



# Annual Report 2019

## Executive Summary

This report covers the progress of the Initiative for Media Innovation (IMI) between January and December 2019. During this period, the IMI strengthened its foundations, particularly with regard to the funding of research and innovation projects, and launched 6 collaborative projects. At the same time, the Initiative continued to develop national and international partnerships, which included the organization of 2 events geared towards students, researchers, media professionals and the general public.

### About the IMI

The IMI is active since March 2018 after being jointly founded by EPFL, SRG, Ringier and Triangle Azur (a cooperation network between the Universities of Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchâtel). The main goal of the IMI is to support the transformation of the media sector by initiating research and innovation projects with affiliated universities and in partnership with participating media organizations. To this end, the Initiative members maintain together an innovation support fund with an annual budget of CHF 700'000.

The IMI is governed by a Board consisting of decision-makers from both the media industry and academia, assisted by a Scientific Committee that includes experts from both sectors. A total of 9 people are members of these councils. The EPFL Media Center, which employs 2 collaborators (1.4 full-time equivalent), is in charge of running the Initiative.

#### Contact

Mounir Krichane  
Director  
mounir@media-initiative.ch  
+41 21 693 81 02

### Key achievements

#### Expanding the Initiative

2019 began with the addition of the partnership between ESH Médias and HES-SO Valais-Wallis to the Initiative as an affiliate member. At present, the IMI brings together 5 universities (EPFL, UNIGE, UNIL, UniNE and HES-SO Valais-Wallis) and 3 media groups (Ringier, SRG and ESH Médias), which gives it both a national and regional dimension within the Swiss media landscape.

#### Federating researchers and experts on key issues

The IMI launched its first call for proposals in November 2018, which was entitled "Helping media fight misinformation and restore the public's trust". In early 2019, the Initiative received 27 pre-project proposals for review and then invited 9 project teams to submit a full proposal. At the end of the selection process, the IMI decided to support 6 projects which started between September and October 2019.

At the same period, the IMI launched a second call for proposals on a more specific issue entitled "Helping media build stronger

ties with the public and enhance its engagement". This time, the Initiative received 7 pre-project proposals which are currently under review. Part of them will lead to concrete projects during 2020.

Lastly, in December 2019, the IMI announced a research grant with two fixed submission deadlines per year in April and October, aiming to sustain project funding in the coming years.

### Building on interdisciplinarity to develop solutions

Following the first call for proposals, the IMI initiated 6 projects (see below) with leading scientists in fields ranging from human and social sciences to engineering, in cooperation with professional experts and journalists. A total of 6 universities and 3 media outlets are collaborating in these projects, involving more than 44 people with a full-time equivalent of around 7.5 positions. They will each last between 12 and 14 months and

amount to a budget of about CHF 900'000 invested by the IMI between 2019 and 2020.

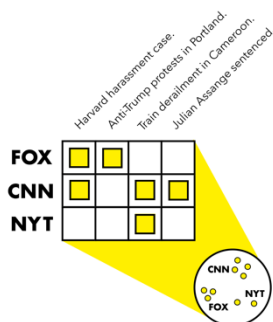
### Promoting the Initiative through partnerships and events

Throughout 2019, the IMI continued its partnership with the MediaRoad project ([www.mediaroad.eu](http://www.mediaroad.eu)) and its network of international stakeholders. In this context, the Initiative organized a 48-hour hackathon in March on the EPFL campus, as a side event to the Radiodays Europe conference, which brought together students, media professionals and hackers in a setting dedicated to co-creation.

The IMI has also strengthened its ties with digitalswitzerland in 2019. As part of Digital Day, the Initiative organized in September in Lausanne, with the support of some of its partners, an interactive dialogue that brought together around 100 media consumers and experts in the field to discuss the current relationship between media and audiences.

## Current projects

Partnerships between scientific research and the media are at the heart of the projects supported by the IMI. These collaborations are intended to help media organizations meet the challenges of digitization while having a positive impact on the public and society. The projects outlined below are part of the first call for proposals and will be completed by the fall of 2020. Each one explores an innovative approach to countering misinformation and restoring public trust in the media.



© 2019 EPFL

### Media Observatory Initiative

EPFL – Le Temps (Ringier)

In the digital age, news consumers experience increasing difficulty in distinguishing genuine from false information and, as a result, their trust in the media is being severely undermined. This project aims to develop a web platform to capture, process and visualize the Swiss and global news landscape, in order to better understand its structure and the dynamics at play.

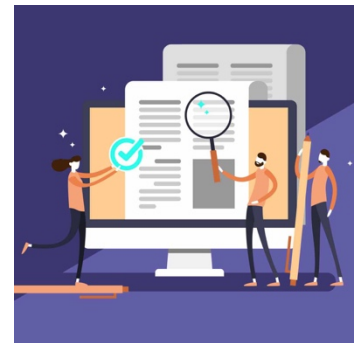
For news consumers, transparent quality and credibility indicators will also help them to assess the reliability of news sources and information. Media outlets will therefore have the ability to stand out and regain their status as the guarantors of quality information. In addition, this platform will enable journalists to keep track of the reaction of the audiences online, allowing them to more effectively identify and address controversial or polarizing issues.

[www.mediaobservatory.com](http://www.mediaobservatory.com)

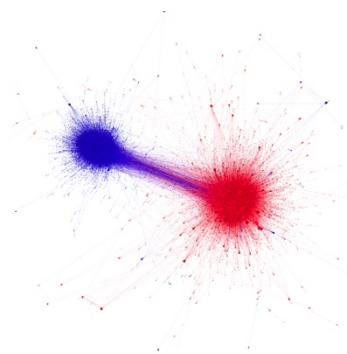
## Traceable Original Journalistic Content (TOJC)

HES-SO Valais-Wallis – ESH Médias

In today's media environment, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between journalistic content and other types of content that do not share the same quality standards. This project aims to develop and evaluate a comprehensive labelling system to identify and certify content originally produced by journalists, in order to promote it and differentiate it from non-journalistic content, especially misinformation. Furthermore, to encourage a broad adoption by the media, the project considers the perception and impact that such a label would have on the readers, and seeks an architecture that leverages existing solutions and integrates seamlessly with the publishing workflows of partner media outlets.



© 2019 HES-SO Valais-Wallis



© 2019 EPFL

## Social network Architectures of Disinformation (#sad)

EPFL – UniNE – RTS (SRG)

Social networks have become by far the most important place online to discuss and exchange information, but they also tend to polarize discussions and isolate users in their own cultural or ideological bubbles. This project aims to develop new methods to analyze the structure and mechanisms of influence within these communities, and to estimate the overall activity of social networks from only a partial view of them. Based on these methods, a tool will be developed to enable journalists to monitor the propagation of controversies and misinformation on platforms such as Twitter and YouTube.

