



2024

 **IFCN CODE OF PRINCIPLES** @Poynter.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary	3	4. Accountability and Transparency	12
Growth and Global Reach	3	IFCN Complaints Process	12
Operational Improvements	3	2024 Complaints	12
Governance and Community Support	3	IFCN Operational Transparency	12
Strategic Initiatives for 2025	3	5. Other Operational and Technical Improvements in 2024	13
2. What is the Code of Principles?	4	Governance and Advisory Board Enhancement	13
Historical overview of the IFCN, the Code of Principles and its Purpose	4	Training and Professional Development	13
The Code and its Significance	4	Community Engagement and Support	13
3. Applications and Operations	7	6. Next Steps 2025: Advancing the Future of Fact-Checking Journalism	14
Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2024 by the numbers	7	Code of Principles Revision	14
Eligibility	7	Additional Web Enhancements	14
Waiver Requests	8	Continual Process Improvements	14
Assessment Process	8	7. Appendices	15
New Applications	9	Appendix 1: 2023	15
Renewal Applications	9	Appendix 2: 2022	16
2024 Code Operations: Procedural and Technical Improvements	11	Appendix 3: IFCN Revised Complaints Policy	16
		IFCN Complaints Review Process	16

On the cover: Fact-checkers working under the IFCN Code of Principles at the GlobalFact conference in Sarajevo, June 2024. (Photo: Vanja Čerimagić)

MLA Citation: Rodriguez-Ruiz, Salvador, Ferdi Özsoy and Arina Lekht. Edited by Angie Drobnic Holan and Enock Nyariki, 2025, IFCN Code of Principles Report 2024.

1. Executive Summary

In an era marked by increasing threats to press freedom, politicized disinformation and rising hostility toward journalists, the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) has reinforced its commitment to strengthening global accountability and trust in fact-checking. The IFCN Code of Principles continues to serve as the world’s leading standard for transparent, nonpartisan fact-checking organizations.

Despite the complexities of today’s media landscape, fact-checking organizations around the world are actively seeking IFCN verification — demonstrating a clear demand for global credibility and professional standards. In 2024 alone, the IFCN handled more than 200 requests for certification from organizations across 57 countries and six continents. This represents a significant validation of the Code’s continued relevance and the global community’s desire to be seen as legitimate, trusted arbiters of information.

This comes at a time when fact-checkers face coordinated harassment, legal threats and shrinking financial support — a reality highlighted in recent research from the Global Disinformation Index (2024) and the Reuters Institute (2023), which both cite growing hostility toward fact-checkers as part of

broader attacks on journalism.

Despite this, organizations are not withdrawing from public accountability; they are leaning into it. The International Fact-Checking Network continues to strengthen and expand its global certification framework; this report highlights the IFCN’s activities, achievements, and strategic improvements implemented throughout 2024.

Growth and Global Reach

In 2024, the IFCN handled 226 applications (165 renewals and 61 new applications) and completed assessment of 135 applications, with 116 organizations successfully meeting compliance standards. These verified signatories now represent 56 countries across six continents, demonstrating the expanding influence of professional fact-checking

globally. At the time this report was finalized, the IFCN maintained 182 verified signatories committed to upholding the Code’s high standards.

Operational Improvements

Significant process improvements implemented in 2024 have streamlined operations and reduced average assessment time from eight to 10 months to approximately six months. Key improvements included:

- Introduction of a preliminary screening process for new applicants.
- Implementation of a two-year review cycle for established signatories with five successful reviews.
- Enhanced assessor recruitment and training.
- Comprehensive website overhaul for improved user experience and application tracking.
- Revised complaints process to reduce frivolous submissions and better identify legitimate concerns.

Governance and Community Support

The advisory board was expanded to include eight new members from diverse regions, bringing broader global perspectives. Working groups were established to address specific challenges such as financial

sustainability and harassment response. The IFCN also implemented dedicated webinars and consultations for Code of Principles applicants, improving communication and support.

Strategic Initiatives for 2025

- Looking ahead, the IFCN will focus on:
- Comprehensive research for a revision of the Code of Principles to address emerging challenges, including AI implications and coalition fact-checking programs.
 - Development of a self-paced online training course on applying for the Code of Principles signatory status.
 - Further web platform enhancements to improve usability and automation.
 - Continued process improvements through standardized assessor guidelines and targeted automation.
- Through these initiatives, the IFCN aims to maintain the Code’s position as the international standard for fact-checking journalism while adapting to new challenges in the evolving information ecosystem.

2. What is the Code of Principles?

Historical overview of the IFCN, the Code of Principles and its Purpose

Fact-checkers from around the world founded the IFCN in late 2015 to uphold accuracy, transparency, and accountability within the global fact-checking community. Amid the rising tide of misinformation, it became evident that a unified set of standards was essential. In response, IFCN launched the Code in 2016, establishing guidelines for fact-checkers worldwide. **The Code of Principles** today serves as the foundational framework for the network, establishing the standards and practices that define its mission.

