

Budapest | 4–6 December 2023

CEMediaTrends

A Central Europe Media Program event



Partner: 

CEMediaTrends Conference

Budapest, Hungary – 4-6 December 2023

A Central Europe Media Program event, organized by Zinc Network and the Center for Sustainable Media, with the financial support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

The CEMediaTrends conference provides an opportunity for digital media outlets in Central Europe to learn and share in a hands-on way how to harness innovation to build their brands and strengthen audience loyalty. The event will showcase new research into media consumption habits in the region, provide a forum for debate on new trajectories in media business models, and feature parallel interactive, hands-on workshops on current topics in digital journalism, and one-on-one "Clinics" with experts.

Who will participate?

- Online media professionals from Central Europe (CE)
- Leading media practitioners from Central Europe, Western Europe, USA.
- Media development donors, funders and implementers

Venue

Hotel Ensana Thermal – Margaret Island
Budapest-Margitsziget, 1007 Budapest, Hungary

Program - Day 1 | December 4 | Monday

08.30 - 09:00: Registration

Participants will be able to register and collect their badges for the event next to the hotel reception. Due to the number of participants, we encourage you to take care of registration early on, if possible.

09:30 – 12:30: MAGNÓLIA ROOM**09:30 – 09:40: Introduction**

- **Jeff Lovitt** | Chief of Party, Central Europe Media Program (CEMP), Zinc Network
- **Péter Erdélyi** | Executive Director, Center for Sustainable Media (CSM), Hungary

Opening remarks to set the stage for the conference, with a brief introduction to CEMP, to CSM and to the event's agenda

09:40 – 10:00: Challenges and Opportunities in Supporting CE's Media Landscape

Welcome speech by **Christopher Abrams** | Senior Development Advisor, Bureau for Central Europe, USAID

10:00 – 10:50: New Insights into Media Consumption Habits – Drivers of Engagement, Trust, Propensity to Pay in Central Europe

Presentation by **Alex Lewis**, Associate Director – Social Research, Zinc Network, on Zinc Network's regional polling and analysis into media consumption habits in five countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia)

10:50 – 11:10: Coffee break | Kamilla lobby**11:10 – 12:25: Digital Audiences in CE**

Panel discussion on audience trends from the perspective of digital media practitioners in CE, including the applicability of research into media consumption habits

- **Veronika Munk** | Director of Innovation and New Markets, Denník N, Slovakia
- **Diana Filmon** | Coordinator, *Gen, știri*, Romania
- **Boryana Dzhambova** | award-winning freelance journalist, Bulgaria
- **Federica Cherubini** (*moderator*) | Director of Leadership Development, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford University

12:25-12:30: Introduction to workshops

Explanation of format and participation in workshops and clinics

- **Ali Mahmood** | Deputy Chief of Party, Central Europe Media Program (CEMP), Zinc Network

PLATÁN RESTAURANT

12:30 – 13:30: Lunch

13:30 – 16:45: Workshops (simultaneously)

Participants will receive an infopack before the event which will contain a recommended, personalized agenda, including which workshop best aligns with their expectations, interests and position.

KAMILLA 1-3	<p>Workshop 1: The research is just the beginning: How to make audience needs actionable for your newsroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ariel Zirulnick Director of News Experimentation, LAist (Southern California Public Radio), USA <p>Using her own newsroom as a case study, Ariel will guide you through the key steps of operationalizing audience research in your newsroom: identifying actionable insights, building understanding of those insights, and integrating them into your products, processes, and metrics.</p>
TOBOZ I	<p>Workshop 2: Podcast Alchemy – How to Find Your Voice and Thrive in the Age of Noise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Szabolcs Töhötöm Tóth Talk-Show Host and Podcast Creator, Az élet, meg minden (Life and Everything), Hungary <p>Strategies to grow your audience, monetize your show, and make your podcast competitive with relevant content. The workshop provides practical tips and effective tools for planning, polishing, and promoting episodes, and offers insights into the driving forces behind today's podcasting boom.</p>
TOBOZ II	<p>Workshop 3: The Principles for Short Form Video</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diana Filmon Coordinator, <i>Gen, știri</i>, Romania • Rareș Nicolae Antal Video Producer and Youth News Reporter, <i>Gen, știri</i>, Romania <p>In a landscaped shaped more and more by social media, news and information have to adapt to the short form content and to the new ways of talking to the audience. We will go through the basic principles of how to create engaging content, how to adapt to the audience and how to reach different publics.</p>

