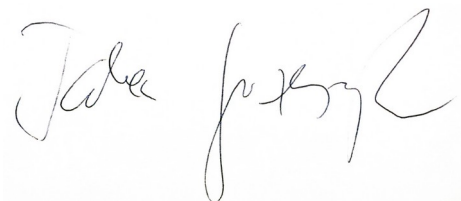# hostwriter

Activity report 2020

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Tabea Grzeszyk

Co-Founder and Managing Director

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1. Introduction

Hostwriter is a non-profit network for media professionals that helps journalists to easily collaborate across borders. We offer young journalists in particular the opportunity to work internationally by providing access to international colleagues and offering journalistic training on the topic of cross-border journalism.

The purpose of our NGO is to promote popular and professional education and international understanding. Hostwriter is an educational and working association of young media professionals and young journalists. Our statutory purpose is realized in particular by:

- The development and operation of an Internet platform on which journalists worldwide can exchange information and cooperate.
- The organization of conferences and seminars for further education with general journalistic topics.
- Organizing and carrying out study trips abroad with the aim, among others, of getting to know the professional and personal circumstances of foreign journalists and holding joint seminars with them.
- Cooperation with youth associations, sponsors of voluntary and public youth and educational work, and journalists' associations in the context of organizing joint educational events and promoting journalistic cooperation.

Unfortunately, due to the global coronavirus pandemic, almost all of the above-mentioned activities, with which we normally realize our statutory purpose, had

to be cancelled or postponed as a result of assembly bans and "social distancing".

For the team, this meant months of short-time work and home office. Only the development and operation of a digital internet platform remained unchanged in the lockdown. In addition to the operation of an Internet platform, the reorientation of our journalistic exchange program "Agora Europe" into an exclusively digital solidarity program enabled us to pursue our statutory

purpose even in corona times (see 2.2. "Agora Europe" - exchange program under corona conditions).

Hostwriter has a supervisory board chaired by lawyer Jutta Freifrau von Falkenhausen and programmer Maren Heltsche.

2. Projects of Hostwriter gUG

2.1 The digital networking platform <u>hostwriter.org</u>

In order to enable journalistic cooperation around the globe and to facilitate contact with colleagues from other regions of the world, we have been operating a free online networking platform since May 2014. The development of our own platform seemed indispensable to us, as existing social networks such as Facebook or similar do not usually protect the privacy of its members sufficiently, as the business model is based on monetization of personal data.

Hostwriter gUG (haftungsbeschr.)	**Bank details**	**Supervisory Board**
Hamburg Local Court	Hostwriter gUG	Chairwoman:
HRB 129750	IBAN: DE 25430609672045978300	Jutta v. Falkenhausen
CEO: Tabea Grzeszyk	BIC: GENODEM1GLS	Vice Chair:
Contact: tabea@hostwriter.org	www.hostwriter.org	Maren Heltsche

We have excluded this business model for Hostwriter in the General Terms and Conditions (see https://hostwriter.org/data-protection). Our Internet platform aims to create a protected place of exchange where journalists are not exposed to surveillance software and where their information is not sold to advertisers for profit.

In Corona times with closed national borders, when local editorial offices were often unable to send their own reporters to risk areas, public awareness of the importance of cross-border research has also increased: The user numbers of our networking platform almost doubled in the crisis year 2020: from an average of 7,400 monthly page views to 14,700.

2.2 "Agora Europe" - exchange program under Corona conditions

The Agora project aims to strengthen cross-border journalism in Europe. In the age of global networking, stories rarely end at national borders. It specifically promotes cooperation beyond investigative lighthouse research in order to make cross-border journalism accessible to young journalists from all departments. The Agora project takes its name from the ancient meeting place of Athenian democracy, where a wide variety of viewpoints were exchanged and discussed.

Originally, a classic journalistic exchange program was planned for 2020, as we had already implemented in 2017 in the host country Armenia: a joint study trip for twenty European journalists, who then support each other in their cross-border research in a six-month "digital newsroom".

The Corona crisis threw a spanner in the works of the study trip, but the program could at least take place digitally - with the travel and accommodation costs saved, we were able to support the participating colleagues from Southern and Eastern Europe with an additional solidarity research grant. All trainings took place digitally, the resulting research on the impact of the Corona crisis for LGBTQ in Europe, mental health in the lockdown, etc. was published in a joint dossier: https://agora.hostwriter.org/AgoraEuropeGrants2020/Dossier/.