Within the first year, 35 organizations from 27 countries joined the IFCN as signatories to the Code. Today, the number of fact-checking organizations that adhere to the Code of Principles has grown significantly – 182 verified signatories representing 81 countries and a broad spectrum of organizations committed to high standards in fact-checking. The signatories range from major news outlets and international agencies to small nonprofits and innovative startup projects. These

organizations operate in diverse political and media environments, but share a common commitment to the Code's high standards. By guiding high-quality fact-checking across contexts — from multiparty democracies to regions with limited access to reliable information — the Code builds credibility and public trust in fact-checking journalism worldwide.

Recognizing the Code's value, tech platforms in 2016 began using it as a guiding standard

for their fact-checking initiatives, helping meet the demand for reliable information online. To ensure fair and consistent enforcement of the Code, IFCN introduced independent assessors in 2017, followed by an online application portal in 2018 to streamline certification as the fact-checking community grew.

The current version of the **Code**, developed in early 2020, includes updated standards on nonpartisanship, evidence sourcing, and transparency. As IFCN's global community expands and new challenges emerge, the Code remains central to ensuring consistency and credibility. To keep the Code relevant and comprehensive, the IFCN will conduct a thorough review and renewal of the Code in 2025 and into 2026, working closely with the community to ensure it addresses the evolving landscape of information verification.

The Code and its Significance

Trust forms the cornerstone of effective fact-checking journalism. According to the Reuters Institute's comprehensive Digital News Report 2024, which surveyed 47 media markets across six continents, transparency and adherence to high journalistic standards emerged as the two most critical factors driving public trust in news sources. In this landscape, fact-checkers serve a vital role by alerting readers to dangerous misinformation through methodical verification. The Code establishes a framework comprising five



fundamental principles, supported by 31 specific criteria that organizations must satisfy to demonstrate compliance. Developed collaboratively by practicing fact-checkers, these principles create a foundation for

methodological transparency, enhance public trust, and foster evidence-based discourse in the global information ecosystem.

The first principle is a **commitment to nonpartisanship and fairness**. This means that fact-checking organizations and teams must follow a standardized process of evidence for every fact check, regardless of the fact-checking journalist's stance on policy positions or ideologies. This is the foundation of the Code and is an essential building block of high-quality fact-checking. Fact checks must be balanced and evidence-driven, and the organization's operations and policies must support the same standard. For example, to be compliant, a fact-checking organization, or its parent organization when applicable, cannot be affiliated with or show support for any political party, any politician or political candidate, nor advocate for or against any policy positions save for transparency and accuracy in public debate. Furthermore, it must have a publicly accessible nonpartisanship policy on its website. Staff members must maintain neutrality on policy

matters their organization might evaluate. They cannot engage in advocacy or express personal views that could reasonably lead the public to perceive bias in the organization's fact-checking work. This professional boundary represents one of several critical safeguards reinforcing the first principle's commitment to nonpartisanship and fairness.

The second principle establishes a **commitment to standards and transparency of sources**. This cornerstone defines rigorous protocols for verifying claims, evaluating evidence hierarchies, disclosing information sources, and ensuring fact checks remain fully replicable by readers. By implementing systematic methodological frameworks, fact-checking organizations minimize source bias while maintaining transparent documentation practices throughout their verification process.

When addressing economic or policy matters, for example, organizations typically triangulate evidence from multiple perspectives — combining government datasets, expert analyses and community impact assessments to present comprehensive verification. Fact checks should provide detailed source attribution that includes each source's identification, specific relevance to the claim under examination, and established expertise in the relevant field. Organizations must also disclose contextual factors that might influence evidence interpretation.

In cases where primary evidence remains

inaccessible to the public, organizations must publish clear explanations for their reliance on secondary sources. The fundamental responsibility of fact-checkers under this principle is to construct evidence chains that are logical, accessible and traceable — allowing readers to independently follow the verification pathway that supports each published conclusion.

The third principle is a **commitment to transparency of funding and organization**. This section outlines how fact-checking organizations and fact-checking teams within larger organizations are to disclose their funding sources or ownership and maintain editorial control and independence. These financial and ownership transparency requirements help readers identify potential influences or conflicts of interest, understand how the organization is funded, who the funders are and who makes editorial decisions.

The fourth principle is a **commitment to standards and transparency of methodology**. Fact-checking processes are directly informed by an organization's methodological approach to verifying information and analyzing claims. Organizations must provide a detailed methodology page that defines what can and cannot be fact-checked, how sources are verified and how evidence is evaluated. It should explain how evidence is handled when it supports or challenges the central claim,

Organizations are not withdrawing from public accountability; they are leaning into it. The International Fact-Checking Network continues to strengthen and expand its global certification framework.

how primary and secondary sources are distinguished, how the organization handles requests for comment from claimants and how readers can submit claims for review.

The IFCN verifies that the methodology is consistently applied across fact checks and that the published fact checks remain neutral and follow consistent evidence standards to ensure nonpartisanship.

