



EFCSN

European Fact-Checking
Standards Network

European Code of Standards for Independent Fact-Checking Organisations

August 2022



EFCSN is supported by the European Union under the 2020 work programme on the financing of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in the field of "Communications Networks, Content and Technology". Agreement number: LC-01740478

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 1: THE CODE OF STANDARDS	8
Article 1: System of Compliance	8
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	8
Article 2: Methodology	9
CHAPTER 3: ETHICAL STANDARDS	10
Article 3: Ethical Standards	10
Article 3. 1: Non-Partisanship and Impartiality	10
Article 3. 2: Privacy and Safety	11
Article 3. 3: Honest corrections	11
CHAPTER 4: TRANSPARENCY	13
Article 4: Transparency	13
Article 4. 1: Organisational transparency	13
Article 4. 2: Financial transparency and conflicts of interest	14
CHAPTER 5: ACCESS AND RENEWAL	16
Article 5: Access	16
Article 5. 1: Assessment procedure	16
Article 5. 2: Criteria	17
Article 5. 3: Application form	17
Article 5. 4: Assessors	18
Article 5. 5: Reconsideration	18
Article 5. 6: Renewal	18
CHAPTER 6: COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT	19
Article 6: Compliance	19
Article 6. 1: Complaints reviewer	19
Article 6. 2: Compliance procedure	20
Article 6. 3: Sanctions	20
CHAPTER 7: EVOLUTION AND CHANGES	21
Article 7: Evolution of the Code	21
Article 7. 1: Procedure	21

ANNEXES	23
Annex 1. Wide Group members	24
Annex 2. Working Committee members	25
Annex 3. Template Article 3.1.I	25
Annex 4. Template Article 4.1.B	26
Annex 5. Template Article 4.1.C	26
Annex 6. Template Article 4.1.D	27
Annex 7. Template Article 4.2.A	27
Annex 8. Template Article 4.2.B	28
Annex 9. Template Article 4.2.D	28
Annex 10. Template Article 5.4	28
Annex 11. Template Article 6	30



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

The European Code of Standards for Independent Fact-Checking Organisations is a set of criteria designed to ensure that organisations fact-checking mis and disinformation adhere to the highest standards of methodology, ethics and transparency in order to best serve the public interest. Once verified as compliant with the professional standards set out in this Code, organisations become members of the [European Fact-Checking Standards Network \(EFCSN\)](#).

The European Code of Standards and the EFCSN are open to organisations dedicated to **fact-checking**, defined as the use of an evidence-based method to verify the accuracy of claims made in the public sphere. Organisations must have a substantial and demonstrable focus on a country that is a member of the [Council of Europe](#), Kosovo or Belarus, to apply.

Membership in the EFCSN signifies an organisation's rigorous commitment to provide accurate information ethically and transparently, without bias or prejudice. Members focus on matters in the public interest and have a proven track record of excellence, integrity and accountability.

LEGITIMACY OF THE CODE

The European Code of Standards is the result of a dialogue about essential standards and best practices among the region's fact-checking community. A Wide Group of more than 40 fact-checking organisations (see Annex 1) was at the heart of the process; their opinions and ideas about what the Code should contain were gathered in an open consultation and then translated into early drafts of the Code by a Working Committee (see Annex 2) elected by the Wide Group to direct the process. The Wide Group offered amendments on the resulting draft and ultimately approved the European Code of Standards by a qualified majority of $\frac{3}{4}$ in the summer of 2022.

The drafting of the Code also benefited from the insights of researchers and academics, media associations, civil society groups, social media platforms and other stakeholders that were invited to participate in the Open Consultation.



THE CODE'S STANDARDS



THE CODE'S STANDARDS

The European Code of Standards lays out three main categories of standards: Methodological Standards, Ethical Standards and Transparency Standards. The Code also establishes how these standards will be assessed and enforced, and the process to amend the Code in the future.

On Methodological Standards, the Code spells out the steps that verified members must take to ensure their investigations are transparent, professional and committed to the highest levels of accuracy. The chapter on Ethics details standards that must be followed by verified members in order to safeguard their impartiality, handle corrections transparently and maintain regard for the safety and privacy of subjects. Finally, the Transparency Standards cover the information members must share about their organisational structure, funding sources and partnership agreements in order to foster trust and ensure their editorial independence.

