

Narrative report 2023

Table of contents

Executive Summary	1
Milestones of 2023	2
Activities and plans moved to 2024	4
Policy and Advocacy Activities in 2023	4
Highlights	4
Detailed activities	4
Impact of the activities on the strategic priorities of the movement	5
Selected Publications	5
Events	5
Basic information about the organisation	6

Executive Summary

Wikimedia Europe (WMEU) was established in January 2023 and formally registered in Belgium in April that year. Many activities focused on making the organisation fully functional, which also meant transferring contracts, liabilities and obligations from our fiscal sponsor, Wikimedia Deutschland, to WMEU. Ensuring that we can be fully operational and supported by adequate systems has been key to preparing for next periods of support to Wikimedians across Europe. Simultaneously, we ensure that public policy and advocacy activities remain the nucleus of our work and are not affected by the changes. In fact, due to team growth we were able to take on new tasks and responsibilities, supporting the awareness raising around Wikipedia becoming a Very Large online Platform and assessing European funding opportunities for next years.

Milestones of 2023

The following milestones have been accomplished from the 2023 annual plan:

<p><i>Strategic and Focused Organisation</i></p>	<p>assuring strategic focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual plan adopted at the General Assembly in January 2023 • strategic priorities for WMEU drafted and adopted in Prague at the General Assembly in June 2023 <p>strategy implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operational objectives revised for 2024 • 2024 annual plan presented at the General Assembly in January 2024
<p><i>Proactive Policy Agenda: Robust and Actionable Policy Dossier, Effective and targeted advocacy</i></p>	<p>ensuring continuity through transition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new policy team member: Michele joined and was onboarded in Q2 • strategic review of EU dossiers - new assignment of responsibilities in the policy team <p>structuring work in reinforced capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agenda setting for the new European Commission - before, during and after the Big Fat Brussels Meeting • new partnership opportunities in evidence-based policy - aligning for the Horizon Europe project proposal in Q2&3 • a hearts-and-minds event: Prague GA opening event (June 2023) <p>consolidating support to the network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an agenda-setting event: workshop “The Wikimedia model and its approach to disinformation” (Brussels, November 2023) aimed at ERGA and Digital Services Coordinators responsible for implementing the DSA rules <p>fully worded vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aligning the approach and angle of support to WMF regarding the Very Large Online Platform designation <p><i>For more information about policy and advocacy activities please see below</i></p>
<p><i>Engaging Messaging, Engaged Communities</i></p>	<p>framework for cooperation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two General Assemblies: online and the first in-person GA in Prague in June <p>supporting the network and the members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment of members’ needs and gaps during the GA in Prague • further exploration with the fundraising manager <p>looking forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Fat Brussels Meeting: small-group strategising for the new EC and related work
<p><i>Capable, Motivated Team</i></p>	<p>ensuring adequate working environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting up of the office for increased capacity throughout the year • transfer of payroll concluded in 2023 to start at WMEU in January 2024 <p>mapping capacities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training needs for Board and team assessed, training required in 2023 offered to team <p>team-building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • team aligned to work together • team retreat: in October 2023 to get to know each other better <p>taking stock:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjustment of roles in the light of changes at the executive level • responsibilities and salaries adjusted for new executive roles towards 2024

