
Elevating quality journalism

Digital News Innovation Fund Report 2018

IP, investigation, user experience/design, aggregation/curati
niche editorial product/new community, newsletter/mail, voic
data, platform/marketplace, video, audio, mobile, new editoria
product, analytics, curation, **Battling misinformation**, streamin
, semantic, new approach, pure content creation, modernisa
d digital agenda, gamification, photo, VR, UX design, distribu
social, **Telling local stories**, DMP/personalisation, bot, paywall
tribution, advertising, personalisation, multimedia developm
dio/video/photo), fact checking/verification, data managemen
base, **Boosting digital revenues**, payment models, immersive
media literacy/education, hyperlocal journalism, crowd sourc
GC, internet of things, analytics/research, blockchain, graphic
sualisation/new formats, **Exploring new technologies**, audien
development, social media/new forms of distribution, work flo
optimisation/organisational structure, data journalism, conten
management/asset management, robot journalism, apps/mobi

European innovation supporting quality journalism

There are few things more important to society than a free and thriving press. As the digital world evolves, journalists and publishers are facing new opportunities as well as new challenges.

Google's mission, to organise the world's information and make it universally useful and accessible, shares the same core values that underpin quality journalism. As our CEO Sundar Pichai publicly stated: "Google cares deeply about journalism. We believe deeply in spreading knowledge to make life better for everyone. It's at the heart of Google's mission. It's the mission of publishers and journalists. Put simply, our futures are tied."

The Digital News Innovation Fund (DNI Fund) is a European programme that's part of the Google News Initiative, an effort to help journalism thrive in the digital age. The DNI Fund is a €150 million commitment to support and kick-start innovation within the European news ecosystem.

Entering its third year, the DNI Fund is coming of age, and a community of successful project owners has flourished. We've seen projects transform from ideas to remarkable and highly impactful solutions that are already making a difference in newsrooms.

In this report, you'll find a full overview of DNI Fund activity as well as details of many brilliant concepts from across Europe that are tackling four key industry challenges: battling misinformation, telling local stories, boosting digital revenues and exploring new technologies. We hope you enjoy reading about them.

The DNI Fund team

 Find more online

More information can be found online at newsinitiative.withgoogle.com/dnifund

29

European countries

461

Projects

€94m

In funding

In conversation with Ludovic Blecher and Rosalia Lloret

We spoke to Ludovic Blecher, Head of the Digital News Innovation Fund, and Rosalia Lloret, external Fund Council member and Head of Institutional and Public Relations at Online Publishers Association Europe, to talk about the DNI Fund and its impact.



“At its core is this open source approach based on collaboration and mutual benefit.”

Ludovic Blecher
Head of the Digital News Innovation Fund



“One of the Fund’s biggest impacts is the change in mindset.”

Rosalia Lloret
External Fund Council member and Head of Institutional and Public Relations at Online Publishers Association Europe

“For me, increased collaboration is the standout feature of this past year.”

Rosalia Lloret
External Fund Council member and Head of Institutional and Public Relations at Online Publishers Association Europe

How have you seen the Fund evolve and grow over the years?

LB _____ As the DNI Fund enters its third year, the community of project owners has grown with it, and we’re seeing more and more positive outcomes. In the early days, we saw a lot of brilliant ideas begin their journeys. But execution takes time – and now we’re at the stage where some of these ideas start having an impact where it matters most: in newsrooms.

RL _____ I’d add that one of the reasons they’re making that impact is because more and more teams are working together, sharing their experiences and expertise. For me, increased collaboration is the standout feature of this past year.

LB _____ I agree that one of the most innovative approaches is collaboration, and I strongly believe it’s the next big thing in news. And what’s great is that it’s happened organically. While the spirit of collaboration has been welcomed by the DNI Fund team, the enthusiasm and act of collaboration has come from the industry and the applicants themselves.

RL _____ By coming together, people realise that they have more in common than they thought. But they aren’t only pooling resources to create something just for that group – in many cases they’re sharing their innovations with anybody who is interested. For example, we’ve seen many projects that use open source coding, which is freely available for all to access.

LB _____ The whole approach from the project owners has been very open source; not only from a code perspective, but embracing an open source mindset.

Has the Fund made a difference to the wider news ecosystem?

LB _____ We’re now starting to really see the impact of the Fund. So far we’ve received 4800+ applications, and looking more narrowly, we’ve funded 461 projects. That’s a lot of news industry experts across Europe spending time and energy on something completely new and embracing fresh approaches.

RL _____ The Fund has brought visibility and a much sharper focus to the business of innovation for those engaged with it. It’s not just about the money, it’s about supporting innovators that want to experiment from within media organisations. It’s sparking both industry-wide innovation as well as internal innovation within organisations themselves. One of the Fund’s biggest impacts is difficult to quantify, because it’s about a change in mindset.

What has the Fund done for local publishers or organisations?

LB _____ There’s a lot of opportunity for innovation across the news ecosystem, and this is also true for local publishers. We’ve found with local projects and applicants to the DNI Fund that they’re really finding recipes that meet their specific needs. They’re reconnecting the dots with their communities and are trying to build innovative and more engaging experiences using local data.

RL _____ Again, I think it all comes back to sharing knowledge. Small, local publishers can learn so much from each other – from organisations that face similar challenges in countries across Europe, as well as from their local peers.

What lessons have you learnt?

RL _____ Moving forward it would be great to see the DNI Fund team supporting and following up projects a bit more closely; providing more resources to connect innovators, helping project owners learn from others successes and failures, and empowering the sharing of technology.

LB _____ If I could turn back the clock I think we could have really built in knowledge sharing from the start of the process. We were a little reserved at first about who might want to share what. But as the DNI Fund has progressed it’s become clear that at its core is this open source approach based on collaboration and mutual benefit. We will do much more this year to share knowledge and connect innovators for the benefit of the news ecosystem overall.

RL _____ This feeling of togetherness and support is one of the aspects of the Fund that makes me really proud to be involved. At first glance, the individual applicants and projects appear to be so diverse, but actually when you dive deeper, they all share several attributes and challenges. At heart, they’re all striving to compete in a complex world and to ensure the sustainability of quality journalism – and that’s a goal that everybody can get behind.

“Now we’re at the stage where some of these ideas start having an impact where it matters most: in newsrooms.”

Ludovic Blecher
Head of the DNI Innovation Fund

Funding breakdown

Battling misinformation

Projects that work to defend and protect quality journalism by using fact checking and other technologies to combat misinformation.

31
No. of projects
€5.1m
Amount of funding

Telling local stories

Projects that use innovation to ensure that local and smaller publishers have a louder voice in the digital space.

50
No. of projects
€13.2m
Amount of funding

Boosting digital revenues

Projects that aim to help publishers access new or better opportunities to turn their content into revenue.

49
No. of projects
€11.8m
Amount of funding

Exploring new technologies

Projects that use digital technology to automate workstreams or content in order to support original journalism or improve the reader experience.

108
No. of projects
€21.5m
Amount of funding

Austria
TOTAL FUND
€2.6m
PROJECTS
12

Cyprus
TOTAL FUND
€450k
PROJECTS
1

France
TOTAL FUND
€10.2m
PROJECTS
41

Ireland
TOTAL FUND
€1.2m
PROJECTS
8

Luxembourg
TOTAL FUND
€285k
PROJECTS
1

Portugal
TOTAL FUND
€5.8m
PROJECTS
21

Spain
TOTAL FUND
€8.2m
PROJECTS
33

Belgium
TOTAL FUND
€3.7m
PROJECTS
14

Czech Republic
TOTAL FUND
€1.1m
PROJECTS
9

Germany
TOTAL FUND
€14.9m
PROJECTS
67

Italy
TOTAL FUND
€7.8m
PROJECTS
31

Netherlands
TOTAL FUND
€3.2m
PROJECTS
23

Romania
TOTAL FUND
€1.5m
PROJECTS
10

Sweden
TOTAL FUND
€2m
PROJECTS
11

Bulgaria
TOTAL FUND
€400k
PROJECTS
4

Denmark
TOTAL FUND
€1.4m
PROJECTS
10

Greece
TOTAL FUND
€1.8m
PROJECTS
8

Latvia
TOTAL FUND
€200k
PROJECTS
4

Norway
TOTAL FUND
€3.2m
PROJECTS
18

Slovakia
TOTAL FUND
€1.2m
PROJECTS
4

Switzerland
TOTAL FUND
€3.3m
PROJECTS
12

Croatia
TOTAL FUND
€850k
PROJECTS
3

Finland
TOTAL FUND
€2.1m
PROJECTS
14

Hungary
TOTAL FUND
€1.3m
PROJECTS
13

Lithuania
TOTAL FUND
€545k
PROJECTS
4

Poland
TOTAL FUND
€3.9m
PROJECTS
22

Slovenia
TOTAL FUND
€750k
PROJECTS
5

United Kingdom
TOTAL FUND
€10.3m
PROJECTS
58

product/new community, newsletter marketplace, video, audio, mobile, news, analytics, curation, Battling misinformation, new approach, pure content creation, agenda, gamification, photo, VR, UX design, local stories, DMP/personalisation, bootcamp, advertising, **Battling misinformation** (photo), fact checking/verification, dating digital revenues, payment models, agency/education, hyperlocal journalism, of things, analytics/research, blockchain, new formats, Exploring new technologies

Impartial and effective



“That initial pot of money gave us the traction to build the first prototypes – and that spurred everyone else on to come round to our way of thinking.”

