics and quality of media content. In addition to traditional self-regulation and accountability instruments (like codes of ethics, press councils, ombudsmen), some media organizations are developing in-house rules (codes, instructions) and various new web-based formats of communication (online ombudsmen, newsroom blogs, forums, correction buttons etc.) which help to raise quality of journalism and facilitate a trust relationship with the audience, by creating better dialogue between the general public and media organizations. Furthermore, codes of conduct and other standards of behavior, helping to guide ethical performance, could work more effectively if the members of the public had an option to discuss the implementation practices, which can be done most easily and effectively online. Therefore, most of the examples collected in this guidebook use the Internet and the Social Web to engage users in a debate about journalism quality. The inclusion of media users into processes of media accountability seems promising: while most of the traditional accountability instruments are reactive, and the problems are often raised after publishing, the interactive nature of online media enables to involve the audience in moral reasoning process already during the information processing and editing.

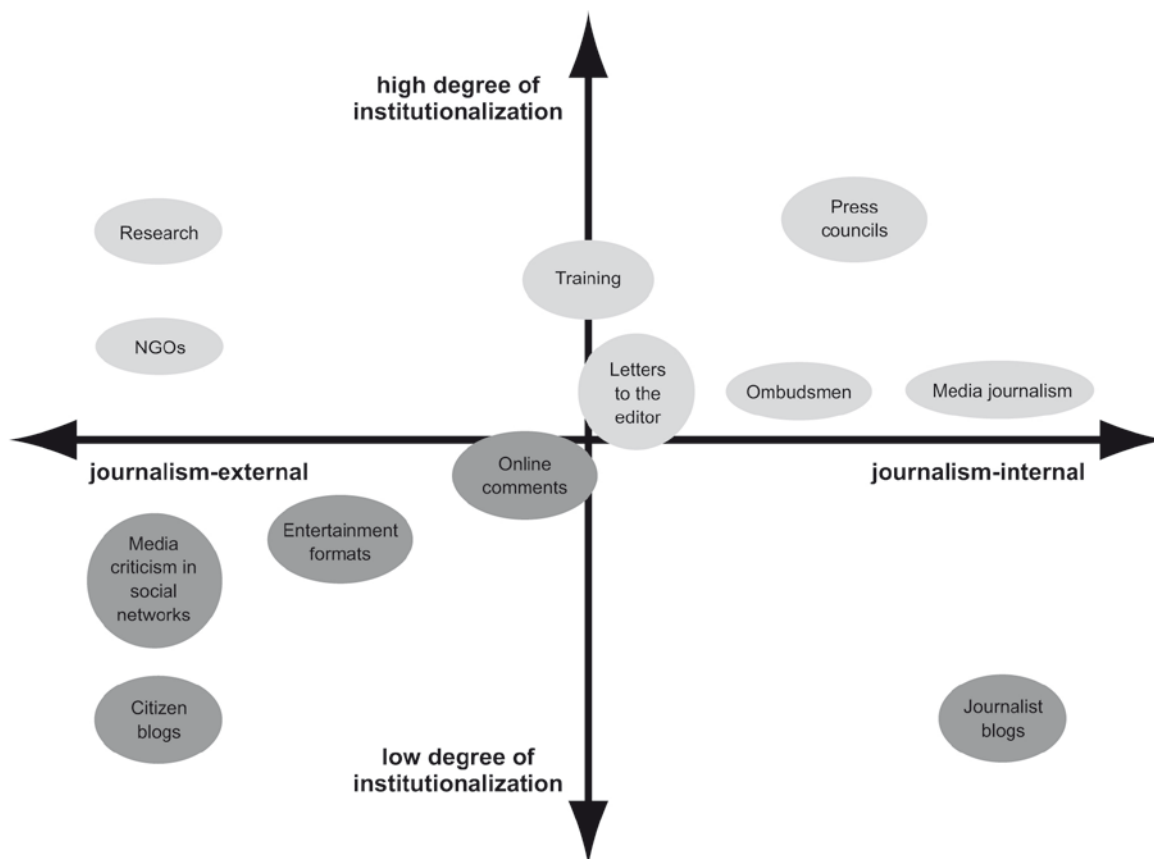
Media accountability

The concept of media accountability is rooted in the strong conviction that media professionals are responsible towards society. Holding the media accountable is “justified as a part of social responsibility of the media” (Heikkilä/Domingo 2012: 5). In the past decades, various accountability instruments have been developed offline and in the past years online as well, as shown in the figure below. Claude-Jean Bertrand, a pioneer in comparative studies on media accountability, speaks of media accountability as “any non-State means of making media responsible towards the public” (Bertrand 2000: 108). He adds that the main aim of media accountability is

“to improve the services of the media to the public; restore the prestige of media in the eyes of the population; diversely protect freedom of speech and press; obtain, for the profession, the autonomy that it needs to play its part in the expansion of democracy and the betterment of the fate of mankind” (Bertrand 2000: 151).

The scholar Denis McQuail describes media accountability as “voluntary or involuntary processes by which the media answer directly or indirectly to their society for the quality and/or consequences of publication” (McQuail 2005: 207).

Figure 1: Typology of media accountability instruments

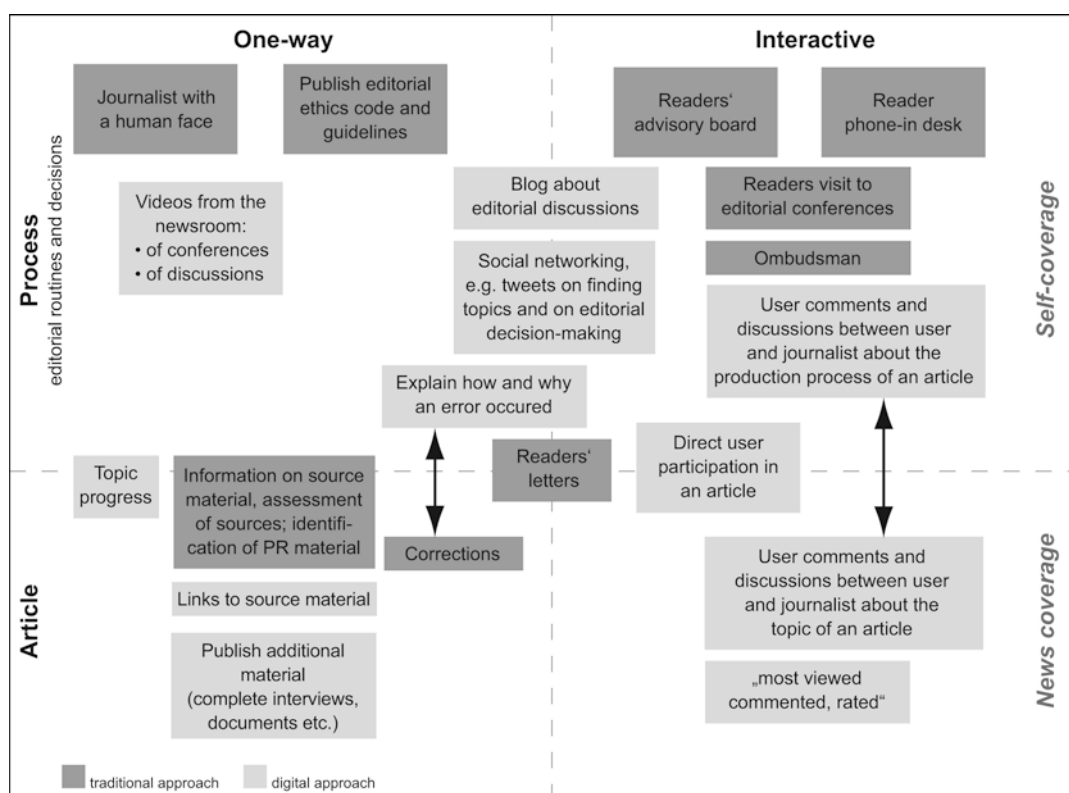


Source: MediaAct.

