



Alliance
of independent
news agencies
in Europe

1939—2019





*The DNA
of independent news agencies: Journalistic
independence through economic strength*

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On the occasion of the 80th anniversary (1939—2019) of the alliance of independent news agencies *Group 39*, this publication presents the functions, tasks and strategies of independent news agencies in Europe. Free news agencies as a specific genre of media in the communication system operate in accordance with the journalistic principle of *true and unbiased news* and a profitable economic model. Group 39 is the oldest agency association in the world and its members are among the most innovative and economically successful news agencies.



Hidden Champions in the News Business

Independent news agencies as a
motor for a free press and platform
of innovation for the media and
communication industry

Value system, business models and strategies for the future of independent news agencies:
commemorative publication on the occasion of the 80th anniversary (1939—2019) of the
association of independent news agencies *Group 39*

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News agencies as democratic infrastructure: trust as new digital currency

500 million EU citizens consume the services of around 5,000 newspapers and related news sites, 50,000 magazines and periodicals, and 4,500 radio and TV stations on a daily basis. In addition, there are an untold number of news and information fragments in social and online sources, the tweets, posts and comments of which often have their starting point in professional journalistic services. Mass media therefore shapes the issues and images (agenda-setting) as well as the discourse (framing) on national and global events. Around half to two-thirds of this sheer volume of daily information and news is supplied by news agencies to media organizations as finished products for the direct use of texts, photographs, graphics, live videos and live blogs, or as raw journalistic material for media con-

tent built upon it. In media production, independent news agencies are the central, for end consumers *invisible* basic infrastructure of national and international news.

Balanced, reliable and critical agency journalism is the system of operation on which the media builds and expands its specific journalistic content and services. Independent agencies operate based on the principle of *accuracy before speed*, even if these two categories are at odds with one other in the instant news mode of flash, alarm and breaking news; they operate in accordance with the journalistic virtues of source diversity (*audiatur et altera pars*) and source credibility (*check, re-check, double-check*); they act quickly and transparently when they make mistakes and correct them; they produce on the basis of factual and verified information and research as a basis for neutral agency news items and therefore remain free of opinion and frequently of authorship by name.

All of these principles and virtues in independent agency journalism build trust. In the immediate digital world of unchecked and partly unverifiable information, opinions, distortions, rumors and fake news, trust has a particularly significant value and, therefore, price. Trust in general,

and verified, fact-based agency information and news in particular, have become stable currency in the digital sphere.

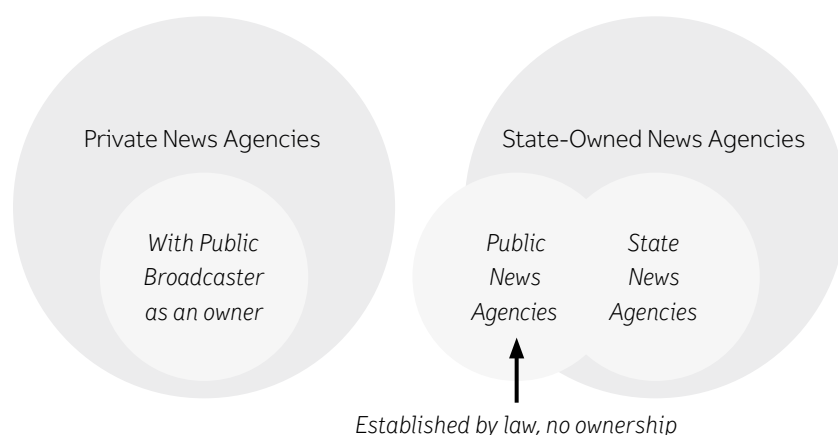
The “club of independents”: public value in the private sector

The stability of this new digital currency of trust is directly linked to the central journalistic functions of independent news agencies (selection of topics based on relevance, fact-checking and verification, contextual classification). Independence means that agency journalism operates autonomously

and reliability of agency reporting is ultimately constituted by the media itself and is therefore immune to a specific journalistic orientation. Another essential source of momentum for the editorial quality of news from independent agencies is the content-related, temporal and technical extensiveness and availability. This extensiveness includes overall thematic coverage (at least nationally and regionally), generic and continuous news coverage, services in all journalistic formats as well as an extensive archive.

In view of the considerable share of news agency content in all media services, the number of news agencies that are genuinely independent of the state is comparatively small. Of around 140 news agencies worldwide, only around 20 are free of state influence. The vast majority of the re-

mainder are state-run or semi-state organized, their budgets financed to a large extent or, in the case of some, entirely from government funds, and leadership in management and the editorial office determined directly or indirectly by parliament or the government. The independent news agencies are owned by media in democracies of a western affinity. Half of the world’s independent agencies are based in Europe. These include



Based on: Classification of news agencies based on ownership: Rantanen, T., Jääskeläinen, A., Bhat, R., Stupart, R. & Kelly, A. (2019). The future of national news agencies in Europe: Executive summary. London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK. <https://doi.org/10.21953/lse.aeginold23jj>

and without any influence from political, economic or other social institutions or groups. Through the primary customers or (collective) ownership of the independent news agencies, the neutrality, balance

the national news agencies of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland), the Benelux countries (including Belgium and the Netherlands), the entire German-speaking region (Germany, Aus-

tria, Switzerland) and the United Kingdom, organized in Group 39.

Independent news agencies have no formal or statutory mandate to create public value and cover the corresponding costs. They generate this public value themselves through their corporate objective, ownership structure and their value and competition-oriented business model — every day nearly 4,000 employees of these ten independent European agencies provide this public value on a private-sector basis.