Mevan Babakar
Head of Automated Factchecking at Full Fact

Quick facts

Full Fact

Full Fact is a charity that provides free tools, information and advice so that anyone can check the claims of politicians and the media.

Country:
United Kingdom

Fund awarded:
2016 and 2017

Amount awarded:
€50,000 and €300,000

25,000+

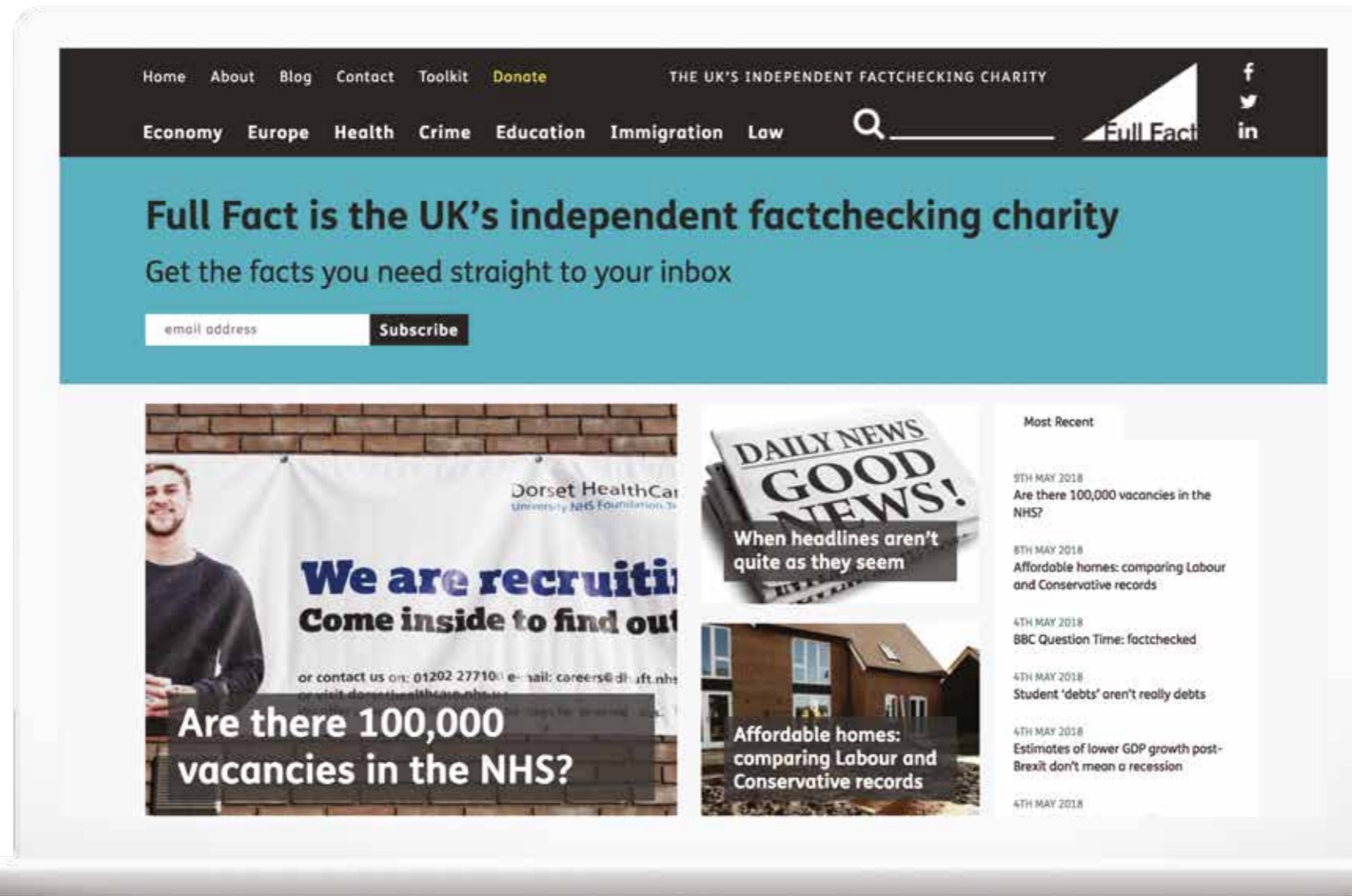
media items processed a week by Full Fact.

10-12

fact checks produced a week.

12 hours

the average time it takes for one fact check.



Full Fact is generally recognised as an organisation that has done more than most to highlight the issue of ‘fake news’, which is probably more usefully described as ‘misinformation’. In 2016, the DNI Fund supported the early beginnings of Full Fact’s automated fact-checking tools. This was instrumental in building the technology that has since been widely featured in the media, for example, when Full Fact live fact checks a TV broadcast. Since the original funding, Full Fact has flourished, with the team doubling in size to 16.

“Full Fact is a registered charity that’s funded by ordinary people, by charitable trusts, and by others,” explains Mevan Babakar, Head of Automated Factchecking at Full Fact. “Google was the first to fund our automated fact checking and actually that was quite brave of them. That initial pot of money gave us the traction to build the first prototypes – and that spurred everyone else on to come round to our way of thinking.”

“We undertake around ten fact checks per week at the moment, including claims made on regular TV programmes such as BBC Question Time. We’re independent, impartial and effective. And there are many examples of how our work has led to retractions or corrections from a wide range of people and organisations, including a former prime minister and also a political party that had actually underestimated the effectiveness of a particular policy. Sometimes it’s not that people

deliberately mislead the public – they can misread the data and make genuine mistakes.”

Now Full Fact has been awarded a further tranche of funding from the DNI Fund, for a new idea. “The project will help us develop a set of standards for sharing fact checks and evaluate automated fact checking to ensure that the systems provide results in a consistently balanced way,” adds Mevan. “This is part research project, part editorial creation, and it aims to explore how our findings can best be disseminated. The objective is to make sure that fact checking at internet scale is balanced and fair, even though we don’t control when or where or how our fact checks appear. So we’re carrying out research into how people experience fact checks in different products, formats, and contexts – and we’re also developing and testing different fact check formats that could automatically appear on social networks. The end game is to implement all these ideas and initiatives across all aspects of our work.”

As a charity, the sharing of experience, expertise and tools across the fact-checking community is a key goal for Full Fact. Mevan and the team are currently working closely with similar organisations in South Africa and Argentina, and hope to be in a position to present some of the findings inspired by the latest funding from the DNI Fund at the Global Fact-Checking Summit in June 2018.

“The objective is to make sure that fact checking at internet scale is balanced and fair, even though we don’t control when or where or how our fact checks appear.”

A question of trust



“We believe we’re making a real difference by helping news organisations and other media professionals provide a better, more accurate and verified news service to their readers.”

George Bara
Chief Strategy Officer at TrustServista

Quick facts

TrustServista

TrustServista uses advanced artificial intelligence algorithms to determine the trustworthiness of news stories.

Country:
Romania

Fund awarded:
2016

Amount awarded:
€50,000

In a world where deadlines rule, media professionals often struggle to find the time or resources to distinguish the fake from the real. And that means they can inadvertently distribute content that misleads readers and jeopardises the hard-won reputation of their organisation.