The fifth principle establishes a **commitment to an open and honest corrections policy**. This cornerstone not only ensures transparency when errors occur but embodies the intellectual integrity essential to credible fact-checking. Self-correction — the willingness to acknowledge and rectify mistakes rather than defending

inaccuracies — represents the highest form of journalistic accountability and demonstrates an organization's authentic commitment to truth over self-interest.

Errors may arise from various sources: copy-editing oversights, sourcing limitations or the emergence of new evidence that contradicts initial conclusions. To uphold this principle, organizations must implement a comprehensive corrections framework that explicitly defines both minor and substantive errors, ensures corrected content is prominently labeled and maintains accessibility for readers seeking accurate information. Additionally, organizations must provide straightforward mechanisms for audiences to submit correction requests or lodge complaints regarding published fact checks.

For established signatories, maintaining a visible link to the **IFCN complaints policy** creates an additional layer of accountability. Organizations must clearly communicate to readers that while the IFCN doesn't adjudicate disputes about individual fact checks, it does oversee systematic compliance with the Code's standards. This multi-tiered accountability structure — internal corrections processes, reader feedback channels, and IFCN oversight — creates a self-regulating ecosystem that continually reinforces fact-checking integrity while building public trust in the verification process.

3. Applications and Operations

The IFCN handles more than 200 applications in a typical year, requiring a robust framework to accommodate this substantial volume while maintaining rigorous evaluation standards.

In 2024 alone, this system handled 226 applications, with renewal applications from existing signatories representing 57 countries across six

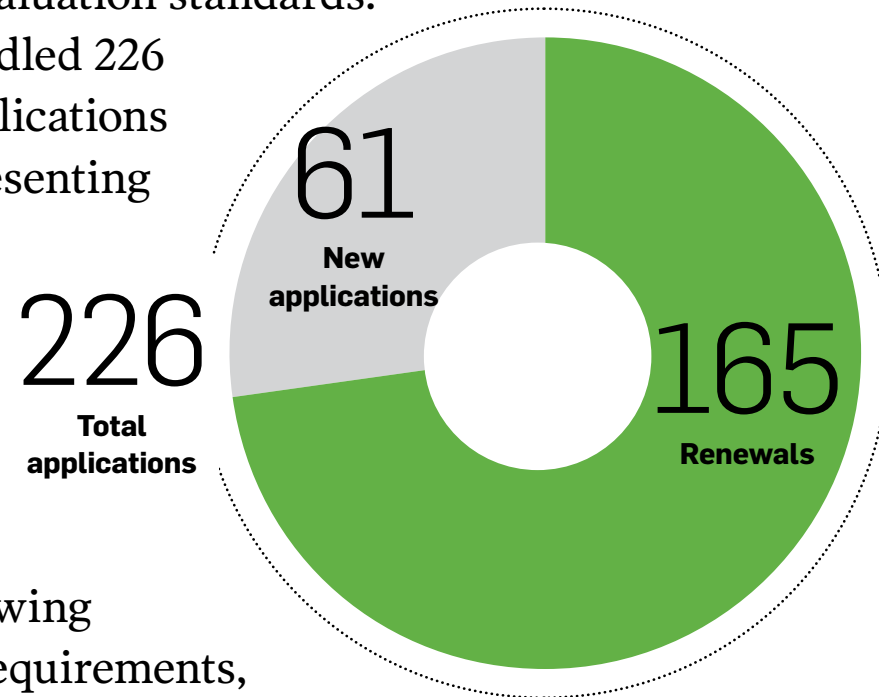
continents. This global certification network reflects the expanding influence of professional fact-checking in promoting information

integrity worldwide. The following

sections detail the eligibility requirements,

assessment procedures, and operational

improvements that have strengthened this vital verification ecosystem.



Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2024 By the Numbers

182

Total Signatories at the end of 2024: 182 organizations from 79 countries demonstrated broad adoption of the Code's standards.

12

New Signatories in 2024: 12 new organizations from 11 countries joined this year.

108

Renewal Status Maintenance: 108 renewal applications demonstrated their ongoing commitment to the Code. 104 received accepted status and 4 applications were declined.

Eligibility

To become a signatory to the IFCN Code of Principles, fact-checking organizations must submit an eligibility request to the IFCN before applying. **The eligibility criteria include:**

1. A link to the applicant's website and their legal registration page.
2. The type of fact-checking organization: nonprofit, for-profit, or part of a larger media group.
3. Years of operation and evidence of published fact checks.
4. A link to their detailed nonpartisanship policy.
5. A link to their detailed methodology page.
6. A link to their detailed complaints page.

Applications are reviewed by assessors, independent professionals with expertise in fact-checking, the local media environment and language proficiency from the applicant's region. They evaluate the strength of the applicant's fact-checking methodology and confirm that transparency requirements are met, as outlined in the Code. **Whether a new or renewing applicant, the organization must meet the following criteria during the assessment:**

1. Be a legally registered organization, unit or team within a legally registered entity.
2. The organization or team must exclusively work on fact-checking.
3. It must publicly display its fact-checking methodology, define the

evidentiary standards used, and publish an open and transparent corrections policy.