Independent news agencies are therefore a suitable *strategic fit* for market-oriented countries with a liberal-democratic disposition (in contrast to countries with a capitalist economic model in totalitarian state structures or regimes). They strengthen a pluralistic media and communication system and, through their cooperative, circulation- and reach-oriented pricing model, guarantee sales and purchase opportunities for agency news for all professional journalistic entities of a country.

financed or government-controlled content is leading to a collision of economic and value models for international news agencies. The counter-models include: the sale of independently produced news to the media as an economic model versus the dissemination of information in the government interest as a PR model. Often, state-controlled or -financed agency content is disseminated in over ten world languages on the international news markets without a business model (e. g. from China, Russia or Turkey), which sometimes makes sound business action for independent international news agencies impossible. A current example from Europe is the organizational and personnel restructuring of the generic news service of the German Press Agency dpa in Latin America due to a massive offer from international state agencies.

Independent news agencies are constantly challenged to protect and ensure their journalistic independence through functioning business models.

Journalistic independence through economic strength: the DNA of independent agencies

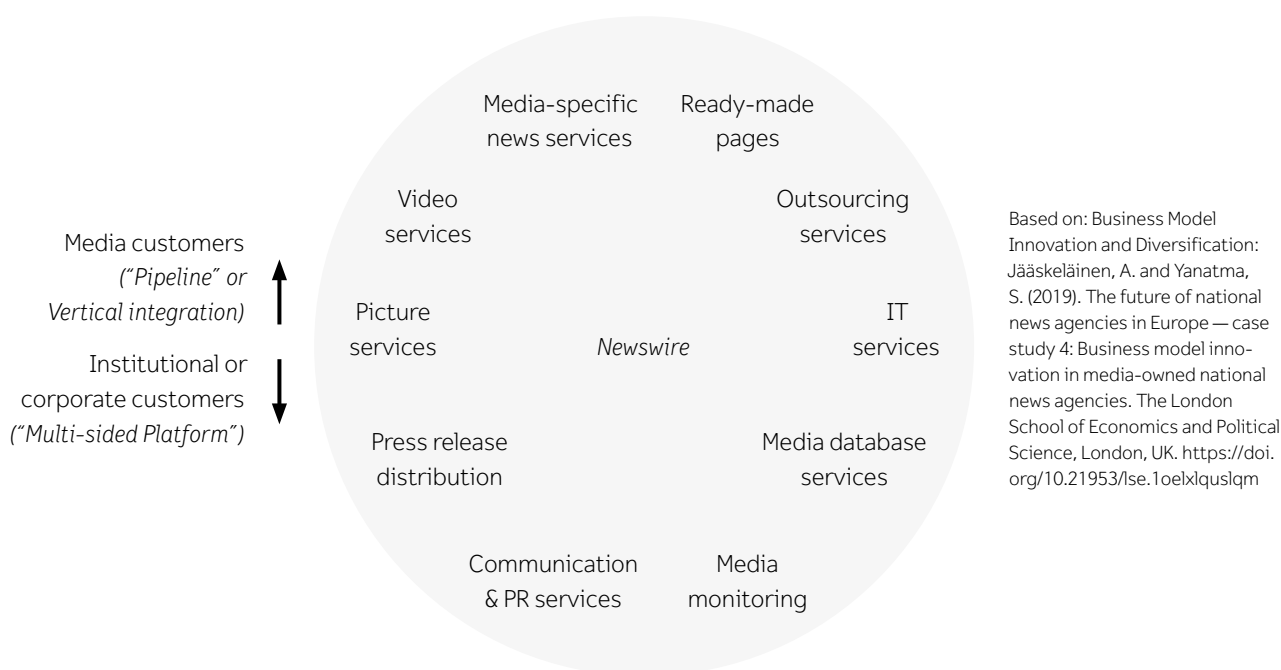
The economic situation for independent news agencies is becoming increasingly challenging. In the domestic markets, the media as owners and primary customers in the core journalistic business of independent agencies are under pressure due to the development of the advertising markets, and concentrations in the media sector are resulting in more difficult purchasing conditions for agency content. On the international markets, the increasing strength of state agencies with government-fi-

Innovation, diversification, new business models: organic growth

Due to the principle of identity typical of independent news agencies — the media are the biggest owners as well as the biggest customers — no substantial new revenues can be generated with traditional agency products. The basic mission of most independent agencies, whose establishment extends back to the nineteenth century, is to create text items (*the wire*). Meanwhile, agency content is produced on a multimedia basis in all genres of media, from text, photo, graphics, interactive graphics,

video, live video and live blogs to automated texts produced on the basis of structured data such as election results. At the same time, the range of sources and sourcing for the agencies themselves have increased exponentially, especially through

is to provide services for the owner media that would be too expensive or too time-consuming for each individual medium. The modern and innovative interpretation of this basic mission includes a diversification of products and markets for the in-



web and social content. The effort that goes into journalistic selection in agency journalism has increased significantly and, in addition to the classic gatekeeping function, the data-supported verification of information poses an essential task. Accordingly, new job profiles can be found in the agency newsrooms: designers, programmers, verification officers and data analysts.

In addition to these ongoing developments in agency journalism itself, the basic mission of news agencies as enterprises has expanded significantly. In its original form, the basic mission

dependent news agencies. In addition to the media's traditional target group, new business fields and target groups have developed. New business models for these include, in particular, the multimedia distribution of original content from organizations (OTS) and the marketing of media content in databases, real-time media monitoring, and media resonance analyses. In individual cases, independent news agencies have also positioned themselves as IT service providers in the areas of video streaming, mobile publishing, editorial systems and as data processing operators for media.