In Romania, a fact-checking project supported by the DNI Fund is currently fact checking around 60,000 articles per day – and is scaling up to more than treble that number.

TrustServista uses advanced artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms to determine the trustworthiness of news stories. Customers submit a URL or raw text and the algorithms analyse the article, identifying semantic similarities, links and references between it and other content on the web before generating a set of trustworthiness metrics. These include a TrustLevel score – which indicates the content’s degree of trustworthiness – and Patient Zero, which identifies the original source of the article. This could be anything from social media or blog posts to website pages or news outlets.

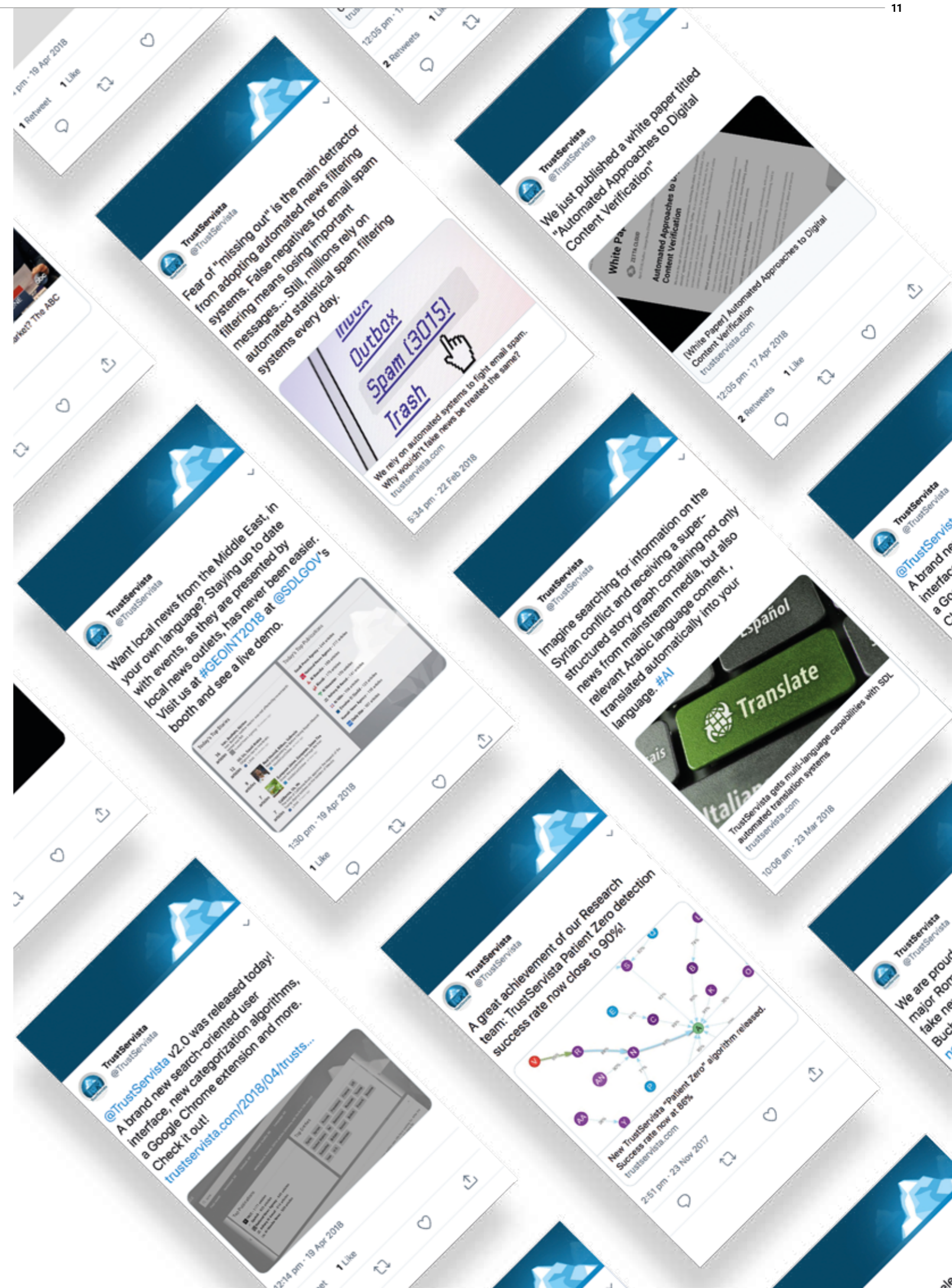
Because TrustServista is delivered as Software as a Service (SaaS), it’s easy to adopt and use. It can also be integrated into third-party software systems, such as newsroom technologies, social media platforms or customer-centric widgets and web browser add-ons.

“Although TrustServista has only been in operation since the end of 2017, we’ve already achieved some significant results,” says George Bara, Chief Strategy Officer. “For example, when news outlets reported a crash involving an airplane and a helicopter just above the Rothschild’s family home in the UK, a couple of conspiracy websites were quick to announce the news of Jacob Rothschild’s death. These reports rapidly gathered over 27,000 Facebook engagements. We correctly identified the information source (with Patient Zero) and automatically scored these articles as having a low-to-medium content quality.”

“We believe we’re making a real difference by helping news organisations and other media professionals provide a better, more accurate and verified news service to their readers. This simply wouldn’t have been possible without the Digital News Innovation Fund. Our parent company, Zetta Cloud, would never have been able to spend €50,000 on developing a prototype that may not have worked. But it did work – and thanks to the DNI Fund, Zetta Cloud had the confidence to invest a further €150,000. We now employ three full-time members of staff and are moving towards being a financially sustainable business, which we expect to happen in the next 18 months to two years.”

60,000+

website articles fact checked per day.



Because facts matter



As highlighted in last year's report, funding received from the Digital News Innovation Fund in 2016 played a major role in establishing Factmata as one of the leading players in the fact-checking arena. Today, Factmata has grown from a one-man band into a business with fourteen full-time members of staff, and venture capital funding of \$1 million.

"The DNI Fund allowed us to work on this opportunity full time," says Dhruv Ghulati, CEO and Research Scientist at Factmata. "It raised our profile and gave us credibility. That enabled us to encourage engineers, developers and designers to work on the project and helped us to build momentum – which is really important in start-ups."

"The DNI Fund allowed us to work on this opportunity full time."

Dhruv Ghulati

CEO and Research Scientist at Factmata

Quick facts

Factmata

Factmata combines cutting edge AI with human community and ingenuity to protect people and businesses from deceptive or misleading content online.

Country:

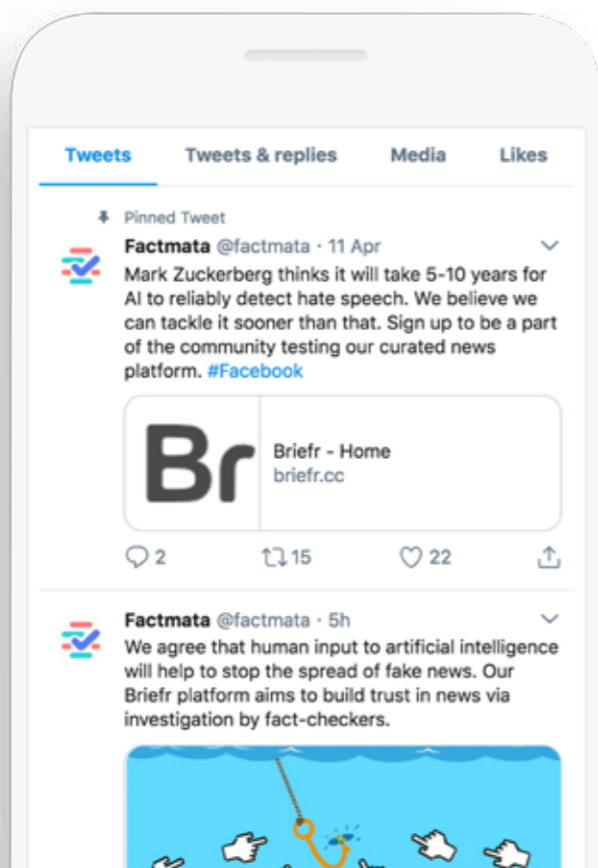
United Kingdom

Fund awarded:

2016

Amount awarded:

€50,000



Currently, Factmata's main focus is on using AI to analyse millions of URLs every day, assessing content on a sentence-by-sentence level to assess the risk to advertisers of appearing alongside what could be inappropriate content. For 2018, the company is launching Briefr, a news-sharing platform for collaborative discussion that's focused on quality and credibility instead of likes and popularity. Factmata is also in the process of launching an open research initiative that will make its data available to other parties.