The European Code of Standards is intended to be an incentive for verified members to keep improving. To achieve this, the Code identifies and encourages additional best practices that are not required for membership but will be evaluated by assessors during the application process. The EFCSN will support organisations with training and other assistance so they can achieve the standards of best practices.



CHAPTER 1: THE CODE OF STANDARDS

Article 1: System of Compliance

- A. In order to be a verified EFCSN member, fact-checking operations must fully comply with all the standards in the Code.
- B. Once approved as a verified member, each operation must acknowledge publicly on its website that they are verified members of the EFCSN and link to their approved application.
- C. Operations that obtain the badge will also be listed on the EFCSN website.
- D. Operations that go further to fulfil the best practices outlined in the Code are encouraged to acknowledge so on their websites.
- E. Parent organisations must follow the general ethical spirit and standards of this Code.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Article 2: Methodology

The verified members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN) **must concentrate on topics in the public interest and follow a clear and transparent methodology that explains why and how certain issues are selected and investigated.** In order to ensure the highest levels of accuracy, findings must be supported and cross-checked by high-quality sources and delivered in precise and factual language .

In order to be recognised as a verified member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN), operations must:

- A. Make available and easily accessible on their website an explanation of the process used to select, research and complete investigations, including a definition of any rating systems used.
- B. Assess the merits of the evidence found using the same standards applied to evidence on equivalent claims, regardless of who made the claim.
- C. Primarily focus on topics that are in the public interest, defined here as issues that concern the welfare of society or individuals, and be willing to explain, if requested by an assessor, how various investigations fit this definition.
- D. Make available and easily accessible on their website a channel through which the public can submit possible claims for verification and encourage users to send in claims to check, while making it clear what readers can legitimately expect will be fact-checked and what isn't fact-checkable.



- E. Identify and include in publications, when possible, access to all evidence or other required information for a reader to replicate the verification process.
- F. Provide evidence for every pertinent factual statement made in an investigation, relying on primary sources where possible. Set out in its fact checks relevant evidence that appears to support the claim as well as relevant evidence that appears to undermine it.
- G. Provide at least two, though preferably more, sources to verify the central claim of an investigation except in cases where there is only a single relevant source. Use the best available primary, not secondary, sources of evidence wherever suitable primary sources are available. Where suitable primary sources are not available, the applicant explains the use of a secondary source.
- H. Name all sources except when their safety is at risk. In such exceptions, anonymous sources may only be included if the information they provide is corroborated by named sources or material evidence.
- I. When quoting experts, establish their credibility in the relevant topic.
- J. Ensure each investigation undergoes at least one round of editing by someone other than the author before publication.
- K. Present findings in precise, factual and non-emotive language, while taking care not to overstate conclusions.

In addition to these measures, the Code identifies the following best practises that are encouraged and will be evaluated by assessors during the application process:

- L. Report on the operation's impact on issues of public interest .



CHAPTER 3: ETHICAL STANDARDS

Article 3: Ethical Standards

The members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network **must operate on the basis of strict ethical standards** in order to protect their independence and credibility. In work that often involves user-generated content, care must be taken to respect the privacy and safety of the subjects involved.

Article 3.1: Non-Partisanship and Impartiality

In order to be recognised as a verified member of the European Fact-checking Standards Network (EFCSN), operations must:

- A. Be editorially free and politically independent.
- B. Not endorse or advise the public to vote for any political parties or candidates for public office.
- C. Not conclude any agreement or partnership with a political party or any other public relations and similar activities that could compromise the operation's reputation for independence and impartiality.
- D. Not focus investigations unduly on one particular political party or side of the political spectrum.
- E. Not employ anyone who holds a salaried and/or prominent position in a political party, government, state or public company under the direct control of a political party or government.
- F. Explicitly address in publications any reasonable conflict of interest or political bias, including from experts or organisations cited.
- G. Have internal policies barring employees from making partisan statements in the name of the operation or organisation and have procedures in place to take action if they do. Operations take steps to ensure that any advocacy or views on policy issues held by staff are managed in such a way that a reasonable member of the public would not see the organisation's work as biased.
- H. Have internal policies that bar employees from accepting in a professional context any gifts, favours, or services with advantageous conditions that go beyond common social and courtesy items, and have procedures in place to take action if they do.