All activities are aimed at a generic expansion of the market in order to generate additional revenues and profits for the purpose of strengthening the economic foundation of journalistic independence.

In the conceptual experiment of founding a new media-owned news agency in the digital era, technology services for media are basically equivalent to the multimedia journalistic services on offer: agency content as an editorial backbone and an IT warehouse for smart production (editorial and content management systems, artificial intelligence solutions, ready-made pages), automated distribution (apps and mobile publishing, kiosk solutions, video streaming) and successful monetization (paid content solutions, e-paper bundles, data models for subscription conversions).

Member values: news agencies as digital cooperatives

For the owners of media-managed news agencies, corporate value is more member value than shareholder value. In addition to the core journalistic services for the media, the central member values are profits or a dividend as a guarantee of economic independence as well as returns from the marketing of media content and comprehensive innovation, digital and technology services.

The mutual or cooperative model of operation is characteristic of most independent news agencies. Regardless of the respective legal form, independent agencies produce win-win constellations for their owners and the entire journalistic media market. They operate as a neutral level of organization for cross-industry products and services. The advantages of this operating model

lie in the non-bureaucratic financing by the news agencies, quick implementation due to existing and well-coordinated organizational structures as well as a framework that complies with competition law. The entire corporate objective of independent news agencies is designed for this cooperative operating model as a neutral platform for the media and communication market. The legal form of the independent agencies plays a secondary role. In German-speaking countries, German press agency dpa is organized as a limited liability company and the Swiss news agency Keystone-SDA as a public limited company. The cooperative character of the platform operating model has also been established in the corporate structure of Austria Press Agency (APA) as a cooperative (eG). APA's statutes lay out this cooperative mandate for the support of its members (=owners) in explicit terms:

§2 Scope

- (1) The cooperative shall be responsible for ensuring ongoing, comprehensive as well as simultaneous and identical information to its members by means of a basic news service established by it, thus contributing to their economic support in accordance with § 1 of the Austrian Cooperatives Act (Genossenschaftsgesetz, GenG).
- (2) The cooperative is obliged to perform its tasks independently of the influence of political and economic institutions and groups and in accordance with the principles of reliability, speed and balance and avoiding any unilateral or partisan approach.
- (3) In order to ensure its independence, the cooperative shall conduct its business successfully in accordance with the principle of sustainability.

- (4) For this purpose, the cooperative shall also operate on behalf of non-members within the scope of its business objective.

Since their foundation in the last, let alone previous century, independent news agencies have operated as companies in a sharing economy and, in the process of digitization, as digital cooperatives in their platform function for the media and communications industry. Apart from the sheer size of the global digital giants, the main difference to the global tech or service platforms originating in Silicon Valley lies in the added value of the services provided. On the basis of the cooperative idea, this added value remains with the members, owners and customers of the independent agencies and is not radically exploited by the platform operator, either commercially or through the massive generation of user data.

Theses on securing the future of independent news agencies

- (1) *Value model*: independent news agencies are a specific genre of media in the communication system. Their journalistic independence can best be achieved through economic strength and profitability from organic growth arising from diversification into new, generic business areas.
- (2) *Business model*: the considerable value of trust through fact-based and balanced agency reporting has its price. Independent news agencies are committed to the paid content model, legal certainty and the protection of copyrights and rights of use, especially in the digital arena.
- (3) *Operating model*: independent news agencies are a neutral level of organization in the media and communications market and produce win-win solutions for all participating partners. In this sense, they operate as cooperatives in accordance with the cooperative principle and enhance the value added of their members, customers and owners as news and information marketplaces with transparent and fair rules.
- (4) *Organizational model*: independent news agencies are active partners and enablers in the transformation of the media. As an organization as a whole, they are therefore subject to a continuous process of innovation based on digital requirements. This concerns, in particular, the development of new skills and job profiles as well as working in line with efficient and agile business, production and customer processes with the highest possible degree of automation (e.g. interdisciplinary teams of journalists, programmers and designers as well as AI solutions for automated content).
- (5) *News-Tech model*: independent news agencies interpret their basic mission in digitization both journalistically and technologically. Agency content is produced, linked and distributed in various formats for various channels using the appropriate technologies and metadata (e.g. live video for online and TV with streaming).
- (6) *Journalistic model*: independent news agencies are no *ministries of truth* that judge whether categories are true or false and check every online information fragment for correctness. Rather, independent agencies act as journalistic beacons by publishing reports verified according to professional cri-

teria on the basis of facts and data, thereby strengthening the value of trust in reliable news and this new digital currency on a daily basis.

- (7) *Collaborative model*: independent news agencies traditionally exchange their respective wire services (*free flow of information*). In the future, they will work much more closely together to strengthen their services in a difficult economic environment (especially in the areas of technology and prototyping), set up joint ventures, and make investments. In addition, independent agencies will increasingly assume the role of organizational and technical platforms for the production of cross-media industry solutions (e.g. for content exchange, bundled solutions and marketing).
- (8) *Dialogue model*: it is the task of independent news agencies to communicate their value model of editorial independence in order to strengthen freedom of the press as a whole in dialogue with all other news agencies, but also to demand their rights be safeguarded in the digital arena in discourse with stakeholders such as the European Union.
- (9) *Member value model*: independent news agencies not only generate profits for their owners, but also a number of other values such as innovation-related dividends through ongoing agile product development and shared services. Shareholders of independent agencies thus benefit from comprehensive member values.
- (10) *Sustainability model*: the value and business model as well as the sustainable cooperative principle make independent news agencies an extraordinarily stable media genre. This vision and mission gives independent agen-

cies in market-oriented countries with a liberal-democratic disposition favorable prospects for the future, even in an era of media transformation and digitalization.