Over the last two years, Dhruv and his team have gathered an impressive portfolio of media coverage and an even more impressive list of backers, including Biz Stone, co-founder of Twitter, as well as the founders of organisations such as Broadcast.com, Craigslist, Zynga, Mulesoft, Brightmail and Flycast Communications.

14

full-time members of staff now work for Factmata, which started as a team of one.



In silicon there is truth



"Our editors wanted to see if we could develop an interface that could help journalists check facts in real time – and which used machine learning to become faster and more accurate over the months and years."

Alvise Zanardi

Project Director at Caltagirone Editore

A new system currently being pioneered by one of Italy's leading publishers could revolutionise the fact-checking process for journalists while also becoming a revenue generator in its own right.

"Our group has 360 journalists and even more freelancers who produce thousands of stories for print and the web each day," says Alvise Zanardi, Project Director at Caltagirone Editore which publishes six newspapers and their associated websites. "This team draws on input from a huge range of sources including social media, the internet, agencies and other publishers. Fact checking these sources needs knowledge and a thorough verification process, and that takes time and resources. Our editors wanted to see if we could develop an interface that could help journalists check facts in real time – and which used machine learning to become faster and more accurate over the months and years."

As a name, Veritas In Silico (VIS, or In Silicon There is Truth) neatly explains the project's objectives. Supported by the DNI Fund as well as investments from the publisher, VIS is currently in the testing phase, with go-live anticipated by January 2019. At that point, VIS is likely to be a text-only solution, using semantic recognition to check the veracity of different sources and identify the most relevant one. But as the project progresses, Alvise and his team are keen to explore how the capabilities of VIS could be extended to embrace photographs and video by using a mix of facial, image and keyword recognition technologies.

"Looking at the business opportunities, our digital department is already experienced in selling IT services to the broader market in Italy. We believe that VIS has great commercial potential to improve quality and cut costs – as machine learning improves the quality of VIS, we'll be evaluating how we can best market it."

Quick facts

VIS Media

VIS is a fact-checking solution using machine learning to help journalists verify news sources.

Country:

Italy

Fund awarded:

2017

Amount awarded:

€350,000

100%

of journalists at Caltagirone Editore will use VIS.

Telling local stories

Holding power to account



“The news industry may be in flux, but it’s vitally important that good local journalism doesn’t disappear.”

Megan Lucero
Director at The Bureau Local

Quick facts

The Bureau Local

The Bureau Local is a not-for-profit network of journalists and tech experts who work together to find and tell stories that matter to local communities.

Country:
United Kingdom

Fund awarded:
2016

Amount awarded:
€600,000

170

the number of local stories published by The Bureau Local network covering everything from identifying the county councils close to financial ruin, to exposing the huge disparities in how local police forces protect women from violent partners.

Local journalists play an important role in democratic society by holding power to account. However, newsrooms have fewer resources to dedicate to much-needed investigative reporting. At the same time, the digitisation of information has grown exponentially. In every area of life, information that was previously found on paper now exists online – and there’s far more of it.

The Bureau Local is a not-for-profit network of journalists and tech experts who work together to find and tell the stories that matter to local communities. The technology they use can unearth more pieces of information than an individual journalist can, and allows journalists to dig deeper, get stories faster and unravel complexity in a way never possible before.

“Having the tools to access and analyse this data is now critical for effective reporting,” says Megan Lucero, Director of The Bureau Local. “There are many powerful public interest stories out there that will only be discovered if traditional investigative techniques are combined with technology.”

Established in 2017 with support from the DNI Fund, the Bureau Local consists of four skilled and experienced data journalists. This team does the heavy lifting, opening up the datasets of public bodies and helping The Bureau network to navigate and interrogate it – to inform the public on the state of their communities and to unveil systemic wrong when it exists. Even if a journalist has never looked at a dataset or knows nothing about Excel, the Bureau team can show them how to dig

into the data, collaborate with the local community and scrutinise the actions of those in power, such as the local council.

“After our first year, the Bureau community already extends to over 650 people across the UK,” Megan explains. “They come from all walks of life. As well as journalists, they’re lawyers and teachers, mums and grandparents – a cross-section of people who’ve been affected by particular issues. We’ve helped this network publish over 170 exclusive local stories – covering everything from identifying the county councils close to financial ruin, to exposing the huge disparities in how local police forces protect women from violent partners.”

“The Bureau is a constant work in progress and we’ve received lots of interest from other countries as well as from regional groups within the UK, who are all excited by the possibilities of data journalism. We’ve proved our point – that collaborative journalism can hold power to account. The news industry may be in flux, but it’s vitally important that good local journalism doesn’t disappear. And the people in power had better recognise that.”



Photo credits: Rob Stothard

Your local digest



“We wanted to explore how new technology could help us deliver a more relevant local news service.”

Tomás García Morán
Project Director at La Voz de Galicia

A man is tripped, a whistle blows, a finger points, a penalty is given...

Viewed from a national perspective, it's a meaningless incident in a game of football. But for people living in the local communities of Galicia in northern Spain, knowing the outcome of this relegation battle isn't just desirable – it's hugely important.

“Although solutions are available to identify content for major national and global stories, they don't work well for journalists covering small and hyperlocal communities,” explains Tomás García Morán, Project Director. “We wanted to explore how new technology could help us deliver a more relevant local news service.”

“Hyperlocal Listener and Community Manager are software solutions that sit on the smartphones of our reporters.

Hyperlocal Listener drills down into social media and other communications channels, keeping us in touch with what local people are reading and posting about. Community Manager then enables us to publish the stories we create from that information in the most appropriate media mix – whether that's in our newspaper, on our website or through general or specialist social media groups. So those of our 11 million unique users who want to know the details about a particular football match, or any other local news items, get the stories they really need, delivered via their favourite channels.”

The team at La Voz de Galicia aim to roll out the project to journalists in regional newsrooms this summer.

(...they missed the penalty, by the way.)

190

the number of journalists using the new software to bring more relevant stories to local communities.

