

MISFLITS & APEL

INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP POSSIBILITIES



**Small
independent
regional
newsrooms**

**cooperating
cross border**

**developing a
sustainable**

**business
model**

west
west

September 2021 - January 2022

Our Story

People

Planet

Profit

Prophecy



People: Because people come first for us, both in our collaborations and in our reporting. We prefer projects that build bridges and tell in-depth stories.

Planet: Our approach is in balance with our environment. All our partners and collaborations must also uphold these values.

Profit: The value of profit is in more than just the results. We contribute to an organic growth model with a value consciousness of all the players we work with. The destination goes beyond making profit.

Prophecy: Building a stable foundation by keeping true to our 4 cornerstones, keeping our vision clear and simple. We provide in a changing environment.

The launch of the Dutch-language website Misflits.be in the winter of 2020, was achieved with a private budget of the owner, without sponsorship, without any other support or subsidies.

Website (Dutch): [Misflits.be](https://misflits.be) (for local and regional reporting)

Website (English): [Misflits.eu](https://misflits.eu) (for cross-border projects)

Contact: Founder/Owner Misflits - Sofia Van Nuffel
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Our Story

Human stories
Non-judgmental
Ethics and truth



APEL PLZEŇ

Apel-plzen.cz is an independent regional online magazine focused on events in Pilsen and the Pilsen region. We want to tell interesting **human stories** happening all around us. We also want to research and share information we all should know before throwing our ballot into the ballot box.

We don't offer a quick infoservice and we're not a platform for political campaigns. We don't do journalism from a desk. We are in touch with those we write about as well as with our readers. We want to know what people care about, and to do **ethical** journalism.

Why **APEL**? The German philosopher Karl Otto Apel was a co-founder of discourse ethics - he sought a form of discussion without prejudice, aimed at a common search for consensus and **truth**. And the mission of this magazine is to *appeal* to be more aware of what is going on around us, but also to talk to each other in a civil, mutually respectful and **non-judgmental** way. Which is unfortunately not often the case, especially in the virtual environment.

*The launch of the website **Apel-plzen.cz** was possible thanks to the support of Danish union of journalists in spring 2021.*

Website (Czech): **Apel-plzen.cz**
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STARS4MEDIA 

Misflits before

STARS4MEDIA

by Sofia Van Nuffel

Before this pandemic, a fresh idea to do something new and experimental in independent Newsroom - land, came to life. For three years the name *Misflits* was written with lipstick on the bathroom mirror. Big gaps in quality reporting and in-depth news made clear that it was time to focus on underreported themes and to do more together with and for people and diverse communities. The under-representation of women in the start-up of newsrooms was an additional motivation, to help restore the balance. The beginning of the lockdown was a perfect environment to develop this idea. The regional Flemish Newsroom Misflits.be went online winter 2020.

Readers who absorb and comment on the daily news reporting sometimes do not realise that news editors who choose to remain independent do not so much opt for sensational news, but rather for deeper and slower reporting, and that this way of reporting also has consequences. This requires, among other things, good organisation, a solid work and research budget and also help and expertise from other (media) professionals.



An independent journalist must also be an entrepreneur, always staying on top of things, looking for new, sustainable solutions and dares to walk new paths. After a period of courageous content creation and research, i have learned that sometimes, out of the blue, you find like-minded people who face the same challenges and are open to doing and developing something together. This has made me realise the great importance of collaboration.

Apel before

STARS4MEDIA

by Lucie Sykorova

To be a local journalist in a country, where journalism is often more of a swear word than anything else, and with earnings lower than for unskilled work at a supermarket checkout, doesn't sound like the best choice ever. It is clear that only those who really love the work as a journalist will stay. But to do this with heart and soul, you usually need the ambition to do it in a good way, so that the work makes sense. And that seems almost impossible in the current circumstances.



Looking beneath the surface, the *fools* who come here begin to feel that they are in a vicious cycle that has only one exit - getting out of the profession. But ultra-passionate *fools* keep trying to find a secret exit. From a way out of the vicious cycle to a completely different way of working meaningful with fulfilling feelings.

Because I was such a double fool, I have been trying to find such an exit for years. I can't claim to have already managed to see a clear path to heaven, but together with two of my colleagues, we have taken the first step. In the spring of 2021, we set up our own website for local slow journalism. The main motto is quality and ethics. The intention was clear, but we had to take a second step. The most important one, which would allow us to work full-time for the local newsroom - to make its and our own growth possible.

West meets East

by Sofia Van Nuffel

In the past few months, I have experimented with fundraising on the Dutch website Misflits.be to make this platform and all the content possible. I noticed that it takes a lot of time and trust. All the more reason to also look beyond our familiar borders. This is exactly the reason why, after the summer of 2021, I paid more attention to the Misflits Extra Muros page where I planned to focus more on cross-border projects and stories. Because the English language is also important for this, I worked on a sister website misflits.eu where all this could become possible.