IO strategies

from the newsrooms
of independent news agencies
to secure the future

1 Content Performance Platform: Algemeen Nederland Persbureau

ANP and EzyInsights are building a platform especially for press agencies to track the *usage and performance of news content*. Google has provided a subsidy of 400.000 euro for this project. ANP leads the project, EzyInsights provides the technical aspects.

2 APA-News-Tech: Austria Press Agency

APA-News-Tech is the new APA strategy and is conceived of as a group-wide program. APA-News-Tech is the transformation of APA-Group into an *editorial and content-based IT warehouse* for media and communicators. All agile product and software development is based on design prints, high-fidelity prototypes and business cases from APA-medialab. Interdisciplinary teams of editors, designers, business analysts and developers work together with APA's customers to develop new digital solutions in the scope of media transformation. These solutions include comprehensive data center operations with managed hosting, editorial systems and archives, mobile publishing, streaming and video services, digital kiosks, smart services (AutoAbstract, SmartTag) as well as payment, login and marketing solutions. The News-Tech program's areas of research and innovation include AI, data, trusted information, paid content, automated content and semantic analysis.

3 Belgapres: Belga News Agency

In Belgapress Belga aims to unite the real time aspects of the *news agency* with the *media monitoring and media analysis* aspects of Go-press. Where the web version of Belgapress addresses the needs of the content editor (search, aggregate, analyse, distribute), the native app provides the content consumer a top-notch, premium, addictive reader experience. Launch is foreseen end of 2019.

4 Performing Content: German Press Agency

It might be the key challenge for journalism in the digital era. How do editorial departments create *captivating content* in the best sense of the word, connecting people to media brands in such a way that they are willing to pay appropriately for it. With this in mind, dpa has launched the Performing Content project to work with media partners to test formats that help turn unfaithful users into loyal customers.

5 Text robot Lena: Keystone-SDA

In autumn of 2018, a small Keystone-SDA team developed a text-generating robot based on open-source software to cover referendums in Switzerland. Named *Lena*, the robot extends coverage of Swiss referendums to the *municipal level*. In two referenda, Lena has written and published almost 9,000 short articles in German and French. These articles described the voting results of each of the 2,200 or so Swiss municipalities and contextualized the results. Before Lena, Keystone-SDA had never been able to offer such hyper-local content to customers.

6 Sports Data: Norsk Telegrambyrå

NTB will be the best player when it comes to *gathering and distributing sports data*. Live score and live tracking, statistics and results from all popular sports at all levels are packaged and distributed to build value for the news agency's customers and be a growth business for NTB, also outside its home market.

7 RADAR: PA Media

RADAR (Reporters and Data and Robots) is a service which brings together *human reporters and artificial intelligence* to scale up the production of localised news using Natural Language Generation and geotargeted distribution. A joint venture with the start-up Urbs Media, RADAR was set up to deliver high volumes of data-driven news to regional and hyper-local news outlets. It received launch funding in 2017 from Google's Digital News Innovation (DNI) fund. Today, RADAR operates as a subscription-funded service serving more than 300 print, digital and broadcasting outlets across the UK.

8 Real Estate Robot: Ritzau Bureau

Ritzau Real Estate Robot writes a news story for every public real estate deal in Denmark. The service is a prestige project targeted towards regional newspapers — providing real *local and interesting news* to end users without the use of journalistic time. It is the latest robot news service Ritzau has developed. It writes approximately 200 stories per day and informs the reader about the pricing, the names of the former and new owner, the calculated price per square meter — and matches it with the previous sale of the house or apartment. It even names the number of bathrooms and adds a picture of the house to the news story.

9 STT Spy: Suomen Tietotoimisto

The STT Spy tool provides *strategic and detailed* information on how media markets use news agency content. Detailed knowledge on how media markets are using news agency content is of vital importance to secure that agencies can fulfil their role as providers of news reports that media can use to keep citizens informed about developments in their countries and abroad. STT Spy is a tool that can provide such knowledge.

10 Standardised entity tags: TT Nyhetsbyrån

TT News Agency is aiming to develop a common solution for the Swedish media market and a national standard for the creation and management of *clearly identified entity tags* for news articles. By considering homophones and other special linguistic cases, entity tags can be uniquely identified and assigned, enabling greater accuracy in the creation of personalized content by publishers. The resulting smart tagging ecosystem will help the Swedish media industry realize new business and advertising opportunities while increasing transparency and reliability.

Clemens Pig in conversation

Group 39 President and APA CEO Clemens Pig on the history and future of independent news agencies — a conversation with APA Editor-in-Chief Johannes Bruckenberg:

Bruckenberg: Group 39 is celebrating the 80th anniversary of its existence in 2019. In an age of digital transformation, are such associations still needed at all?

Pig: Absolutely. The development of Europe's independent news agencies joined in Group 39 illustrates a fundamental constant, namely the strict focus on the value model of independent news agencies that has connected, united and carried the group, uninterrupted, through all these 80 years. The establishment during the Second World War was a highly courageous step, and what the small news agencies at the time undertook with respect to the

free and independent exchange of information was strategically quite forward-looking. We aim to effectively transport this value model into the future.

And with new members ...