- I. Make available and easily accessible on their website these and any other non-partisanship policies (See template in Annex 3).
- J. Only advocate for issues that are relevant to the mission of fact-checking and are compatible with a reputation for independence and impartiality. Organisations that engage in advocacy must set out public guidelines on how they adhere to these standards.

Article 3. 2: Privacy and Safety

In order to be recognised as a verified member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN), operations must:

- A. Obscure the image and/or identity of subjects of an investigation when there is a reasonable concern for their safety.
- B. Take measures to avoid exposing the source or identity of user-generated disinformation content to undue public scrutiny.
- C. Be restrictive, respectful and considerate when mentioning or identifying minors and make efforts to protect their privacy.
- D. Anonymise any personal information that could allow the harassment of people (i.e. at least partially concealing telephone numbers, IDs or passports, bank account numbers, email addresses...)
- E. When appropriate and possible, a right-of-reply should be offered to any named person or organisation who is the source of the inaccurate claim and/or is the subject of significant criticism or allegations.

In addition to these measures, the Code identifies the following best practises that are encouraged and will be evaluated by assessors during the application process:

- F. Put in place measures that aim to address the risk of trauma or harassment experienced by staff as a result of the operation's activities, including but not limited to providing training to prevent and identify symptoms.

Article 3. 3: Honest corrections

In order to be recognised as a verified member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN), operations must:

- A. Correct every known mistake promptly with a correction note in the same publication in which the error was made; if the error is only typographical, grammatical or stylistic, a correction note is not needed.
- B. When the original publication in which the mistake was made is not editable, disseminate the correction in the same format and channel as the original so that as far as possible users of the original see the correction and the corrected version.



- C. If a mistake is substantial, meaning it fundamentally changes the conclusions of the investigation or is a clear departure from the methodology and policies of the operation, include the accurate information, as well as an explanation of the circumstances that allowed the error to transpire, in the correction note. Then disseminate the correction in the same format and channels as the original.
- D. Acknowledge the addition of any new information to a publication in an update note in the same publication.
- E. Make available and easily accessible on their websites a corrections policy and a record of the corrections published over the previous year in the first application for EFCSN membership and of the previous two years upon renewal.
- F. Include in their corrections policy, available and easily accessible on their websites, a detailed account of how they assess requests for corrections.
- G. Offer audiences direct channels to request a correction, within the corrections policy on their website.
- H. H. Inform audiences of the possibility of submitting a complaint to the EFCSN under the terms of article 6 with a link to the **complaint form**.

In addition to these measures, the Code identifies the following best practises that are encouraged and will be evaluated by assessors during the application process:

- I. Undergo an internal and documented annual review of published corrections to determine whether methodological and procedural changes should be made to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future.
- J. Offer an independent review of a complaint if the subject of an article is not satisfied after an internal complaints process has been followed.



CHAPTER 4: TRANSPARENCY

Article 4: Transparency

The members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network **must be transparent about their organisational structure, funding, partnerships and agreements** in order to **foster trust and accountability with the public**. Verified members must disclose the ownership, legal status, and governance of their organisations. They must also explain the professional background of all key staff in their fact-checking operation and its organisational structure.

Article 4. 1: Organisational transparency

In order to be recognised as a verified member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN), operations must:

- A. Make available and easily accessible on their website a statement that sets out the applicant's organisational structure and makes clear how and by whom editorial control is exercised.
- B. Make available and easily accessible on their website regularly updated information related to the ownership and legal status of the operation and/or parent organisation. People or entities holding over 5% of the shares must be disclosed (see template in Annex 4).
- C. Make available and easily accessible on their website regularly updated information related to the governance of the operation and/or the parent organisation (see template in Annex 5).
- D. Provide proof of the ownership, legal status and governance of the organisation to the external assessors and the Governance Body; this information does not need to be publicly disclosed (see template in Annex 6).
- E. Make available and easily accessible on their website regularly updated information about the identity of the editors or decision makers behind the operation, including any relevant previous roles.
- F. Make available and easily accessible on their website regularly updated information about the positions held by all staff involved in the fact-checking operation's editorial output, including any relevant previous roles.
- G. Make available and easily accessible on their website a statement setting out the operation's mission, values and internal guidelines in place to protect its independence.
- H. Make available and easily accessible on their website the organisation's bylaws, understood as the rules or statutes that govern the members of an organisation.