KAMILLA 2-4
Workshop 4: Mastering Newsletters: Engage, Grow, Succeed

- **Dávid Tvrdoň** | Subscription Growth and Retention Specialist, SME, Slovakia

Unlock the power of effective email communication to captivate your audience, boost revenue, and build a loyal supporter base.

Participants of this workshop will gain a deep understanding of how newsletters help driving a successful reader revenue run newsroom.

(15:00-15:20: Coffee break: MAGNÓLIA ROOM)

16:45 – 17:00: Break

MAGNÓLIA
17:00-17:45 | TRACK 1 | Workshop 5: Audience Opportunity – Build and Maintain 1P Data

- **Teodora Patrauceanu** | Partnerships Development Manager, Google

Learn about building and maintaining 1P Data; gain insights into optimizing your site for audience development and commercial opportunities, understanding buyer behavior, identifying trends, and leveraging new privacy features.

MAGNÓLIA
17.45 - 18.30 | TRACK 1 | The News Sustainability Project - Google: Monetization

- **Arun Venkataraman** | Strategy Lead, Google News Initiative

This session will provide industry insights and practical examples how to understand, measure and enable News sustainability for publishers. It will explore ways to approach Subscription models and provide opportunity for outlets to test some of the assumptions they have about their monetization options.

KAMILLA 1-3
17.00 - 18.30 | TRACK 2 | TECH for Journalism: Let's shed light on elections!

- **Natalia Žaba** | Teaching Fellow, Central & Eastern Europe, Google 2024 will be a year to remember with more than 70 elections scheduled in 40 countries around the world. Join us and discover what are the tools and programs you can use instantly to elevate your reporting, increase productivity, celebrate collaboration, and help create a safe space for the public in your country to make informed, free of malicious influence decisions.

Please note that the abovementioned Google sessions take place simultaneously so you will have to make a decision whether you prefer to attend TRACK1 or TRACK2 events. In case of any questions, feel free to contact us.

JÁZMIN ROOM 1-2

19:30 – 21:30: Buffet dinner at the hotel

20:30 Night Owl Debate “*What Price Independent Media?*”

The motion: Independent Media Should Embrace Paywalls to Support Sustained, High Quality Journalistic Content

Debate between leading media experts who will make the case respectively for independent media as a public good with no paywall and for independent media financed by audiences willing to pay for quality journalism. The discussants will address the wider impact on the media market of premium content versus no-paywall models.

- **Grzegorz Piechota** | Researcher-In-Residence and Readers First Initiative Lead, International News Media Association (INMA)
 - **Márton Kárpáti** | President of the Board, Telex, Hungary
 - **Jeff Lovitt** (*moderator*) | Chief of Party, Central Europe Media Program, Zinc Network
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Program - Day 2 | December 5 | Tuesday

MAGNÓLIA ROOM

09:00 – 10:20: News Products, AI Innovation & Audience

This panel will explore innovative news product thinking in journalism, emphasizing audience-centric experiences. Learn about agile methodologies, data-driven decision-making, and the impact of AI in shaping news content. Discover how this approach integrates innovation with editorial integrity and strategic objectives in a dynamic media environment.

- **Cristian Lupşa** | Founding Editor, Decât o Revistă (DoR), Romania
- **Ali Mahmood** | Deputy Chief of Party, Central Europe Media Program (CEMP), Zinc Network
- **Ariel Zirulnick** | Director of News Experimentation, LAist (Southern California Public Radio), USA
- **Glenn Kates** (*moderator*) | Portfolio Director, Media Development, Zinc Network

10.20 - 10.25 | Introduction to Workshops

Explanation of format and participation regarding afternoon workshops and clinics.