Reflecting on the past on the occasion of the 80th anniversary automatically raises the question of how this group should develop strategically. A key question I was confronted with was whether Group 39 wanted to bring the historical form of organization or the value model of independent agency journalism into the future. Ultimately, this also meant expanding the historically developed eight-member structure to include Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa) and the British Press Association (PA Media), both of which are organized identically to the Group 39 agencies on the basis of their value model. We then invited both to join, and

the two news agencies are now new members by unanimous decision. With the new structure, all European agencies with pluralistic media ownership are now united in Group 39.

Why now?

Group 39 was founded in 1939 because the cooperation at the time between international agencies Reuters in London, Havas in Paris, and Wolff in Berlin ended in pre-war Europe in the mid-1930s, and international agency reporting became increasingly biased and propagandistic, as Wolff's telegraph office in Berlin became the National Socialist German news agency. For the small national news agencies from Scandinavia, the Benelux states and Switzerland, this was the motivation to cooperate and exchange news and information because they were dependent on the international agencies.

The oft-cited Fourth Estate at its most effective

That the smaller independent agencies joined forces at both the editorial and technological levels was a revolutionary story. With a mixture of telegraph and long-wave technology, these agencies developed a kind of precursor to the satellite, though the corresponding transmitter in the Netherlands was seized by Nazi Germany 100 days after the regular start of transmission. This history explains why it took a little longer for the independent news agencies of Germany and Great Britain to join. We unanimously arrived at the strategic decision to accept the new members, who have the same value model as the previous Group 39 members, and they also wanted to join.

Austria's APA joined Group 39 in 1956 ...

APA didn't exist in 1939. The precursor to the organization



“Verified and fact-based news helps cool a thoroughly overheated opinion market.”

at that time was an appendage of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda of the National Socialists. During the Second World War, AP and Reuters already decided that after the war the two world agencies would only cooperate with independent news agencies. This led to a denationalization of news agencies from 1945 on, for example in Italy, Germany, Austria and Japan. In Austria this happened at the initiative of Alfred Geiringer, the Reuters representative who had previously fled the Nazis to Great Britain. As a result of his work, in 1946 APA was founded in the legal form of a cooperative as an independent news agency owned by the daily newspapers of the time. Then after the signing of the State Treaty, APA also joined Group 39.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the democratization of Eastern Europe after 1989, there was no denationalization as there was

after 1945. Why do the state and policymakers find it so difficult to refrain from interfering in news agencies?

News agencies are something akin to the infrastructure of the media industry. News agencies supply the press, television, radio and online portals. News agencies have a fundamental importance for the entire media market, which is what makes them journalistically important. This renders it all the more important that news agency journalists are able to work completely autonomously and that the ownership structure is independent of the state. Editorial independence and quality in critical agency journalism means diversity, balance and verification of sources and complete thematic coverage.

At the same time, state-run news agencies are gaining strength ...

In autocratic countries we’re seeing a professionalization of PR and information activity, which is now flooding entire markets with government-financed, government-controlled and censored content. This professionalization of political PR has also found an arena in the area of state news agencies. China, for example, is extremely active with its state news agency — analogous to the country’s multibillion-euro investments. Or for example in Latin America, where English and Spanish services are offered without competitive business models. This makes it all the more difficult for independent and international news agencies to find a business and economic model that enables them to operate successfully in this distorted playing field. These are unequal conditions. Legislators at the European level also have to create a framework that allows independent news to



From 1939 the Hellcommune disseminated news via the major radio station in Dutch Radio Kootwijk

find a market. These extensive PR services cloaked as agency material present an enormous challenge to international news markets. This not only involves trustworthy and verified text, but also corresponding video and image material.

We're experiencing a resurgence of political propaganda, while politicians denounce independent media and news as fake news ...

There's an unmistakable tendency toward bypassing that's noticeable. Political parties and political organizations want media presence and, in particular, direct communication. The technical prerequisites for building sizeable communities via video channels or social media channels are better than ever. The formidable role that news agencies have in this is trusted, credible and reliable content. This is a traditional

strength of news agencies; they haven't reinvented it, but they do have to call more attention to it and better clarify the benefits. The category of trust has become a currency in the digital world. In this extremely fast-paced digital world and flood of distorted opinions, rumors and actual fake news, news agencies have a key role to play. Verified and fact-based news helps cool a thoroughly overheated opinion market. The crucial point is that we don't pretend to be a *ministry of truth*. It is not about truth. Agencies are beacons where fact-based, reliable agency reports are published. And everything that's reliable builds trust. In times of uncertainty, and many people are disconcerted, the content of news agencies contributes to a sense of security. Reliability, trust and democratically stable and orderly conditions are central rules for politics, society and

the economy to function. News agencies provide an important building block for this.

What does the status of news agencies say about the degree of freedom in democracies?

I'm very firmly convinced that there is a direct link between independent news agencies, freedom of the press and media diversity. Independent news agencies strengthen a pluralistic media system, while independent news agencies strengthen the degree of freedom of the press and diversity of information with their basic information.

How can the members of Group 39 support and strengthen each other?

Operational exchange is particularly important. There is a vigorous exchange of information on topics related to

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digitization and innovation. You compare key company figures and products and learn from each other. Another point is the challenging economic environment. Here common interests are formulated to facilitate dialogue with stakeholders, other agency associations and EU institutions concerning a media policy framework.

What does the Group 39 strategy look like moving forward?