Quick facts

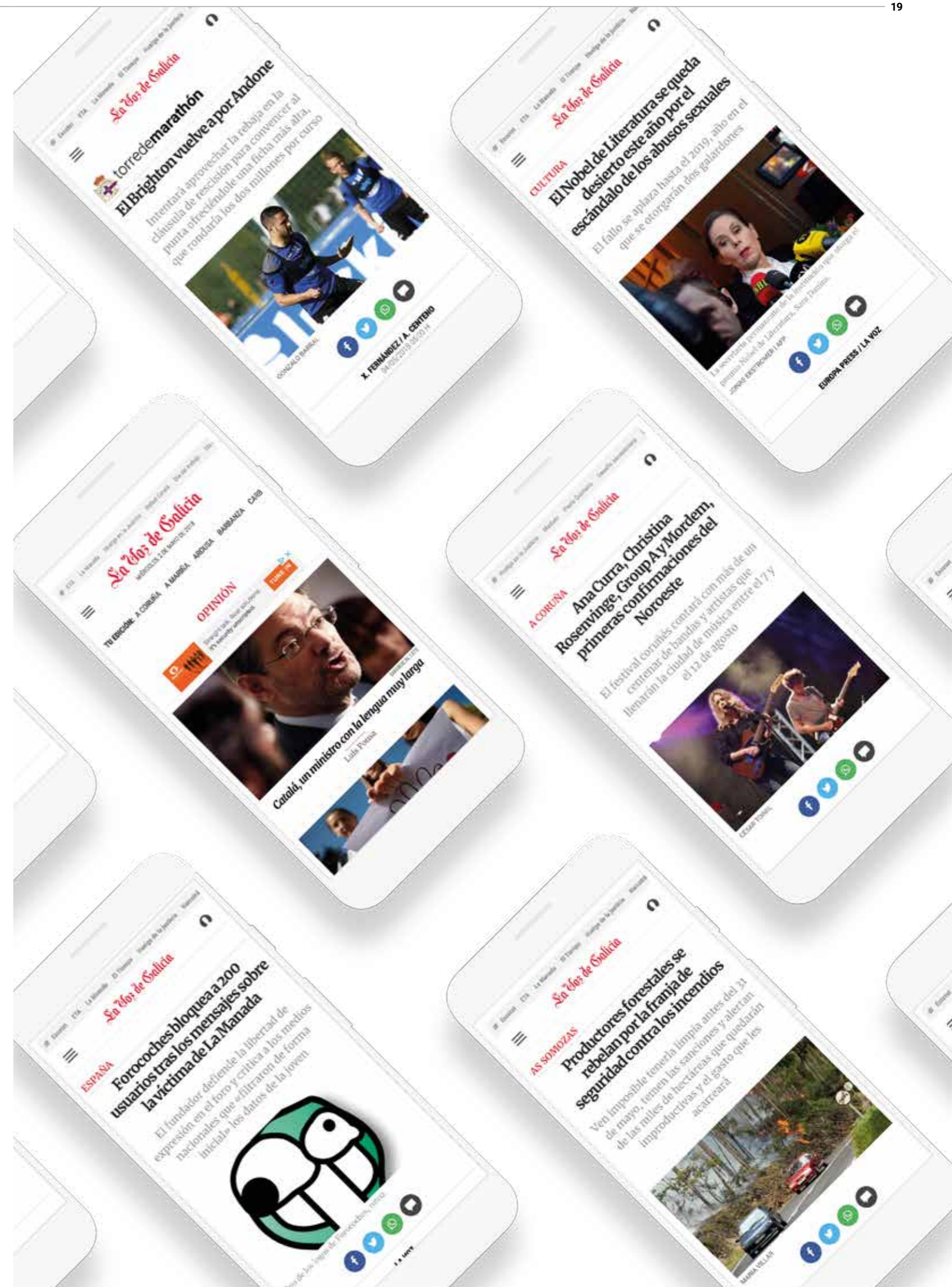
La Voz de Galicia

Two projects which enable journalists to identify and publish stories that are most relevant to local audiences.

Country:
Spain

Fund awarded:
2016

Amount awarded:
€350,000



Needles in haystacks



“We’ve open sourced the code on GitHub, and I’d welcome anyone using it in the wider public interest.”

William Perrin
Entrepreneur and Founder of Talk About Local

For decades, weekly lists of civic information have been a major source of story leads for local journalists. But with lists such as those from magistrates’ courts and planning and licensing departments often totalling more than 500 pages a week, which would take several days for a journalist to go through, this is needle-in-haystack territory. And few local publishers now have the resource or the time to analyse the lists in any detail.

Now complete, Local News Engine (LNE) was essentially a prototype project created by Talk About Local to discover whether algorithms could analyse lists and identify story leads. Running from autumn 2016 to spring 2017, the project

was made possible by the DNI Fund, which paid for the complex coding.

“This was an exceptionally well-run process and I’d encourage people to apply for funding,” explains William Perrin, founder of Talk About Local. “Our conclusion was that relatively simple sorting by computers did make it easier to spot leads, shedding many hours of reading. As resources diminish in newsrooms, this could become a vital productivity tool. While the project has closed, its potential lives on – we’ve open sourced the code on GitHub, and I’d welcome anyone using it in the wider public interest.”

Quick facts

Local News Engine

Local News Engine uses algorithms to generate leads for potential news stories from local data. Now complete, it is available to all via GitHub.

Country:
United Kingdom

Fund awarded:
2016

Amount awarded:
€50,000

June 2016

Funding awarded.

January 2017

Prototype launched.

March 2017

Open source code made available to wider public on GitHub.

Making local news work



“The appetite for hyperlocal news is vast – the problem is how to use that to generate revenue.”

Christian Junker
Project Leader at Tagesspiegel LEUTE

While almost every reader survey concludes that local news is the most highly valued of all content, making it pay is another matter entirely.

“Monetisation is one of the biggest challenges and opportunities for local publishers,” says Christian Junker, Project Leader at Tagesspiegel LEUTE. “Here in Berlin, our goal was to provide original digital local journalism for the city’s 12 districts. Each of these is actually the size of a city in its own right and has its own distinct local flavour, but is only served by publications that cover the entire Berlin area. The appetite for hyperlocal news is vast – the problem is how to use that to generate revenue.”

Support from the DNI Fund helped Tagesspiegel LEUTE increase subscribers by 40%, which has in turn enabled it to invest in the business – for example, by employing a dedicated journalist for each of the 12 districts. The DNI Fund’s contribution also enabled the team to develop a self-service ad portal for small and medium-sized local businesses. “This is what makes the project work from a financial perspective,” adds Christian. “Local businesses don’t have the capital to invest in city-wide advertising, so instead they use our portal to create and place their messages where they’re most effective – in front of a highly targeted local audience.”

12

journalists – one per district of Berlin.

40%

increase in subscribers – from around 93,000 to 130,000, since the start of the project.

Quick facts

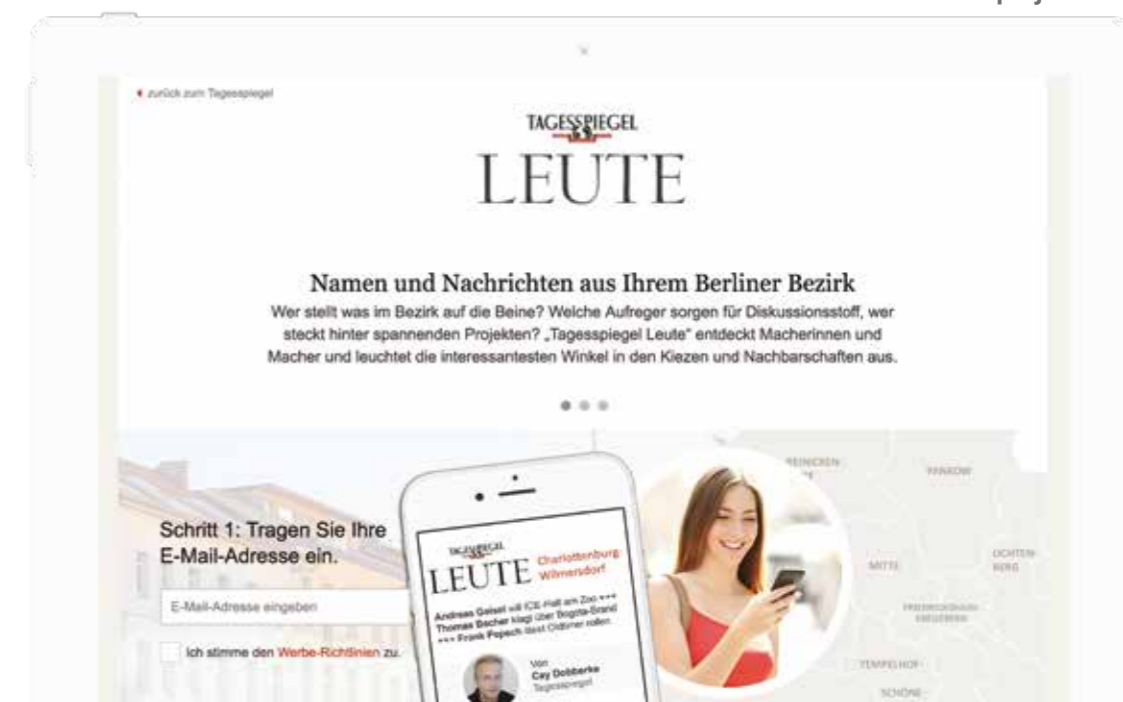
Tagesspiegel LEUTE

Tagesspiegel LEUTE provides digital local news to subscribers in 12 districts of Berlin.

Country:
Germany

Fund awarded:
2016

Amount awarded:
€550,000



Boosting digital revenues

Ready, steady, go



“Using Steady, publishers can easily earn monthly payments from their supporters while retaining full control over their projects, copyright and content.”

Philipp Schwörbel
Founder and Managing Director at Steady

Quick facts

Steady

Steady enables digital publishers to monetise their content by building a revenue stream from subscriptions.

Country:
Germany

Fund awarded:
2016

Amount awarded:
€350,000

In the midst of an evolving digital landscape, one of the biggest challenges publishers and journalists face is monetising their content.