If the Governance Body approves an appeal that fulfilling organisational transparency requirements could reasonably result in state-sanctioned, politically induced, or any other kind of violence against an organisation or its members, such information may exceptionally be revealed only to the Governance Body of the Code and the assessors. Such an appeal must be explained in a letter to the Governance Body.

Article 4. 2: Financial transparency and conflicts of interest

In order to be recognised as a verified member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN), organisations or parent organisations must:

- A. Disclose all income sources contributing 1% or 5.000 euros (whichever the higher), from the most recent annual accounts when joining and the last two annual accounts when renewing membership, to external assessors and the Governance Body; this does not need to be publicly disclosed and will be under confidentiality (see template in Annex 7).

An applicant can request to instead submit this information to an external auditor. The Governance Body may only grant the request if it is satisfied both that there are sufficient legal, commercial, safety, or other grounds to accept such a request, and that it is in the best interests of the EFCSN to do so.

The Governance Body would, in agreement with the applicant, appoint an external auditor of good standing and repute who does not have an existing relationship with the applicant. The costs will be the responsibility of the applicant unless the Governance Body chooses to bear the cost.

If the auditor sees a potential conflict of interest in the applicant's income sources, it must report a summary of its findings, including the number of conflicts and the types of conflict but without identifying the sources of conflict, to the Governance Body, the assessors, and the applicant. If the applicant chooses to proceed with its application, the auditor must submit a full report to the Governance Body and the assessors, which will decide what must be disclosed in accordance with article 4.2.B.

- B. Make available and easily accessible on their website an updated declaration of the overall annual income of the organisation. In that declaration, they will set out their main sources of income including but not necessarily restricted to those contributing over 5% of their annual income for the most recent annual accounts when joining and two previous annual accounts when renewing membership. The declaration must also list all sources of income from online platforms, public funders (national or international) and/or any other source of income that may entail a conflict of interest as understood by the Governance Body (see template in Annex 8).



- C. Make available and easily accessible on their website an explanation of the mechanisms established to ensure editorial independence, as well as an explanation of the nature of the work funded by any platform, public source (national or international) and any other source of income that may entail a conflict of interest as understood by the Governance Body.
- D. Make available and easily accessible on their website an updated declaration of all unpaid significant commitments made to other organisations (see Annex 9).
- E. Publicly acknowledge and clearly mark sponsored content, meaning material in an online publication which resembles the publication's editorial content but is paid for by an advertiser and intended to promote the advertiser's product or services, within any publication that has been sponsored. Fact-checking content cannot be sponsored content under any circumstances.
- F. Make available and easily accessible on their website goods and services they receive from external sources, including paid subscriptions or free access to tools, software and/or advertising, that make a material difference to their finances (5% of net income).
- G. Fulfil all transparency statements in a full and honest manner. Neither assessors nor the Governance Body have the power needed to verify these statements. Therefore, if information emerges that proves that any part of the transparency statement is less than full and honest, a sanction procedure will be opened.

If the Governance Body approves an appeal that fulfilling financial transparency requirements could reasonably result in state-sanctioned, politically induced, or any other kind of violence against an organisation or its members, such information may exceptionally be revealed only to the Governance Body of the Code and the assessors. Such an appeal must be explained in a letter to the Governance Body.

In addition to these measures, the Code identifies the following best practises that are encouraged and will be evaluated by assessors during the application process:

- H. Make available and easily accessible on or from their website the full annual accounts of their organisation for each year since joining the EFCSN.



CHAPTER 5: ACCESS AND RENEWAL

Article 5: Access

In order to become members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network, the interested operation, as defined in the Introduction, must submit an application that will undergo an assessment procedure.

At the end of the procedure, each approved member receives a badge which must be published on its website. Operations that obtain the badge will also be listed on the EFCSN website together with their application so that readers can check that they are verified members.

All the tasks and responsibilities attributed to the Governance Body in this chapter can be delegated, by the Governance body itself, to a different designated body, whose characteristics will be defined in detail in a separate document, annexed to the Code.

