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CASE

CONTEXT.RO

“**From Words to Video:**
Building Digital Skills to
Engage New Audiences

STUDY

IN SHORT

Context's initiative aims to develop a video production workflow and train a group of younger reporters to create digital content. With support from an outside expert, the team is beginning to build a process of strengthening their digital skills and better engaging with audiences on social media.

ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Context was founded in 2022 and is based in Romania. Working as a team of multinational investigative journalists, they investigate cross-border organized crime, corruption, and other types of injustice and document the impact on society. Their focus is to expose the relationship between money and power, illegal operations affecting the public interest, and crimes against humanity.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

To develop video production capacity within the newsroom by training young journalists, building digital storytelling workflows, and expanding reach on social media through accessible, factual video journalism.



IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

Context worked with an external video mentor to establish a step-by-step workflow — from concept to publication. The team prioritized training in scripting, shooting, and publishing short-form videos, while adapting goals to focus on incremental skill-building and testing different content strategies for each platform.

Transitions

WHY THIS PROJECT?

Context chose to focus on video because it is one of the most effective ways to reach a wider audience. With more people consuming video content every day, the newsroom sees it as essential to adapt. “If you want your message and your stories to reach more people, you need to do video,” fundraising manager Marian Fangli said.

While Context has primarily published written content on its website and social media, with people consuming more and more video and audio content, they see this shift as a necessary next step. Although the outlet does not currently have a dedicated video editor, it hopes to hire one in the future and is actively seeking grants and funding to help expand its video production efforts. The need to shift was significant and Context lacked financial support after USAID funding cuts.

“Now we are better. We're stable again,” Fangli said. “So, this is one of the main points for our development, to grow engagement, and especially on video.”

HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

When applying design thinking to the project, Context started by asking what the group realistically wanted to achieve. At first, the goal was to teach younger reporters to handle the full video production process on their own. But as the work began, the team realized video editing is a skill that takes time and experience to develop. So, they adjusted their expectations: if even one person could start learning editing, that would be a bonus, but the focus would stay on teaching the rest of the production steps.

From there, they began testing different parts of the workflow and thinking through what each video should do. Should it inform? Should it bring people to the website to read more? Should it encourage donations or newsletter subscriptions? The team is now trying out these different goals to see what works best for their audience and their content.

DID CONTEXT'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

Context has begun producing videos, with several currently in progress and the first ones set to be released soon. While it's still too early to measure audience response, the goal is to increase engagement — especially on platforms like TikTok and YouTube, where Context's current reach is limited.

Expanding its presence on TikTok is a priority, given the platform's influence and the widespread disinformation that circulates there. Since Context regularly addresses these issues, video content is seen as an important tool to strengthen its voice, reach more people, and better carry out its mission.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID CONTEXT ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

One of the first challenges the Context team encountered was realizing that full independence in video production would be more difficult than expected. At the start of the project, the goal was to train younger reporters to handle the entire process — from concept to video editing — on their own. But as the work progressed, it became clear that video editing requires a level of experience that cannot be developed immediately. The team recognized that true independence would mean eventually hiring a video editor or investing more time for reporters to learn those skills.

The second challenge came when publishing pushbacks disrupted their timeline. They had planned to release one video per week, but with the first article and video being pushed back, the team had to adjust by producing more videos each week to stay on schedule and meet their deadline. While they push to stay on schedule, they also understand that investigative reporting can be unpredictable.

HOW WAS CONTEXT'S PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

While they did not know yet how their audience would respond, they expected the videos to do well but recognized it was still the summer holiday season, so engagement might be lower than usual. “We’re not expecting the same level of response we would get in October, when more people are actively engaged,” Fangli said. Still, they are confident the videos will drive strong engagement on TikTok and YouTube, while also bringing value across other platforms.

WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID CONTEXT GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

One important lesson the team has already taken from this experience is about timing and planning. Typically, they start outlining the steps of a project after getting a grant — figuring out the stages and deliverables once everything is confirmed. But they have realized that real, practical planning does not actually begin until they know exactly when the project will start and under what conditions. Launching something in early summer is completely different than starting in March — both in terms of the audience and the people involved.

Now, they see how valuable the contracting phase can be — that window between being awarded the grant and the official project start. Instead of waiting for the project to kick off, they have learned that this is the ideal time to plan. It is a shift they plan to carry forward in future projects.

WHAT DOES CONTEXT PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

Context is currently waiting to hear back on a few other grant applications. The team expects answers soon, and if they secure the funding, they will be able to develop a longer-term plan for video production. If not, they will look for other ways to keep the work going without additional financial support. Either way, they are confident that video will remain part of their future. The long-term goal is to bring on a dedicated video editor or establish a consistent partnership with an external collaborator.

They hope the videos will reach people who do not usually engage with their written content — especially those who have been disinformed — and offer a clearer, more truthful perspective on the issues the newsroom covers. The team focuses on hard-hitting investigative journalism, aiming to tell the factual truth without trying to persuade readers on an emotional level. They know this approach means slower growth, but they prefer it that way. Their priority is to share the facts uncovered by their investigations and report what emerges.

“This is a very important message for us to get out that we are telling the factual truth, we are investigating, and what comes out we write about it,” Fangli said.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD CONTEXT GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

Context advises other journalists to use more video and audio as well. “I believe that for any newsroom, one of the main objectives is to reach as many people as they can with their message,” Fangli said. “And people are reading less and less and they are consuming more and more video and audio content.”

The team recognized that focusing on these formats is important, but moving into video is not simple — especially without prior experience. Some newsrooms already have extensive video production experience, so for them it’s easy to jump in, get the cameras, and start creating. For others, it takes more effort to gain the skills and equipment needed to make it happen.