4. It should publish an average of at least one fact check per week over six months, or 12 months for fact-checking organizations or teams in countries with five or more active IFCN signatories.
5. At least 75% of fact checks must focus on claims that impact the welfare or well-being of individuals, the general public or society.
6. Funding sources that account for 5% or more of total annual revenue must be disclosed, or a statement of ownership must be provided if the organization is part of a larger media group.
7. Editorial output must not be controlled or influenced by a state, political party or individual politician.
8. The organization must document how it ensures editorial control and independence from funders.

Waiver Requests

While the standards outlined above are required, new and renewing applicants may request a waiver from one or more of these criteria when compliance is not possible, or when disclosure could compromise the safety and security of the fact-checkers.

For example, applicants may request waivers from financial disclosures or organizational information if such information would cause material harm to the organization or team

members because of their journalism.

Given the rise in harassment against journalists and threats to press freedoms, applicants may also request a waiver from the weekly publication requirements if the organization is operating in regions experiencing civil or political conflict or in regions hostile to independent journalism.

If a waiver is requested, the applicant must submit it with their application for review by the assessor and the advisory board. The applicant must provide information regarding their media environment, and they must explain any safety risks or unique challenges that could arise if the information were made public. This typically includes supporting financial and organizational documents.

These documents are filed separately from the application and only viewable by IFCN staff, the assessor and the advisory board. The assessor reviews them to determine their merit and to provide a recommendation to the IFCN advisory board on whether the waiver should be accepted or rejected. The IFCN advisory board has discretion in accepting or rejecting an applicant's waiver request.

Due to significant changes to the global media environment, particularly concerning foreign funding and "foreign agent" laws, the IFCN received 18 waiver requests in 2024. Of the waivers submitted, nine were from renewing signatories and the other nine came from new applicants.

Most applicants requested waivers from

financial disclosure requirements, and these applicants typically operated in regions where press freedoms had eroded, where journalists faced harassment or where they were targets of repressive "foreign agent" laws.

Two applicants requested leniency on weekly fact check requirements. These organizations experienced severe and persistent harassment and legal threats from political entities, forcing them to pause their operations. Others cited financial constraints that limited their publishing capacity.

Upon review of these waivers in the assessment process, only one new applicant was rejected due to shortcomings in their sourcing policy and fact-checking methodology. The remaining 17 waivers were reviewed and approved by the IFCN advisory board.

Assessment Process

The IFCN's assessment process balances thoroughness with efficiency through a structured evaluation. Central to this system are independent assessors who operate separately from both IFCN staff and the advisory board, bringing crucial regional expertise and language proficiency to each application. Their deep understanding of local media environments ensures applications are evaluated within appropriate cultural and political contexts while maintaining global standards. This independence strengthens the integrity of the entire certification system.

Timelines for the assessment process vary depending on the application volume and whether the applicant is a new or renewing signatory. Due to the number of applications, the availability of assessors and the length of advisory board deliberation, the application process for new organizations may take between six months to 18 months from submission to final decision. Renewals typically take about six months from submission to final review.¹ Assessments may take longer if the advisory board wishes to extend their voting period to request more information from the applicant or assessor.

All assessments, whether new or renewing, follow the same five stages:

- **Assessor confirmation:** Assessors are vetted journalism and fact-checking professionals from around the globe, typically college professors, lecturers or media experts. IFCN staff review each new assessor's qualifications. After they are deemed eligible and attend a webinar, they may start work as an assessor. They are assigned to specific applications based on availability, regional expertise, country, language needs, and familiarity with the applicant's media and political environment.
- **Assessment:** The IFCN currently partners with 51 assessors to review applications. Assessors typically have 15 days to complete preliminary assessments and flag non-compliant submissions to the

¹ Six-months based on operational improvements made in 2024. Prior to 2024, the assessment for renewal applications took between 8-10 months.

IFCN. This year, 48 assessors reviewed 135 applications.

- **Request changes:** If an assessor identifies gaps in the application or areas of improvement on the applicant's website, IFCN staff informs the applicant of the requested changes. Once changes are made, IFCN staff reviews them, informs the assessor, and the assessor continues the process. Most change requests relate to sourcing and evidence, funding and editorial independence, methodology, and expectations for corrections and complaints. Applicants must ensure this information is clearly presented on their website.
- **Reassessment:** After a request for changes is made, the applicant provides additional information, and the IFCN staff provides it to the assessor. If the assessor finds the applicant still non-compliant, and IFCN staff agree the issues are substantial, the applicant will be notified that the process cannot continue. Applicants receive detailed feedback and may reapply later, after the assessor's recommendations are implemented.
- **Advisory board voting:** Once an applicant meets all requirements, the application is sent to the IFCN advisory board, which is the body that approves or rejects applicants. The advisory board members — 15 when all seats are filled — deliberate on each completed application, reviewing assessor notes and supporting

Significant process improvements implemented in 2024 have streamlined operations and reduced average assessment time from eight to 10 months to approximately six months.

documents to ensure the applicant meets the Code's standards. The advisory board has four to six weeks to complete its review of the applications and vote in favor or against the acceptance of the applicant as a signatory. The advisory board may extend its voting period on specific applications for further deliberation and review, requesting additional information from the applicant or assessor to make an informed decision. If the advisory board reviews the application and finds it compliant with the Code, the applicant is accepted as a verified signatory, eligible for professional development opportunities managed by the IFCN.