Article 5.1: Assessment procedure

- A. The Governance Body has the final word about membership. To be valid, the decision requires a qualified majority of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the voting members of the Governance Body. For the decision to be valid, the voting members must be at least 50%+1 of the total members of the Governance Body. The decision is based on the “Criteria”, as set in article 5.2.
- B. Before the vote, the Governance Body receives opinions of two external assessors (see article 5.4), both unaware of the identity of the other one. The Governance Body will also seek opinion of members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network from the same country as the applicant or, if there are no members from the same country, from the same geographical region, as described by the UN methodology that divides Europe into 4 subregions: Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Northern Europe, and Southern Europe. The decisions of the external assessors and the opinions of the members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network from the same country/geographical region must address the “Criteria” set in article 5.2. and will be mandatory but not binding for the Governance Body.
- C. Where an organisation works in multiple languages, they must provide evidence that they apply consistent standards across all languages. If such evidence is deemed sufficient by the Governance Body, the organisation will be assessed in at least two languages of the Governance Body’s choice. If the evidence is not deemed sufficient, separate assessments will be carried out for each language an organisation works in. All publicly disclosed requirements within the Code

must be in all the languages the organisation works in.

- D. The final decision of the Governance Body must be explained. The final outcome is publicly available. The possible final decisions are:
- “Approval”, in case of full and definitive approval
 - “Pending decision”, if the Governance Body asks for more information from the applicant before taking a definitive decision
 - “Rejection”, in case of full and definitive rejection
- E. The Governance Body must use its best efforts to ensure that the whole Assessment procedure is concluded in a period not more than 90 working days.
- F. The Governance Body will keep a record of rulings on exceptional cases of access to ensure consistency in the application and interpretation of the Code across members.

Article 5. 2: Criteria

- A. The applicant is a legally registered organisation, or a distinct operation within a legally registered organisation, and details of this are easily found on its website.
- B. The operation or organisation is set up primarily for the purpose of fact-checking, as defined in the Introduction.
- C. The applicant must have a substantial and demonstrable focus on one (or more) of the countries of the Council of Europe, plus Kosovo or Belarus.
- D. Applicants must provide evidence to demonstrate they have published an average of four original fact-checks per month consistently over the previous year.
- E. The applicant’s articles or investigations must primarily focus on claims related to issues that, in the view of the Governance Body, concern the public interest.
- F. The applicant must be compliant with methodological standards, as set out in Chapter 2.
- G. The applicant must be compliant with the ethical standards, as set out in Chapter 3 of the European Code of Standards.
- H. The applicant must be compliant with the organisational and financial transparency requirements, as set out in Chapter 4 of the European Code of Standards.

Article 5. 3: Application form

The adherence to the criteria set out in article 5.2 will be evaluated on the basis of an application form, with standardized questions.



Article 5. 4: Assessors

The external assessors mentioned in article 5.1 must have proven expertise in the field of fact-checking and disinformation and they must not have conflicts of interest with the organisation that they are called upon to evaluate. They must not be staff of organisations that are already members of the EFCSN.

Annex 10 sets out a rotation system to ensure that the same organisation will not be evaluated on consecutive occasions by the same assessors.

Article 5. 5: Reconsideration

In response to a rejection decision of the Governance Body, it is possible for the applicant to file an appeal form according to the following procedure:

- A. The appeal must be presented in the month following the rejection.
- B. The evaluation procedure for the appeal is the same as for the first access application, but the external assessors will be different individuals.
- C. In case of rejection of the appeal, the applicant is not permitted to present a new application for the following 12 months.

Article 5. 6: Renewal

- A. The membership to the European Fact-Checking Standards Network expires 24 months after the official acceptance is granted unless exceptional situations as understood by the Governance Body.
- B. To renew the membership it is possible to submit an application, at least 21 months after the last official acceptance.
- C. The application form, criteria, and procedure are the same as for the first application to join the European Fact-Checking Standards Network.
- D. If significant changes occur in ownership or governance of an organisation already member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network, the organisation must notify the European Fact-Checking Standards Network in the following month. In this case, the Governance Body of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network has the power to decide by consensus that a renewal is necessary, even before the scheduled expiration of the membership.



CHAPTER 6: COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Article 6: Compliance

Any individual or organisation that believes that a member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network significantly failed to fulfil the requirements of the Code, if the complaint is not satisfied by the organisation concerned, can submit a complaint to the European Fact-Checking Standards Network for evaluation by the Governance Body (see Article 6.1).

The Governance Body won't examine issues related to a single publication unless it consists of a significant breach of the requirements of the Code.

The complaint must be submitted through a specific form (see Annex 11), made available on the European Fact-Checking Standards Network's website.