We intend to more vigorously communicate the value system of independent news agencies to the outside world. We're currently discussing a seal of approval for the editorial content of our group's news agencies. We aim to strengthen each other in the areas of innovation and technology and take appropriate initiatives that will benefit all independent agencies. For example, there's the idea of a

cluster for artificial intelligence and a joint development and programming team for prototypes. Europe's independent news agencies currently employ over 4,000 people. Connecting and bundling at the digital and technological level is inevitable. We want to find solutions for services that strengthen the media and communication market in the respective member countries. In Austria we've developed corresponding paid content and content-sharing models with AustriaKiosk and the Austria Video Platform. The independent news agencies' highly stable situation is based not only on their independence but also on the cooperative principle. The more integrated in the respective media market an agency is, the better positioned it is. If we promote our independence and the cooperative principle within Group 39 in the best possible way, then

economically we'll also have a good future.

To what extent is the value model of independent news agencies at risk?

The model of the free flow of information and autonomous journalism is more important than ever. This value model is more topical than ever. The Group 39 agencies were already highly innovative and technologically oriented agencies when they were founded 80 years ago. That's a central theme for the issues of the future. The starting point for the strategic work of news agencies is freedom of the press and independent reporting as well as innovative and technological orientation. Not that much has changed in this basic value system, though, of course, the specific nature of the processes has changed dramatically as a result of digi-

tization and technical progress. A comparison of international research and development spending, which is dominated by the financial superiority of companies from Silicon Valley, quite significantly illustrates this change, which encompasses us all. But independent news agencies are to some extent more than century-old source of fascination. They're a stable genre of media. We have credibility in terms of editorial content and brand value for further diversification, and we're not in the final stretches of digitization yet.

Austria was recently shaken by the Ibiza affair. How has the scandal affected Austrian journalism?

As far as the development of quality journalism as a brand is concerned, I see a definite increase in strength. The way the affair was dealt with in the media after it became known

was extremely important. The media provided objective, fast and transparent information. It was demonstrated that what happens would emerge. Seeing how important independent journalism is to the population cast it into stark relief. The question is to what extent this increase in strength can also be commercially exploited. All in all, the importance of independent journalism has been demonstrated; that's the oft-cited Fourth Estate at its best.

Thank you for the conversation!

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Dr. Clemens Pig

President of the alliance of independent news agencies *Group 39*

CEO APA – Austria Press Agency

Clemens Pig is chairman of the board of directors and CEO of APA – Austria Press Agency (Vienna) as well as vice president of the board of directors of Keystone-SDA-ATS AG (Bern). Pig is a member of the association council of the Austrian Association of Cooperatives and of the academic advisory board of APA-MediaWatch as well as a guest lecturer at the universities of Vienna and Innsbruck.

While studying political science, the Innsbruck native founded the company *MediaWatch – Institut für Medienanalysen GmbH* with colleagues at university and, following a successful sale, merged it into APA-Group. In 2008, Pig joined the management in Vienna and was initially employed as the manager of marketing and sales as well as the managing director of the APA subsidiary APA-DeFacto Datenbank & Contentmanagement GmbH. In 2014 Pig was appointed managing director of APA-Group and took over as chairman of the board of directors in 2016.

In his academic work, Pig discusses political communication in the process of digital transformation in the media in a series of publications and essays in books. In 2013 Pig was awarded the Austrian Research Award of the Austrian Public Relations Association (PRVA). Pig was named *Media Manager of the Year* by the industry magazine *Der österreichische Journalist* in 2018. From 2017 to 2019 he was a member of the Board of EANA – European Alliance of News Agencies, 2018 also a member of the Board of the international news agency network MINDS International.

Clemens Pig (* 1974) is married and the father of three daughters.



Algemeen Nederland Persbureau BV (ANP)

Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau BV (ANP) was founded in 1934 and is the largest press agency in the country. ANP supplies the media with hundreds of news items and thousands of photos every day and delivers dozens of radio programmes and video reports to its clients daily.

Media monitoring, media analysis and partnerships are also part of agency's portfolio.

Based in The Hague and with editorial offices in Amsterdam and Brussels, the agency employs more than 250 people, including 160 journalists. Speed, independence and reliability are

ANP's most important standards. The agency has adapted its production and processes to the latest technological developments and cooperates with leading international press agencies, software and content partners.

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CEO Martijn Bennis



APA – Austria Presse Agentur eG

APA – Austria Press Agency is the national news agency and Austria's leading information service provider. It is owned by twelve Austrian daily newspapers and the Austrian public broadcasting corporation ORF.

APA-Group comprises the cooperatively organized news agency and three wholly-owned subsidiaries and operates as a news agency, information agency

and technology agency with a total of 519 employees. The group also has international holdings in Switzerland (integrated news and picture agency) and Germany (mobile publishing solutions).

The editorial offices of APA ensure real-time news services in word, image, graphics, audio and video, while the subsidiaries provide distribution, research and knowledge management services

as well as information technology solutions. The companies of APA-Group address professional users (information managers, PR and IT representatives) in the media, political, government and business markets. APA carries out its tasks independently of the state, government and political parties based on the principles of reliability, speed and balance and avoiding any bias or partisanship.

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CEO Clemens Pig



Belga News Agency NV

Belga News Agency is the main Belgian supplier of news to the media. Belga delivers fast, reliable and high-quality news from home and abroad, in the form of photos, text messages, online news, audio bulletins and video reports,

in both national languages, to the media, government institutions, companies and organisations. Thanks to the acquisition in 2016 of Gopress, the main media monitoring company, PR and communications managers

also have a complete arsenal of powerful and professional tools at their disposal for the optimal management of their news and communications. Belga currently employs 135 people, 100 of whom are journalists.

