



Combatting news avoidance among Generation Z

- WORLD NEWS MEDIA CONGRESS 2024
- COPENHAGEN, 27-29 MAY 2024

GATHERING THE WORLD NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

The media industry is facing defining challenges, from economic pressures, to polarisation, climate change, and a number of conflicts. Today, more than ever, human rights, press freedom and reliable journalism are vital to sustain democratic societies.

Intending to address these agendas, more than 1,000 media leaders, journalists, and editors from 85 countries attended the 75th World News Media Congress in Copenhagen. **The World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)** organised the international meeting in a local partnership with **the Danish Media Association (Danske Medier)**.

NEWS AVOIDANCE AMONG GENERATION Z

In many countries, millions of people are consistently avoiding the news (Toff et al., 2023). This phenomenon is called **news avoidance** and is most often associated with less privileged groups (e.g., people from lower socioeconomic

classes, and people uninterested in politics). Today, the problem is also growing among younger people (Generation Z), who constitute nearly one-third of the world's population.

Growing news avoidance among Generation Z creates challenges for journalists and news outlets, who find it hard to engage them in their new products and sell their journalism. At the same time, this is also a democratic

problem, since enlightened democracies require various groups of people to take part in political decisions and be a part of the news environment.

The workshop – supported by **WAN-IFRA, Danske Medier, TV2 Echo,** and **Copenhagen Legacy Lab** – sought to highlight new solutions to the issue of news avoidance among Generation Z. The workshop resulted in **The Copenhagen Criteria**; seven news values to guide news organisations in how to engage with Generation Z.

Throughout this co-creation workshop, the students were assisted by 12 congress delegates from the news industry (professional news editors and journalists). This innovative match-making exercise was carried out to facilitate valuable two-way communication between news producers and an important segment of their audience. By directly involving both younger people and editors in the process, the final solution was grounded in the real needs and preferences of Generation Z.

“39% of the global population now often or sometimes avoids the news, up from 29% in 2017”

The Reuters Institute's 2024 Digital News Report

A PRE-CONGRESS WORKSHOP WITH 70 STUDENTS

Before the 75th World News Media Congress, 70 international students from **the International People's College (IPC)** in Elsinore north of Copenhagen participated in a full-day workshop facilitated by **the University of Southern Denmark (SDU)** and **NewsArcade**.



Photo: Wonderful Copenhagen



Photo: Wonderful Copenhagen



Photo: World Association of News Publishers

LEGACY CASE STUDY



Photo: Wonderful Copenhagen



Photo: Wonderful Copenhagen

“News avoidance should not be understood as young people generally being uninterested in society around them. Nor is it necessarily a chronic condition. Several workshop participants mentioned that the process of getting closer to the creation of news alleviated their anxiety about engaging with it.”

Aslak Gottlieb, Journalistic Lecturer at University of Southern Denmark (SDU)

and the direct but respectful tone of communication, which is typically Danish. Lastly, the delegates were introduced to Danish folk songs, a tradition the students enjoy daily.

THE VOICE OF GENERATION Z

In the weeks before the workshop, the International People’s College established a new course focusing on journalism and news avoidance to prepare the students. This course was offered to 12 students with a special interest in the topic.

During the World News Media Congress 2024, three student representatives from the course were invited to share their views on news avoidance and present The Copenhagen Criteria as their solution to the problem.

This presentation took place in a full auditorium in front of 250 editors and journalists during the congress session: *“How to Sell Your Journalism to News Avoiders”*. After the session, the audience was invited to meet the students and the involved organisation in the exhibition area.

For the 12 congress delegates, it was a unique chance to learn about Danish culture and the traditions of a classic folk high school in Elsinore. Throughout the day, the congress delegates experienced the democratic, non-hierarchical environment,

“The project focusing on global youth news values is the best I have been part of. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity and will cherish the experience for many years.”

Student from International People’s College (IPC)

The World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) were excited to include the young generation in the congress in Copenhagen. As a result, the organisers would like to bring the concept forward for future congresses. Now, the aim is to continue and extend the work with The Copenhagen Criteria at their congress in Krakow in 2025.

Throughout the congress, more than 150 hard copies of The Copenhagen Criteria were distributed to interested professionals from the media industry.

The Copenhagen Criteria are meant as guidance for publishers and journalists. The involved organisations hope that the news values will be applied by media outlets to create content that engages and inspires Generation Z.

“We were inspired by the young voices from the international school, and we will consider this format when hosting future global events.”

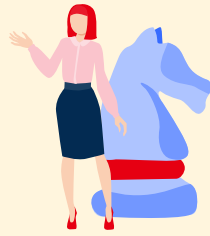
Cherilyn Ireton, Executive Director at World Editors Forum (WAN-IFRA)



Photo: Wonderful Copenhagen

Photo: World Association of News Publishers

LEGACY PROCESS



Strategic goals and societal needs

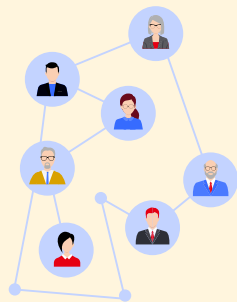
News avoidance is a global newsroom challenge. The challenge is well recognised and discussed among editors and media professionals and is also described in the exhaustive 4-year study [“Avoiding the News: Reluctant audiences for journalism”](#) by Toff et al. According to this study, news avoiders primarily include young people, women, and people from lower socioeconomic classes.