The opportunity to involve the European Fact-Checking Standards Network, if a complaint is not satisfied by the organisation concerned, must be specified in the websites of all the members, in their corrections policy (see article 3.3).

Article 6. 1: Complaints reviewer

The Governance Body can appoint a Complaints reviewer to assist with complaints received against the EFCSN members.

The main tasks of the Complaints reviewer are:

- A. To carry out a preliminary analysis of all the complaints and inform the Governance Body of any that are rejected because they are disingenuous, constitute harassment or are manifestly baseless.
- B. To highlight errors on a particular article or investigation that represent a significant breach of the code but can be settled with a simple correction, at least in cases where the organisation object of the complaint does not have an independent structure to review complaints that have not been satisfied.
 - B.1 To notify the member concerned, specifying the required correction and asking the member to comply in the following 7 working days.
 - B.2 If the member complies, to notify the complainant about the correction.
 - B.3 If the member doesn't comply, to notify the Governance Body, which will evaluate the complaint.
- C. To highlight to the Governance Body cases of repeated or major violations.



Article 6. 2: Compliance procedure

- A. The Governance Body, when dealing with accusations of significant failures to comply with the Code, has the final word about compliance. To be valid, the decision on whether a violation has occurred requires a qualified majority of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the voting members of the Governance Body. For the decision to be valid, the voting members must be at least 50%+1 of the total members of the Governance Body.
- B. Before the vote, the Governance Body must give the organisation accused of failing to fulfil the requirements of the Code the right to reply and defend itself, and seek the mandatory but not binding opinion of an external assessor (see article 5.4).
- C. The opinion of the external assessor must address any failure to fulfil the requirements of the Code, its gravity and a proposed sanction or a spectrum of applicable sanctions.
- D. The final decision of the Governance Body must be explained. The final outcome is communicated to the interested parties in the following 7 working days, and it is made publicly available in an “Annual report”. The “Annual report” must be published in the first 6 months after the end of the relative year.
- E. The whole Compliance procedure must be concluded in no more than 60 working days and the Governance Body decision will be considered final and binding.
- F. Governance body members must recuse themselves from assessments of their own organisations to avoid a conflict of interest.

Article 6. 3: Sanctions

The severity of the imposed sanction is always related to the seriousness of the breach of the Code.

- The possible sanctions, from the least to the most severe, are:
- a private formal advice or reprimand that specifies the actions needed;
- a public formal reprimand that specifies the actions needed;
- the suspension of the organisation’s right to vote in all the bodies of the EFCSN , for a period that ranges from 3 months to 3 years;
- the suspension of membership, for a period that ranges from 3 months to 3 years;
- the withdrawal of membership, and the prohibition to reapply for a period that ranges from 3 year to 5 years;

Repeatedly failing to comply with requirements of the Code with identical or similar behaviours is reason to impose more severe sanctions.



CHAPTER 7: EVOLUTION AND CHANGES

Article 7: Evolution of the Code

The content of the Code will be periodically reviewed, in order to keep it as updated as possible.

- A. The first overall review will be done one year after the Code comes into effect for the first time; the second overall review will be done after 2 years after the first review; after that, overall reviews will be done every 5 years;
- B. If the qualified majority of $\frac{2}{3}$ of all members of the Governance Body asks to review any part of the Code, at any time, the Governance Body will organise such a review within the following 6 months;
- C. If $\frac{2}{5}$ of the members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network formally ask to review any part of the Code, at any time, the Governance Body will organise such a review within the following 6 months;
- D. Every 12 months after the Code comes into effect, the Governance Body will report to the members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network on any areas of the Code that can be improved, and propose changes to that effect, specifying which changes are considered “major” or “minor” (see article 7.1).
- E. The members of the European Fact-checking Standards Network can propose changes and assessments of effectiveness for the Code, at any time, through a dedicated email address.

Article 7. 1: Procedure

The Governance Body will decide, at least once every 12 months, which proposed changes are “minor” and which are “major”, in a vote with a qualified majority of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the voting members of the Governance Body. For the decision to be valid, the voting members must be at least 50%+1 of the total members of the Governance Body. The member organisations of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network will be informed immediately after.