Arduinkaai 29, 1000 Brussels, Belgium



CEO Patrick Lacroix



dpa Deutsche Presse-Agentur GmbH

dpa is the biggest news agency in the Federal Republic of Germany with headquarters in Hamburg and a central editorial office in Berlin. dpa has been the market leader in Germany for high-quality news journalism since 1949.

With around 1,000 journalists, dpa produces 12 regional

services in addition to its general news service. The agency maintains 50 locations in Germany for this purpose. Abroad dpa is represented by almost 100 bureaus.

There are more than 100 news agencies around the world, but only a minority of them are independent. dpa is one of them.

It is first and foremost the independence that makes dpa's services attractive and reliable, beyond the classic news business.

The dpa group of companies also includes the German market leaders in the distribution of press releases and the production of infographics.

Mittelweg 38, 20148 Hamburg, Germany



CEO Peter Kropsch

KEYSTONE SDA

Keystone-SDA-ATS AG

Keystone-SDA distributes information from politics, business, society, culture and sports in text, images, videos and infographics. A central desk in Bern, twelve regional and nine photographic offices cover national reporting in the three national languages of German, French and Italian round the clock, 365 days per year. With a total of 216 employees the Swiss news agency circulates daily news and sports reports, press

photos and videos, supplemented with thematic images from everyday Swiss life, profiles of Swiss personalities and stories in the form of pictorials and reports. The historical picture archive is an important contribution to Switzerland's visual memory.

In addition to almost all Swiss media, Keystone-SDA — a stock corporation owned by Swiss media and APA — Austria Press Agency — serves numer-

ous international media and news agencies. It also supplies companies, authorities, organizations and communication agencies with content. Keystone-SDA is commissioned to produce tailor-made content that customers use for online and offline communication. As a partner, it also supports its diverse customer base in the implementation of digital strategies.

Wankdorfallee 5, 3000 Bern, Switzerland



CEO Markus Schwab



Norsk Telegrambyrå AS (NTB)

For over 150 years NTB has been supplying the Norwegian media landscape with news from home and abroad. Today the agency, which has always been privately owned, is the largest provider of content services in the areas of

text, images, video and graphics for Norwegian media. NTB also offers a wide range of services inside and outside the media business, such as distribution of press releases and investor relations information, production of

newspaper pages, image storage and language services. NTB has taken a leading role in developing the next generation sports reporting, through robot journalism and a sophisticated use of sports data.

Langkaia 1, 0150 Oslo, Norway



CEO Mads Yngve Storvik



PA Media Group

The PA Media Group has been at the forefront of media innovation for more than 150 years and delivers compelling content and vital services in an evolving media market. PA Media Group comprises a diverse portfolio of specialist

media companies spanning news & information, data, technology, marketing and communications. Its flagship brand, PA Media, is the national news agency for the UK and Ireland. PA Media Group provides customers across the

media, sport, corporate, betting and public sectors with the broadest range of content, products and services to inform and entertain their audiences.

The Point, 37 N Wharf Rd, Paddington, W2 1AF London, United Kingdom



CEO Clive Marshall



Ritzaus Bureau A/S

Ritzaus Bureau was founded in 1866 and is the largest news agency in Denmark. With around 170 employees, Ritzau supplies the vast majority of Danish media with domestic and foreign news around the clock. In addition to the general news service, Ritzau

generates a steadily growing share of its turnover as a news provider for private companies, organisations, financial institutions, and public or state institutions. In addition to the core business of general news in text, audio, photo, video, and graphics,

the agency has four secondary business areas: a financial news service, PR tools, listings and information (TV, radio and sports directories, stock exchange listings, weather forecasts), as well as special services (e.g. finance, health, entertainment).

Store Kongensgade 14, 1264 Copenhagen, Denmark



CEO Lars Vesterlokke



Suomen Tietotoimisto (STT)

The Finnish news agency STT was founded in 1887 and is one of the oldest news agencies in the world. In addition to multimedia news delivery in a variety of formats, customers also benefit from a range of communication servic-

es, such as the distribution of original texts via STT Info, visual services by STT's picture agency Lehtikuva, individual alerts on current developments of interest, planning and scheduling systems and other services.

Due to the broad clientele of media, companies, organisations and advertising agencies, almost all Finns are directly or indirectly recipients of the news provided by the Finnish news agency.

Porkkalankatu 20 A, 00180 Helsinki, Finland



CEO Kimmo Pietinen



TT Nyhetsbyrån AB

TT is the national news agency in Sweden with a history dating back to the 1920s. The mission of the agency, owned by the largest Swedish media companies, has always been to provide the media market with fast, impartial and reliable news. Over time, a wide range of services has been added: images, features, infograph-

ics, video clips and a 24/7 news update service for digital platforms including live blogging and live TV. All products and services are also sold outside the media industry. Since a couple of years, TT successfully provides a press release service, Via TT.

Creativity, curiosity and trustworthiness are the most im-

portant values for the company. In addition to the news agency, the TT Group also includes Retriever (media monitoring) and Scanpix Baltics (photos). TT is one of the most profitable news agencies in Europe. The Group has over 400 employees and an annual turnover of around 70 million euros.

