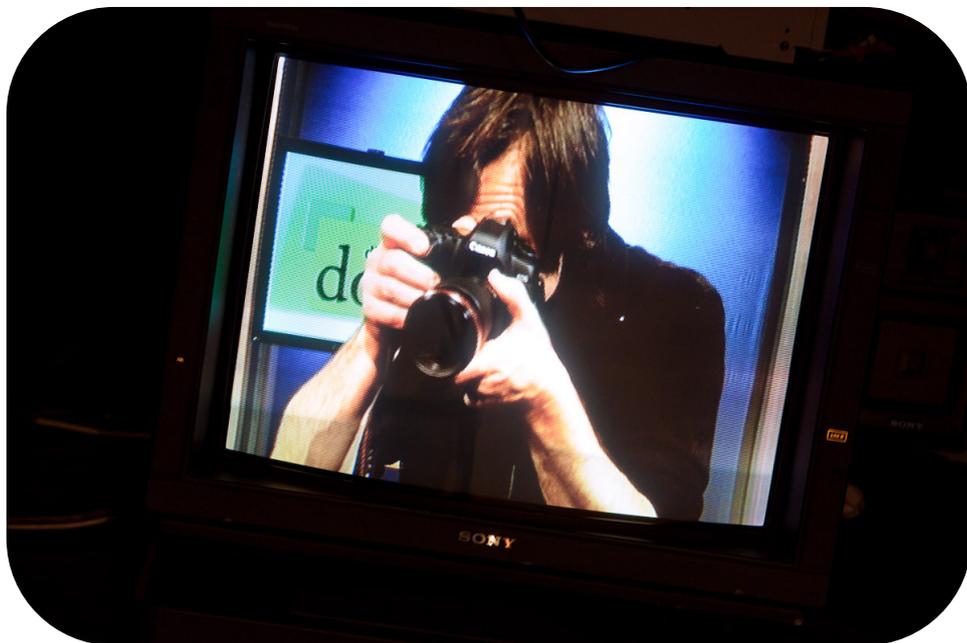


Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe (MediaAct)

# Media Managers' Guidelines to Quality Management and Accountability



## Basics

These guidelines were developed to support media managers in establishing accountability practices and strengthen their quality management instruments. They are based on hands-on best practice examples and scientific research done in the context of the MediaAcT project, funded by the European Union Seventh Framework Programme ([www.mediaact.eu](http://www.mediaact.eu)). The guidelines were also pre-tested and discussed at a media managers' workshop in Vienna, Austria, in September 2012.

According to the results of this workshop, there are three main issues with adapting *all* media accountability instruments for a certain media company:

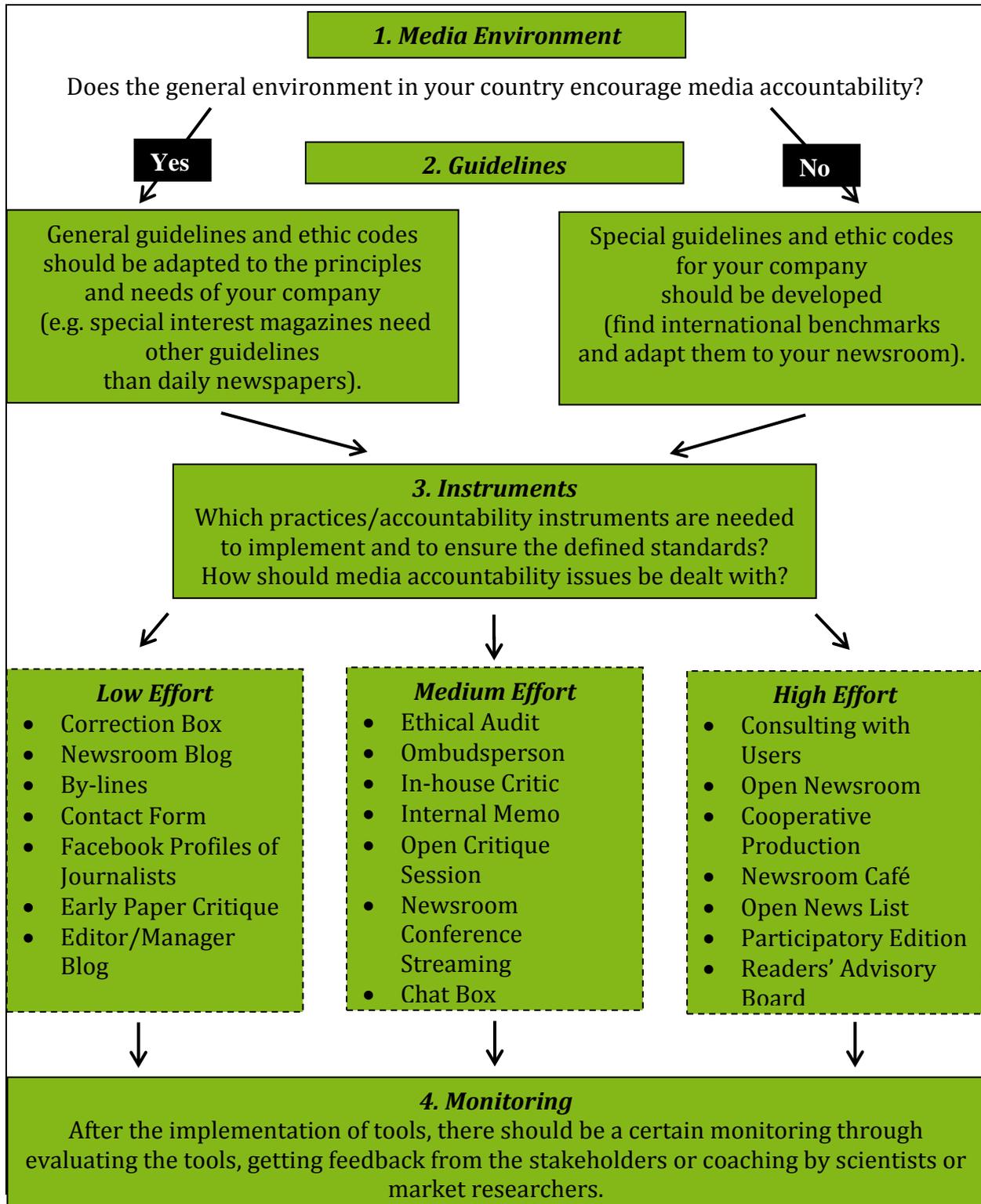
- 1) the different (media) cultures between countries (e.g. the awareness of transparency necessity differs between Northern and Southern European countries),
- 2) the different cultures of media companies within a country (e.g. depending on the history of the company, of its financing scheme, on its leadership and so on),
- 3) the different budgetary constraints (that impede, for example, the creation of an ombudsman office in certain media organisations).

In consequence, the authors of this paper do not suggest a list of guidelines for implementing media accountability instruments. Instead, we suggest a decision-making process for the implementation of such tools and eleven principles.

Efficient media accountability practices and internal media self-regulation instruments can help media companies create and improve transparency as one of the main quality criteria in contemporary journalism. These instruments can set professional journalism apart from copy-paste journalism, user-generated content or social media hypes. Furthermore, the inclusion of users, pro-active quality management during the production process combined with a transparent correction management generate trust-based user loyalty and a sales boost, regardless of the media product under discussion (reference or popular journalism).

Media self-responsibility in combination with self-regulation instruments upholds media freedom from state control and soft-censorship.

## Decision-Making Process for Implementing Guidelines



**5. The Future of Media Accountability**

How should digitalization processes, social media and other (future) developments be included in the accountability processes?  
How can the newsroom benefit from these (future) developments?

## Eleven Media Accountability Principles

1. Media accountability instruments should come from within the media industry. In order to function properly, they should be supported by journalists, media managers and media owners likewise.
2. Consider media accountability instruments as a means of quality control.
3. Regard media accountability as a branding strategy, used to communicate your quality standards to the public.
4. Implement internal guidelines how to deal with media accountability issues.
5. Encourage journalists to reflect on their job. This can be done via media journalism, newsroom intranet and personal meetings. Social media does not replace professional feedback and reflection.
6. Use training courses to keep journalists abreast.
7. Consider that media accountability practices do not limit competition nor is it necessary costly.
8. Open your media company for a larger audience, through social media or through other channels you might consider appropriate.
9. Use social media as feedback channels – every member of your public can act as an ombudsperson or as a correction instance, so that the newsroom deliver a better media product.
10. Deal openly with critique and errors. Making mistakes is part of the job of a professional, so why not talking about it publicly on correction pages, in error boxes or in visible additions to articles?
11. Include the input of the audience in the newsroom processes not only for feedback, but also for new ideas, information or even content.

## More Information – Links:

Project “Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe” (MediaAcT): [www.mediaact.eu](http://www.mediaact.eu)

Best Practice Guidebook: <http://www.mediaact.eu/strategies.html>

Media Accountability Practices on the Internet: <http://www.mediaact.eu/online.html>

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