New Applications

New applications from fact-checking organizations must pass an initial screening process before applying to ensure they meet the minimum requirements — legal registration, financial transparency, methodology, editorial independence and a corrections policy. The IFCN staff completes this screening before assessment begins, as detailed above.

Between January and December 2024, the IFCN received a total of 180 new applicant requests. After the screening process, only 26 met the minimum application requirements and were invited to complete the full application. Of the 26:

- Eight have not yet submitted the full application
- 16 are currently being assessed — four from Sub-Saharan Africa, one from MENA, four from Europe, one from North America, three from South America, two from South Asia and one from Asia Pacific in the assessment process
- Two applicants from Kenya and Liberia successfully completed the IFCN assessment process and are current signatories.

Renewal Applications

Between January and December 2024, the IFCN received 165 renewal applications. Of those, 108 completed the assessment process. Four were rejected due to sourcing or methodology issues.

Of the 135 applicants who completed the assessment process from January to December 2024 and received a final determination, the advisory board voted on 125 of the 135 applications with an average completion time of six months. The remaining 10 did not reach the advisory board due to organizational closures or failure to meet sourcing, publication or methodology requirements.

2024 Code Operations: Procedural and Technical Improvements

In 2024, the IFCN updated the [IFCN Code of Principles website](#), establishing a screening process for new applicants, improvements to the assessor onboarding process and implemented a two-year review process for signatories with five successful reviews. The purpose of this update was to attempt to streamline a process that had become too slow. In 2023, for example, the IFCN received 140 applications, with an average completion time of eight to 10 months. To streamline the IFCN assessment process and standards without compromising the quality or integrity, the IFCN made several workflow and platform improvements. These changes reduced the average assessment time from **eight to 10 months to about six**.

The screening process ensures applicants submit a full application only after they are deemed eligible. It also saves the IFCN staff time by reducing reviews of ineligible applications. The update improves application quality by giving constructive feedback to applicants who may not yet be ready and offering tips to new organizations to meet the minimum requirements to apply.

Also in 2024, signatories with five or more successful assessments and no serious complaints under the [IFCN complaints policy](#) were granted senior IFCN signatory

status. These senior IFCN signatories enter into a two-year renewal process, which reduces annual application volume and improves assessor and applicant management.

Improvements to the assessor recruitment and onboarding processes were also made in 2024 to ensure that the IFCN has enough qualified assessors with the academic background, media experience and language proficiency to verify whether an applicant meets the IFCN standards.

To streamline the process for training new assessors, the IFCN and the Poynter Institute's digital experience team created a new assessor screening and assignment process. Potential assessors must now submit a short biography that outlines their qualifications for a more intensive review by IFCN staff.

A more robust onboarding process, which includes concrete examples and an increased level of nuance, ensures that the advisory board and readers have the necessary context to understand the assessment process, the applicant's compliance with each criterion and provide important local context with relevant sources.

In-Renewal or Expired. Signatories are active for 12 months after successfully passing the IFCN assessment process and acceptance by the IFCN advisory board. There is also a 90-day grace period for renewing signatories to ensure they submit their renewal application on time.

In 2024, the IFCN also worked with the Poynter digital experience team to overhaul the IFCN website to ensure accurate representation of a signatory's status as active. In the previous iteration of the IFCN website, the signatory page relied on an automated internal dataset that was unable to accurately display a signatory's status or take into account the 90-day grace period for reapplication, causing issues for signatories who relied on an active signatory status for their work. Applicants could submit multiple applications at once, resulting in unprocessed applications, preventing the signatory page from accurately reflecting if the applicant's signatory status was active, in-renewal or expired. The updated IFCN signatory page now automatically updates the status of renewing applicants from active to in-renewal or expired based on the completion date of an application and without relying on a static dataset. This change has streamlined workflow, improved real-time reporting and removed the need for manual updates by the IFCN staff.

As part of the 2024 update, the IFCN and digital experience team improved the user experience for assessors, applicants and advisory board members. The previous website was difficult to navigate, and the application criteria were unclear. Users struggled to understand instructions or requirements and entered information in the wrong fields. This back and forth would result

in inefficiencies and prolong the time needed to complete the assessment for both applicants and assessors.

The updates include a clearer delineation between the 31 criteria of the IFCN application, blocking out sections where applicant answers are not required, increased visibility between sections requiring amended answers from the applicant or assessor, and greater transparency in each criterion requirement and applicant and assessor answers for advisory board deliberation. Feedback has been positive. Users now navigate the application more easily, better understand what is required, and provide more constructive feedback. The advisory board also deliberates more efficiently, helping to streamline the assessment timeline.