News avoidance presents a democratic problem since an enlightened democracy requires us to take part in political decisions and be a part of the news environment. Thus WAN-IFRA’s vision, to promote press freedom, quality journalism, innovative and sustainable business and technology models, aligns well with the objectives of the legacy initiative.



Objective

To mitigate news avoidance among Generation Z.



Stakeholder involvement

[The Danish Media Association](#) and [WAN-IFRA](#) jointly arranged the congress session about news avoidance and invited congress delegates for the preceding workshop.

[The International People’s College](#) generously opened its doors for the workshop and established a new course for 12 students with a special interest in journalism and news avoidance.

[NewsArcade](#) and the [University of Southern Denmark](#) facilitated the workshop and assisted the students who presented the Copenhagen Criteria at the congress.

[Copenhagen Legacy Lab](#) coordinated the overall legacy process and facilitated the dialogue between the stakeholders.



Activity

A pre-congress workshop with 70 students and 12 congress delegates.

Workshop program:

- Introduction: News values and the problem of news avoidance
- Break-out session 1: Engage vs. avoid
- Break-out session 2: Formulating news values
- Voting: Identifying seven new values for Generation Z

Based on the voting, the group of students from the journalism short course formulated [The Copenhagen Criteria](#) – seven news values to engage Generation Z.



Outputs (immediately after the activity)

Three student representatives from IPC presented The Copenhagen Criteria to more than 250 news editors and journalists at the congress during the session: “How to Sell Your Journalism to News Avoiders”.

Throughout the day, more than 150 hard copies of the news values were distributed to interested professionals from the media industry.

The Copenhagen Criteria is anchored in NewsArcade as a free and public [landing page](#) with information and materials to be directly applied by news outlets and journalists.

TV 2 Echo produced [three short TikTok videos](#) to address news avoidance and encourage news engagement among younger audiences.

After the congress, WAN-IFRA communicated the project through blog posts and email outreach, reaching over 1,000 editors and approximately 30,000 people by email.



Outcomes (+6-12 months - changed behaviour)

Mitigating news avoidance remains a key priority for WAN-IFRA. During 2025 they launched [the Future Audiences Initiative](#) to engage young people in news and a new [policy](#) on media literacy guided by the Copenhagen Criteria.

NewsArcade has incorporated The Copenhagen Criteria into [a post-graduate training course for journalists](#). In addition, [Creative Europe](#) has provided funding to develop an educational programme around NewsArcade, which will apply the methodology of The Copenhagen Criteria.

IPC has since become part of the EU project [NewsArcade – Seriously Play the News in the Classroom!](#), a programme that fosters critical thinking and news literacy through gamification in education.

WAN-IFRA was recognized as one of three finalists for the [ICCA 2024 Incredible Impacts Award](#) for its legacy initiative.

LEGACY PROCESS



Impact (+1 year – societal value)

On an international level, some of the journalists who attended the workshop have applied the news values in their work or shared them with educational institutions and the media industry:

“At Cape Town Daily on Cape Town TV we’ve adopted the Copenhagen Criteria as our guide to how we cover news.”

Glenda Nevill, Editor of The Media Online and The Media Magazine

“At the United Daily News, I’ve shared the Copenhagen Criteria (...) The newsroom is taking it as a guideline to work on a new set of writing style guide when addressing issues that is aimed for broadening the discussion throughout the community.”

Che Chen, United Daily News

In Denmark, IPC has introduced two new courses - Media Literacy and Newsroom - inspired by the Copenhagen Criteria. In these courses, students learn to analyze news, produce media content, and critically assess information. At the same time, IPC has launched a five-year strategy aimed at strengthening democratic values. The strategy focuses on understanding how media, social media, and artificial intelligence (AI) influence society, with particular attention to information flows and source criticism.

The Copenhagen Criteria has also become a permanent part of the Danish Development Research Network ([DDRN](#)). For example, it is integrated into a [Science Journalism](#) course for master's students, where it supports critical and transparent reporting.



Legacy (+1-3 years and beyond...)

The Copenhagen Criteria continue to be used by educational institutions and the media industry to support the creation of news that engages young audiences effectively.

THE COPENHAGEN CRITERIA

News Values for Gen-Z



- **Educational** – show us news that helps us learn and understand more about relevant topics
- **Empowering** – show us news that encourage us and provides tools to take action based on informed decisions
- **G-local** – show us how global events impact us locally and vice versa
- **Human** – show us diverse representation through personal experiences, that evoke empathy, compassion and inspiration
- **Impactful** – show us events that affect numerous people and influence us or those involved
- **Objective** – show us fact-based news, unbiased and from different perspectives
- **Timely** – show us current news and prioritize ongoing events

Read more: www.newsarcade.eu/news-values



Engaging Generation Z in digital journalistic products is an ongoing struggle for news outlets worldwide. **The Copenhagen Criteria** provide news producers with a set of guiding values when producing news products for young audiences.

Around 70 international students have co-defined the news values in partnership with news editors and journalists prior to the World News Media Congress 2024 in Copenhagen. The results were presented by student representatives during the congress session: *“How to Sell Your Journalism to News Avoiders”*.

Danish Media
Association:



NEWSARCADE

INTERNATIONAL
PEOPLE'S COLLEGE
DEN INTERNATIONALE HØJSKOLE

WAN
IFRA World Association
of News Publishers

SDU
University of
Southern Denmark

©