- A. The “minor” changes will be approved by the Governance Body itself, with a qualified majority of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the voting members of the Governance Body. For the decision to be valid, the voting members must be at least 50%+1 of the total members of the Governance Body.
- B. The “major” changes to the Code will be approved by all the members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network, with a qualified majority of $\frac{3}{4}$ of all members. For the decision to be valid, the voting members must be at least 50%+1 of all the members.



Any organisation can challenge the decision of the Governance Body, about a change being “minor” or “major”, in the following 15 days. In the following 15 days the Governance Body will inform all the members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network of similar challenges, and of the possibility to support them. If the challenges are supported by a minimum of 1/5 of all the members, the Governance Body will requalify the changes accordingly and follow the relevant procedure. If there are no challenges, or, if 15 days after the Governance Body’s decision, the challenges aren’t supported at least by 1/5 of the members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network, the Governance Body will vote on the minor changes, with the procedure set in article 7.1 letter A), in the following 15 days.



ANNEXES



Annex 1. Wide Group members

Wide Group members and countries where operations are based:

- 15min, Lithuania
- AFP, France
- Correctiv, Germany
- Delfi, Lithuania
- Demagog, Poland
- Doğruluk Payı, Turkey
- Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa), Germany
- Eesti Päevaleht, Estonia
- EFE Verifica, Spain
- Ellinika Hoaxes, Greek
- EU DisinfoLab, Belgium
- Factual.ro, Romania
- FakeNews Tragač, Serbia
- Fakt Yoxla, Azerbaijan
- Faktisk.no, Norway
- Faktograf, Croatia
- Faktoje, Albania
- france.tv, France
- Full Fact, United Kingdom
- Fundación Maldita.es, Spain
- Georgia's Reforms Associates, Georgia
- Hibrid.info, Kosovo
- Istinomer, Serbia
- Källkritikbyrå, Sweden
- Kallxo, Kosovo
- Knack, Belgium
- KRIK, Serbia
- Les Surligneurs, France
- Logically, United Kingdom
- Media Development Foundation, Georgia
- Metamorphosis Foundation, North Macedonia
- mimikama, Austria
- Newtral, Spain
- Observador, Portugal
- Open Fact-checking, Italy
- Oštro, Slovenia
- Pagella Politica/Facta, Italy
- Polígrafo, Portugal
- Pravda Association, Poland
- Raskrinkavanje (Center for Democratic Transition), Montenegro

- Re:Check, Latvia
- Science Feedback, France
- STOP FALS!, Republic of Moldova
- Teyit, Turkey
- The Journal, Ireland
- TjekDet.dk, Denmark
- Verificat, Spain
- VoxUkraine, Ukraine
- Zašto ne (in representation of Raskrinkavanje and Istinomjer), Bosnia and Herzegovina

Annex 2. Working Committee members

Working Committee members and countries where operations are based:

- Delfi, Lithuania
- Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa), Germany
- Factual.ro, Romania
- Full Fact, United Kingdom
- Kallxo, Kosovo
- Logically, United Kingdom
- Pravda Association, Poland
- STOP FALS!, Republic of Moldova
- Teyit, Turkey
- TjekDet.dk, Denmark
- Verificat, Spain
- Zašto ne (in representation of Raskrinkavanje and Istinomjer), Bosnia and Herzegovina

Annex 3. Template Article 3.1.I

This template or a similar format containing this information has to be available and easily accessible on your website:

[Name of the operation] is not under the editorial control of the State, a political party or a politician and will not focus investigations on one particular political party or side of the political spectrum.

This operation will not employ any person who holds a salaried or prominent position in a political party, government, or public company under the direct control of a political party or government and will not ask or advise the readers to vote for any political parties, candidates for public office, or policies other than those which are pertinent to fact-checking.



[Name of the operation] will not conclude any agreement or partnership with a political party and will address any reasonable conflict of interest or political bias from the experts or organisations they quoted or used.

[Name of the operation] will warn employees not to make political statements in the name of the operation and to not accept any gifts, favours, or services with advantageous conditions in a working environment that go beyond common social and courtesy items.

