European Federation of Journalists

POSITION PAPER

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM IN EUROPE

Journalism is a public good which plays a critical role in promoting a healthy information space. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping journalism. AI can and does support journalists by analysing data or assisting with tasks but it must remain **subordinate to human editorial responsibility**. For example, if a text is translated using AI, the journalist/editor must still understand the original text to then compare the AI-generated translation with the original text.

While these tools offer promise, they also raise urgent questions: What about internal information flow? Are all journalists or editors-in-chief technically knowledgeable? Who gets paid? **Does the use of AI comply with journalist ethics?**

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) advocates for an AI future that upholds journalistic ethics, protects authors' rights and appropriate remuneration, ensures fair access and guarantees editorial independence.

This position paper outlines EFJ's vision and demands for responsible and ethical use of AI in journalism across Europe.

1) HUMAN EDITORIAL CONTROL IS ESSENTIAL

Journalists and newsrooms must not use AI if they do not know the original sources. For example, reporting should not be based on an AI-generated summary if the original text is unknown. Companies must inform workers and their trade union representatives about the use of algorithms and AI in management processes.

In addition, AI's and in particular generative AI chatbots' growing role in newsrooms must be addressed through **social dialogue** or other forms of dialogue between newsrooms and societal actors (newsrooms, developers (large AND small), diverse range of citizens, academics, civil society) AI experts. Collaborations with research can help capacity building and getting additional expertise on board.

Journalists' organisations, media employers and employees/news workers should collectively define the conditions under which AI is used, maintaining workers' rights, editorial standards and ethical standards. Successful responsible innovation projects succeed when different parties of an organisation (legal, editorial, R&D, marketing, etc.) internally jointly decide the course of digitisation.

Surveys indeed demonstrate again and again that human oversight is considered of particular importance (1). AI in newsrooms should:

- Ensure AI is used under clearly-defined conditions with human editorial control.
- Not replace journalistic work nor automate content production without human review and responsibility.

2) JOURNALIST WORK MUST BE PROTECTED

Journalists' work should not train AI systems without their informed consent - and certainly not without proportional appropriate remuneration.

Journalists' oversight of AI systems is essential to ensure their use is legitimate, fair, transparent and safe in the workplace. A human-centric approach to developing and implementing AI helps ensure systems function as intended, protecting both workers and consumers while benefiting organisations.

Legal compliance, mandated by the EU AI Act, is only the baseline for AI systems. However, compliance alone does not guarantee fairness or ethical standards. Meeting ethical requirements **benefits both individuals affected by AI and the organisations that use it**. For example, media companies using digital avatars based on the body of a journalist should have the permission of the journalist to do so. The same applies to the voice of the journalist in synthetic voices.

EFJ urges public donors to prioritise media that, instead of dismissing journalists due to AI-driven restructuring, choose to educate staff and freelancers. Since February 2025, the AI Act has required companies to train employees who work with AI. This should be reviewed in some way.

Public donors should prioritise media that use the opportunities of AI tools to improve the content and fight disinformation, especially by detecting automated bots and deepfake videos. The ethical use of AI must be a condition for public investment in journalism.

The EFJ calls for:

- **Mandatory transparency** on the data used to train generative AI systems and used for Realtime-Augmented-Retrieval (RAG) which, from the perspective of the resilience of journalism, may be even more problematic. Such a database should not depend on any particular identifier scheme: it should be searchable.
  - Clear records from AI developers showing which journalistic sources were used in model training and fine-tuning or "alignment".
  - Mandatory transparency on layoffs is also required as journalists are being laid off due to higher costs and newsrooms are increasingly automating work.
- **Quality inputs**: Generative AI models must train on quality journalistic content in order to generate quality outputs – but it must be ensured that the appropriate remuneration to media organisations is re-invested in journalism and journalists.
- **Explicit author consent** before any journalistic content is used for AI training or as input.
- **Appropriate remuneration** and licensing agreements when generative AI uses journalistic work.

We oppose any systems that mine, mimic or monetise journalists' work without credit or remuneration.

3) TRANSPARENCY IS NON-NEGOTIABLE FOR AUDIENCES AND JOURNALISTS ALIKE

AI-generated content must be clearly labelled when it influences editorial output. Public trust depends on knowing what is real and what is synthetic (2). Concrete labels should be developed with users and in response to real user needs.

Media organisations should use AI in a transparent and ethical way that empowers not only media business, but especially journalism (e.g. investigative). There is a fine balance here as overuse of AI may undermine already fragile trust in the media (3).