Media transparency

With transparency, the audience as the key stakeholder gains a better understanding of the news machinery (Meier 2009: 4). Media professionals often debate to what extent it is healthy for a media organization to expose its backstage and what the public should know about the editorial process. The German scholar Klaus Meier developed a three-dimension transparency matrix in order to differentiate between a wide range of instruments on the organizational/newsroom level.

Figure 2: Traditional and digital instruments for creating newsroom transparency



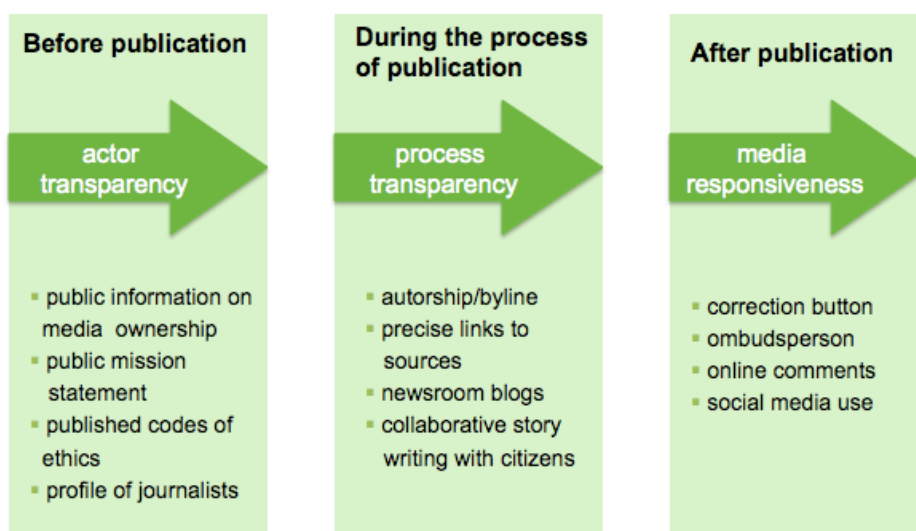
Source: Adapted from Meier (2009).

More detailed, the Finnish journalism scholar Heikki Heikkilä distinguishes three forms of transparency:

- **Actor transparency** refers to practices of norms and information on who stands behind the news. This contextual information includes practices that ensure transparency of ownership or publishing codes of ethics as well as information about the journalists producing the news stories.
- **Production transparency** denotes practices where media organizations disclose information about their sources and professional decisions made in the process of news production.
- **Responsiveness** refers to practices where media organizations engage in dialogue with the audience – mostly by web-based transparency instruments. The interaction with the users is realized in practices like managing errors in the news, acquiring feedback and critique as well as using social media instruments.

Together actor transparency, production transparency and responsiveness build three phases in the media accountability process. The following figure gives an overview over the various media transparency instruments.

Figure 3: Media Transparency: Process and Instruments



Source: Authors – adapted from Heikkilä/Domingo (2012: 43).

To some extent the actor transparency is a precondition for the existence of audience-inclusive accountability instruments. Selected key transparency instruments will be illustrated with examples from across Europe in this guidebook. The sidestep at the end of the book is going to shed the light on a completely unexpected genre – entertainment: We will take a glance at media satire as an example for “serious media accountability with a smile”.

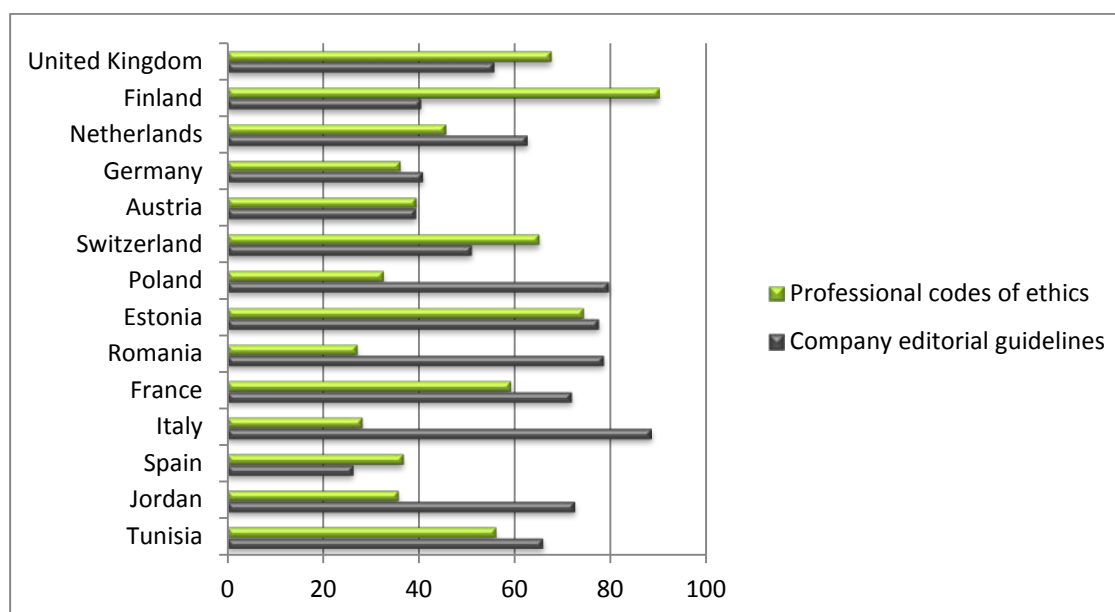
If you would like to read more about media transparency across Europe, please visit the MediaAcT website: <http://www.mediaact.eu/online.html>.

Does media accountability work in all journalism cultures?

Of course, decisions upon whether and when to use the input of members of the general public and to what extent and how to disclose the newsroom’s decision-making process, back-stories and moral reasoning in case of ethical dilemmas depend on the values and resources of the media organization, and on the journalism culture in a particular country. So - can the media accountability and media transparency instruments described above work in all countries?

Our research has shown that journalists in countries with a well-developed journalistic profession – characterized by a strong and unified journalists’ federation, and a tradition of journalism education –, many independent news outlets and a healthy public service broadcasting, journalists are much more willing to become involved in media accountability and transparency practices. While journalists in those countries see a relatively high impact of media accountability instruments on the professional level – likes press codes and press councils –, journalists from countries with a rather weak journalistic profession rely much more on organizational codes of ethics, as the figure below shows.