Annex 4. Template Article 4.1.B

This template or a similar format containing all this information has to be available and easily accessible on your website:

Is your fact-checking part of a larger organisation?	YES/NO
Name under which it is registered:	
Country in which it is registered:	
Legal status under which it is registered:	
Registry name:	
Registry number:	
Ownership:	<p><i>List the names of those people or companies holding more than 5% of the shares and the percentage of shares they hold.</i></p> <p><i>If your organisation doesn't have ownership, explain it in this space.</i></p>

Annex 5. Template Article 4.1.C

Instructions: How is decision making supervised within your organisation or your parent organisation? Is there a board of trustees? Are decisions made by the shareholders? Do you also have specific committees in charge of taking specific decisions? Use the left column to list the name and task of the governance structure you are referring to and the right column to list the names of the members belonging to it.



This template or a similar format containing all this information has to be available and easily accessible on your website:

Governance structure & task	Full name of the people involved
<i>i.e. Board of trustees: in charge of overseeing the operation, approving annual plans, budgets, memories and accounts.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name Surname 1 • Name Surname 2 • Name Surname 3 • ...
<i>i.e. Editorial Advisory board: in charge of analysing and answering readers complaints about our job.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name Surname 1 • Name Surname 2 • Name Surname 3 • ...

Annex 6. Template Article 4.1.D

This information will only be made available to the external assessors and the Governance Body and will not need to be publicly disclosed.

Proof of registration/legal status:	<i>Upload a document or paste a link.</i>
Proof of ownership:	<i>Upload a document or paste a link.</i>
Proof of governance structure:	<i>Upload a document or paste a link.</i>

Annex 7. Template Article 4.2.A

This information will only be made available to the external assessors and the Governance Body and will not need to be publicly disclosed:

Name of the contributor/client	Name of the program or nature of the agreement
<i>Mr. I think journalism is important</i>	<i>Donor</i>
<i>Organisation We believe in quality journalism</i>	<i>Grant for investigative reporting</i>
<i>Company I need help tackling the disinformation ecosystem</i>	<i>Client on Third party tackling</i>



Annex 8. Template Article 4.2.B

This template or a similar format containing all this information has to be available and easily accessible on your website:

Your annual income for the last finished year:	
Sources of income contributing over 5 % of the total annual income	
Other relevant sources of income as understood in article 4.2.B:	

Annex 9. Template Article 4.2.D

This template or a similar format containing all this information has to be available and easily accessible on your website:

Name of partner organisation	Description of the activities

Annex 10. Template Article 5. 4

For every country represented by a potential member, there should be:

- if the potential members from the same country, applying in the same year, are 3 or less, at least three external assessors (see paragraph 1)
- if the potential members from the same country, applying in the same year, are more than 3 and less than 7, at least four external assessors (see paragraph 2)

Paragraph 1

A body of 3 assessors can evaluate 1 organisation every 90 days. Considering the possible Appeal, that can last for 30 days, 3 assessors working without interruptions are likely to analyse, if needed, up to 3 organisations per year.



To ensure that the same organisation is not evaluated by the same pair of assessors for two applications in a row, is set the following rotation system:

(Same organisation applying)

Application 1: AB
Application 2: AC
Application 3: BC

After 3 applications from the same organisation, the rotation system starts from the beginning.

Paragraph 2

A body of 4 assessors can evaluate 2 organisations every 90 days. Considering the possible Appeal, that can last for 30 days, 4 assessors working without interruptions are likely to analyse, if needed, up to 6 organisations per year.

To ensure that the same organisation is not evaluated by the same pair of assessors for two applications in a row, is set the following rotation system:

(Same organisation)

Application 1: AB
Application 2: CD
Application 3: AC
Application 4: BD
Application 5: AD
Application 6: BC

After 6 applications from the same organisation, the rotation system starts from the beginning.



Annex 11. Template Article 6

First Name:	
Last name:	
Contact E-mail address:	
Organisation member of the EFCSN object of the complaint:	
Specify when the failure to fulfil the requirement of the European Code of Standards occurred:	dd/mm/yyyy
List the specific requirement/ requirements of the European Code of Standards that the organisation failed to fulfil:	
Specify the reasons why you think the specific requirement/requirements has not been fulfilled:	
Provide all the relevant links, documents, materials etc. that demonstrate the organisation object of the complaint failed to fulfil the requirement/requirements of the European Code of Standards:	
Have you tried to contact the organisation member of the EFCSN object of the complaint?	YES/NO
Provide all the relevant materials and information to demonstrate the contact/the attempted contact:	
Have you received an answer from the organisation member of the EFCSN object of the complaint?	YES/NO
If yes, why was it not sufficient to satisfy your complaint?	