After the new procedures and website were implemented, the IFCN worked with the advisory board to recruit and onboard eight new members.²

With the website and process updates, the IFCN advisory board also received onboarding training that explained the new process and instructions on how to navigate the website.

This new process helps the IFCN gather feedback on the board's priorities, shape future trainings, improve support for applicants and assessors, and foster transparent communication with the board.

² The Advisory Board is made up of representatives from each continent, elected by the verified signatories in the region and is responsible for the final approval or rejection of all IFCN applications.

4. Accountability and Transparency

Beyond advocating for transparency in the fact-checking community, the IFCN models these values in its Code of Principles through a structured accountability framework. This system includes a public complaints mechanism that enables stakeholders to address potential violations of the Code, reinforcing the organization’s commitment to consistent standards. Full details of this accountability process are available on the [IFCN complaints page](#).

IFCN Complaints Process

In 2024, the IFCN updated its complaints process to limit frivolous complaints and more proactively inform signatories of alleged violations of the IFCN Code of Principles. This new process allows IFCN staff to review the merits of the complaints and categorize them as actionable, not actionable, or junk. The IFCN reviews actionable complaints and supporting evidence, allowing signatories to respond to legitimate complaints before their annual renewal.

2024 Complaints

The IFCN complaints policy was revised during the 2024 website update. Previously, individuals submitted complaints through the IFCN website, which stored them in an

internal database for staff review. IFCN served as a mediator between the complainant, the applicant and the assessor, who reviewed the complaint, typically during a regularly scheduled assessment. In reviewing this process, the IFCN saw that the complaints focused on single fact checks or unrelated issues, not violations of the Code. Hostile actors exploited the system to delay and prolong a signatory’s renewal process, since each complaint prompted a response. This led to capacity strains due to a large number of irrelevant or frivolous complaints.

To address these issues, the IFCN replaced the form with a dedicated complaints email inbox with specific requirements. Complaints must state which principle was violated, explain how it was violated, and include

supporting evidence for review. The IFCN limits each person to three complaints per year to reduce abuse and frivolous submissions. Staff reviews the complaints, monitors trends and offers guidance to organizations or assessors. The process helps IFCN inform the public and provide more accurate information to address any grievances they may have about specific fact checks or third-party fact-checking programs.

Since launching the new process, the IFCN received 315 emails to the IFCN Complaints inbox in 2024. Of those, 279 were categorized as junk, 27 as not actionable and nine as actionable for staff review. “Junk” were incoherent or misunderstood the purpose of the IFCN complaints process. These emails had grievances concerning social media platforms, the loss of access to their individual accounts or did not contain any information. The “Not Actionable” category primarily concerned complaints with moderation policies on social media platforms, grievances with a single specific fact check that limited the user’s reach and profile, or were against signatory parent companies.

The nine complaints deemed actionable primarily focused on fair use, website transparency and accessibility, or claims of bias and nonpartisanship. The IFCN is currently in discussion with four organizations requesting clarifications regarding their nonpartisanship policies, the IFCN team has also assigned the complaints to an appropriate assessor to provide feedback. These complaints and responses will be

reviewed and provided to another assessor and the advisory board during the signatory organization’s renewal application. The five other complaints concern less urgent issues of accessibility and clarity, which will be addressed when the organization reapplies to the IFCN Code of Principles.

In 2024, the IFCN processed one complaint alleging severe violations of the Code. After an extensive review of the evidence, consultation with assessors and the advisory board, and direct communication with the signatory, the IFCN found the evidence and complaint significant enough to warrant immediate revocation of signatory status. The organization was removed from the IFCN and is barred from engaging in IFCN activities or advertising itself as a member of the IFCN.

IFCN Operational Transparency

In implementing our refined complaints process, the IFCN put in place requirements for input and final approval by the IFCN advisory board. This new complaints process allows the IFCN to better manage the flow of complaint emails, more readily identify legitimate complaints, guide readers towards better ways to raise concerns that fall outside the IFCN’s purview, and better monitor potential harassment campaigns and narratives. These trends and potential issues are shared with the IFCN harassment working group, communications working group and the advisory board as appropriate.

5. Other Operational and Technical Improvements in 2024

Governance and Advisory Board Enhancement

The IFCN significantly strengthened its governance framework in 2024 by expanding the IFCN advisory board. This expansion brought in more diverse regional perspectives, with eight new members from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America. This broader representation has proven crucial in addressing region-specific challenges and supporting the unique needs of fact-checking organizations worldwide. This expansion provided new opportunities to collaborate and discuss the growing challenges to press freedoms and the increase of targeted harassment campaigns against journalists; better communicate existing IFCN grant and funding opportunities to regional networks; and better develop strategies to improve the IFCN's capacity to address ever-changing information integrity challenges.

The IFCN also implemented or revitalized working groups of fact-checking signatories across a variety of issues. Signatories provided the IFCN with new financial strategies through the IFCN financial sustainability group and better monitoring and response to harassment cases through the IFCN harassment working group. A communications working group focused on promoting fact-checking activities and goals.