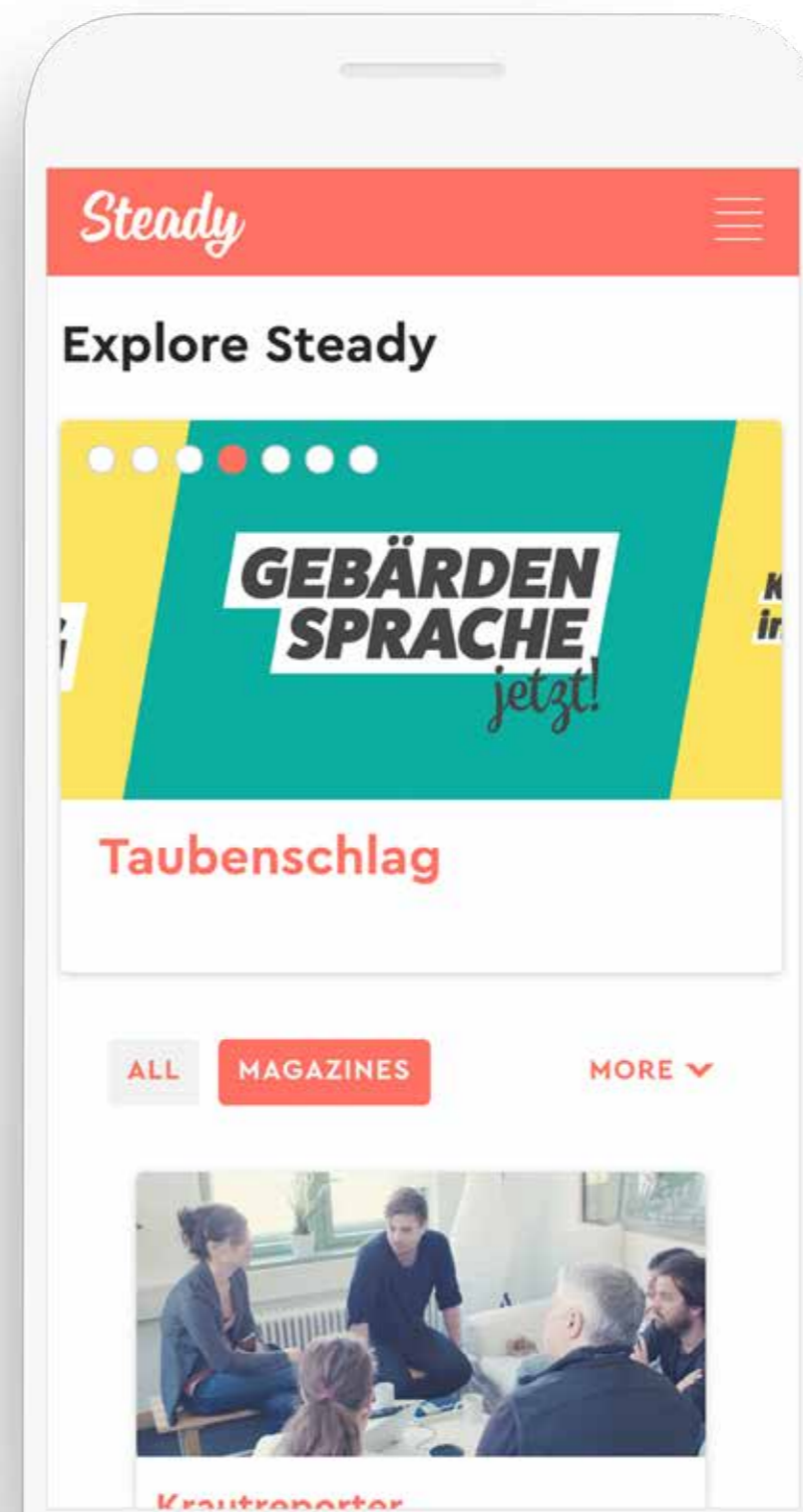
But there is cause for optimism. Supported by the DNI Fund, a small start-up in Germany is providing journalists with the technology and marketing tools they need to build a membership base and generate revenue. The DNI Fund delivered two-thirds of the money the team needed to write the code and take the first steps to market. It also provided the momentum to keep the project on track. Already, over 200 journalists and other content creators, such as YouTubers and podcasters, are earning a regular income thanks to Steady.

“Our goal is to promote and enable media that is funded by an audience, not by big business, online ads or influential benefactors,” explains Founder and Managing Director Philipp Schwörbel. “We call it ‘people-powered media’, because it is the readers or viewers who are the ones that make it financially possible.”

Philipp and his business partner have personal experience of how difficult it is for new publishers to make a living. Even though their online magazine *Krautreporter* was funded by Germany’s most successful crowdfunding campaign, it came close to failure.

“It’s one thing for a journalist to be great at reporting, but another entirely for them to master online marketing, recurring payment issues and membership management,” adds Philipp. “That experience was the inspiration behind Steady, because we realised that there are many more ‘Krautreporters’ out there that need some support. Using Steady, publishers can easily earn monthly payments from their supporters while retaining full control over their projects, copyright and content. There’s no such thing as a typical Steady publisher – they cover a wide range of topics and while some of them are one-man-shows earning just a few hundred Euros a month, others are teams of up to 15 people bringing in regular five-figure monthly revenues. What they all have in common is access to a range of tools from Steady that they can integrate directly in their websites and blogs to gain memberships.”

The results make impressive reading. As well as the 200+ people now earning an income from their publishing activities, the growth of the project has led to the creation of six new jobs at Steady and the receipt of a further €500,000 in funding from other backers.



Project impact

200

users including journalists, bloggers, YouTubers and podcasters are now earning regularly thanks to Steady.



team grew by 6.

26,000

users of the platform since project launch.

98%

of subscribers retained monthly.

Pooling resources



“We need to work together to create an advertising marketplace that’s safe for brands.”

Mario Matos
Co-Project Leader at Nonio

With digital channels accounting for an increasing percentage of total advertising spend, Portugal’s six largest media owners are teaming up to pool their online resources, put their differences aside and create a powerful consortium of over 70 websites and apps that can reach 85% of the country’s 6.5 million monthly active internet users.

Supported by the DNI Fund as well as by €1.3 million worth of free coverage in its members’ publications, the Nonio consortium has built a data management platform and single sign-on facility. Users simply log in to one of their sites – and they will be recognised across all the other sites operated by the consortium without needing to log in multiple times. “This process means we can collect a wide range of data on our users and

use this to create a compelling proposition for advertisers,” says Mario Matos, Co-Project Leader at Nonio.

“Already, over 500,000 users have signed up to Nonio. Our target is for all four million adults who are touched by our consortium’s publications to register as users.” Such an extensive pool of aggregated data segments will give Nonio a viable offer to present to advertisers and this could boost advertising rates.

Mario believes there is room in the market for both technology companies and independent media companies to thrive. “We need to work together to create an advertising marketplace that’s safe for brands,” he adds. “This can be a win/win situation.”

85%

of the local market has been reached by Nonio.

500,000

users have signed up to Nonio in 12 months since its launch.

Quick facts

Nonio

Nonio is a collaboration between Portugal’s top six media companies that aims to create a compelling digital proposition for advertisers.

Country:
Portugal

Fund awarded:
2017

Amount awarded:
€900,000

Opening up opportunities



“We’ve developed new open source software that will help more publishers sell online subscriptions.”

Tomas Bella
Head of Online at Dennik N

When 45 Slovakian journalists quit their jobs in 2014 to set up a rival newspaper, they learnt some hard lessons about turning high-quality content into something that would pay the rent. But they learnt fast and they learnt well. Within three years, Dennik N turned a profit, building a subscriber base thanks to a set of tools developed in conjunction with a small group of software developers.

Support from the DNI Fund in 2015 enabled the staff of Dennik N to make these free, open source tools available to publishers through a project known as REMP (Readers’ Engagement and Monetisation Platform). Now a second tranche of funding from the DNI Fund is supporting REMP 2, which aims to improve the software to the point where it can rival world-leading e-commerce solutions.

“We’ve developed new open source software that will help more publishers sell online subscriptions,” explains Tomas Bella, Head of Online at Dennik N. “Firstly, REMP 2 will provide journalists with more details on what readers consider to be quality content that they will be happy to pay for. It also improves the way that publishers can manage their paying customers. Finally, REMP 2 aims to predict which readers are most likely to become subscribers, so publishers can focus their efforts.”

The size of the team at Dennik N has now grown to 60, mostly made up of software developers. The new, improved version of REMP was launched in March 2018, and featured over 1,000 changes or revisions to the original software.