Transparency must exist at three levels:

- **External**: Audiences must be informed when generative AI is heavily used for core activities in content creation. For example, the use of AI for translation or transcription is purely ancillary, whereas use of AI to write text or do research is very close to core tasks, and hence, should be subject to transparency requirements.
- **Internal**: Journalists must be educated on the AI tools being used.
- **Third-party**: Media outlets must demand transparency from AI providers regarding how tools work and what data they use.

Generative AI tools – especially those capable of creating deepfakes or mimicking real individuals – should always carry clear visual or textual disclosures.

4) EQUAL ACCESS AND TRAINING FOR ALL JOURNALISTS

AI must not widen the gap between large newsrooms and under-resourced media outlets neither between different regions throughout Europe. Newsrooms must provide and promote continuous training programmes so that workers acquire the necessary skills to work with AI technologies.

The EFJ urges:

- Investment in AI tools and infrastructure that serve **independent, local, and freelance journalists** by media organisations and national governments, EU institutions and other European philanthropies and funds.
- **Publicly-funded alternatives to big tech platforms**, which are currently dominating AI development.
- Inclusion of **AI literacy in journalism education** and continuous professional training to prevent misuse and promote ethical practices. Newsrooms should ensure that journalists have enough time to build up AI expertise and engage with AI intensively.

EFJ encourages newsrooms to include technical staff and to bring journalists and those who code the algorithms together in order to develop a mutual understanding of journalism ethics and a human rights driven approach.

5) ETHICS MUST SHAPE THE USE OF AI IN NEWS

Journalistic ethics must guide how AI is used and developed, from newsroom tools to audience recommendation algorithms.

We reaffirm the importance of:

- Truthfulness, accuracy, impartiality, accountability, and protection of sources.
- Maintaining authenticity and traceability of content.
- Avoiding AI-generated impersonations, fabricated recordings, or synthetic content that could mislead the public.
- Ensuring that AI-driven personalisation systems support **viewpoint diversity** and **democratic dialogue**, not filter bubbles or ideological silos.
- Internal and external dialogue on the responsible use of AI so that it is used according to journalistic ethical standards and that readers trust its use in the news.

All AI systems used in journalism should undergo independent evaluation by journalists' organisations, media councils and/or other media experts to ensure that they meet these ethical standards.

6) JOURNALISTS' ORGANISATIONS MUST HELP GOVERN THE FUTURE OF AI

AI governance must not happen behind closed doors or be dictated by platform companies. Journalists' organisations must be **active participants** in the national, European and global governance of AI systems that affect public information, including governance by EU standardisation organisations, such as CEN and CENELEC.

Collective agreements on AI must, among other things, regulate the use of generative AI in audiovisual production, including the obligation to obtain explicit consent for digital replication, offer appropriate remuneration and include limitations on use.

This also requires capacity-building, especially at the level of local media organisations, who often have limited resources to be active in these fora. Joint studies should be carried out between trade unions, companies and public administrations to analyse the impact of generative AI on the media and on employment in the sector.

Journalists organisations can have an active role in shaping the future of AI through responsible procurement, i.e. creating a demand for journalistic AI that reflects journalistic values and users' rights to privacy, freedom of expression and non-discrimination that is open-source, explainable and environmentally-friendly (4).

The EFJ calls for:

- The involvement of journalists' representative organisations in **EU and Council of Europe frameworks** regulating AI.
- The inclusion of journalists' organisations in initiatives like the **Trusted European Media Data Space (TEMS)** to empower journalist-driven innovation.
- A collective, democratic approach grounded in social dialogue and collective bargaining to building and implementing AI tools that serve the public interest.

AI is not just a technical tool. It's shaping how societies access information and shifting the working conditions in newsrooms. European journalists deserve an AI future that supports their work, not one that erodes their autonomy, exploits their content or widens existing inequalities.

THE EFJ IS COMMITTED TO DEFENDING:

- Editorial independence in the age of automation.
- Fair remuneration and rights for journalistic creators.
- Equal access to AI tools and training.
- Ethical and transparent AI systems.
- A media landscape where human responsibility remains at the core.
- Internal and external dialogue on the responsible use of AI.

THIS IS NOT A FIGHT AGAINST AI – IT IS A FIGHT FOR JOURNALISM.

(1) 'Generative AI in Journalism' report
(2) Research shows that users would feel manipulated if they were not informed that content has been AI-generated.
(3) This is evident from the 2025 Digital News Report, an annual international study on news consumption among the public.
(4) For example, see Annex 1 in the Council of Europe "GUIDELINES ON THE RESPONSIBLE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEMS IN JOURNALISM".

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