During my cross-border research, I met Lucie from the Czech Republic, during an online course about crowdfunding and collaborative journalism at the Prague Media School. We accidentally ended up in an online meetingbox together and soon realised that we were walking a parallel road with our newsrooms and that we were facing similar challenges. Lucie was in the early stages with developing *Apel*, which was not yet online, and my website Misflits for only six months. We noticed that the bridge between East and West were far apart in terms of approach to the necessary challenges, but interesting enough to learn from each other. After many conversations and online coffees (thanks to Mrs. Corona), we decided to sign up together as partners at Stars4Media, where we emerged as one of the lucky few.



meets East West

by Lucie Sykorova

I met Sofia at an online event during the third wave of Covid in spring 2021. By then, we were used to zoom events and conferences and had already attended several. Suddenly, there were plenty of them everywhere. I joined without great expectations, but with an interest in meeting some new colleagues from other countries. And there I met Sofia. We were both interested in the same topic at that time - exploited workers. So we started talking about it inside the event, and then outside. We had several online coffees, some quite long. And I felt like i met a real soulmate - both professional and personal. This was extra rewarding because we could share our East-West perspective on different topics.



We also found out, among other things, that we are both in a similar phase with our baby newrooms. Well, Sofia's is already a toddler. But both would need a kick-off to move forward.

That's when I got the information about the Stars4Media program. Our first idea was that this would be exactly the right thing for us. So we applied together and succeeded! This is a win-win. The support (with an easy bureaucracy) would allow us to find a way to make our newsrooms sustainable and at the same time to establish a journalistic cooperation with Sofia, my journalistic soulmate. Because we both involved our colleagues, we created a great multi-skilled team. We could share ideas, views and knowledge, which was very useful. I am sure we will benefit from it long after the Stars4Media project is over.

Chosen strategy membership model

We developed a strategy for setting up a good crowdfunding campaign, taking inspiration from similar projects, especially in Germany. We became part of a German community around the Beabee platform, a project that develops software for smaller editors based on a membership business model. We gained a lot of inspiration and knowledge there and are now implementing the Beabee software in our websites and continuing to build our communities.



In our search for a partner for this kind of software, we were happy to find Beabee, where we can get in for free during the entire test phase. Apart from being a good tool for what we both need, we also see it symbolically as a bridge being built between our two European countries, as Germany lies between us. That is a very big windfall that we did not expect to have.

Setting up Crowdfunding campaign



We combine this with our questionnaires and research into what readers would like to read.

Beabee's community already has a number of testers who have come before us. We are learning from them to have a shortcut so we can start our Crowdfunding campaign as soon as possible.



We also have our StartPress connection, which was included in the online course, which is connected to the Prague Media School where we first met. So by finishing this Stars4Media project, we have already made a first draft.

In addition to this international crowdfunding campaign, we are also aiming to raise funds each in our own country to support us in the next steps of our newsroom development. We are currently building our Social Media pages to help us to get the most out of our crowdfunding campaigns.



Conclusions Lessons learned



Stars4Media has enabled us to start a new journey. This is very important for small media, who need such opportunities the most. It allowed us to focus on our websites, the research examples of good practice, and to think more about our own strategies. We drew up the plan for our crowdfunding campaigns and learned how to technically manage the member community.

After researching the best options, we took a big step forward by becoming part of the Beabee community. We compared the features and conditions of the Beabee software with other similar platforms and it is clear that it's the best choice for our purpose, as it is specifically designed for news media based on a membership model.

For the Czech website Apel-plzen.cz, the software needs to be adapted by local experts. It can be used by other news websites as well, because it is designed as an open source and can be self-hosted, which is a big advantage. For Misflits, there were some technical problems with the website itself at first, but the English version of the software was perfect. Misflits.eu is an English website for cross-border projects.



Thanks to the support of Stars4Media, we were also able to meet each other in person. It assured us that we are on the same wavelength and that our cooperation can be fruitful. We will certainly continue our journalistic cross-border cooperation on underexposed topics!



Future plans



We already found another journalistic topic, which we want to work on together. We will work on a current issue about cults, viewed from a local, regional and global perspective. Since we already started to work on a preliminary investigation, we realised how much we can benefit from our East-West link on this topic, perspective and information sources. To be able to develop this research further, we plan to have a research budget together through our crowdfunding campaigns and additional journalistic grants.

We are really looking forward to it!

And so the end of the Stars4Media program is just another beginning for us!


Many thanks to all who enabled us to work on this!

Sofia and Lucie



STARS4MEDIA





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We would also like to thank all partners of the Stars4Media program. The Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Europe's Media Lab (Fondation EURACTIV), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). And ofcourse also the European Commission who co-founded this Stars4Media project.