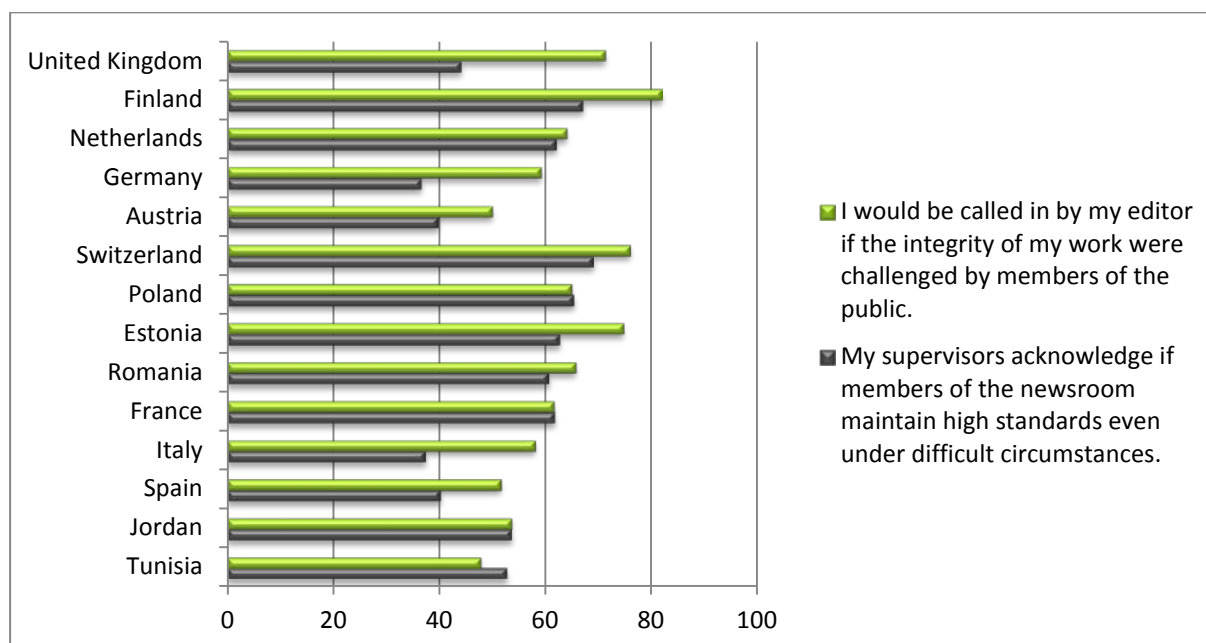
Figure 4: Journalists’ perspective on the impact of professional and organizational ethics codes (impact rated as “high” or “very high”)



Source: MediaAcT.

This again points to the relevance of media managers’ support for accountability and transparency initiatives: The newsroom is obviously the central venue to protect journalistic values. Furthermore, journalists across the 14 European and Arab countries we surveyed for our study highlighted the importance of the media management in the process of securing journalistic quality.

Figure 5: Journalists' perspective on the impact of media managers in the process of securing quality in journalism ("I agree"/"I fully agree")



Source: MediaAct.

The variety of tools, instruments and best practices in this handbook also show cultural differences between the media landscapes in Europe. For example, we can find more tools for user-generated content in the Northern countries and more external initiatives in the Southern countries. However, in a time of growing media concentration and emerging digitalization processes, media companies should foster corporate social responsibility measures by involving media managers and journalists through diverse tools. Such tools can be found in all different media cultures. In general, most media accountability and transparency instruments used in newsrooms worldwide so far have their origins in the Anglo-Saxon world, as the history of media self-regulation and media accountability has started, centuries ago, in the Anglo-Saxon world: In Great Britain and the United States, the first press codes have been created in the late 19th century, later on followed in the 20th century by the first trade journals, newspaper ombudsmen and regular media pages or sections in the leading quality media. The tradition of media self-regulation and media accountability in the Anglo-Saxon world most likely stands out because the concept of press freedom has emerged from the United States and Great Britain – both countries were the first to de-regulate its media sector by liberating the press from state interference, and also enabling competition between news outlets with different political attitudes. When state control diminished, the need for self-control grew.

Today, journalists in some Southern and Eastern European countries, and in many Arab, Asian, African as well as Latin American countries still struggle with political intervention into the media, limiting the journalists' ability to fulfill their watchdog role. Not surprisingly, in many

of those countries the media accountability infrastructure is underdeveloped – there are no, or no properly functioning, press councils, little media criticism in the mass media, no ombudsmen offering the public a forum for critique. However, our comparative research into 14 European and Arab countries has also shown that even in those countries media accountability can function: From France to Romania, critical journalists have set up well-frequented media blogs, where they initiate debates about the media. Especially in the Arab world, social media have become an important tool for the dialogue between media organizations and their publics in the course of the “Arab spring”. And again – in countries where the journalists’ federations so far are too weak to establish functioning modes of media self-regulation, it is up to the news organizations to establish accountability and transparency practices.

Our survey furthermore reveals that the external factors that influence professional accountability evoke rather unique situations in different countries. In contrast, media professionals tend to be inward oriented concerning different accountability instruments. Hence, to get reporters to comprehend a vision of user-inclusive accountability instruments an important function emerges for the leaders: to inspire and motivate the newsroom staff.

If you are interested in national details on media accountability in Europe and the Arab world, please visit our website and get in touch with the MediaAcT consortium via the contact form. We will send you the country reports of the project.

A media policy perspective: Why it pays to invest in media accountability

Company’s investment – not only financially, but furthermore in an ethical sense – can be a major asset on a diverse and highly competitive media market. On the global political agenda the idea of accountability, transparency, and participation has been of great importance in the discussion during the last years. “Transparency’s centrality to journalism ethics is most evident in disclosure surrounding U.S. news media. However, evidence of the dissemination of this professional ideal beyond US borders is growing.” (Allen 2008: 324) The reason for the striking evolution of the accountability idea can be rooted in the dual objective of accountability and transparency – both aiming at ethical and business goals likewise. Apart from the main idea of media accountability, transparency and responsiveness, the implementation of these instruments can also have a positive impact on the **performance**, the **public image** and the **political independence** of the media company:

Media accountability as a framework for autonomy and press freedom

Investment in media accountability and transparency instruments as a self-regulatory body has a vital impact on the media company's autonomy from government interference. First and foremost, implementing independent frameworks of media accountability instruments can secure the media company's independence from governmental interference. Thus, it can support the core values of a functioning press and of good governance. Hence, transparency and responsiveness are a crucial investment into safeguarding the long-term goal of media freedom, which is the basis for a functioning press and a democratic media landscape.

Media accountability as a USP

Media accountability instruments are a unique selling proposition in the increasing media competition. In a saturated market, where the target audience's time and attention is a limited resource, innovative and effective media accountability instruments arouse attention and sharpen the profile of a media company.

Media accountability as a flagship of quality journalism

Media accountability instruments are a distinctive feature of journalism within a "new ecosystem" for information (Fancher 2010): "We are competing with increasing numbers of competitors who don't have the same training or ethical background as the journalists in our own newsroom." (Ziomek 2005: 14) The current struggle described as "battles between the personal journalism of the internet versus mainstream journalism" (Ziomek 2005: 10) results in an audience lacking a differentiation between non-journalistic products (blogs, spin) and journalistic content (see Donsbach et al. 2009: pp. 130). Accountability and transparency about standards and procedures in journalism can therefore be a key for journalists and companies to differentiate themselves from many other 'communicators'.

Media accountability as a tool for audience loyalty

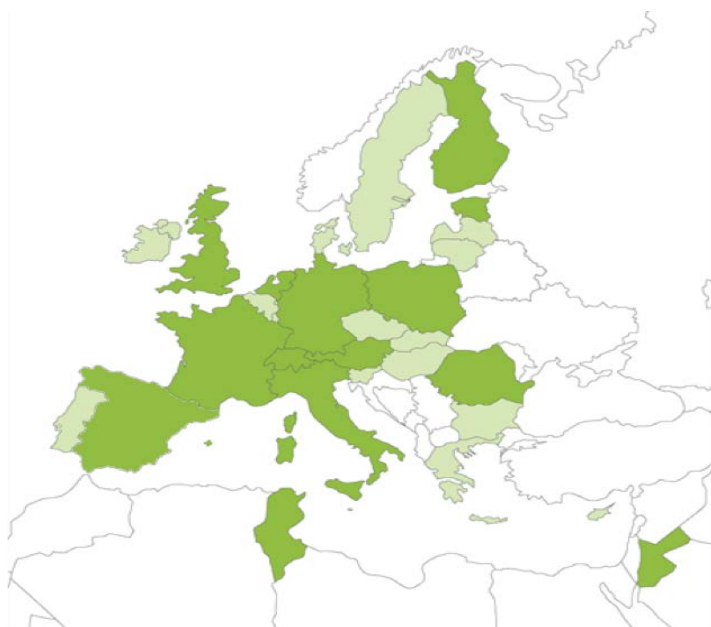
Additionally, accountability, transparency and in particular responsiveness can be effective measures to increase and regain public trust. Interacting with the stakeholders and aiming at drawing a more direct relationship to the company's target group can in the long run increase audience loyalty. Building on those arguments audience loyalty can be identified as an important feature for the media sector's own ability to persist on the advertising market: The economic survival of news organizations depends on the loyalty of media users.