<p><i>Sustainability and Growth</i></p>	<p>new setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual financial plan adopted at the General Assembly in January • coordinating with WMDE on spending and monitoring throughout 2023 • Fundraising Manager: Valentina assigned to work on the Horizon Europe proposal <p>getting to full-speed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual financial plan adjusted for increases in travel and representation • partial transfer of financial assets from WMDE in December 2023 • donor mapping - assessment and planning for 2024 <p>fundraising strategy implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • securing members' pledges for 2024 - 2 new contributors <p>towards diversification of funds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of Horizon Europe funding application • collection of 2023 members' contributions • 2024 financial plan prepared and adopted by the Board <p><i>For more information please see the financial report 2023</i></p>
<p><i>Robust and Lean Operational Backbone</i></p>	<p>preparing for autonomous operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contractors chosen and contracted: accountant, payroll service provider (BE and IT), banking services • plan of transfer of all assets from WMDE created and partially implemented (conclusion in 2024) <p>beginning of autonomy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration finalised in April 2023 • Closing WMDE work contracts and other contractual obligations (rent) as of December 31, 2023 <p>towards full operational capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring smooth operations in all areas up to existing capacities (see deferred items from the annual plan) • compliance with relevant laws and regulations through additional consultancy, adjustments with accountant and payroll provider, etc.
<p><i>A Trusted Partner within the Movement and in Europe</i></p>	<p>coordination with strategic partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conversations and sync with the global policy team throughout 2023 • conversations and updates with existing donors: secured increased contribution from WMDE for 2024, good relationship with Mercator Stiftung <p>mapping opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new partners and thought leaders: around the HE proposal and beyond • sustaining relationship with the CEE Hub: Prague GA, exchanges between staff <p>syncing with the global movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wikimania presence, coordinating with representatives of various hubs • planning for positioning in global conversations in 2024

It still feels like we are in a “startup” phase where many routine things are done for the first time and require setup, process and cross-team coordination. We have slowly been absorbing functions that in previous years were managed at WMDE by a number of teams.

We needed to prioritise and distribute tasks to set up a proper organisational backbone. Support is needed to run operations in a way that enables our team to focus on expanding work on our statutory objectives.

Activities and plans moved to 2024

1. Creating framework for evaluation - it was too early to focus this as the organisation was still forming and changing (with new staff and plans emerging). Evaluation was carried out on a regular basis after projects or their milestones were achieved.
2. Approach to working with non-EU countries - the VLOP designation, focus on the new European Commission agenda and the need to direct more support to France and Italy in advocacy because of the new strategically important legislation, kept us at the ad hoc level of support to our non-EU members. This plan will be developed into a comprehensive support to members in 2024.
3. Membership engagement plan - as the setup and recruitment activities dominated the timeline, we were also understaffed in terms of directing adequate focus to systemic support for members. It made sense to move the process to 2024 when the team is more consolidated, and financial and administrative support is secured to free capacities to address this workstream comprehensively.
4. Communication plan and online presence - there was no capacity available to set up a structure plan. Existing channels were used and populated with content when possible.
5. Workplace organisation: due to the fact that the payroll remained formally at WMDE throughout 2023, items such as office rules, feedback and performance review plan, and employee and benefit plan have been postponed to 2024 (the outline and expectations were discussed at team retreat). Comprehensive training plan will be developed within the framework of career planning in 2024.
6. Financial/fundraising strategy & donor engagement: as the later than expected hire of fundraising manager occurred and the Horizon Europe work was prioritised in 2023, the plan was postponed to 2024 in the interest of engaging members in strategising. Donors were kept up to speed by periodic communication on milestones (no formal reporting was due in 2023).
7. Concluding transfer of assets: the ability to absorb resources only at the end of the year coincided with year closing at WMDE. Please see the financial report for details on how the transfer has been planned and how it partially took place.

Policy and Advocacy Activities in 2023

Highlights

- Promoting the definition of online platform moderation as limited to that performed by the platform provider itself.
- Promoting the cyber resilience concept as safeguarding free software developed by volunteers, academics, and not-for-profits from excessive obligations relating to proprietary production and ownership models.
- Ensuring that community content moderation can be based on reliable media sources without restrictions.
- Supporting the position of journalists and volunteers when facing lawsuits intended to deter them from publishing factual information.

Detailed activities

Digital Services Act (DSA): The EU policy team communicated with the European Commission explaining the content moderation model by the Wikimedia Foundation and how it differs from edits by volunteers. On 25 April 2023 Wikipedia was designated as a Very Large Online Platform (VLOP), unique as a not-for-profit and community-driven project. While this entails additional obligations and reporting requirements, it also positions Wikimedia as a civil society movement, providing an example of a successful decentralised project.