- **Ali Mahmood**, Deputy Chief of Party, Central Europe Media Program (CEMP), Zinc Network

10:25 – 10:45: Coffee break | Kamilla lobby

10:45 – 14:30: Workshops (simultaneously)

KAMILLA 1-3

Workshop 5: **Audience revenues: How to figure out whether your audience is ready to support you and what to offer them?**

- **Péter Erdélyi** | Director, Center for Sustainable Media (CSM), Hungary

In this workshop we will explore audience motivations for payment, talk about unique value propositions, direct relationships and benefits and services your readers may be willing to pay for.

KAMILLA 2-4

Workshop 6: **Reader revenue growth master class**

- **Grzegorz Piechota** | Researcher-In-Residence and Readers First Initiative Lead, International News Media Association (INMA)

At this workshop, INMA's Researcher-In-Residence Greg Piechota will reveal the five biggest pitfalls of subscription and membership programs, and then discuss how to build an engine for continuous growth.

TOBOZ II

Workshop 7: **Data journalism for the newsroom**

- **Attila Bátorfy** | Head of Operations, ATLO, a data journalism and visual content team powered by investigative journalism center Átlátszó, Hungary

The workshop will offer participants insight into integrating simple data graphics into everyday newsroom operations. It will introduce practical workflows, best practices, and essential techniques for effective data journalism.

TOBOZ I

Workshop 8: **Exposing AI-Generated Disinformation: An OSINT Workshop for Journalists**

- **Mamuka Kirkitadze** | Technical Data Information Specialist, Zinc Network

The workshop introduces OSINT in journalism, focusing on uncovering AI-generated content. It covers operational security, data collection, verification techniques, geolocation fundamentals, and methods for identifying disinformation in the information ecosystems.

PLATÁN RESTAURANT

12.15 - 13.00 Lunch

Participants will receive an infopack before the event which will contain a recommended, personalized agenda, including which workshop best aligns with their expectations, interests and position.

14:30 – 14:45: Break

MAGNÓLIA ROOM

14:45– 15:45: Innovation and Impact in Environmental Reporting

A presentation by award-winning journalist **Abigail Edge**, Senior Newsroom Strategy Consultant, Fathm, UK, about impactful and audience-engaging reporting on environmental issues in CE. Joining Abigail on stage will be PressOne colleagues:

- **Ioana Epure**, Editor-in-Chief, PressOne, Romania
- **Mălina Gîndu**, Social Media Manager, PressOne, Romania
- **Laura Popa**, Reporter, PressOne, Romania

15.45-16.15: Coffee break | Kamilla lobby

16.15-17.15: Google News Consumer Insights (NCI)

MAGNÓLIA

16:15 – 17:00: News Consumer Insights

- **Teodora Patrauceanu** | Partnerships Development Manager, Google

Explore the potential of Google's News Consumer Insights (NCI) in a specialized workshop. Uncover how NCI enables news publishers to make informed, data-driven decisions, boosting profitability and fostering deeper relationships with readers. Learn techniques to effectively utilize NCI for strategic business choices and enhanced audience engagement

17.15 - 19.30 | Free time (and clinics for specific colleagues)

PITPIT RESTAURANT, Ötpacsirta u. 2. 1088, Budapest

19:30 – 21:30: Dinner

Program - Day 3 | December 6 | Wednesday

MAGNÓLIA ROOM

09:00 – 10:30: [Strategies in Support of CE Independent Media](#)

Panel discussion on the approach of different funders towards strengthening independent media in Central Europe

- **Olesia Gardner** | Civil Society and Media Advisor, Central Europe, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, USAID
- **Marcin Gadziński** | Program Director for Europe, Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF)
- **Péter Erdélyi** (*moderator*) | Executive Director, Center for Sustainable Media (CSM), Hungary

10:30 - 11:00: [Coffee break | Kamilla lobby](#)

Please note that check-out from the hotel is latest by 11:00 on day of departure, however, as confirmed with the venue, your luggage can be left at the reception desk.