Digest of this guidebook

The best practice examples are presented in an alphabetic order in the main part: all presentations include a short description of the practice, the costs of implementation (money/time/resources), the user participation, as well as the reasons for regarding it as a best practice example, and also highlight why it is important for media accountability and also useful for a media company.

The project MediaAcT

The research project "Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe" (MediaAcT) examines media accountability and transparency in twelve Eastern and Western European states as well as two Arab countries.



The project analyzes 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 project is a joint interdisciplinary effort of a team of 14 partners from Eastern and Western Europe as well as from the Arab World, using a multi-method approach (survey, desk studies and expert interviews) for the analysis. MediaAcT receives funding of approximately 1.5 million Euro from the European Union Seventh Framework Programme and has a duration of 3 1/2 years, starting in February 2010.

For further details on the project, news and outcomes please visit <http://www.mediaact.eu>

Actor Transparency and Newsroom Transparency

Case Study: *Money.pl* (Poland)

1. Short description

The online news portal *money.pl*, reporting mostly on financial and technological issues, established official Facebook profiles for its journalists and staff (in addition to their private accounts). They are available for their audience.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Time for creating Facebook accounts; time of journalists maintaining profiles.

3. User participation

The number of followers of each profile and the level of activity of journalists and other members of staff vary. But the tool as such is working and journalists interact with the users.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

Splitting private and professional Facebook accounts can encourage journalists to use Facebook as a channel of professional communication and enhance their involvement in the dialogue with users.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

The splitting described above helps to increase **actor transparency** and **newsroom transparency**.

Links:

<http://pl-pl.facebook.com/TomaszBonek?sk=info> (Tomasz Bonek, Editor-in-Chief) (Polish)
<http://pl-pl.facebook.com/ciszak.moneypl> (Polish)

See also:

VilaWeb – Digital newspaper at Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/VilaWeb> (Spanish)

VilaWeb – Director Vicent Partal at Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/vpartal?ref=ts> (Spanish)

Chat Box

Case Study: eEditor at *Norran* (Sweden)

1. Short description

The eEditor (Chatta med redaktören) is a chat box (live-chat), conspicuously featured on the front page of the Swedish local newspaper *Norran*. Every day from 6am to 9pm or even 11pm, an editor is at the receiving end of this communication tool, where users can suggest topics or ideas for stories, report mistakes, ask questions or give feedback.

2. Money/Time/Resources

One editor who is responsible for the tool each day.

3. User participation

Several hundred. The new tool has increased the number of unique visitors, the level of credibility and ad revenues.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

The chat box is an innovative instrument, aggregating the functions of an ombudsperson, a correction button and a form for user-generated content. The chat box also offers a new pipeline for feedback and critique.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

This tool **includes users** in the production and feedback process. It fosters the **error management**. It is a soft form of user-generated content and **fosters user-medium loyalty**, respectively the users' sense of community. It also opens the newsroom to the audience.

Link:

<http://norran.se/> (Swedish)

See also:

ZDF – Chat with ZDF-staff: <http://bit.ly/SHn3xn> (German)

Editorial Blog

Case Study: *Tagesschau*-Blog (Germany)

1. Short description

The *Tagesschau*-Blog is Germany's best-known editorial blog. The newsroom of *ARD-aktuell*, which is responsible for the main newscasts *Tagesschau* and *Tagesthemen* started blogging on August 8th 2006. Since its creation, about 40 authors have contributed to the blog, among them the editors-in-chief. The frequency of the *Tagesschau* blog entries varies on average from three to ten a month.

Beside the *ARD Tagesschau*-Blog, the second major German public broadcasting company, *ZDF*, has launched the interactive tools *heute journal plus* and *heute plus* in December 2011. At *heute journal plus* the news broadcast is re-published online, enriched with further background information about editorial decisions concerning theme-weighting, additional information about the topics or uncut interviews with experts quoted in the news broadcast. Once a week, *heute plus* gives the public the opportunity to discuss the latest news broadcast live. In an additional 30-minute broadcast on *ZDFinfo* and via online stream, the users can discuss via skype and chat with editors, anchors or members of the news team.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Writers' time.

3. User participation

Most entries only offer commentary on current news topics, while others clearly convey deeper insights into news decisions. The user has the possibility to leave comments. Some entries elicited more than 250 commentaries.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

The editorial staff wanted to give insights into newsroom work and they wanted to reveal how the news is produced.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

It comprises the three dimensions of **actor transparency**, **production transparency** and **newsroom transparency**. The blog, as a part of *Tagesschau*, can be considered as a self-marketing instrument.

Links:

<http://blog.tagesschau.de/> (German)

<http://heutejournalplus.zdf.de/> (German)

See also:

NOS – Editorial Blog: www.nos.nl/nos/weblogs (Dutch)

El diario – Editorial Blog: <http://www.eldiario.es/zonacritica/> (Spanish)

Case Study: “Interna” – Blog authored by the Editor-in-Chief of *Südosstschweiz* (Switzerland)

1. Short description

“Interna” is the blog of David Sieber, editor-in-chief of *Südosstschweiz*. He regularly gives insights into the newsroom, its decision-making processes and into discussions at the conference table. He writes about the media industry, comments on media ethics and invites readers to join the discussion.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Writing time of a blog comment twice a month.

3. User participation

Usually each article is accessed by more than a thousand readers and commented upon in the blog, as well as on Facebook and Twitter.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

It is one of the few examples where an editor-in-chief gives his personal insights into the decision-making processes of the newsroom and where ethical questions are discussed, too.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

This tool creates **actor, newsroom and production transparency**, explains decisions and helps the audience understand the journalists’ motivations.

Link:

<http://www.suedostschweiz.ch/community/blogs/interna> (German)

See also:

L1 – Chief editor blogs: <http://www.l1.nl/blog/hoofdredacteur> (Dutch)

Case Study: “Editors’ Blog” of the *BBC News* (United Kingdom)

1. Short description

The “Editors’ Blog”, where editors from across *BBC News* share (their) dilemmas and issues, started in May 2006 as part of an effort to improve transparency and accountability. The *BBC* values openness and accountability and offers the audience the possibility to interact with its staff. This blog aims at explaining the editorial decisions and dilemmas faced by the teams running the *BBC*’s news service (incl. radio, TV, online).

2. Money/Time/Resources

Most of the blog posts are fairly brief and they are written by many different contributors from across *BBC* TV and radio, respectively the online service. In 2011, there were 70 blog posts.

3. User participation

In some cases, the blog posts are responses to feedback, comments and criticism the *BBC* may have received from the public over the way it had handled certain news stories. Each post also allows for moderated response.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

The types of articles posted on the blog fall into two general categories – updates about *BBC News* (a new newsroom, an app, viewing figures, etc.) and responses to feedback. For example, in December 2011, the *BBC* was criticized over its coverage of a European Summit in Brussels (notably by the Eurosceptic media), which led to the *BBC* Director of News issuing a response which then received a further 200 comments.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

Responding to criticism, and being open to further criticism, is an excellent way of showing **actor, newsroom and production transparency** – especially for the publicly funded *BBC*.