Quick facts

REMP

REMP is a set of open source tools that enables digital publishers to turn users into subscribers.

Country:
Slovakia

Fund awarded:
2015 and 2017

Amount awarded:
€350,000 and €755,000

1,000+

‘commits’ made to REMP open source tools via GitHub.

10

the number the team has grown by since starting in 2014.



A sporting chance

“What surprised us was that while people were reluctant to pay for each issue, La Numérique was in fact an excellent tool to encourage people to subscribe to the total L’Equipe offering.”

Vincent Briot
Head of Product at L’Equipe

A new channel is giving one of France’s leading publishers more than a sporting chance of monetising its valuable content.

Selected by the DNI Fund, La Numérique was originally conceived as the ideal complement to the *L’Equipe* morning newspaper – an evening dose of digital sport that readers would pay for on an issue-by-issue basis.

But the team at *L’Equipe* quickly realised that they had more on their hands than just a new way for fans to access content. “We knew that people would welcome an evening sports update, delivered to their mobile devices just when they were unwinding after the day’s work,” comments Vincent Briot, Head of Product at *L’Equipe*. “What surprised us was that while people were reluctant to pay for each

issue, La Numérique was in fact an excellent tool to encourage people to subscribe to the total *L’Equipe* offering.”

Since its first editions hit screens during the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, La Numérique has helped drive up the *L’Equipe* subscriber base to over 120,000, each of whom is paying €1 for the first month, and then a €9.99 monthly fee. La Numérique has 50,000 users per day, and almost half of all *L’Equipe* subscribers access La Numérique at least once a month.

“Innovation like this requires time and resources,” adds Vincent. “La Numérique is constantly evolving – it now includes video, for example – but it was that initial support from the DNI Fund that gave us the impetus and support we needed at the very beginning.”

Quick facts

La Numérique

A new paid-for evening digital edition published by *L’Equipe*, the leading sports publication in France.

Country:
France

Fund awarded:
2016

Amount awarded:
€210,000



50,000

La Numérique users every day.

Weekenders to subscribers



“The funding enabled us to work with a digital consultancy, evaluate the options available and build a solution.”

Espen Rønning
Business Developer at Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen (GD)

In Norway, cabins are a way of life. Every Friday, thousands of city dwellers pack skis, bikes and provisions into their cars and head out to rural cabins for a couple of days of fun activities. While the doubling of its population every weekend has long supported the economy in Lillehammer, it’s now also the inspiration for a digital initiative that is set to transform the financial prospects of the town’s long-established daily magazine.

“We believed that weekend visitors were a huge market for both our existing stories and for content targeted around their interests and needs,” comments Espen Rønning, Business Developer at Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen (GD). “We wanted to discover the best way to reach these weekenders, and whether they’d subscribe to this sort of content. The DNI Fund enabled us to work with a digital consultancy, evaluate the options available and build an appropriate solution.”

Espen’s team – which thanks to the DNI Fund’s support has grown to include a full-time journalist as well as a project group – initially considered creating an app before opting for a website because of the opportunities to reuse existing content. Within a few weeks of launch in March 2018, GDhytte.no had already gained 3,350 subscribers, each paying 39 Kroner (€5+) per month. The site also carries paid-for advertising.

Espen now has plans to roll out the concept to other niche audiences in the Lillehammer area over the next six months. “GDFamilie and GDUtflytter will target families and young people,” he adds. “Our parent company Amedia, which has 64 titles across Norway, is following our progress with great interest so the long-term impact of GD could be significant.”

Quick facts

Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen

GD is a digital magazine project targeted at niche audiences and generating revenue through subscriptions.

Country:
Norway

Fund awarded:
2017

Amount awarded:
€300,000

3,350

subscribers gained within a few weeks of launch.

€5+

monthly payment by each subscriber.

Exploring new technologies

Charting growth



“We now have the revenue stream to support Frames’ continued operation as a standalone business.”

Leo Xavier
Founder, Frames and CTO, Observador

Quick facts

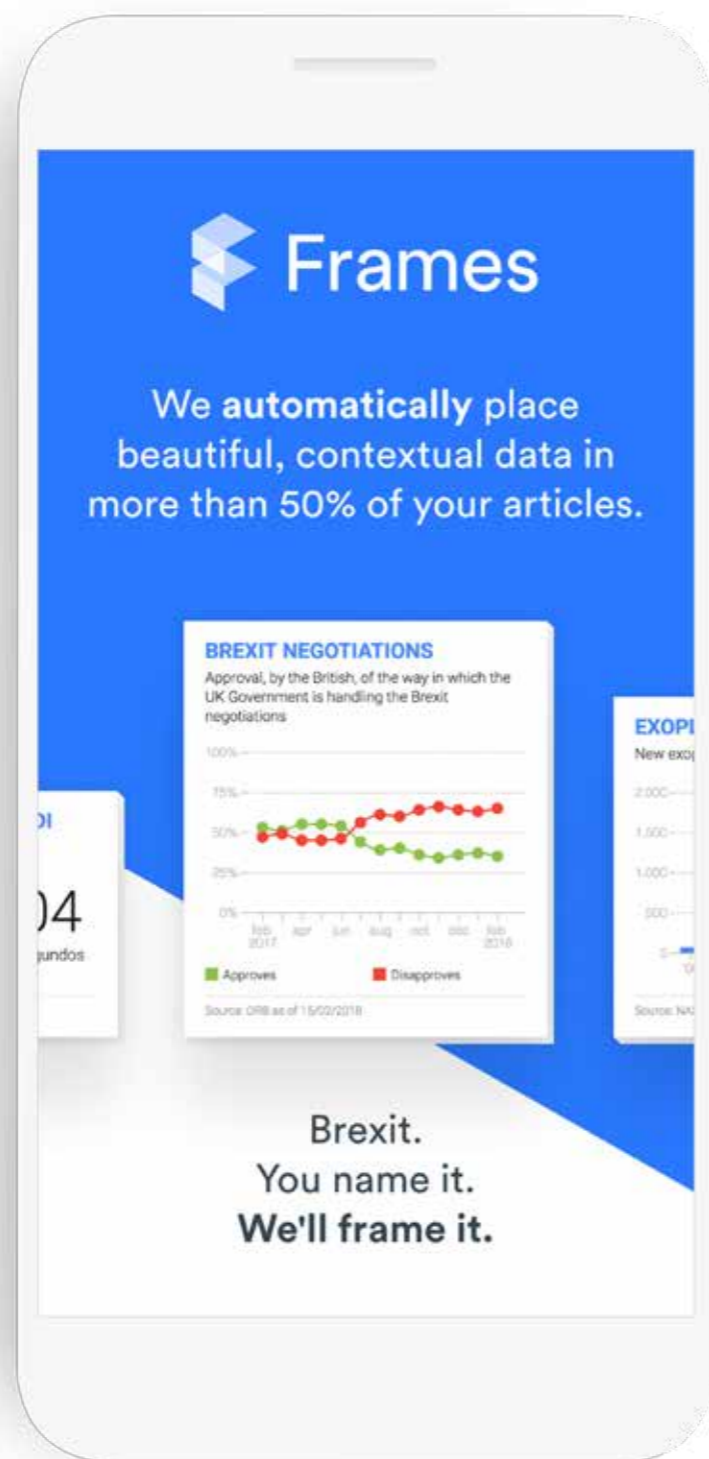
Frames

Frames provides the online publishing industry with innovative charts that improve understanding and generate revenue.

Country:
Portugal

Fund awarded:
2016

Amount awarded:
€415,000



Every publisher and journalist knows the value of charts and wants more of them. Done well, charts throw light on difficult topics – they make stories easy to read by breaking up oceans of text. The reality is different. Busy newsrooms don’t always have the tools or skills to create great charts. And in a world of daily, if not hourly, deadlines, they often don’t have the time.

Frames is a new business established by Portugal’s leading online newspaper with support from the DNI Fund. Its mission is not only to make great charts simple to incorporate – but to increase page views and generate revenue at the same time.

“Together with some financial support from parent company Observador, support from the DNI Fund has enabled five people to work full time on the Frames concept since 2016.”