MAGNÓLIA ROOM

11.00 - 11.45 | [Get ahead of the curve with the Journalism Trust Initiative](#)

The Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI) counters the digital proliferation of propaganda, advertising, and disinformation by promoting ethical journalism. It focuses on elevating trustworthy content and providing tangible rewards for professional journalism, thereby building public trust.

- **Chloé Fiodiere** | Global Manager, Journalism Trust Initiative, Reporters sans frontières (RSF)

11.45 - 12.30 | [Find new paths to revenue and audience growth |](#)

Learn how the new Media Viability Accelerator (MVA) Forward program - led by USAID, Internews, Microsoft and partners - will drive innovation and growth, promote your achievements to funders, investors and partners, and bring easy-to-use insights to your work, free of charge.

- **Jason Lambert** | Senior Director of Media Business and Project Lead, Ads for News, Internews
- **Mirza Kurtović** | Business Development Specialist, Europe & Eurasia Programs, Internews

12:30 – 12:40: Reconvening for closing session

12:40 – 13:00: Concluding Remarks and Next Steps

Closing remarks and acknowledgments, including next steps for CEMP and CEMediaTrends.

- **Péter Erdélyi** | Director, Center for Sustainable Media (CSM), Hungary
- **Jeff Lovitt** | Chief of Party, Central Europe Media Program (CEMP), Zinc Network
- **Olesia Gardner** | Civil Society and Media Advisor, Central Europe, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, USAID

Media outlets/organizations represented at the event

- From **Bulgaria (7)**: Association of European Journalists, Club Z, Dnevnik, Gospodari.com, Mediapool, Pod Tepeto, Toest
- From **Croatia (1)**: ŠibenikIN
- From **Hungary (9)**: Átlátszó, 444.hu, Direkt36, G7, Lakmusz, Magyar Hang, Nyugat.hu, Partizán, Telex
- From **Poland (10)**: Krytyka Polityczna, Kultura Liberalna, Notes from Poland, Oko.press, Outriders, Pismo. Magazyn opinii, Radio Nowy Świat, Reporters Foundation, Silesiana, Zawsze Pomorze
- From **Romania (9)**: Átlátszó Erdély, Economedia, G4 Media, Hotnews, Panorama.ro, PressOne, Recorder, Spotmedia.ro, UH
- From **Serbia (1)**: BIRN
- From **Slovakia (1)**: Denník N
- From **Slovenia (2)**: N1, Večer

World-class experts

Experts at the event will include Federica Cherubini, Director of Leadership Development at RISJ; Ariel Zirulnick, Director of News Experimentation at Southern California Public Radio; and Grzegorz Piechota, Reseacher-In-Residence at INMA.

Workshops

Workshops throughout the conference will allow participants to proactively engage in small groups on the evolution of user needs, and formats and products such as podcasting, short-format video and newsletters.

Panel discussions

Journalists, editors from various outlets, along with researchers will participate and debate each other in several panel discussions focusing primarily on the latest trends in Central European media.

Clinics

Participants will be able to attend one-on-one, solution-oriented clinics focusing on issues related to the daily lives of digital outlets, including organizational change, leadership and management, or grant-writing.

Networking

The event also offers a chance for participants from digital outlets, academia and research and the donor field to network and connect in semi-formal and informal settings too, e.g. at Night Owl Debates and a dinner party.

[About the Organizers](#)

Zinc Network conceptualizes and creates programs, interventions, and strategic communications campaigns around some of the world's most complex problems – from disinformation to extremism, media capture to authoritarianism. Zinc, which is headquartered in London with offices in Washington, D.C., Tbilisi, and Warsaw, launched the **Central Europe Media Program (CEMP)** in October 2022 to foster the sustainability and growth of independent media in Central Europe. CEMP, headed by Zinc in collaboration with IREX, is a five-year program made possible with the financial support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The CEMediaTrends conference is a CEMP event in partnership with the **Center for Sustainable Media**, Hungary. The Center for Sustainable Media, based in Budapest, Hungary, works to support ethical financing to safeguard media independence, and is committed to reshaping the European funding environment and helping publishers with business development to counter media capture.