Links:

www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors (English)

www.bbc.co.uk/blogs (English)

See also:

The Guardian – Editors’ Blog: <http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/editors/> (English)

Case Study: Media Manager Blog of Mario Tedeschini Lalli (Italy)

1. Short description

The blog of Mario Tedeschini Lalli, former journalist and current media manager at *La Repubblica*, primarily covers reflections on journalism. His daily topics in his blog, on Facebook and Twitter include transparency in journalism, current debates and foreign best practices.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Writers' time.

3. User participation

Although not widely followed on social networks, Tedeschini is a role model for *La Repubblica* journalists.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

It is important in particular in the context of Italian media, where such issues are often avoided. His social network accounts and his blog are aggregators. He identifies and highlights good practices in the field of journalism and suggests improvements.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

This practice opens journalism to public and initiates a self-reflection process within the industry. It fosters **actor, newsroom and production transparency**.

Links:

<http://mariotedeschini.blog.kataweb.it/> (Italian)

<http://www.facebook.com/mario.tedeschini.lalli?ref=ts> (Italian)

<https://twitter.com/#!/tedeschini> (Italian)

Error Management

Case Study: Error Button at *Berliner Morgenpost* (Germany)

1. Short description

The “Leider falsch”-button (unfortunately erroneous) was implemented in April 2009. Users can easily report mistakes and errors by clicking on this button. Thus, they are involved in the fact-checking process. According to the *Berliner Morgenpost*, the primary objectives are transparent correction, proper information and trust towards users.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Generally, the costs only involve time resources, including the regular checking of social media services (Twitter, Facebook, Google+) for input on possible factual errors.

3. User participation

The numbers of complaints vary. In some months there are up to 15 complaints, in others there is only one.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

The voluntary participation of the public in the quality control is known as fact-checking in science. Formally internal tasks such as quality control and error correction are complemented by users’ feedback.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

Error buttons can be described as economic techniques by which news outlets can measure media accuracy and increase accountability. Error buttons boost users’ **responsiveness** and help to enhance **error management**.

Link:

<http://www.morgenpost.de/berlinaktuell/article1077710/> (German)

See also:

Tagesanzeiger – Korrektur-Hinweis: <http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch> (German)

20Minuten – Fehler gesehen: <http://www.20min.ch> (at each article) (German)

20Minuten – Une faute?: <http://www.20min.ch/ro/> (at each article) (French)

NOS – Correction box: www.nos.nl/nos/herstel/ (Dutch)

Case Study: *Fixmedia.org* (Spain)

1. Short description

This project invites citizens to report errors in news by filling out a simple form. Sharing their suggestions for fixing the story with other *Fixmedia* users allows them to vote for the “fix”. The aim is to create a community of citizens concerned with quality in journalism and to promote critical consumption of media. So far it has been aimed at the Spanish-speaking community, but an English version is included in the future development plan. *Fixmedia*'s motto is to “improve the news”.

2. Money/Time/Resources

The project is a non-profit initiative of *Nextmedia*, a small company run and owned by journalists and web developers which has also created the citizen journalism website *Bottup.com*. They financed the start-up phase of the project through crowd funding on the Spanish website *Goteo.org*, reaching the minimum budget of € 5.705 in 40 days, and aiming at € 8.205.

3. User participation

They have 406 “likes” on their Facebook page, 332 followers on Twitter, and 137 people have contributed money to their crowd-funding initiative.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

It is a good example for the development of web tools that facilitate citizens' participation in the debate on the quality of journalism in concrete ways. It is embedded with social networks, allowing users to share their concerns and can be effective in pointing out news reporting flaws.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

With *Fixmedia*, journalists feel a very specific pressure towards accuracy and fairness in their reporting. This is not a random campaign on Facebook or Twitter, but rather a systematic compilation of arguments pertaining to specific stories that citizens feel are flawed. It enhances **responsiveness** and establishes **error management**.

Link:

<http://fixmedia.org> (Spanish)

Media Journalism TV Show

Case Study: “De Waan van de Dag” (The Topic of the Day) (The Netherlands)

1. Short description

“De Waan van de Dag” (The Topic of the Day) is a 29-minute weekly media journalism program on the public service broadcaster. This program focuses on production routines, editorial choices, must-haves and flaws in journalism, attempting to provide wider insight into the professional processes of journalism. Journalists, reporters and editors-in-chief have 8-10-minute debates about specific issues, moderated by a well-known and experienced presenter. On the website, guests and presenter additionally reflect on their own performance in the show.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Average of € 50.000 per 29-minute show.

3. User participation

Viewing rate averages: 300.000, or a market share of 5.5%. The show was discontinued in June 2012, because the presenter resigned. The newsroom is working on a new media journalism program.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

One of the main success factors of the show was the presenter’s experience and predisposition for self-criticism. This increased journalists’ willingness to contribute to the show. As media are increasingly subjected to public scrutiny on daily talk shows, this weekly program offers a more critical and in-depth reflection on journalism. The ‘behind-the-scenes’ webpage of the show offers a meta-level in media journalism. In short, directly after the show, both guests and the presenter reflect on their own performance.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

It illustrates that media critical debates and **quality discussions** are more fruitful if the players involved are respectful and knowledgeable. As the editor-in-chief Wim van Klaveren stated: “Criticizing journalists is difficult, but not impossible”. The abundant experience and self-critical stance of the show host often convinced guests to appear on the show. The newsroom deliberately chose the program title “De Waan van de Dag”, which has a less judgmental tone than its predecessor “De Leugen Regeert” (The Lie Reigns).

Link:

<http://waanvandedag.vara.nl/Achter-de-schermen.10307.0.html> (Dutch)

See also:

Norddeutscher Rundfunk – Zapp – das Medienmagazin: <http://bit.ly/da9BNs> (German)

Westdeutscher Rundfunk, WDR5 – Media Journalism (radio) Show: <http://bit.ly/KDxYDW> (German)

Newsroom Cafe

Case Study: *The Register Citizen* Newsroom Cafe (USA)

1. Short description

The Register Citizen Newsroom Cafe in Torrington, Connecticut, is a combination of coffee house and local newsroom. It doubles as a normal coffee house and a newsroom for their company. The newspaper deals with local content produced by professionals, citizen journalists, and lay people. People can give feedback to stories and attend the planning meeting at 4pm, which is also streamed online. *The Register Citizen* Newsroom Cafe also has a Community Media Lab with working space for bloggers and a fact-checking section.

2. Money/Time/Resources

The normal running costs of an office.

3. User participation

Online participation and user participation are quite high. The physical presence in the newsroom is not that high at the moment. But those present are high quality, contributing a lot in terms of facts and/or ideas.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

The Register Citizen Newsroom Cafe shows an innovative approach to connecting journalists and users, not least of all in the production process. Furthermore, there is a high potential in fostering the users' loyalty to the medium.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

It fosters the dialogue between journalists and readers on- and offline. It also strengthens the **error management** process, creates **actor, newsroom and production transparency** and contributes to **responsiveness**. The **user inclusion** goes along with a certain form of **media literacy** and creates **user-medium loyalty**.

Link:

<http://newsroomcafe.wordpress.com/> (English)

Ombudsperson

Case Study: (Cyber-) Ombudsperson of *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Germany)

1. Short description

The nationwide daily newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* offers a notable best practice example in this field: Under the pseudonym “Bronski”, the German editor and media journalist Christopher Rummel acts as an online ombudsperson. He publishes and discusses readers’ comments in his *FR-Blog* and facilitates communication between the audience and the newsroom staff. The readers can get in touch with the ombudsperson through his blog, which is directly linked and connected to the website of *Frankfurter Rundschau*.