“Together with some financial support from parent company Observador, support from the DNI Fund has enabled five people to work full time on the Frames concept since 2016,” says Leo Xavier, the CTO at Observador. “It’s funding that’s already delivering benefits. Before we started Frames, only a small fraction of articles on observador.pt used charts. Today, that figure is closer to 50%. As well as improving reader understanding of complex issues, the charts are generating 5.6% more page views. Even more impressively, they’ve created a new revenue stream for Observador. Companies such as Vodafone, Deloitte and SportTV are now sponsoring charts relevant to their businesses – and this is

already contributing gross annual revenue of around €100,000 for our publisher. We now have the revenue stream to support Frames’ continued operation as a standalone business.”

This is how Frames works...

A dedicated team in the Frames newsroom continually monitors current events and decides what charts could best help readers make sense of them. If there’s an earthquake in Mexico, for example, the team might create a chart showing the magnitude of previous earthquakes. Meanwhile, a journalist at the publisher writes up the earthquake story exactly as usual. Software on the content

management system analyses the story and, as the journalist is typing, if there’s a good match the software automatically integrates a relevant chart – in this case, one about earthquake magnitude – into the layout. That’s all there is to it. There’s no extra work for the journalist. And he or she can delete or edit the chart if they don’t feel it adds to the story.

We think that Frames has applications right across the industry,” Leo adds. “So we’re now in the process of using Observador as a case study and talking to publishers in other countries, explaining how Frames can make a real difference to their newsrooms and their readers – and make money at the same time.”

Project impact



50%

before Frames, charts featured in very few articles on observador.pt – but today, almost one in two articles include a chart.

€100k

the amount Frames has contributed in gross annual revenue for the team’s publisher.

5.6%

more page views on Observador generated by the charts, as well as improving reader understanding of complex issues.

Showing all sides



“Journalism just needs the power to make itself better heard in times when everyone is screaming for attention online.”

Felix Friedrich
Co-Founder and CEO at The Buzzard

Quick facts

The Buzzard

The team behind The Buzzard news website is training a machine-learning algorithm to include all sides of a debate and provide users with a balanced, holistic overview.

Country:
Germany

Fund awarded:
2017

Amount awarded:
€50,000

16x faster

the speed at which The Buzzard's new solution can find different viewpoints.

10,000+

the amount of articles analysed by The Buzzard every month.

500

global news websites and blogs analysed every day.

7

new people have joined the team since the project began.

While the personalisation of content is recognised as a powerful advantage for publishers and readers alike, it can mean that people aren't often exposed to a range of viewpoints on a particular subject. In Leipzig, Germany, a team of journalists and web developers are using €50,000 received from the DNI Fund to train a machine-learning algorithm to burst those bubbles.

The Buzzard website has already built a strong following for curating articles manually, balancing out political bias. “Journalism just needs the power to make itself better heard in times when everyone is screaming for attention online,” says CEO Felix Friedrich, who co-founded The Buzzard with Editor-in-Chief Dario Nassal. “We're interested in showing all sides of the argument around the biggest debates on our planet, such as climate change, global inequality, capitalism, globalisation and sustainability.”

Right now, that's an extremely time-consuming process that requires extensive research via RSS readers, databases and search engines. However, support from the DNI Fund has enabled The Buzzard to build the first prototype of a technological solution that uses an algorithm to find different viewpoints up to 16 times faster than before. “But these are just the first steps,” Felix adds. “We plan to launch our opinion navigator internally at the end of May 2018. Then we aim to fully launch it in 2019, rolling it out across Europe and then South and North America.”

“This could be the start of a digital marketplace for journalism that links readers and publishers via our online platform, as well as an app. Journalism was made by humans to reveal what the powerful do and we aim to make sure that tradition continues. The potential is huge – our initial thoughts are that we could be achieving revenue of up to €100 million in five years.”

the Buzzard [Neue Debatten](#) [Buzzard Daily](#) [Über uns](#) [Log-in](#) [Kostenlos](#)

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200 Jahre Karl Marx

Würde eine Demokratie wie Deutschland auch ohne Kapitalismus funktionieren?

Ja 03.05.2018

Wir könnten auch ohne Kapitalismus – und es wäre besser

Quelle: Wolfgang Uchatius (DE)
Veröffentlicht auf: Die Zeit

Nein 03.05.2018

Ohne Kapitalismus würden Gewalt und Populismus Leben bestimmen

Quelle: Henrik Müller (DE)
Veröffentlicht auf: Spiegel Online

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Deutsche Außenpolitik

Sollte Deutschland militärisch mehr Verantwortung übernehmen?

Growing your own

“Journalists are using their new skills to create compelling stories that pull readers into our website.”

Stefano Ramagli
IT Manager at Il Secolo

As new media continues to become more important, there's an increasing shortage of journalists equipped to get the best out of it. In Italy, one national publisher has come up with a radical answer: grow your own journalists.

“New media has transformed how journalists work,” says Il Secolo’s IT Manager Stefano Ramagli. “The money from the DNI Fund enabled us to implement a customised e-learning project on Moodle, our existing web-based solution, which covers everything from how to categorise a story for social media, to how to integrate

video into a story, and use analytics to track views and likes. And because the training is delivered online, our people can access it wherever and whenever they want, even at home.”

“We aim to establish a new way of working, not just for new journalists but also for those already on the team. To date, one in six journalists have completed the course and are using their new skills to create compelling stories that pull readers into our website – the more traffic we generate, the more advertising revenue we make. This is just the starting point. Ultimately, 100% of our journalists will take part in the course.”

1 in 6

journalists have completed the course so far.



100%

of Il Secolo’s journalists will take part in the course.

Quick facts

Il Secolo XIX

An in-house training platform that enables journalists to seize the opportunities offered by new media.

Country:
Italy

Fund awarded:
2016

Amount awarded:
€315,000

Editorial led, robot delivered



“Great journalism is why investors subscribe to Mediafin. QuoteBot helps us deliver that better, faster and more cost effectively.”

Nicolas Becquet
Project Director at Mediafin

With 26,700 digital subscribers, Belgian financial publisher Mediafin has a long history of leading the way in monetising digital content.

Their subscribers expect daily updates of key market information. But while these articles are essential pieces of content, they’re repetitive and time-consuming for journalists to produce. So Mediafin set about creating a robotic solution that would free up journalists’ time. Developed in partnership with robotic writer specialist Sylabs and academic researcher Laurence Dierickx (ULB) – and supported by the DNI Fund – QuoteBot extracts market data from a structured database to automatically produce text and graphics. More than 50% of Mediafin subscribers are already fully digital, and the expectation is that QuoteBot will increase that still further.

“QuoteBot is a win/win for us”, says Nicolas Becquet, Project Director. “By automating certain structured and iterative actions, it enables our journalists to spend time doing high-value work. Secondly, it allows us to provide an even better service to our subscribers, offering them more personalised market information at the time and on the device of their choice.”

“This is very much an editorial-led solution, not something that’s been imposed on the newsroom by the IT people. Great journalism is why investors subscribe to Mediafin. QuoteBot helps us deliver that better, faster and more cost effectively.”

Quick facts

QuoteBot

QuoteBot is a robotic solution that frees up journalists’ time by automatically producing personalised articles and structured data.

Country:
Belgium

Fund awarded:
2018

Amount awarded:
€210,000



30 mins

time saved per journalist per day by using QuoteBot. This allows them to focus on analysis and value-added content.

Council members



João Palmeiro

President of the Portuguese Publishers Association, Chair of the DNI Fund



Veit Dengler

Executive board member, Bauer Media Group



Rosalia Lloret

Head of Institutional and Public Relations at Online Publishers Association, Europe



Bruno Patino

Dean of Sciences Po Journalism School



Madhav Chinnappa

Director of News and Publishers, EMEA Partnerships, Google



Miriam Meckel

Publisher of WirtschaftsWoche and Professor for Media and Communication Management



Arianna Ciccone

Founder and Director, Perugia International Journalism Festival



Anthony Nakache

Director, Online Partnerships Group EMEA, Google



Bartosz Hojka

Chief Executive Officer, Agora S.A.



Murdoch MacLennan

Non-Executive Chairman, Independent News & Media, IE



Torsten Schuppe

VP, Marketing EMEA, Google



Bart Brouwers

Professor in Journalism, Groningen University, and owner of Media52

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DE PERSGROEP
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LA PRESSE.BE – ALLIANCE DES MÉDIAS D'INFORMATION
MEDIAFIN
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MEDIAKUNTA OSAKUNTA
PICKS
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TALENTUM

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 IMPRESA PUBLISHING
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SLOVAKIA

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