



# FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: CHALLENGES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

26 June – 08 July 2022

*Gummersbach, Germany*

## Abstract

Freedom of the press or its modern equivalent, freedom of the media, is a central tenet of liberal thought and a fundamental liberal value. If we do not have platforms on which we can communicate and share ideas free thought cannot survive and more importantly flourish and spread across the world.

The media's role has always been important, but in 2022 a free and thriving media feels even more important as we are confronted with a world that is facing challenges that require a global response. A well-informed populace is critical.

On the one hand, new technologies provide us with new opportunities and enhance our freedom in ways that were unimaginable just a few years ago. Today a majority of the world's population has access to media unparalleled in history, both as recipients and as producers of content. It is conservatively estimated that over 5 billion pieces of content are produced and shared every day.

With modern technology, however, old problems have not disappeared and new problems have emerged. Technology also has a dark face. It has been used in recent years to entrench authoritarian and populist regimes. It has enabled the harassment and censorship of media professionals and bloggers, and has provided multiple means for the production and channelling of propaganda, disinformation and fake news, and surveillance designed to intimidate. Unfortunately, we have seen many examples of this during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in political campaigns. The perfection of techniques to limit the media is accompanied by legislation designed to curb freedom of expression by political measures designed to strengthen the hold political elites and their allies have on the media and the spread of ideas amongst the population.

## TOPICS

### **Part one: the right to freedom of expression**

The first step is to ensure that we and the people we serve know why freedom of the media is such a precious asset central to the proper functioning of a liberal democratic order. The seminar will thus begin with an overview of the rationale behind *the right to freedom of expression*, a right that is fundamental to the existence of a free press, a free

broadcasting system, a free internet and digital platforms. This will include comparisons of country experiences and a discussion of the validity of arguments for certain legal and other restrictions to this freedom. If there is a necessity for some kind of control, who should it be by: the state or through non-state entities and voluntary bodies enforcing ethical codes of conduct?

### **Part two: understanding the current media landscape**

The next part of the seminar will give us an opportunity to assess and evaluate the most important recent technological innovations and the effects they have had on:

- the production and dissemination of information
- media professionals (and non-professionals) and the challenges they face
- the controls that such developments should be subjected to, by whom and how?
- the intrinsic value in preserving and protecting *traditional* media platforms?
- laws governing the media and whether technological developments require them to be updated and recommendations on how this should be done?

### **Part three: the weaponisation of information**

Part three will take a deeper look at how to deal with the challenges and dangers confronting media professionals (and non-professionals): how to ensure their security, how to protect their freedom to investigate and publish, and how to counter the trend towards a weaponisation of news by state and private actors with an authoritarian or partisan agenda.

This part will include practical exercises designed to expose or counter increasingly sophisticated techniques used by such actors. A further focus will be on strategies and methods for re-establishing trust in the work of media professionals and their outlets and, more generally, the trustworthiness of information offered to the general public. Finally, the marked tendency among recipients to isolate and protect themselves from content that contradicts their favoured views will be discussed, including counter-strategies, especially in the world of social media.

### **Part four: Liberal responses and themes for mobilisation**

The last part will be devoted to developing professional and political solutions for the many problems and issues addressed during the seminar. What can professional organisations and politicians do to enhance freedom of the media, improve standards and the environment in which they work? Are there relevant recommendations that are specifically liberal? What would their main features be? Is media self-regulation a viable alternative to regulation through law and by the state? How should media professionals and others adapt to today's technological advances?

## **TARGET GROUP**

The seminar addresses professionals in positions of responsibility from all media dealing with news and opinion (eg, journalists, bloggers, press officers), liberal politicians and experts specialising in media issues and non-governmental organisation activists with a specific interest in promoting freedom of the media.

All candidates are expected to be liberal in outlook and have a basic knowledge of what liberalism is and, in particular, of its values and objectives. The seminar is designed not as a basic introduction to the topics presented above, but as an opportunity to reflect and exchange views on appropriate ways of responding to the challenges facing the media.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Participants will be required to participate actively in the seminar. They will be asked to prepare presentations, work in various working groups and produce outputs individually. The seminar will provide many opportunities for the exchange of experiences and ideas with colleagues from around the world. Several expert inputs will be provided during the seminar by individuals with experience in the media landscape.

## OBJECTIVES

The seminar aims to interrogate the following questions and provide liberal responses to these:

- What can media professionals and others do to ensure that the press and other media fulfil their critical role in holding leaders to account and in providing quality services for their respective audiences.
- What can they do to protect their security and independence?
- How can freedom of the media be preserved, protected and promoted as a key tenet of liberal thought?

## Facilitators



### Kylie Hatton

Kylie Hatton is Director for Communication & Marketing at the University of Cape Town, the top university in Africa. She has deep experience in all forms of communication, especially online communication platforms. Due to the environments that she has worked in she has particular experience in crisis communication. Prior to joining UCT she worked for the City of Cape Town, one of South Africa's largest and leading municipalities, as the Manager: Media. Kylie was responsible for the oversight of all of the City's media engagement and relationships. She served 6 Mayors during her time at the City. She has also worked for the international non-government sector as well as South Africa's Parliament. She facilitates seminars and workshops on topics such as media and social media, communication, local government, strategic planning and public transport.



### Ivabelle Arroyo

Ivabelle Arroyo is a well-known political journalist in Mexico. She runs a digital newspaper in Mexico City and she is a broadcast analyst for TV Azteca (one of the biggest broadcasters in her country). Since 2003 Ivabelle has been writing weekly in national newspapers. She has 24 years of experience in journalism, from a reporter to editor in chief. Since 2019 she has been part of the jury of the Walter Reuter Journalism Award, which targets Mexican and Latin American journalists who publish in Mexican media.



### Veni Swai

Veni Swai is a passionate human rights and media advocate, community organizer for civic engagement and entrepreneurial empowerment, and a political parties' strategist. Her recent media engagements include the *Media Freedom Pulse Digital* project, a safe online platform for journalists to exchange their experiences, as well as a documentary on the impact that women as journalists have in the media industry from Tanzania, Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe. Veni holds Bachelor of Education degree and Master of Development Studies from the University of Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, a *New Aid Architect* certificate from the University of Antwerp, and one on Policy Advocacy and Program Management from MS-TCDC, Arusha, Tanzania. Since 2005 she has worked as the East African Programme Officer for Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.

## The Foundation

We, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, promote individual liberty, free and open societies and free markets in Germany and throughout the world. To us freedom is the guiding principle in policy making. We believe that free and open societies are the only societies that allow human beings to decide for themselves what is best, to develop their full potential and to pursue their dreams. This is what we mean when we claim to value human dignity. And it is

freedom that produces prosperity. Together with our counterparts – who all share a similar set of values – we support initiatives in Germany and abroad that serve to enhance respect for the rule of law, private property and human rights, that foster tolerance and that strengthen economic freedom rights and democracy.

The programs of the Foundation's International Academy for Leadership (IAF) form an integral part of our international work and offer Liberals from all parts of the world opportunities to engage in dialogue, an exchange of ideas, networking and cooperation. We aim to inspire.

---

**Venue:** **International Academy for Leadership (IAF)**

Theodor-Heuss-Straße 26  
51645 Gummersbach  
Germany

**Language:** English

**Registration:** 25 March 2022 (via dvinci)  
<https://fnst.dvinci-hr.com/en/p/iaf/jobs/20294/intro>

**Registration fee:** 260,00 €



[www.freiheit.org/iaf](http://www.freiheit.org/iaf)



[FNF.IAF](#)



[iaf\\_gummersbach](#)



[iaf\\_gummersbach](#)