European Media Freedom Act: This legislation aims to safeguard the position of media organisations in the EU as essential actors in freedom to receive and impart information as well as ensure fair distribution of state

funds. In case the new law limits content moderation, it will make it harder for the Wikimedia community to alter or remove content even if it does not comply with our rules across various projects. Thanks to our awareness-raising activities, Wikimedia projects are exempted from this limitation. We also spoke in favour of measures to protect journalists from excessive use of spyware.

Anti-SLAPP Directive: This directive aims to shield journalists as well as volunteer editors from Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP). The team focused on raising awareness how mechanisms for early dismissal of lawsuits, addressing cross-border cases, and compensations of damages impact our projects, volunteers and availability of information about public figures. Our work on this will continue on the national level

Cyber Resilience Act: This legislation aims to enhance security for the internet of things and at the same time proposes strict obligations binding organisations and volunteers developing and sharing free software. Working with partners, the team raised awareness on the impact of these stringent requirements in the proposed legislation on not-for-profits, academia, and volunteers.

European Data Act (EDA): While primarily focused on interoperability and cloud provider switching, the EDA also addresses the sui generis database right (SGDR), a concern for Wikimedia. The team's efforts brought about solutions resulting in the SGDR not applying to machine-generated data, though Wikimedia's recommendation would have been to revoke this protection altogether.

Impact of the activities on the strategic priorities of the movement

Knowledge as a Service: The movement is progressing towards its strategic objective of becoming the fundamental infrastructure for free knowledge by advocating for measures that support knowledge dissemination in various formats and developing tools for allies. Wikimedia Europe directly contributed to this goal by raising awareness among relevant stakeholders in Europe on how legislative frameworks should protect, promote and align with the principles of open access to information.

Selected Publications

- [Anti-SLAPPs Directive: a step in the right direction](#)
- [Geo-Blocking & Audiovisual Content: Why we need to achieve a truly connected digital single market](#)
- [European Media Freedom Act: some reflections from Wikimedia Europe](#)
- [Wikipedia will be harmed by France's proposed SREN bill: Legislators should avoid unintended consequences](#)
- [Europe Needs Digital Public Spaces That Are Independently Moderated and Hosted](#)
- [Who Should be Liable for Free Software?](#)
- [Open letter on making encyclopaedias fit for the digital age](#)
- [Wikimedia Position on EU Proposals for a Liability Carve-Out of Free and Open-Source Software](#)

Events

1. The Policy Team at Wikimedia Europe hosted the workshop "The Wikimedia model and its approach to disinformation." in Brussels on November 22, 2023. It was aimed at awareness-raising among the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA), specifically targeting Digital Services Coordinators responsible for implementing the EU Digital Services Act (DSA) rules, the workshop facilitated direct engagement with these authorities, providing insights into Wikimedia projects, their collaborative model, and strategies for addressing disinformation.
2. The Big Fat Brussels Meeting was focused on the approaching European elections and resulting opportunity to formulate a new agenda for the European Commission in its after-election composition. We envisioned a horizon of our proactive focus for the next 5 years. We assessed how



far we've come and what lies ahead of us. We also zeroed in on practical asks which will help us test out methods to create compelling narratives about our generic agenda: explaining the Wikipedia model, and AI.

Basic information about the organisation

Wikimedia Europe AISBL

Rue Belliard 12

1040 Brussels, Belgium

office@wikimedia-europe.eu

Enterprise no: 0800303151

Where to find us:

Our EU policy blog: <https://wikimedia.brussels>

Our webpage: <https://wikimedia-europe.eu>

Our LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/wikimedia-europe>

Our public policy mailing list: publicpolicy@lists.wikimedia.org

Board:

Claudia Garád - president

Capucine-Marin Dubroca-Voisin - treasurer

Maciej Nadzikiewicz - secretary of the Board

Gonçalo Themudo - board member

Rebecca MacKinnon - board member

Team:

Anna Mazgal - executive director

Dimi Dimitrov - EU policy director

Valentina Calcagno - fundraising manager

Michele Failla - senior EU policy & law advisor

Erkida Pema - finance and operations officer