2. Money/Time/Resources

The costs mainly consist of the writer’s time resources.

3. User participation

“Bronski’s” blog entries often deal with controversial topics. Readers’ comments are mostly concerned with topics covered by the political, economic, and society department. Readers have the opportunity to raise their concerns and share their opinions with “Bronski”. In recent entries, the comments received up to 400 comments.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

An ombudsperson mediates between the audience and the editorial staff, acts as a quality expert for internal concerns and operates externally as a scout. The (Cyber-) Ombudsperson does not fulfill all the special functions of an ordinary ombudsperson, but it merges reader contacts with quality insurance.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

It interweaves the concept of a regular ombudsperson with the concept of media watch blogs. By combining online activities on the newspaper’s website with the (offline) concept of an ombudsperson, news outlets are able to facilitate the **user inclusion**. Through the implementation of an ombudsperson, news outlets can create more openness and strengthen their **error management**.

Link:

<http://www.frblog.de> (German)

See also:

New York Times – The public editor: <http://publiceditor.blogs.nytimes.com/> (English)

The Guardian – Readers’ Editor: <http://bit.ly/MK4dP> (English)

Main-Post – Leseranwalt: <http://www.mainpost.de/specials/leseranwalt/> (German)

El País – Defensor del Lector of *El País*: http://elpais.com/tag/defensor_lector/a/ (Spanish)

Politiken – Readers’ Editor: <http://politiken.dk/debat/profiler/laeserredaktoer/> (Danish)

Tamedia News Company – Ombudsmann: <http://bit.ly/NwUvA3> (German)

SRG – Ombudsmann: <http://bit.ly/nO5kNI> (German)

NRC – Blog ombudsman: www.nrc.nl/ombudsman (Dutch)

TV3 – Ombudsperson: <http://bit.ly/NVRkYr> (Spanish)

Der Standard – Leserbeauftragter <http://bit.ly/RDaDkv> (German)

Open Critique Session

Case Study: “Offene Blattkritik” (Open Critique Session) at *Datum* (Austria)

1. Short description

The national monthly magazine *Datum* established an open forum where the audience can discuss the latest issue with the editorial team and an external expert from the media or from arts. The discussion centers on headlines, content, style, media ethics, media legislation etc. It is realized offline and hosted in the *Literatur Haus*, a location for literary events in Vienna.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Rent for the location; preparation time; guests and location coordination.

3. User participation

Average of 100 visitors from the general public, journalism students and editors take part in this discussion.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

It is quite an inexpensive format that attracts a lot of people, especially from the general public. It strengthens reader loyalty towards the medium and gives an insight into the production process.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

This tool creates **newsroom and actor transparency** and gives an insight into the **production process**, it allows the **inclusion of users** in the feedback process and it is a form of user education toward **media literacy**.

Link:

<http://bit.ly/OtaQJA> (German)

See also:

El Periodico – Open Critique Section: <http://entretodos.elperiodico.com> (Spanish)

Open News List

Case Study: *The Guardian* “Open News List” (United Kingdom)

1. Short description

On this website of the British daily quality newspaper *The Guardian* users get access to the stories being discussed or produced at any particular time in the newsroom. Obviously, that does not include investigative stories and certain scoops.

2. Money/Time/Resources

The Guardian news list is a Google.doc file, initially created for internal use which is made available online. *The Guardian* has also introduced “Community standards and participation guidelines”.

3. User participation

The Guardian has set guidelines and rules for the participants.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

The readers get a notion of how items of information become a piece of news. The users can provide the writers of each particularly news item with additional information and give feedback via Twitter or Email.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

This tool creates **newsroom transparency** and gives insight into the **production process**. It also helps to explain decisions and stimulates the users to contribute (**user inclusion**) ideas and information.

Link:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/series/open-newslist> (English)

In addition: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/open-weekend> (English)

See also:

VilaWeb: <http://bit.ly/qtYRGO> (Spanish)

Open Newsroom Conference

Case Study: *rue89* (France)

1. Short description

The news website *rue89* offers its readers the possibility to participate in their newsroom conference every Thursday at 10am. Newsroom staff suggests the subjects and interacts with readers through a chat function. Here, they explain and discuss their decisions and potentially take up some suggestions coming from the audience. It is a rotating system in which editors from specific departments participate. The chat is available online afterwards.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Time needed to answer and interact.

3. User participation

Each week there are dozens of participants.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

Although costs are really low, the medium can better anticipate its audience's needs and expectations; the interaction can also reveal potentially exclusive angles or points of view. The participants have the feeling of being actively involved in the editorial process, which enhances their sense of community.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

It **includes the users** in the editorial process opening up the process of news production. Thus, it creates **newsroom and production transparency**.

Link:

<http://www.rue89.com/participez-a-la-conference-de-redaction-en-ligne> (French)

See also:

Bild.de – Journal Critique with VIPs: <http://bit.ly/RnRxTC> (German)

Case Study: “Repubblica Domani” (Repubblica Tomorrow) – *La Repubblica* (Italy)

1. Short description

The daily newspaper *La Repubblica*'s website, dating from 1997, is the most visited news website in Italy and streams their most important editorial meetings. Although it is not streamed live, editor and journalists justify their choices, comment the news and discuss the way the paper will convey the news.

2. Money/Time/Resources

The resources required are several cameramen and an editor.

3. User participation

Videos are viewed on average 9.000 times.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

It reveals the backstage of news making and shows how a newspaper is produced, the roles inside the newsroom and the relation between editor and journalists. At the same time, it is a low cost practice.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

Although it involves a relatively large amount of work, the practice reveals the way a newspaper's editorial line is decided, discussed and debated within the editorial meeting. It leads to more **newsroom and production transparency** and **includes the users**.

Link:

<http://video.repubblica.it/rubriche/repubblica-domani> (Italian)

Participatory Edition

Case Study: *Oma Olivia* (Finland)

1. Short description

Oma Olivia is a project jointly created by the staff of the women's magazine *Olivia* and by their audience, which resulted in the publication of the magazine's 2/2012 issue. The project was realized online in Sept.-Dec. 2011. Their staff transformed regular magazine slots (e.g. food, lifestyle, feature interview) into 15 online "challenges" in which visitors contributed with their ideas, suggestions, and by discussion with editorial staff. Material thus created was used to varying degrees in the magazine.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Preparations started in January 2011. The publisher allowed the editor-in-chief to devote some of her working time to the project. A grant from the Federation of the Finnish Media Industry enabled the magazine to hire an expert in crowd-sourcing to help them with the project design and execution, as well as an IT company to set up and maintain a dedicated website. Give-aways acquired from sponsorship deals (e.g. with cosmetics companies) were used to encourage readers to participate in challenges on the website. All other work was done in-house without extra costs. It required a lot of online presence and continuous feedback from the journalists to maintain readers' interest.

3. User participation

From Sept. to Dec. 2011, 863 people contributed to the project. On average, the website got around 2.000 visits every week during the project's time (busiest week: around 5.000 hits). The magazine used this network in spring 2012 for some smaller projects, and a new jointly created issue is scheduled for this autumn. The issue sold more copies than a regular January issue and advertisement sales were up 20% from previous years. The project was nominated for Journalistic Act of the Year 2011 in the National Journalists' Gala in March 2012.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

This example enhanced the audience's understanding of journalistic processes and gave journalists better insights into audiences' views. It forced journalists to state their goals and motives clearly and enabled wider networks of expertise between journalists and audiences.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

The participatory edition promotes **user engagement**, opens the journalistic production processes and provides insights to the audience. It fosters **actor, newsroom and production transparency**.