Training and Professional Development

Recognizing that education and continuous professional development are essential to maintaining high fact-checking standards, the IFCN began developing a comprehensive training program on the Code of Principles. The course is designed to help fact-checking journalists and organizations meet the Code's requirements and strengthen their practices in both local and international contexts.

Set to launch at the end of 2025, the IFCN Code of Principles Course will be a self-paced, online program that guides organizations through each principle, the related criteria, and best practices for building and maintaining high-quality fact-checking operations. It will include real-world examples and common challenges fact-checkers face when verifying claims and evidence across different scenarios.

Each lesson will feature self-assessment quizzes to reinforce the IFCN's fact-checking approach and current industry standards. The course will support applicants in understanding the Code's requirements

and help organizations identify areas of improvement in their processes and policies. Those who complete the IFCN course will not only know the content of the Code but will also be better prepared to meet its standards and improve their chances of successfully completing the IFCN assessment.

Community Engagement and Support

Strong community connections remain fundamental to the IFCN's mission. Through targeted engagement initiatives and improved support systems, we've created more opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing. The IFCN has implemented dedicated webinars and individual consultations for new and renewal applicants to communicate any existing challenges in their applications, suggest site improvements and provide suggestions to strengthen the Code in new areas such as generative AI.

This framework allows applicants to have individualized and group consultations to address any specific questions, provide more relevant examples to specific challenging scenarios and ensure continuous compliance with the Code. This system changes improved communication channels for application status updates through an automated notification system for deadlines, application reminders, staff, assessor and advisory board action requirements, cutting the average timeline to complete the IFCN assessment process by two months when compared with 2023 applications.

6. Next Steps 2025: Advancing the Future of Fact-Checking Journalism

Code of Principles Revision

The IFCN is undertaking a comprehensive research initiative to evaluate the current Code of Principles in light of emerging challenges in the information ecosystem. This initiative will gather community insights, analyze implementation feedback, and assess how the Code's principles align with evolving verification needs. By examining developments in information dissemination, technological advances, and new organizational frameworks, the IFCN aims to build a foundation for potential future refinements.

Key research areas include the ethical implications of artificial intelligence for verification standards, the growing importance of coalition fact-checking programs, and the expansion of regional network initiatives. This exploratory process will engage fact-checking journalists and media experts through specialized focus groups focused on specific emerging challenges. To ensure broad stakeholder input,

the IFCN will facilitate community feedback mechanisms to introduce the research process and discuss preliminary findings about potential updates that may strengthen the Code going forward.

Additional Web Enhancements

To support our expanding global community of fact-checking journalists and adapt to emerging technologies, the IFCN

will continue investing in our technical infrastructure to improve usability, determine potential automation features and ensure quality control among applicants and assessors. These improvements will focus on creating a more robust, stable and user-friendly platform, automation of routine processes and notification systems, internal data analytics and reporting capabilities, and educational resources for fact-checking journalists on implementing the Code in their existing processes.

These improvements to the IFCN infrastructure and user experience will strengthen and grow the global fact-checking. Through these strategic initiatives, we aim to ensure that the Code continues to be the international standard for fact-checking journalism while adapting to new challenges in the international information ecosystem.

Continual Process Improvements

Building on the operational enhancements of 2024, the IFCN is committed to further strengthening our core processes to better serve the fact-checking community. Our continuous improvement strategy focuses on four key areas. We are standardizing assessor guidelines and training protocols to ensure consistent evaluations. We are refining the assessment framework through targeted automation of monitoring and management

tasks. We continue implementing improvements based on comprehensive feedback mechanisms from the longstanding signatory community. Finally, we are developing accessible resources that help new organizations effectively integrate the Code into their existing verification practices. These interconnected initiatives will enhance both efficiency and quality across our certification ecosystem.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: 2023

The IFCN received 161 applications between January and December 2023. In 2023, the IFCN made a final determination on 140 applications, 47 were new applicants and 93 were renewal applications. Of the 140 applications that received a final determination, 123 applications were determined compliant with the Code — 93 renewal applications and 30 new applications — and 17 new applications were found noncompliant. In total, the IFCN handled 218 applications in 2023 — 161 from 2023, 55 from 2022 and two from 2021.

	Total Applications Accepted in 2023	Total Applications Rejected in 2023	Total Applications Received in 2023	2022 Carryover Applications	2021 Carryover Applications
New	30	17	42	29	2
Renewal	93	0	119	26	0
Total	123	17	161	55	2

The IFCN added three new organizations from regions experiencing civil unrest. These include one organization from Sudan, one from South Sudan and one from Armenia. The IFCN also added one new organization from the Czech Republic, focusing on Belarusian and Russian disinformation, our first organization in Liberia, and three organizations in Japan.

The IFCN also saw the first **IFCN signatory based in a single State within the United States** focusing on investigative journalism

and fact-checking in local state government during a time of increasing news deserts.

The IFCN found new leadership, naming **Angie Drobnic Holan as IFCN Director**. This leadership change brought about new perspectives to the IFCN with important and necessary changes to the IFCN by-laws and internal IFCN COP processes. This change allowed the IFCN staff to better identify existing challenges within the IFCN Code, its process and build a framework for collaboration between IFCN staff and the

Poynter Digital Experience team.