Kungsholmstorg 5, 3 tr, 10512 Stockholm, Sweden



CEO Jonas Eriksson

Statute

of the alliance of independent European news agencies Group 39

* Traditional Group 39 road map: ANP, APA, Belga, dpa, Keystone-SDA, NTB, PA Media, Ritzau, STT, TT (re-starting with 1st January 2020)

1. *Definition:* The Group 39 is a non-profit association of privately owned, independent European news agencies.
 - 1.1 The historical roots of the Group date back to November 1939 when ANP, Belga, NTB, Ritzau, SDA, STT and TT decided to fight for the concept of truthful and unbiased news and the free flow of information. On the verge of the Second World War they laid the cornerstone of the Group by founding a community of independent news agencies, the so called *Hellcommune*, and to offer resistance to the state-controlled or state-influenced world agencies of these days.
2. *Members* unite European news agencies which are privately owned and independent from the state, the government and other official authorities.
 - 2.1 Members are the leading national news agencies of Austria (APA), Belgium (Belga), Denmark (Ritzau), Finland (STT), Germany (dpa), the Netherlands (ANP), Norway (NTB), Sweden (TT), Switzerland (Keystone-SDA) and the United Kingdom (PA Media).
3. *Mission:* The common mission of the members is to provide their core product, their general news services (GNS) for the media and other customers.
 - 3.1 Members respect the values of fact-based, unbiased and independent news-reporting as the ultimate goal of their core business.

- 3.2 Members see profitability as economic precondition for maintaining the editorial independence of their agencies. They are therefore running a profit-oriented business in which diversification to new products and markets is of strategic relevance.
4. *The Purpose* of the Group is to promote common interests of its members on a top management level by open exchange of know-how and competence in:
- 4.1 safeguarding the concept of free and independent news agencies providing true and unbiased news as a backbone of a free press and a free democratic society.
- 4.2 sharing information and know-how on all subjects of their business, be it of operational or of strategic relevance.
- 4.3 benchmarking business, editorial or technical developments, concepts and figures.
5. *Regulations:* The Group shall hold its meetings normally twice a year.
- 5.1 Each member agency shall be represented at the meetings at highest level by its CEO.
- 5.2 Each member agency shall cooperate in compiling a confidential survey on comparative figures every year.
- 5.3 The Group shall organise management training programs/exchange programs for top and mid management personnel and also organise study tours to organisations and institutions of common interest.
- 5.4 The Group shall meet two times a year. The spring meeting shall be combined with the EANA Conference, the autumn meeting shall be a separately organised event.
- 5.5 Every other year the *Group 39-trip* shall be organised by the member next to the traditional road map*.
6. *The Chairman* coordinates all activities of the Group.
- 6.1 He represents the Group outwards.
- 6.2 He chairs the meetings and all other activities of the Group and takes care of financial obligations linked to the Group's meetings.
- 6.3 He takes care of the minutes of the meetings.
7. *General Assembly:* The Group shall hold a General Assembly once a year. It decides on:
- 7.1 long term objectives of the Group.
- 7.2 any change of the mission of the Group.
- 7.3 changes of memberships.
- 7.4 the appointment of the Chairman of the Group. The chairman shall be appointed according to the traditional road map* out of the members of the Group for a period of two years.
- 7.5 Any decision concerning change of memberships and change of the mission shall be taken unanimously.

Group 39 — History of an Exceptional Alliance of News Agencies



Dr. Wolfgang Vyslozil is Secretary General of Group 39 and former long-time CEO of APA. He provides an extensive examination of the history of Group 39 in his standard work *Group 39 — History of an Exceptional Alliance of News Agencies. Character, Business & Policy of Independent News Agencies in Europe*. The book features the exceptional story of Group 39, whose members are bound by their conviction that a free press requires free and independent

news agencies. The book also provides a comprehensive overview of the development of independent news agencies from 1945 to 2012. Moreover, it demonstrates on the example of Group 39 that with respect to the exchange and distribution of news the worldwide news agency system is based on a 140-year symbiosis and interdependence between national and international agencies. (ISBN 978-3-200-03342-9, Vienna 2014, Publisher: APA)



„A free press requires free and independent news agencies.“

Wolfgang Vyslozil

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Vesa Moilanen — p. 33: TT, Fredrik Sandberg — all others: APA

From 1850

Agency news becomes a business commodity through the telegraph.

1934

End of cooperation between the then global agencies Reuters (London), Havas (Paris) and Wolff (Berlin); founding of the National Socialist German news bureau DNB in place of Wolff.

From 1938

Growing influence of governments on the then dominant global agencies, whose reporting became increasingly propagandistic, one-sided and biased.

Nov. 1939

At the initiative of the Dutch news agency together with the Nordic, Swiss and Benelux agencies, the founding of the *Hellcommune* as the forerunner of Group 39. The aim: to disseminate impartial news from these countries using the revolutionary *Hellschreiber* technology in combination with longwave radio.

Nov. 1939

— Feb. 1940

100 Days of the Hellcommune: On 23 November 1939 the Hellcommune begins broadcasting news via the major radio station Radio Kootwijk (near Amsterdam). Following occupation of the station by the German Armed Forces in February 1940, the broadcasting facilities are blown up by the German troops.

Nov. 1945

Resumption of cooperation between the agencies of the former Hellcommune under the name *Group 39*; active since 1945 as a joint lobby of the group.

ab 1945

At the initiative of AP and Reuters and based on a US congressional resolution strongly US-backed campaign to support independent news agencies and denationalize them.

Mai 1949

Adoption of the first statutes of Group 39.

History & contemporary era of Group 39



Aug. 1956

APA – Austria Press Agency becomes the eighth member agency of Group 39.

Aug. 1957

Foundation of the EANA (European Alliance of News Agencies) by Group 39.

Jan. 2004

Adoption of the first mission statement of Group 39.

2019

Reform of statute under Austrian chairmanship, simultaneous inclusion of German press agency dpa and the British PA Media Group as the ninth and tenth members of Group 39. 80th anniversary of the Group 39 association of independent news agencies.