2.3 "Unbias the News - Why Journalism Needs Diversity"

In 2020, under the impact of the ongoing Corona pandemic, we have continued to grapple with the question of a sustainable future for Hostwriter. Some of our core activities to achieve our NGOs purpose remain at risk in the future: International events, conferences and study tours will probably only be feasible under strict hygiene conditions for years to come.

After consulting with our Supervisory Board, we therefore decided to try out a new way of pursuing our purpose in addition to operating a digital networking platform for journalists: We used the second half of 2020 to prepare the launch of a non-profit Hostwriter newsroom. The aim of the "Hostwriter Newsroom" is to contribute to more diversity in international journalism by publishing underrepresented perspectives, thereby strengthening the NGOs purpose of promoting international understanding.

The Hostwriter Newsroom pursues community-oriented, inclusive reporting and sends a signal against the lack of diverse perspectives in the German and

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international media business, in which, for example, journalists of color, colleagues with an immigrant background or with disabilities are dramatically underrepresented. The journalists involved in the Hostwriter Newsroom receive access to journalistic training to promote the professional development of young media professionals.

The Hostwriter Newsroom "Unbias the News" builds on our book project of the same name, which we used back in 2019 to make journalistic voices heard that are most glaringly absent from international news coverage. Colleagues who are disadvantaged because of their ethnicity, gender, disability, class, age, religion, belief or geographic location.

3. Cooperation, training and input at conferences

- Hamburg University, Winter Semester 2019/2020, Seminar: "Cross-border Journalism: How to collaborate across borders". External teaching assignment Tabea Grzeszyk and Bernadette Geyer / Hostwriter. Link: https://blog.hostwriter.org/hostwriter-showcases-mundus-students-journalism-projects/

- Tübingen University, Summer Semester 2020, digital block seminar "Cross-border Journalism: How to collaborate across borders". External lectureship Tabea Grzeszyk.

- Bosch Alumni Network: "Participatory Workshop: Unbias the News - Why diversity matters for journalism" with Mercy Abang, Wafaa Albadry, Tina Lee

and Zahra Salah Uddin / Hostwriter, 26.2.2020, Link: https://www.boschalumni.net/events/31304

- DW Akademie, Online Seminar: "Fundraising for Cross-border Research", Trainer: Tabea Grzeszyk, 28.2.2020

- Webinar: "Cross-border Journalism" with Hostwriter Ambassador Mohammad Bassiki, 7.3.2020

- Partnership with storytelling project "Summer of Solidarity," June-August 2020, link: https://blog.hostwriter.org/hostwriter-joins-summer-of-solidarity-collaborative-media-initiative/

- Netzwerk Recherche, annual digital conference: "Innovative through the crisis: How new media projects and formats are emerging now", panel with Tabea Grzeszyk, 19.6.2020

4. Publications

- Hostwriter: "Agora Europe - Dossier", Link:
  https://agora.hostwriter.org/AgoraEuropeGrants2020/Dossier/

- PressPad: "Diversity is more than meets the eye," guest article by Hostwriter's Tina Lee, Jan. 17, 2020, link: https://presspad.co.uk/diversity-is-more-than-meets-the-eye/

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- Hostwriter Blog: "A Collaborative Journey to Tell an Important African Story," interview with Hostwriter awardee Patrick Egwu, March 11, 2020, link: https://blog.hostwriter.org/a-collaborative-journey-to-tell-an-important-african-story-an-interview-with-patrick-egwu/

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- Podcast, Choose Inclusion: "Episode 21: Journalism Without Inclusion - What Can Go Wrong? " Interview with Tina Lee, 5/27/2021, link: https://rss.com/podcasts/chooseinclusion/45284/

- Hostwriter Blog, Daniel Bates, "Tipsheet: Key Lessons from Reporting on the Jeffrey Epstein Scandal," 4/6/2020, link: https://blog.hostwriter.org/tipsheet-key-lessons-from-reporting-on-the-jeffrey-epstein-scandal/

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- Deutschlandfunk Kultur: "Decolonize yourselves! A Journey to the Blind Spots of Journalism," Sept. 7-12, 2020, link: https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/reise-zu-den-blinden-flecken-des-journalismus.4229.de.html

- Hostwriter Blog, Zahra Salah Uddin: "Collaborating Across Borders During COVID-19," 9/30/2020, link: https://blog.hostwriter.org/collaborating-across-borders-during-covid-19/

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