The IFCN began collaborating with the Poynter digital experience team to review the IFCN website and identify ways to reduce manual processes. They also worked to create a visual redesign of the IFCN website, focusing on improving readability and ease of use for front-end users.

The IFCN commenced conducting individualized new applicant and assessor consultations. These consultations were conducted to ensure that applicants and assessors had a basic understanding of the requirements within the Code of Principles.

Finally, the IFCN announced the launch of the \$12 million **Global Fact Check Fund** to support the global fact-checking community. This fund is separated into three tiers—BUILD, GROW and ENGAGE—to support existing IFCN signatories and aspiring applicants to develop their fact-checking capacity.

Appendix 2: 2022

In 2022, the IFCN processed 80 applications — 57 renewals and 23 new applications. Of 66 completed applications, 64 were marked compliant and two did not meet the requirements for acceptance to the IFCN. Of these 66 completed applications, 14 were carried over from 2021.

The IFCN saw the inclusion of the first Bulgarian fact-checking organization.

	Total Applications Accepted in 2022	Total Applications Rejected in 2022	Total Applications Received in 2022	2021 Carryover Applications	2020 Carryover Applications
New	14	2	13	6	0
Renewal	51	0	41	8	0
Total	64	2	54	14	0

Appendix 3: IFCN Revised Complaints Policy

To ensure our Code of Principles has integrity and usefulness, we will investigate complaints that critique a signatory for failing to uphold its standards. Readers who believe an organization has failed to adhere to the Code of Principles may submit a complaint to the International Fact-Checking Network for review.

Complaints may be sent via email to complaints@ifcn.org. They must include 1. specific sections of the Code that have been violated, 2. supporting documentation, and 3. whether the complainant has contacted the fact-checking organization. For documentation purposes, complaints may not be made anonymously.

IFCN Complaints Review Process

When a complaint is submitted, the IFCN will take the following steps:

1. IFCN staff reviews the complaint and specific evidence provided to determine if the complaint is clear and alleges specific violations of the Code of Principles.
 - The complaint must be related to the standards in the Code of Principles. The IFCN will not investigate complaints that do not allege a violation of the Code.
 - The IFCN will not accept complaints of individual fact checks or single topics

unless a Code violation is involved. Such complaints should be pursued directly with the signatory.

- The IFCN does not investigate platform moderation policies or third-party fact-checking programs unless a Code violation is involved. Complaints about third-party fact-checking programs should follow the guidance provided by the platform in question.
 - The IFCN staff reaches out to the signatory for a response to the complaint.
 - The IFCN consults publicly available sources and/or conducts interviews for additional information.
 - To prevent the use of the complaint process as a harassment tool, individuals are limited to three (3) complaints per calendar year.
2. If a formal review is merited, the IFCN will assign an independent assessor to review complaints. The signatory will be informed of the review. The IFCN staff gives the information from the preliminary review to the assessor. The assessor conducts any additional needed investigation.
 - The assessor provides a letter to the IFCN detailing the severity of the complaint and the local media environment. The assessor may request additional information to assist in their review.
 - The signatory has 30 calendar days to formally respond to the IFCN regarding the complaint, provide evidence in their

defense and respond to any assessor questions. In urgent situations, the IFCN Director may require an expedited response.

3. The IFCN reviews all evidence and presents the evidence to the advisory board for review. In urgent cases, the IFCN director may ask the advisory board for expedited review.

- The IFCN may request additional information and evidence from the person who filed the complaint, the assessor or the signatory on behalf of the advisory board.
- The advisory board, in consultation with the IFCN director, will determine the consequences depending on the severity of the violation.
- **Minor infractions:** The IFCN director, advisory board and signatory will agree on an improvement process and a means of notifying the person who filed the complaint if the signatory has fallen short of the standards set in the code but (a) the infringement is real but not serious or systematic and (b) appears to result from a misinterpretation, not a wilful disregard, of the Code.

- **Moderate Violations of the Code:** The IFCN director and board may temporarily suspend signatory status if the signatory has violated one or more criteria of the Code and the matter is serious enough to require corrective action, requiring extensive corrective measures that take more than six months to correct and verify. The organization would need to reapply for signatory status once all measures have been completed.

- **Serious Violations of the Code:** The IFCN Director and board may withdraw signatory status if the signatory purposefully violates the ethical standards of the Code, deliberately attempts to conceal information or undermine the assessment process, or the IFCN and the signatory cannot resolve the issues outlined in the complaint.

Once the review is complete, the IFCN will notify the person who filed the complaint of the Advisory Board's decision and actions based on their findings.

To support the International Fact-Checking Network please contact:

International Fact-Checking Network at Poynter

Angie Drobnic Holan

Director

aholan@poynter.org

or

info@ifcn.org

The International Fact-Checking Network is an affiliate of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, Inc., a non-profit
501(c)3.

The EIN for the organization is 59-1630423.



Poynter.50 YEARS

Journalism. Truth. Democracy.