Link:

www.omaolivia.fi (Finnish)

Quality Management Process

Case Study: “Moment mal – pas si vite” (Just a Moment) at the *Swiss News Agency (SDA)* (Switzerland)

1. Short description

In early 2007, the *SDA* restructured their internal feedback and criticism model basing it on four pillars: At least once every four months, the editor-in-chief discusses fundamental editorial work questions in a newsletter titled “Moment mal – pas si vite” (Just a Moment). It is aimed at all three language areas within the organization. Once a month heads of department (Ressortleiter) write feedback on their respective sections. During the week, the heads of department as well as the deputy editors-in-chief accompany and supervise the day-to-day work routine. On Fridays, the head of department in charge of supervising the newsroom writes a weekly review that is electronically distributed to all editors. Once every four months, there is also an external feedback.

2. Money/Time/Resources

The time required to write the newsletter. No additional personal costs.

3. User participation

Internal feedback and discussion. Feedback from external clients.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

One of the few examples of a lively, internal debate on quality and accuracy. Important is also the aspect of external feedback.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

Active **discussion on journalistic quality** and accuracy, motivation for editors and fruitful quality management process.

Link:

http://www.quajou.ch/downloads/medien-award/Dokumentation_Q_Medienaward_2007.pdf
(German)

See also:

El Mundo – Blog from journalist Arcadi Espada: <http://mun.do/aqTWeW> (Spanish)

Case Study: “Early paper critique” – *Bieler Zeitung* (Switzerland)

1. Short description

The early paper critique means that all articles produced before 6pm, that is before the newspaper goes into print, are collectively analyzed by the editors involved. The articles are always presented by the head of the news division (Nachrichtenchef). At least one of the chief editors, as well as the art director, have to be present. During the discussion, the editors try to optimize the issue and/or the weighting of the different titles, leads, pictures and video clips.

2. Money/Time/Resources

The time required to prepare the critique and discussion. No additional personal costs.

3. User participation

Internal feedback and discussion.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

One of the few examples of a lively internal debate on quality, accuracy and decision-making.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

Active **discussion on journalistic quality** and accuracy enhances the motivation for editors and the active **error management** process.

Link:

http://www.quajou.ch/downloads/medien-award/Dokumentation_Medien-Award_2005.pdf
(German)

Readers' Advisory Board

Case Study: *Bild*-“Leserbeirat” (Germany)

1. Short description

Since October 2007, the tabloid *Bild* has had an advisory council composed of readers, elected once a year. The 32 members collaborate on editorial ideas. Twice a year the panel is invited to the newspaper's headquarters in Berlin, where the participants are encouraged to share their views with the editors-in-chief. The council members can also point out what topics deserve more respectively less attention by the newspaper.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Panel members are reimbursed for traveling costs but get no compensation for their work.

3. User participation

The readers' advisory council aims at finding better responds to the interests and concerns of its readership. The readers stem from all social groups. The council is introduced on the online platform.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

The readers can share their opinions, which ensures transparency and their participation.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

The “Leserbeirat” contributes to the level of **responsiveness, media literacy** and is a form of **user inclusion**. It fosters **quality discussions**. It is also a high impact marketing tool for the paper and enhances **user-medium loyalty**.

Link:

<http://bit.ly/MMsYPn> (German)

See also:

Vorarlberger Nachrichten – Leserbeirat: <http://bit.ly/OZ3dwT> (German)

Oberösterreichische Nachrichten – Leserbeirat: <http://bit.ly/RCqPcg> (German)

Sonntagsblick – Leserrat: <http://bit.ly/Oo9MHG> (German)

El Punt – El Consell Editorial: <http://bit.ly/QwmOVg> (Spanish)

User discussed Content for TV

Case Study: *YLE "Uutiset Suora linja"* (YLE News Hotline) (Finland)

1. Short description

In January 2012, the daily prime time live current affairs program on *YLE TV2* (public broadcaster Channel 2) initiated a new section of the main news. It focuses on citizens' perspectives. Lay people can suggest topics, comment on newsroom ideas and act as contributors. Therefore, they use several online tools (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Google+) to stimulate the audience and explain the editorial team's choices. Their program's daily agenda is publicly available on the show's website. Every topic to be broadcast is agreed upon between contributors and staff.

2. Money/Time/Resources

The program is based on a 30-minute weekly citizen journalism show which was discontinued in December 2011. Staff from this show moved on to the new one, and a few additional recruitments were made. Preparations for the daily show were made in autumn 2011 with the help of training sessions held by researchers from the University of Tampere. The studio of the program underwent a facelift before the start. No other costs were incurred, as citizen contributors are not remunerated. But it requires good networking and the online skills of the journalists, as well as audience stimulation and credibility building.

3. User participation

On Facebook, the program has over 1.500 "likes". Also, the general feedback has been positive. Commenting on newsroom topics has so far been the most common manner of participation. Content production and suggestion of new topics are fairly rare. Daily audience ratings have remained at the same level as those of the old show (around 350.000 viewers daily). Furthermore, it has encouraged young people to participate through online channels.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

These innovative ways of receiving feedback and opening up journalistic processes have improved understanding between audiences and journalists.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

This TV program combines participatory elements with professional-produced content. It **opens the production process** for users, makes decision processes transparent (**newsroom transparency**) and fosters **user inclusion**.

Link:

<http://yle.fi/uutiset/puheenaiheet/> (Finnish)

User Engagement via Subscription

Case Study: +Vilaweb (Readers' Community) (Catalonia, Spain)

1. Short description

+Vilaweb is a Catalan online daily news outlet. The website has created a “paying-membership readers' community” in order to allow readers to participate actively in the newsroom processes. Thus, the readers can get in touch with the reporters and use the newsroom facilities to cover public or private events. The staff of +Vilaweb sends an email to the readers every afternoon in order to inform them about the news agenda. Likewise, the readers can modify the content or suggest new articles.

2. Money/Time/Resources

The additional costs are partly covered by the readers' subscription fees. Membership costs € 0,16 a day.

3. User participation

+Vilaweb has about 537.000 readers (March, 2012). 1.500 members have joined +Vilaweb since its creation in October 2011.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

+Vilaweb helps involve the readers into the news production process. In turn, readers become more loyal and committed. The readers' subscriptions allow the news website to give free access to its content.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

This news website allows the readers' participation (**user inclusion**) and **strengthens the user-medium loyalty**.

Link:

<http://www.vilaweb.cat/mesvilaweb> (Catalan)

User Integration

Case Study: “Listeners’ Club” of *Radio Balad* (Jordan)

1. Short description

The local radio station *Balad* in Amman institutionalized its way of interacting and collaborating with citizens in the news production by establishing a “Listeners’ Club”. The Club’s members convene to a general assembly once a year. Through regular but informal ways of communication, active members discuss among each other but also with *Balad* staff current quality of productions, while also providing the staff with their own research and topics of interest. Some even produce their own programs.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Balad appointed a Liaison Officer who acts as first contact person for Club members. The working time other staff need to react to comments and suggestions from the Club. Once a year, a room for the general assembly is needed.

3. User participation

Approximately 200 Club members, some of who produce contents themselves and many of whom contribute in research.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

It is quite inexpensive and involves a lot of listeners. Listeners and producers are autonomous but network with each other in context of voluntary contributions. It is unique in Jordan.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

Newsroom and production processes become **more transparent** for listeners who participate in the production. The format strengthens relationships between staff and listeners, enhancing **actor transparency**. Interactivity is ensured and **media literacy** is boosted among listeners.

Link:

<http://ar.ammannet.net/> (Arabic)

Case Study: Internet Platform *Medienkritik Schweiz* (Media Criticism Switzerland) (Switzerland)

1. Short description

Since November 2010, the website *Medienkritik Schweiz* (<http://medienkritik-schweiz.ch/>) has served as a platform for critical debate on the media system in Switzerland. It was created upon the initiative of the association *Medienkritik Schweiz* in collaboration with the Institute of Applied Media Studies (IAM) of Zurich University of Applied Sciences in Winterthur.

On this platform, the two partners monitor and describe the condition of media in Switzerland with different journalistic forms. The association and the university are equally responsible for the content. The majority of the current contributions originate from students of IAM. That is why the initiative is a good example of collaboration between an association and an institution of journalism training – which also favors media criticism and media journalism. In the third year of the bachelor’s program in journalism, students conduct research on the structure and the actors of media criticism in Switzerland. The articles published on the webpage are researched and produced by the students themselves.

2. Money/Time/Resources

Hosting costs. Probably: editing costs (time) of the articles published.

3. User participation

Discussions on the website; furthermore the discussants may be students.

4. Why is it a best practice example?

The main advantage of the project is the lively participation of journalism students. They can contribute articles, comment and “get used” to media journalism.

5. Why is it important for media accountability?

It promotes fruitful **discussions on journalistic quality** and accuracy, fosters media journalism and promotes active collaboration between an association and journalistic education.

Link:

<http://medienkritik-schweiz.ch/> (German)

See also:

Online media criticism platform: www.leugens.nl (Dutch)

Side Step

Beside the internal means of media accountability, there are various initiatives that help to foster media accountability from the outside. Some of them are connected to media companies, some are completely independent. Various examples are listed here in order to give an idea which initiatives might be encouraged or even launched, some of them ideally in cooperation with e.g. research and training institutions, universities or non-profit initiatives. However, these ideas might also help to find new and innovative ideas for integrating audiences, improving users' participation and enhancing credibility.

Let's start with humor. Media satire is a great way to discuss media accountability. Some newspapers regularly feature humorous columns on media, and there are also **TV shows with satirical content on media and journalism**. The program "Switch reloaded" is shown on the Munich-based private channel *ProSieben*. Showcasing well-known German comedians, "Switch reloaded" was nominated for the German "Grimme" prize. So far 65 20-minute shows have been produced. Other suitable examples on German television, which effect media accountability, are the late night shows "Harald Schmidt Show" (*Sky*), the "heute show" (*ZDF*) and "TV total" (*ProSieben*), the later featuring the well-known host Stefan Raab. TV shows are costly, but satirical content could also be produced on more convenient prices for online distribution. A well-known example of news parody as a form of media criticism is Finish *Lehti* (The Paper, <http://lehtilehti.fi/>). The website provides mock versions of online news, television news reports and weekly magazines. These media products represent a non-commercial and small-scale version of the US role models, such as *The Onion* (<http://www.theonion.com/>) or *The Daily Show* (<http://www.thedailyshow.com/>). Due to its low public profile, for instance, the mock TV news video clips have gathered no more than 2.500 viewers on average. However, media satire in general is very popular. The above-mentioned show "Switch reloaded" reached top market share of almost 20 percent in Germany. These examples show that even entertainment programs can develop a critical potential.

Another way of fostering the discussion on media accountability are **media observatories**. Catalanian *Media.cat* (<http://www.media.cat>) is an online media observatory created by an association of professional journalists. It publishes daily commentary on news coverage by mainstream media, reflections on journalistic practice as well as on changes in the industry and periodically produces in-depth reports, regarding media performance on controversial topics. The daily reports and columns on the *Media.cat* website are voluntary contributions by members of the association and other journalists. They raise money from public institutions for the in-depth reports and also experiment with crowd funding for the annual project. This case is a good example of how journalists can individually press for accurate reporting and

transparency. The fact that professional journalists are involved makes it a good example of self-regulation and peer-oversight. They also aim at making the public more demanding and critical towards news. The example shows how journalists can take the initiative to foster transparency even if their organizations have not developed specific accountability mechanisms. It demonstrates that rising public awareness can be as important and effective as developing accountability practices within the newsrooms.

Such an impulse can also be given by academia. *The European Journalism Observatory (EJO*, www.ejo-online.eu and www.ejo.ch) is an example that works on a transnational level. The *EJO* is a network of collaborating research institutes based in twelve countries, with a decentralized structure. The observatory is designed to build bridges between national journalistic cultures in Europe and in the U.S., facilitating collaboration between media researchers and practitioners. By publicizing the results of media research accessible to broader audiences, studying “best practices” in journalism and analyzing trends in the media industry, the *EJO* strives to improve the quality of journalism, to contribute to media literacy, and helps to foster press freedom. Public events and workshops organized by *EJO* facilitate an open, international exchange of ideas among researchers, media practitioners, students and interested individuals involved in various fields of media. *EJO*'s studies conducted with other institutes are comprehensively presented to a wider audience of researchers and practitioners and other interested parties. The comparative analysis of European and U.S. developments allow for early identification of newsroom and the greater media industry trends. Many articles are published in major newspapers, journalism magazines and research journals, although some are created exclusively for publication on *EJO* websites.

Another initiative that was launched at a university aims at strengthening awareness of media quality. The Swiss “Yearbook Quality of the Media” is based on an annual research and is a resource for people working in the media, those involved in politics, economics or academia and anyone with an interest in media trends. This yearbook is based on the correlation between the quality of democracy and the quality of public communication. It is also designed to emphasize the media quality as an important aspect of public communication. (http://jahrbuch.foeg.uzh.ch/Broschren/Broschueren/finale%20Broschueren/Broschur_Jahrbuch_foeg_englisch.pdf or http://jahrbuch.foeg.uzh.ch/JAHRBUCH_2011/Seiten/default.aspx) It is a valuable resource for both researchers and journalists in terms of talking about the development of the Swiss media system. However, a study of this magnitude comes at high personnel costs and thus depends on funding. On the other hand, it launches discussions on the quality of Swiss media both in the traditional media (TV, radio and press) and on the web. The publication of the yearbook’s findings triggers intense discussion, particularly between researchers and journalists.

Such initiatives are particularly valuable in media environments with little reporting on media topics. Media journalism as such is an important driver of media accountability, but there are various European countries where there is only little space for media journalism. Thus, initiatives to launch the discussion are an important contribution to media accountability. In Romania, Petrișor Obae, a business journalist specialized in media and advertising, started his own company, *Pagina de Media SRL* (Media Page Ltd., www.paginademedia.ro), that runs a website featuring news about the communication industries and analyses of violations of media, advertising and business ethics codes. The site includes a collection of Romanian and internationally recognized ethic codes and media laws, and an invitation for the public to submit ethic cases, to be presented and discussed shortly after they were identified. The site is accessed mostly by journalists, by advertising and by public relations specialists. The ethic cases gather most of the comments (between 40 and 150 comments). The topics include political public relations done by journalists, paid trips for journalists, surreptitious advertising, misleading advertising, unpaid wages, or unfair business pressures. In a month, it has an average of 57.000 unique clients, about 200.000 visits and about 450.000 hits.

Finally, it is also important to screen media accountability instruments on a regular basis. A good example for this practice is the Dutch “Monitor Mediaverantwoording” (monitor media accountability, www.mediaverantwoording.nl), an initiative of *Fontys University of Applied Sciences, School of Journalism in Tilburg*. It assembles all documents and features that increase the transparency of news organizations. The results are generated in a yearly content analysis of websites of news media organizations, conducted by junior year journalism students. Again, research resources and thus funds are needed for such a project. But so far, editors-in-chief and other executives have stated that it reminded or even inspired them to implement media accountability instruments such as codes of ethics, editorial statutes and the like. As an initiative, it fuels the professional discussion on transparency and accountability.

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